
introduced a requirement for a preliminary design review to be held for all major defense acquisition programs before the start of system development.²⁰ Eleven of the 16 future major defense acquisition programs in our assessment intend to conduct such a review in accordance with the act. Four of the remaining programs have not yet established a date for their preliminary design reviews; the fifth program is not required to hold a preliminary design review because it expects to enter the acquisition cycle at production start.

The Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform Act of 2009 also requires the acquisition strategy for major defense acquisition programs to provide for use of competitive prototypes before a program enters system development, which can provide a program with an opportunity to reduce technical risk, refine requirements, validate designs and cost estimates, and evaluate manufacturing processes. According to the results of our survey, 13 of the 16 future programs in our assessment intend to develop prototypes of the proposed weapon system or key subsystems before development start. Three programs do not intend to use prototyping and two of those programs intend to seek a waiver from the prototyping requirement, as provided by the act. The program that does not intend to seek the waiver—the Common Vertical Lift Support Platform—is proceeding directly to production and the competitive prototyping requirement is not applicable.

A requirement for major defense acquisition programs to have acquisition strategies that ensure competition or the option of competition throughout the acquisition life cycle was also included in the Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform Act of 2009.²¹ Use of competition throughout a program's life cycle can help to reduce program costs. Measures to ensure competition or the option of competition may include developing competitive prototypes, using modular open architectures to enable competition for upgrades, and holding periodic system or program reviews to address long-term competitive effects of program decisions. Eleven of the 16 future programs in our assessment intend to use these measures or options after development start. Figure 9 summarizes the progress in implementing selected acquisition reforms for future programs.

²⁰Pub. L. No. 111-23, § 205(a).

²¹Pub. L. No. 111-23, § 202.