

BUSINESS INNOVATION SYMPOSIUM (E6)

New space industry segments, firms, actor groups, and multiple programs: innovation, entrepreneurship & investment at the mesoscopic level of analysis (2)

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STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES AND THE DEFINITION OF OVERSIGHT-RELATED WORK

Abstract

The activities required for government oversight of space system acquisition are necessary for monitoring and controlling risk, but they can also increase the cost and schedule of a system's development. The extent of the burden of these activities has been contested by stakeholders. They discuss the burden of oversight activities from their own context, resulting in the estimate of the burden of oversight ranging from 2 percent of a space system's total cost to factors of 3 to 5 times more than commercially available alternatives. We contend that stakeholders need to understand each other's perspectives on oversight to move this debate forward.

In this research, we explore how engineers working for different stakeholders involved in space system acquisition (contractors, Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDC), and government program offices) define oversight. Using in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 45 engineers involved in space acquisitions at the program execution level for the United States Department of Defense, we use an inductive approach to define oversight from the perspective of each stakeholder group. We highlight the similarities and differences between their definitions of oversight. Across stakeholders, engineers agree that the amount of on a program is contingent upon the stage of the program's lifecycle and the type of contract used. The differences between their perspectives relates to the day-to-day activities performed by each stakeholder group. Our findings suggest that contractors and FFRDC engineers consider oversight to be mission assurance-related verification and validation of technical work while Air Force program office engineers focus more on program deliverables for reviews within the Air Force. We discuss the implications of these findings for policy makers and engineering managers interested in government oversight reform.