



FEDERAL  
ACQUISITION  
INSTITUTE



# FAI 2021 Strategic Plan



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## MESSAGE FROM THE ACTING DIRECTOR

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I am pleased to present FAI 2021, our strategic plan for fiscal years 2017–21. This plan establishes a direction for growing a well-trained, adaptable acquisition workforce, qualified to achieve their mission. We prepared FAI 2021 in collaboration with stakeholders and in close consultation with the FAI Board of Directors and General Services Administration Office of Government-wide Policy. Approved by the Office of Federal Procurement Policy, it establishes a 5-year vision and strategy that build on our accomplishments and move us forward to a state where all acquisition professionals have the skills and resources to meet mission challenges effectively and efficiently, with FAI serving as their champion.

We will build on our progress on administration and congressional initiatives to improve federal acquisition. Our foundation of professional development and certification will help us advance to the concept of qualification—enabling the workforce to perform with confidence. The FAI team plays a critical, unique role in developing and maturing acquisition workforce readiness. We are the conduit between acquisition policymakers, workforce managers, and other professionals involved in acquisition workforce development. Leveraging our strategic position and government-wide mission, we will continue to promote collaboration, integration, and innovation across the acquisition enterprise, ensuring investments in the acquisition workforce lead to more effective and efficient government.

Over the next several years, we will work toward achieving our three strategic goals:

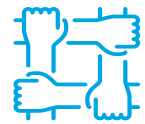
1. Enable a qualified acquisition workforce.
2. Align acquisition policies, practices, and people.
3. Optimize resources to execute our mission.

As leaders, we are responsible for ensuring our acquisition workforce professionals broaden their capabilities and become more effective in their roles. Collectively, we can do so by giving them training and education opportunities and on-the-job developmental experiences. Budget pressures are likely to continue, so we need to identify ways to innovate, increase collaboration across government, and reduce duplication.

Defense and civilian agencies share many of the same challenges, including their ability to attract, develop, and retain a qualified acquisition workforce. By operat-



### FAI Team Values



**Teamwork**



**Excellence**



**Integrity**



**Resilience**



**Trust**

ing as a single government, we can conquer our resource challenges and accomplish our complex missions. By maximizing resources, crossing agency boundaries, and evaluating our progress along the way, we will increase efficiencies and synergies government-wide.

Our mission is critical and our vision is clear. We want to be the premier institution of acquisition workforce excellence. As we implement FAI 2021, we will continue to champion the acquisition workforce and its capabilities to conquer our acquisition challenges—today and tomorrow. Please join us on this journey.



**Jeffrey B. Birch**



# OVERVIEW

Established in 1976, the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) fosters and promotes development of the civilian agency federal acquisition workforce. In 2011, the Federal Acquisition Institute Improvement Act strengthened FAI's role to satisfy 12 statutory responsibilities in three broad areas: professional certification training, human capital planning, and acquisition research.

## 12 STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES

### PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION TRAINING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT



Develop a highly professional acquisition workforce



Facilitate interagency intern and training programs



Evaluate effectiveness of training and career programs



Collaborate with and leverage civilian training programs

### HUMAN CAPITAL PLANNING



Analyze competencies, skills, and knowledge



Assist agencies to identify and recruit qualified candidates



Collect and analyze acquisition workforce data



Assist civilian agencies with human capital planning efforts

### ACQUISITION RESEARCH



Expand instructional materials with public and private sectors



Promote establishment of academic programs



Perform career management and research functions



Improve the procurement process through government-wide research



**FAI's mission is important, diverse, and far-reaching. We support the training and career development needs of nearly 215,000 registered Federal Acquisition Institute Training Application System (FAITAS) users.**



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**In collaboration with its partners in the public and private sectors, FAI delivers training, promotes professionalism, and expands acquisition workforce development opportunities.**

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FAI's mission is important, diverse, and far-reaching. We support the training and career development needs of nearly 215,000 registered Federal Acquisition Institute Training Application System (FAITAS) users. Our reach spans the organizational boundaries of the 23 Chief Financial Officer Act agencies and over 80 small agencies. Approximately 80,000 of those professionals hold Federal Acquisition Certifications (FACs).

FAI falls under the General Services Administration's (GSA's) Office of Government-wide Policy (OGP), which provides FAI day-to-day operational and resource support. The Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) gives FAI strategic and policy direction. FAI works in partnership with the Veterans Affairs Acquisition Academy, Homeland Security Acquisition Institute, and other training and development organizations.

In collaboration with its partners in the public and private sectors, FAI delivers training, promotes professionalism, and expands acquisition workforce development opportunities.

FAI supports acquisition human capital planning and performs acquisition research to improve acquisition performance. FAI coordinates with the Chief Acquisition Officers Council (CAOC), FAI Board of Directors, Federal Acquisition Council on Training Executive Steering Board (FACT-ESB), and Interagency Acquisition Career Management Committee (IACMC) to develop and implement government-wide strategies to meet the needs of our current and future acquisition workforce members. Under authority of the Services Acquisition Reform Act of 2003, which established the Acquisition Workforce Training Fund, FAI executes its responsibilities primarily through revenue generated from the GSA Federal Supply Schedules.

# FAI 2021 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

FAI formed a set of aspirational outcomes to strengthen acquisition workforce excellence. To attain these outcomes, FAI updated its vision and mission, and then established strategic goals and objectives, as shown in the FAI 2021 framework.



**VISION**  
**The premier institution  
of acquisition  
workforce excellence**

**MISSION**  
**Foster a high-performing,  
qualified civilian  
acquisition workforce**



## STRATEGIC GOALS



**Goal 1:**  
**Enable a qualified  
acquisition workforce**

### Strategic Objectives

- 1.1 Evolve learning and professional development opportunities available to the acquisition workforce
- 1.2 Champion and promote acquisition workforce excellence
- 1.3 Explore innovative approaches and modalities for offering certification training



**Goal 2:**  
**Integrate acquisition policy,  
practice, and people**

### Strategic Objectives

- 2.1 Optimize the effectiveness of learning solutions
- 2.2 Facilitate implementation of acquisition workforce policies and emerging initiatives
- 2.3 Drive *Big A* performance improvements



**Goal 3:**  
**Optimize resources to  
successfully execute  
our mission**

### Strategic Objectives

- 3.1 Collaborate with stakeholders to advance acquisition workforce initiatives
- 3.2 Create an integrated and adaptable enterprise IT architecture
- 3.3 Build and sustain a healthy and productive FAI work environment

## Guiding Principles

FAI 2021 is founded on thoughtful and deliberate guiding principles:



- Be the catalyst for collaboration.
- Focus on acquisition workforce development outcomes.
- Leverage stakeholders to enhance capabilities.
- Enable transparency for insight and accountability.
- Pursue efficiencies in mission execution.

These principles are relevant in everything we do, serving as tactical and strategic business rules.



## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND FAI 2021 FORMATION

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To ensure FAI 2021 encompasses the broad federal civilian agency acquisition workforce community, FAI involved staff members and stakeholder groups, looking across the private and public sectors, in our strategic planning process. This collaborative process included two phases: scanning the environment and setting and validating the FAI 2021 strategy.

To gain a common and complete understanding of key factors influencing FAI—and to garner insight into our strategic direction—FAI

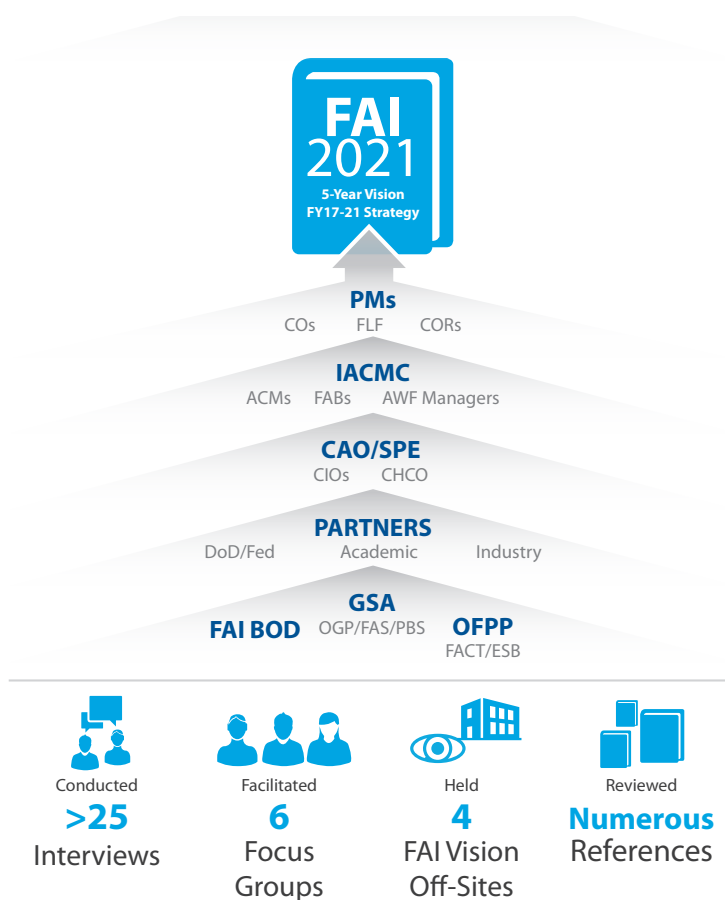
- interviewed more than 25 senior leaders in the acquisition workforce community;
- facilitated strategic discussions with interagency groups, partners, stakeholders, and staff members; and
- reviewed relevant public-and private-sector reports and information.

FAI synthesized the stakeholder engagement information into a set of aspirational outcomes depicting a state of acquisition workforce excellence where:

- The acquisition workforce has the talent and qualifications, as well as the resources, to succeed.
- Leadership recognizes and rewards acquisition community contributions to achieving excellence and accomplishing the agency mission.
- The acquisition workforce takes advantage of rotational assignments and related training to gain new skills.
- Training and learning assets are available at the point of need, and are engaging, interactive, and relevant.
- Bureaucratic roadblocks and urban legends are identified, communicated, and eliminated.
- Innovation and streamlining are encouraged and rewarded.
- Thoughtful succession planning strategies align with deliberate acquisition workforce experiential learning opportunities.

FAI analyzed our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to inform the creation of strategic objectives. The strategic objectives optimize the strengths and opportunities and overcome weaknesses and threats to achieve collective stakeholder outcomes envisioned for 2021. The entire FAI staff then identified





Understanding that an administration change may affect acquisition workforce expectations, FAI 2021 and its associated performance tasks may change.

**However, the need for a prepared, well-trained acquisition workforce endures.**

a preliminary set of 5-year performance tasks describing the major work efforts required to achieve each strategic objective.

The FAI team formulates annual performance tasks in collaboration with stakeholders to ensure alignment with the prevailing strategic environment. Understanding that an administration change may affect acquisition workforce expectations, FAI 2021 and its associated performance tasks may change. However, the need for a prepared, well-trained acquisition workforce endures. As the new administration shapes its management agenda, FAI will adjust and deliver training, professional development, and human capital initiatives in response.

The FAI team uses quarterly performance reviews to monitor progress in achieving annual performance tasks. Progress is tracked using an integrated master schedule collaborative tool, with strategic objective owners furnishing status updates, noting issues or delays, and identifying corrective actions. Annual performance tasks are integrated into FAI staff performance plans to promote accountability and ownership. The FAI annual report and the OFPP annual report to Congress will capture the achievement of annual performance tasks and their beneficial effects.



## STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

The federal government continues to pursue modernization and innovation to increase efficiencies and effectiveness throughout the acquisition process. An evolving, mission-critical business, federal acquisition drives effective, efficient government. To enhance acquisition performance, the acquisition workforce composition and capabilities must align with new laws, changing policies, and agency missions.

The acquisition workforce continues to be a topic of discussion on many agendas. GSA, OFPP, and FAI are prepared and aligned to develop and deploy new acquisition workforce initiatives and priorities. The CAOC, Chief Information Officers Council, and Chief Human Capital Officers Council are fostering increased collaboration. Working as an integrated team—with shared goals and priorities—they will ensure the desired acquisition outcomes.

Today's acquisition workforce is in a generational transition. Our current training and development practices will not meet the needs or desires of our future acquisition workforce community. Changing our culture, acquisition processes, and workforce development practices is no longer an option, it's a must. New training development and delivery technologies and methods will shape the future of learning. The need for interdisciplinary and cross-functional acquisition teams and increased demand for experiential learning opportunities demonstrate the vital, ongoing mandate to innovate.

Budget realities require smarter ways of doing business. By consolidating efforts, streamlining performance, and leveraging its collective buying power, our government will realize operating efficiencies and reduce costs, driving greater return on taxpayer dollars.

Initiatives such as Category Management and Unified Shared Services offer new ways to think about acquisition at a government, rather than agency, level. The Acquisition Gateway initiative will become a major resource, pointing to available contracts, best practices, comparison tools, samples, prices paid, templates, and more. These initiatives will accelerate the trend toward task order contracting, increase the use of data to manage acquisition, change market research, and require an evaluation of "best in class" contracts for their applicability to an immediate requirement. Thus, the acquisition system will operate in a fundamentally

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different way. FAI plays a key role in helping the workforce understand when and how to use these new methods and resources.

The federal government is improving the tools and capabilities available to the acquisition workforce and addressing the drive to digital service acquisitions and information technology (IT) programs by improving the oversight and governance of IT investments:

- The president's Smarter IT Delivery cross-agency priority goal has three core objectives: bring the best IT professionals into government, establish effective processes and procedures to drive outcomes and accountability, and partner with the most innovative companies.
- The Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA), the most significant IT acquisition reform legislation in decades, brings agencies' chief information officer, chief acquisition officer, and chief human capital officer together to address acquisition workforce issues.
- A recent Office of Management and Budget (OMB) memorandum promotes initiatives such as the Digital Services Contract Training and Development Program, the TechFAR, the Digital Services Playbook, and Digital Acquisition Innovation Labs to improve the acquisition and delivery of digital services.

Combined with the known challenges of aging legacy systems, the move to digital and open-source management, and need for non-traditional suppliers, the drive to digital government underlines the necessity for a new approach to acquisition talent management and requires FAI to play a leading role.

The need to pivot to contract administration and focus on ensuring we have qualified workforce members available to serve as contracting officer's representatives is critical. Once the acquisition has been awarded, effective contract administration ensures the government receives supplies and services in accordance with the terms and conditions delineated. In recent years, most acquisition reforms and increases in oversight have focused on fixing problems in the contracting function. However, chief acquisition officers and other thought leaders have long pointed to critical root causes early (before contracting) in the larger acquisition life cycle,





also known as *Big A*. *Big A* performance relies on a strong procurement capability, a strong contracting officer's representative community, and a well-trained program and project management pool to ensure successful acquisition outcomes.

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**The program manager embodies the entire *Big A* life cycle, from identifying and defining a needed capability through its development, testing, production, deployment, and ongoing operations and support.**

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The program manager embodies the entire *Big A* life cycle, from identifying and defining a needed capability through its development, testing, production, deployment, and ongoing operations and support. Getting program management right yields better requirements, expressed as desired program outcomes, which result in better industry-proposed solutions, encourage innovation, and deliver best value to the government. Effective program management also sets the stage for properly managing contractor performance once contracts are awarded.

Pending legislation, if passed, could elevate the role of the project or program manager and the professionals who perform it. Agencies will need to invest in developing project and program manager talent. FAI will facilitate the development of a government-wide program management framework to consistently operationalize *Big A*.

To support these initiatives, FAI will rethink core elements of its certification programs and adapt them to a more mobile cadre of program and project management and contracting officer's representative talent. As we develop talent and expertise in targeted areas, we will focus on forming FAC specialty tracks.



# STRATEGIC GOAL 1

## Enable a qualified acquisition workforce.

### Goal Overview

Serve as a champion for the acquisition workforce. Appropriately prepare the workforce for the work it must perform to achieve mission goals. In collaboration with stakeholders, expand federal acquisition certification programs to include specialty tracks, provide learning assets at the point of need and in modalities the mobile acquisition workforce desires, and move toward the concept of acquisition workforce qualifications.

### Expected Outcome

A qualified and innovative acquisition workforce that conquers the acquisition challenges of today and tomorrow.

### Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Tasks

#### 1.1 Evolve learning and professional development opportunities available to the acquisition workforce:

- Continue the evolution and growth of experiential training and development programs, such as the Digital Services Contract Professional Training and Development Program.
- Implement acquisition workforce experiential development opportunities.

#### 1.2 Champion and promote acquisition workforce excellence:

- Promote acquisition recognition awards programs.
- Highlight and share acquisition success stories.

#### 1.3 Explore innovative approaches and modalities for offering acquisition training:

- Research leading private-sector practices and adopt those appropriate.
- Research leading academic practices and implement them for acquisition professionals.
- Identify and evaluate learning development capabilities.
- Deliver training at the point of need.



## STRATEGIC GOAL 2

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### **Integrate acquisition policies, practices, and people.**

#### **Goal Overview**

Keep workforce capabilities and practices aligned with evolving policy. Strengthen the acquisition function by delivering the benefits of competency-based standards while giving agencies flexibility in implementation. In collaboration with policymakers, workforce managers, and acquisition professionals, engage early in the formation of new policies and requirements, drive rapid adoption of new acquisition policies and practices, and update or develop learning assets to support new policies.

#### **Expected Outcome**

Effective integration and implementation of federal acquisition policies, practices, and workforce capabilities.

#### **Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Tasks**

##### **2.1 Optimize the effectiveness of learning solutions:**

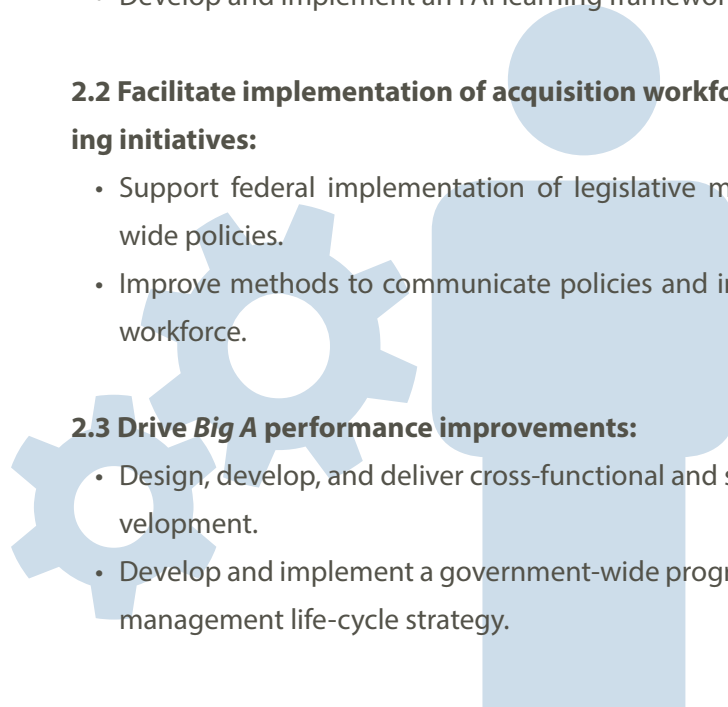
- Champion emerging government-wide acquisition workforce initiatives.
- Develop and implement an FAI learning framework guide.

##### **2.2 Facilitate implementation of acquisition workforce policies and emerging initiatives:**

- Support federal implementation of legislative mandates and government-wide policies.
- Improve methods to communicate policies and initiatives to the acquisition workforce.

##### **2.3 Drive *Big A* performance improvements:**

- Design, develop, and deliver cross-functional and specialized training and development.
- Develop and implement a government-wide program/project manager talent management life-cycle strategy.





## STRATEGIC GOAL 3

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### Optimize resources to execute our mission.

#### Goal Overview

Secure and leverage required resources to realign and develop acquisition workforce capabilities that drive successful acquisition outcomes. Maximize both public and private sector collaboration opportunities to increase innovation and expand data-driven decision-making capabilities. Reinforce an FAI culture of responsibility and accountability to successfully execute the FAI mission.

#### Expected Outcome

Alignment of resources to develop an agile and qualified acquisition workforce to enable mission success.

#### Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Tasks

##### 3.1 Collaborate with stakeholders to advance acquisition workforce initiatives:

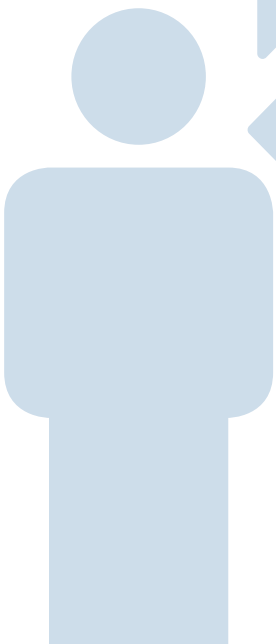
- Advance research that improves the federal acquisition process.
- Promote public and private acquisition training.
- Establish a government-wide career path for contracting professionals.

##### 3.2 Create an integrated and adaptable enterprise IT architecture:

- Identify, evaluate, and integrate technology and tools that advance the acquisition workforce.
- Enable intuitive and scalable reporting and data-driven decision capabilities.
- Establish and institutionalize repeatable processes and practices.

##### 3.3 Build and sustain a healthy and productive FAI work environment:

- Strengthen FAI operations to effectively meet the mission.
- Optimize communication, collaboration, and transparency across the FAI staff.
- Identify long-term funding strategies to sustain government-wide acquisition workforce initiatives.





February 23, 2017