



FAI NEWSLETTER

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From the Director



**Melissa Starinsky,
Director, FAI**

Some things never change. Then, there's Federal acquisition.

Fiscal Year 2015 was a momentous year for the Federal acquisition workforce as we practiced our trade and honed our craft. Operationally, our civilian agency acquisition professionals executed over 4.5 million contracting actions and obligated more than \$160 billion on behalf of their internal customers and for the benefit of the citizens they serve. Concurrently, we (for

I count myself among our acquisition workforce) have been transforming our marketplace, modernizing our methods, and expanding our skill sets as we bring our government into the digital age, leverage our collective buying power, and nourish innovation and competition in our industrial base.

Breakthroughs in technology are bringing about breakthroughs in the business practices we employ to structure competitions, determine source selections, and conduct oversight of our commercial providers and public partners. The Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA), the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) implementing guidance (M-15-14), and agencies' FITARA implementation plans are driving change on the same

scale as the Services Acquisition Reform Act (SARA) and the Clinger Cohen Act (CCA) in decades past. Factor in the impact of the President's *Smarter IT Delivery* Cross-Agency Priority Goal and the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) addition this year of *Improving the Management of IT Acquisitions and Operations* to its High Risk List, and you've got plenty of pressure on the acquisition workforce to think and act in new ways.

It is fitting, perhaps poetic, that the transformations in technology and acquisition practices are, in turn, driving transformations in our methods for developing the acquisition workforce. Lately, some agencies have started using challenge and prize authority to tackle some tough mission-centric problems. Here, a "seeker" poses a problem to the public and "solvers" submit "solutions." The best solution wins the prize designated. A great example of this has unfolded during the few months since I assumed the position of Director at FAI. Specifically, OMB's Office of Federal Procurement Policy, in partnership with the recently established US Digital Service, selected a winner of a prize competition under the [America Competes Reauthorization Act](#) through the [Challenge.gov](#) platform to pilot a training program to develop digital services expertise in contracting professionals. Derived from an inno-

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vative acquisition approach, this novel workforce development program is itself being developed using agile methods, even as it imparts cutting-edge knowledge about agile methods and digital services technology acquisition to its first cohort of 30 contracting professionals. The winning program incorporates customized learning paths, self-directed and guided learning, mentoring and coaching, an integrated collaboration portal, and real digital services assignments. Once the pilot concludes, participants will receive the first ever FAC-C with a specialization in Digital Services.

Innovative training to develop innovative contracting professionals, procure innovative technology, deliver citizen services in innovative ways—that's poetic, all right!

On a personal note, as the newest member of the FAI team, I want to recognize and thank Jeff Birch. As FAI Acting Director, he both ably helmed our small and very talented group for the last year and laid the foundation for a smooth leadership transition. I'm thrilled to report that Jeff will remain on board as our Deputy Director, continuing to serve alongside me, working with all stakeholders, and serving you. FAI is here to help you develop the ever-expanding skills you need to support the missions of your agencies and to continue to meet citizen expectations for performance and stewardship in this time of government transformation.

2016 Acquisition and Small Business Excellence Awards Nominations Closing Soon!

As part of the efforts to recognize acquisition professionals who contribute to outstanding improvements in acquisition throughout the Federal government, the Chief Acquisition Officers Council (CAOC) is seeking nominations for the 2016 Acquisition Excellence Awards and Small Business Excellence Award. Nominations are being solicited for Federal employees engaged in team or individual activities that led to excellent results in any of the five acquisition categories seen in the table to the right in FY 2015.

Nominations are being accepted through **January 15, 2016**. The awards will be presented at "Acquisition Excellence 2016" in Washington, D.C., in March 2016.

To learn more about the awards and how to nominate an individual or a team, visit the [2016 Acquisition and Small Business Excellence Awards page on FAI.gov](#).

2016 Acquisition Excellence Award Categories

- Agile
- Innovation
- Category Management

Small Business Award Categories

- Effective Collaboration
- Maximize Opportunity



FEDERAL ACQUISITION CERTIFICATIONS

FAI Publishes NEW Guidebooks for the Acquisition Workforce!

FAI is pleased to announce the launch of not one, not two, but THREE new Guidebooks for the acquisition workforce! The new Guidebooks, which are sure to serve as great resources, job aides, and reference materials, include:

- [Contracting Professionals Smart Guide](#)
- [Project Manager's Guidebook](#)
- [Acquisition Career Manager Guidebook](#)

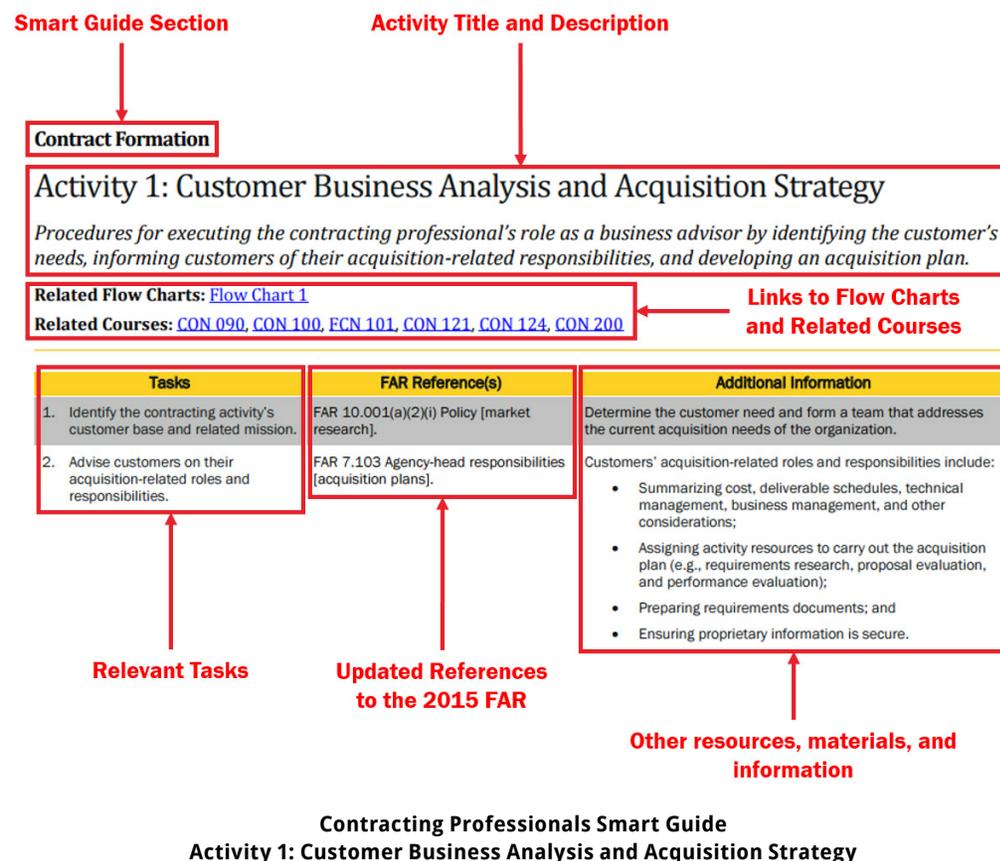
Brief descriptions of each Guidebook are provided below, and the full PDF versions can be accessed through FAI.gov! All Guidebooks are posted on the [Guides & Manuals](#) page, under the Resources tab on [FAI.gov](#).

Please fill out the [FAI Guides Feedback Form](#); we would like you to provide feedback and recommendations for how the Guidebooks can be improved.

Contracting Professionals Smart Guide

On November 2, 2015, FAI proudly launched the new [Contracting Professionals Smart Guide](#), a redesigned and updated version of the Contract Specialist Training Blueprint. FAI's Contracting Acquisition Program Executives collaborated with a network of subject matter experts (SMEs) to conduct research and design the Smart Guide. The Smart Guide features 51 FAR-driven activities associated with the acquisition process, grouped into two primary content areas: Contract Formation and Contract Administration. Each activity includes:

- Tasks with FAR References current through the 2015 FAR;
- Flow charts for each activity that visually demonstrates the Tasks;
- Links to relevant FAI and DAU training courses; and
- Many more helpful resources, materials, and information for contracting professionals!



Check out the [Guides & Manuals](#) page under the Resources tab on [FAI.gov](#) to access all of the Guidebooks today!

FEDERAL ACQUISITION CERTIFICATIONS

FAI Publishes NEW Guidebooks for the Acquisition Workforce! (Cont'd)

Project Manager's Guidebook

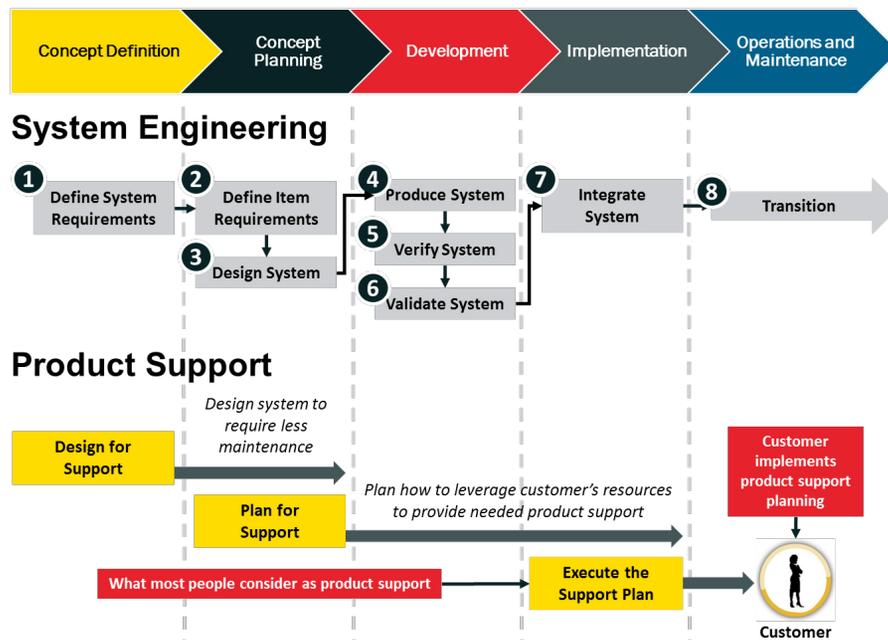
The [Project Manager's \(PM\) Guidebook](#), recently published on November 25, 2015, is the newest of the three FAI Guidebooks. FAI collaborated with SMEs from across the Federal government to develop the Guidebook, which offers best practices, foundational concepts, and useful tools and templates for all Federal program and project managers (P/PMs).

The PM Guidebook serves dual purposes. First, students enrolled in FPM 120, the FAC-P/PM entry-level online course, are encouraged to leverage the Guidebook as a supplemental tool and resource to further explain course content. Secondly, the Guidebook features topics that are based upon requirements development, budget planning and execution, and acquisition governance, focus areas for all Federal civilian P/PMs. Thus, the Guidebook serves as a desk-side reference, practical resource, and job aid for new and seasoned P/PMs alike.

Visit FAI.gov to access all that the Project Manager's Guidebook has to offer—best practices, resources, tools, techniques, and much more!

Acquisition Career Manager Guidebook

FAI developed the [Acquisition Career Manager \(ACM\) Guidebook](#) as a targeted resource for current and future ACMs, but the Guidebook can also be used as a great reference in helping everyone in the acquisition community understand the essential role the ACM plays in carrying out their responsibilities as identified in [Office of Federal Procurement Policy \(OFPP\) Policy Letter 05-01](#) and subsequent policies. The ACM Guidebook is organized around key responsibility areas and provides suggested steps, resources, tools, source documents, links, and other information that are relevant to each.



Project Manager's Guidebook: Product Support Across the Life-Cycle

Tell Us What You Think of Our New Guidebooks!

Check out all three Guidebooks on FAI.gov, and then tell us what you think about each one!

Visit the [FAI Guides Feedback Form](#) and, for each Guidebook, tell us what you find most and least helpful, and also share recommendations for how the Guidebook can be improved.

Check out the [Guides & Manuals](#) page under the Resources tab on FAI.gov to access all of the Guidebooks today!

FEDERAL ACQUISITION CERTIFICATIONS

Arriving Full Circle with the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA)

The Federal sector has experienced increasing and significant emphasis on effective management of information technology (IT) assets since the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published the [25 Point Implementation Plan to Reform Federal Information Technology Management](#), or the 25 Point Plan, on December 9, 2010. Following release of the 25 Point Plan, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) implemented several supporting policy, competency, and career path documents, including the FAC-P/PM-IT core-plus specialty certification highlighted in [FAI's Spring 2015 Newsletter](#). These intermediate steps have now culminated in the passing of the most significant Federal IT reform in two decades, the [Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act \(FITARA\)](#), part of the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act.

Agency Acquisition Career Managers (ACMs) and their represented workforce members need to understand the significance of FITARA, the impact it has on the acquisition workforce, as well as how to implement it. To help, this article provides historical background about the development of FITARA as well as suggestions for implementing it at your agency.

History of FITARA

The 25 Point Plan launched many IT initiatives with ACM-focused tasks, including an emphasis on developing the IT workforce (e.g., design a formal IT PM career path, develop IT acquisition professional cadres, and establish human capital strategies to attract and manage IT professionals). Follow-on guidance from OPM and OFPP put these initiatives into preliminary motion, but each piece of guidance was independent of the others. This brought

about the need for FITARA, an act that reconciled the independent nature of previous legislation embodied in the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996 into an all-inclusive package.

FITARA has refined and elevated the role and responsibilities of agency Chief Information Officers (CIOs). In a May 2015 *Federal Times* article written by Mr. Vance Hitch, former CIO of the Department of Justice, Hitch explains, "Unlike the Clinger-Cohen Act, FITARA provides specific metrics and designated owners for the development of processes, and enforcement of those processes to confirm that implementation and management of FITARA are achievable."

Implementing FITARA

For ACMs, their agency CIO has now become a prolific stakeholder, given ownership responsibilities of FITARA implementation and management that Mr. Hitch describes in his article. So how do ACMs work with this new CIO stakeholder, and, consequently, what's the impact to the workforce member?

We first recommend that every ACM and IT professional in the workforce thoroughly review OMB's June 10, 2015, FITARA implementation guidance, [Management and Oversight of Federal Information Technology](#), particularly the "Common Baseline for IT Management and CIO Assignment Plan" matrix found in Attachment A. The second and third columns of the matrix show the organizational interface points relevant to the CIO carrying out the FITARA mandates. The table on the following page highlights a few points of interest to the ACM and IT professionals from this matrix.

Continue to check [FAI.gov](#) for tools, resources, and materials to help in the implementation of FITARA at your agency.

FEDERAL ACQUISITION CERTIFICATIONS

Arriving Full Circle with FITARA (Cont'd)

Matrix Reference	Description of Roles and Responsibilities
C1.	The CO shall be included in planning processes for how the agency uses IT resources to achieve its objectives...including all points in the IT life-cycle, operations, migration and disposition.
E2.	Program Managers shall work with the CIO to define IT performance metrics and strategies to fulfill agency strategic objectives.
I2.	IT acquisitions are led by personnel with appropriate federal acquisition certifications, including specialized IT certifications as appropriate.
K2.	Agency CAO is responsible for ensuring contract actions that contain IT are consistent with CIO-approved acquisition strategies and plans.
P2.	CIO/CHCO/CAO shall develop a set of competency requirements for IT staff, including IT leadership positions, and develop and maintain a current workforce planning process.

Areas of interest for ACMs and IT professionals from OMB's June 10 memorandum, [Management and Oversight of Federal Information Technology](#) (Attachment A: "Common Baseline for IT Management and CIO Assignment Plan")

Next, we suggest that ACMs develop a career path roadmap, similar to the [Project and Program Management Roadmap crafted by the Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\)](#). This enterprise-wide "pyramid" addresses how DHS manages P/PM certifications and how certifications fit into the overarching human capital strategy at DHS. Further, the DHS career path can be customized to include the ACM's new engagement obligations with the CIO office in managing IT PM certifications and assignments. It can also be modified to capture how the agency manages and assigns contracting professionals, especially those administering IT procurements.

In summary, ACMs implementing their respective programs for certifying and managing their IT Program and Project Managers with the FAC-P/PM-IT specialty certification are well on their way to alignment with OMB's memo. Likewise, initiatives are underway at OFPP to enhance the training of contracting professionals working on IT procurements. To continue the momentum forward, it is imperative that:

- ACMs communicate and collaborate with their agency CIO offices to develop a rapport in the early stages of FITARA implementation and OMB's corresponding guidance;
- P/PMs who manage IT projects work toward achieving the FAC-P/PM-IT specialty certification if they haven't already done so; and
- Contracting Officers and P/PMs on IT acquisitions ensure that those acquisitions align with CIO-approved acquisition strategies and plans and that modular contracting strategies are used where appropriate.

The bottom line is that with FITARA, the CIO office now has more involvement in the acquisition arena than in the past. As an acquisition workforce member, this can be a positive experience, provided you stay current on the most recent legislation, guidance, and resources to assist you in implementing FITARA.

Continue to check FAI.gov for tools, resources, and materials to help in the implementation of FITARA at your agency.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Training Opportunities at VA Acquisition Academy (VAAA)

Federal Construction and Facilities Managers Training

Did you know there is a law requiring Federal facilities management (FM) personnel to have the competencies necessary to manage Federal buildings? The VA Acquisition Academy's (VAAA) Facilities Management School (FMS) can help you meet the requirements of [Public Law 111-308 – The Federal Building Personnel Training Act of 2010 \(FBPTA\)](#) through its professional development, training, certification, and continuous learning opportunities.

Having the skills to effectively manage and operate Federal facilities is imperative, given the size of the Federal real property portfolio. VA operates over 1,000 health care, cemetery, and benefits facilities across the nation, and, according to an [April 21, 2014 General Service Administration \(GSA\) News Release](#), the GSA provides workspace for more than a million Federal workers who work in both Federally-owned and leased space, which makes up more than 9,000 properties of 377.9 million square feet of workspace.

"The VAAA FMS offers an array of relevant competency-based training delivered in multiple modalities," said FMS Vice-Chancellor Paul Krasley. "We pride ourselves on delivering innovative learning solutions that ensure the facilities management and construction workforce has the proficiency and skill necessary to effectively construct, manage, and operate facilities. Our offerings help ensure FBPTA compliance, while developing the careers of the FM and construction workforce."

FMS training is open to students from other government agencies and offers access to training, professional certifications, and educational resources in the areas of building operation and management, project programming, construction management, safety and occupational health, fire safety, electrical power generation, water and energy management, and sustainability, among others.

The FMS continually refines its offering in response to both Federal regulation and industry leading practices. In alignment with the March 19, 2015, Execu-

tive Order, [Planning for Federal Sustainability in the Next Generation](#), FMS can provide access to course offerings in a number of relevant areas: Green Construction and Building Envelope Design, Solar Energy, Thermal Power and Renewable Energy, and Building Energy Efficiencies and the Energy Independence and Security Act. In addition to the resident courses offered in Frederick, Md., FMS also offers over 1,400 online courses to help the workforce meet certification requirements and improve their skills in their chosen field, and it provides training for certification in:

- Sustainability Facility Professional (SFP)
- Facility Management Professional (FMP)
- Certified Facility Manager (CFM)
- Certified Biomedical Equipment Technician (CBET)
- MEDGAS ASSE 600 Series

To learn more about FMS training opportunities at the VA Acquisition Academy, visit www.acquisitionacademy.va.gov/schools/fm, email at vaaafms@va.gov, or call Dr. Paul Krasley at 240-215-0711. To receive updates on training and upcoming courses, click [here](#) to subscribe for updates.



TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Training Opportunities at VAAA (Cont'd)

Big "A" Training

Recognizing that it takes an entire team to make the acquisition system work better, the VA Acquisition Academy (VAAA) recently expanded its curriculum offerings through its Performance Excellence (PE) program to provide opportunities for contracting, program, legal, finance, industry, and others to learn together and tackle some of agencies' most critical mission challenges. PE also provides organizational improvement interventions that support acquisition-related culture change initiatives and strategies for how organizations can leverage data for better and more informed decision making. One of the newest PE offerings is the "Using Market Intelligence for Acquisition Decision Making" course, which recently received the American Council for Technology and Industry Advisory Council (ACT-IAC) Excellence in Government-Industry Engagement Award.

The Market Intelligence course is a collaborative, multidisciplinary approach to training that combines contracting, program management, and other perspectives with the entire acquisition team and industry. It is designed to improve



industry and government communications, establish partnerships with industry, and gain an understanding of market forces, trends, and direction for a specific market segment.

"Market Intelligence is a best practice used in the private sector," said VAAA Program Management School Vice-Chancellor Paul Gregory. "Companies are constantly trying to understand their market and the goods and services delivered in that market, as well as what goods and services are required by their customers and how to better serve their needs. Government can learn from and partner with the private sector to better understand their own strategic direction and requirements and determine best practices and innovative solutions," he said.

Newly appointed FAI Director Melissa Starinsky commented that, "market intelligence can significantly shorten the requirements definition phase of the entire acquisition lifecycle, and when paired with true performance based methodologies, it can be a powerful way to deliver better and faster mission outcomes at lower cost and higher quality."

"I am really excited about this opportunity," said VAAA Performance Excellence Director Deborah Gadsden. "Market intelligence will allow us to better partner with industry and provides an opportunity to dispel myths about how we can and should engage with industry partners. It provides an opportunity to improve our acquisition planning and decision making."

The course utilizes anonymous voting buttons that encourage participant feedback in a safe setting. Specifically, participants are encouraged to:

- Recognize how government and industry perspectives impact market intelligence;
- Explore how government and industry engagement enhances market intelligence; and
- Increase government and industry collaboration to support good acquisition decision making.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Training Opportunities at VAAA (Cont'd)

The goal is to shift the paradigm of government/industry acquisition engagement from isolated procurement of products and services to a deeper focus on customer needs and an understanding of the current and emerging capabilities in the marketplace that can deliver on those needs. This new way of thinking has the potential to create impacts well beyond the particular portfolio of any one participant.

Additional PE offerings include courses in Critical Thinking and Lean Six Sigma. The Critical Thinking course is an interactive, outcome-focused facilitated course that blends individual development with rational and creative critical thinking processes to create a comprehensive approach to problem solving, decision making, and planning. The Academy offers two critical thinking courses: Critical Thinking for the Acquisition Individual (FPM 253) and Critical Thinking for Acquisition Leaders (FPM 254).

The Lean Six Sigma course focuses on Lean Six Sigma methodology and tools. It supports the Define-Measure-Analyze-Improve-Control (DMAIC) roadmap for achieving more efficient and effective processes and services. Learning is reinforced through dynamic exercises and methods taught to expand the problem-solving ability of the participants to support larger projects in the organization. The Academy offers two Lean Six Sigma courses: Lean Six Sigma Greenbelt (FPM 170) and Lean Six Sigma Blackbelt (FPM 270).

The VA Acquisition Academy also offers training for Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C), Program/Project Management (FAC-P/PM), and Contracting Officer's Representatives (FAC-COR), as well as training for facilities managers, supply chain managers, and logisticians. For more information, visit www.acquisitionacademy.va.gov.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Acquisition and Logistics
VA Acquisition Academy

FAI's Acquisition Seminars Continue to Thrive!

Looking for exciting training opportunities where you can earn Continuous Learning Points (CLPs) without having to leave the office? Unable to attend a training offering due to limited travel budgets at your agency? Sick of taking "any old training" just to earn CLPs? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then the Acquisition Seminar series may be the answer for you! FAI's Acquisition Seminars are free, easy-to-access live webcast training opportunities, sponsored by FAI, and available to the Federal acquisition workforce at large. Workforce members earn CLPs by registering in [FAITAS](#) and then viewing each live webcast.

Since the spring of 2015, FAI has broadcast five Acquisition Seminars, attended by thousands of viewers worldwide. The seminar topics include:

April 22, 2015: "Agile Acquisitions 101: The Means Behind the Magic" – This seminar explained the importance of implementing Agile procurement methods and strategies and featured examples of where Agile acquisition has been implemented in the Federal government, lessons learned, and success stories.



TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

FAI's Acquisition Seminars Continue to Thrive! (Cont'd)

What to expect when you contract with AbilityOne

- Fewer steps, but can be a longer process
- Involves procedures with which you may be unfamiliar – but help is available
- Resistance from Stakeholders
 - Lack of familiarity
 - Need to get things done
 - Questions about suitability



June 17, 2015: “[AbilityOne: Another Tool in Your Procurement Toolbox](#)” – During this seminar, viewers had the opportunity to hear from representatives of all of the AbilityOne Program partners. The AbilityOne presenters demonstrated how to contract with AbilityOne and the breadth of products and services available and shared the many benefits of contracting with the program.

November 5, 2015: “[Meet the Administrator – Anne E. Rung](#)” – This very special event featured Anne E. Rung, Administrator of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP), in a Meet the Administrator webcast, where Ms. Rung responded to questions submitted directly by members of the acquisition workforce. Ms. Rung was interviewed by Joanie Newhart, Associate Administrator for Acquisition Workforce Programs, OFPP, where she addressed questions about acquisition workforce training and development, small business goals, reverse auctions, efforts to simplify Federal procurement, and the impact of the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA) on the acquisition workforce.



Anne E. Rung
Administrator
Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP)

**“Meet the Administrator”
Acquisition Seminar**
Anne E. Rung, Administrator,
Office of Federal Procurement Policy

July 22, 2015: “[Lifting the Curtain – Debriefings](#)” – In this Acquisition Seminar, FAI facilitated a mock debriefing engagement between real industry and government procurement professionals. This provided viewers with a first-hand look at the Federal contracting process from both sides of the table. You can read more about the Debriefings Acquisition Seminar on page 13.



“Lifting the Curtain – Debriefings” Acquisition Seminar



In case you missed these or any of the previously recorded Acquisition Seminars, you can check them all out, including all related materials and resources, in the [FAI Media Library](#).

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

FAI's Acquisition Seminars Continue to Thrive! (Cont'd)

December 9, 2015: "[GSA Multiple Awards Schedule Program: A Complete Solution!](#)" – Our most recent broadcast focused on GSA's widely used \$33-billion a year program, the Multiple Award Schedules (MAS) Program. During this seminar, viewers had the opportunity to hear how the GSA MAS Program can benefit all of your acquisition needs, including Small Business set-asides, online shopping using GSA e-Tools, Contractor Teaming Arrangements (CTA), and obtaining the best possible price. The seminar also highlighted the GSA Common Acquisition Platform (CAP) and the Acquisition Gateway.



"GSA Multiple Awards Schedule Program: A Complete Solution!" Acquisition Seminar
John Andre (left), Federal Acquisition Institute
Peter Bastone (right), Federal Acquisition Services, General Services Administration

If you haven't had a chance to catch one of our Acquisition Seminars broadcasts, there are plenty more opportunities for you to tune in. FAI has a full line up on the agenda for 2016, including another great Acquisition Seminar under the "Lifting the Curtain" series – "Can We Talk: Industry Day Conferences." In this seminar we will feature SMEs from government and industry that present on a variety of topics to improve industry collaboration and to forge better partnerships during engagements. "Can We Talk: Industry Day Conferences" will broadcast live on **Wednesday, January 20, 2016, at 1:00pm EST** and will look at how to prepare for and conduct successful Industry Day Conferences. If you haven't registered for this great, free webcast in [FAITAS](#) yet, don't delay! You will receive two continuous learning points (CLPs) for viewing, but advanced registration is required to earn CLPs!

Additionally, be on the lookout for more information about the February 17, 2016, seminar where we explore techniques to trim time off acquisitions as well as the April 13, 2016, webcast that takes a deeper look at suspension and debarment.



In case you missed these, or any of the previously recorded Acquisition Seminars, you can check them all out, including all related materials and resources, in the [FAI Media Library](#).

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Takeaways from the “Debriefings” Acquisition Seminar

Having the right mindset is a critical first step in preparing for a debriefing and avoiding some of the common pitfalls. In addition to a number of key takeaways, the July 22nd FAI Acquisition Seminar, “[Lifting the Curtain – Debriefings](#),” stressed the importance of cultivating the right mindset towards preparing for and conducting a debriefing engagement.

One key takeaway from the seminar is to recognize that a request for a debriefing is not a time to panic or reason to raise defenses. This can be an easy trap to fall into given the common misbelief that unsuccessful offerors look to recoup proposal costs via protest. However, industry demonstrated in the July Acquisition Seminar that they are really looking for guidance and direction on how to improve future proposals. Essentially, industry understands the greater importance of fostering and developing relationships in order to build business, as opposed to protesting. Therefore, it is important to recognize and remember there is mutual interest and benefit to both parties during debriefings.

A second key takeaway is to understand that actions of the offeror are outside of your control but not outside of your influence. Your mindset should be focused on how your debriefing team can assert your influence to ensure a positive outcome for both the government and the vendor. Being successful requires not just a focus on preparation but also having a good understanding of the unsuccessful offeror’s motivation for requesting a debriefing, and a good way to understand their motivation is to ask open-ended questions (e.g., “What areas do you feel would be helpful to discuss?”).

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that mistakes and misunderstandings happen. Being self-aware and recognizing these things will occur prior to, during, and after a debriefing can help put the team in the right frame of mind and help you avoid the tendency to dwell on mistakes or even turn the debriefing into a debate or dictation of the government’s position. Debating or dictating through a debriefing does not foster or support the government-vendor relationship. Instead, the intent should be to come to a respectful and mutual understanding of each party’s position—“relate not debate.”

Lastly, it is important to see a debriefing as an opportunity to learn and exchange ideas. It should not be viewed as an inconvenience to be avoided or rushed, as this “government-versus-vendor” mentality blocks a very important factor of a successful debriefing: listening. Essentially, if we are combative and defensive, there is little room to develop, build, and foster a relationship to learn and exchange ideas.

Overall, the key theme discussed in the July Acquisition Seminar was to recognize that cultivating a mindset towards having a positive view of debriefings will result in being better prepared, and you may just find yourself looking forward to receiving requests for debriefings!



We'd like to thank Thomas O'Linn, Procurement Analyst from the Office of the Procurement Executive at Department of the Treasury, for submitting this article. Check out the "[Lifting the Curtain – Debriefings](#)" Acquisition Seminar in the FAI Media Library today!

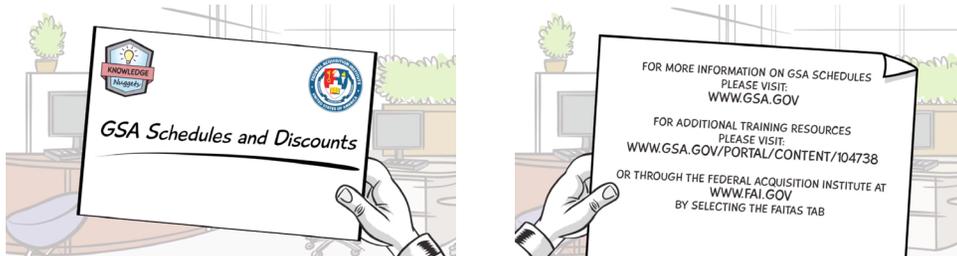
TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Three New Knowledge Nugget Videos Are Now Available!

FAI is pleased to announce that three new Knowledge Nugget videos are now available in the [FAI Media Library](#):

- [“The Many Facets of the Contracting Professional”](#) – Brief overview of the various roles and responsibilities of a Contracting Professional.
- [“The 5 Ws of an ACM \(Who, What, Why, When, Where\)”](#) – Quick glimpse of the various roles and responsibilities of an Acquisition Career Manager (ACM).
- [“GSA Schedules and Discounts”](#) – Learn about the Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) program, how schedule prices are determined, IDIQ contracts, and tips around how to request a discount from vendors.

As a reminder, Knowledge Nuggets are quick bursts of “just-in-time information,” presented in an entertaining format, as a way to introduce new concepts or hot topics, answer fundamental questions, or serve as a refresher on acquisition-related topics. The Nugget videos are less than ten minutes in length and each one provides links to additional training resources so that viewers can obtain more information on the subject matter.



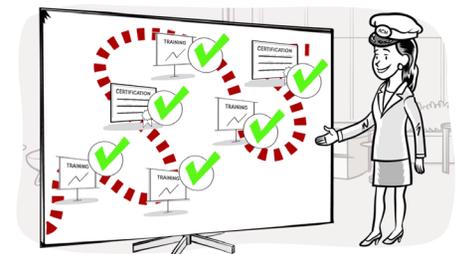
“GSA Schedules and Discounts” Knowledge Nugget

Knowledge Nugget Topics
• What is a Program Manager (PM)? – COMPLETE
• The Many Facets of a Contracting Professional – COMPLETE
• The 5 W’s of an ACM (Who, What, Why, When, Where) – COMPLETE
• GSA Schedules and Discounts – COMPLETE
• FAITAS in 3 Minutes
• What is a Contracting Officer’s Representative (COR)?
• Category Management Overview
• Certified Cost & Price Data for Commercial Items
• Ten Tangible Techniques to Trim Time
• Big “A” – The 3 Legs of Acquisition



“The 5 Ws of an ACM” Knowledge Nugget

“The Many Facets of the Contracting Professional” Knowledge Nugget



Be sure to check out all of the Knowledge Nuggets in the [FAI Media Library](#), and keep an eye out for new releases!

HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

Strengthening the Acquisition Talent Management Lifecycle

Acquisition Human Capital Plans

Federal leaders often declare the workforce as their number one priority, and that statement isn't just motivational rhetoric. For many agencies, the largest budget item is personnel, making "The Workforce" government's most valuable asset. It also makes "The Workforce" government's greatest liability if we don't successfully identify, develop, prepare, and support workforce members.

Under the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRA Modernization Act), agencies must report on their priority goals for improving the performance and management of various entities, which may include goals related to the procurement and acquisition workforce. The annual Acquisition Human Capital Plan (AHCP) is a means to meet GPRA's mandate while helping to strengthen the agency's acquisition workforce to improve acquisition outcomes. Through the AHCP, OFPP and FAI requests information about the progress that each agency has made in the previous year in managing the acquisition-related programs and initiatives. This information collected is used to help promote cross-agency collaboration and identify areas where systematic, government-wide support for programs and initiatives can be provided. This article focuses on agencies' successful strategies for developing and implementing human capital management strategies, including a section focused on preparing the workforce for more effective IT acquisition decisions.



Human Capital Success Stories

The 2015 AHCP submissions illustrate that agencies are making great strides in helping to strengthen the acquisition workforce. The following is a sample of some of the innovative practices that agencies are engaged in:

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Staffing Model – DHS developed a procurement staffing model to improve workforce planning. The model is populated with data detailing actions for each type of procurement from the Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS). It assists in calculating the total number of operational hours required by each component in executing its projected procurement requirements over the coming year. This number can then be translated into the quantity of procurement personnel required at that component.

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Strategic Leaders Program – HHS has implemented an Acquisition Strategic Leaders Program (ASLP) to prepare leaders for higher and broader roles and responsibilities, maximize leadership potential by addressing inherent challenges, and strengthening leadership styles. The program develops mid- and senior-level leaders by supporting a climate of continuous learning and improvement, promoting challenging work, and providing opportunities for innovation and creativity across organizational boundaries. The ASLP's goal is to build commitment, provide tactics to balance short- and long-term strategic goals, and educate leaders how to better translate strategy into effective action. Additionally, scheduled workshops are used to guide leader development, strengthen organizational relationships, and fuel sustained success in the government's changing environment.

General Services Administration (GSA) Cross-Training – GSA has developed a program to enable GS-1102 acquisition professionals to cross-train within various business lines and agency organizational units. The purpose is to develop a highly diversified GS-1102 position that can effectively award Multiple Award Schedule contracts, understand the competitive delivery and task order process, and develop key attributes to successful contract management in a post-award phase.

HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

Strengthening the Acquisition Talent Management Lifecycle (Cont'd)

Strategies for Building an IT Acquisition Cadre

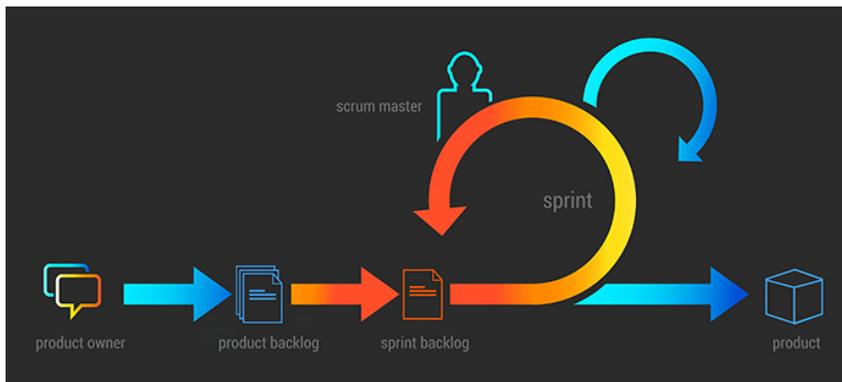
The Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA), included as part of the FY2015 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), is designed to improve how the Federal government acquires, implements, and manages IT investments. It includes a number of provisions that are relevant to the acquisition workforce. FITARA expands training and use of IT cadres by developing, strengthening, and deploying IT acquisition cadres with highly specialized skills, including program and project managers. Section 835 of FITARA requires agencies to address how they are “meeting their human capital requirements to support the timely and effective acquisition of information technology.”

The FY2015 AHCP IT Supplement included a number of questions for agencies to assess their progress towards the human capital areas identified in FITARA. The questions covered ten different human capital areas. Agency responses to the IT Supplement revealed that they are making the most progress towards providing soft-skill training to contract specialists (91% indicated that they have initiatives in place for this area), developing personnel assigned to IT positions (87%), and strengthening IT program

management (87%). The results also highlight potential areas where agencies as a whole need further improvements. Only 35% of agencies answered that they have implemented pilot programs of innovative approaches to human capital programs, such as job rotational initiatives, or direct hire authority for personnel in IT positions. Only 48% stated that they have onboarding programs in place that are specific to contract specialists.

The IT Supplement also provides an opportunity to facilitate knowledge sharing and greater collaboration across agencies by asking them to provide information about their programs across the different human capital areas. Highlights from the questionnaire include the following innovative practices:

- **Governmental Rotational Programs** – The Department of Labor (DOL), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and HHS utilize intra- or inter-agency rotational programs to better develop their acquisition professionals' IT acquisition knowledge and expertise.
- **Industry Rotational Programs** – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) uses partnerships with the private sector to broaden the existing operational and technical skill sets of mid-level contracting professionals.
- **CIO Office Detail** – The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) details a member of its IT staff to work in the CIO's office, which provides significant insight into the office's processes and procedures and has led to recommendations for several new tools for the COR workforce.
- **Agile Training** – DHS is working to build an Agile capability through classroom training and a series of study groups that meet regularly. Training and study group meetings provide participants with an opportunity to review and discuss approaches and best practices for applying Agile methodologies to their respective programs or projects. Participants will be recognized by the Department once they have gained sufficient experience to advise others in Agile concepts and approaches.



TOOLS & TECHNOLOGY

Check Out What's New in the GSA Acquisition Gateway

The [General Services Administration's \(GSA\) Acquisition Gateway](#) helps all Federal-wide government buyers act as one acquisition community. The Acquisition Gateway is a workspace that provides accurate, useful, and unbiased advice. It helps Federal acquisition professionals learn what they need to know, connect with others to collaborate and communicate, and accomplish their tasks effectively. Inside the Acquisition Gateway, you can find government-wide (not just GSA!) solution comparisons and explore product and service category hallways. The hallways feature expert articles, templates, market research tools, prices paid data, and more to achieve successful outcomes at each step of the acquisition lifecycle.

GSA is building the Acquisition Gateway with an Agile approach that incorporates user-centered design and iterative development. This gives the flexibility needed to quickly adapt the Acquisition Gateway to be the most useful tool for the acquisition workforce.

If you are not already an Acquisition Gateway user, we invite you watch this [two-minute video tutorial](#) that demonstrates the step-by-step process for registering!



Note: In order to sign in, you first need to assign your personal identity verification (PIV or CAC) card with a MAX User ID. We are working on alternative authentication procedures for agencies that do not use PIV or CAC cards.

Once registered, we encourage you to:

- Log in and explore the Gateway -- and check back often
- Connect and contribute best practices and templates
- Help us build by participating in usability testing by contacting Kelly Robinson at kelly.robinson@gsa.gov

The Acquisition Gateway team is also giving quarterly demos and trainings—the next demo is scheduled for January 2016. If you are interested, keep an eye out on the [GSA Events](#) or [GSA Interact](#) websites to sign up!

Visit the [Acquisition Gateway](#) and start exploring today!

Using FAI's Help Desk - ServiceNow



Did you know that FAI's Help Desk received 3,516 inquiries in the month of May? Of those inquiries, 881 were made using FAI's Help Desk Service Management system: [FAI ServiceNow](#). The three most common question areas included:

- Requests related to Accounts & Passwords;
- Course/Training Registration; and
- Certification.

When submitting a ticket, remember to check out our [FAQ Library](#) first as you may be able to find the answer to your question without even needing to submit a ticket.

How to Submit an FAI ServiceNow Ticket

1. Click the **Help Desk** link at the top of the **FAI.gov** homepage
2. Enter your email address in the space provided under **Requestor Information**
3. From the provided drop-down lists, select the relevant **Category, Subcategory, and Item**, and enter a **Description**
4. Based on your selections, **FAI ServiceNow** may display a **Related FAQ** that addresses your question
5. Enter the **CAPTCHA** text and click the **Submit Request**

ACM IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Getting to Know Bea Dukes, Acquisition Career Manager, General Services Administration (GSA)



Bea Dukes, ACM,
GSA

1. How long have you worked at the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA)?

In FY2012, I became GSA's Acquisition Workforce Division and Acquisition Career Manager (ACM).

2. Where were you before coming to GSA?

I have more than 25 years of public sector, private sector, and academic experience in several acquisition leadership roles as well as organizational management, human capital management, and training and development. I've held various leadership positions including, but not limited to, the following: ACM at the Department of Energy, Director of the Defense Contract Management Command in St. Louis, Director of the Defense

Logistics Agency Land-based Combat Vehicles Procurement Division, Deputy PM for Acquisition – Army Wholesale Logistics Modernization Program, Contracting Officer – Unlimited Warrant, U.S. Army AG Branch Assignments Officer, as well as adjunct professor.

3. Tell us about one of the biggest successes achieved by your team.

Within GSA, we have reached many acquisition career management milestones. Perhaps the most significant was updating GSA's acquisition career management policies in conjunction with the massive FAITAS deployment efforts that resulted in encouraging 8,000+ personnel to register and the subsequent migration of over 5,000 FAC-C, FAC-COR, and FAC-P/PM certifications into the FAITAS Certification Module to help GSA manage its acquisition workforce data.

4. What is the biggest challenge in your position?

Although challenging in nature, it is a pleasure to lead efforts to (1) build a strong foundation for GSA's Contracting Officer Warrant Program as well as the acquisition career management programs within GSA, (2) help shape professional development programs and initiatives for the GSA acquisition workforce, and (3) increase efficiencies and improve acquisition management capabilities and training through implementation of FAITAS.

5. What motivates you to put your best foot forward on a daily basis?

I am enthusiastic and highly motivated to deliver acquisition career management consultative services to our senior leadership, stakeholders, and clients to help build a stronger acquisition workforce that effectively engages industry, fosters healthy and productive relationships, and supports smart and effective buying government-wide.

6. What skills do you think are most critical to successfully perform your job?

Today's ACM needs to be a visionary, leader, consultant, facilitator, and a relative subject matter expert in acquisition, human capital, and data analytics. While ACMs may not possess expertise in all of the aforementioned areas, it is important that the ACM has a collaborative partnership with those professionals within the agency so as to have access to the applicable competencies, knowledge, skills, and abilities required to facilitate mission accomplishment. Depending on the positioning of the ACM position within the agency, the ACM has an integral role from the strategic to the operational and from operational to the tactical acquisition workforce environment.



ACM IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Getting to Know Bea Dukes, ACM, GSA (Cont'd)

7. What could the FAI Team do to move the Federal acquisition workforce forward?

The FAI team delivers phenomenal support to the ACMs. I would ask that FAI continue the current role, collaboratively leading the Functional Advisory Boards, providing acquisition program executive support, and providing forums that facilitate knowledge sharing for ACMs across the Federal government.

8. What words of wisdom would you offer to your fellow Acquisition Career Managers?

I would advise fellow ACMs to be early adapters of new technology, highly competent acquisition professionals, facilitators of policy change, and to innovatively approach the new normal within the acquisition career management environment. The ACM role can be quite demanding, so the key to success is to remain adaptable, innovative, and creative while maintaining a balance in your professional and personal life. On a daily basis, my family helps to keep me balanced!

9. What goals do you have for your acquisition workforce?

The goals that I have for the acquisition workforce are to:

- (1) Facilitate the development and deployment of an agency-wide Acquisition Workforce Professional Development Program;
- (2) Update remaining workforce policies with implementation and impact to workforce in mind;

- (3) Further refine our communications efforts for the acquisition workforce;
- (4) Provide enhanced data visualization tools;
- (5) Deliver innovative and interactive training solutions;
- (6) Deploy enhanced competency validation tools; and
- (7) Facilitate knowledge management, knowledge sharing, and succession planning initiatives, while providing easy, one-stop access to policy changes, best practices, resources, and tools for the acquisition workforce.

10. What is something about yourself that others might not know?

Some may not know that I enjoy empowering and helping to create pathways for others to achieve their goals. This inner drive started when I was a young soldier (private) and continued through my field grade years while in the U.S. Army. After I retired from the military (Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army), I enjoyed my refreshing stint as an adjunct professor, helping to facilitate learning in the undergraduate and graduate classrooms. In the private sector, I was able to learn industry practices while sharing government practices to help our industry partners better understand the acquisition environment. As a community volunteer, I enjoy serving in various capacities to share knowledge, lessons learned, and to help America's youth leaders to realize their goals and dreams!



Want your agency's Acquisition Career Manager to be the star of an upcoming edition of ACM in the Spotlight? E-mail your nomination to contact@fai.gov.

WORKFORCE RESOURCES

Student Support

If you have training and development questions, always begin with your agency Acquisition Career Manager (ACM)

[List of ACMs](#)

[FAI.gov](#)

[FAI Help Desk](#)

[DAU.mil](#)

