



Federal Acquisition *INSIGHT*

January 2008



From the Desk of the Director: Karen Pica

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The acquisition workforce received a great deal of attention this year. The FAI team is proud to have been a part of the efforts designed to help you as an acquisition professional and to help implement and manage efforts that will maintain the quality of acquisitions in support of your agency missions. Under the leadership of OFPP, the Chief Acquisition Officer's Council, and the Agency Acquisition Career Managers, FAI supported efforts to identify and increase the skills of contracting professionals, institute robust certification programs for acquisition professionals in the program/project management and contracting officer representative fields, and help identify the proficiencies of the acquisition workforce so FAI can provide resources and learning as needed.

In 2007, FAI developed and expanded partnerships with key organizations such as the Office of Personnel Management, the National Contract Management Association, and educational institutions to identify resources and avenues for maintaining the professional development of the acquisition workforce. In 2008, FAI will continue developing these partnerships and seek others in order to provide the resources for your continued development and advancement.

We look forward to working closely with you and your Acquisition Career Managers in 2008 to support key initiatives for the acquisition workforce.

Around the Acquisition Workforce

**Certification Program for Contracting Officer Technical Representatives (COTRs)
Announced by OFPP
By Linda Ott**

Mr. Paul Denett, Administrator of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy, announced the Federal Acquisition Certification Program for Contracting Officer Technical Representatives (FAC-COTR), in a memo dated November 26, 2007.

This new certification program recognizes COTRs as critical members of the acquisition workforce. COTRs provide the key subject matter expertise necessary for meeting agency needs through vendor arrangements.

COTRs are relied upon for both technical (subject matter) expertise and quality delivery of contract performance.

The FAC-COTR program establishes a structured training curriculum for COTRs and standardizes the competencies required to perform the COTR role across civilian agencies. The program also reinforces the importance of a strong relationship between the Contracting Officer and the COTR, as only a portion of the required training is standard, with the remainder dependent on the type of vendor arrangement in place, any agency specific needs, and the skills and knowledge of the individual nominated by the program office.

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Around the Acquisition Workforce

The FAC-COTR program went into effect on November 26, 2007.

Anyone appointed as a COTR in a civilian agency on or after this date must be certified within six months from their date of appointment. They must then maintain their skills currency through the completion of 40 hours of continuous learning every two years in order to maintain their certification.

Those who are currently serving in a COTR role, which means they hold a delegation letter on an active contract, must obtain certification within twelve months of the effective date of this policy (i.e., by November 25, 2008). Those individuals must also maintain their skills currency through the completion of 40 hours of continuous learning every two years in order to maintain their certification.

To obtain certification, COTRs must complete a minimum of 40 hours of training. Twenty-two of these 40 hours must cover the essential COTR competencies. To view the COTR competencies, please visit: <http://www.FAI.gov/pdfs/11-26-COTR-Memo.pdf>.

A suggested training curriculum to achieve proficiency in the COTR competencies includes these courses:

- CLC106 – COR with a Mission Focus
- CLM024 – Contracting Overview
- CLC004 – Market Research
- CLC007 – Contract Source Selection
- CLM003 – Ethics Training for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics



If you have completed FAI's 24-hour "COR Mentor" course (no longer active), you are considered to have satisfied the 22-hour essential competencies training requirement. The remaining 18 hours of training are agency-specific courses or electives. These courses should be identified in consultation with your supervisor or nominating official and the Contracting Officer who will be appointing you as the COTR.

Individuals who are certified at the Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) Level I, or at the Federal Acquisition Certification for Program and Project Managers (FAC-P/PM) Mid-/Journeyman Level, are considered to have met the FAC-COTR certification requirements. These individuals must still submit the necessary documents to their Agency Acquisition Career Manager in order to obtain their certification.

Further information on the FAC-COTR program can be obtained by reviewing the official memo at <http://www.FAI.gov/pdfs/11-26-COTR-Memo.pdf>. If you have questions or are seeking certification, please consult your agency acquisition career manager (a list can be found at <http://www.FAI.gov/acm/who.asp>).

Around the Acquisition Workforce

The Career Development Benefits of Becoming a Subject Matter Expert (SME)

By Otis Langford

What is an SME?

SME is an acronym for Subject Matter Expert, or an individual possessing a high level of expertise in a specialized job or task within an organization. An SME may come from any career field, and be expert in any specific area. SMEs in the acquisition field, for example, have a wide variety of areas in which they can specialize—ranging from small business contracting to sole source awards to building successful requirements documents.

SMEs are often utilized to formulate or advise in the development of training documents and standard operating procedures, briefings, presentations, and project plans. FAI regularly uses SMEs to review, validate and provide feedback on our training processes and programs. Contributions from SMEs help ensure that training and certification programs remain current, relevant, informative, and interesting.

How the SME Process Works

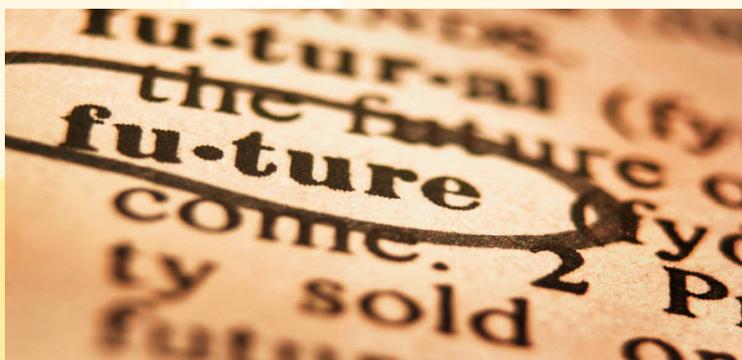
Typically, a “call for SMEs” is issued by the project sponsor. This can be done via a formal letter or memorandum, but is most frequently done through an e-mail invitation. The invitation states the project's objective, duration and targeted meeting schedule. SMEs are expected to attend most of the scheduled meetings and accept assignments to brainstorm ideas, review content, provide feedback and ask provocative questions. Serving on an SME committee is much like serving on a think tank. Many professionals find it rewarding to be called upon to use their expertise to help produce a product or service.



Networking Opportunities for SMEs

One of the greatest benefits of becoming an SME is the ability to expand one's professional network. When you serve on an SME committee you frequently interact with individuals that you wouldn't normally work with, including those from other companies. This enables you to learn about best practices in your field that are being accomplished at other organizations. It can also be highly rewarding to work on a committee in which there are people who share your interest, passion and expertise in your given field or subject.

The expanded network available to a SME can be extremely beneficial for career development—not only through opportunities to increase your knowledge and competency base, but also by providing exposure to potential job references. Many professionals are reluctant to use current supervisors and colleagues for references, for fear of jeopardizing existing professional relationships while pursuing uncertain opportunities. In such instances, a fellow SME can serve as a strong, professional reference that can attest to your specialized expertise.



Around the Acquisition Workforce



How to Document Your SME Participation on Your Resume or OF-612 Form

A sample framework for documenting your SME participation follows:

"Voluntarily participated on a Panel of Experts that provided content suggestions, editing and feedback for the development of a Small Business Contracting course. This engagement included attending monthly meetings, reviewing over 200 pages of course content, and working as a team to ensure the objectives of the training program were achieved through the content and format of the course."

Additionally, if you had the opportunity to chair an SME Committee or serve as team leader, this should also be documented in your job application. Don't forget to include contact information for your references as well as your dates of service. If you received a letter of commendation for your participation, this should be documented on your resume/job application and placed in your personnel file.

Finally, if you can identify any specific goals or milestones that were achieved through your efforts on the SME committee, this should also be included on your resume/job application.

Additional Benefits of SME Participation

In addition to the networking and career development benefits of becoming an SME, many individuals find the change in duties to be a refreshing and enriching experience. If you find yourself in a "job rut," serving on an SME committee can reinvigorate your professional energy and motivation. Also, many professional associations and organizations recognize time invested in SME participation toward continuing education credits to maintain certification. This is true of all SMEs that participate on projects sponsored by the Federal Acquisition Institute.

Serving on an SME committee can also allow you to enhance your project team skills in an environment of professionalism. The ability to work on teams is a highly sought after attribute, and individuals who might otherwise not have the opportunity can hone their teamwork skills on an SME committee.

Call for SMEs!

The Federal Acquisition Institute is currently seeking SMEs to participate in the development of a Small Business Contracting training module. Interested persons should contact Otis W. Langford, Jr. at (703) 805-9417 or Otis.Langford@FAI.gov.



Around the Acquisition Workforce

Are You an AbilityOne Program Supporter?

By Stephanie Lesko

The Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled (Committee), the federal agency that oversees the AbilityOne Program [formerly the Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Program], is soliciting nominations for the 2008 E. R. "Dick" Alley Career Achievement Award.

The highest award given by the Committee, this award is intended to recognize current federal employees who have provided **extraordinary, sustained support** for the AbilityOne Program and its mission of **creating employment opportunities for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities**. In 2001, a GSA employee received this honor—Donna Hutchens, Procurement Services Team Leader in the Northwest/Arctic Region of GSA's Public Buildings Service—and the Committee is looking to honor other GSA employees who demonstrate outstanding contributions to the program.

All nominees will be evaluated and rated based on the following criteria:

1. *Shows consistent, dedicated service in the form of specific actions that have advanced the employment of people who are blind or have other severe disabilities through the AbilityOne Program over a substantial number of years.*
2. *Demonstrates a high degree of personal integrity, as well as exceptional knowledge and understanding of the AbilityOne Program.*
3. *Establishes/maintains cooperative relationships with the members of the AbilityOne team (Committee, NIB, NISH, nonprofit agencies, federal customers).*



NOTE: Nomination submissions (including additional recommendations) must be received via electronic mail in an accessible file format (e.g., WordPerfect, Word, or ACCESSIBLE Adobe PDF, etc.). Signed hard-copy originals will be accepted only in conjunction with the appropriate electronic files.

Persons submitting nominations must address each of the evaluation criteria with examples of accomplishments cited whenever possible, including number of years the nominee has worked with the AbilityOne Program and number of blind or severely disabled people who are employed as a result of the nominee's accomplishments.

The deadline is Thursday, January 31, 2008. An Award Selection Committee will review and rate all nominations and reach a decision in March 2008.

You can receive a nomination form from Stephanie Lesko at slesko@abilityone.gov or by visiting www.abilityone.gov. For more information on past award recipients, please visit the Committee's website at www.abilityone.gov.

Around the Acquisition Workforce

ALS Update: Acquisition Learning Seminars

By Otis Langford

On October 25, 2007, the Federal Acquisition Institute hosted an Acquisition Learning Seminar titled "Deal or No Deal – Contract Administration," in the Washington, D.C. area. This event is available for viewing on www.FAI.gov. The seminar's goal was to provide information on:

- Negotiating a solution to a contract administration issue.
- Resolving questions relating to contracts.
- Using effective interpersonal skills to maintain positive working relationships among contract stakeholders.

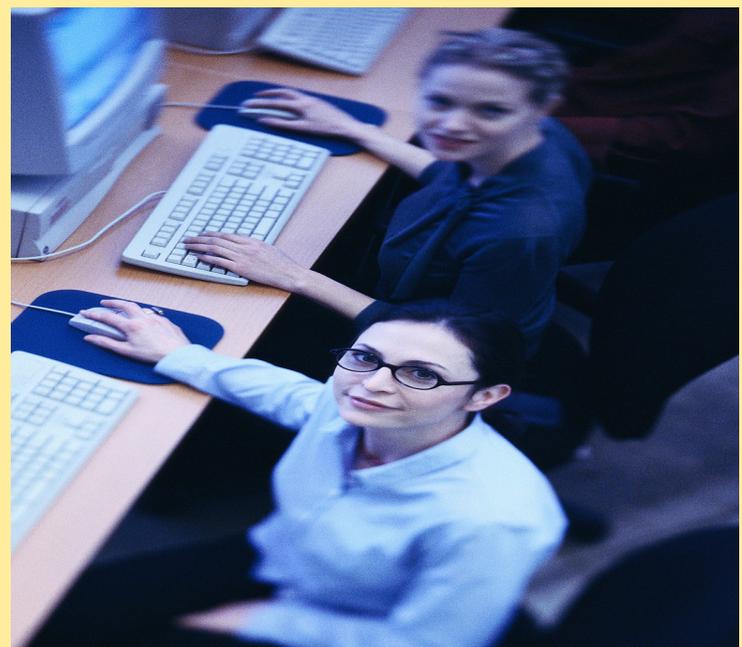
Presenters were: Joni Dowling from the Department of Homeland Security, Anthony Palladino from the Federal Aviation Administration, Nydia Coleman from the Library of Congress, and Cherie Smith from the Department of Defense.



Training Updates

Please note that the process to procure FAC-C core training classes for FY08-12 is near completion. As soon as new class schedules are available, an announcement and class schedules will be posted to the FAI website.

If you have any questions and/or concerns, please contact FAI Student Services at questions@FAI.gov or (703) 805-2300.



Acknowledging Excellence

SHINE Initiative Award Announcements January - March 2008



E.R. "Dick" Alley, Jr. Award

Nominations due Jan. 31, 2008

www.AbilityOne.gov or www.JWOD.gov

Recognizes a federal employee who has provided extraordinary achievement and sustained effort in utilizing the federal procurement system to create employment and training opportunities for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities under the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act (AbilityOne/JWOD) Program.

Elmer B. Staats Young Acquisition Professional Excellence Award

Nominations due Jan. 31, 2008

www.procurementroundtable.org

\$5,000 award

Recognizes a young federal acquisition professional, no more than 37 years of age, who has contributed significantly to acquisition operations or acquisition policy.

NCMA/ESI International Contracting Award

Nominations due Feb. 22, 2008

www.esi-intl.com/public/contracting/contestrules.asp

\$5,000 award

Recognizes a government or commercial contracts professional who has contributed significantly to acquisition operations or acquisition policy.

Ida Ustad Award of Excellence in Acquisition

Nominations due Feb. 28, 2008

www.gsa.gov

\$5,000 award

Recognizes a federal employee who demonstrates or embodies the concept of "contract specialist as business leader/advisor."

NCMA - Herbert Roback Memorial Award

Nominations collected by NCMA Committee (yearly)

www.ncmahq.org/awards

Recognizes a nationally renowned and distinguished American who has made a significant contribution to the betterment of public contract management through lifelong achievement in the public and/or private sectors.

Department of Veterans Affairs Champions of Veterans Enterprise Awards

Nominations due March 21, 2008

www.vetbiz.gov

Recognizes significant contributions by individuals or organizations who are dedicated to expanding business opportunities for veterans and service connected disabled veterans.

Service to America Medals (Sammies) Award

Nominations due March 3, 2008

www.servicetoamericamedals.org/SAM/

\$3,000-\$5,000 award

Recognizes individuals in the federal workforce who have made significant contributions to our country, based on their commitment and innovation, as well as the impact of their work on addressing the needs of the nation.

Acknowledging Excellence

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Award

Nominations due March 30, 2008

www.adr.gov

Recognizes outstanding uses of ADR by federal agencies and private companies in acquisition-related disputes.

Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Award

Nominations due March 30, 2008

www.whitehouse.gov/omb/procurement/

Recognizes an outstanding FAR individual member who made significant contributions to the FAR process in the previous fiscal year.

GSA Governmentwide Excellence in Performance-Based Service Acquisition Awards

Nominations due (to be determined)

www.performanceweb.org

\$2,500 award

Recognizes federal employees that are leaders in the contracting environment and have transformed their organization through "best-in-class" practices in acquisition.



Award Presentations:



Administrator Paul Denett; Director of OMB Jim Nussle; Cindy Maltby, Program Manager; and Andy Houghton, Chair, Committee for Purchase from People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled (Dick Alley Award sponsoring agency)

Paul Denett, Administrator, Office of Federal Procurement Policy, hosted a National Disability Employment Awareness Month recognition event with Melwood in the Indian Treaty Room of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building on October 29th. Melwood is a nonprofit organization that serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This recognition event was part of a SHINE initiative that recognizes federal employees who demonstrate acquisition excellence; Melwood contract employees were recognized and presented with appreciation certifications and AbilityOne pins.

As part of the same event, the President's Committee for Purchase from People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled once again recognized Cynthia Maltby, Office of Federal Procurement Policy, for her receipt of the 2007 E.R. "Dick" Alley Award. The Committee also recognized Paul Denett for all his support, presenting him with a commemorative coin in a beautiful wooden box.

Speakers at the event included: Paul Denett; Andy Houghton, Chair, Committee for Purchase; Brenda Sheaffer, Melwood custodian; Janice Frey-Angel, Melwood CEO; and Jameela Akbari, OMB Diversity Council. Attendees included: Jim Nussle, Director of OMB; Clay Johnson, Deputy Director for Management at OMB; Daniel Gade, Associate Director, Domestic Policy Council; and several Presidentially appointed, Committee for Purchase members.

More information on AbilityOne can be found at www.jwod.gov.

"Getting good results from our acquisitions ultimately depends on the capabilities of the workforce. Our workforce must be equipped with the skills and competencies required to meet the federal government's increasingly complex needs."

Paul Denett, OFPP Administrator

Tip of the Month

Ensuring a Happy New Year

Tackling all your daily work while thinking about training can be a challenge. Consider these training tips to help you make the most of the New Year:

- Take the attitude that training is really personal development. Think strategically about your training and learning needs.
- Remember that formal training programs are only part of your development picture. Most real training occurs on the job.
- Set a positive example. Your attitude about training could influence your co-workers.
- Understand that when you grow, your job satisfaction and ability to retain it increases substantially.
- Set and keep realistic training goals.

Above all, remember to be sensitive to your fellow workers and yourself throughout the year.

Wishing you peace and success all through the coming year,
Otis W. Langford, Jr., FAI Training Manager



Upcoming Events

February 6, 2008: ALS Meeting, Washington, DC

February 21, 2008: IACMC Meeting, Washington, DC

February 25-27, 2008: FAI participating in the Government Performance Summit 2008

April 13-16, 2008: NCMA World Congress, Cincinnati, OH

April 15, 2008: DAU Acquisition Symposium, Ft. Belvoir, VA

April 22-24, 2008: GSA Expo, Anaheim, CA

Looking Ahead!

Please stay tuned for the February Edition of FAInsight, which will feature other great acquisition-related articles!

We want to hear from you! How do you like our newsletter's content and format? Please let us know what we can provide to make it most useful for you and how we can support you and your training needs. Please contact questions@FAI.gov and visit www.FAI.gov.

Thank you

We thank guest authors for their contributions and views and present these as part of Federal Acquisition Insight for our readers' information.

For More Information, or to submit an article, contact the editor: Danielle Porak de Varna Danielle_PorakDeVarna@sra.com or visit www.FAI.gov.

