

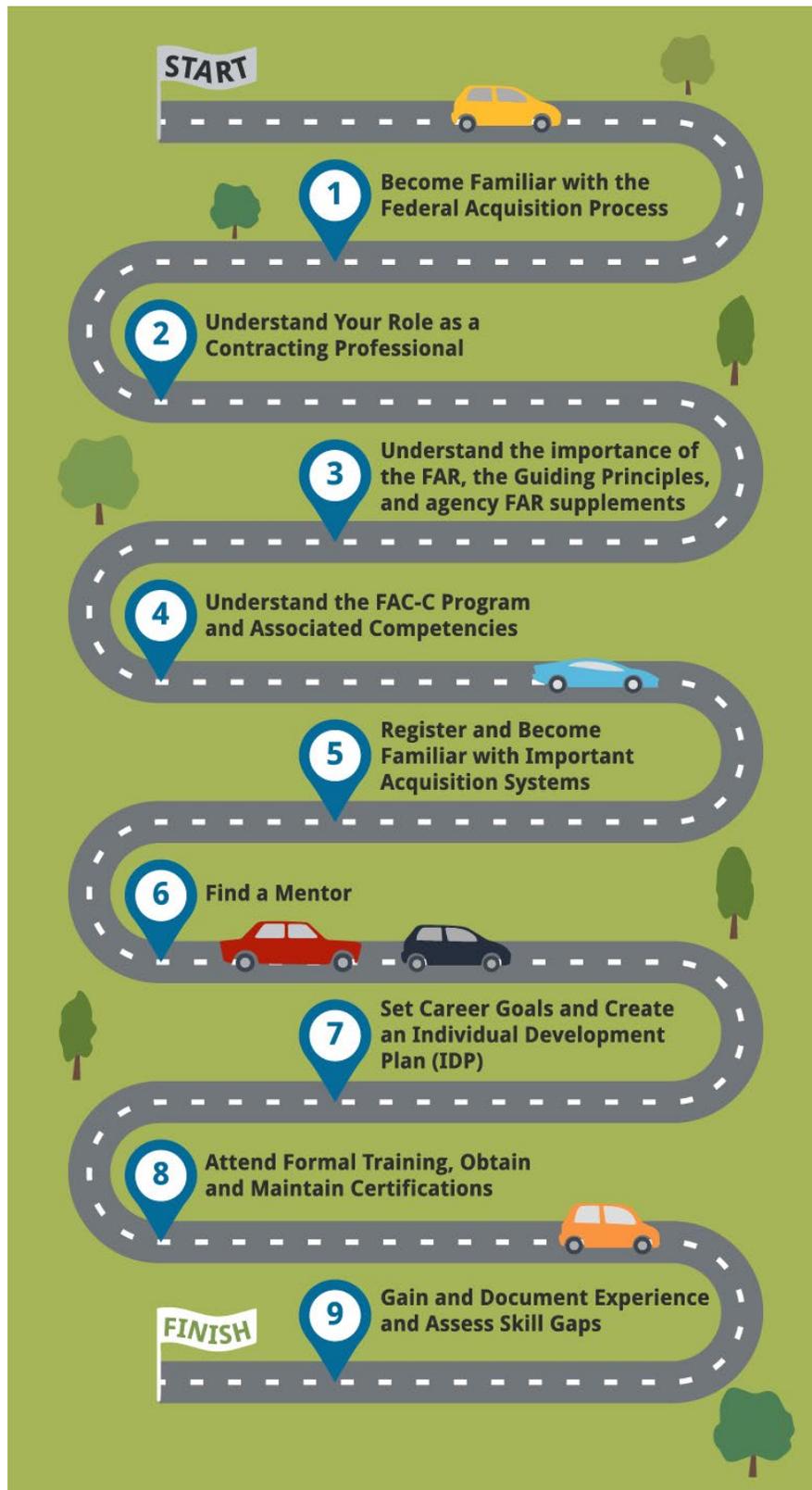


CONTRACTING PROFESSIONAL'S CAREER ROADMAP

Contracting Professionals serve the Federal Government as business advisors with the goal of acquiring products and services that provide the best value to the Government. In this role, Contracting Professionals use agency, program, and marketplace knowledge, as well as contracting processes and best practices, to guide their customers and craft smart business arrangements that assist with achieving mission results for their agency. Contracting Professionals should be intimately familiar with the goals of their program offices and customers and use their acquisition and business knowledge to forge solutions by creating a partnership with their customers. Contracting professionals are responsible for the entire business cycle, from using relevant marketplace knowledge to inform strategy and planning activities to managing contractor performance and maintaining useful business relationships into the future.

The purpose of this roadmap is to provide Contracting Professionals and their supervisors with a guide to getting started in the 1102 career field. It provides a framework for the career, including gaining a basic understanding of the acquisition process, the competencies and mandatory training required, guidelines for selecting and working with a mentor, guidelines for goal setting, and best practices for documenting experiences on the job. New Contracting Professionals should work through the steps and the “to-do lists” early in their professional career.

Select the numbers below to view the details and to-do lists about each step in the roadmap.



#1 Become Familiar with the Federal Acquisition Process

Updated August 2019

New Contracting Professionals should become familiar with the Federal Acquisition process at a high-level before entering into formalized acquisition training.

To Do List

- Watch this 12 minute video: **”Big A: The Three Legs of Acquisition”** to learn about how the elements of the overall acquisition process in the Federal government encompass much more than just procuring goods and services.
- Review the **Contracting Professional's Smart Guide** (CPSG) which con-tains 51 Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) driven activities that are associated with the acquisition process. The CPSG is organized into two sections of the acquisition lifecycle - Contract Formation and Contract Administration.
- Review the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) **Contracting Subway Map** Which is an interactive, color coded guide to the acquisition process. While some of the content is geared toward the Department of Defense (DoD), it provides a good visual representation of the over-all federal acquisition process. Make sure to click on the “i” logos for more information on each of the steps.
- Meet with agency/bureau acquisition staff/colleagues and review agency/bureau specific basic acquisition information they may provide.

#2 Understand Your Role as a Contracting Professional

Updated August 2019

It is very important to clearly understand your roles and responsibilities as a Contracting Professional.

To Do List

- Watch this video entitled Big "**The Many Facets of The Contracting Professional**" to learn about the various roles and responsibilities of the Contracting Professional.
- Review the responsibilities of Contracting Professionals which have been outlined in the Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) Program refresh **memo** from the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) dated May 7, 2014.
- Review the interactive **GPS Career Path Map** which can guide Contracting Professionals through the career path journey, starting at GS 7-9 entry level, and spanning through the GS 12-13 level.

#3 Understand the importance of the FAR, the Guiding Principles, and agency FAR supplements

Updated August 2019

The **Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR)** governs the acquisition process by which executive agencies of the United States federal government acquire (i.e., purchase or lease) goods and services by contract with appropriated funds. The FAR is grounded by the Guiding Principles which are found at **FAR 1.102**. These principles provide a foundation from which sound business judgment and business acumen decisions are made.

To Do List:

- Review and understand the FAR Guiding Principles at **FAR 1.102**.
- Read and understand this important statement from **FAR 1.102(d)** as these words are the foundation of the work of a Contracting Professional.
 - ***Each member of the acquisition team*** (which includes the customer and members from the finance, legal, program management and other communities) ***must exercise personal initiative and sound business judgment in providing the best value product or service to meet the mission needs. In exercising initiative, members of the acquisition team may assume that if a specific strategy, practice, policy, or procedure is in the best interests of the Government and is not addressed in the Federal Acquisition Regulation, nor prohibited by law (statute or case law), Executive Order, or other regulations, that the strategy, practice, policy, or procedure IS a permissible exercise of authority.***
 - Take the online course **FAR 100: Introduction to the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR)** - This is a two (2) hour online course that explores the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), gaining an understanding of how it is administered, structured and updated.
 - Review your agency's online **agency-specific FAR supplements**. Notice how these regulations are structured and aligned with the FAR.

Step #4: Understand the FAC-C Program & Associated Competencies

Updated August 2019

The Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) was issued pursuant to the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) Act, 41 U.S.C. § 1101 et. seq., and OFPP Policy Letter 05-01. There are three (3) FAC-C certification levels and Contracting Professionals are required to be certified. The FAC-C Program is structured around 28 Technical and 10 Professional **competencies** which refer to the knowledge, skills, and abilities Contracting Professionals must have in order to perform their contracting duties.

The technical competencies are covered extensively throughout the formal FAC-C training and are very easy to define. The professional competencies (which are often referred to as “soft skills”) refer to a person’s non-technical abilities and are more aligned with a person’s disposition and personality. There are no specific FAC-C courses directed at the professional competencies, however, it is recommended that Contracting Professionals review the professional competencies with their supervisor and/or mentor and seek learning opportunities that will grow these competencies as well.

The FAC-C is founded on: (1) core competencies that are considered essential for successful contracting; (2) education; (3) training; (4) experience; (5) continuous learning to maintain skills currency; and (6) developmental activities.

To Do List:

- Review the Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) Program refresh memo from the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) dated May 7, 2014. Also, determine if your agency has agency-specific policy that supports this OFPP **memo**.
- Review the **FAC-C technical and professional** competencies
- Review the **FAC-C certification requirements** which include education, experience and training requirements for each FAC-C level.
- Watch this **video** that provides a brief overview of the various roles and responsibilities of an Acquisition Career Manager (ACM) and explains how they can help 1102s achieve their career goals.
- Find out the name and contact information for your agency’s **Acquisition Career Manager** (ACM), and the name of your Bureau ACM (BCM), if applicable.
- Determine if your agency has any department, agency, or bureau specific FAC-C requirements.

Step #5: Register and Become Familiar with Important Acquisition Systems

Updated August 2019

As a contracting professional, in order to perform various tasks you will be required to access a number of systems in order to successfully perform your job duties.

To Do List:

The Federal Acquisition Institute Training Application System (FAITAS)

FAITAS is the online registration system for federal civilian acquisition workforce training and the system of record for all federal civilian acquisition certification programs. FAITAS is used to maintain training records, certification information and register for acquisition-related courses. The system is also used to process contracting officer warrants and register and maintain continuous learning achievements. Please note that not all agencies have implemented FAITAS to its fullest capacity.

- Watch this **video** entitled “FAITAS in 3 Minutes
- Review this **guidance** and watch this **1 minute video** on how to set up a FAITAS account.
- Review this **guidance** and watch this **6 minute video** on how to navigate the FAITAS course catalog.
- Watch this **6 minute video** about using filters in the FAITAS course catalog.

The Defense Acquisition University (DAU) Virtual Campus

Many of the required online FAC-C courses must be taken from the DAU Virtual Campus.

- Sign up for a DAU Virtual Campus Account
- Become familiar with the site and browse the training catalog.

The System for Award Management (SAM)

The System for Award Management (SAM) is the official registration portal for all entities that wish to do business with the Federal Government. It is used by Government contracting and grants officials responsible for activities with contracts, grants, past performance reporting and suspension and debarment activities.

- Create a SAM.gov account and become familiar with the site.

Beta.SAM.gov

Beta.SAM.gov will eventually be merged with SAM.GOV, but for now it is a separate website with a different purpose. Beta.SAM.gov currently is where users can search Contract Opportunities (previously FBO.GOV) and search for wage determinations online (previously WDOL.GOV).

- Create a Beta.SAM.gov account and become familiar with the site.

The Acquisition Gateway

The Acquisition Gateway is a workspace for acquisition professionals and federal buyers to connect with resources, tools and each other to improve acquisition government-wide.

- View the Acquisition Gateway **Welcome Video** and spend some time getting familiar with the types of community discussions, tools, resources, tutorials that are available on the Gateway.
- Browse the Acquisition Gateway **tutorials** which includes numerous step by step guides and video resources to learn how to use the different available to you on the Acquisition Gateway.

Step #5: Continued

Updated August 2019

- Once you are logged-in to the Acquisition Gateway, join the **OFPP Project InReach Group** to be connected to the Office of Federal Procurement Policy. Get familiar with the group and what policy and tools are offered on the site.
- Search for and join other Acquisition Gateway **Community Groups** that interest you.

Federal Procurement Data System-Next Generation (FPDS-NG)

The FPDS-NG is the central repository of information on all Federal contracting. Contracting Professionals should become very familiar with this website and how to use, for market research but also in filling it out correctly for awards. Understanding those fields is very important. Most agencies access FPDS-NG through their agency's Contract Writing System.

- Sign up for an account and browse the FPDS-NG website.

Acquisition Open Opportunities

- Sign up for an account through Acquisition Open Opportunities which is a website where you can gain experience with hands-on training, share your expertise and work with others across the government.

Where in Federal Contracting? (WIFCON)

WIFCON is a website that provides quick access to acquisition information such as contracting laws and pending legislation, current and proposed regulations, guidance, courts and boards of contract appeals, bid protest decisions, contracting newsletters, and selected analysis of federal acquisition issues. Note: The discussion forums in WIFCON are not in and of themselves official interpretations of FAR requirements, and that contracting controversies should be brought to agency contracting management and legal counsel for final interpretation, rather than attempting to rely on the WIFCON discussion forums.

- Browse the website to become familiar with the information that is available.

Virtual Acquisition Office (VAO)

The VAO is a commercial tool that contains a wealth of information and training for acquisition professionals, however, a paid subscription is required to log-in.

- Find out if your agency has a VAO subscription and, if so, register for an account. Browse the website to become familiar with the information and publications that are available.

Contract Writing System

- Each agency has a different Contract Writing System that is used to create contract solicitations. Ask your supervisor which system your agency uses and, if possible, sign up for a user account and sign up for system's training if available.

Step #6:

Find a Mentor

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Contracting Professionals are encouraged to identify a peer, technical and/or leadership mentor to assist them in navigating their career. If agencies don't have formal mentoring programs, Contracting Professionals are encouraged to obtain a mentor informally.

To Do List:

- Research to determine if your agency has a formal mentoring program/mentoring agreement.
 - Review **OPM's Mentoring Library** and **OPM Best Practices for Mentoring**.
 - Find and interview potential mentors that meet the following general qualifications (sometimes a mentor can be a supervisor, but most of the time it is someone else):
 - A high performing, seasoned 1102 Contracting Officer or Contract Specialist;
 - Someone you trust and respect that has the time to devote to mentor you in your career development;
 - A genuine interest and desire to help develop less experienced (entry level) Contracting Professionals;
 - Onsite visibility into your day-to-day work; and
 - Develop and sign a **mentoring agreement** with your mentor
 - Have regular mentoring sessions, begin by sharing your self-assessment
 - Develop a Mentoring Action Plan
 - Evaluate/Re-evaluate the Mentoring Relationship
 - Be aware of your actions and avoid doing these things:
- Be aware of your actions and avoid doing these things:
 - Criticize your mentor
 - Rely on your mentor to solve all of your problems or give answers to all of your questions
 - Cancel meetings and/or visits at the last minute
 - Commit yourself to obligations you cannot keep
 - Be late to work or meetings
 - Be absent – physically and/or mentally

Step #7: Set Career Goals & Create an Individual Development Plan

Updated August 2019

To Do List

- Create short-term (6 mos.-3 years) goals. Some examples of short-term goals for a new Contracting Professional might be to take a certain number of formal training courses or obtain a certain level FAC-C Certification.
- Create long-term (3-5 years) goals. Some examples of long-term goals for a new Contracting Professional might be to obtain an unlimited warrant or to become a team leader.
- Work with your supervisor and/or mentor early on to identify these goals for yourself and re-visit them yearly to make adjustments.
- Review **OPM's Wiki** on Individual Development Plans (IDPs) which provides helpful advice on developing an IDP, templates, opportunities and other considerations.
- Working with your supervisor and/or mentor, create an Individual Development Plan (IDP) for the upcoming year which should be based upon the short and long term goals and include not only formal FAC-C training, but also include experiential/developmental activities from **The 1102 Experience Development Tool**

Step #8: Attend Formal Training, Obtain and Maintain Certifications

Updated August 2019

To Do List

- Using your IDP, search, plan, register and attend formalized FAC-C training. Many courses are online and self-paced and no-charge. FAI offers FAC-C Instructor Led Training at no charge. All training can be found by searching in **FAITAS** and the **DAU Virtual Campus**.
- Research and get familiar with your agency's specific FAC-C certification process.
- Once you have met the training, education and experience requirements for Level 1, apply for FAC-C certification.
- Watch this 5 minute **video** on how to submit a certification request in FAITAS.
- Once you are certified, pace yourself to earn 80 continuous learning points (CLPs) every two years, beginning with the date of your certification. Review **FAI's information** page on continuous learning opportunities.
- If your office purchases Digital Services, consider applying for the **Digital Services IT Program (DITAP)** and obtain the FAC-C-Digital Services (FAC-C-DS). (Must be FAC-C Level 2 or 3 certified before pursuing this core-plus certification).
- Consider pursuing the National Contract Management Association's (NCMA's) **professional certifications** : 1) The Certified Professional Contracts Manager (CPCM), or 2) The Certified Federal Contract Manager (CFCM).

Step #9: Gain and Document Experience and Assess Skill Gaps

Updated August 2019

Contracting Professionals can learn certain technical skills through training, but they learn most effectively how to apply these skills through on-the-job and other experiential learning.

To Do List:

- Use the **1102 Experience Development Tool** (once finalized, will be hyperlinked and accessible online) with your supervisor/mentor to identify and document participation in specific 1102 job tasks, creation of documents, acquisition strategies, categories of spend and contract types in an effort to gain a depth and breadth of experience in the career field. Make sure to include any desired experiences on your annual IDP and share with and obtain approval from your supervisor.
- On a regular basis, review the 1102 Experience Development Tool assess your skill gaps and look for ways to expand your experiences:
- Use **Acquisition Open Opportunities** website to identify and search for unique opportunities to gain experience and assist other contract offices.
- Network with other Contracting Professionals that you meet in an effort to share experiences and work products.
- Join **Communities** and network within the Acquisition Gateway (make sure you are logged-in first).
- Consider a rotational assignment or detail within your agency or at another agency.
- Participating on intra - or interagency teams to address specific acquisition challenges or other broader leadership issues, such as Integrated Project Teams (IPTs) or joining professional associations, such as the **National Contract Management Association (NCMA)**.

Once you have worked through all the check-lists and “to-do” lists found in this tool, which may take several years, you should be well on your way to a successful career as a Contracting Professional – good luck!

If you have any questions about this tool, you may contact Teresa Reeve at the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) at teresa.reeve@fai.gov.