

Functional Series [400](#)
Personnel

INTERIM UPDATE 05-13

SUBJECT: Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) Training and Certification Program

NEW MATERIAL: This Notice is being issued to employees and supervisors to provide comprehensive policies and procedures regarding the Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) Training and Certification Program. In addition, this Notice addresses specific responsibilities that supervisors have with respect to supervising employees who have been designated as CTOs.

EFFECTIVE DATE: 09/29/2005

ATTACHMENT: [CTO Master LIST](#)

POLICY

USAID/General Notice
M/HR & M/OAA
09/29/2005

Subject: Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) Training and Certification Program

This Notice is being issued to employees and supervisors to provide comprehensive policies and procedures regarding the Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) Training and Certification Program. In addition, this Notice addresses specific responsibilities that supervisors have with respect to supervising employees who have been designated as CTOs (see Section No. 7, Supervising Employees with CTO Duties and Responsibilities).

This policy is effective on issuance of this Notice, with the exception of the CTO Training Courses Required for Certification in Section No. 8, which was effective on March 7, 2003 (see General Notice 0311, Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) Certification Program, dated March 7, 2003).

1. Purpose

In April 2003, the Agency began implementation of the Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) Training and Certification Program to fulfill the need for qualified technical managers for project management of acquisition and assistance instruments. This program was developed and is administered in accordance with the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) Letter No. 97-01, which mandated that all Federal agencies prepare and train employees who are responsible for managing contracts. USAID expanded this mandate to include employees who are responsible for managing grants and cooperative agreements.

OFPP recently replaced Policy Letter 97-01 with Policy Letter 05-01 "Developing and Managing the Acquisition Workforce" (accessible on the OFPP website at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/procurement/policy_letter_05-01.html). M/HR and M/OAA are considering how the new Policy Letter affects USAID's current CTO Training and Certification Program but are proceeding with this Notice in the meantime. We will implement any resulting changes to our Program through the ADS clearance process.

2. Coverage

USAID's CTO Training and Certification Program covers both acquisition and assistance management, in recognition of the fact that USAID managers may be assigned to duty stations throughout the world and must possess the knowledge and skills to manage either type of instrument.

The Office of Acquisition and Assistance in the Bureau for Management (M/OAA) issued policy and procedures for appointing CTOs in Acquisition and Assistance Policy Directive (AAPD) 04-10, "Standardized Model Letters for Designating the Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) for Contracts, Grants, and Cooperative Agreements," on August 26, 2004. (See http://www.usaid.gov/business/business_opportunities/cib/pdf/aapd04_10.pdf). The AAPD recommended a time limit for CTOs to obtain certification (see Section IV of each standardized CTO designation letter), but note that Section 3(b) of the AAPD itself states that this Notice takes precedence over the time limits in the CTO designation letter. All other terms of the AAPD and the standardized designation letters remain in effect unless otherwise noted or until M/OAA amends the AAPD.

Once an individual successfully completes the required courses, Training and Education Division (M/HR/TE) staff of the Office of Human Resources will issue to that individual a CTO Certificate signed by the Director, M/HR, and the Director, M/OAA, to show that the individual has successfully completed the Agency's CTO mandatory training and certification program requirements. Section No. 8 covers the specific CTO training courses that are required for certification.

3. Administration of CTO Training and Certification Program

M/HR/TE staff is responsible for approving, procuring, and developing in-house CTO certification training programs in coordination with M/OAA. In addition, M/HR/TE staff monitors and evaluates classroom courses in USAID/W and overseas to improve the quality of training and to revise courses, as needed.

4. Mandatory CTO Training and Certification Requirements

All employees appointed by a CO or AO to manage the technical aspects of a contract, grant¹, or cooperative agreement on behalf of the CO or AO, regardless of whether the source of funding is program or operating expense, are required to complete the

Agency's CTO mandatory training and certification requirements. As part of this responsibility, employees are expected to maintain records of their required courses and have their CTO Certificate available for verification purposes. Project Managers and non-direct hire staff (e.g., CASUs, Fellows, and other non-PSC contractors) are encouraged to take CTO certification courses; however, USAID's immediate priority for training is the current CTO staff. Non-direct hire training takes priority over training for partners (see Section No. 14).

Current or previously warranted Contracting Officers and any Executive Officer (EX) staff who have received the Procurement Management Certification Program (PMCP) certification are not required to complete the CTO Certification Program and are eligible to receive a CTO Certificate on the basis of their prior PMCP Certification.

To receive a CTO certificate, the CO or EXO in question should contact Ferindo Middleton on (202) 712-4591 and provide the date of his/her PMCP certificate. This information will be entered into the CTO database.

5. USAID Employment Categories Eligible to Perform CTO Duties

The above mentioned AAPD 04-10 states that only a direct-hire Federal employee or a personal services contractor is eligible to be designated as a CTO (see section 3(a) of the AAPD). The following employment categories within USAID may be designated as CTOs:

- U.S. Direct Hires (USDH)
- Foreign Service National Direct Hires (FSNDH)
- Personal Services Contractors of any nationality,
- Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) (see ADS 460), and
- Direct Hire employees of Participating Agencies under Interagency Agreements (e.g., PASAs, RSSAs, etc. See ADS 306, Interagency Agreements).

Contractors/Recipients and their employees and Fellows (not including PMFs) may not be certified as CTOs (but see Section No. 14). Managers of PASAs/RSSAs and supervisors of PSCs do not require CTO certification. Questions regarding whether other categories of staff not included in the above list may be certified as CTOs should be referred to Contracting/Agreement Officers (COs/AOs).

6. Maintaining Master Lists of CTOs

Operating Units (OUs) (i.e., Bureaus, Offices, and Missions) to which CTOs are assigned are required to maintain up-to-date master lists of their respective CTOs to ensure that these individuals requiring training receive it on a timely basis.

Attached to this Notice is a standardized CTO Master List (CTO ML) format for Operating Units to use to track information on their CTOs. Although its primary purpose

is to ensure that the CTOs in the OU receive required training, the CTO ML includes additional data fields that the OU may find useful for other purposes, such as a tracking tool to assist with updating CTO information in NMS (for AID/W) and Phoenix (AID/W and those Missions with Phoenix).²

Each OU is responsible for maintaining its own CTO ML, including deciding whom to assign the responsibility for administering it and how. Even with decentralized administration of the lists, using a standardized format throughout the Agency ensures that (1) OUs can more easily share information tracked on the CTO ML as CTOs move from one Bureau/Office/Mission to another and (2) the receiving OU immediately identifies the training needs of a newly-assigned individual expected to be a CTO.

Enter all individuals expected to be designated as a CTO during his or her assignment to the OU, even if he/she has not yet been so designated. Include as much information as possible in all fields, especially those pertaining to scheduling CTO training courses. When a CO/AO makes a formal CTO designation, the CTO ML administrator enters this specific data into the appropriate fields on the ML.

The following is a brief discussion of the column headings on the ML format:

OFFICE/TEAM and CTO Name Organize the first column by offices or teams within the OU to reflect the organization managing the obligation and enter the individual's name next to his or her assigned office or team. Because each OU is organized differently or may have different preferences for organizing this information, the attached CTO ML format allows for the OU to decide how best to group its CTOs. If the OU prefers to establish an additional column on the spreadsheet to allow identification of both office and team, it may do so as long as the other columns and headings remain unchanged.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS Enter the CTO's employment status-e.g., USAID direct hire (USDH), Foreign Service National Personal Services Contractor (FSN PSC), PASA USDA/DH, etc. Identifying the individual's employment status ensures that individuals who are not eligible to be a CTO are not inadvertently nominated to the CO or AO (see Section 5 of this Notice).

HR Confirmed Certified Training Yes/No; Designation Letter by CO/AO - Yes/No (date); CONTRACTOR OR RECIPIENT NAME; CONTRACT/GRANT/CA AWARD NUMBER; NMS Designation Yes/No; NMS CTO ROLE Yes/No; and PHOENIX ISSUE OFFICE ADDRESS TAB Yes/No OUs should verify with the CTO Training Coordinator in M/HR/TE that the CTO's training and certification status is up to date in the M/HR/TET CTO database. If the individual is already designated as a CTO (Column heading "DESIGNATION LETTER BY CO/AO" is "yes"), then enter the date when the CO or AO issued a designation letter, the name of the contractor or recipient, and the award number³. "NMS Designation" is for AID/W awards and indicates whether the CO/AO has entered the CTO in NMS as the CTO for that award. If the CO/AO has not issued a designation letter or did not enter the CTO in NMS, then the OU must follow-up with the CO/OA, in accordance with AAPD 04-10 and the September 24, 2004 General Policy

Notice entitled "Updating Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) and Managing Organization Information in Phoenix" (Notice 0958, at <http://iapp1.usaid.gov/notices/notDetail.cfm?msgID=8622&currmo=9&curryr=2004&prevnext=yes>). The A&A Solutions Center (e-mail address opsolutionincenter@usaid.gov) must give the individual the CTO role in NMS A&A in order for the CO/AO to designate the individual as a CTO, so verifying that the individual has this role ("NMS CTO ROLE Yes/No") will allow the CO/AO to designate the individual as the CTO in NMS A&A.

Missions do not use "NMS CTO role." However, those Missions where Phoenix has been installed must complete the "PHOENIX Issue Office Type" field in the obligation record and should then answer "PHOENIX ISSUE OFFICE ADDRESS TAB Yes/No" as appropriate on the ML.

Properly administering these particular fields will be useful when updating CTO information in NMS and Phoenix.

A&A 102 PLANNED DATE, A&A 102 DATE TAKEN, A&A 103 PLANNED DATE, and A&A 103 DATE TAKEN - OUs use these columns to track the CTO training status of its staff members. If CTO names are grouped by offices or teams within the OU, then managers should be able to identify at a glance the status of CTO training for each office, team, and individual CTO, and the timing for providing training.

7. Supervising Employees with CTO Duties and Responsibilities

- a. Supervisors of CTOs have specific responsibilities with respect to their employees who perform CTO duties. Supervisors are expected to incorporate on a prospective basis CTO-related duties and responsibilities into position descriptions, vacancy announcements, performance plans, and statements of work.
- b. It is important to make employees aware they will have CTO work as part of their continuing duties and responsibilities and that the performance of this work will be taken into account in their annual performance evaluations.

For Foreign Service employees who perform CTO duties, supervisors are responsible for incorporating these duties in work objectives and performance measures on the AEF-Foreign Service (AID 461-1). It may not be feasible to have a separate work objective dedicated to the performance of CTO tasks. In such circumstances, supervisors should incorporate these duties under other closely related work objectives and performance measures in the employee's performance plan in such areas as financial management, procurement, or administrative management.

When a program or activity is implemented through contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements for which the employee is the CTO, then the employee's responsibilities for program or activity management may be another area that can and should reflect the employee's performance as a CTO.

For Civil Service employees who perform CTO duties, supervisors must take into account the performance of these duties in evaluating at least one of the six generic performance elements on the AEF-Civil Service Form (AID 462-1). These general performance elements are work responsibilities that are common to all employees and include Technical Expertise, Planning and Organizing Work, Execution of Duties, Communications, Professionalism and Teamwork, and Customer Service.

Supervisors may wish to customize, specify, or clarify their expectations beyond the core performance standard descriptions for one or more of the generic performance elements that relates to the performance of CTO duties. The supervisor may use the space in section 3-B of the AEF to provide additional guidance for this purpose.

For example, a supervisor may wish to address programmatic performance accomplishments under execution of duties or technical expertise that explains the level of performance expected at the employee's grade level or that relates to how well an employee carries out his/her responsibilities.

c. In evaluating the employee's performance of CTO duties and responsibilities, supervisors must request 360-degree feedback from Contracting/Agreement Officers or input from other appropriate sources including contractors. COs/AOs have a responsibility to provide this feedback.

d. In developing training plans for employees who serve as CTOs, supervisors are expected to include the mandatory training courses for employees who have not yet taken the necessary training and to schedule it with the employee. The Individual Development Plan, Form AID 400-21 (12/03), is to be used for developing and documenting employee training plans. This form is a macro and is accessible from the USAID Forms Page.

8. CTO Training Courses Required for Certification

a. New CTO Certification Training Requirement

The two courses described below are required for CTO certification. Each course requires 40 hours of classroom training.

(1) Acquisition Management (A&A 102) is a 40-hour, skills- based classroom course focusing on what a CTO needs to know to manage contracts and support quarterly accrual estimates. A USAID-specific 26-unit course, CTO Mentoring, is online and acts as a knowledge-based supplement to the A&A 102.

(2) Assistance Management (A&A 103) is a 40-hour, skills- based classroom course focusing on what a CTO needs to know to manage grants and cooperative agreements and develop accurate accruals.

The Acquisition and Assistance Management courses cover specific CTO competencies that address CTO requirements for responsible management of the acquisition and assistance instruments, including contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements that are an integral part of implementation of a development program.

In order to pass the CTO Certification courses, participants must achieve at least an 85 percent score on the competency test administered for each course (see Section No. 9, Successful Completion of CTO Training Courses). Because the skills-based classroom work is an important component of CTO training, the certification program does not permit "testing out" of taking the courses.

b. Prior CTO Training Requirements for Certification

The Agency will accept for certification employees who completed the four courses required for certification under the prior CTO certification policy established in 1998.

In addition, the Agency will accept for certification employees who completed the three required courses in Acquisition and Assistance Management conducted in 2002-2003.

c. Other Substitute Course Work

The USAID Acquisition CTO Course (Northwest Procurement Institute, Inc., (NPI)) may be substituted for the Acquisition Management course. The two pilot courses -- CTO/AM 1 Workshop and AAA given in Budapest -- are accepted for CTO Certification.

9. Successful Completion of CTO Training Courses

a. Competency Testing

Competency-based, pre-course work tests and post-course work tests are administered to measure the learning of competencies and to assess the quality of the training courses. Participants must achieve at least an 85 percent score on the post-course competency test for each course to successfully complete the course. If an employee does not pass the competency test, he or she has six months to take the course again. If the employee still does not pass the test, the Contracting Officer or Agreement Officer may rescind the CTO appointment letter (see Section 12).

b. Mandatory Class Attendance

For both A&A 102 and 103 (see Section No. 8a(1) and (2)), participants are required to be in attendance at least 85 percent of the class time in order to receive a certificate of completion.

10. Time Limits for Acquiring CTO Competencies

All individuals who are appointed by letter from a Contracting Officer (CO) or Agreement Officer (AO) to be a Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) must meet the Agency's CTO mandatory training and certification program requirements, either (1) prior to the issuance of their CTO appointment letter, (2) within one year of issuance of the appointment letter, or (3) the effective date of this Notice, whichever comes later. Individuals who fail to complete the CTO certification requirements may have their CTO appointment letter rescinded (see Section 12).

Once the scheduled USAID online courses are activated, CTO certification requirements may change to require both the online course(s) and the Acquisition and Assistance Management classroom courses. Any future changes to CTO certification training requirements will be announced in a USAID/General Notice.

11. Recommended Continuing Education

To assist in maintaining CTO competencies, M/HR/TE recommends that CTOs continue to take training. Certified CTOs should take the equivalent of 40 hours of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) every two years. This may be met by taking a variety of courses, such as the most current CTO certification courses or more in-depth courses in financial management, statement of work/program description writing, project management, Mission program planning, or other Agency approved technical training associated with CTO duties.

Online courses are accepted; e.g., USAID E-Learning Institute (Skillsoft), USAID online CTO courses, USDA Graduate School, etc. The CTO may report CEU training to the Program Manager for CTO Training in M/HR/TE by providing a copy of the course certificate upon completion of the training.

12. Rescinding a CTO Appointment Letter

If an employee designated as a CTO fails to satisfactorily complete certification training or perform well on the job, the CTO's appointment letter may be rescinded. Only the Contracting Officer/Agreement Officer has the authority to take such action.

COs/AOs have the authority to rescind an appointment letter at any time if the individual's performance as a CTO is unsatisfactory; for example, if the individual fails to perform these duties and responsibilities, or if the individual exceeds his/her authority as specified in the appointment letter. CO/AOs will also rescind an appointment letter if the CTO is reassigned to a new post or position.

If an employee designated as a CTO does not complete the CTO mandatory training and certification requirements within the time required under Section No. 10, the CO/AO may allow the CTO to continue for another six months so that the individual may have additional time to complete these requirements. However, if after another six-month period the employee still has not successfully completed the CTO training and

certification requirements, then the CO/AO must rescind the appointment letter and designate a new CTO for that award. (This is the case for each award for which the individual may have been designated CTO.)

Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis where the Operating Unit or a Strategic Objective (SO) Team obtains the written approval of the Director, Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA), to allow the individual to continue as a CTO.

13. Recommended Courses for Supervisors and Senior Managers of CTOs

Supervisors need updated knowledge and skills to match those of their CTOs. Supervisors are strongly encouraged to attend a two-day course on Acquisitions & Assistance for CTO Supervisors. This course emphasizes the correct support to be given to a CTO consistent with the CTO requirements. It is recommended that this training be completed within one year of being assigned supervision or management of CTOs.

In order to provide support and direction to CTOs and to achieve the desired results from USAID projects and activities, senior managers are also encouraged to attend a one-day course, Acquisitions & Assistance for Senior Managers. This course will assist senior managers, including Mission Directors, Deputy Mission Directors, Deputy Assistant Administrators, and Assistant Administrators, in understanding the authority and current requirements of employees with CTO duties and responsibilities.

14. Participation of USAID Partners in CTO Courses

USAID encourages the participation of partners, whether contractors or grantees, in CTO Certification courses. Generally, no more than two spaces in classroom training are available for partners. This training is provided to USAID partners to assist them in understanding the authority and requirements of USAID CTOs. In addition, this training should enable USAID partners to receive consistent treatment in their dealings with CTOs worldwide. Partners are not eligible for certification.

This Notice will be incorporated as an internal mandatory reference to ADS 458, Training and Development which will be issued in the near future. This Notice will supplement guidance in ADS 461, Employee Evaluation Program, Foreign Service and Senior Foreign Service, and ADS 462, Employee Evaluation Program, Civil Service.

1 Includes grants to public international organizations (also see ADS 308, Grants and Cooperative Agreements with Public International Organizations).

2 For more information, see General Policy Notice dated September 24, 2004, entitled "Updating Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) and Managing Organization Information in Phoenix." However, use of the CTO Master List does not replace any requirement in the earlier Notice.

3 OUs may add additional information about the award, such as the effective date, estimated completion date, etc., if desired, provided that the data fields in the standardized ML remain unchanged.

POINTS OF CONTACT: Questions regarding this Notice may be directed to Anne Terio, M/HR/TE, (202) 712-0624; or Diane Howard, M/OAA/P, (202) 712-0206.

Notice 0983

File Name	Notice Date	Effective Date	Editorial Revision Date	ADS CD No.	Remarks
IU4_0513_100505_cd41	09/29/2005	09/29/2005		CD 41	This IU will remain effective until the policy in it is incorporated into an ADS chapter.

Iu4_0513_100505_w100705_cd41