

AUG 15 1997

MEMORANDUM

TO: See Addressee List

FROM: *PS*
Janis A. Sposato
Procurement Executive

SUBJECT: Training of Procurement Personnel

During the last four years, the Administration has substantially overhauled the Government's fifty year old procurement system. These changes, which are an outgrowth of the National Performance Reviews's recommendations, culminated in passage of both the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act of 1994, Pub. L. 103-355, and the Federal Acquisition Reform Act of 1996, Pub. L. 104-106 (including new qualification standard for GS-1102, Contracting Positions). These laws are intended to achieve a procurement system that is more efficient, more customer and commercially oriented and less labor intensive. Under these laws, we have the opportunity to work smarter, using common sense practices in procurement and purchasing. Other Administration initiatives have included formalized use of past performance criteria in evaluating contractors, streamlining source selection procedures in order to award contracts more quickly, and use of simplified procedures for smaller dollar purchases (e.g., increased use of bank cards, etc.).

Implementation of these tremendous changes requires retraining of the workforce. If we are to successfully transform our procurement system in actual practice, the existing workforce must learn about and accept the new flexibilities now available. If the recent statutory reforms are to meet the needs of Federal program managers for timely, quality contract deliverables at realistic and reasonable prices, they must be supported by a renewed emphasis on training and education. This is not only a good thing to do for its own sake, it is also smart business. Industry surveys indicate that each dollar invested in procurement and purchasing training yields significant returns in terms of more successful contract negotiations that result in lower prices paid. The whole purpose of procurement reform is to stretch tight budgets through less costly procedures that result in lower prices and better contractor performance.

As you consider your bureau's procurement personnel requirements in the coming year, I urge you not to skimp on training of your acquisition workforce. To the contrary, I would urge each of you to place more resources into this vital area. I assure you that the results will more than offset the small initial price.

Encourage employees to maintain the currency of their acquisition knowledge and generally enhance their knowledge of related acquisition management disciplines through academic programs and other self-developmental activities. Within the parameters of 5 CFR 410, we encourage you to promote the utilization of academic programs by colleges and universities in acquisition fields and related academic prerequisites, skills, and knowledge. In meeting the tougher education standards required under the Clinger-Cohen Act, and in the spirit of making procurement people the government's business people, allow employees to be cross-trained not only in business and legal subjects, but in other related disciplines as well such as computer technology and communication skills. In keeping with the need for ensuring a more educated and skillful work force where people will exercise more discretion and business judgment and will be empowered with greater responsibilities, please allow greater latitude in the types of courses that you are willing to provide tuition reimbursement for. In my view, this includes training in the broad range of knowledge, skills and abilities that are required in individual job performance. Narrow technical skill based training alone, while needed, is no longer sufficient to develop competent, well rounded business people. Equally important, are an individual's analytical, writing and interpersonal skills.

We look forward to working with each of you on these important initiatives. If you have any questions on these new procurement career initiatives, please call me at (202) 514-3101 or Dr. Deborah M. Patrick, the Procurement Career Development Program Manager for the Department, at (202) 616-3681.

Attachment

ADDRESSEE LIST

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