



# Federal Acquisition *INSIGHT*

October/November 2007



## From the Desk of the Director: Karen Pica

As part of our continuous efforts to provide development opportunities for the acquisition workforce, we are pleased to announce that OFPP has released the 2007 Contracting Workforce Competencies Survey results. With workforce changes imminent, the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) is enhancing learning opportunities and expanding our partnerships in order to strategically position the civilian contracting workforce effectively for the next generation. For more detailed results, please read the newsletter article below. We also encourage you to visit us at <http://www.FAI.gov> today for your career development needs.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, a time to pay tribute to all of our workers with disabilities. Through initiatives such as "Workers with disabilities: talent for a winning team," FAI honors the contributions of physically challenged employees. We consistently strive to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our workforce and are committed to providing maximum opportunities for people with disabilities and to our service-disabled veterans. Our goal is to provide dynamic career development opportunities to prepare today's workforce for tomorrow's challenges. To suggest how we can better support the talent and resources within your team, please drop us a line at [questions@FAI.gov](mailto:questions@FAI.gov).

### In This Issue

From the Desk of the Director	1
Around the Acquisition Workforce	1
Acknowledging Excellence	7
Acquisition Spotlight	8
Training Update	8
Tip of the Month	9
Upcoming Events	9
Looking Ahead	9

## Around the Acquisition Workforce

### Office of Federal Procurement Policy Announces Results of 2007 Contracting Workforce Competencies Survey

The Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) has released the governmentwide results of the 2007 Contracting Workforce Competencies Survey. The survey was conducted April 30 through May 18, 2007, by FAI. The federal civilian contracting workforce was surveyed in an effort to determine the availability of contracting skills and to identify areas where resources should be concentrated to improve essential contracting skills.

OFPP and FAI, as well as individual agencies, continue to analyze the survey data gathered from approximately 60% of the civilian

contracting workforce, an exceptionally high response rate. Of the 5,409 individuals responding to the survey, 80% were in the GS-1102 series, most indicating that they were either Contract Officers or Contract Specialists.

The demographic data being collected by the survey, presents this composite profile of a typical member of the Federal contracting workforce:

- 51 to 55 years of age
- Female
- GS-1102, grade 12 or 13
- Not in a supervisory role
- Holds a bachelor's degree or higher
- Is likely to retire in the next 11 to 20 years

### FAI Board of Directors

- David Litman—Chair, DOT
- Molly Wilkinson, GSA
- Kay Ely, OPM
- Joanie Newhart, SBA
- Dr. Ed Hoffman, NASA
- Frank Anderson, OSD and DAU
- Chuck Gherardini, EPA
- Tom Essig, DHS

## Around the Acquisition Workforce

Results indicate that proficiency levels in both general business competencies and technical contracting competencies are at the levels necessary to achieve agency missions. The highest proficiency levels were found in the GS-1102 workforce in the Contract Officer and Procurement Analyst job functions. The highest proficiency levels were also evident in employees with 21 or more years of federal contracting experience and by survey respondents holding a master's or PhD degree.

The survey also revealed that significant proficiencies in both the general business and technical contracting competencies will be leaving the government acquisition workforce over the next 10 years due to the retirement of senior-level professionals. This information is corroborated by the data in FAI's 2006 *Annual Report of the Federal Acquisition Workforce*. These findings will allow OFPP, FAI and other federal agencies to plan for replacement and transfer across the knowledge pool over the next 10 years.

Survey respondents indicated that training in the following competency areas would be beneficial on an individual as well as organizational level:

- Project management
- Defining government requirements and performance-based acquisitions
- Effective management of requirements for contract administration
- Effective performance management and use of performance metrics

FAI will explore the need for further training in these areas through a variety of delivery methods. Agencies are analyzing what their workforce respondents reported as training needs and formulating their own individual training response strategies.

Employees who participated in the survey indicated their agreement with key assessments of their work environment. Employees agreed that:

- Managers approve training requests.
- Rotational assignments to broaden expertise would be beneficial.
- Their supervisor plays a key role in their Individual Development Planning.

- Their performance review gives them information about their training needs.
- They would benefit from a mentor or coach.
- They are provided dedicated work time to complete online training courses.

Managers who participated in the survey indicated their agreement with key managerial statements. Managers agree that:

- Upper management supports training requests.
- They would support their employees in identifying rotational assignments.
- They play a key role in their employees' Individual Development Planning.
- They provide feedback to their employees on their training needs in performance reviews.
- They are able to provide adequate on-the-job training and coaching for employees.
- They have adequate resources and support to provide the training needed by employees.

At both the governmentwide and agency levels, the survey results will prove exceptionally valuable in developing comprehensive and effective human capital strategies for managing the civilian acquisition workforce.



## Around the Acquisition Workforce

### National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Dear Colleagues:

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled (the Committee) is the independent federal agency that administers the AbilityOne Program.

As President Bush has noted, "All of our citizens should have the opportunity to live and work with dignity and freedom. Every October, we observe National Disability Employment Awareness Month to recognize the talents, skills and dedication of people with disabilities who are a vital part of our work force." National Disability Employment Awareness Month is an exceptional time to celebrate the successes of the AbilityOne Program, but there are numerous other opportunities throughout the year to plan and conduct AbilityOne events. New contract awards, ribbon-cutting ceremonies, anniversaries and other milestones, visits by prominent individuals and award presentations all offer the chance to reach local, state and national leaders as well as local businesses and the media.

The AbilityOne Program creates an array of business solutions at a fair market price to federal customers staffed or produced by people with severe disabilities. Due to the AbilityOne Program, nearly 48,000 people are employed at more than 600 community-based nonprofit agencies across the country. These opportunities have equipped tens of thousands of people who are blind or have other severe disabilities with

the skills and training necessary to earn equitable wages, benefits and greater independence. Although we celebrate these successes, there remains a critical need for the AbilityOne Program. Census statistics show only 38% of the overall population of people with disabilities are employed.

We hope that you will take advantage of October's National Disability Employment Awareness Month observance to recognize the achievements of the AbilityOne Program and the 48,000 people it employs in support of you, our federal customers.



Sincerely,

Patrick Rowe, Acting Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer



## Around the Acquisition Workforce

### How To Make a Difference through Awareness

By Stephanie Lesko

#### What is legal blindness?

The Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act and The Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled Committee's regulations use the following common definition of legal blindness:

Central visual acuity which does not exceed 20/200 in the better eye with correcting lenses or...visual acuity if better than 20/200...accompanied by a limit to the field of vision in the better eye to such a degree that its widest diameter subtends an angle no greater than 20 degrees.

#### What is a severe disability?

Disabilities can be categorized as:

- Physical (affecting mobility and/or neuromuscular function)
- Sensory (affecting sight and/or hearing),
- Communicative (affecting speech),
  - Hidden disabilities, which include conditions of heart or respiratory system
  - Epilepsy
  - Mental Illness
    - Mood disorders
    - Depression
    - Post traumatic stress

The Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act and the Committee's regulations define a severe disability other than blindness as:

A severe physical or mental impairment (a residual, limiting condition resulting from an injury, disease, or congenital defect) which so limits the person's functional capabilities (mobility, communication, interpersonal skills, self-care, self-direction, work tolerance or work skills) that the individual is unable to engage in normal competitive employment over an extended period of time.

As evident by the above definitions, the AbilityOne Program focuses on providing employment and training opportunities for two specific groups—people who are blind and people who have other severe disabilities and are unable to obtain or maintain competitive employment.

Please contact Stephanie Lesko, Public Affairs Specialist, at the AbilityOne Program if you require any assistance in planning an AbilityOne celebration during National Disability Employment Awareness Month at [slesko@jwod.gov](mailto:slesko@jwod.gov) or visit <http://www.abilityone.gov/jwod/index.html> for more information.



To avoid negative connotations or patronizing language, emphasize the "people" before the disability, such as:

- People *with disabilities*, instead of the *disabled* or *handicapped*
- People *who are blind*, instead of *blind people*
- *Has* (specify the disability), instead of *afflicted with*
- *Born with* (specify the disability), instead of *has a birth defect*
- A person who *uses a wheelchair*, instead of *confined to a wheelchair*
- People who are *deaf*, instead of *deaf and dumb*, *deaf-mute* or *hearing-impaired* people
- Products *created by people who are blind*, instead of *blind-made* products
- A person *without speech*, instead of *mute*
- A person with *a developmental disability*, instead of *retarded*

## Around the Acquisition Workforce

### Tips for interacting with people who are blind:

- Introduce yourself. Not everyone recognizes voices or remembers them.
- Don't leave a person who is blind talking to himself/herself.
- Let him/her know when you are leaving.
- Don't use hand signals. People with severe visual disabilities can't see waving or pointing hands.
- Don't omit words like, *See* or *Look*... People with visual disabilities are not offended by these words and understand that these words are part of normal conversation.
- Do feel free to photograph people who are blind or visually impaired. Everyone likes to capture special moments to save and show to others.
- Do speak directly to a person who is blind. Don't speak to a family member or friend and ignore a person who is blind. He or she can speak for himself or herself.
- Don't push, pull or grab a person who is blind. This can cause accidents and is often embarrassing.

### Tips for interacting with people with disabilities:

A disability is just one fact or aspect about a person. When we look beyond the disability, we see that an individual life, in all its variety, is more similar to our life than it is different.

- People with disabilities have the right to full inclusion and integration into society.
- People with disabilities can work.
- People with disabilities can benefit from the same services available to the rest of society.
- People with disabilities deserve opportunities just like everyone else.



### When providing assistance:

- First, ask if help is needed.
- Be sure you understand what is needed.
- Don't take over; just help.
- Speak directly to the person with a disability rather than through someone else such as a sign language interpreter.
- Treat adults as adults!
- Don't be afraid of making a mistake.
- Use common sense and a positive attitude.
- Always think of the person first.
- Be generous with yourself.
- Unsure of what to do or say? Ask!
- Made a mistake? Apologize, correct, learn and move on.
- Best way to refer to someone with a disability? By their name!
- Do offer your arm for assistance. A person who is blind would rather take your arm than have you take his arm.
- Don't rearrange furniture or personal items. Being independent means being set in your ways about where things belong. Please tell a person who is blind if you move something.
- Don't leave cabinet or closet doors partially open. This is unsafe and can cause accidents.
- Don't think more or brighter light is always better. More light may cause glare, which can make vision worse.
- Do use color contrast like black and white. Contrasting colors, black and white, or light and dark help objects or shapes stand out.
- Do remember that vision changes can be a result of weather conditions. Sometimes a person with visual disabilities sees better on cloudy days than on sunny days.



## Around the Acquisition Workforce

### FAI Town Hall Meeting – Success in San Francisco

On August 21, 2007, FAI held its first Town Hall Meeting in San Francisco, California. FAI's Director, Karen Pica, facilitated and led the open forum discussion, which was hosted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Twenty-five people representing six different federal agencies attended the session. Agencies included EPA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Social Security Administration, U.S. Mint, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Department of Homeland Security. Participants received 1.5 continuous learning points for their attendance.



Ms. Pica began by giving an overview of FAI and discussing the training and learning seminars it offers. From there, the session was an active dialogue with questions, challenges, and answers coming from both Ms. Pica and the audience. The discussion touched on training format, discussed pros and cons of online and classroom training, and also focused on coming changes in the workforce.

Questions were raised regarding how FAI is addressing recruiting and retention in the contracting workforce. Ms. Pica talked about having government sell itself better. Two ways Ms. Pica mentioned were 1) using current employees as ambassadors of their program, and 2) helping managers understand workforce flexibilities available to them.

The informal nature of the Town Hall forum allowed for candid discussion from both sides of the podium. The successful session provided an opportunity for federal employees to have direct access to the FAI Director and for FAI to promote the importance of training and continued learning in the field.

### FAI Website Redesign

By Otis Langford

In late 2007, FAI plans to launch a redesign of the FAI.gov website. Based on feedback from FAI's constituents and input from users, the redesigned website should make information easier to find as well as provide information that supports many areas of interest to the acquisition workforce professionals. Contract Specialists, Project and Program Managers, COR's and COTR's, Acquisition Career Managers, and others will be able to find information from training and certification to knowledge management.

If you are interested in providing feedback on the plans for the new FAI site, please contact Hallie Wilfert at 703-284-8256 or [hallie\\_wilfert@sra.com](mailto:hallie_wilfert@sra.com). Preparing today's workforce for tomorrow's challenges.



## Around the Acquisition Workforce



### ACMIS

Acquisition Career Management Information System

#### ACMIS Updates – Coming October 2007

By: Gloria Poole

In response to OMB memo dated May 23, 2007, Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) will comply with safeguarding against and responding to the breach of personally identifiable information.

In an effort to enhance security for Acquisition Career Management Information System (ACMIS) participants within the governmentwide acquisition workforce, FAI is implementing additional security measures to reinforce the administrative, technical, and physical safeguards on electronic files now in place in ACMIS. These measures will ensure the security and confidentiality of employee records by detecting and guarding against security or integrity threats.

Beginning in October 2007, the following ACMIS enhancements will be implemented:

- (1) The entire Social Security Number (SSN) will be displayed as asterisks when a user registers as a new user of the system.
- (2) Social Security numbers will not be displayed on any pages within ACMIS.



All FAI team members working our programs have training in protecting your personal information.

In addition to critical security updates, enhancements to the appearance, functionality and navigation of the system will be launched. Improvements are being made in the following areas:

- Process for identifying users' roles and certification requirements
- Registration process simplification: reducing the number of steps required by users to access the system
- New graphic design for the system
- Navigation and system functionality
- Removing the "Required Mandatory Training" table to facilitate manual registration for mandatory courses

Look for announcements at <http://www.FAI.gov> for the official launch date in the coming weeks!

## Acknowledging Excellence: Acquisition Awards Update



**Nominate now!** Nominations are open for the Elmer Staats Award and due at 5pm EST on Friday, October 26, 2007. All nominations should be submitted to Michiyo Wheeler, [mwheeler@agacgfm.org](mailto:mwheeler@agacgfm.org), 800.242.7211, ext. 321. For more information please visit: <http://www.agacgfm.org/membership/awards/staats.aspx>.

**Mark your calendars!** The Blanche Witte Memorial Foundation Annual Award is due November 15, 2007.

For more information please visit: <http://intranet.ncmahq.org/Award%20Policies%20and%20Guidelines/Blanche%20Witte%20Memorial%20Foundation%20Annual%20Award.doc>.

Contact: Wendy Murrah 800-344-8096 x411 or [murrah@ncmahq.org](mailto:murrah@ncmahq.org)

The 2008 Sammie Award nominations are ongoing until March 2008. For more information or to nominate a colleague, please visit:

<http://servicetoamericamedals.org/SAM/nominations/>.

## Acquisition Spotlight

### Meet Gloria Poole

#### Program Manager of FAI's Information Technology Program!

Gloria Poole serves as Program Manager for FAI's Information Technology Programs. She is originally from West Virginia, and has a Bachelor of Science in Business from the University of New York, Albany. With more than 20 years of experience working for the federal government, she adds a wealth of expertise to FAI's team and is a leader of our mission.

Among Gloria's talents is performing analysis on acquisition workforce tasks, with a focus on motivation, team spirit, requirements, and



expected performance. As Program Manager, she also directs and oversees the implementation of IT-related programs for FAI and the FAI/Defense Acquisition University (DAU) partnership. She ensures that FAI IT programs meet governmentwide policy objectives and comply with GSA technical, security, and capital planning requirements.

She also prepares and presents analyses to gain support for effective change.

Among the challenges presented to Gloria at FAI have been leading, developing and implementing the migration of the FAI IT infrastructure; and serving as IT COTR for related programs and the FAI/Defense Acquisition University (DAU) partnership. Working with staff and contractors across three developmental teams, Gloria successfully steered FAI's business decisions and utilized her team's talents to implement Phase I of the FAI IT infrastructure—which includes the new Federal Acquisition Institute Training Application System (FAITAS). She also helped to merge FAI Online University courses with DAU learning modules, enhancing the visibility of these courses governmentwide.

Gloria appreciates the continued opportunities to challenge her skills at FAI, and strives to become even more efficient in her analytical job functions. Outside her life at FAI, Gloria loves dancing and macramé.

## Training Updates

A Partial Listing of FAI's FY08 Training Opportunities is now available. The new training opportunities for October and November 2007 can be found at FAI.gov (<http://www.fai.gov/resource/courseldt.asp>).

Eligible employees can register for training via FAITAS (<https://www.atrrs.army.mil/channels/faitas/student/logon.aspx?caller=1>).

Please note that additional FY08 classes will be posted to FAI.gov as vendor contracts are awarded.

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





"Americans with disabilities are active and contributing members of our society and they must have the opportunity to develop the skills they need to compete and obtain jobs in the 21st century workforce".

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
October 21, 2004

## Tip of the Month

### TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL ON-LINE LEARNING:

When taking an on-line class from your office, it is important to be able to focus on the course, material and when available the instructor. We recommend the following:

1. **Quiet Place.** Reserve a quiet place to take your class. (Schedule a conference room with Internet access and telephone line or close your office door.)
2. **Do Not Disturb.** Let others know that you are taking a class and should not be disturbed. (Place a sign on the door that says "In training, Do Not Disturb.")
3. **Engage.** Stay engaged – seek help, complete exercises, complete all assignments.
4. **Manage your time** well. Allow for periodic breaks.
5. **Don't multi-task.** Concentrate on the instruction provided. Don't do email, make calls or read other material. You'll get more from the session if you stay focused on the session.

Source: <http://www.spss.com/training/howitworks.htm>



## Upcoming Events

- October 26: ACMIS System Enhancement Release
- October 30: FAC-PPM Vendor's Meeting
- November 8-9: Government Contract Management Conference
- December 20: IACMC Meeting

**Important  
DATE!**

## Looking Ahead!

Please stay tuned for the December/January Edition of FAInsight which will feature the Contracting Workforce Competencies Survey Results and other great acquisition related articles!

We want to hear from you! How do you like our new newsletter 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](mailto:questions@FAI.gov) and visit [www.FAI.gov](http://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](mailto:Danielle_PorakDeVarna@sra.com)  
Or visit [www.FAI.gov](http://www.FAI.gov).*

