



DAU Mission Assistance

A Less-Familiar Tool In the Acquisition Tool Kit

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Today's acquisition environment is complex. Aside from the many technical challenges associated with developing new capabilities, shrinking DoD budgets are creating extraordinary acquisition pressures. Not surprisingly, these shrinking budgets demand a program manager's constant vigilance. Add this to the challenges of maturing and fielding tomorrow's technology in parallel with dynamic statute, policy, and process changes, and it's easy to see why a program manager (PM) assignment is one of the most challenging jobs in the Defense Acquisition Workforce.

The ability to bring in the right support to help address specific complex program challenges facing today's PMs can be an invaluable asset to a program office team. So are there any secret formulas available to PMs to help them combat some of these foreboding eventualities? While not a secret, leveraging DAU's Mission Assistance product line gives PMs access to a greater body of knowledge and expertise and can ultimately strengthen a PM's formula for success.

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For PMs considering this less-familiar tool, the question immediately comes to mind, "What practical benefit can my organization expect from working with DAU Mission Assistance?"

The answer is straightforward. DAU is positioned to assist DoD acquisition program organizations facing cost, schedule, and performance hurdles. DAU's Mission Assistance capability was designed to help PMs and others tackle the tough acquisition challenges they will encounter. DAU faculty includes subject-matter experts (SMEs) across all functional areas, who have collectively worked in every acquisition phase, in every acquisition product line, in industry, and in every military component. With this cadre of seasoned acquisition experts bringing varied backgrounds and extensive experiences to the table, valuable acquisition insights are at the PM's disposal.

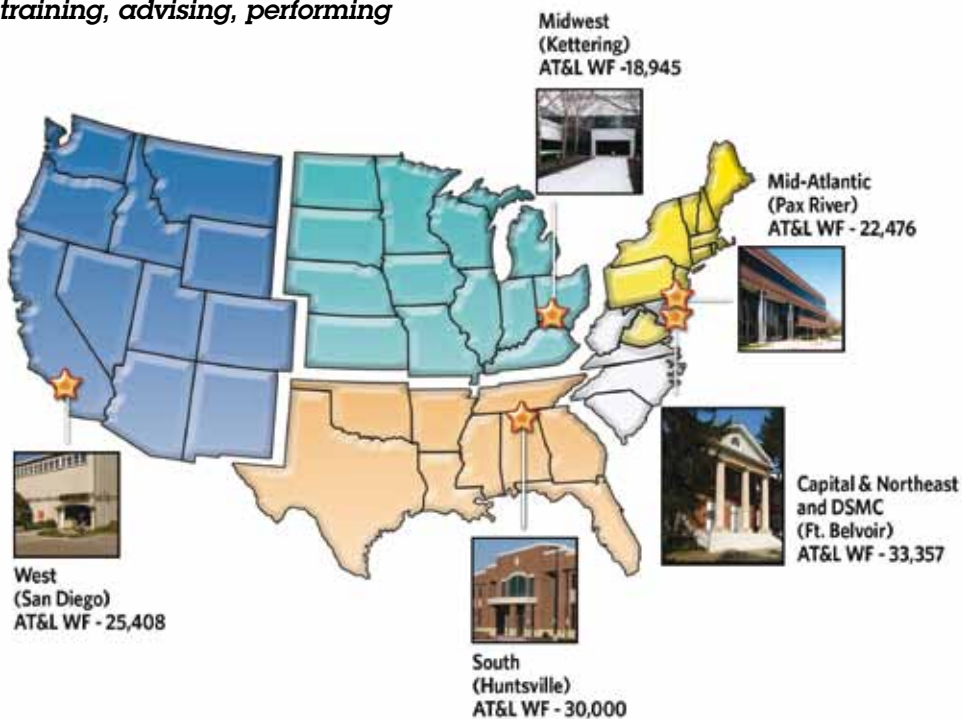
Why the Changing Federal Environment Makes Mission Assistance More Useful Than Ever

The federal government and DoD fiscal environments are radically changing. The "flat" economic recovery from the 2008 recession and sustained high unemployment have resulted in budgetary reductions, with the prospect of larger reductions in the near future. Renewed emphasis on deficit reduction will only accelerate this trend. Historically, major DoD budget cuts have usually been taken first in acquisition accounts.

Congress's recent acquisition legislation—the Weapons System Acquisition Reform Act (WSARA) of 2009, and the Implementing Management for Performance and Related Reforms to Obtain Value in Every Acquisition Act (IMPROVE) Acquisition Act of 2011—has been informed by these drivers. Both acts task DoD acquirers to improve performance in multiple areas.

DoD leadership started early to proactively address these "sea changes." Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, Ph.D., in his former role as under secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, issued a series of Better Buying Power initiatives that challenged the Defense Acquisition Workforce to "do more without more." These initiatives articulate strategic and tactical guidance on how the DoD ac-

Figure 1. DAU Regional Orientation
We are part of the acquisition community with global outreach—training, advising, performing



Located with Our Customers

quisition enterprise can help deliver better value while improving acquisition execution. (Note: these "efficiency initiatives" continue to evolve, so those seeking the latest information on them are encouraged to view the Acquisition Community Connection's Better Buying Power public website [<https://acc.dau.mil/initiatives>]. In addition, each DAU region can provide direct BBP mission assistance).

As a result of these environmental changes, DoD acquisitions are under more scrutiny than ever before. Inarguably, PMs are still expected to deliver specified capability to the warfighter within allocated resources, via flexible and executable alternatives, despite the environmental/fiscal turbulence. PMs who fail to address significant problems, and bring unresolved issues forward to a formal forum like a program review or Defense Acquisition Board (DAB) without thoughtful corrective "ways ahead" can quickly lose ground.

DAU's Mission Assistance can be a useful resource to test-drive a PM's alternative strategies or assist a PM in reflecting more deeply about an issue, so he or she can evaluate the best alternative while considering acquisition "best practices." Identifying problem areas while they incubate, but before they mature, gives more time to the acquisition manager to look at root causes, develop the necessary corrective actions or mitigation techniques, and ultimately influence acquisition outcomes for the better. DAU has a proven track record of providing valuable assistance in this area to a wide variety of acquisition organizations.



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DAU Mission Assistance Is Organized Around Its Workforce

To better serve its AT&L customers, DAU developed a regional customer-support strategy with campuses co-located close to key workforce locations. This construct allows DAU to provide responsive customer support to the Defense Acquisition Workforce, from training classes to specialized mission assistance.

What Types of Mission Assistance Does DAU Offer?

Specific Mission Assistance varies and can take on many forms as identified below.

Mission Assistance can be:

- A program “assist,” perhaps in the form of an assessment of the health of a particular acquisition area across any aspect of its life cycle
- A dialogue on best practices and lessons learned that can benefit a program by creating more efficiencies
- An outside, objective set of eyes to look at various aspects of a program such as an acquisition strategy, source selection plan, competitive strategies, systems engineering plan, integrated schedule, incentive plan, etc.
- A review and analysis of an organization that may result in compelling insights and comprehensive recommendations
- Specialized and focused acquisition team training, covering the gamut of necessary team skills

Whatever form it takes, Mission Assistance is “not” intended to be an audit, an oversight function, an inspection, or a source of additional labor for program offices. Instead, it is a collaborative discussion between a customer and DAU regarding specific aspects of their acquisition, and stays between them and them only. It is strictly “not for attribution.” This privileged communication is a fundamental tenet of DAU Mission Assistance.

DAU Mission Assistance Efforts Fall into Several Categories:

Targeted/Tailored Training includes courses/workshops that have been developed or can be customized to meet focused acquisition training and is more granular in nature. These courses can be given as is, or tailored to an individual pro-

gram's needs. A complete listing of the current targeted training courses can be found in the DAU iCatalog (<http://icatalog.dau.mil>) or by contacting an associate dean of outreach & mission assistance (ADOMA) in the respective region.

Rapid Development Training (RDT) requires quick production and fielding of training materials in support of time urgent changes to DoD policy and acquisition initiatives. The primary goal of all RDT efforts is to have materials available (normally, via the Internet) at the same time the policy change or acquisition initiative is announced. Examples of recent RDT include DoD 5000-series changes and the changes in life cycle support policy including the creation of the program support manager (PSM). RDT for Better Buying Power was made available to the Defense Acquisition Workforce in the fall of 2011.

Consulting provides partnering assistance to individual acquisition efforts focused on a wide array of unique challenges and issues. This partnering can occur in a variety of sizes (from individual to large acquisition organizations), or formats (e.g., workshops focused on specific outcomes (including government, or government/industry teams), specialized team training to improve performance; one-on-one mentoring /coaching for individual senior acquirers, or a deep investigative dive into programmatic and/or organizational challenges).

For an in-depth breakout of DAU's Mission Assistance portfolio, visit the Mission Assistance website at <http://www.dau.mil/ma/default.aspx>

MDAP/MAIS Mission Assistance

Major Defense Acquisition Programs (MDAPs) and Major Automated Information Systems (MAISs) face many challenges throughout their life cycle. Having an experienced “thinking partner” available to help reconcile a wide range of challenges, ranging from leadership to programmatic, has proven invaluable for many PMs and PMOs. To further aid MDAPs and MAISs, DAU established an MDAP/MAIS director to provide this capability as part of the senior leadership staff at each region and the Defense Systems College Management (DSMC).

DAU Mission Assistance Also Includes Services Acquisition Assistance

Over half of the total DoD acquisition expenditures reside in acquisition of services, and have done so for more than 10

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years. "Improving the Tradecraft of Services Acquisition" (a major Better Buying Power area) has become a high priority. Educating the workforce engaged in services acquisition to effectively execute this critical area is vital.

DAU developed the Services Acquisition Assist workshops to support better services acquisition execution. These workshops are designed as a just-in-time event to facilitate a specific acquisition team and its requirement. These workshops use a seven-step services acquisition process. They teach the teams, through hands on training, how to develop and execute performance-based services requirements in their specific job domains. The following diagram is an overview of the Services Acquisition Assists workshops:

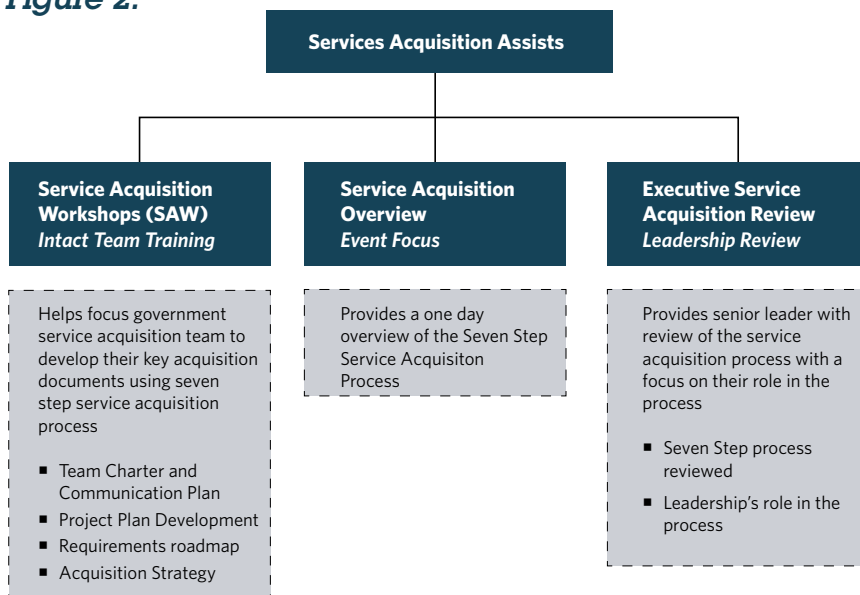
Mission Assistance Customer Feedback

Like any product line, feedback is an essential component since it addresses what matters most—the customer's view. AT&L programs that have leveraged the program assist capabilities such as program start-up workshops (PSWs) or internal support to a specific task or program objective felt well prepared for their program's challenges. Following is a sampling of customer responses to DAU's recent mission assists.

Capt. Rick Muldoon, USN, (Ret.) Program Manager, PMA-261, CH-53 Heavy Lift Helicopters: "When I requested assistance in pulling together a command climate survey shortly after reporting on board as the PM, DAU was ready and able to jump in and make it happen. From developing the right questions for my command climate survey, to administering the online survey, through the detailed analysis of the results, DAU was there to provide their expertise and guidance, and I greatly appreciated it. DAU has also been valuable in helping us get out the message to the broader acquisition community on a couple of very successful program initiatives, which is important to the health of the DoD acquisition community."

Rear Adm. (Select) C.J. Jaynes, USN, Program Manager, PMA-213, Naval Air Traffic Management: "As a new Program Manager leading the start-up of an ACAT 1D program Joint Precision Automated Landing Systems (JPALS), I turned to DAU Mid Atlantic to guide and facilitate a program start-up workshop. The team spent 4 days together establishing ground rules, drumbeats, working relationships and aligning the government and contractor organizations to work in the most efficient manner. Eighteen months later, the Team asked for DAU to return and facilitate a follow-up workshop to help us attain the next level of performance. I was so pleased with the results that were achieved for the team that I decided to use DAU to lead the off-site for the entire program office. DAU conducted a climate survey and assisted the program office in focusing on areas that would enhance productivity and performance."

Figure 2.



Mission Assistance Customer Feedback

Brig. Gen. Frank Kelly: Commanding General, Marine Corps Systems Command, Quantico, Va.: "DAU's support to MARCORSSYSCOM with online courses, classroom training, and mission assistance initiatives has measurably improved our individual acquisition capabilities and organizational performance. The full range of acquisition services and solutions available through DAU make them an invaluable resource and essential component of our acquisition mission."

Mike Christoff, Training & Education Specialist, Acquisition Workforce Training Office of the Chief Procurement Officer, U. S. Department of Homeland Security: "In simplest terms, the commitment of the DAU Mission Assistance team allowed the Department of Homeland Security to meet the certification training requirements for the program manager acquisition workforce through the design and development of PM Level 1, 2, and 3 courseware and by delivering superb classroom instruction to more than 2,000 students over the past 3 years."

Jimmy Bailey, C-17 Globalmaster III, Deputy Director, 564th Aircraft Sustainment Squadron, USAF: "The end result of our C-17/DAU collaboration will result in a contract being in place by the required date and a completely new government-contractor working relationship."


Ricky O. Stuart, Technology Manager, Riverine Inter-coastal Operations (RIO) Joint Capability Demonstrations (JCTD) Project, U.S. Southern Command: "DAU's expertise and facilitation turned a difficult, complicated task into an event that yielded a precise, common focus that will serve the RIO JCTD well."

Lt. Col. Keith Nowlin, Operational Manager, Joint Recovery and Distribution System Joint Capability Demonstrations (JCTD) Project, U.S. Army Combine Arms Support Command: "Just wanted to say thanks to the DAU team for facilitating a project review. DAU provided a great tool that we will use to assist us with the JCTD. This was a tremendous help and don't be surprised if we ask you to come back later in the program."

Maj. Gen. (Select) Christopher Bogdan, KC-46 Tanker Program Executive Officer and Program Director: "The PSW was a huge success from my point of view. It provided a structured forum for the leaders of our program office and other government stakeholders to meet and begin building relationships with their Boeing counterparts. It was also a superb starting point for a program of this scope and complexity. Together, with the help of DAU, the program office and Boeing were able to map out the first 180 days of the program, so we all have a common understanding of how we will move forward and operate together. I recommend all DoD programs—big or small—conduct a PSW. It is well worth the time and effort."

Col. Charles Cynamon, Air Force Space Command/Space & Missile Center, MILSATCOM Program Office: "The DAU Executive Coaching Program was critical to focusing my attention and energy toward creating a sound investment strategy for the future military satellite communications enterprise. My DAU coach collaborated with me on articulating the future vision, identifying the necessary actions, and developing an actionable plan to achieve a lasting goal. Through this program, Air Force Space Command now has an approved investment strategy for providing our warfighters with improved and affordable satellite communications capability."

Conclusion

With the radical changes in today's fiscal and acquisition environment, coupled with the sustained emphasis by Congress and other key stakeholders on improving acquisition outcomes, the DoD acquisition manager's job grows more and more challenging. DAU's Mission Assistance capability can provide rapid, knowledgeable and non-attribution support to help meet those challenges and improve acquisition outcomes. DAU's entire enterprise of acquisition experts stands ready to assist any acquisition program office, regardless of ACAT level, emphasizing collaboration and customer focus. For more information, please contact the personnel identified in the sidebar. 

The authors' contact information is provided in the sidebar at the end of this article.

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