EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

July 13, 2011

MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF ACQUISITION OFFICERS
                              SENIOR PROCUREMENT EXECUTIVES
                              CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICERS

FROM: Daniel I. Gordon
                             Administrator

SUBJECT: Guidance for Specialized Information Technology Acquisition Cadres

The Federal government spends over $500 billion annually on contracts and orders for supplies and services, many of them high-risk and complex in nature. Far too often, Federal information technology (IT) acquisitions, especially for large projects, have been plagued by budget overruns, missed milestones, or failure to deliver expected functionality—and sometimes all three.

To address these challenges, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a "25 Point Implementation Plan to Reform Federal Information Management Technology."[1] Among other reform initiatives, this plan calls for guidance on designing and developing specialized IT acquisition cadres, where helpful, and for best practices that can help agencies address IT acquisition challenges. The attached guidance describes how agencies can: (1) design and organize a cadre of contracting professionals, Program Managers (PMs), and Contracting Officer's Representatives (CORs) to ensure these functions work closely throughout the process to achieve program goals, and (2) strengthen the skills and capabilities of this specialized acquisition cadre to improve outcomes. A community of practice (CoP), described below, is being developed to capture and disseminate best practices for developing and strengthening these specialized teams and for improving IT acquisition strategies and practices generally.

Many Chief Acquisition Officers, Chief Information Officers, and other agency leaders have already recognized the benefits of developing a multi-functional group of professionals to acquire and manage complex programs. In developing this guidance, the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) reached out to several of these organizations and the attached guidance includes best practices for recruiting, training, developing, and organizing acquisition professionals to achieve shared goals. This is consistent with OFPP's related initiatives to strengthen the acquisition workforce, reduce the use of high-risk vehicles, increase competition, and generally achieve better value for our acquisitions, in accordance with the March 2009 Presidential Memorandum on Government Contracting.[2] While the attached guidance addresses IT acquisitions in particular, the principles and practices can be utilized for other specialized program areas.

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[1] http://www.cio.gov/documents/25-Point-Implementation-Plan-to-Reform-Federal%20IT.pdf
[2] http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Memorandum-for-the-Heads-of-Executive-Departments-and-Agencies-Subject-Government/

While establishing cadres is not mandatory, agencies will benefit from reviewing their current IT acquisition workforce and program needs to determine if developing a new specialized team, or expanding the use of cadres where they exist, would lower program risk and improve outcomes. Using this guidance, agencies are required to update their most recent acquisition human capital plan (AHCP), which was submitted to OMB in March in accordance with OFPP guidance,[3] with a short supplement that:

1) analyzes their current IT acquisition staffing challenges;

2) determines if developing or expanding the use of cadres would improve IT program results; and

3) outlines a plan to pilot or expand cadres for an especially high-risk IT area, if the agency determines that such an effort would improve performance.

Details on the required elements of this supplement are included in Appendix 1, and the AHCP supplement is due to OMB on August 31, 2011.[4] OFPP, in consultation with the Office of E-Government and IT, will follow up with agencies to discuss agency plans and progress, disseminate best practices, and help address any challenges in adopting specialized IT acquisition teams. OMB may ask agencies with successful cadre experience to assist in reviewing agency plans and offering feedback.

To help agencies implement the strategies in the attached guidance, OFPP is:

- establishing a Community of Practice (CoP) for developing cadres and strengthening IT acquisition skills on the OMB MAX webpage at https://max.omb.gov/community/x/3ZA5Ig. The CoP will include best practices, information on training and development opportunities, and other resources; and

- working with the acquisition and IT communities to explore the development of "core-plus" certifications in IT acquisition as a supplement to core certification.

Thank you for your commitment to this important initiative. If you have any questions, please contact Joanie Newhart on (202) 395-4821 or jnewhart@omb.eop.gov.

Attachment

cc: Chief Human Capital Officers
        Chief Financial Officers
        Acquisition Career Managers

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[3] http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/procurement_workforce/AWF_Plan_10272009.pdf
[4] Because the Department of Defense does not submit an AHCP, a separate review may be submitted.

GUIDANCE FOR SPECIALIZED IT ACQUISITION CADRES

I. Introduction

The increasing complexity of Federal programs calls for a re-examination of how agencies organize, train, and develop their employees to ensure that high-risk efforts are appropriately staffed and supported. The Federal acquisition workforce is made up of many professionals who play key roles throughout the acquisition[5] and management process: Program Managers (PMs) identify needs and develop requirements based upon user and other stakeholder inputs; Contracting Officers (COs) establish acquisition strategies to achieve best value for taxpayer dollars; and Contracting Officer's Representatives (CORs) manage contract performance to ensure the government's interests are protected.

To improve the professionalization of the acquisition workforce generally, the Department of Defense, through the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act, established education, training, and work experience requirements. Civilian executive agencies followed and, in Policy Letter 05-01,[6] the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) established a robust framework for developing and managing the acquisition workforce. Today, certification programs exist for PMs, COs, and CORs to ensure they have the general skills and abilities to act in the best interest of the Government.[7] However, with the increasing number of high-risk Federal programs and the recent focus on improving how the Government buys and manages IT, additional steps must be taken to leverage, develop, and organize our acquisition human capital better and to provide targeted support where program risks are greatest.

II. Designing and Organizing a Specialized IT Acquisition Cadre

What is a specialized IT acquisition cadre and how does it work?

PMs, COs, CORs, and other professionals who have a shared expertise – whether through experience, training, or other developmental activities – of the commercial IT marketplace, vendor base, acquisition environment, and program management techniques are generally better able to define requirements, establish appropriate business strategies, and monitor contractor performance for IT procurements. Moreover, intra-agency communication and collaboration is generally more effective when there is a common understanding of each other's role in the process, but this doesn't always happen. The 2010 Acquisition Workforce Competency Survey[8]

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[5] Consistent with the Services Acquisition Reform Act of 2003, the term 'acquisition' means the process of acquiring, with appropriated funds, by contract for purchase or lease, property or services (including construction) that support the missions and goals of an executive agency, from the point at which the requirements of the executive agency are established in consultation with the chief acquisition officer of the executive agency; and includes describing requirements, soliciting and selection sources, awarding contracts, and managing contract performance.

[6] http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/procurement_policy_letter_05-01/

[7] This memorandum does not change these certification programs or the education, training, and experience qualifications applicable to these positions.

[8] http://www.fai.gov/pdfs/2010-Acquisition-Workforce-Competency-Survey-Results-Report.pdf

showed that contracting professionals rated project management as their lowest competency, and PMs rated themselves low in contracting competencies.

Many agencies have developed specialized cadres, like the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) at its Technology Acquisition Center and the General Services Administration's Assisted Acquisition Service, that are permanent organizations of acquisition professionals who support the major IT needs of an agency or organization – from requirements development through test and acceptance to contract closeout. By centralizing these functions, some agencies have found that they can achieve economies of scale, gain specialized IT experience, and develop centers of excellence to reduce program risk and increase the chance of successful program outcomes. Further, IT vendors – from large firms to small businesses – can target their communication efforts and build better, more effective relationships with the cadre's PMs, COs, and CORs.

Integrated Program Teams (IPTs) are cross-functional or multidisciplinary groups of individuals that are organized and collectively responsible for the specific purpose of delivering a product to an external or internal customer. They are led by a Program Manager (PM) and similar to a specialized cadre but are generally established to support a particular program for a limited period of time. IPTs include members of the specialized cadre and their customers, and also other key experts and stakeholders for the program. Each IPT for an IT program should include Government staff with expertise in program management, resource management, procurement, systems architecture and engineering, security, requirements analysis, test management, configuration management, and other disciplines, as necessary, to act in the best interest of the Government, evaluate all aspects of the project, and ensure delivery of promised functionality. Key members of the IPT should 1) be in place throughout the program lifecycle and 2) be co-located during the most critical junctures of the program, to the maximum extent possible.

What primary functions are usually represented in a specialized IT acquisition cadre?

Specialized IT acquisition cadres are generally composed of highly-trained, experienced acquisition professionals. At a minimum, cadres require the skills of the following:

- *Contracting Officers and contract specialists* – COs legally obligate the Government when they enter into contracts, and contract specialists support the COs in accomplishing their many duties during the pre- and post-award acquisition phases.
- *Program Managers* – PMs have a high-level understanding of the program and its supporting projects. The PM develops requirements, supports the CO throughout the acquisition process, and monitors all program activities closely to ensure desired outcomes or to identify remediation needs. When appropriate, some agencies may also have Project Managers who generally manage one or more projects.
- *Contracting Officer's Representatives* – CORs are designated and authorized in writing by the CO to perform specific technical or administrative functions on contracts or orders.[9]

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[9] As defined in Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 2.101. For the purpose of this guidance, the term COR also refers to Contracting Officer's Technical Representatives (COTRs), Technical or Task Monitors (TMs), and others who assist COs in managing their contracts.

What are some additional support functions that should also be considered when developing this team of professionals?

Given the general shortage of acquisition professionals and the challenges inherent in buying highly-technical goods and services, having additional support staff – whether full-time or part-time – can improve program outcomes.

- *Customer liaisons* – Several contracting organizations have improved requirements development through the use of customer liaisons. Customer liaisons are the bridge between the CO and the customer. Customer participation is critical throughout the program life cycle to ensure that the user's needs are appropriately described. Because COs may not have sufficient time to work closely with the customer in developing requirements, and because customers may need additional support to develop requirements that can be clearly explained in a solicitation, the customer liaison is a useful addition to the team. Technical writers can be very effective in this role and are used in many agencies to improve communication.

  In addition to assisting with requirements development, customer liaisons can support a variety of acquisition functions, such as independent cost estimating, source selection planning, and organizing evaluation teams, etc. After award, customer liaisons can also work with the COR to bridge the communication gap if the COR was not involved earlier in the process.

Communication and collaboration can also be positively affected by customer liaison and teaming concepts. For example, the VA has developed an Acquisition Rapid Response Office (ARRO) within its Technology Acquisition Center in New Jersey. ARRO is the first stop for procurement requests within the center. A team comprised of the procurement coordinator, CO, contract specialist, and engineer works with the customer to clarify, improve and assist in determining the requirement. The ARRO does a significant amount of training for customers and CORs at the VA, which takes a burden off the CO. Additionally, the VA develops experts through internal and external training programs. For example, they are currently working with a local university to build an IT track within the university's MBA/MS programs.

- *Commodity Experts* – Individuals with in-depth knowledge of a particular segment of the IT market, like telecommunications, or with a particular kind of solution, like cloud computing, are invaluable to the team.

- *Small Business Specialists* – Small businesses play a critical role in the Government's IT environment. From programming to technical support services, small businesses support a wide range of efforts so including small business specialists in the cadre can be especially helpful. They can identify new vendor partners, improve communication with existing partners, and increase opportunities generally.

- *Industry Liaisons* – Industry liaisons, such as those agencies will identify in their vendor communications plan in support of OMB's "Myth-busting" effort,[10] provide targeted outreach and assistance to the vendor community and can serve as a focal point for vendors seeking to do business with the agency. Adding this support may lead to better competition as it will help the CO reach vendors who may not previously have been considered.

- *Cost/Price Analysts* – Cost/price analysts and cost estimators can assist the CO in many areas, such as providing independent cost estimates, analyzing proposals, and developing negotiation positions. Though COs are required to take training in this area, cost and price analysis is a time intensive activity and individuals with this expertise can be especially helpful on complex acquisitions.

- *Financial/Budget Analysts* – Involvement of financial/budget analysts during the acquisition process can help to avoid potential problems in developing acquisition strategy areas related to finance and budgetary issues.

- *Purchasing Agents/Procurement Technicians* – Purchasing agents and procurement technicians can assist contracting professionals with a wide range of duties. They are typically trained in basic procurement, so can provide assistance with tasks ranging from market research and file preparation to tracking procurements and preparing awards for simple acquisitions.

What should the Chief Acquisition Officer (CAO), Chief Information Officer (CIO), and Senior Procurement Executive (SPE) consider in determining whether to develop a specialized IT acquisition cadre?

While there are many considerations in determining if a cadre would improve IT acquisitions, the SPE, CAO, and CIO may find the following questions helpful[11]:

- IT Management:
    - Does the agency have a significant number of highly complex and/or high-risk IT acquisitions?
    - Have agency TechStats uncovered institutional challenges with the agency's IT acquisitions?
    - Have reviews by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and/or Inspector General (IG) highlighted IT acquisition challenges or missed opportunities?

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[10] OFPP's February 2, 2011 memo titled, "Myth-Busting: Addressing Misconceptions to Improve Communication with Industry during the Acquisition Process," available at
http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/procurement/memo/Myth-Busting.pdf
[11] Some questions were taken from GAO's "Framework for Assessing the Acquisition Function at Federal Agencies." The Framework is available at http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05218g.pdf.

- Acquisition Function:
    - Does the agency spend a significant share of its procurement dollars on IT supplies or services?
    - Could the agency better leverage its IT spend or improve the quality of its goods/services by centralizing all or part of these acquisitions?
    - Have agency AcqStats uncovered systemic challenges with the agency's acquisition function?
    - Have the agency's (or bureau's) acquisition assessments or internal control reviews required by OMB Circular A-123[12] highlighted challenges in the acquisition function?
    - Does the agency have distinct customer groups with highly specialized mission needs?

- Acquisition Workforce:
    - Do FAI workforce reports[13] or competency surveys[14] indicate that your agency has challenges in this area?
    - Do your acquisition human capital planning efforts indicate that your agency needs additional staff or skills to meet mission needs?
    - Do your agency's CAO and CIO communicate regularly about how best to staff high-risk IT acquisitions? If not, would this improve outcomes?
    - Are your COs, PMs (especially PMs for IT efforts), and CORs assigned to IT acquisitions appropriately certified and up-to-date on continuous learning requirements?

How should this cadre be recruited, retained and organized?

Because specialized IT acquisition cadres work in a fast-paced, dynamic environment, special consideration should be given to recruiting and retaining these individuals. Agency CAOs and SPEs should work closely with the CIO and Chief Human Capital Officer to develop strategies and best practices in these areas. As agencies gain experience, OFPP will share these best practices and strategies for recruitment and retention of cadre members in a CoP.

Contracting professionals can add significantly more value to the IT supplies and services being provided to customers when they work very closely with the COR and fully understand the customer's mission and requirements. This is usually best done by organizing around specific customers or categories of IT spend, such as hardware, software, IT support services, and telecommunications.

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[12] http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/omb/procurement/memo/a123_guidelines.pdf
[13] http://www.fai.gov/fapis.asp
[14] http://www.fai.gov/compsurvey.asp

Considerations for each are listed below:

Considerations for Organizing the Contracting Function	
Organize around Customers	*Organize around Commodities*
- Large portion of procurement dollars are spent on a specific customer (for example, transportation research) - Customers often comment that there is no consistency in the contracting team that supports their mission so the learning curve is steep - There is lack of cohesiveness in the acquisition strategies because of this steep learning curve - Contracting professionals continuously note that they don't understand customer needs well - Customer service metrics are not being met - Acquisition outcomes would be improved by collocating the procurement staff with its customers[15]	- Large portion of procurement dollars is spent on a specific commodity (for example, IT supplies) - Agency buying power could be improved by centralizing certain IT acquisitions - Unit costs and administrative costs could be reduced - Agency has a significant number of high risk contract actions in a specific area - Techstats uncover ongoing challenges with the agency IT acquisitions

NIH has developed a cadre around the procurement of highly scientific and technical services and has found that having contract specialists partner closely with their PhD/MD technical customers not only helps the contract specialists pick up a sizeable amount of technical knowledge, but also improves understanding of how results from one contract affect the overall program. Contract specialists "buy in" to their program office's mission, understand the importance of their role, and this sense of community translates into better outcomes.

Is specific experience helpful in selecting specialized IT acquisition cadre members?

Based on OFPP's outreach, experience is an important factor in the success of specialized acquisition cadre members. When recruiting members into the cadre, many agencies require previous experience in the specialized area. For example, when the VA recruits individuals for its Technology Acquisition Center, it first looks for professionals who have several years of experience buying IT supplies and services. Then it looks for people with excellent interpersonal skills and who have been successful working with customers. However, other agencies have been equally successful recruiting individuals with excellent communication, writing, and critical thinking skills, and then teaching them IT and contracting.

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[15] COs must maintain their independence in regard to making acquisition decisions. As such, COs should report to and be evaluated by a supervisor within the contracting chain even if they are located elsewhere.

> The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) developed a Business Management Team to help translate the program office's scientific/technical requirements into acquisition requirements. The new team is composed of individuals with acquisition knowledge who are fluent in the program office's technical language and have FDA experience, excellent technical writing ability, and above average customer service skills. The FDA has found that team building helps to develop communication, leadership, and problem-solving skills within the team.

III. Strengthening IT Acquisition Skills and Capabilities

What is the process for IT acquisition cadre members to become specialized?

Generally, cadre members must be certified first in their core functional area – whether through the Federal Acquisition Certification (FAC) programs for civilian agencies or the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) program for defense agencies – and can then pursue additional training, experience, or developmental activities in a specialized area as part of their continuous learning efforts. OFPP will work with the acquisition and IT communities to explore the development of "core-plus" certifications using the guidance below as a framework. Chart 1, on the next page, details areas of specialized learning that may be helpful to team members. These areas of specialized learning are not mutually exclusive, and cadre members should share some understanding in all of these areas. In particular, leadership and communication skills are equally important to all cadre members.

Because contracting professionals, PMs, and CORs have continuous learning requirements to keep their core certifications current, there are many opportunities for cadre members to gain these specialized skills and knowledge through training, experience, and developmental assignments. It is recommended that these individuals spend a minimum of 50% of their continuous learning points (CLP) requirements getting trained or developed in the specialized area after achieving the minimum level of functional expertise or certification required for their position. Continuous learning requirements for each of the FAC certifications as well as a guide to earning CLPs are available at http://www.fai.gov/training/clo.asp.

Specialized acquisition cadre members should also consider having an Individual Development Plan (IDP) to ensure that there is a focused strategy for obtaining the most effective training for the specialized IT cadre member, given the often limited resources and time for training.[16] These

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[16] The OPM website (http://www.opm.gov/hcaaf_resource_center/assets/Lead_tool3.pdf) has some helpful information on the purpose and benefits of individual development planning, roles and responsibilities for the employee and supervisor, the IDP process, and key elements of an IDP. The Department of Commerce (DOC) has a guide for employees which includes several self-assessment worksheets (http://www.nwstc.noaa.gov/nwstrn/d.ntp/idp-2001.pdf). The Washington Headquarters Service of the Department of Defense has a website (http://www.whs.mil/hrd/Civilian/CareerDevelopment/IndividualDevelopmentPlan.cfm) that contains an IDP guide.

individuals can consult with appropriate staff members in both the CIO and CAO offices for help in developing an effective IDP.
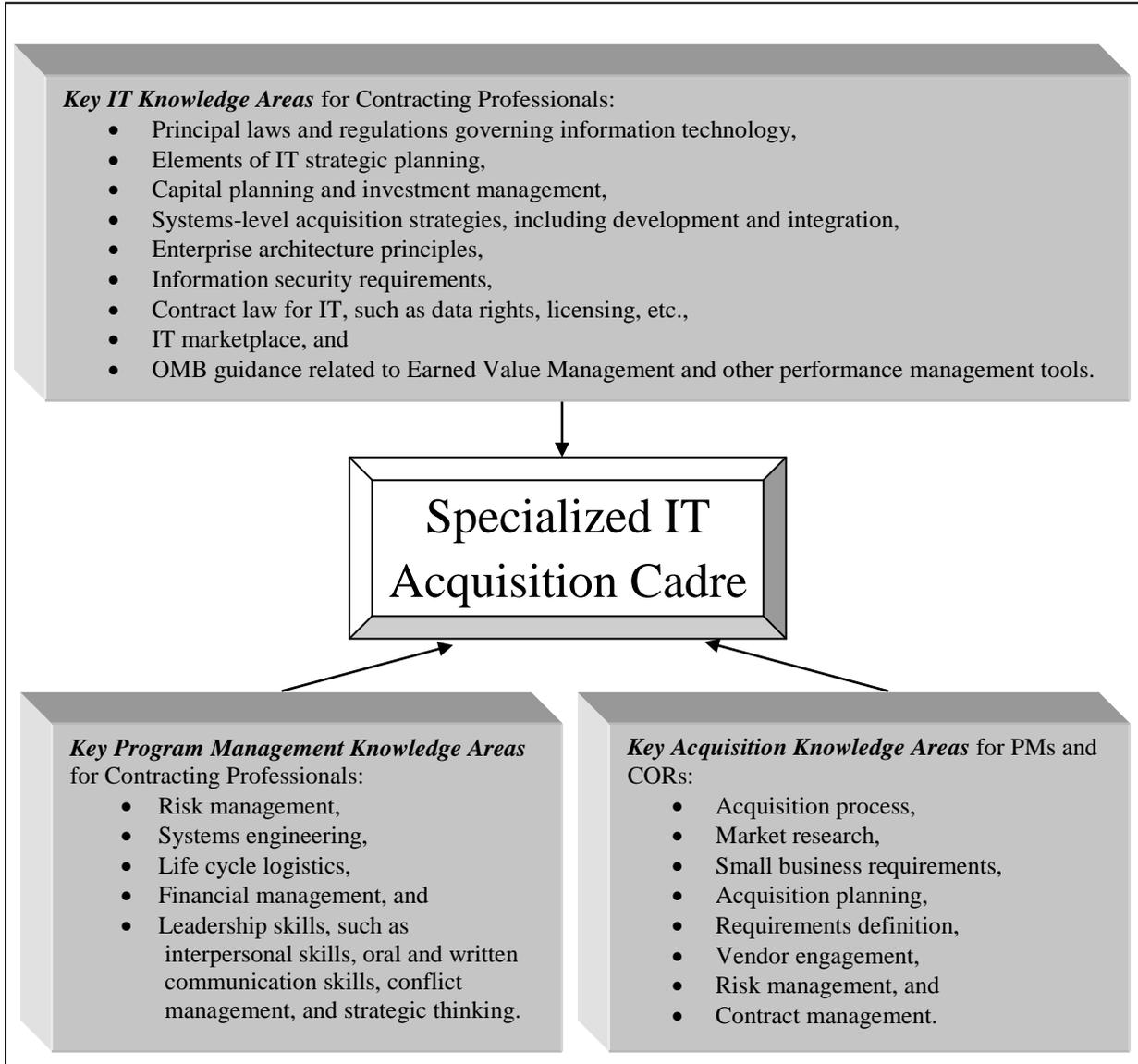
Key IT Knowledge Areas for Contracting Professionals:
- Principal laws and regulations governing information technology,
- Elements of IT strategic planning,
- Capital planning and investment management,
- Systems-level acquisition strategies, including development and integration,
- Enterprise architecture principles,
- Information security requirements,
- Contract law for IT, such as data rights, licensing, etc.,
- IT marketplace, and
- OMB guidance related to Earned Value Management and other performance management tools.

Specialized IT Acquisition Cadre

Key Program Management Knowledge Areas for Contracting Professionals:
- Risk management,
- Systems engineering,
- Life cycle logistics,
- Financial management, and
- Leadership skills, such as interpersonal skills, oral and written communication skills, conflict management, and strategic thinking.

Key Acquisition Knowledge Areas for PMs and CORs:
- Acquisition process,
- Market research,
- Small business requirements,
- Acquisition planning,
- Requirements definition,
- Vendor engagement,
- Risk management, and
- Contract management.

Chart 1 – Specialized Skills/Knowledge for Contracting Professionals, CORs, and PMs

Training –- Examples of classes that are currently available to assist cadre members in obtaining specialized skills are listed below. In addition, there are many commercial providers that provide classes in information technology, program management and acquisition. Agency acquisition career managers and the CoP will provide additional resources as appropriate and OFPP will work with the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) and the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) to identify additional opportunities. Cadre contracting professionals may benefit from obtaining FAC-P/PM certification and, conversely, PMs may benefit from obtaining FAC-C certification.

- Defense Acquisition University (DAU) (www.dau.mil)
  - ACQ 101 – Fundamentals of System Acquisition Management (online)
  - IRM 101– Basic Information Systems Acquisition (online)
  - CLC 013 – Performance-Based Services Acquisition (online)
  - CLE 028 – Market Research for Technical Personnel (online)
  - CLM 017 – Risk Management (online)
  - CLM 031 – Improved Statement of Work (online)
  - CLM 025 – COTS Acquisition for Program Managers (online)
  - CLC 011 – Contracting for the Rest of Us (online)
  - CLM 014 – IPT Management and Leadership (online)
  - CLE 025 – Information Assurance for Acquisition Professionals (online)
  - CLB 016 – Introduction to Earned Value Management (online)
  - IRM 202 – Intermediate Information Systems Acquisition (classroom)
  - IRM 304 – Advanced Information Systems Acquisition (classroom)
  - CON 100 – Shaping Smart Business Arrangements (online and classroom)
  - CON 237 – Simplified Acquisition Procedures (online)

- Information Resources Management College at National Defense University (http://www.ndu.edu/iCollege)
  - Strategic Information Technology Acquisition (classroom)
  - Information Technology Project Management (classroom)
  - Software Acquisition Leadership (classroom)

Cross-training specialized acquisition cadre members together in various knowledge areas, such as performance-based acquisition, strategic sourcing, or requirements development, helps to develop a common understanding of processes and issues, as well as a common language, and can lead to better performance. Even more effective is training the cadre together on a specific procurement because they can get experience in working together on acquisition and program challenges.

Experience and Other Developmental Activities – Other career experiences and development opportunities that lead to specialized IT acquisition skills are listed below, and agencies are encouraged to identify additional opportunities tailored to their specific needs:

Level	Suggested On-The-Job Experience and Other Developmental Activities
Entry	- Participate in the Federal Acquisition Fellows Coalition[17] - Attend meetings or conferences of a professional acquisition or IT organizations

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[17] http://www.fai.gov/FAIC/Default.asp

Level	Suggested On-The-Job Experience and Other Developmental Activities
	• Be a member of a source selection team for IT goods or services • Attend agency seminars to better understand agency mission • Find a mentor in your organization • Shadow an executive in your agency within your functional area
Mid	• Participate in a working group at your agency to solve an acquisition or IT challenge • Participate in professional acquisition or IT organizations • Lead a source selection team for an IT good or service • Find a mentor from a different organization • Perform a rotational assignment in an IT program office within your agency • Perform peer reviews of solicitations or other contracting offices in your agency • Shadow an executive in your agency in a different functional area
Senior	• Participate in an interagency working group to solve an IT acquisition challenge • Assume a leadership position in a professional acquisition or IT organization • Write articles on IT acquisition challenges and solutions • Give presentations on contracting challenges and solutions • Lead peer reviews of solicitations or other contracting offices in another agency • Participate in a Federal Strategic Sourcing Initiative commodity team • Be a mentor • Perform a rotational assignment in another agency

What resources are available to help IT acquisition cadre members get these specialized skills?

FAI is developing government-wide programs for rotational assignments and mentoring of acquisition workforce members. In addition to any existing agency programs, these programs will help current or aspiring cadre members gain broad insight into other perspectives.

- The *Talent Exchange Program (TEX)* is currently being piloted and is planned for launch by FAI in October 2011. The TEX will be available on the FAI website (www.fai.gov) and will enable acquisition professionals to leverage intra-agency and government-wide experiences. It will provide a central location for agencies to post detail opportunities and for individuals to search and apply for details. The site will also contain best practices, a toolkit, and helpful information for both agencies and potential detailees. Assignments will run from long-term details to short-term, project-specific assignments that might include one or more of the following:

- o Helping to develop requirements for a high risk or complex IT acquisition.
- o Serving on the technical evaluation panel for increasingly complex IT goods or services.
- o Establishing vendor communication events and initiatives, such as those promoting small businesses.
- o Managing acquisition workforce initiatives for a cabinet-level agency.
- o Assisting an agency CIO with strategic IT initiatives.
- o Performing a customer liaison function between a CIO office and a contracting office.

Within an agency, detailing contracting professionals into program offices and vice versa is an effective tool to help individuals within these important functional areas understand each others' role and responsibilities and develop a common language.

- Similarly, FAI will be launching a government-wide *Mentoring Program.* Acquisition workforce members will be able to use the FAI website to connect with mentors who can provide technical, leadership, career and personal development advice. The website will provide best practices, a toolkit, and a central portal for mentors and mentees to connect. This program is planned for launch in the second quarter of FY2012.

"Speed mentoring" is an easy way to draw junior and senior members of the workforce together for short, dynamic mentoring sessions. OFPP and FAI have sponsored a number of these events and have found that bringing together mentors and mentees from a variety of agencies and backgrounds can be very helpful. It does not require a significant time commitment and provides participants with common interests and goals the chance to connect quickly. Tips on this and other developmental activities will be available on the CoP site.

How do professionals progress through the cadre from entry to senior levels?

There is a natural career progression for each of the specialized acquisition cadre functional areas, and much of this is determined by the requirements for civilian and defense agency acquisition certification and the job series generally. For example, a GS-1102 CO certified at a level II has prescribed education, training, and experience requirements that remain unchanged. However, Chart 2, on the next page, depicts the principal levels of certification and the types of assignments that IT cadre members can expect as they progress through their career. High performers in these organizations can take on additional responsibilities and progress quickly, to the extent permitted by their agency and their certification requirements.
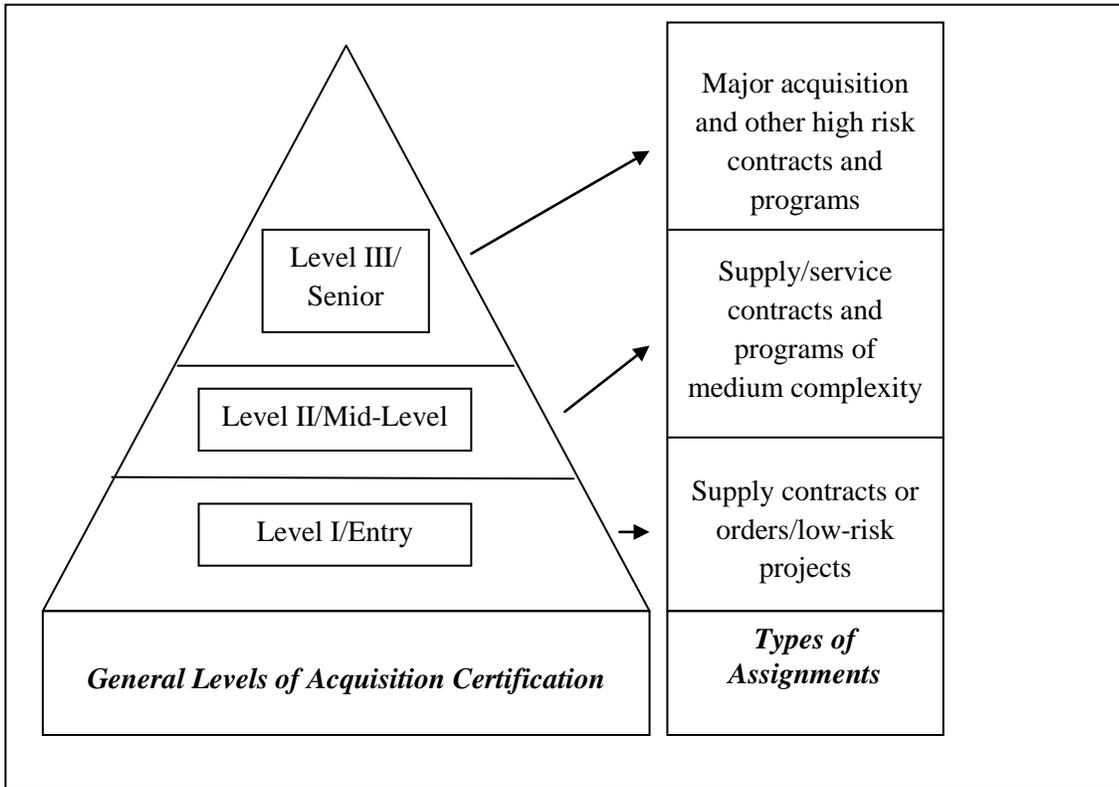
Chart 2 – Career Progression for Contracting Professionals, CORs, and PMs

IV. Conclusion

Federal IT acquisitions present unique challenges and agencies are encouraged to consider developing specialized teams to improve how the Government buys IT goods and services. By using this guidance and the community of practice, agencies can consider designing and developing cadres of specialized IT acquisition professionals who can help the agencies address these challenges.

ACQUISITION HUMAN CAPITAL PLAN SUPPLEMENT

Agencies shall prepare a brief supplement (3-5 pages) to their Acquisition Human Capital Plan (AHCP) that analyzes their current IT acquisition staffing practices, determines if developing new or expanding the use of existing cadres would improve IT program results, and outlines a plan to pilot a new or expanded cadre for an especially high-risk IT area. AHCP supplements are due to at OFPP by August 31, 2011. Please submit to Joanie Newhart at jnewhart@omb.eop.gov.

(Note: this update to the AHCP does not obligate the agency to any course of action, but will be used as part of the acquisition human capital planning process and for OMB and agency discussions.)

I. *Analysis* – Briefly analyze the agencies' current IT acquisition management staffing challenges using the questions in section II above as a general guideline. For agencies with cadres, discuss how expanding the use of these teams would benefit the agency.

II. *Determination* – Discuss if the agency plans to pursue the development of a cadre and what IT programs the cadre will support.

III. *Resources* – If the agency plans to pursue a cadre, discuss how this effort will be supported. For example, will the agency new recruit FTEs to develop an in-house cadre? Shift existing FTEs to develop an in-house cadre? Is the agency considering using the services of another agency instead of developing in-house capacity?[18] How will the agency minimize impact on the existing workforce and programs? How will the agency recruit and retain specialized cadre members?

IV. *Pilot Plan* –- If the agency plans to develop a specialized team, briefly describe the plan to pilot this effort. For example, describe how it will be organized, how big the team might be, what functions will be included in the cadre, what kinds of decisions the team will be responsible for, etc.

V. *Development* – What specialized training or development activities will the agency provide cadre members? How will effective communication and collaboration among team members be encouraged?

VI. *Results* – How will you measure the success of the cadre?

VII. *Agency Leads* – Identify the senior agency officials in the CAO and CIO organizations that collaborated on this AHCP update for purposes of follow-up, if necessary.

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[18] Such as the General Services Administration's (GSA's) Assisted Acquisition Service (http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/105201), Department of Interior's (DOI's) National Business Center's Acquisition Services Directorate (AQD) (http://www.nbc.gov), or Department of the Treasury's Bureau of Public Debt (http://www.publicdebt.treas.gov). POCs will be provided in the Community of Practice.