

Acquisition Advisory Panel  
Workforce Working Group  
From: Robert M. Cooper  
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In Reference 3 the PSC observes that federal acquisition is burdened with questions of credibility, disconnects, increasing complexity, change and oversight leading to reluctance by acquisition officials to make decisions (as required under FAR 1.102 (d) and 1.602-2). It goes on to assert that one of two basic factors behind these problems is a lack of meaningful commitment to and support of the Acquisition Workforce. A far more aggressive and robust training and professional development is called for. The workforce problems are described as going well beyond traditional certification requirements and requiring extensive investment and commitment orders of magnitude greater than before.

The continuing question of the size of the acquisition workforce arose with the underlying problems of definition, utilization, and what Metrics measure Performance. Additional problems were noted: the need to slow further Reform and limit it to corrections to enable assimilation of existing reform; the extent that Streamlining has had problematic consequences, e.g. Task Order SOWs, GWAC marketing, Purchase Card Training, etc., the disparity between excessive downsizing and growing workloads, and the balance between oversight and the regulatory direction to exercise discretion.

## TRAINING

There is a general problem of adequate Training for the complexities of Best Value Evaluation, Commercial Item definitions and utilization of the Commercial Buy Test at Part 13.5, Performance-Based Acquisition, Past Performance Evaluation, Electronic Tools and utilization of various forms of Task Order contracts. The recent OFPP Policy Letter 05-01 laid groundwork for these training needs to be more adequately and uniformly met across the Government (see also Entry, below). There should also be more training in Risk Management, Business Decisions, Strategic Analysis, and Case Studies.

## METRICS

Basic Metrics for acquisition performance on both individual and organizational levels would include: number of protests, number of protests denied/sustained, of sustained protests number of insufficiently documented/reasoned decisions (particularly in the case of BV and OCI), PALT, goal achievement (e.g. 23% for Small Business), adequate market search, and timely obligation of funds.

## ENTRY

Career Entry Standards should be reviewed. The loss of the FSEE and subsequent PACE exams is a handicap in the hiring process. Intern Programs should be examined for adequacy, currency, and potential expansion. Most importantly, the 24 hour Business Course requirement should be revisited. Although a background in Business Education is helpful, in itself it is not a strong indicator of the full range of capacities required to meet the challenges of risk management and decision making called for in the expanded acquisition role of Business Manager imposed by recent Reform.

Analytical skill and ability to clearly Articulate and execute resulting weighed risks must be developed, identified and verified before the complex and demanding responsibilities of acquisition personnel against the scope and pace of their environment will be reliably, efficiently, and effectively performed. Demonstrated education/training/performance in case study, logical analysis, and English composition are equally as important as finance, accounting, and logistics for professional level performance of acquisition duties. Further, these standards should be increasingly uniform not just between the civilian and military resources in the Government, but between the Government and Industry, given the growing emphasis/trend toward contracting out acquisition duties under FAR 7.503(d).

Numerous protests are sustained based on poorly documented decisions and contract files by insufficiently trained and staffed acquisition offices spending over \$One Billion/day in an atmosphere of continuous complexity, pressure, change, and oversight. Numerous Studies and Public Statements call for prompt and major corrections of the Workforce aspect of acquisition problems.

The rule-writers and fund appropriators in Congress must be informed fully forcefully by their own Panel regarding this ongoing and critical problem and the required remedies. In the interim, Agencies and their outsourced Industry counterparts must be held to training and performance standards that reliably preserve the interests of the Government and the Taxpayer.