

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

DEPARTMENTAL PERSONNEL MANUAL SYSTEM

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Career Development Program

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Attached is the Department of Transportation's Acquisition Career Development Program, as required by Executive Order 12352. The content of this program was developed jointly by acquisition staff members and personnel staff members of the Office of the Secretary and the operating administrations. Although the management of this program rests primarily with the Department's Procurement Executive, who is the Director, Office of Acquisition and Grant Management (M-60), the purpose of the program is to foster career development within the Department's acquisition work force. For this reason, the program is being officially published in the Departmental Personnel Manual.

Attachment


Director of Personnel

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DOT

ACQUISITION CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
1. Purpose	2
2. Objectives	2
3. Applicability	2
4. Definitions	2
5. Management Responsibilities	4
6. Acquisition Employees Responsibilities	6
7. Training	6
8. Contracting Officer Appointments	6
<u>Attachments:</u>	
1. Identification, Selection and Assignments of the Acquisition Career Workforce	7
I. Entry Level Intake Sources	7
II. Transitions and Assignments within the existing workforce	9
2. <u>Intern Program</u> (Reserved)	16
3. <u>Career Counseling and Assessment</u>	17
Exhibit A: Sample Employee Career Assessment	22
Exhibit B: Sample Individual Development Plan	25
4. <u>Acquisition Training</u>	27
5. <u>Contracting Officer Appointment Procedures</u>	32
Appendix I: Experience Requirements	41
Appendix II: Criteria for Evaluation of Training Courses	47
Exhibit A: Sample Qualifications Statement for Appointed of Contracting Officers	52

PREFACE

The Department of Transportation (DOT) Acquisition Career Development Program establishes a Department-wide framework for the management of career development activity within the acquisition field. It provides flexibility for each operating administration to establish and implement its own program to meet its mission requirements.

This program defines objectives and responsibilities and establishes the basic components of the Career Development program. The program has been designed in accordance with DOT personnel management policies, Office of Personnel Management regulations, and implements Executive Order 12352, Federal Procurement Reforms.

The purpose of this document is to identify knowledge and skills basic to the acquisition function in DOT and to serve as a guide for the development of increased capabilities and competencies. The success of this program depends upon viewing it in proper perspective as it relates to other personnel management processes, e.g., performance appraisal and promotions. This program is relevant only to defining the desired knowledge and skills of the work performed in the acquisition field. Once defined, the knowledge and skills in the career levels are the basis used to determine the employee's knowledge and skills as they relate to the appropriate level. This assessment shows what developmental experiences and training are needed to increase the employee's competence in the acquisition work functions. The supervisor and the employee then plan how these will be acquired either through work-related development assignments and/or education experiences.

Comments or suggestions relating to the content of this Program should be forwarded to the Director of Acquisition and Grant Management (M-60), Room 9100, Nassif Building.

THE PROGRAM

1. PURPOSE

This establishes DOT's Acquisition Career Development Program and assigns responsibilities for the implementation and administration of the program.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the DOT Acquisition Career Development Program are to:

- a. attract, develop, and retain high quality personnel required to meet current and future staffing requirements;
- b. encourage employees who desire an acquisition career in DOT to develop their capabilities; and
- c. stimulate employees to engage in self-development activities.

3. APPLICABILITY

The program is established for employees who have or are seeking career or career-conditional appointments and occupy positions in the following classification series:

GS-1106 Procurement Assistant/Clerk
GS-1105 Purchasing Agent
GS/GM-1102 Contract and Procurement

Any employee in a position, regardless of its series, in which 50 percent or more of the duties and responsibilities involve pre or post-award contracting and purchasing functions may request to participate in the program.

4. DEFINITIONS

- a. Acquisition Career Development Program. A planned program to attract, develop, and retain personnel in the acquisition field by means of:
 - (1) providing developmental opportunities to improve performance in present job assignments; and
 - (2) providing developmental opportunities to prepare for future assignments.

- b. Acquisition Career Field. The acquisition occupation is composed of the following work functions: Contract Negotiation, Contract Price Analysis, Contract Administration, Procurement Analysis, Purchasing and the Contracting Officer function.
- c. Career Assessment and Counseling. This is the process of assessing an employee's career goals and development needs, and giving guidance in planning alternatives to achieve the goals. This function is primarily the responsibility of the employee's immediate supervisor and is an ongoing process.
- d. Career Development. Career development is the planned, organized and systematic development of employees through work assignments and training in the acquisition career field. Work-related developmental assignments include such activities as on-the-job training and rotational assignments. Training also includes formal education such as academic learning, correspondence courses, and workshops.
- e. Career Intake Sources. A career intake source is a method of recruitment for entry level employees. See Attachment 1.
- f. Career Levels. The acquisition work functions are grouped into five levels of knowledge and skills to provide a logical framework for overall development and training planning. These are:
 - (1) Procurement Assistant/Clerk
 - (2) Purchasing Agents
 - (3) Contracts - Entry Level (Trainee) (GS 5-7)
 - (4) Contracts - Intermediate Level through Journeyman (GS-9-12)
 - (5) Contracts - Senior Level and above (GS/GM-13 and above)
- g. Career Patterns. Career patterns are pathways through which employees may progress in the DOT acquisition field. The particular career pattern followed by the individual employee will depend upon the employee's education, experience, background and upon the opportunities which are provided at each acquisition activity.
- h. Individual Development Plan. This is a written plan developed jointly by the employee and supervisor, and with the technical advice and assistance of their personnel office, to define work assignments, training and other development activities that will assist in improving performance and provide opportunity for individual growth. A sample format is set forth in Attachment 3, Exhibit B.

5. MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. Department's Procurement Executive. The Procurement Executive is responsible for the overall management of the Program.
- b. Director of Personnel. The Director of Personnel provides advice and guidance to the Procurement Executive in the overall management of the Program, and serves as the final authority on all matters involving personnel laws, regulations, and procedures. He/she appoints a representative to serve on the DOT Acquisition Career Development Committee.
- c. DOT Acquisition Career Development Manager. The program will be administered by the DOT Acquisition Career Development Manager, who shall be the Chief, Policy and Survey Division, OST. His/her responsibilities are to:
 - (1) recommend career development policies, programs and plans consistent with Office of Personnel Management, DOT, and Operating Administration personnel policies to the Procurement Executive;
 - (2) serve as Chairperson of the DOT Acquisition Career Development Committee;
 - (3) assess and report annually on the accomplishments and effectiveness of the program to the Procurement Executive;
 - (4) serve as the primary interface with the Federal Acquisition Institute to coordinate acquisition career development and training;
 - (5) work with other agencies to coordinate career development and training; and
 - (6) work with the Office of Personnel to assure that the administration of the program is in conformance with all applicable personnel requirements and procedures.
- d. DOT Acquisition Career Development Committee.

The Committee assists the Procurement Executive in the management of the program and makes recommendations on policies, programs and plans to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the program. This Committee also recommends individuals for rotational and intern assignments. Each operating administration will have the opportunity to appoint up to two representatives. Normally the appointed individuals would be from the

acquisition office and from the personnel office. The Director of Personnel shall also appoint a member of his/her staff to serve as an advisor to the committee and as the representative of the Director.

- e. Operating Administrations Head of the Contracting Activity. Each Head of the Contracting Activity, as set forth in TAR part 2, is to:
- (1) be responsible for the overall management of the Career Development Program within his/her administration, including the assessment of the organization's staff development needs, and within the framework established by this program, assure that those needs are met;
 - (2) assure that the staff of the Acquisition Activity works closely with the personnel office staff in the administration of all aspects of the program, in order to assure that all applicable personnel requirements and procedures are met; and
 - (3) report annually to the Department's Procurement Executive on the accomplishments of the Career Development Program.
- f. Operating Administration Personnel Offices. Personnel offices are responsible for providing technical support and assistance to the acquisition activity in carrying out the requirements of this program. They are also responsible for assuring that the administration of this program is in conformance with all applicable personnel requirements and procedures.
- g. Operating Administration Acquisition Career Development Managers. Each operating administration will designate an Acquisition Career Development Manager (either a representative from the acquisition or personnel field) to administer the program and work with the DOT Career Development Manager. Normally, this individual will be a member of the DOT Acquisition Career Development Committee. Responsibilities of these individuals are to:
- (1) assist acquisition supervisors in the preparation of employees' annual Individual Development Plans;
 - (2) work with DOT officials and others to determine how local acquisition training and development needs can most efficiently be met;
 - (3) issue guidelines to implement this Program, as needed; and
 - (4) participate as a member of the DOT Acquisition Career Development Committee.

h. Supervisors. Supervisors are the key management officials responsible and accountable for the training and development of all their subordinates. Their responsibilities are to:

- (1) administer the Career Development Program as it applies to their subordinates;
- (2) conduct career assessment and counseling interviews with their employees;
- (3) prepare annually an Individual Development Plan for each employee;
- (4) provide formal and on-the-job training to subordinates; and
- (5) monitor the accomplishments and assess the effectiveness of training and development activities of each employee.

6. ACQUISITION EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees must provide the interest and initiative necessary for development and advancement in the acquisition field. Each employee has a responsibility to assess his/her aptitudes, strengths and weaknesses, and identify career goals.

7. TRAINING

Levels of Training. Attachment 4 outlines the non-mandatory but recommended training which is available for broadening background and improving knowledge and skills.

8. CONTRACTING OFFICER APPOINTMENTS.

The appointment of a contracting officer is to be made as required by FAR 1.603 and Attachment 5 of this plan. This discretionary delegation of contract authority below the level of Head of the Acquisition Activity is made to individuals who are determined to be qualified to exercise this authority. The contracting officer function does not necessarily coincide with a particular grade or career level and is not inherently a part of the personnel system. However, these procedures are included in the plan to ensure that qualified individuals will be developed and their appointment will be managed consistently.

IDENTIFICATION, SELECTION AND ASSIGNMENT
OF THE ACQUISITION CAREER WORKFORCE

I. ENTRY LEVEL INTAKE SOURCES

As part of the acquisition career management process, acquisition managers in the Operating Administrations should conduct regular systematic analyses of their work force and projected vacancies in order to identify those vacancies which could/should be filled at the entry level. Once appropriate entry-level vacancies have been identified, further consideration should be given to the various staffing options available in filling those positions. Just as it is important to have a balance between journeyman and entry-level employees, it is important to consider a mix of sources from both within and outside the Department when filling positions. Although factors such as budget constraints, hiring limitations and affirmative action goals are often a consideration, acquisition managers should consider the career intake sources identified below when filing position.

A. Office of Personnel Management Examination for Contract Specialists.

This examination is used to fill positions at GS-5 and GS-7, and is designed primarily for college graduates, although anyone may take it. The examination was established in May 1986, and consists of three parts: an ability test (written), a job knowledge test (written) and an optional oral interview. Once an applicant has passed the written exam, he/she is placed on the OPM register of eligibles in score/rank order. When an agency wants to fill a position from this register, OPM will refer the top candidates on the register to the agency.

There is one important exception to this "top of the register rule": bilingual/bicultural persons on the register can be selected ahead of other applicants, regardless of their score, when the agency can demonstrate that performance in the position would be enhanced by knowledge of the Spanish language and/or culture.

B. Outstanding Scholar Program.

The outstanding scholar program allows an agency to directly hire persons with a 3.5 or higher grade point average (out of 4.0) or who stand in the upper 10 percent of their college or university major subdivision. The program, while aimed at Black and Hispanic applicants in

support of agency affirmative action programs, is open to all applicants. These applicants do not have to take the OPM contracting examination.

C. Undergraduate Cooperative Education Program.

This program provides for periods of academic study at the undergraduate level interspersed with periods of study-related work in the Department. Upon graduation, eligible co-op students may be converted to permanent, full-time employees at the GS-5 or GS-7 level without having to take the OPM contracting examination. To be eligible for conversion at GS-5, the co-op student must have worked a total of at least 26 weeks divided into at least two separate work periods with an intervening study period. For conversion at the GS-7, the co-op student must also meet certain academic criteria, or have worked a total of at least 52 weeks. Because work periods must be study-related, co-op students should not be assigned clerical work. Rather, they should be assigned subprofessional work which prepares them for permanent employment. At the same time, the employing office has an opportunity to observe the co-op student's performance so that it has a basis for deciding whether or not to convert the co-op student at graduation.

D. Graduate Cooperative Education Program.

This program is similar to the Undergraduate Program, except that upon completion of graduate school, co-op students are eligible for conversion to Acquisition Specialist positions at GS-9. Under this program, graduate co-op students must work a minimum of 16 weeks in order to be eligible for conversion.

E. Federal Junior Fellowship Program.

This program is designed to provide career-related summer and vacation employment for needy students after their senior year in high school and during their four years in college. Federal Junior Fellows must be appointed upon completion of their senior year in high school, graduate in the upper 10 percent of their high school class and demonstrate a need for earnings in order to continue in school. Junior Fellows are appointed as student trainees in the occupation that the trainees are expected to fill upon completion of the program (college graduation), e.g., GS-1199, Student Trainee (Procurement). A very attractive feature of the program is the fact that, while in college, Junior Fellows count against a special ceiling allocation from OPM to the Department, and not against the Full Time Equivalency ceiling. Upon graduation, Junior Fellows may be converted to permanent full-time employees at GS-5 or GS-7 without having to take the OPM contracting examination.

F. Upward Mobility Program.

The Upward Mobility Program is designed to provide a way for DOT lower level employees who are in positions which do not enable them to realize their full work potential to expand their career opportunities by moving into target positions with greater career potential. It provides a way for clericals and subprofessionals to compete for accelerated formal and on-the-job training which will provide the qualifications for professional positions. In the acquisition field, progression from the GS-1106 Procurement Clerical and Assistance Series to the GS-1102 Contracting Series is common under the Upward Mobility Program.

G. Internal Placement and Merit Promotion.

Although not an abundant source of candidates, recruitment and movement of current employees by announcing vacancies under merit promotion procedures can sometimes produce qualified entry-level candidates.

The career intake sources described above, though not all-inclusive are those most likely to produce high-quality entry-level employees. Acquisition managers who wish to explore the use of these sources should work closely with their personnel offices, since most of these programs have additional eligibility requirements and administrative procedures not included in the brief descriptions provided.

II. TRANSITIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS WITHIN THE EXISTING WORKFORCE

Career development often occurs through rotational assignments and through occupational reassignments. Both will enhance the professional acquisition staff through experience and knowledge gained from working in different, but related organizations and functions.

A. Rotational Assignments

1. Introduction. Being an effective, efficient, professional acquisition employee mandates a continuous learning process which can be defined as an infusion of knowledge from both formal and informal education plus learned experiences. Formal and informal education based upon textual knowledge can be predictably measured, dispensed, and absorbed by the employee. However, due to differences in mission, personnel, and operational practices by other offices, a wealth of non-textual knowledge lies waiting to be absorbed as work experiences by a rotational employee.

Rotating employees as a means for enhancing knowledge via broadened work experiences may in some instances substitute for formal training. Furthermore, under ideal conditions a rotational employee fills a void in the receiving office and meaningfully contributes to the mission of that office.

The immediate possible benefits accruing to the Department include savings in training costs (see Considerations below), avoiding lost time (by scheduling in a rotational replacement), and expanding the experience base among the participating offices. The long range benefits accruing to the Department include greater efficiency through newly acquired procedural knowledge, potential cost savings resulting from sharpened negotiating skills, and an enhanced professional image to the public.

2. Considerations. While the benefits of rotational assignments seem quite obvious, not so obvious are the authorities or legal provisions which may come into play with the implementation of rotational assignments. The general method of reassigning an employee for a specified period from his/her current position to that of another position is by way of a detail. A detail can be used to meet temporary work needs of an administration. Therefore, details are appropriate when there is an emergency, an abnormal workload, special projects or unanticipated absences. Details may also be used for training purposes, especially whenever the training is part of an established promotional or developmental program.

The use of a rotational assignment as a training vehicle, within the limits established by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in FPM 300, Subchapter 8, is a proper use of a detail. In addition, the Comptroller General has ruled that inter-agency and intra-agency details must be made on a reimbursable basis except for certain limited circumstances. Generally speaking, details (rotational assignments) of fewer than four months (120 days or less) which are either inter or intra-agency can be authorized or justified as meeting the limiting criteria established in the Comptroller General's ruling and the implementing OPM regulations on nonreimbursable details.

Care also must be taken to ensure that if the "training" is part of an authorized training agreement (e.g., intern program), part of a promotion program or required as prior consideration for promotion, that merit promotion procedures are followed when selecting employees for "rotational assignments." Exceptions to these prohibitions are permitted if merit promotion procedures have already been applied and if the training is associated with promotions not covered by merit promotion procedures.

3. Candidates. Rotational assignments should be considered at various stages of the employee's short term and long term (career ladder) Individual Development Plan (IDP) and should include employees in the 1102, 1105, and 1106 series at all grade levels. When hiring entry level employees in these series, it would be useful to also have position descriptions spell out planned rotational assignments as part of the developmental training and orientation of the new employee. It would help institutionalize the rotational assignment concept and give the new employee a better idea of the scope of the work in the contracting acquisition areas. Rewriting and revising position descriptions to include rotational assignments as turnover occurs would be useful at levels above the entry level and also foster the idea of cross-training and individual development.

4. Procedure.

- a. Participating modal administrations should encourage eligible employees to register with the Office of Personnel, to participate in the Professional Exchange Program (PEP). The Office of Personnel will provide placement services by scheduling and coordinating rotations to keep office disruptions at a minimum.
- b. The duration of a rotation assignment should be commensurate with the complexity of work involved. For example, a GS-1105-5 Procurement Agent may be able to absorb the new methods, techniques, and functioning nuances of the office rotated to within a period of 90 days, whereas a GS/GM-1102-13 Contract Specialist may be better served by remaining at the gaining office for a longer period due to the more complex nature of contracts vs. purchase orders and the length of time required to process contracts. Upon completion of the assignment period, the participants will return to their normal duties.
- c. Rotational assignments need not always be to parallel contracting functions. Much valuable experience and knowledge can come from related fields such as: budget; financial management; engineering/program offices (where contract statements of work are prepared); or from contract negotiation to contract administration (and vice versa).

- d. Rotational assignments must be carefully planned so as to provide maximum benefits for the "trainee" and the office where the training occurs. Training objectives should be well defined ahead of the placement of the trainee with enabling and terminal objectives outlined. To assure that the training objectives are met, a job analysis of the incumbent contracting and acquisition positions should be made to avoid training employees in areas which are not critical to the position, but rather to provide employees with the knowledge, skills and abilities to perform satisfactorily in their current positions. The job analysis would also help to define the areas in the acquisition field which need to be strengthened. Terminal objectives are demonstrated skills and abilities expected after the period of training. Enabling objectives can only be measured by their implementation such as by using knowledge of particular regulation(s).
- e. Each rotational assignment should be evaluated at mid-term and at the end of the training period, in accordance with the DOT combined Performance Management and Recognition System and Performance Management System Plan. The employee and supervisor (or trainer) of record should both provide comments, recommendations and suggestions about the training being received and any ancillary work being accomplished. Particular attention should be given to how effective the rotational assignment was at meeting the training objectives identified.
- f. Personnel Actions During the Program. During the course of the assignment, participants should be considered for any promotion or reassignment for which they would normally be considered. If promotion or reassignment results, the participant may continue the program for the balance of the assignment or the assignment may be terminated; specific disposition is a management decision to be decided upon collectively by the supervisors involved.
- g. Placement upon Completion of Program. Upon completion of the rotation, participants may return to their normal duties, or may be re-assigned or promoted in accordance with previously prescribed and DOT component approved plans.

- h. A written assessment must be given to employees following each rotational assignment in order that the employee receives a meaningful sense of accomplishment and that the rotational program be given accreditation by DOT as well as other governmental agencies.

B. Acquisition Career Bridge Program.

The Acquisition Career Bridge Program is for the advancement of small purchase personnel to contracting assignments. This program is covered by the Department's Upward Mobility Program requirements.

1. Introduction.

The acquisition career bridging program envisions that selected small purchasing personnel, who meet general experience, education, training, and performance criteria and who demonstrate potential for processing GS-1102 work, would be considered eligible for entry into a 2-year Career Bridging Program. This training should be quite similar (or identical) to training given to GS-1102 trainee personnel and should strive to ensure consistency in journeyman standards. In addition, this training should ensure that graduates from the Career Bridging Program are fully prepared, competent, and capable of performing contracting assignments at the GS-9 grade level. This program should be developed and implemented as follows:

- a. DOT operating administrations should annually target a specific number of positions to a 2-year GS-1102 Career Bridging Program.
- b. Entry into the program should normally be at the GS-5 grade level. Selected personnel in higher grades would retain their current grade. (Note: It is not envisioned that this program would normally be open to personnel already at the GS-9, or above, grade levels).
- c. Upon satisfactory performance during the training program period, personnel could be promoted up to the GS-9 grade level.
- d. Selected personnel would remain in their current series through the 2 year training period. Upon graduation from the program, personnel would normally transfer into the GS-1102 series at the GS-9 level.

- e. Selection into the program would be on a competitive basis. Factors considered in the selection process would include:
 - o Successful completion of work assigned.
 - o Successful completion of required training.
 - o Outside activity, i.e., successful completion of job related correspondence course training, or successful completion of business or Government contracting courses at a college or university.
 - o Exhibition of high level potential.
 - o Latest annual performance appraisal.
 - o Other factors as may be prescribed by the Department.
- f. The DOT operating administration would exercise vigorous position management to ensure that sufficient GS-1102 positions would be available to personnel graduating from the program.
- g. Personnel not satisfactorily completing this program would be "selected out" of the program and revert back to their same or comparable position within the operating administration.

C. Occupational Reassignments

1. Introduction. Occupational reassignments provide a greater flexibility to Federal managers, at a time when there is an ever increasing need to more effectively and efficiently utilize present human resources, by providing the opportunity to consider employees for a change in occupations when they initially do not meet established civil service qualification requirements. All occupational reassignments are subject to OPM regulations and the personnel office must be consulted prior to initiating a reassignment action. It is expected that occupational reassignments will occur only in rare instances. More specifically, these reassignments will:
 - a. Provide managers and supervisors with the opportunity to take greater advantage of the skills, knowledge, and abilities of high caliber employees who are part of the headquarters work force.
 - b. Give employees the opportunity to progress by moving laterally into a new field if vertical movement in the same field is restricted by low turnover and acute competition.

2. Procedures. Managers and supervisors who are interested in considering an individual for reassignment who does not meet current OPM qualification standards should consult with their personnel office for further information.

INTERN PROGRAM

(Reserved)

THE DOT INDIVIDUAL ACQUISITION CAREER COUNSELING AND
ASSESSMENT PROGRAM FOR ACQUISITION PERSONNEL

I. GENERAL

A. Purpose

To provide all Departmental acquisition employees and supervisors with an opportunity to review current job performance, discuss career interests, assess capability for progression, and establish an appropriate program of training and development to support the acquisition employee career interests and the needs of the Department of Transportation (DOT). As an adjunct to career counseling, to provide all DOT acquisition personnel and supervisors with a convenient source of information they will require to accomplish the most efficient and useful career planning.

B. Definitions

1. Counseling. Counseling is a helping process which permits supervisors and employees to constructively discuss performance and behavior factors around which an employee's career and personal development can be systematically planned.
2. Career Assessment. Career assessment is the process of inventorying and evaluating the attributes and potential capabilities of each employee. It includes analysis of career training needs and preparation of an Individual Development Plan which provides for an orderly progression within the career field through planning for fulfillment of career training needs.

II. ACQUISITION CAREER INFORMATION CENTER

A. As a central resource for supervisors and employees involved in the Individual Career Counseling process, the Office of Personnel, as a part of the Central Employment Information Office, (M-18), will establish and maintain a Acquisition Career Information Center (The Center). The Center will be supplied with acquisition career development information supplied by the administrations and will contain, as a minimum:

1. Copies of the complete "Acquisition Career Management Program."
2. Classification and qualification standards for all acquisition occupations.

3. Up-to-date catalogs and course descriptions for academic, training, and correspondence courses for contracting, acquisition, and closely related career fields.
 4. Descriptions of Departmental training opportunities, including programs of formal rotational or developmental assignments.
 5. Current compilation of all DOT vacancy announcements in the acquisition fields.
 6. Annually updated organization charts and brief descriptions of the nature, operations, employment ceiling, and occupational distribution of all modal and Departmental acquisition organizations.
 7. Sample outlines of typical acquisition career patterns with normal requirements (knowledge, skills, abilities) for entry and progression.
 8. Bibliography of current subject matter resources for developmental reading assignments.
- B. After gathering general information from The Information Center, employees and supervisors in the acquisition field who need supplementary resources not available in The Center, may consult their modal personnel office. The Center will be located in the Office of the Secretary, Office of Personnel, Nassif Building, Washington, D.C.

III. INDIVIDUAL CAREER COUNSELING AND ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Career counseling and developmental planning are the joint responsibility of the employee and his/her immediate supervisor. Together with performance and career appraisal, they provide the essential elements in the successful career of an individual.

- A. Timing: To be most effective, career counseling and assessment must be an ongoing, not a periodic process; it is the supervisor's day-to-day responsibility. However, since PMRS or PMS appraisals must be accomplished annually with a semiannual review conference, the primary formal counseling should occur in conjunction with preparation or review of the performance appraisal/rating plan.
- B. Content: Effective counseling must extend beyond the discussion of performance as it relates to critical job elements. It is the basis upon which a broader career assessment and Individual Development Plan are formulated. Career counseling sessions should be geared to frank and open discussion to motivate interest in career development. They should include:

1. A concrete and realistic discussion of available career paths and attainable career goals.
2. An objective assessment of the employee's strengths and weaknesses as they apply to defined goals. The discussion should, as a minimum, contain the elements defined in Exhibit A, Section I, of the attached "Sample Employee Career Assessment", and may include additional items.
3. Setting of at least 1 concrete career objective with an appropriate time frame for accomplishment. Goal setting is highly individual, and may range from acquisition or extension of a specific knowledge or ability to enhance current performance, through identification of a position or positions which will serve as short and/or long range goals. (See Section II of "Employee Career Assessment.")
4. Assessment of capability and means for reaching the defined goal within a reasonable time. (Section II - "Employee Career Assessment")
5. Preparation of an Individual Development Plan which, depending on individual and/or organization needs, may identify:
 - a. reading assignments
 - b. on-the-job developmental activities
 - c. internal rotational or short-term intra-Departmental assignments
 - d. a coach or mentor
 - e. academic courses, training, or seminars/workshops necessary or desirable to broaden and update technical knowledge and skills.
6. Scheduling of follow-up actions, times for reporting, and mutual feedback on progress. (Section IV - "Employee Career Assessment")
7. Documentation of the counseling and assessment session, its results, and any additional comments by the supervisor or the employee. (Section V - "Employee Career Assessment")

The form entitled (optional) "Employee Career Assessment" is intended as a guide. The counseling and appraisal session need not be restricted in either content or method. Whatever techniques are used, the supervisor should assure that a friendly and cooperative atmosphere is maintained. Likewise, the employee must maintain an open mind and freely discuss all aspects of individual development; honest self-assessment is imperative. In such an environment, the session will be mutually beneficial, contributing to the overall improvement of the acquisition work force.

C. Structure: Counseling and assessment of the scope indicated in III. B., above requires more than a single meeting. The following process segments are suggested.

1. Pre-Counseling Meeting: Prior to this meeting, the supervisor will review the employee's last official performance appraisal and assess the employee's progress and performance relative to the previous Individual Development Plan. (Exhibit B) Then, at the meeting, the supervisor will a) schedule the employee's counseling and assessment session, b) tentatively identify the employees' career desires and/or next career position goal, and c) plan for both employee and supervisor to utilize the resources of the Acquisition Career Information Center and/or personnel office representatives in the operating administration to identify knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) required to attain the next career goal, and the training or development activities required to attain these KSA's.
2. Counseling and Assessment Session:
 - a. Discussion should be relaxed and open as possible. The (optional) "Employee Career Assessment" form may be used as a guide. Use of the seven items in Section I. a. of that form and the job elements in the employee's PMRS/PMS appraisal plan will reveal how the employee stands in the mind of the supervisor. This is designed to structure, not limit the conversation, and the employee should feel free to question or ask for more specific information on items requiring improvement.
 - b. The remainder of the counseling will involve goal setting and formulation or updating of an Individual Development Plan. If deficiencies or needed improvements are identified during the appraisal phase, the supervisor should list these deficiencies and any training requirements not yet accomplished for the employee's present position. These courses and goals should be distinguished from recommended training and development related to the next career position or to overall career progression.
3. Conflict Resolution: The Employee Career Assessment Individual Development Plan, and any added comments should be signed and dated by the supervisor and the employee. If conflict occurs, it should be resolved by the reviewing supervisor.
4. Post Assessment Actions: The supervisor and the employee should make every reasonable attempt to adhere to the time schedule for follow-up actions, reporting, and progress feedback set in Section IV of

the (optional) "Employee Career Assessment." The supervisor should also attempt to immediately use the employee's new or enhanced skills and knowledge acquired through development activities.

SAMPLE
Employee Career Assessment

Name:

Appraisal Date:

Position Title, Grade, and Series:

Organization Location:

Section I - General Assessment

- A. Discuss the following items with the employee relative to the current position and overall general progression:
1. Technical Competence (Soundness of decisions and recommendations; development of solutions; innovativeness; production of quality work).
 2. Quality and Timeliness (Meeting deadlines and schedules, and accomplishment of workload in order of priority).
 3. Written Communication (Expression of ideas in a clear, concise and convincing manner).
 4. Oral Communication (Expression of ideas in a clear, concise and convincing manner).
 5. Cooperation (Tact, diplomacy and maintaining interpersonal relationships).
 6. Stability (Composure and effectiveness under pressure and adverse or changing conditions).
 7. Supervision and Administration (Developing subordinates; gaining respect, loyalty and cooperation; delegating authority; distributing work; coordinating and controlling diversified activities; obtaining conformance to high standards; effective planning and organizing; capability or sensitivity to adaptation of EEO goals and concepts).
- B. Address the employee's overall capability for general progression within the career field.

_____ Outstanding	_____ Marginal
_____ Above Average	_____ Limited
_____ Average	

Section II. - Goal Identification

A. Check one or more of the following:

_____ Employee's current position fulfills his/her immediate career desires. The following goal(s) is/are designed to extend or enhance knowledge and abilities required in the current position:

_____ Employee's goal as the next career position is identified below, together with knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics required to attain the goal.
Position Title, Grade, and Series:
Position Requirements:
Target for attainment:

_____ Employee's long range career goals and general intermediate steps and requirements are identified below with tentative targets for attainment:

B. Check one or both boxes if applicable:

_____ Employee is geographically mobile. (Able and/or willing to perform duties or accept a position outside the local commuting area).

_____ Employee is functionally mobile. (Able and/or willing to perform the duties of a acquisition position in a different area of specialization or with a broader scope.)

C. If employee has identified his/her next career position as a specific goal, appraise the employee's capability for progression to that position by checking the appropriate box (only one).

_____ Can be effective in the next career position with a normal break-in period of up to three months (appropriate training and development has been accomplished).

_____ Can be effective in the next career position within twelve months, pending completion of appropriate training and development.

_____ Cannot be effective in the next career position within a reasonable time.

Section III - Individual Development Plan:

The plan should be prepared using Exhibit B as a guide.

Section IV - Time Schedule:

Follow-up actions, reporting on accomplishments, and mutual feedback on progress.

Section V - Documentation:

A. Immediate Supervisor's Comments

Date	Name, Title, Organization	Signature
_____	_____	_____

B. Employee's Comments

Date	Signature
_____	_____

C. Reviewing Supervisor's Comments

Date	Name, Title, Organization	Signature
_____	_____	_____

SAMPLE
Individual Development Plan

From: (Supervisor)

To: (Employee)

The purpose of this memorandum is to confirm our discussions concerning your career development and to establish an IDP for the period _____.

Background. You entered into service on _____ (Date) as a _____ (Series & Grade) _____ (Title). Since that time you have progressed to your current _____ (Title) position. In the process you have gained experience in many different aspects of _____ (phases of acquisition process). You have also processed _____ (contracting methods, contract types used).

In addition to this experience, you have received the following formal training:

The _____ (appropriate career level) level in our agency in the GS-1102 series is Grade _____. Employees may progress to that level competitively or noncompetitively.

Plan for Implementing Goal and Objective. To achieve this goal, it is important that we begin to diversify your experience. Until now, you have specialized in _____ (contracting method, contract type, or analyst function). Beginning (insert date), we will take the following actions to broaden your experience with exposure to _____ (expanded contracting methods and contract types, commodity/service types, or analyst functions).

1. Reassign you to the _____ (office).
2. Assign a workload of representative contracts for _____ (contract types).
3. Within three months begin assigning _____ (contracting methods or commodity services types).
4. Arrange for you to attend/obtain training in one or more of the following areas.

The objective of these assignments and course work is to develop your knowledge of the acquisition process as it relates to acquisition through negotiation, both competitively and

Exhibit B (Cont'd)

noncompetitively. Specifically this will include a thorough exposure to the following:

(List specific training/developmental objectives of appropriate career level)

The expected timetable for course attendance is _____ and is dependent on the availability of funds.

Attachment 4

Acquisition Training RequirementsGeneral

Both training and development are specified for career levels as described below:

- (1) Procurement Assistant/Clerk. Employees at this level should receive a general orientation regarding the position and role of the acquisition activity. As an employee's technical support role increases, i.e. employee's Grades 5-7, they should develop increasing skills in formal contract procedures.
 - (2) Purchasing Agents. At this level procurement personnel should have a foundation in basic acquisition and progressively more expertise in using simplified purchase methods, and where appropriate, in formal contracting procedures.
 - (3) Contracts - Entry Level (GS-5 through GS-7). Employees at this level should receive a foundation in specialized knowledge and skills and a general orientation regarding the position and role of the acquisition activity in accomplishing the DOT mission. Progressively more responsible work assignments, job related training, formal courses of instruction and self-development activities will be included.
 - (4) Contracts - Intermediate Level (GS-9 through GS-12). At this level, primary emphasis is on increased and advanced technical knowledge and skill. Progressively more responsible work assignments add to depth and breadth of technical competence. Both on-the-job and off-the-job training, and developmental activities are concerned with increasing technical skills.
 - (5) Contracts - Senior Level (GS/GM-13 and above). At this level, acquisition personnel are expected to be fully competent in technical matters relating to their field. However, there will be a continuing need to keep abreast of changes and to learn management skills. Education and training become more generalized with greater emphasis on self-development.
- b. Categories of Courses. In addition to being organized into three career levels, formal courses are also identified by category, in accordance with the

relationship of the course to the DOT acquisition function.

- (1) Core Subject Courses. Provides the basic skill and information needed for the employee's current position and preparation for advancement in the career field. Normally, an employee should be expected to have received the training prescribed for a particular career level before advancement to the next level. However, an otherwise qualified employee who has not had the opportunity to receive training for a particular level may be appointed or promoted to the next level. When an employee who has not completed this training is promoted, the supervisor should arrange the appropriate training within the subsequent 12-month period. This period may be extended by the Head of the Procuring Activity.
 - (2) Core Subject Courses by Function. Provides the knowledge and skills required for employee proficiency in a particular position. Examples of these functions are ADP acquisition, construction contracting, and architect-engineer contracting.
- c. Updating Courses. Personnel are encouraged to make recommendations through their respective supervisors of any recommended revisions, deletions, or additions to formalized training course offerings. This includes requests for equivalent course determinations.
 - d. Course Equivalencies. Formal DOT sponsored courses are one source of acquisition knowledge. An employee who possesses the knowledge and skills taught in core subject courses is not required to take such courses if he/she meets the course equivalency requirements. Course equivalencies are essential to assure optimum use of acquisition resources and training facilities.

The following courses will generally cover the areas outlined below:

I. PROCUREMENT ASSISTANTS/CLERKS

CLASSROOM HOURS

A. BASICS OF ACQUISITION FOR ASSISTANTS/CLERKS 40

1. GENERAL SUBJECTS

- a. Introduction to Acquisition
- b. Role of Acquisition Assistants/Clerks
- c. Meaning of commonly used acquisition terms
- d. Laws governing acquisitions
- e. The FAR and TAR; how to use
- f. Standards of Conduct - Ethics
- g. Reporting Procedures

2. CORE SUBJECTS

- a. Three main phases of the acquisition process
- b. The Procurement Request
- c. Sealed Bidding and negotiation
- d. Small purchase procedures; Imprest Fund, Blanket Purchase Agreements
- e. Solicitation documents (RFQ's, IFB's, RFP's)
- f. Commerce Business Daily; Bidders mailing list
- g. Issuance of the Solicitation
- h. Receipt of Bids and Proposals
- i. Recording Bids and proposals
- j. Evaluation and award; negotiations
- k. Contract Administration
- l. Contract files and close out

C. BASIC PRICE ANALYSIS 40

D. FSS CONTRACTS, FEDSTRIP 24

E. MARKET RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS 16

The training would be an introduction to the acquisition process and treatment of fundamental principles and techniques with emphasis on public sector acquisition through small purchase procedures, under GSA contracts and from mandatory sources.

Course content should include:

1. Small purchasing requirements for planning, requisitioning, competition, solicitation, evaluation, pricing, and documentation.
2. Small purchase methods such as purchase orders (priced and unpriced), blanket purchase agreements, imprest funds, credit cards, and SF44s.
3. Government sources of supply.

4. Requirements for selection, administration of GSA contracts delivery orders, mandatory versus optional schedules, and term contracts.
5. Administration of orders, payment procedures, method of inspecting and testing; transportation and deliveries.
6. Purchasing reports.
7. Principles of buying, market conditions, and competition.
8. Use of business judgment.
9. Federal acquisition responsibility and authority.
10. Ethics and Standards of Conduct.

II. CONTRACT SPECIALISTS Entry Level (GS-1102-5/7)

<u>CORE SUBJECTS:</u>	<u>CLASSROOM HOURS</u>
A. BASIC ACQUISITION MANAGEMENT	80
B. NEGOTIATION TECHNIQUES	40
C. COST AND PRICE ANALYSIS	40
D. CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION	40

III. INTERMEDIATE LEVEL (GS-9/11/12)

<u>CORE SUBJECTS:</u>	<u>CLASSROOM HOURS</u>
A. INTERMEDIATE ACQUISITION MANAGEMENT Course subject same as Basic Acquisition Management plus:	40
B. SEALED BIDDING	40
C. NEGOTIATED ACQUISITIONS	40
D. CONTRACT LAW	40
E. INCENTIVE CONTRACTING	40
<u>CORE SUBJECTS BY FUNCTION:</u>	
F. ADP ACQUISITION	40
G. CONSTRUCTION AND ARCHITECT-ENGINEER CONTRACTING	40

IV. SENIOR LEVEL (GS/GM-13 and above)

<u>CORE SUBJECTS:</u>	<u>CLASSROOM HOURS</u>
A. ADVANCED ACQUISITION MANAGEMENT	80
B. ADVANCED SEALED BIDDING	40
C. NEGOTIATION ACQUISITIONS (ADVANCED)	40
D. COST AND PRICE ANALYSIS (ADVANCED)	40
E. CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION (ADVANCED)	40
F. CONTRACT LAW (ADVANCED)	40

Contracting Officer Appointment ProceduresI. GENERAL

- A. This establishes Departmental guidelines and procedures for the selection, designation and termination of contracting officers, as required by FAR 1.603.
- B. Because of continually changing statutory and regulatory requirements regarding Federal contracts, and the growing visibility and volume of Federal contracting, the complexity of the contracting process has increased significantly. As a result, the responsibility and authority of the contracting officer have also expanded.
- C. To aid those who function as contracting officers, and to ensure the continuation of the expertise necessary to accomplish the Department's contracting needs, these procedures provide further guidance for appointing contracting officers. Delegations of contracting officer authority below the level of a head of a contracting activity will normally be made to individuals rather than to positions. Therefore, these procedures and training requirements do not correlate directly with the training requirements for career levels in Attachment 4. Heads of contracting activities (HCA) should use Attachment 5 as guidance in appointing contracting officers.
- D. Several actions (selection, training, and termination of designation) can have a significant impact on personnel management (position classification and management, employee development, selection guidelines, adverse actions, and grievances). The successful implementation of these procedures requires a close working relationship among line management, contracting officers/specialists and personnel officers/specialists.
- E. General service training and assignment policies may prevent military personnel from having all the desired training before reporting for duty in a acquisition billet. Nonetheless, every effort should be made to ensure that military personnel receive both formal and on-the-job training, specific to their current assignment as early in the tour as possible.

II. SELECTION OF CONTRACTING OFFICERS

In addition to the requirements in FAR 1.603, the following guidance is provided for the selection of contracting officers by the head of the contracting activity:

A. Level I Contracting Officers. This guidance applies to those who sign open market purchase orders up to \$25,000, delivery orders up to the maximum order limitation under mandatory Federal Supply Schedule contracts, and purchases from mandatory sources of supply.

1. Standards.

- a. One year of acquisition experience involving the knowledge, skills, and abilities set forth in Attachment 5 Appendix I. Cumulative experience may be applied.
- b. Eighty classroom hours of acceptable training as outlined by Attachment 5, Appendix II.
- c. Satisfactory performance appraisal rating in acquisition duties, including ethical conduct and the exercise of good business judgment.

2. Equivalencies.

Passing an appropriate examination given by a nationally recognized professional contract organization may be used to substitute for Level I training requirements.

3. Exceptions.

- a. Those project heads, technical managers, administrative personnel, and others assigned to remote field locations who have limited occasion to make small purchases and who do not have a contracting officer present can be excepted from the qualification standards of the Appointment System. This exception authority is limited to \$5,000 per transaction for open market purchases, to the maximum order limitation for delivery orders against mandatory Federal Supply Schedule contracts, and to other mandatory sources of supply.
- b. This authority may not be used to acquire construction over \$2,000 or services over \$2,500. This exception is subject to the following additional requirements:
 - (1) All individuals operating under this authority must be identified by name and a mechanism for delegation of authority must be set forth in modal and office procedures. (Certificates need not be issued to these individuals although the issuance of a certificate is an acceptable method of managing the delegation of this authority.)

- (2) Sixteen classroom hours of training or equivalent correspondence instruction in small purchasing should be completed prior to delegation of this authority.

B. Level II Contracting Officers. This guidance applies to those who perform contracting officer functions for contractual actions which do not exceed \$200,000, or at a lower level which may be designated by each administration.

1. Standards.

- a. Three years of progressively responsible, full-time acquisition experience involving the knowledge, skills, and abilities set forth in Attachment 5, Appendix I.
- b. 200 Classroom hours of acceptable training as defined in Attachment 5, Appendix II.
- c. Satisfactory performance appraisal rating in acquisition duties, including ethical conduct and the exercise of good business judgment.

2. Equivalencies.

- (1) Completion (baccalaureate degree) of an undergraduate program from an accredited institution of higher learning regardless of the major field of concentration may be substituted for one year of acquisition experience.
- (2) Completion (baccalaureate degree) of an undergraduate program from an accredited institution of higher learning with a major in acquisition may be substituted for two years of acquisition experience.
- (3) Completion (baccalaureate degree) of an undergraduate program from an accredited institution of higher learning with a major in business administration, accounting, or economics may be substituted for two years of acquisition experience.
- (4) Completion (masters degree) of a graduate program from an accredited institution of higher learning regardless of the major field of concentration may be substituted for two years of acquisition experience.

- (5) Completion (masters degree) of a graduate program from an accredited institution of higher learning with a major in business administration, accounting, or economics may be substituted for three years of acquisition experience plus twenty hours of classroom training.
- (6) Completion (master degree) of a graduate program from an accredited institution of higher learning with a major in acquisition may be substituted for three years of acquisition experience plus Level II training requirements.
- (7) One year of concentrated on-the-job experience in a acquisition subject area (for example, contract administration) beyond the three-year minimum, indicated for Level II in (1) above, can be substituted for 24 classroom hours of training in that same subject area. The maximum credit that can be earned by additional on the job experience in separate concentrated procurement subject areas is 96 classroom hours.
- (8) Passing of an examination which is given by a nationally recognized professional contract organization and which has been approved by the Procurement Executive, may be substituted for Level II training requirements.

3. Exceptions.

- o On-Scene Coordinators (OSC's) as contracting officers against existing BOA's for actions under oil spill pollution and hazardous material cleanup efforts with a limit not to exceed \$50,000 per incident.
- o On-Scene ship construction and alteration contract representatives and ship managers with a limit as established by the agency.

C. Level III Contracting Officers. This guidance applies to those who have been delegated unlimited authority to perform contracting officer functions.

1. Standards.

- a. Four years of progressively responsible, full-time acquisition experience involving the knowledge, skills, and abilities set forth in Attachment 5, Appendix I.

- b. Training requirements of Level II should be met.
- c. An additional two hundred hours of classroom training as defined in Attachment 5 Appendix II.
- d. Satisfactory performance appraisal rating in acquisition duties, including ethical conduct and the exercise of good business judgment.

2. Equivalencies.

- (1) Level II equivalencies (1) through (5) are identical for Level III.
- (2) Completion (masters degree) of a graduate program from an accredited institution for four years of acquisition experience plus Level II and Level III training requirements.
- (3) One year concentrated on-the-job experience in an advanced acquisition subject are (for example, contract administration) beyond the four year minimum indicated for Level III in (1) in Level II can be substituted for 24 classroom hours of Level III training in that same area. The maximum credit that can be earned by additional on-the-job experience in separate concentrated acquisition subject area is 96 classroom hours.
- (4) Passing of an examination, which is given by a nationally recognized professional contract organization and which has been approved by the Procurement Executive, may be substituted for Level III training requirements.

3. Exception.

- o OSC's as contracting officers against existing BOA's for actions under oil spill pollution and hazardous material cleanup efforts with a limit not to exceed \$50,000 per incident.
- o On-Scene ship construction and alteration contract representatives and ship managers with a limit as established by the agency.

D. Exemptions.

1. The following types of transactions are exempt from all provisions of the Appointment System:
 - a. Interagency agreements including transfer of funds
 - b. Grants
 - c. Cooperative agreements
 - d. Calls against Blanket Purchase Arrangements
 - e. FEDSTRIPS
 - f. SF-44 - Purchase Order - Invoice - Voucher
 - g. Imprest fund purchases
 - h. Signing of Training Authorizations for Public Course Offerings
 - i. Signing of Travel Related Documents
 - j. Authorizations or Orders for Printing and Duplicating Services
 - k. Signing of Government Bills of Lading
 - l. Lease of family/unaccompanied personnel housing
 - m. Non-appropriated fund small purchase actions under \$5,000
2. Although not required to be included under these procedures, modes may, at their discretion, require that a contracting officer sign any or all of these types of transactions. In any case, the head of the contracting activity is responsible for instituting sound management controls of these transactions.

E. Documentation. A qualification statement in the sample format prescribed in Exhibit 1 should be completed for each person selected as a contracting officer. A copy of these qualification statements should be maintained by the head of the contracting activity in an appropriate manner.

F. Conflict of Interest Statements. All contracting officers must comply with the existing conflict of interest regulations. Level II and III contracting officers must file a current Form DOT F 3700.1, confidential Statement of Employment and Financial Interests, in accordance with Federal Personnel Manual Chapter 735, Employee Responsibilities and Conduct, Subchapter 4, Agency Regulations Governing Statements of Employment and Financial Interests.

III. DESIGNATION OF CONTRACTING OFFICERS

- A. Certificate. It is the Department's policy to redelegate contracting officer authority to individuals below the Head of the Agency and head of the contracting activity levels only in writing on a "Certificate of Appointment", SF-1402. The certificate will state the responsibility and authority of the appointee, and the limitations of the appointment, whether on the face of the form or by incorporation by reference to another document. To the extent incorporation by reference is used, copies of the referenced document shall be made readily available to the public upon request. The certificate shall be prominently displayed in the vicinity of the contracting officer's work area.
- B. Qualification period. No contracting officer delegation below the Head of the Agency and head of the contracting activity levels shall be valid except those which have been made in accordance with these procedures. Prior to making such delegation, the Qualifications Statement for the nominee contracting officer shall be evaluated and a decision made whether the qualifications have been met. Where the appropriate qualifications have been met, a permanent certificate may be issued. Where the qualifications have not been met, an interim certificate may be issued valid for a specified period and should be subject to the following conditions:
1. The extent to which training and experience have not been met should be determined and stated in writing accompanying the nomination.
 2. A time-phased action plan for meeting the qualifications should be prepared, and approved by the appointing official.
 3. The interim certificate shall expire and not be reissued if qualifications are not met within the specified time unless a waiver is granted by the head of the contracting activity.
 4. An interim Level II certificate should not be issued to anyone with less than two years of full-time acquisition experience; an interim Level III certificate should not be issued to anyone with less than three years of full-time acquisition experience.
 5. Interim certificates should not be issued for Level I contracting officers.

C. Maintaining a certificate.

1. Once a permanent appointment is made, and in order to function effectively, contracting officers should maintain their certificates through continued training in pertinent acquisition subjects.
2. Administrations and offices should ensure that certificates are maintained in accordance with these procedures. The following number of training hours are desirable to maintain a certificate:

Level I: 24 hours every three years.

Level II and III: 40 hours every three years.

In addition, the contracting officer duties are to be reflected in the individual's performance appraisal as a critical job element.

IV. TERMINATION.

- A. The Contracting Officer's certificate may be terminated by the appointing official. Reasons for such termination may include:

1. Failure to comply with: applicable requirements, statutes, Executive orders, Office of Management and Budget Circulars, Federal management circulars, the Federal Acquisition Regulations, the Department of Transportation Acquisition Regulations, modal or office regulations, policies, or procedures, limitations of these procedures, delegated responsibilities, or good business judgment.
2. Failure to maintain training standards after appointment.
3. Violation of the Employee's Responsibility and Conduct Code. (Federal Personnel Manual, Chapter 735 and 49 CFR 99.735).
4. The need for a contracting officer no longer exists.
5. Reassignment of the appointee to a new position within the mode or office where the need for the certificate no longer exists.

6. Transfer of the appointee to another mode or office within the Department of Transportation or to another Government agency.
 7. Retirement, resignation, or other termination of the appointee's Government employment.
- B. Termination may have a personnel-related impact upon individuals. Therefore, the appropriate personnel office must be consulted prior to effecting any termination which may lead to a grievance or similar personnel action.
- C. The appointing official (i.e., the head of the contracting activity) may delegate the authority to terminate appointments to the chief of the contracting office where the terminations are for strictly administrative reasons, such as transfer of an individual to another Government agency, or retirement of the individual. Delegation of termination authority is limited strictly to such cases, and is not permitted for any termination which may lead to a grievance or similar personnel action.
- D. Termination of appointments of individuals made in accordance with these procedures and for the reason stated in paragraph IV-A above should read substantially as follows:

SUBJ: Termination of Appointment as Contracting Officer, Certificate of Appointment Serial No. _____.

FROM: (Appointing Authority)

TO: (Name, grade or rank, and service number, if any).

Your appointment as contracting officer contained in the subject certificate is hereby terminated effective _____.

DATE:

(SIGNATURE AND TITLE)

ATTACHMENT 5
APPENDIX I

Experience Requirements

The following general requirements are provided to assist in assessing an individual candidate's acquisition experience in the GS-1105 or GS/GM-1102 series position.

A. LEVEL I CONTRACTING OFFICER.

1. Knowledge of and demonstrated compliance with Federal acquisition laws, policies, regulations, and business and economic development programs, and methods and procedures applicable to small purchases and orders from Federal Supply Schedule contracts and from mandatory sources.
2. Knowledge of the Federal acquisition process, market conditions, how to achieve competition, and how to determine a reasonable price from basic arithmetic calculations.
3. Ability to select appropriate methods or procedures for purchasing materials or services and to apply consistently fair and sound business judgment.
4. Ability to communicate appropriately with Government and non-Government personnel and to complete actions within a reasonable time.
5. Ethical conduct in business dealings as required by Federal Personnel Manual, Chapter 735 and 49 CFR 99.735.
6. Knowledge of and ability to utilize cost and price analysis, negotiation and contract administration techniques applicable to open market purchase orders up to \$25,000.

B. LEVEL II CONTRACTING OFFICER.

1. Knowledge of Government Contract Law; and Federal regulations and policies for the solicitation, award and administration of contracts.
2. Knowledge of the budget execution process and procedures for verifying that funds are available for the acquisition.
3. Skill at determining whether a non-competitive procurement is necessary and justified, given the nature of the requirements, market conditions and procedural constraints.

4. Ability to identify and develop sources of supply.
5. Knowledge of the procedures for small business and labor surplus set asides (including class set asides); knowledge of the process for procuring goods and services from 8(a) firms.
6. Ability to determine the best method of acquisition, given the nature of the requirement and market conditions (e.g., simplified purchase methods, sealed bidding, negotiations, etc.).
7. Skill at identifying and developing special provisions and options for solicitations to protect and further the Government's interests.
8. Knowledge of methods for publicizing solicitations.
9. Skill at evaluating and responding to inquiries regarding solicitations.
10. Knowledge of the process for amending solicitations, extending the solicitation period, and properly processing late bids or proposals.
11. Knowledge of the conditions and process for cancelling solicitations.
12. Basic knowledge of the process for evaluating bids, including such aspects as verifying bids, determining the allowability of mistakes in bids, and determining responsiveness.
13. Ability to identify and obtain data for evaluating proposals from both Government (i.e., technical evaluators and auditors) and non-Government sources.
14. Skill at analyzing market conditions and historical pricing data to determine the fairness and reasonableness of proposed prices; and to develop and support the Government's pre-negotiation objectives.
15. Basic skill at analyzing proposed elements of cost to develop cost and profit pre-negotiation positions, based on data from the offerors, in-house estimates, technical evaluations and audit reports.
16. Ability to determine the competitive range.
17. Skill at developing negotiation objectives, strategies and tactics.
18. Skill at conducting negotiation sessions.
19. Ability to determine the necessity and extent for pre-award surveys.

20. Skill at determining the responsibility of proposed offerors.
21. Ability to make and justify final source selection decisions.
22. Knowledge of the procedures for awarding contracts and providing prompt notice of the awards.
23. Ability to conduct post-award conferences (if necessary).
24. Knowledge of methods and conditions for modifying contracts through formal change orders and supplemental agreements.
25. Skill at instructing COTR's and quality assurance personnel on their authority and limits.
26. Knowledge of the process for settling claims, ability to determine the validity of claims and establish the Government's position on the amount of the equitable adjustment.
27. Knowledge of the process for ordering (a) temporary halts in work under contracts and (b) the resumption of work.
28. Ability to monitor the contractor's progress, determine whether delays are excusable, and grant performance time extensions for excusable delays.
29. Knowledge of the criteria for determining whether the contractor is failing to make due progress or not complying with other contract provisions.
30. Knowledge of the techniques and instruments for dealing with the contractor's failure to perform (e.g., cure and show cause notices).
31. Knowledge of the conditions and process for terminating contracts for the convenience of the Government or for default.
32. Ability to determine and assess liquidated damages; obtain consideration for delinquent deliveries or items not meeting specifications.
33. Knowledge of the consequences of breach of contract by either the Government or the contractor.
34. Knowledge of the process for inspecting and accepting the contractor's work.

35. Ability to manage the payment of contractors (e.g., requests for progress payments; the processing of contractor invoices; release of claims; assignment of payments; adjusting contract fund requirements; the withholding and set off of payments).
36. Ethical conduct in business dealings as required by Federal Personnel Manual, Chapter 735.

C. LEVEL III CONTRACTING OFFICER.

1. Knowledge of Government Contract Law, and Federal regulations and policies for the solicitation and administration of contracts.
2. Ability to develop, maintain and update advanced acquisition plans.
3. Ability to advise and assist requiring activities in evaluating statements of work or specifications to yield the best market response, in terms of quality, quantity, timeliness and price.
4. Skill at advising and assisting requiring activities in formulating and applying criteria for evaluating offeror's proposals.
5. Advanced skill in assisting the requiring activities in avoiding non-competitive situations and obtaining competition, when competition would best serve the public interest.
6. Skill at applying procedures for small business and labor surplus set asides (including class set asides); knowledge of the process for procuring goods and services from 8(a) firms.
7. Ability to determine the best method of acquisition, under more complex conditions, given the nature of the requirement and market conditions (e.g., simplified purchase methods, sealed bidding, negotiations, etc.).
8. Ability to select the most appropriate pricing arrangement (i.e., "type of contract"), given the nature of the requirement and market conditions.
9. Skill at determining the necessity for, and developing of contractor financing arrangements (e.g., progress payments advance payments, etc.).
10. Skill at identifying and developing more advanced special provisions and options for more sophisticated acquisitions.

11. Advanced knowledge of methods and issues involving the solicitation of bids and proposals, from publication of the solicitation through receipt and opening of the bids and proposals.
12. Skill at determining the necessity for and conducting pre-proposal (i.e., solicitation) conferences.
13. Advanced knowledge of the process for evaluating bids, including verifying bids, determining the allowability of mistakes in bids, and determining responsiveness.
14. Ability to identify and obtain data for evaluating proposals from both Government (i.e., technical evaluators and auditors) and non-Government sources.
15. Advanced skill at analyzing market conditions and historical pricing data to determine the fairness and reasonableness of proposed prices; and to develop and support the Government's pre-negotiation position on price.
16. Advanced skill at analyzing proposed elements of cost to develop cost and profit pre-negotiation positions, based on data from the offerors, in-house estimates, technical evaluations and audit reports.
17. Ability to determine the competitive range when complex technical issues are involved.
18. Advanced skill at developing negotiation objectives, strategies and tactics.
19. Skill at conducting pre-negotiation fact-finding conferences with the offeror's representatives.
20. Skill at managing negotiations utilizing a team approach.
21. Advanced skill at determining the responsibility of proposed offerors.
22. Knowledge of advanced source selection methods.
23. Skill at developing the Government's position on protests.
24. Advanced knowledge of the methods and conditions for modifying contracts through formal change orders and supplemental agreements.
25. Advanced skill at instructing COTR's and quality assurance personnel on their authority and limits.

26. Knowledge of the process for settling complex claims; ability to determine the validity of complex claims and establish the Government's position on the amount of the equitable adjustment.
27. Advanced knowledge of, and skill at, monitoring the contractor's progress, determining whether delays are excusable, and granting performance time extensions for excusable delays.
28. Skill at determining whether the contractor is failing to make due progress or not complying with other contract provisions.
29. Skill at applying the techniques and instruments for dealing with the contractor's failure to perform (e.g., cure and show cause notices).
30. Advanced knowledge of the conditions and process for terminating contracts for the convenience of the Government or for default.
31. Skill at obtaining consideration for delinquent deliveries or items not meeting specifications.
32. Ability to obtain and review cost accounting standards disclosure statements; determine whether investigations of the statements are necessary; and negotiate cost impact adjustments.
33. Knowledge of the process for reviewing and approving the contractor's accounting and cost estimating systems.
34. Knowledge of quality assurance systems and processes.
35. Ability to review and consent to proposed sub-contracts; knowledge of the procedures for reviewing contractor purchasing systems.
36. Knowledge of the techniques for identifying and resolving defective pricing actions.
37. Skill at negotiating forward pricing agreements, interim billing rates, and final overhead rates.
38. Advanced knowledge of methods for managing the payment of contractors (e.g., requests for progress payments; the processing of contractor invoices; release of claims; assignment of payments; adjusting contract fund requirements; the withholding and set off payments).
39. Ethical conduct in business dealings as required by Federal Personnel Manual, Chapter 735.(43 CFR 15).

ATTACHMENT 5
APPENDIX II

Criteria For
Evaluation of Training Courses

These training course criteria have been developed to aid the individual, the supervisor, and the training officer in establishing an individual development plan which will comply with the appropriate level of the contracting officer standards. These criteria will be used to determine the acceptability of a training course when a recommendation for a criteria is submitted.

GENERAL

Training must be directly related to the body of knowledge of contract management, and it must include most of the described topics within the core subject areas. A course in which several acquisition subject areas are addressed is acceptable provided the overall specific number of hours in core subjects are met for the applicable level. Equivalency tests and correspondence courses are acceptable for credit under these procedures if they comply with and provide training in the core subject areas. To be credited, a copy of the certificate of completion (e.g., SF-182) or any should be submitted with the recommendation for appointment.

LEVEL I

Level I develops functional knowledge of the laws, policies, procedures, and methods pertaining to open market purchase orders up to \$25,000. It builds on the basic small purchase techniques of Level I by providing the knowledge of socio-economic, labor, and synopsis requirements pertaining to open market purchases over \$10,000, as well as the knowledge of pricing, negotiating and contract administration techniques applicable to such purchases.

The 40 hours of purchasing training and 40 more hours of training in negotiation or cost and price analysis or contract administration, or a combination thereof, are recommended for Level I. The descriptions of "Negotiation", "Cost and Price Analysis" and "Contract Administration" contained in the "Core Subjects" section of Level II training (see below) are appropriate guidelines for courses in these subjects applicable to Level I.

LEVEL II

Level II develops functional knowledge of the laws, policies, procedures, and methods pertaining to Federal contracts to enable an individual to operate effectively in managing the full range of basic contracts.

Basic course content (total of 200 hours) must convey an understanding of the following general subjects:

A. General Subjects

1. Federal acquisition policies.
2. Explanation of the acquisition cycle and advance acquisition planning.
3. Overview of budget and appropriation cycle.
4. Ethics and conduct standards.
5. Basic contract laws.
6. Business and economic development requirements in acquisitions.
7. Identification and comparison of types of contracts and clauses.
8. Sealed bidding and negotiated methods of acquisition.
9. Definition of value, cost, price, and profit.
10. Simplified negotiation techniques.
11. Protests, disputes, and appeals.
12. Contract administration responsibilities.
13. Contract modifications.
14. Subcontracting relationships.
15. Special acquisition methods and reports.

B. Core Subjects

Special emphasis on the core subjects of sealed bidding, negotiation, cost and price analysis, contract administration, and contract law (approximately 40 classroom hours each) generally should include:

1. Sealed Bidding.
 - Procedures.
 - Bidder responsibility.
 - Responsiveness and timeliness of bids.
 - Evaluation and verification of bids for award.
2. Negotiation.
 - Circumstances permitting negotiation.
 - Determinations and findings.
 - Negotiation procedures.
 - Negotiation objectives and sessions.
 - Simplified source evaluation and selection techniques.
 - Offeror responsibility.
3. Cost and Price Analysis.
 - Fair and reasonable price determination.
 - Economic concept of value, cost and profit.
 - Cost and price analysis.
 - Profit factors.
 - Awareness of cost principles: allowable and allocable.

- Identification of elements of financial statements.
- Simple cost control techniques.
- Truth in Negotiations Act.
- Contract audits.

4. Contract Administrations.

- Responsibilities and functions of a contract administrator.
- Proper authority for change orders/supplemental agreements.
- Identification of equitable adjustment factors.
- Quality assurance, inspection and compliance with contract terms.
- Delays/suspension of work.
- Labor provisions.
- Contract payments.
- Disputes and remedies.
- Liquidated damages.
- Termination for Convenience or default.

5. Contract Law.

- Basic contract law principles.
- Federal contractual authority.
- Federal acquisition regulation.

For a course to qualify for credit toward a core subject area, it should contain a majority of the topics listed under the subject area. A course which specializes in only one or two topics does not satisfy the entire core subject area for Level II. For example, a contract claims course does not satisfy a need for a basic course in contract administration.

LEVEL III

Level III courses concentrate on the analysis of advanced acquisition methods and techniques to enable an individual to manage effectively more complex contractual relationships. The appointment system training for Level II is also recommended for Level III. The essential difference between Level II and Level III courses is that Level II conveys general acquisition knowledge, while Level III concentrates on the in-depth analysis of more complex and specialized acquisition areas and presents an overview of acquisition management.

Advanced course content (total of 200 hours) should include a combination of the following general subjects and approximately 40 classroom hours each in courses from the core subjects listed below:

A. General Subjects

1. Acquisition management.
2. Advance acquisition planning.
3. Advanced acquisition and contracting methods and techniques.
4. Complex contract types.
5. Acquisition of major systems.
6. Analysis and interpretation of private sector market conditions.
7. Labor, business and economic development contract provisions.
8. Data Management.
9. Incentive contracting; cost reduction.
10. Current policy issues.
11. Source Selection.

B. Core Subjects

1. Sealed bidding.

- Specification and purchase description.
- Two-step sealed bidding.
- Mistakes in bids.
- Protests.

2. Negotiation.

- Techniques and strategy of effective negotiation.
- Competitive range determinations.
- Advanced source evaluation and selection process and techniques.

3. Cost and Price Analysis.

- Contract risk allocation.
- Financial management and interpretation of financial statements, and determination of viability of a business concern.
- Overhead analysis and negotiation.
- Quantitative techniques for evaluation.
- Cost accounting standards.
- Cost control techniques.
- Design to cost; life cycle cost; value engineering.

4. Contract Administration.

- Change orders/supplemental agreements; forward pricing.
- Settlement of contract claims and equitable adjustments.
- Terminations for convenience or default.
- Interpretation of specifications.
- Contractor performance measurement.

5. Contract Law.

- Evaluation of acquisition statutes.
- Case studies and analysis of Comptroller General, Contract Appeals Board, and court decisions in major contract issues.
- Understanding legal procedures and interpreting legal concepts.
- Contemporary legal acquisition issues.

SAMPLE
Qualifications Statement
for Appointment of
Contracting Officers

TO: Head of the Contracting Activity

The following findings and determinations are made pursuant to applicable laws and regulations:

1. There is a clear and convincing need to appoint a contracting officer for Level _____ for the following reasons:

2. The nominee contracting officer is:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Series & Grade: _____

3. The nominee contracting officer will occupy the following organization position, responsible for the processing of acquisitions:

Office: _____

Division: _____

Location: _____

4. The nominee's Qualifications Statement (SF-171; inventory, or otherwise) is attached which identifies pertinent knowledge, skills, and abilities plus training and education qualifications.

5. The nominee's conflict of interest disclosures statement is on file in the appropriate personnel office. (Level III and IV)

6. The nominee's performance of acquisition duties is satisfactory.

Supervisor

(Signature of Supervisor of the nominee
Contracting Officer)

(Date)

(Typed name)

(Acquisition Office)

(Title)

APPROVED:

Date

Head of Contracting Activity

The nominee's experience, education, and training meet the established minimum qualifications. Therefore, the requested permanent certificate shall be issued.

The nominee does not meet the established minimum qualifications. Therefore, an interim certificate shall be issued, to be effective for a maximum of _____ (Level II and III only.) from date of signature.