

## **GSA Acquisition Policy Federal Advisory Committee (GAP FAC) Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee Meeting**

**January 31, 2023**

The General Service Administration (GSA) Acquisition Policy Federal Advisory Committee (GAP FAC) Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee convened for the fifth public meeting at 3:00 PM on January 31, 2023, virtually via Zoom with Nicole Darnall, Co-Chair, presiding.

In accordance with FACA, as amended, 5 U.S.C. App 2, the meeting was open to the public from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM EST

### **Subcommittee Members Present:**

Nicole Darnall, Co-Chairperson	<i>Arizona State University</i>
Gail Bassette	<i>Bowie State University</i>
Mark Hayden	<i>New Mexico General Services Department</i>
Anne Rung	<i>Varis, LLC</i>
Kristin Seaver	<i>General Dynamics Information Technology</i>
Clyde Thompson	<i>GovStrive, LLC</i>
Steven Schooner	<i>George Washington University</i>

**Absent:** Darryl Daniels and David Malone

### **Guest Speakers & Presenters:**

Joanie Newhart	<i>Associate Administrator for Acquisition Workforce Programs, The Office of Federal Procurement Policy</i>
Christine Heibeck	<i>Learning and Development Program Manager, Federal Acquisition Institute</i>
Nicholas West	<i>Acting Director, Office of GSA Acquisition Policy, Integrity &amp; Workforce Office of Government-wide Policy</i>
Nicole Acevedo	<i>Division Director for the GSA Acquisition Workforce</i>
Bea Dukes	<i>GSA Acquisition Career Manager</i>

### **GSA Staff Present:**

Stephanie Hardison, *Deputy Designated Federal Officer*

Adam Sheldrick, *GAP FAC Support Team*  
Skylar Holloway, *GAP FAC Support Team*  
Annabelle Thompson, *Closed Captioner*  
Daniel Swartz & Jill Lamoreaux, *ASL Interpreters*

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Stephanie Hardison, Deputy Designated Federal Officer, opened the public meeting by welcoming the group before reminding the public that there would be time for comments and statements at the end of the meeting. Stephanie then performed a roll call to confirm attendance and a quorum. After the quorum was met, she turned the meeting over to the Co-Chair Nicole Darnall.

## **WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS**

Co-Chair Nicole Darnall welcomed the committee and thanked the presenters for being there today before turning the meeting over to Anne Rung.

## **AWFS GUEST SPEAKERS**

Anne Rung introduced the first speaker Joanie Newhart.

Joanie Newhart is talking to the group about their broader work, the acquisition workforce. There is currently an effort called Building our Best within the acquisition workforce, and there are four points of it:

1. A hiring crisis where the workforce needs younger people.
2. Modernizing the certificate.
3. The culture is hard to change, and last is a networking piece.

They heard from younger people on the frontline who wanted to connect with others who went through similar things that they were going through.

Joanie Newhart turned the conversation to Chris Heibeck to talk about Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) Modernization. Modernization is a new way of training contractors, and aligns with Defense Acquisition University (DAU). The previous certifications spent a lot of up-front time where everyone followed the same training whereas this model adds more of a competency model that adds an industry perspective. They are moving away from the 3-level certification to a new program. The new part of this program is the introduction to credentials.

Chris Heibeck explained their Contracting Professional Maturity Model, showcasing how they expect people to enter the career field. For the first one to two years, contractors will get on the job training before moving to the practitioner level, where

they get competency credentials. They will continue to advance to become advanced practitioners before moving on to be professional experts and lifelong learners.

A credential is a curated package of learning assets built at the taxonomy's applied level. Credentials need to have performance learning objectives. They are going to be approved by the federal governance board. We are working with DAU to adopt credentials that apply to the federal workforce. They are meant to be taken at the time of need to support the individual and the mission. It's a tool for supervisors and employees to engage in developing skills needed and professional development. It's an opportunity to leverage and strategically align our government courseware to support the workforce.

Credentialing isn't a one size fits all training model. They aren't a demonstration of ability or years of experience and aren't unnecessary. Not every topic will need a credential. Credentials have an expiration date of 3-5 years before they need to be renewed. New policy or additional training to be taken upon renewal.

Christine showed an example of a career in construction contracting and the steps an individual would go through from start to finish in the world of credentialing.

Credential is a new program with a lot of new implementations happening. The FAC-C program will include the adoption of DAU built credentials. FAI is working to develop government-wide credentials. Many new credentials are planned. DAU is forecasting to launch a credential program late this fiscal year or early next fiscal year. As of today, 16 credentials are aligned to a specific mission assignment available to the workforce.

They are working in tandem with OFPP to establish a federal credential governance board responsible for determining the applicability and feasibility of specific credentials. They've been working with an interagency credential workgroup to establish this process and the standards. Colleagues at the DAU have mentioned that not all topics need to be addressed as credentialing. They could be regular training. Christine took questions from the group before Anne Rung introduced speaker Nicholas West.

Nicholas West is talking to the group about the new FAC-C program and what that means within GSA. GSA is onboard with adopting a new model. A policy signed last week has GSA implementing changes to hiring practices to support a new model. The ideas and objectives that Joanie Newhart and Christine Hiebeck spoke about are all supported by GSA to increase the pool, get folks trained and utilize the best.

Each contracting activity has an individual called the acquisition career navigator. This individual is responsible for helping that contracting activity understand the training needs of that organization. This is a new role at GSA, and a specific responsibility goes along with it.

Many tools that exist within the new course demand system that we use to manage workforce learning. We've been able to group contracting activities and individuals to mandate a specific learning course. There is currently an idea for more awareness focused training in the area of supply chain risk management. It's an awareness course on cyber management's new and evolving policy. We can track compliance, use that network of acquisition career navigators to manage a new force and make sure folks can take that training.

There's a course that folks use to understand the basic awareness of the contracting community on sustainability issues that they should have the basic awareness of. We've mandated that for contracting officer representatives and FAC-C program managers. We focus on folks reading and understanding these new policies and how to incorporate sustainable acquisition into the acquisition planning process. We also focus on how to promote innovation in contracts in terms of thinking about sustainability. We have knowledge checks on things like this to promote folks to understand and increase knowledge within the workforce. Within GSA, there are specific courses where our federal acquisition service hosts a virtual acquisition day annually, an internal two-day learning event where they do webinars. They've developed a sustainable acquisition webinar to talk about things folks should think about in FAC contracts. These are posted on CSOD to manage and allow the acquisition navigators to mandate them if they want to track compliance and draft completion. A new climate for program managers course has also been mandated.

We have niche contracting areas, and many of the contracts already fit those niches. How you consider the sustainability part of contracting is unique depending on what you're buying. Ensuring that learning objectives are met through credentials makes better sense than trying to teach someone to be the jack of all trades. If we are looking for general awareness, the learning assignment tool is good to use for that. We were successful in developing general awareness with that.

## **GUEST SPEAK Q & A**

### ***Questions for Christine Hiebeck & Joanie Newhart***

**Q:** Steve Schooner – Can you say a few words about how DAU, Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI), Office of Federal Procurement policy (OFPP), and National Contract Management Association (NCMA) are collaborating? How is everyone playing together and what can we expect?

**A:** Joanie Newhart – I haven't seen all of us get along for a while, so it's nice we are now. Our model is similar to DOD's Back to Basics. They are the standard for acquisition training, so we aligned with them. Before, we could take the DoD people without the civilian people, but now we are signing an MLU for reciprocity which is a big deal. We are trying to figure out ways to leverage and benefit what we do for the acquisition workforce.

**A:** Christine Heibeck – For our professional exam, FAI & OFPP has been collaborating with DAU. This means everyone will take the same exam and curriculum as a foundation.

**Q:** Anne Rung – Is credentialing new for FAI?

**A:** Christine Heibeck - DAU started developing credentials a year before Back to Basics. At one of their leadership meetings, they talked about how they are in the infancy stage of this program. It's a development of the curated training packages they are trying to deploy across the workforce. They have over 30 planned for the contracting workforce and separate ones for specific workers.

**Q:** Anne Rung – Does the federal credential governance board decide which DAU certifications occur, or are they just for civilians?

**A:** Christine Heibeck – That would be for the civilian side.

**Q:** Nicole Darnall – To what extent has the topic of sustainability come up in these discussions and how do you see it fitting in based on the directionality of all these changes?

**A:** Christine Heibeck - A significant amount of work being done in that arena. There are federal training resources out there on climate and sustainability. There's no active credential now, but a planned one for DAU is on their forecast plan. They have an ongoing study with the RAND group. They are doing a study to identify federal training assets that are being looked at and reviewed by several folks

**A:** Joanie Newhart - At my level, it is a priority. Our challenge is what the contracting officers need to know rather than having them be an expert in everything sustainability. We could use some advice when it comes to that.

**Q:** Mark Hayden – This is great news. Is there a model of credentialing out there that is already in place to see an example?

**A:** Joanie Newhart – DAU would have a model since they are further along.

**A:** Christine Heibeck – The credentialing model is taking industry best practices. The latest and greatest in training is developing curated training packages. There's not a lack of training resources, but the acquisition workforce needs to see which training is relevant.

**Q:** Anne Rung – This subcommittee is contemplating a sustainability climate credential. How can we move that forward?

**A:** Christine Heibeck – One of the processes we are looking at is when a topic is identified, that research is the first step. Is there an existing federal credential, or is there one planned that addresses the training gap?

**Q:** Kristin Seaver – Can you envision a process where credentialing could be crowdsourced but goes through a vetting process and be added for folks? Do you envision stacking credentials that could elevate someone into a practitioner/advanced practitioner in their categories?

**A:** Christine Heibeck – The program is new, but I believe the maturity model is set up, so there will be foundational credentials. As people advance there will be more advanced credentials. The only one I've seen so far is a foundational contingency contracting one and an advanced contingency contracting one. The advanced one was very narrow to the point where it would only apply to a small audience of individuals. As we are addressing this need and trying to determine the audience size is part of our development process and framework. What we are doing from a federal perspective is setting up a good foundation.

**Q:** Kristin Seaver - Would some of these credentials be universal across the industry side of procurement and acquisition?

**A:** Christine Heibeck – I think we're probably there. We have courses on the internet available for anyone to take courses within the government.

**Q:** Anne Rung – What is the impact on agency performance with a credential? What happens when you have a credential?

**A:** Christine Heibeck – It's going to take years for us to have the data to know this.

**Q:** Nicole Darnall – Can we get access to the innovation pilot?

**A:** Christine Heibeck – We are about to launch the awareness course, and I can see if I can give you access to that.

**Q:** Nicole Darnall – Has a gap analysis been done around the sustainability area recognizing that this is the first step to developing a credential?

**A:** Christine Heibeck – Not at FAI.

***Questions for Nicholas West***

**Q:** Steven Schooner – Can you say a word about sustainability versus sustainment?

**A:** Nicholas West – It's an imprecise word search in terms of the curriculum. It's not necessarily apples to apples

**Q:** Anne Rung – As you did your internal assessment, do you have any information on how empowered the acquisition workforce feels on their ability to enable sustainability or climate requirements?

**A:** Nicholas West – One of the tenants of one of the policies mentioned is to encourage the contracting officer to feel empowered and to promote innovative thinking when developing requirements. We gave them examples to help them spur innovation. We don't have a great way to baseline if it was executed well. We have our procurement management reviews that look into compliant issues, but not sure if we have anything targeted to sustainability.

**A:** Joanie Newhart – After the new administration came in there were a lot of executive orders on the things the acquisition workforce didn't have on their radar before. We are trying to help them maneuver through all of those things, and sustainability is important. It's up there with a bunch of other priorities and one of the challenges is getting the training to the right folks.

**Q:** Steven Schooner – How will sustainability climate training or certification intersect with category management?

**A:** Christine Heibeck – It intersects in multiple ways. When we look at category management, we've been looking at the top spend in government categories to determine how to prioritize. There is a category management one, which is a broader one that depends on your position.

**A:** Nicholas West – We have the acquisition workforce setting up those management solutions that need to learn how sustainable acquisition meets their objective of establishing the best possible vehicle. Their job is to try to make it as easy as possible



for those ordering those vehicles. In an ideal world you have those setting up the vehicles and taking care of the majority of the issues to lighten the load.

**Q:** Steven Schooner – What can we do to shape this process?

**A:** Jeff Koses – A credential that aims to promote ideas. It has to be rigorous, meaningful and shaped by experts in the area. I'm suggesting that you all have the knowledge and deep academic background on how adult learners learn. How do we do something meaningful? We are looking for your guidance in putting together a curriculum to figure out the most important knowledge to curate for that purpose.

**A:** Joanie Newhart – I can go and find the experts and connect them to come out with a great outcome which is what I'm hoping to do here.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The floor was opened to the public for questions or comments, but there were none.

### **CLOSING REMARKS**

Troy Cribb thanked the subcommittee and presenters for a great meeting today. She and Cassius need to think about bringing people into the conversation. As each subcommittee goes along, we need to think about the stories that make it compelling to policymakers. She looks forward to moving forward with recommendations that will elevate things to a higher level and showcase why it's important.

Cassius Butts thanked everyone for their time and work. Everyone's opportunity to weigh in is meaningful. When it comes to recommendations, we need to continue to be thoughtful of having data around the recommendations. When the legislators have an opportunity to review data, they can vote on whether or not it's cost-effective and that is how dollars get allocated. Folks need to continue to be mindful of that.

Jeff Koses mentioned the group identified a quick win with some of the conversations that have been going on. There's potential around updating coursework and using the learning assignment tool to mandate some progress across the agency. That can be an intriguing big win. Jeff applauded the group's ongoing progress and thanked the presenters.

Nicole Darnall thanked the subcommittee for the engaging discussion today. She asked the members to think through the different quick wins mentioned and how we can create opportunities to start formulating a pathway forward.



## ADJOURNMENT

Stephanie Hardison adjourned the meeting and reminded everyone that the next Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee meeting would be February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, from 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M. EST

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

DocuSigned by:

*Nicole Darnall*

6/20/2023

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Nicole Darnall

Co-Chairperson

GAP FAC Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee