

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

January 22, 2024

The GSA Acquisition Policy Federal Advisory Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee convened for a public meeting at 3:00 PM on January 22, 2024, virtually via Zoom, with Nicole Darnall, Chair, and Anne Rung, 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 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. EST

Committee Members Present:

Nicole Darnall, Chairperson

Arizona State University

Anne Rung, Co-Chair

Varis LLC

Mark Hayden

State of New Mexico

David Malone

AquireIQ

Steven Schooner

George Washington University

Kristin Seaver

General Dynamics Information

Technology

Clyde Thompson

GovStrive, LLC

Absent: Gail Bassette, Darryl Daniels

Guest Speakers & Presenters:

Cedar Blazek

Training Program Manager, Department of Energy

Bea Dukes

Office of Government-wide Policy, Acquisition Career Manager, GSA

Nicole Acevedo

Office of Government-wide Policy, Director, Acquisition Workforce Division, GSA

Danielle Mouw

Office of Government-wide Policy, Procurement Analyst, Acquisition Workforce Division, GSA

GSA Staff Present:

Boris Arratia

Designated Federal Officer

David Cochennic

GAP FAC Support

Skylar Holloway

GAP FAC Support

Heather Easterly

Closed Captioner

Rene Devito

ASL Interpreter

Blair Fell

ASL Interpreter

CALL TO ORDER

Boris Arratia, Designated Federal Officer, opened the public meeting by welcoming the group to the first meeting of the year for the GAP FAC before mentioning they are wrapping up the report from the December meeting where recommendations were presented. He reminded the public that there will be time for comments and statements at the end of the meeting. Boris performed a roll call to confirm attendance before turning the meeting over to Chairman Nicole Darnall.

Welcome & Opening Remarks

Nicole expressed her gratitude for the gathering of the committee and highlighted the importance of the upcoming six months for the subcommittee's work on sustainability in federal acquisition. The focus of today's meeting surrounds essential pathways for making sustainability a core competency.

Co-Chair Anne Rung emphasized the need for practical steps, including low-hanging fruit, in addition to big and creative ideas. The discussion aimed to explore ways to embed sustainability.

Nicole introduced speakers from GSA and DOE which included Cedar Blazek, Bea Dukes, Nicole Acevedo, and Danielle Mouw with an outline of the overarching question of how to leverage structures and processes for sustainability in federal acquisition.

Guest Speaker & Questions

Background

Each guest speaker provided a background on themselves and shared what it is they do.

Cedar Blazek is from the Department of Energy's (DOE) Federal Energy Management Program (FEMP) and brought along her colleague Allison Ackerman who leads the DOE's energy efficient product procurement program. Cedar manages the training program at FEMP, which offers accredited training in various federal energy and water management categories. FEMP's programs cover technology, operations, maintenance, fleets, and training related to acquisitions, procurement, and performance contracting. The goal is to provide comprehensive and beneficial training for individuals involved in energy, water, emissions management, federal facilities, and fleets.

Bea Dukes is from the General Services Administration (GSA) and works across the agency horizontally and vertically as it pertains to integration within the acquisition workforce. She focuses on emerging themes, including sustainability, and addresses

workforce needs by managing change through training initiatives. Bea emphasized the importance of integrating training in day-to-day activities.

Allison Ackerman who is colleagues with Cedar, is from FEMP and works on the energy efficient product procurement which is a FEMP designated program focusing on sustainability acquisitions and bridging work into acquisition.

Nicole Acevedo is the director of the GSA Acquisition Workforce Division and manages certifications, credentials, warrants, and execution of acquisition training. She highlighted her partnership with the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) and collaborated with Boris and Stephanie to develop new training programs based on the GAP FAC recommendations. They aim to start a new agency-wide initiative, centralizing and ensuring consistency in implementing specialized training programs within GSA. Nicole emphasized expanding these efforts government-wide through FAI.

Danielle Mouw, who is part of Nicole Acevedo's team at GSA, focuses on the IT workforce and the IT Acquisition Credential's (ITAC) success in creating objectives and guiding rails for workforce relevance. There is a need for responsible, data-driven, and user-driven training programs to address the rapidly evolving landscape, including sustainability.

Questions

Q: Nicole Darnall - We are curious about effective strategies for motivating change within organizations, particularly concerning employee motivation. What levers have you found or utilized to effectively motivate employees in your workplace?

A: Cedar Blazek - The key is to incorporate sustainability into employee's performance plans and job descriptions. Setting expectations and guidelines for what is standard versus going above and beyond is crucial. Additionally, FEMP encourages awards in acquisition, like water management awards and fed spotlight awards, recognizing outstanding work in energy, water, and sustainability. These awards might not initiate new behavior, but they contribute to maintaining positive habits. Combining awards with clear expectations is essential for making sustainable practices permanent. Time and money are also effective motivators, and internal awards, though challenging, can significantly boost motivation.

A: Bea Dukes - A strategy we employ is based on Kotter's principles and creates a sense of urgency. We aim to help our workforce understand the importance of acquiring new knowledge and applying it to their workspaces. These days, it's crucial for people to comprehend the "why" behind actions, moving beyond simply following instructions. We've found that by explaining the sense of urgency and the significance of changes, we can assist the workforce in adapting and adopting new learning models. As time passes, these steps become an integrated part of our regular work.

Q: Anne Rung - Are there any particularly effective techniques for communicating the urgency, mission, and importance of the policy?

A: Bea Dukes - It's crucial for them to understand why it's important and the potential consequences of not adopting it. Sometimes it's about emphasizing the positive aspects rather than using negative reinforcement. To ensure widespread understanding, we utilize visualization through dashboards. People tend to respond better to positive indicators on the dashboard. What we don't measure, we can't be aware of the progress or lack thereof.

Q: Anne Rung - Is this sense of urgency communicated via email, policy directors, town halls, or a combination?

A: Bea Dukes - It's a combination of strategic, operational, and tactical communications. We utilize various channels such as email, strategic communications, town halls, and other forums. It's not just limited to email; we involve senior procurement, executive champions, operational teams, and contracting directors. Nicole Acevedo's role is crucial in preparing and communicating with the workforce, ensuring they are equipped. We also have people on the ground to directly engage with the workforce for local communication. The approach involves multiple phases and communication levels—strategic, operational, and tactical—ensuring saturation across the enterprise. Town halls and other forums complement the process to effectively communicate the sense of urgency.

A: Cedar Blazek - One important aspect to consider is the need for an executive champion and leadership support. When leaders emphasize a goal, it becomes a significant motivator. Additionally, internal policies and processes should align with the goal, not just in words but integrated into the internal procedures. It's crucial that references to forms or standard operating procedures clearly indicate the importance of the goal.

A: Bea Dukes - Cedar is right. In terms of policies, we document them in a repository accessible through an online acquisition portal. This allows anyone to access and read the policies for themselves. It's about having a check and balance to ensure alignment.

Q: David Malone - Is there a metric or Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for training and development accountability, encompassing staff members, managers, and directors? If so, what is the metric, and is it supported across all levels?

A: Nicole Acevedo - At GSA, we have a structure called the acquisition career navigator. Each head of contracting activity appoints an individual to support career management, including training. This person works strategically within their organization, addressing training needs, making purchases, and collaborating with subject matter experts to develop training. The infrastructure includes formally appointed Acquisition Career

Navigators (ACNs) who partner with my organization to reach the entire workforce of over 7,000 members.

Q: David Malone - Do the managers in the organization overseeing acquisition staff have specific metrics they're held accountable for?

A: Nicole Acevedo - Yes, each manager is responsible for ensuring their staff possess the required certifications and maintain the necessary training for their roles. The ACNs play a role in supporting organizational reporting of needs, concerns, and priorities to Higher Contracting Authority (HCA) and Senior Executive Service (SES) leadership. This happens both at an organizational level and strategically throughout the organization.

A: Danielle Mouw - While on the topic of competency, while not every agency or the entire GSA has adopted this approach, for IT acquisition credentials, we conduct a skills assessment. We created and validated a specific IT competency model. Having a baseline of the workforce's knowledge, skills, and abilities allows us to measure a program's effectiveness against these skills. The ITAC is designed to address and close the identified skill gaps.

I also want to add to Cedar's point about awards, which is an excellent example. Recognizing individuals for their exceptional work is crucial. I also suggest considering an approach that involves understanding not just the skills to be developed but also the professional's journey—from recruitment to retention and session planning. Different tools and incentives may be more relevant at different stages. While awards are important, someone newly recruited might prioritize introductory awareness and a sense of being nurtured. It's about tailoring incentives to different phases of the professional's journey. I can provide various examples to illustrate this concept further.

Q: Nicole Darnall - What specific levers are ineffective in motivating employees? What should we avoid in this regard?

A: Danielle Mouw - Asking professionals to do more with less and perform tasks they're not trained for is a significant demotivator. This approach can lead to losing valuable employees.

A: Cedar Blazek - Inserting additional responsibilities not explicitly mentioned in the job description or not covered by immediate and direct policies can be demotivating. Fitting tasks as "other duties as assigned" may lead to dissatisfaction.

Q: Mark Hayden - Can you elaborate more on the downside? For instance, in the state, there's no policy, statute, or order, leaving individuals with the only option to take independent action and risk termination. Is there a similar situation at the federal level?

A: Danielle Mouw - In providing feedback, it's important to note that it's all relative. While the federal space, particularly within my community of federal buyers, contracting specialists, and officers, offers more opportunities and is more professionalized than many other job series, there is always room for improvement. Staying plugged into the workforce's dynamics, understanding their identity, and continually measuring procurement effectiveness are crucial. This involves providing meaningful curriculum, opportunities for sub-specialization, and fostering a sense of community and peer collaboration. The goal is to support continuous learning for a lifelong learning model, ensuring individuals feel valued and connected, especially in the virtual environment. These are just a few examples of ongoing efforts for improvement.

Allison highlighted Executive Order (EO) 14057, Section 401, which assigns responsibility to OPM for federal workforce training related to sustainability.

Q: Nicole Darnall - I'm curious about levers that have been the most effective in your experience. Considering Anne's point about low-hanging fruit, where should we start for the biggest wins in initiating sustainability efforts, recognizing the need for a comprehensive approach?

A: Nicole Acevedo - An idea that has been circulating here at GSA and aligns with Anne's point is establishing a specialized credential program. Ensuring the workforce is well-prepared, not only in terms of authorities and requirements but also in practical know-how, is crucial for successful implementation. The challenge lies in people not knowing how to execute sustainability practices. Practical training applications that offer guidance on the actual implementation of sustainable practices are essential. We're looking into creating a standardized curriculum administered through an easily accessible platform for GSA and possibly government-wide.

A: Cedar Blazek - I agree with Nicole A.'s proposal for a specialized credential program. Requiring training for sustainability work is key, and I suggest starting by incorporating sustainability training into performance plans and structures. The credentialing program is seen as a pathway to long-term success in implementing sustainability training.

Q: Nicole Darnall - Can you share how you've modified or changed job descriptions, especially in the context of sustainability concerns or other change areas, to effectively recruit the right individuals? Specifically, once individuals are in the role, how have you defined job responsibilities to focus on emerging or changing areas?

A: Cedar Blazek - The modification can be as straightforward as incorporating keywords like sustainability, energy, and efficiency in the job description. This ensures visibility in searches, reaching individuals passionate about these topics who may not initially associate acquisitions with sustainability roles. All job positions written for my office include these keywords, emphasizing their critical nature. I can speak to incorporating

these terms into job positions I create, but I'm curious if anyone at GSA has additional insights or experiences in modifying or adding such elements to job descriptions.

A: Danielle Mouw - I would emphasize the importance of competency. Clearly defining competencies or knowledge, skills, and abilities for a workforce allows you to use precise language in recruitment announcements to attract the right talent. While sustainability is a critical buzzword to include, it's equally essential to holistically target individuals with crucial skill sets—ones that encompass critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. This, in my view, enhances the overall effectiveness of recruitment efforts.

Q: Anne R. & Nicole D. - Have you observed a growing interest in recruiting individuals with a focus on sustainability? Is a job description highlighting sustainability aspects appealing to a significant number of people? For the recent job applications you've received, have you noticed a notable shift in the number of applicants expressing interest in sustainability roles?

A: Nicole Acevedo - We're launching an Acquisition Talent Development (ATD) program at GSA, which targets entry-level contracting staff (1102s, GS7 and 9), sustainability has emerged as a compelling aspect. We've observed a strong appeal among recent graduates, indicative of a generational shift where environmental awareness holds greater importance. Entry-level positions seem to attract substantial interest due to the opportunity to contribute to environmental concerns. However, I've not observed as strong an interest among junior or senior-level staff, unless sustainability is a top-down priority. Naturally, it becomes a more significant attraction for those actively seeking new positions.

Q: Nicole Darnall - Can you tell us more about the acquisition talent development program, and what it looks like?

A: Nicole Acevedo - The ATD program was initiated about a year ago with a kick-off meeting to discuss entry-level strategies for the program. Over the past year, there has been significant effort across our agency to create a streamlined entry point for new hires at GS7, GS9, and 1102 work grades. GSA, being primarily top-heavy with GS11 and above positions, faced challenges in succession planning due to a small workforce at GS9 and below. To address this, the program aims to build a robust workbench of professionals internally, ready for promotion into journeyman positions, rather than relying on external hires. We are currently launching the first cohort with the ambitious goal of hiring 120 individuals at GS7, GS9, and 1102 levels within this fiscal year. This initiative required substantial internal process changes to centralize hiring practices across different offices. Now, the only entry point for entry-level contracting professionals at GSA is through this program. Once accepted, it's a two-year journey starting at GS7 and ending at GS9, coupled with the achievement of FAC-C

professional certification and a specialized GSA contracting credential. The program is designed to groom participants into proficient contracting professionals equipped with on-the-job training, certifications, credentials, and specialized knowledge, ensuring they are ready for their roles after the two-year period.

Q: Anne Rung - Are you thinking the sustainability certifications will be for the more seasoned and experienced 1102s? Is there a role for the GS7 through 9 levels in the sustainability certification space or just learning about sustainability?

A: Nicole Acevedo - We aim to expose participants to sustainability topics within the program. The courses currently under development are intended to be part of the sustainability credential. Our plan is to test these courses with entry-level professionals. If successful with this group, we can then extend the courses, specifically a couple of general ones, in year two of the program. This would serve as an introduction to sustainability principles, grounding participants in the basics before moving on to more advanced subjects. Essentially, we intend to leverage this cohort to test and refine the courses, ultimately incorporating them into the curriculum for sustainability certification.

A: Bea Dukes - I am going to echo what Nicole A. was saying and as Jeff mentioned, there are different levels of awareness that we're creating. With a new course that was just updated and retitled and renamed. It's sustainability across the acquisition, across all dimensions not just for contract specialists and buying folks, but the program project managers and those who do contract administration. We're assigning that training to every single person in that space and it's an awareness training so you may not become an expert. This is just to make sure that everyone has a grassroots, base level of knowledge upon which they can then grow and learn in the sustainability space.

Q: Nicole Darnall - How long is the training?

A: Bea Dukes - That training is self-paced. Right now, its assignment is one or two continuous learning points, which means the user can take one to two hours to complete. It depends on how fast you listen, and how fast you read. The goal is not to speed through but take the time you need to observe the new content and then to complete the learning assessment that validates that you have completed that training. Then you are awarded your points to help maintain whatever credential you may have and then it's also something to put on your paper, saying "I did it." The measure for this is the dashboard and here's the number of people who need it. Here's the number of people who have completed it so that it will be measured and accounted for at the end of the fiscal year. And then for the sustainability training, the user has about 90 to 120 days after it is assigned to complete it. That will capture new ones that come to the agency as well as those who migrate from other organizations as well as new folks. As Nicole A. mentioned, the ATD is a special program but I'm referring to other individuals that fall outside of that program.

Q: Nicole Darnall - Is this a training we can review?

A: Bea Dukes - Absolutely, there's a public link I can share with you.

Q: Steven Schooner - I'm looking at this spreadsheet of all of the available training, is this spreadsheet in the public domain somewhere? If I'm an acquisition professional or someone who is interested in that, where would I find this information?

A: Cedar Blazek - On the top of the chat, I put in two links for the FEMP's workforce development training program and FEMP's energy product proficiency program. If you go to FEMP's energy-efficient product procurement program and click training on that page, is where you can get the sustainable acquisition training resources. We also have an inventory of those trainings that break them down based on type as well, which is really helpful.

Q: Boris Arratia - Have any of you worked with OPM? I saw the reference to the EO where the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is tasked with this. I'm wondering if any of you had interactions with anyone at OPM that is working in this space?

A: Bea Dukes - We had interactions with OPM and the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) on beginning conversations on how to restructure job descriptions to better attract candidates and to make them more user-friendly for the public to read and access and consume. We had some initial discussions in this space. I can tell you the discussions I was in were not necessarily restricted to sustainability jobs but the broader discussion of how we make government, not just more accessible in terms of IT perspective but more accessible in terms of the terminology we use and making the announcements more readable in everyday language. This is where the conversation began several months ago. I don't know where it has moved to but I have seen movement in the cyber space but I'm not sure where it is right now in terms of this particular topic.

A: Cedar Blazek - We had one ongoing interaction with OPM related to senior executive training around sustainability and how to incorporate it in our senior executive training programs. We were working with the staff member hired specifically to work on that topic, Heath Harding who has since left OPM. We did not have a follow up with anyone else there. I don't think it ended up being incorporated because I haven't gotten an update for many months but we were working with them for a while to find ways to incorporate it in the senior executive training.

Q: Nicole Darnall - Has the responsibility for monitoring the staff's engagement in competency-based training been assigned in the current structure? Who is currently held accountable for this, and could you provide insights into the existing process for overseeing this?

A: Danielle Mouw - On behalf of ITAC, we've been working on developing a credential model for the IT purchasing workforce at GSA. Our focus is on getting this initiative running smoothly, securing resources, and establishing a sustainable approach, primarily based on a skills assessment. This assessment will not only inform our curriculum but also guide our future solutions. The next comprehensive workforce assessment for the agency is slated for 2025, ensuring that our competency model remains current. We've recently undergone a minor refresh, recognizing the need for some consolidation. Well-crafted competencies possess enduring strength, and our goal is to stay attuned to the evolving skill requirements within our community, ensuring alignment with the needs that haven't shifted.

A: Bea Dukes - In managing the sustainability course, we use the FAIC system, a platform accessed by acquisition workforce professionals. The course is assigned within this system, and individuals are provided around 90 days to complete it. The system's output metrics contribute to generating a dashboard that offers insights into the status of completion. This dashboard facilitates tracking and analysis, providing senior leadership with a comprehensive view of the acquisition workforce's health. I find it valuable that we can drill down by workforce series or job type, allowing for a detailed understanding of training progress within specific segments of the workforce.

Q: David Malone - Do the operational leaders who manage acquisition personnel have metrics or KPIs for their own performance?

A: Bea Dukes - I'm unable to provide the specific details from memory at the moment. There are numerous ongoing activities in that area, and I recall something related to data in FY24. However, to ensure accuracy, I would need to conduct further research and provide you with the precise information.

A: Danielle Mouw - For ITAC, we're in the initial phases of developing an Individual Development Plan (IDP) solution. The goal is to integrate the competency model into a learning management system, creating an automated platform for managers and employees to collaboratively navigate the skill-building journey. This approach goes beyond a simple credential program, focusing on a holistic, long-term solution. It addresses the evolving needs of employees from the early stages of their career to the middle, emphasizing the synergy between these two phases and aligning with the HR aspects of the process.

Q: Kristin Seaver - How do you perceive the progress in terms of the pace of implementing initiatives for climate and sustainability, especially in mobilizing a large workforce?

A: Danielle Mouw - We initially took a deliberately slower approach in the beginning to establish processes and procedures. However, during COVID, we demonstrated agility

by producing 30 continuous learning resources within a month. This experience highlights that with well-established processes and a clear understanding of the required skills, significant progress can be made rapidly. We currently have over 150 resources in our continuous learning tool, allowing us to curate and develop resources at a rapid pace, which wasn't the case during the initial stages of understanding the workforce and their skill needs. This initial investment in understanding has provided us with the ability to respond promptly to evolving environmental changes and legislative requirements.

Q: Nicole Darnall - Does this go back to the baseline assessment you mentioned earlier?

A: Danielle Mouw - Certainly, and we acknowledge the importance of the competency model. Assessing the workforce for necessary skills is crucial, and while we might not have followed the exact approach mentioned, we have adopted a streamlined version. This involves understanding the learning objectives for specific training and ensuring a micro version of a competency model for each class. This adaptation helps us tailor our training programs to address the precise skills needed for various issues.

Q: David Malone - Do operational leaders in procurement receive requests for sustainability solutions, or does sustainability usually come up when tied to other priorities like cost savings and accessibility? Are there trends indicating an increased focus on sustainability, or should there be incentives to encourage leaders to prioritize sustainability independently?

A: Nicole Acevedo - When it has been raised as a high priority, it's usually tied to some other concerns. So if it's tied to cost savings, accessibility, removing barriers to entry for certain small businesses, etc., then it's prioritized. If there is a solid way to tie it into some of those regularly regarded priorities, it becomes part of the natural part of the consideration process, but in and of itself, standing alone, not typically.

Q: Mark Hayden - Is the federal government ready for sustainability, or does it need a push or pull? Is there widespread awareness and consensus, or is there hesitation?

A: Danielle Mouw - Cyber Supply Chain Risk Management (C-SCRM) is a topic that can be intimidating due to its extensive reach, much like sustainability. Having a champion who communicates its cross-cutting nature and emphasizes its integral role in various procurement processes, framing it in terms of risk, can lead to a more cohesive understanding. Drawing parallels to the IT field, where everything is interconnected, and simplifying the language can help rally efforts, pilot solutions, implement continuous learning, and take the initial steps.

Q: Nicole Darnall - Is the training uniform for frontline staff and leaders, or should there be merits in a differentiated training for managers to address specific questions related to sustainability in the contracting process?

A: Nicole Acevedo - I believe there might be value in exploring the idea of separate credentials for different audiences within our sustainability training. It's a topic we'd like to discuss further with the group to determine the courses suitable for the curriculum and whether distinct credentials are necessary. The content could also include resources like decision trees and workflows, not necessarily limited to instructor-led courses. Sometimes, a cheat sheet or resource guide might be sufficient. We're open to exploring various approaches and believe that understanding sustainability's priority and providing clear procedural guidance can drive compliance and effectiveness. Additionally, linking sustainability efforts to tangible benefits, such as cost reduction and increased ROI, could further motivate and engage employees, providing data-driven insights that resonate with senior leadership and Congress.

Q: Nicole Darnal - How are we distinguishing between the learning resources and the employees taking advantage of them?

A: Bea Dukes - For the new sustainability course, it will be assigned to approximately 5,000 unique individuals based on their certifications—program and project managers, CORs, contract administrators, and anyone involved in procurement. This gives us an approximate number of individuals accessing the course.

Regarding leadership engagement, there's a recurrent challenge in organizations, especially in the government, to identify catalysts that stimulate intellectual consideration of sustainability. We're striving to integrate sustainability seamlessly into acquisition requirements, making it an integral part of our routine, rather than a checkbox item assessed once a year or quarter. The goal is to make it an intrinsic aspect of our everyday language and standard business practices, aligning with the challenge of operationalizing this concept.

Q: Nicole Darnall - What do you see as the catalyst for stimulating thought around sustainability?

A: Bea Dukes - The catalyst should be integrating sustainability into acquisition planning, making it a part of the routine and requirements from the early stages. It's about ensuring it's not an afterthought but an integral aspect considered throughout the process.

A: Danielle Mouw - To add to Bea's point, when constructing the ITAC competency model, we involved senior executives, workforce members, and middle managers. We initiated conversations around the challenges they face, recognizing the difficulty of their roles and encouraging open dialogue. This approach laid the foundation for a strategic

initiative that has evolved into a comprehensive program. For sustainability to gain traction, we need a champion who understands its critical importance and actively engages with the workforce, fostering a sense of value and collaboration. Drawing parallels to the ITAC program, graduates have come full circle by providing feedback on skills acquired early on and, post-graduation, contributing as Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to enhance ongoing training. This cycle ensures that individuals are not only trained but also actively participate in refining the program, fostering a sense of ownership and continual improvement.

I'd like to echo what others have mentioned, particularly focusing on accessible, low-hanging fruit. One approach is to curate existing content on sustainability, such as memos, and transform them into continuous learning opportunities. By promoting these resources through our system, we not only make them readily available but can also track utilization data. Additionally, the upcoming training Bea discussed provides another avenue for measurement through end-of-course assessments. These initiatives represent small, low-risk steps that leverage existing resources, allowing us to gather feedback and continuously improve our training efforts.

Q: Mark Hayden: Who is actively pursuing these classes, considering our previous discussion? I believe the catalyst for engagement comes from a combination of factors. Firstly, leadership plays a crucial role. It's essential for leaders to vocalize and emphasize the importance of sustainability, making it more than just content on a website but a topic actively discussed. Secondly, creating a buzz and socialization around the subject can drive interest. Real-world events like tornados, droughts, and floods could prompt a reevaluation of our actions. Having the ability to make informed decisions in a safe environment is also vital. Lastly, incentives can be the driving force. By instilling a genuine desire to contribute to sustainability efforts, you can capture hearts and souls. Although this might have been challenging at the state level, the federal government has the capacity to implement these strategies effectively. I see these four elements converging to foster greater engagement.

A: Cedar Blazek - I'd like to add that the current administration's appointment of chief sustainability officers for each federal agency is a significant step. These officers, often overseeing facilities and real estate, serve as senior-level champions advocating for sustainability within their agencies. This top-down approach provides crucial support and guidance. Additionally, the administration's commitment is evident in initiatives like the Federal Building Performance Standard, requiring 30% of existing government-owned buildings to achieve zero Scope 1 emissions. This standard extends to new construction as well. The alignment of leadership commitment, guidance, and tangible goals demonstrates a strong foundation for sustainability efforts.

Q: Nicole Darnall - Drawing from your insights into creating effective change, what do you believe should be our primary area of concentration? If we were to make a single recommendation, what shape and form should it take?

A: Cedar Blazek - The key recommendation should involve incorporating sustainability training as a requirement into job descriptions for acquisition professionals. This, in my view, will be a pivotal driver. Even before establishing a comprehensive credentialing program, emphasizing language and training related to sustainability is crucial. The subcommittee could play a vital role in identifying specific language for insertion. Pinpointing the metrics specific to job roles would be essential.

A: Nicole Acevedo - We'd value your partnership and subject matter expertise in guiding our efforts to identify and build our training. Any support you can offer is immensely beneficial. We have internal experts at GSA, and GAP FAC, who you'll hear from via Boris, and they are seeking your feedback to steer the working group on identifying new courses. We have automated solutions for learning assignments, which can be a swift win for us, while we work towards a more comprehensive credential program. Danielle's success with IT serves as a golden example, and your support in this regard is greatly appreciated.

Review of Key Takeaways

The group transitioned to the Jamboard to document and discuss their key takeaways gathered from today's presentations. Below is what they gathered:

- Trying to recruit because the agency is top heavy. New recruits will grab onto sustainability more quickly and more readily.
- Need an executive champion.
- Leverage newly launched GSA talent and development program.
- Awards and recognition programs are important.
- Competencies, if done well, have a lot of staying power.
- Low hanging fruit training.
- Incorporate change catalysts:
 - 1: leadership
 - 2: socialization
 - 3: no threats
 - 4: incentives with possible recognition
- The training program Nicole Acevedo discussed should help, once the student completes the training.
- Communicate the urgency. Storytelling. Link to mission.

- Communication should be saturated across all levels.
- Follow up with OPM on EO 14057 Section 104.
- Metrics (KPIs) at all levels.
- Incorporate sustainability training as part of performance plans.
- Differential training for leaders or sustainability resources (e.g. checklists, language).
- It sounds like they have taken this topic seriously and have given it some great thought.
- Additional level of training for leaders that support how they drive accountability.
- Tie sustainability to cost saving efforts.
- Possible competition among agencies/departments to score the highest on achievements.
- Build in some type of training into job descriptions for every AWF professional. Insert this language.
- Make clear with information/education why this is important - you need to win their hearts and minds to make this work.
- Show progress: “this” (CO2 savings) was achieved by this date and “we” made this happen. What is the next goal?
- Modern practice of credentialing and micro credentialing - with an expectation that there is at least one credential or micro credential for every level (level specific) of the AWS.
- First - work within established lanes (esp. with 1102s) and use the latitude that exists within OPM boundaries.
- Job descriptions need to include sustainability expectations.
- How to best help senior leaders to ask the right questions?
- Potential checklist of questions for leaders.
- They also emphasized that top management must get involved.
- Competency piece matters. Add shelf life by focusing on KSAs critical thinking problem solving. Do not assign sustainability responsibility into the category of “other duties as assigned.”
- Job descriptions should include keywords around sustainability, energy, etc.
- GSA’s Acquisition Talent Development (ATD) could be a great place to focus on sustainable procurement.
- Sustainability should be linked to the organization's mission to achieve greater impact.
- ATD and credentials is a great opportunity to embed sustainability. We should consider the next steps.
- How to increase the importance of sustainability with requirements developers?
- Awards and recognition are very important, but need a performance plan and job descriptions first.

- Awards/Recognition need to reflect the professional's journey from hiring to retirement (e.g. rookie of the year).
- Make sure sustainability is included in job descriptions and perfect measures.
- The foundational importance of defining competencies - and producing resources/training and expectations that support building those competencies.

The group then went to discuss next steps.

Anne suggested initiating contact with OPM, seeking an individual actively engaged in sustainability and climate training. Cedar highlighted John Gill, as of a few months ago, as a key figure overseeing the executive order implementation at OPM. Boris offered to take the lead in identifying the most suitable contact person.

Nicole and Anne will work to organize the key takeaway board. They plan to categorize the information into buckets and revisit it during the next administrative meeting.

Additionally, there's a recognition of the potential for new recruits to contribute to creating specialized sustainability experts, possibly through the talent and development team. Exploring awards and recognition practices, with a focus on best practices from the White House and other areas, is also highlighted as a potential avenue for incentivizing individuals.

Public Engagement

Nicole Darnall opened the discussion up to the public for any comments.

Jennifer Heno suggested the subcommittee reach out to sustainability touchpoints in each agency, specifically those managing sustainability KPIs for their regions and work units. These individuals, often in facilities, could provide valuable insights into whether the right metrics are being tracked and offer suggestions for additional KPIs.

Anne Rung expressed enthusiasm about the idea of involving agency sustainability experts in future discussions.

Closing Remarks

Nicole expressed gratitude for the valuable input, enthusiasm, and engagement from participants in the discussion. She anticipates making sense of the Jamboard and identifying common themes emerging from the discussion. She expressed appreciation for the rich conversation and engagement, looking forward to collaborating in 2024 for the final set of recommendations.

Adjournment

Boris Arratia adjourned the meeting 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

3/25/2024

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Nicole Darnall
Chairperson
GAP FAC Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee

DocuSigned by:

Anne Rung

3/25/2024

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Anne Rung
Co-Chairperson
GAP FAC Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee