



# FAI NEWSLETTER

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## From the Acting Director



**Jeff Birch,**  
Acting Director, FAI

As we prepare for 2017, there seems to be one word at the front of everyone's minds: transition. What will that word mean to you? Some find transition energizing, some concerning, some feel indifferent, and some are cautiously optimistic. Some will use the transition as an excuse to freeze until they are told what to do next—please don't be one of those people. Take ownership of your career and make the greatest contribution you can as a mission critical member of your agency.

Now is the time to lay the groundwork for success in 2017 and beyond. As with every change of administration, there will be many new faces in leadership positions across government. Within your own agency and office, investigate who the new influencers are and what their priorities may be. Keep an open mind and recognize what you have in common: we all want to serve the agency so that it can be as effective as possible to successfully achieve mission goals. Regardless of the size or direction of the changes in your agency, find a way to be a positive force for the future. Seek out new opportunities, volunteer for assignments that will expand your skill sets and resume, and treat every assignment as an opportunity to make an impact and grow your professional network.

At FAI, our mission to foster a high-performing, qualified civilian acquisition workforce continues to guide and inspire us. We will keep our eyes on emerging and enduring needs to support the development of committed, skilled, and responsive acquisition workforce professionals like you. As we transition into a new administration with new ideas and priorities, it's the perfect time to nourish expanded relationships and gain new experiences. As talented and professional members of the acquisition workforce community, we are known to welcome new challenges and opportunities to build a stronger and more resilient America—2017 will be no different.



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# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Acquisition Open Opportunities: Join Today!

Open Opportunities is a marketplace of opportunities for government professionals. It promotes a more effective, efficient, and responsive government by sharing skills and collaborating on projects across offices and agencies.

### Find Talent for Your Opportunities

Would you like to: (a) solve a challenge or complete a project using contracting professionals from another office or agency; (b) provide experiential learning to acquisition workforce members; and/or (c) develop your professional network across government?

If you've answered "Yes!" to any of these questions, then Acquisition Open Opportunities is for you! We are looking for participants to post opportunities for the contracting community. Starting off small is fine. Perhaps your office is hosting an upcoming industry day or holding a debriefing session; if so, share those valuable experiential learning opportunities with junior contracting professionals. The potential opportunities are endless! If you want to discuss a potential opportunity before making the leap, contact FAI's [Anne Reinhold](#).

### Find Opportunities for Your Talent

Would you like to: (a) serve on a cross-agency project team without leaving your office; (b) advance your career through experiential, hands-on learning; and/or (c) expand your professional network?

If you've answered "Yes!" to any of these questions, then Acquisition Open Opportunities is for you! Search for and find the perfect opportunity to meet your interests and advance your career.

To learn more about Open Opportunities, create an account, and post or explore opportunities, visit <https://openopps.digitalgov.gov>.

## ACT-IAC 2017 Acquisition and Small Business Excellence Awards

### 2017 AWARD CATEGORIES

#### ACQUISITION EXCELLENCE

- Program Management
- Innovation
- Category Management

#### SMALL BUSINESS EXCELLENCE

- Effective Collaboration
- Use of Small Business Tools to Maximize Opportunities for Small Businesses

As part of the efforts to recognize acquisition professionals who contribute to outstanding improvements in acquisition throughout the Federal government, the Chief Acquisition Officers Council (CAOC) is seeking

nominations for the 2017 Acquisition Excellence Awards and Small Business Excellence Award. Nominations are being solicited for Federal employees engaged in team or individual activities that led to excellent results in any of the five acquisition categories shown above in FY 2016.

Nominations are being accepted through March 20, 2017. The awards will be presented at "Acquisition Excellence 2017" in Washington, D.C., in the summer of 2017. To learn more about the awards and how to nominate an individual or a team, visit the [2017 Acquisition and Small Business Excellence Awards page on FAI.gov](#).

### **COR and PM Communities of Practice (COPs) – Up and Running!**

The [COR CoP](#) on the [Fed PM CoP](#) website is hosted on the OMB MAX platform, providing templates and useful information for COR professionals.

Create an OMB MAX account now, and join the COR CoP today! Don't miss this exciting opportunity to connect, network, and collaborate with other COR professionals from across the agencies!

**YOU can help make the COPs a success!**

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Fair Pay and Safe Workplaces Executive Order 13673

The [Fair Pay and Safe Workplaces Executive Order 13673](#) set to take effect on Tuesday, October 25, 2016, was halted one day prior to the effective date. Let's take a closer look at why the regulation was put on hold and the implications this has on the Federal acquisition workforce.

### Why Was the Regulation Not Put into Effect?

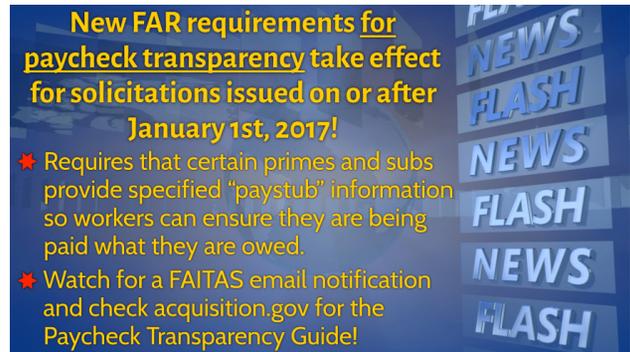
The Associated Builders and Contractors of Southeast Texas and the National Association of Security Companies filed a lawsuit on October 7, 2016 in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas seeking to overturn the final rule. An emergency motion for a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction was issued on October 13, 2016, and, on October 24, 2016, the U.S. District Court issued a preliminary court-ordered injunction preventing certain sections, provisions, and clauses of the rule from taking effect while the lawsuit is pending. At this time, the court-ordered injunction has not yet been resolved; therefore, contracting officers and contract specialists need to be aware of how to proceed according to the terms of the injunction.

### What Does This Mean?

As discussed in the [Fall 2016 Newsletter](#), to implement the Executive Order, the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council (FAR Council) created and issued the final [FAR Rule](#) (FAR Subpart 22.20) and [Guidance](#), comprised of the three main requirement areas shown to the right.

The court-ordered injunction prohibits the implementation of any portion of the FAR Rule (FAR Subpart 22.20) or the DOL Guidance that relates to two

of the three main areas of requirements: 1) Compliance with Labor Laws and 2) Arbitration of Employee Claims. The court order does **NOT** prohibit implementing sections of, or the clause in, the FAR rule that addresses paycheck transparency requirements (FAR 22.2005).



**New FAR requirements for paycheck transparency take effect for solicitations issued on or after January 1st, 2017!**

- ★ Requires that certain primes and subs provide specified "paystub" information so workers can ensure they are being paid what they are owed.
- ★ Watch for a FAITAS email notification and check [acquisition.gov](http://acquisition.gov) for the Paycheck Transparency Guide!

### Main Requirement Areas of FAR Subpart 22.20



In compliance with the terms of the court order, changes have been suspended to the System for Award Management (SAM) to support bidder and contractor submission of information on labor law violation decisions. Also, the changes to support public disclosure of this information in the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) have been put on hold.

Additionally, FAI has postponed deploying its training to provide guidance on the implementation of the final rule until the court order has been lifted. In preparation for the release of the Fair Pay and Safe Workplaces rule, FAI collaborated with the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) and worked with subject matter experts from the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP), Department of Defense (DoD), DOL, General Services Administration (GSA), and the FAR Council to produce a comprehensive web-based training for all contracting officers and contract specialists. Should the restraining order be lifted, the federal contracting community will be highly encouraged to complete this training to learn about their new roles and responsibilities, the role of the contractor, and that of the newly established Agency Labor Compliance Officer (ALCA).

Stay tuned for future updates on the status of this very important regulation!

# TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

## FREE Training Awaits! Don't Delay - Register Today!

### FREE Training for ALL!

FAI has some great training opportunities, with seats still available, for the entire acquisition workforce! More FAC-C, FAC-COR, and FAC-PPM training will be added to FAI's training schedule in 2017, but don't let these upcoming opportunities pass you by.

Check out [FAI.gov](http://FAI.gov) for the [upcoming courses with seats still available](#), register in FAITAS, and take advantage of this free training as soon as you can.

### Featured Training: FPM 120A and 120B



FAI is pleased to announce that [FPM 120A](#) and [FPM 120B](#) classes are now LIVE, as of October 1, 2016! FAI split the previous FPM 120 entry-level class (42-hour/90-day course) into two separate courses, FPM 120A and 120B, which gives students 60 days to complete each class (120 days total). The additional time to learn and absorb smaller chunks of information and material has already resulted in a 99% reduction of course extension requests! Both courses prepare entry-level project managers with

the fundamental knowledge, skills, and understanding required to fulfill their responsibilities as program and project managers.

Upon successful completion of each course, the exams, and a survey, students will receive Continuous Learning Points (CLPs), an electronic certificate of completion in their FAITAS/ATLAS account, and a record of completion entered into their FAITAS/DAU transcript.

Don't miss out. Be sure to register in [FAITAS](#) today for FPM 120A and 120B!

## NEW Acquisition Seminar Now Available for Viewing - It's FREE!

FAI is pleased to announce the release of its newest Acquisition Seminar, "Can We Talk: Information Disclosure During the Acquisition Process." Many govern-



ment contracting officers and industry representatives are uncertain about the kind of information that can and should be shared during the acquisition process and the timeframe for sharing that information. Releasing certain information too soon can compromise the integrity of the process by creating an unfair competitive advantage to some vendors. However, releasing critical information too late can render it useless and negatively impact the volume and quality of the offers and the outcome of the subsequent acquisition.

This seminar helps strike a balance with the kind of information that can be released to industry, when that information can be released, and to whom that information can be released by the key players involved on the government's side of the process. Experts from government and industry look at three specific phases of the acquisition process - planning, pre-award, and award - and collectively examine a number of myths and questions around information disclosure during these phases.

Members of the Federal acquisition workforce can register for and access this **FREE** training opportunity through [FAITAS](#) and will earn one Continuous Learning Point (CLP) for watching! The seminar is also available for public viewing in the [FAI.gov Media Library](#).

*CLPs can only be obtained by registering and viewing through FAITAS.*

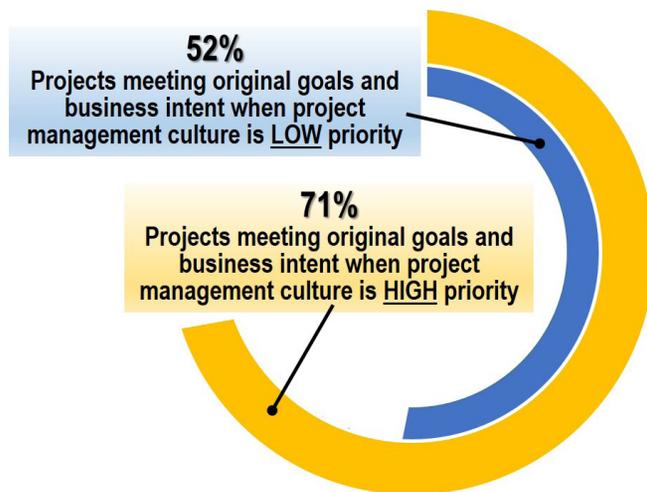
# FEDERAL ACQUISITION CERTIFICATIONS

## Improving the Federal Government through Program Management

Today, the Federal government, on balance, does an admirable and largely unsung job of managing the day-to-day operations needed to deliver an extensive array of public services under difficult circumstances of challenging budgets and shifting political agendas. However, the government is increasingly called upon not just to manage the routine operations of ongoing programs but to undertake large, complex initiatives to create new programs and services and to adapt and improve ongoing programs in a rapidly changing environment. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has identified a number of programs in the high-risk category, all having one common theme: lack of program management. The recent high-profile issues involving Healthcare.gov is just one example of a project requiring greater attention in program management.

A management discipline known as program management has evolved over the past few decades to address the challenges of managing large, complex change initiatives. This discipline has been widely adopted by the private sector

with demonstrated success across a range of industries and endeavors. Successful adoption of program management would enable the government to more consistently and efficiently achieve important public purposes, save taxpayer dollars, enhance service delivery, and perhaps most importantly, rebuild public trust.



The Project Management Institute (PMI) conducted a “Pulse of the Profession” survey for which over 800 project managers, 150 of whom were Federal employees, identified three key areas to help illustrate the importance of program management, as shown below.

### 1. Program Management Practices Increase Chances for Success

- 25% of organizations consider leadership, business, and strategic management skills and technical skills a priority, and these organizations have **40% more projects** meeting original cost, schedule, and performance goals than organizations that do not consider the management and technical skills a priority.
- **Projects are 32% more successful** in organizations that invest in program management training, offer a defined project management career path, and establish a formal knowledge transfer process.

### 2. Government Could Learn from Industry

- Only 11% of government organizations (Federal, state, and local) have senior-level program management-related roles as opposed to **22% of industry organizations** that have a senior-level program management-related role.
- Only 37% of government organizations have a formal process for developing program management competencies—**17% lower than industry**.

### 3. Effective Program Management Can Translate into Cost Savings

- According to a study conducted by Accenture in 2013, “Coup D’état: Radically Rethinking Public Services,” the **United States Government could save as much as \$995 billion by 2025** by increasing public sector efficiency by just 1% a year, including improving program management practices.
- On average, for every \$1 billion spent by government organizations, **\$148 million is wasted** as a result of poor program management.
- For every \$1 billion spent for government/private sector projects, **\$109 and \$122 million were wasted in 2015 and 2016** respectively as a result of projects conducted without active program management.

# FEDERAL ACQUISITION CERTIFICATIONS

## Debunking Urban “Contracting” Legends

According to Merriam-Webster, an urban legend is simply defined as “a story about an unusual event or occurrence that many people believe is true but that is not true.” Urban “contracting” legends have made their way in to a variety of routine contract actions on the simple basis that “it’s always been done that way” and with the assumption that they are actually rooted in policy or regulations (when they may not be!). With tight deadlines and an even tighter fiscal environment that we are all operating in, it’s critical that we focus on working smarter, not harder.

As a way to promote efficient and effective practices across the Federal acquisition workforce, FAI will tackle an urban “contracting” legend in each edition of the FAI Newsletter to demystify or debunk the practice or procedure.

### Urban “Contracting” Legend vs. Fact

**URBAN LEGEND**

**Putting Options in an IDIQ Contract is Required**

**FACT**

**Option Periods are NOT Required for IDIQ Contracts**

One practice seen time and time again is the inclusion of options under indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contracts. Although this practice is not prohibited, it is certainly not required. As stated in the [Federal Acquisition Regulation \(FAR\), Subpart 17.2](#), “Inclusion of an

option is normally not in the Government’s interest when, in the judgment of the contracting officer....An indefinite quantity or requirements contract would be more appropriate than a contract with options.”

Exercising options is not a complicated contract action; however, it does add an administrative burden on the entire acquisition team. This burden equates to not only extra time but extra resources, resulting in an unnecessary use of taxpayer dollars.

Consider the implications of including options in this scenario: You have a five year, multiple award IDIQ contract with options, and you have five vendors. If you include yearly options, by the time you get to the end of the fifth year, you would have done 25 needless modifications. Not only is it 25 modifications, but in order to exercise the option there are required determinations and findings that the contracting officer would have had to prepare and advance notices that are required to be provided to the contractors.

### The Bottom Line

There is a lot of administrative work involved when including options in an IDIQ contract, and the additional time for exercising options has an associated cost. Therefore, it begs the question, if we don’t have to include options in an IDIQ contract, why would we? And what is the real value of putting an option in an IDIQ contract if it’s not required? This is just “food for thought” as you prepare your next IDIQ contract!



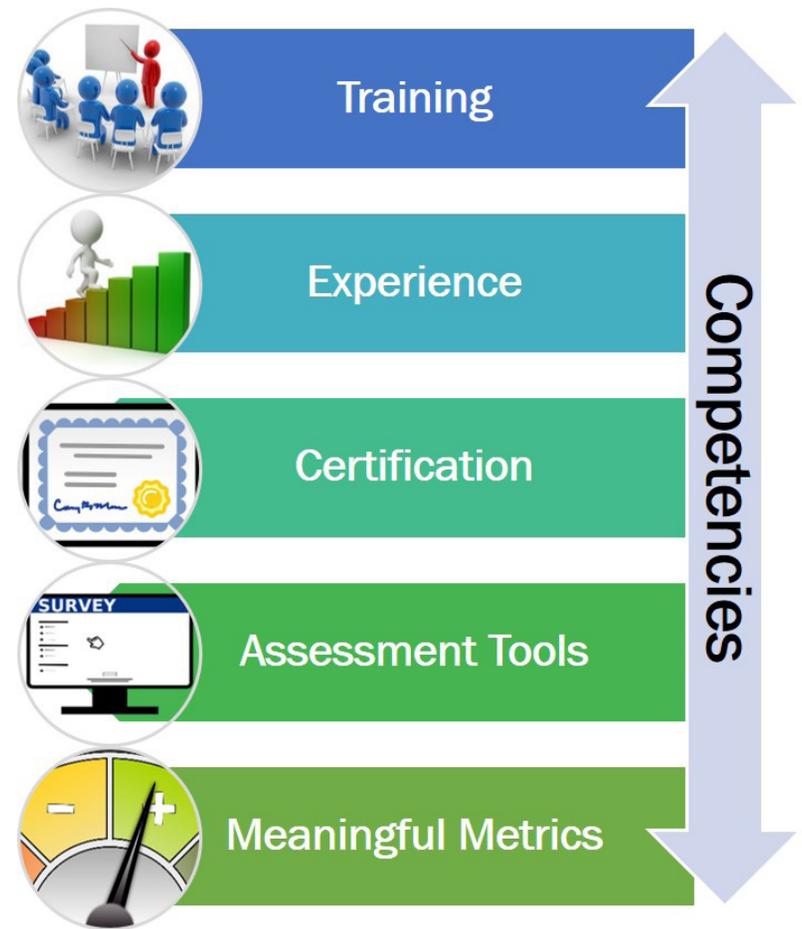
# HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

## An Integrated Approach to Competency Management

The Federal Acquisition Certification (FAC) programs are based on the competencies required for success within each role of the acquisition workforce (FAC-C, FAC-COR, and FAC-P/PM). Increasing experience and developing proficiency in the FAC competencies is how individuals can improve as professionals and advance in their careers, and it is how the government-wide workforce can rise to meet current and emerging challenges. There is a multitude of great competency-based initiatives for attracting, assessing, training, developing, recognizing, and managing members of the acquisition workforce; however, most of these initiatives are conducted in isolation, and we are not experiencing their full potential. Integrating these initiatives under an overarching strategy would enhance their efficiency and effectiveness exponentially. It would also enable agencies to deliver a consistent message to current and prospective employees on the expectations and opportunities as they begin and advance in their careers.

As an organization with a government-wide mission, FAI is ideally positioned to take the lead on an overarching competency framework to support the needs of both the agencies and you, the workforce member. As a start, FAI is assessing how it can integrate its new and existing competency-based systems and initiatives with the goal of connecting training, certifications, assessments, and metrics and to make this information readily available to agency leaders and individual workforce members. These initiatives include the Acquisition Workforce Competency Survey, the annual Acquisition Human Capital Plan process, training and continuous learning assets, and a new objective competency assessment.

In the coming months, FAI will be working to develop an integrated competency strategy. Potential results of the strategy will be to provide the personalized information to workforce members needed to self-assess, plan a desired career path, develop, and advance in their careers. It will also help FAI, civilian agencies, and other training providers enhance and better target services to strengthen the overall competency of the acquisition workforce.



**Integrated Competency Approach**

# ACM IN THE SPOTLIGHT

## Getting to Know Angela Thomas, Acquisition Career Manager (ACM), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)



Angela Thomas, ACM,  
USDA

### 1. How long have you worked at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and where were you before?

I started my journey with the USDA 23 years ago, though I've only been the Acquisition Career Manager (ACM) for six months. Prior to serving in this role, I held the position as one of the 11 ACM Designees under the USDA umbrella's acquisition offices.

### 2. Tell us about one of the biggest successes achieved by your team.

USDA has gained tremendous success within the acquisition workforce, and I expect to see that continue to grow by cultivating and retaining our people and putting our best practices and procedures in place. Over the years, we have been able to leverage the available resources and strengthen our efforts to have a properly trained and certified workforce. I'd like to think of it as continuity of operations. I am committed to carrying out the efforts in place and, from that vantage point, building momentum to increase our cadre of qualified employees.

USDA has taken every opportunity to provide information on the importance of achieving a certification. As the ACM, I must continuously work with the acquisition workforce to ensure they comprehend their roles in this process. At times, though, gaps still occur. One challenge is understanding where gaps lie, anticipating needs, and creating tools to effectively help address them. Unfortunately, face-to-face interaction is not always available, so I plan to make information sharing more accessible.

### 3. What is the biggest challenge in your position?

USDA has taken every opportunity to provide information on the importance of achieving a certification. As the ACM, I must continuously work with the acquisition workforce to ensure they comprehend their roles in this process. At times, though, gaps still occur. One challenge is understanding where gaps lie, anticipating needs, and creating tools to effectively help address them. Unfortunately, face-to-face interaction is not always available, so I plan to make information sharing more accessible.

### 4. What motivates you to put your best foot forward on a daily basis?

USDA employees across the country and around the world do critical work that impacts millions of lives. Knowing that the work I do helps others to support the mission of our agency is rewarding. Also, learning new things has always been a great motivator for me. From every job I've had, I believe I've always been able to learn something new, or view an issue differently to achieve the expected outcome, and transfer that knowledge to others. I get better because my curiosity pushes me to try new things.

### 5. What skills do you think are most critical to successfully perform your job?

I would say that one is the ability to be a chameleon, able to dive into the analytical portion of measuring data and creating policy while also maintaining strong customer service and communication skills that are needed to create connections and foster relationships. I think being organized is another big quality to possess.

### 6. What could the FAI team do to move the Federal acquisition workforce forward?

FAI is exceptionally supportive in their efforts to propel the Federal acquisition workforce forward. As a participant in the Change Advisory Board (CAB) and the Functional Advisory Boards (FABs) for Contracting Officers (CON), Contracting Officer's Representatives (COR), and Program and Project Managers (P/PM), this commitment is evident. Though I do not have any new ideas to offer at this time, I appreciate that FAI seeks to create an environment that is inclusive of ideas for systemic improvements. As such, I know these efforts will continue as we look ahead to a promising future that accelerates and supports the development of the acquisition workforce.

# ACM IN THE SPOTLIGHT

## Getting to Know Angela Thomas, ACM, USDA (Cont'd)

### 7. What words of wisdom would you offer to your fellow Acquisition Career Managers?

Be open to share and to learn. I never want to be stagnant, and a new idea or skill could come in handy someday. I've witnessed how our respective workforces benefit when we work together, share ideas, discuss best practice, and offer resources.

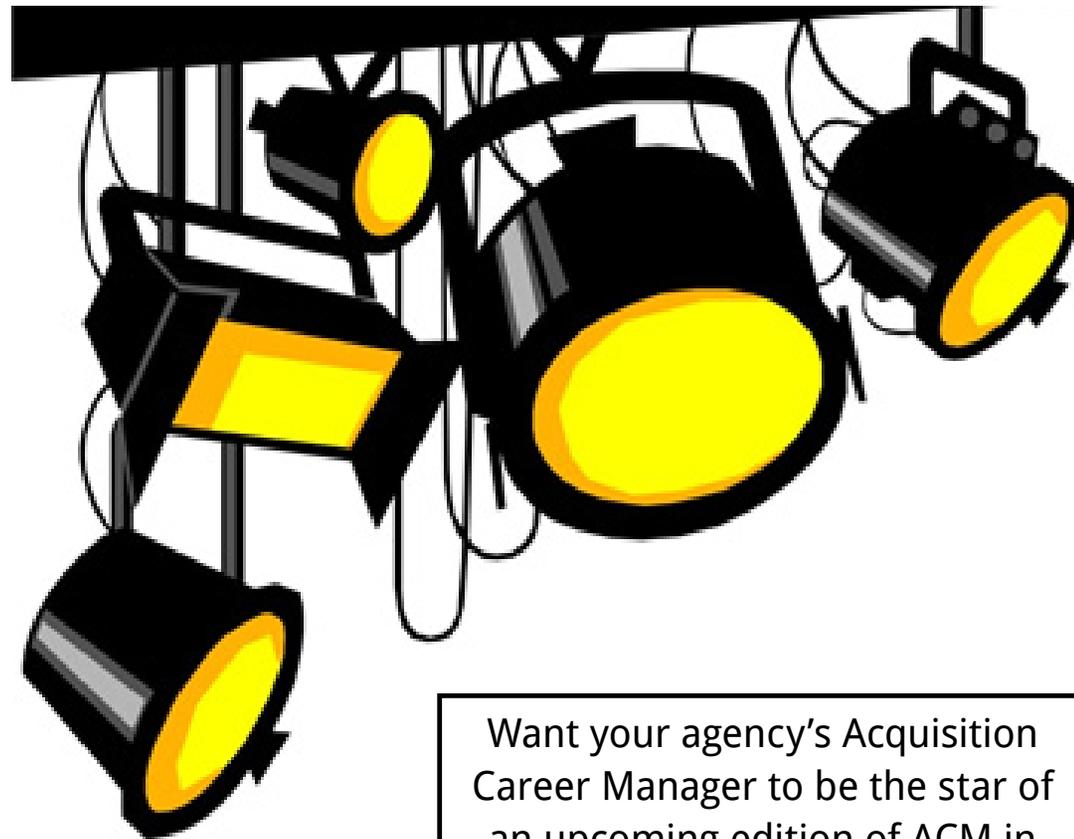
### 8. What is a goal you have for your acquisition workforce?

Increase employee engagement programs. Though they require constant nurturing and communication, as they begin to grow and become part of the heartbeat of the organization, the positive impact will be significant.

As I've learned over the years, in order to make an impact, information needs to meet the needs of the people who I am tasked to assist. While I constantly try to gauge and meet their needs, it is imperative to not only be transparent with the acquisition workforce but also to listen and learn and be open to their input and feedback.



Additionally, this year the focus will be on helping those employees seeking to achieve the Program and Project Management certification as well as the IT specialization certification. At the same time, I'll explore new efforts to provide flexibility for those seeking training opportunities to retain a certification while working with all of our partners to help develop solutions to reduce barriers to support these efforts.



Want your agency's Acquisition Career Manager to be the star of an upcoming edition of ACM in the Spotlight?

E-mail your nomination to

[contact@fai.gov](mailto:contact@fai.gov).

# WORKFORCE RESOURCES

## Student Support

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If you have training and development questions, always begin with your agency Acquisition Career Manager (ACM).

[List of ACMs](#)

[FAI.gov](#)

[FAI Help Desk](#)

[DAU.mil](#)

