

Federal Project Management: Understanding FAC-P/PM and Competency

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Executive Summary

Project success is more important than ever. FAC-P/PM plays a key role in that success.

Mission success is often dependent on project success. The federal government has joined industry in a pattern of increased attention to project management that includes establishing certification and competency standards. The Federal Acquisition Certification for Program and Project Managers (FAC-P/PM), which was created April 2007, is a work in the early stages of progress. Its goal of “well-trained and experienced program and project managers” remains intact.

This study was conducted to get a glimpse into the status of FAC-P/PM; it is in the early stages of implementation and the pace is accelerating. Implementation seems further along where positive project management and training attitudes exist; however, implementation is sporadic and hampered by a lack of a centralized or active inter-agency community. Implementation is also hindered by the relatively sizable effort required by each Agency to develop their own individual FAC-P/PM programs; this is presenting a barrier for some. The Senior/Expert level of FAC-P/PM is receiving virtually all of the attention.

FAC-P/PM is a three level competency-based project and program management certification for federal government civilian employees. It includes skills specific to the government environment that are not well represented by industry or commercial certifications. The Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) within the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) controls the program, the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) oversees the program, and the individual agencies are responsible for exercising the wide latitude they have been given to develop and implement compliant FAC-P/PM programs.

Positive reports from adopters of FAC-P/PM have been received for the government-specific aspects, for the inclusion of life cycle system management, and for the inclusion of leadership. The impact of FAC-P/PM on the management and outcome of projects and programs has not been measured and is likely too early to tell; however, some project managers report signs of improvement. Study data indicate that higher levels of value are associated with FAC-P/PM where implementation was furthest along, where there is increased appreciation for project and program management, where certification is based more on competency and less on training, and where employees see FAC-P/PM as part of a systematic effort within their Agency to improve project and program results.

Project management is an emerging field across many civilian agencies, and, as in any emerging market, there are leaders and followers.

OMB and FAI have a tremendous opportunity to harness the power of the early adopters lessons learned and knowledge base for the benefit of the next wave of FAC-P/PM adoptions.

Continuing the FAC-P/PM program and implementations is recommended; study data are suggestive of the program's value. Recommendations at the program level for OMB and FAI include assessing program performance using outcome-based measures, providing Agencies with additional implementation guidance, developing a collaborative inter-agency implementation community, enabling individual Agencies to leverage the experience of the early adopters, and increasing the awareness of FAC-P/PM within the program and project management workforce. Recommendations at the Agency level include improving outreach with the early adopters, stimulating Entry/Apprentice and Mid/Journeyman levels of certification, focusing more on competency and less on training, and using a framework to plan and guide FAC-P/PM implementations.

Introduction

“OMB and federal agencies have identified approximately 413 IT projects— totaling at least \$25.2 billion in expenditures for fiscal year 2008—as being poorly planned, poorly performing, or both.”

GAO Testimony Highlights; July 31, 2008
GAO-08-1051T

Background and Purpose of the Report

The FAC-P/PM Study: Designed To Support Better Federal Project Management

The purpose of this report is to present the results of a study that has been conducted of the status of the Federal Acquisition Certification for Program and Project Managers (FAC-P/PM). Since FAC-P/PM is in its early stages of implementation, this study sought to learn about how it is being implemented, to find out about what the early effects might be, and to offer recommendations to aid those involved its implementation. An emphasis of the study was to identify actions that can be used by those who are still involved in implementing FAC-P/PM.

The emphasis on project management in the federal civilian government continues to increase steadily, supported by a range of mandates and public pressure, and mirrored in the industry and military sectors by at least as substantial a level of emphasis. This across-the-board emphasis is being driven by the increased attention to results and the recognition of the effective role that project management and project management certification play in achieving these results.

It is understood that the glimpse provided by this study is constrained by limitations associated with trying to characterize a broad and diverse population that is not aligned with any specific federal occupation series. This glimpse is further constrained by the newness of the subject; a limited number of people are aware of FAC-P/PM to the degree necessary to offer informed opinions about it. As a consequence, this glimpse into FAC-P/PM is partial and incomplete; its accuracy is likely greater for some of the pockets within Agencies than others.

What Is Project Management?

At its core, project management is a structured discipline that is focused on achieving project results. Projects are defined as “a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result¹.” This definition highlights the fact that projects are timebound and involve schedules. It also highlights the fact that projects are undertaken to achieve something unique. An important consequence of project uniqueness is risk; generally speaking, the more unique the project is, the more significant a role risk plays in project success. Project management places considerable emphasis on planning for those risks, executing according to the plan, and controlling/monitoring the scope and resources.

A Multi-Modal Study

Projects are fundamentally different from the type of work commonly referred to as maintenance and operations where work has more of a repetitive nature. Organizations are invariably involved with a mix of project work and operations work. Processing claims at the Social Security Administration is an example of operations work; upgrading the claims processing system is an example of project work.

The larger the portion of project work done in the organization, the more likely the organization will reap the benefits of adopting project management. There are some solid connections between project management and other successful management approaches that have been used including Management By Objectives (an outcome-based process), Six Sigma (a quality management strategy), and Business Process re-engineering (focused on work flows).

Project management uses techniques from other disciplines.

Project management has successfully imported elements from these approaches and focused them on the temporary and unique aspects of projects. Projects in the federal civilian government can span a very broad range of work including, for example, a one-week effort to re-layout a Department of Transportation jobs web page to correspond to related changes on other web pages; a six-month endeavor at the Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management to revise their Wild Horse and Burro Strategy Development Document; to a multi-year undertaking at the Federal Bureau of Investigation to develop and deploy their Next Generation Workspace.

¹ The Project Management Institute has published a widely accepted definition in the American National Standard Institute ANSA/PMI 99-001-2008 document titled *A Guide To The Project Management Body Of Knowledge – Fourth Edition*.

Survey Methodology

This study involved interviewing federal civilian employees with knowledge about how project and program management is practiced within their Agencies, surveying federal civilian employees and contractors involved in federal civilian projects and programs, examining available literature, drawing upon commonly accepted practices, and drawing upon available FAC-P/PM expertise.

Interviews were conducted with: Central Intelligence Agency, Department of Commerce, Department of Energy, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Treasury, Federal Acquisition Institute, Federal Bureau of Investigation, General Services Administration, Office of Federal Procurement Policy, Office of Management and Budget.

A survey was released to the membership of the Washington D.C. chapter of the Project Management Institute; responses received from 57 employees involved with federal civilian project management were equally split between federal and contractor employees.

U.S. Federal Government has long relied on project management.

Project management is being applied within aerospace, the military, health care, information technology, intelligence, as well as many other fields. This broad range of project work extends into virtually all corners of the government and involves a significant amount of effort; federal spending on information technology projects alone in fiscal year 2011 will total \$79.4 billion².

Project management is key to achieving project success. Studies have repeatedly shown that the benefits of project management include improved cost performance, improved schedule performance, greater predictability, higher probability that what is delivered meets the needs, increased customer satisfaction, and improved employee retention³. In the federal government, mission success is increasingly dependent on project success.

Project management has been alive and well in the federal workforce in the United States for more than sixty years. In fact, some of the earliest adopters of the discipline of project management worked on government projects; in the late 1950's the Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT) for assessing project performance was developed as part of the Navy's Polaris missile program. In the mid 1970's, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued Circular A-109, the first federal directive to address program management. This document solidified the role of Cost and Schedule Control System

² The OMB report titled *Analytical Perspectives – Budget of the U.S. Government – Fiscal Year 2011* contains financial information about information technology and other large federal projects.

³ The 2002 book by W. Ibbs & J. Reginato. titled *Quantifying the Value of Project Management* contains research results that show project schedules and project costs averaging 20-40% lower for projects that employ mature project management and that the probability of their actual schedules/costs equating to what was planned is more than doubled. The 2002 book by J. Pennypacker titled *Justifying the Value of Project Management* contains study results that show improvements to a broad range of metrics attributed to project management including a 34% growth in sales, a 33% growth in customer satisfaction, and a 36% growth in employee satisfaction.

Criteria (C/SCSC) and set the stage for the establishment, a decade ago, of Earned Value Management System standards⁴. OMB Circular A-11, which has been in use since 1997, contains specific requirement in Part 7 for the planning and management of projects including in the 2010 release, the requirement to establish and manage cost/schedule/performance baselines for information technology projects.

More recently, official actions have highlighted the recognition of the importance of project management when, on February 18, 2009, as part of the national approach to addressing the economy, the Director of OMB issued “Initial Implementing Guidance for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.” This sixty-two-page document contains many dozens of very specific actions and responsibilities associated with project management to ensure that “specific program outcomes and improved results” are achieved.

This history of project management in the federal government is reflected in core regulations including the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR). This history shows project management evolving from an enabler for and subset of successful acquisition to what is increasingly recognized as a complementary field. The performance-based trends within the federal sector are increasing the role from what is described somewhat passively in the FAR as contract administration and oversight to a much more active role of managing performance⁵. While project management may once have been viewed mostly within the bounds of acquisition, it is now increasingly understood that project management has significant application for non-acquisition efforts as well, and that acquisition, in some circumstances, can be viewed within the bounds of project management. Indeed, acquisition is recognized as but one of the important nine knowledge areas in the *PMBOK® Guide*⁶.

The federal project manager’s role is evolving.

⁴ On August 17, 1999 the Department of Defense (DoD) adopted the ANSI/EIA-748-A (American National Standards Institute / Electronic Industry Association) Earned Value Management System (EVMS) standard; adoption by civilian federal agencies followed. The 2010 IMB Center for The Business of Government report titled *Project Management in Government: An Introduction to Earned Value Management (EVM)* by Y. Kway and F. Anbari describes the practices and trends in EVM and provides suggestions for increased adoption.

⁵ The Acquisition Central web site for the federal acquisition community www.acquisition.gov includes the *Seven Steps to Performance-Based Acquisition* with the management of performance identified as the most important step.

⁶ The Project Management Institute publication titled *A Guide To The Project Management Body Of Knowledge – Fourth Edition*, which is a widely accepted standard commonly referred to as *PMBOK® Guide*, identifies project procurement management as one of the nine knowledge areas.

The Project Manager

The sheer number and skill levels of project managers in industry have grown in response to the increased importance of project management⁷. Likewise, the numbers of federal civilian employees performing project management duties has increased as well⁸.

Increased demand and complexity of projects has increased the criticality of the project manager role.

However, this increase is occurring at a time when achieving success is still a difficult goal⁹. One look into troubled projects like the SBInet at Department of Homeland Security, Deepwater at the Coast Guard, handheld devices at the US Census Bureau, or the Sentinel case file system at the Federal Bureau of Investigation, highlight the underlying obstacles to success. GAO recently reported that competence in project and program management is a critical factor to the success of those efforts¹⁰. The project manager's role is so critical to the success of the project that the OMB Circular A-11 Exhibit 300 now requires the name and qualifications of the project manager. The definition of acquisition has even been expanded; for the first time it officially includes project managers¹¹.

Just as industry has placed an increased emphasis on project-related work, the federal civilian sector has mirrored industry by building training programs and career paths for project managers. Although no federal Standard Occupational Classification has yet been established for project management, certain job classifications such as GS-2210 IT Project Manager do now include important aspects of project management, and interpretive guidance has been issued for project manager positions¹².

⁷ The Project Management Institute (PMI), as the largest professional project management professional association in the world, reports a total of more than one half million members and credential holders; membership growth has averaged more than 20% per year for the past decade.

⁸ Congress enacted section 869 of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 that directs OMB to prepare an Acquisition Workforce Development Strategic Plan for federal agencies other than the Department of Defense to develop a specific and actionable 5-year plan to increase the size of the acquisition workforce. *FAI 2008 Annual Report of the Federal Acquisition Workforce* states that there were 1,756 program and project managers on 12/31/08 in the civilian agencies, an increase of 89% from the previous year. While this report substantially underreports the actual number of federal civilian project management employees, internal counts in some individual agencies are larger than the FAI reported total, it does reflect the growth trend.

⁹ The Standish Group report dated April 23, 2009 titled *CHAOS Summary 2009* shows more failing projects than previously, with only 32% of projects succeeding on time, on budget, and with the required features.

¹⁰ See for example: GAO-09-620T Coast Guard Deepwater, GAO-07-518 Department of Energy project management practices, GAO-08-79 US Census Bureau information technology management, GAO-06-698T Federal Bureau of Investigation Sentinel case file system, or GAO-05-819T satellite programs in the Intelligence Community.

¹¹ The *Services Acquisition Reform Act of 2003 (SARA, P.L. 108-136)* expanded the definition of acquisition workforce to include project and program managers.

¹² The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) created the GS-2210 IT Project Manager position and issued the document titled *Interpretive Guidance For Project Manager Positions* in August 2003.

Project Management Certification

“Well-trained and experienced program and project managers are critical to the acquisition process and the successful accomplishment of mission goals.”

Office of Federal Procurement Policy, April 25, 2007¹³

Certification Background

FAC-P/PM is nearly four years old.

In response to this situation, for the first time ever, civilian employees now have the opportunity to earn a certification in project and program management that was created specifically for them. This new certification credential, the Federal Acquisition Certification for Program and Project Managers (FAC-P/PM) was put in place by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) because according to the April 25, 2007 OMB memorandum for Chief Acquisition Officers from the Administrator of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) "Well-trained and experienced program and project managers are critical to the acquisition process and the successful accomplishment of mission goals."

This focus on meeting mission goals through the efforts of program and project managers underpins the FAC-P/PM certification. It spotlights the connection between skilled program and project managers and the effectiveness of the acquisition process within their Agency. Now civilian federal government employees have an opportunity to earn not only industry-accepted credentials such as those from the International Project Management Association (IPMA) and from the Project Management Institute (PMI), but also a FAC-P/PM credential that includes elements of particular relevance to them as federal employees¹⁴.

¹³ Memorandum for Chief Acquisition Officers from OMB Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) dated April 25, 2007.

¹⁴ Project management and program management credentials are available from the International Project Management Association (IPMA Levels A-D) and from the Project Management Institute (Project Management Professional, Program Management Professional.)

Certification Attributes

Knowledge based certifications abound.

Certification is a well-established approach to helping employees validate that they possess desirable competencies associated with particular job requirements. Some certifications even go beyond the lower levels of learning such as knowledge and understanding of a subject to actually encompass higher levels of learning to include the application of the knowledge¹⁵. An example of this important distinction of learning levels are the differences between knowing what a project plan is, comprehending the significant contents within a project plan, being able to apply knowledge to write a project plan, and performing analysis to determine how the project plan can be tailored to the particular situation.

Some certifications reflect these levels of learning by offering levels of certification; each of the levels can correspond to higher levels of learning and they can correspond in project management, to larger, more complex, and higher risk projects.

The basis for granting a certification can play a key factor in determining the value of the certification. Certifications with minimal effort can be obtained through longevity, by attending training, by recasting previous experience, or some combination. Certifications requiring increased effort can involve passing tests, demonstrating on-the-job performance, peer reviews, or some combination. The largest grantor of project management certifications in the world uses a combination of documented experience and applied knowledge as the basis for their certification¹⁶.

FAC-P/PM Certification History

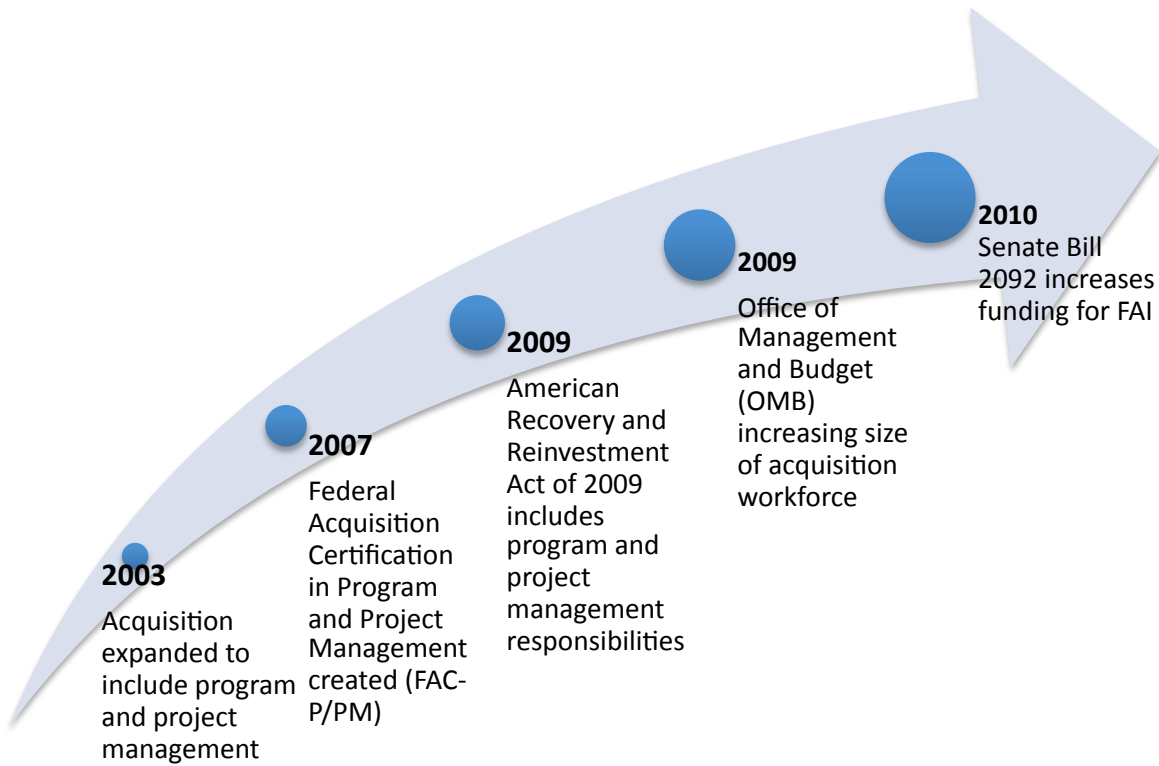
As a result of OMB's Office of Federal Procurement Policy Letter 05-01 dated April 15, 2005, the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) formed a cross-functional working group and developed recommendations for the "establishment of certification programs for program and project managers..." That policy letter, which provided the rationale for establishing a special government certification, stated that the action is being taken to build on "previous efforts to improve the development of the acquisition workforce" by addressing the broadened definition of acquisition contained in the Services Acquisition Reform

¹⁵ One method for classifying the levels of learning, which was established in 1956 by Benjamin Bloom, identified six levels within the cognitive learning domain. These Bloom's levels are frequently used in the training and workforce development arenas as standards against which competency development and certification programs must be measured.

¹⁶ The Project Management Professional (PMP) certification from PMI requires the applicant to meet experience criteria for managing projects, to meet education criteria for training, and to pass an exam with knowledge and application of knowledge questions.

Act of 2003 (SARA, P.L. 108-136). For the first time, the Acquisition role now includes “program and project managers.” This is a significant expansion, and means that civilian federal government program and project managers are part of the acquisition workforce.

Following the adoption of the working group recommendations, FAC-P/PM was officially established on April 25, 2007. FAI was charged with administering the FAC-P/PM program in conjunction with individual agencies. Since 2007, FAC-P/PM has been adopted by most of the executive agencies and FAI maintains its responsibilities for the program.



The FAC-P/PM program applies to all executive agencies within the federal government, except those subject to the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA, 10 U.S.C. §§ 1741-46); it is recognized and accepted by, at a minimum, all civilian executive branch agencies. This certification is not mandatory for all program and project managers; however at a minimum, program and project managers assigned to programs considered major acquisitions must be FAC-P/PM certified at the Senior/Expert level unless the appropriate Agency official grants a waiver. Major acquisitions are defined in OMB Circular A-11, Part 7, Exhibit 300, and include projects with obligations greater than \$500,000 annually. The targeted completion date

for this certification is one year from the date of assignment to the program or project.

Recently, U.S. official actions have highlighted the recognition of the importance of project and program management. On February 18, 2009, as part of the national approach to addressing the economy, the Director of OMB issued “Initial Implementing Guidance for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.” This sixty-two-page document contains many dozens of very specific actions and responsibilities associated with project and program management to insure that “specific program outcomes and improved results” are achieved. To help agencies develop plans to increase the size of the acquisition workforce, Congress enacted section 869 of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009.

An Acquisition Workforce Development Strategic Plan

This provision directs OMB to prepare an Acquisition Workforce Development Strategic Plan for federal agencies other than the Department of Defense to develop a specific and actionable 5-year plan to increase the size of the acquisition workforce and operate a government-wide acquisition intern program. Section 869 outlined a number of matters that the plan was to include, such as the development of a sustainable funding model to support efforts to hire, retain, and train an appropriately sized and skilled acquisition workforce.

In response, OMB issued its plan for civilian agencies on October 27, 2009. The plan, according to OMB, provides a structured approach for these agencies to augment and improve the skills of their acquisition workforce, which includes contract specialists, contracting officer’s technical representatives (COTR), and program and project managers. According to an April 23, 2010 General Accounting Office (GAO) report to congressional committees titled “The Office of Management and Budget’s Acquisition Workforce Development Strategic Plan for Civilian Agencies” OMB officials acknowledge that the plan does not explicitly address all of the required matters. However, according to the report, they believe that it nevertheless provides, for the first time, a government-wide framework for civilian agencies to conduct agency-specific acquisition workforce planning.

Senate Bill 2902 added significant funding to FAI.

Most recently, the Senate passed legislation intended to improve the Federal Acquisition Institute. The Federal Acquisition Institute Act (S. 2902) will ensure consistency of training programs across the civilian acquisition workforce, and is intended to make better use of training dollars. Consider that if even one percent of the \$538B spent each year in contracting is saved through improved project management, a \$5 billion dollar savings would accrue to the government.

FAC-P/PM Implementation

FAC-P/PM is located within and managed by elements within the federal acquisition structure. The Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) has the responsibility for oversight for the FAC-P/PM program. As such they are responsible for developing and reviewing FAC-P/PM competency and training standards, reviewing the FAC-P/PM implementation programs within the various government agencies, recommending FAC-P/PM program changes to OMB, and developing training blueprints for agencies, vendors, or other agencies to use to assess their courses against the FAC-P/PM standards. FAI also has responsibility for developing and making available to government employees training courses that specifically satisfy one of the five FAC-P/PM competency areas, the government-specific competency area. OFPP within OMB has responsibility for overseeing the FAC-P/PM program within FAI and for enacting changes to the program.

FAC-P/PM is a distributed implementation model.

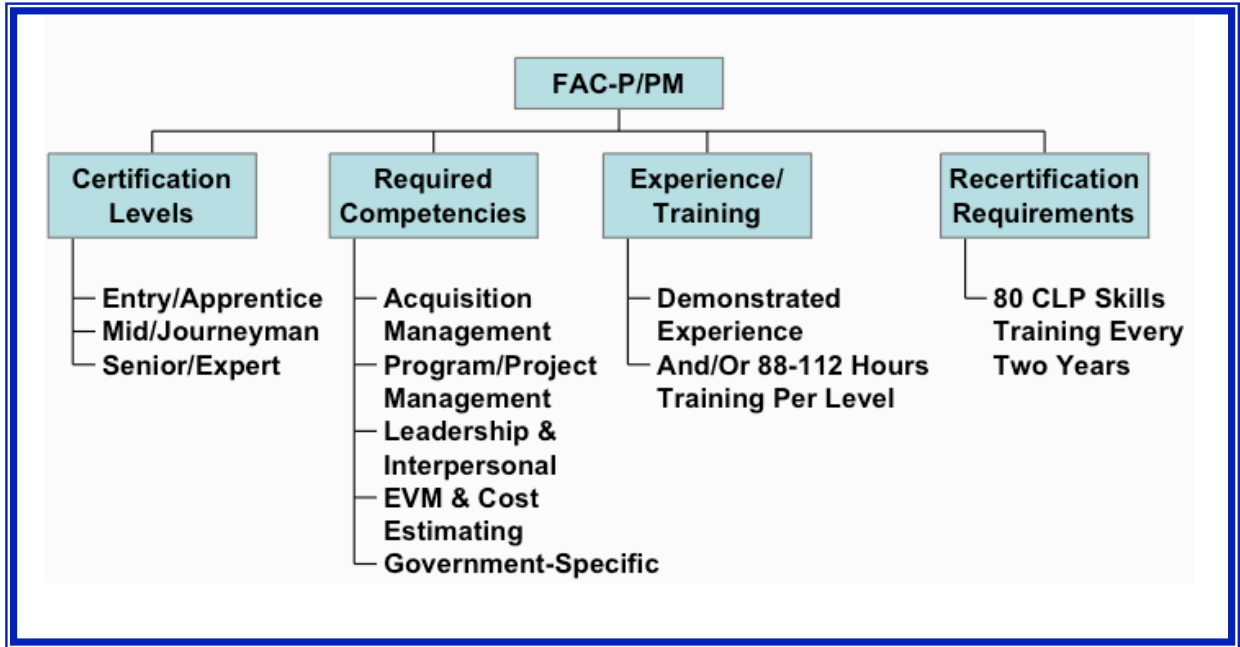
Each government Agency is responsible for developing and implementing FAC-P/PM programs that satisfy the competency and training standards, for managing those programs, and for issuing FAC-P/PM certifications to their employees who meet the criteria. The government agencies have the responsibility to develop and implement FAC-P/PM programs matched to the specific mission needs of their Agency; beyond insuring compliance with the FAC-P/PM competencies and standards, consistency or compatibility with other Agencies is not required.

FAC-P/PM Certification Requirements

FAC-P/PM is designed to be a competency certification, not a knowledge based certification.

FAC-P/PM certification is based on attaining competencies and experience associated with any of three levels (see chart, next page) and ensuring 80 hours of continuous learning is achieved every two years: Entry/Apprentice, Mid/Journeyman, and Senior/Expert. Certification at a lower level is not a prerequisite for a higher level of certification. An applicant can satisfy the competency requirements through successful completion of suggested training, completion of comparable education or certification programs, or demonstration of knowledge, skills, and abilities. The FAC-P/PM competencies encompass five knowledge areas: acquisition management, program and project management, leadership and interpersonal skills, earned value management and cost estimating, and government-specific skills¹⁷.

¹⁷ The full set of FAC-P/PM competencies can be found on the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) website at: www.fai.gov/certification/management.asp



The levels of FAC-P/PM certification represent the progression associated with increasingly larger, more complex, and higher risk projects and with increased autonomy, responsibility, and authority of the project manager.

At the FAC-P/PM **Entry/Apprentice** level the project manager should have:

- knowledge and skills to perform as a project team member,
- the ability to manage low-risk and relatively simple projects or to manage more complex projects under direct supervision of a more experienced manager,
- an overall understanding of project management practices including performance-based acquisition, a recognition of an Agency's requirements development processes,
- the ability to define and construct various project documents, under supervision, and
- an understanding of and involvement in the definition, initiation, conceptualization or design of project requirements.

At the FAC-P/PM **Mid/Journeyman** level the project/program manager should have:

- knowledge and skills to manage projects or program segments of low to moderate risks with little or no supervision,
- the ability to apply management processes, including requirements development processes and performance-based acquisition principles, to support the Agency's mission to develop an acquisition program baseline from schedule requirements, plan technology developments and demonstrations and apply Agency policy on interoperability,
- the ability to identify and track actions to initiate an acquisition program or project using cost/benefit analysis,
- the ability to understand and apply the process to prepare information for a baseline review,
- can assist in development of Total Ownership Cost (TOC) estimates,
- and the ability to manage projects as well as program segments and distinguish between program and project work.

At the FAC-P/PM **Senior/Expert** level the program manager should have:

- knowledge and skills to manage moderate to high-risk programs or projects that require significant acquisition investment and Agency knowledge and experience,
- the ability to manage and evaluate a program and create an environment for program success,
- the ability to manage the requirements development process, overseeing junior-level team members in creation, development, and implementation,
- the expert ability to use, manage, and evaluate management processes, including performance-based management techniques,
- and the expert ability to manage and evaluate the use of earned value management as it relates to acquisition investments.

Competency Areas

The FAC-P/PM competency model is constructed around seven essential competencies:

Competency	Aligned Skills
Requirements Development Management Process	Recognition of investment management requirements and acquisition policies, understanding of how to manage risk; understanding of factors that influence cost, schedule, and performance.
System Engineering	Recognition of the scientific, management, engineering, and technical skills used in the performance of systems planning, research and development.
Test and Evaluation	Recognition of efficient and cost effective methods for planning, monitoring, conducting, and evaluating tests of prototype, new, or modified systems equipment or materiel.
Life Cycle Logistics	Recognition of performance-based logistic efforts that optimize total system lifecycle availability, supportability, and reliability/maintainability.
Acquisition/Contracting	Recognition of the supervision, leadership and management processes/procedures involving the acquisition of supplies and services, construction, research and development; acquisition.
Business Financial Management	Recognition of the forms of cost estimating, cost analysis, reconciliation of cost estimates, financial planning, formulating financial programs and budgets, budget analysis/execution, benefit-cost analysis, Earned Value Management (EVM).
Leadership Professional	These are the skills, knowledge, abilities and traits acquired through experience, training and education within government and the private sector, including oral communications, flexibility, problem solving conflict management, interpersonal skills, resilience, accountability, customer service, and written communication.

Agency Adoptions

Agencies that are new to FAC-P/PM can benefit tremendously from the experience of the early adopters. Undertaking FAC-P/PM is an investment into a curriculum that requires much forethought and consideration of the best path forward. Early adopters of FAC-P/PM have experience in determining appropriate investment levels into FAC-P/PM, and making the tough investment decisions.

Early Adopters:

NASA
DOE
Treasury

Recent Adopters:

FBI
Commerce
Veterans Affairs
GSA

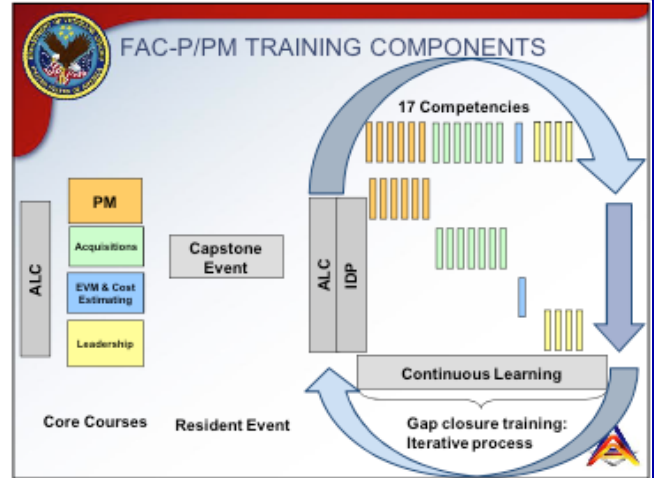
Case Study:

Competency-Based FAC-P/PM Implementation at Veterans Affairs

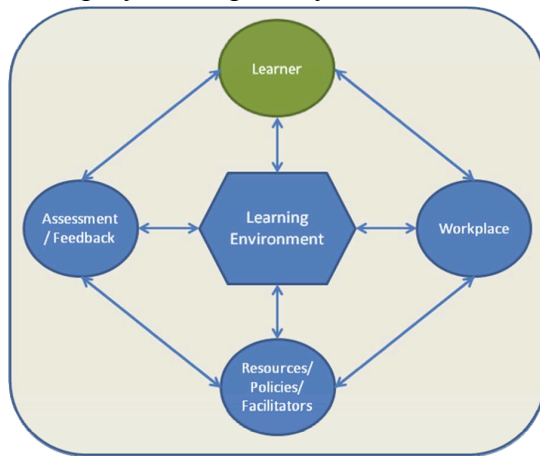


In the Fall of 2008 the Veterans Affairs Acquisition Academy was created. Its stated purpose is to respond to the growing challenge of effectively executing a dramatically larger purchasing budget with the same sized acquisition workforce in an environment where significant concerns exist for 82% of their major investments¹⁸.

One of the approaches the Academy is taking to address these concerns is the development and implementation of a FAC-P/PM certification program. This program, sized at \$60M over five years, is being undertaken through a combination of staff and contractor expertise. According to Richard Garrison, who is Vice-Chancellor of the VA Acquisition Academy Program Management School, a competency-based approach will be used¹⁹.



This approach focuses on the effective application of skills, includes assessments of practical application through exams and scenarios. The process being used for employee progression begins with a foundation of core skill requirements, includes an assessment of the gap between the level of employee competency and the core skill requirements, follows with capstone and gap closure training, and is supported by continuous learning.



Individual employee action plans are to be developed and monitored. Competency-based assessments determine the progression by the employee through the process.

A shift is occurring at the Academy away from a traditional input-based model where independent activities focus on training, toward an integrated output-based learner driven model where assessment and feedback are used. In this model the learning process does not end when the training event ends; ongoing reinforcement and feedback are included. The VA anticipates that the resulting training will be developed in line with the learners' needs, that the learner will have an active role, and that levels of learning will be evaluated.

¹⁸ According to IT Performance Dashboard for July 31, 2009 status of Exhibit 300 IT projects self-reported by VA: <http://it.usaspending.gov/>
¹⁹ Case material from presentation titled "VA Acquisition Academy Competency Based Assessment" by Richard Garrison and Louisa Schaefer dated May 2010 delivered as part of the April 29 & 30, 2010 Online Forum session 501 by The Learning Guild: <http://www.elearningguild.com/showFile.cfm?id=3977>

Building Project Management Leaders

“Skilled program and project managers are critical in developing accurate government requirements, defining measurable performance standards, and managing contractor activities to ensure that intended outcomes are achieved.”

Paul A. Denett

Memorandum for Chief Administration Officers

April 25, 2007

Competency Overview

Competency, not knowledge alone, leads to improved performance.

Nowhere is the need for competent project managers more urgent than in the federal government. With billions of dollars spent on projects and hundreds of new legislative mandates arriving anew each year, it is imperative that the federal government develop a workforce of high quality project managers. Effective project managers and project leaders require more than training courses – they need a full spectrum of support to evolve into truly competent stewards of public trust. Competency has a range of meanings across managers and human resource professionals, however we will limit our definition to mean the junction of behaviors, skills, experience, and knowledge, as shown in the figure.



In a work environment, competency involves the meaningful intersection of:

1. **Knowledge.** Relevant information and the associated judgmental reference points that allow the information to be applied effectively.
2. **Skills.** Specific, often technical, capabilities that can be performed by an individual.
3. **Experience.** A history of working within and across similar projects and organizational environments. Experience also implies a network of resources that the individual can access and use.
4. **Behaviors.** Conduct and personal decorum that is readily apparent to others. Behaviors extend to levels of personal expression, dress, humor, verbal and non-verbal communication queues, and more.

In developing the FAC-P/PM program, FAI took a bold step forward

by defining requirements that addressed skill development, experience, and knowledge and behaviors. The FAC-P/PM competency model seeks to develop program and project managers to be able to operate in a wide range of contexts and environments, much as any competent professional might. The FAI model, as designed for the Acquisition function, strives to incorporate all of these elements into one contiguous model.

The model suggests that any one of these elements can exist alone or in conjunction with others, but that does not imply competence. Consider a recent medical school graduate. She may have years of education behind her (knowledge), hours of laboratory practice (skills) and internships in various hospitals and clinics (experience). Yet, she lacks the decision-making dexterity borne from having seen the same medical situation many dozens of times.

She also lacks a depth of knowledge and use of her medical tools, as well as the authoritative demeanor (behavior) that will come with time. Because of these deficiencies, she is not yet considered competent. She may be trained, educated, and skilled to a low level. But she is not yet considered competent to manage her own roster of patients.

Such is the plight of the federal project manager. To become highly competent in federal sector project management, individuals must first become identified as project and program managers. Next, they must seek to gain the project management skills and government specific knowledge that will advance their career. In the federal world, there tends to be a large amount of statutory and regulatory knowledge required to be perceived as competent.

Two important concepts are fundamental to improving competency:

1. **Depth of Understanding.** To become competent, one must understand the deeper mechanics of their particular field. They must be able to see the symptoms of problems from the causes of problems. Core concepts should come easily to the individual, and alternative methods should be readily apparent. Depth of understanding extends across all competency elements. In other words, one must possess a deep understanding of the skills, behavioral, experiential, and knowledge aspects.
2. **Feedback.** Competency depends upon a feedback loop from mentors, coaches, team members, and others. Individuals improve in their performance through effective feedback. Again, feedback must traverse all elements of competency. An individual must get feedback on their skills, behaviors, experience, and knowledge base to be able to improve.

Competency elements can be influenced and improved over time, as shown below. In the current FAI model, agencies may or may not im-

Two factors improve competency.

plement these measures when developing their project managers. As such, a project manager may be able to survive simply because they have a depth of government specific knowledge.

Competency Element	Improvement Methods
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Training
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the job training • Job aids
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance reviews • Goal setting
Behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring • Coaching

By employing the FAI model, it is envisioned that the FAC-P/PM program will directly contribute to the development of more effective project and program managers. Classroom training and on-the-job assignments provides the raw skills required to be a project manager, while more formal education and extensive training develop a deeper knowledge set for the project/programs manger. Experience is gained from assignments, coupled with goals and reviews. Finally, behaviors are influenced through activities like effective coaching and mentoring. By linking specific activities with the competency elements, a well-rounded program of development emerges.

Evaluating the FAC-P/PM Certification Program

Federal Information Technology (IT) projects too often cost more than they should, take longer than necessary to deploy, and deliver solutions that do not meet our business needs.

Peter R. Orszag

OMB Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

June 28, 2010

Criteria for Evaluation

FAC-P/PM is a three-year-old program, and is administered centrally by FAI, which has a staff of 5-10 people. The implementation of the program lies within each agency and is the responsibility of the Chief Acquisition Officer. We kept these program elements in mind while reviewing the FAC-P/PM program. Our review included several criteria:

1. Is the FAI model being implemented as designed?
2. Are agencies getting value from the investment in FAC-P/PM?
3. What success factors or causal relationships exist in those agencies that have realized success with FAC-P/PM?

Summary of Findings

As of August 2010, FAC-P/PM is a work in the early stages of progress. In the three years since it was enacted, awareness about and adoption of FAC-P/PM by civilian government agencies is sporadic, some federal agencies have developed and are following FAC-P/PM implementation plans, and some may not be. Insight and understanding about the reasons for this degree of variation is limited.

There is no easy way to count the number of FAC-P/PM certifications.

The count of the number of FAC-P/PM certified employees has not been identified²⁰. Implementation of FAC-P/PM is hampered by the relatively sizable effort required by each Agency to develop their own individual FAC-P/PM programs; this is presenting a barrier for some. Greater attention is being paid to the FAC-P/PM Senior/Expert level of certification than the Entry/Apprentice and Mid/Journeyman levels; for major programs, each completed OMB Circular A-11 Exhibit 300 Business Case now list the name of the FAC-P/PM Senior/Expert

²⁰ The Acquisition Career Management Information System (ACMIS) contains counts for the number of FAC-P/PM certified employees at the Senior/Expert level only; Entry/Apprentice and Mid/Journeyman levels are not included. The *FAI 2008 Annual Report of the Federal Acquisition Workforce* includes counts of program and project managers, but is silent regarding FAC-P/PM certification. Annual reports for subsequent have not been posted on the FAI website.

level program manager assigned. The industry response to FAC-P/PM has followed; some training providers now offer FAC-P/PM compliant curriculums. The Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) also offers some FAC-P/PM training, and it maintains an awareness of some of the FAC-P/PM activities within the government agencies and industry²¹. The demand for the FAC-P/PM training has been modest, with catalog offerings outpacing student enrollment.

The following findings were identified as a result of following our methodology.

Finding 1: Program Design and Implementation

The FAC-P/PM program is being implemented as intended in many agencies. Nearly all departments interviewed have complied with OMB requirements for senior level program managers on Exhibit 300 represented programs. Fewer departments are taking real steps to implement Mid- and Entry-level competency programs. FAC-P/PM does not have a unified, government-wide definition of implementation success. There is no overarching adoption strategy²².

Finding 2: Reconciling Project Management and Acquisition Lifecycles

In the federal environment, the acquisition lifecycle is dominant to project management. The roles and phases are oriented around the contracting and procurement of goods and services, rather than around the development of a project and its intended outcomes. This means, for example, that when a new data center is being constructed, the effort is approached as a set of acquisition activities. Project tasks fall into the larger acquisition phases. The Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) describe in many thousands of pages the rules, concepts, and techniques by which government employees may procure goods and services. Yet, when looking for advice in project management that is not associated with a specific department, one will find only a few scattered documents, most of which is found within the Federal Acquisition Institute. This focus is the result of a deep and abiding belief in an acquisition orientation that stretches back for decades. This approach can be summed up in the phrase “An acquisition may result in one or more projects.”

²¹ A total of 16 vendors, 4 Agencies, as well as the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) are listed as having FAC-P/PM compliant courses in the FAI document titled *FAC-PPM Training Crosswalk May 2010*.

²² Note that a September 2010 informal survey of two-dozen federal agencies conducted by one agency’s FAC-P/PM expert determined that half of the agencies surveyed did not have a FAC-P/PM policy and that relatively low-level employees were making certification decisions within the agencies.

This acquisition-centric approach is in stark contrast to the private sector and many other government entities, where project management tends to be the more dominant set of activities. In these environments, the program or project manager oversees the acquisition of goods and services in support of achieving project objectives. An acquisitions administration will support the program or project through oversight and enforcement activities. This approach can be summed up in the phrase “A project may result in one or more acquisitions.”

FAC-P/PM is a manifestation of the acquisition-centric approach, and is creating an environment that limits the success of project management. The government’s ambivalence is imbued directly into the program, as evidenced by the program guidance “Unlike the Federal Acquisition in Contracting (FAC-C) program, which prescribes a specific curriculum, the FAC-P/PM describes core, minimum competencies that are considered essential for successful program and project management.”

Finding 3: Lack of Clear Program Metrics

FAC-P/PM has nearly no discernable measures of success. Unlike many federal programs, FAC-P/PM lacks a dashboard to quickly understand the health of the program. There is no clear source of data for reporting the effectiveness or basic results of FAC-P/PM (# of certifications by person, agency, mission, etc.) The current system used to capture certification information does not appear to capture dashboard ready measures. Unless quantifiable metrics exist, it is impossible to fully know where the program is, develop continuous improvement plans, or achieve increased benefits or returns.

How many FAC-P/PM certifications should occur this year? How many training hours will be engaged in pursuit of certification? If the results of these types of questions were available, a clearer picture of the program status would be discernable and relevant. The lack of program level data or a centralized repository of FAC-P/PM certified personnel by industry diminishes the program’s value to potential adoptees.

Finding 4: Program Awareness

Awareness of FAC-P/PM is limited both across the Federal government, within individual agencies, and even among program and project managers. FAC-P/PM does not have an active community to drive knowledge sharing. There are no conferences, regular meetings, or widespread cross-agency platforms for sharing²³. There appears to be limited FAC-P/PM outreach and communication both internal and external to the program. Even project managers within the identified agency groups are not aware of the FAC-P/PM requirements. Anecdotally, many of the interview targets were marginally aware of the program itself, even if their bosses or co-workers knew of the program. Even within agencies, FAC-P/PM appears to be under communicated. This is highlighted when the research identified multiple instances of FAC-P/PM programs appear to be occurring within the same agency, often without the knowledge of the staff involved, with different success criteria if it exists at all.

Finding 5: Implementation Guidance

There is no common reference guide for implementing FAC-P/PM. Every agency we met with had struggled with developing an individual, custom program born out of their understanding of the requirements. The FAC-P/PM program delegates the ‘program how to’ implementation process to each agency. There is merit in this approach as it does allow each agency to implement a tailored specific program within its unique environment. Unfortunately, this ‘hands’ off approach provides a significant agency level challenge on how to implement the program and what does a successful implementation look like.

Additionally, a baseline of best practices has not been clearly established or routinely shared across agencies. This leaves each agency to their own devices to figure out what ‘may’ work for them. This approach increases the overall program cost as each agency must learn on their own versus using value creating knowledge.

There is little agency guidance on the ‘how to’ as well as to what a successful implementation effort looks like. With no clear program level guidance each agency is then faced with trying to determine;

- (1) What are the measures of success?
- (2) How does an agency know that it is successful? and
- (3) What does a competent workforce look like?

²³ Some attempts with limited impact have been made to work across agency boundaries. A Project Management Working Group under the Chief Acquisition Officers Council existed for a period of time; an informal gathering led by the US Department of Treasury of FAC-P/PM officers from several Agencies existed for a period of time, and a Federal Advisory Board with participation from a few agencies has recently been formed.

At best, the research identifies that the only program measure is that names are being added to the Exhibit 300. This lack of guidance is hindering the program advancement and acceptance.

Finding 6: Impact of the Program

While the program has evolved, the real vision of FAC-P/PM is not readily apparent. With three years of FAC-P/PM experience to guide OMB and FAI, the longer-term vision of FAC-P/PM should be revisited and restated to ensure that it is relevant. Impact of FAC-P/PM on the performance of project managers is uncertain. Impact of FAC-P/PM on project outcomes and success is unclear. However, agencies that strive to establish and maintain project management as a core competency tend to utilize FAC-P/PM as a means to improve their staff.

As with industry project management certifications, a perception exists that FAC-P/PM certification will increasingly be required for assignments, and that it will contribute toward career advancement. The impact of FAC-P/PM on the management and outcome of projects and programs has not been measured; it is likely too early to tell. Some research interviews indicated that a correlation exists between the implementation of FAC-P/PM and improved project outcomes and is suggestive of the value of FAC-P/PM. Efforts to develop success criteria for FAC-P/PM, and activities to correlate project and program success with FAC-P/PM certification are yet to be undertaken by the agencies.

Recommendations

The intent of these recommendations is to provide a results-oriented, competency-based program to support achievement of an agency's mission through sound acquisition program and project management.

Federal Working Group Program and Project Manager
Certification Recommendations
January 17, 2007

The following program recommendations were developed throughout the process, and validated through multiple review sessions. The recommendations are divided into two parts:

- **Recommendations to OMB and FAI.** These recommendations are focused on the findings related to the leadership, management, and support of the overall FAC-P/PM program.
- **Recommendations to Federal Agencies.** These recommendations are focused on the findings for agencies in the implementation of the FAC-P/PM program.

It should be noted that FAI and many agencies are taking real steps to implement FAC-P/PM. The recommendations below are in no way intended to detract from these real efforts, but rather support the continued development of program and project manager competency.

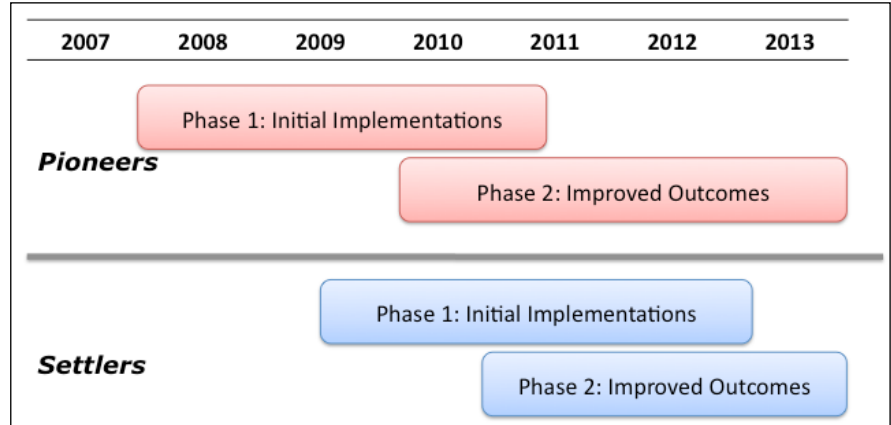
For The Office of Management and Budget and Federal Acquisition Institute

Recommendation 1: Maintain and Evolve the FAC-P/PM Program

The promise of a competent project and program workforce must be realized across the Federal government to ensure that projects and programs achieve the value and return on investment that must be undertaken. In our research, we found no other federal or private sector program with the same or similar purpose as the FAC-P/PM program. The Federal government leverages a large portion of its annual spending on programs and projects. Consider that the 2010 Federal IT budget is \$82.6 Billion, or the 2010 defense spending is over \$693 Billion²⁴. These figures do not account for the plethora of new high-way projects, homeland security, construction projects, health and human service programmatic efforts, and more. Large portions of these budgets are devoted to the development and implementation of new systems, products, and services. With many billions riding on the success of a project framework, the FAC-P/PM program simply must endure.

FAC-P/PM leadership at the program and agency level have an opportunity to reevaluate the challenges and opportunities that this program offers to the federal environment. All agencies are required to follow the OMB directive regarding FAC-P/PM Senior resources assigned to major resources. The leadership agenda for FAC-P/PM should focus

on driving a culture of performance and competence, in addition to adherence to the certification requirements. The early adopting agencies, pioneers, have a different set of needs than those agencies that just lately coming to understanding the full implications of FAC-P/PM.



Pioneers, having spent considerable energy early on creating the program, must now turn their focus to making real advances in performance improvement and competency. The late adopting agencies, settlers, are still mired in the mechanics of the program.

Project management is an emerging field across civilian agencies, and as in any emerging market, there are leaders and followers. To be effective, the FAC-P/PM program should consider specific ways to improve the measurement and consistency of implementations across federal agencies. The remaining programmatic recommendations address key areas for improvement.

Recommendation 2: Measure the Results

Our research revealed little measurement of the basic parameters or effectiveness of the FAC-P/PM program as a whole. The program design is deliberately distributed such that agencies retain the authority and responsibility for their individual results. Yet, if the original objective of the FAC-P/PM program was to “align a base of essential competencies across the federal government’s acquisition workforce,”²⁵ then the program should strive to measure the results associated with project and program performance. To achieve the vision and promise of a competent workforce, the FAC-P/PM program requires an integrated approach for measuring, monitoring and managing the results of the program. Our research revealed little or no evidence of:

1. **Program results reporting** – Those measures that indicate the scale and scope of FAC-P/PM adoptions by agencies.
2. **Outcome-based reporting** – Those measures that indicate the FAC-P/PM is improving the performance of actual projects/programs.

An integrated set of key performance indicators (KPI’s) would provide year-over-year results addressing the health of the program. As shown below, an integrated set of KPI’s will create a complete picture of the health of project management across the federal government. An integrated approach should involve multiple levels of the federal enterprise, including:

- **OMB** – to collect and aggregate information about the health of projects and large acquisitions.
- **FAI** – to collect and aggregate program specific information.
- **Agencies** – To collect agency specific data related to FAC-P/PM.

Suggested KPI's

The following table presents suggested key performance indicators at all three levels.

Level	Suggested KPI
Federal Government	# of major projects and programs on GAO Watch List
Federal Government	# of EXHIBIT 300 submissions with >10% variance from baseline
Federal Government	# of projects and programs cancelled or suspended due to under performance
FAC-P/PM Program	# of FAC-P/PM certifications by level, agency, industry
FAC-P/PM Program	# of agencies with partial and full FAC-P/PM implementations
FAC-P/PM Program	# of projects and programs supported by FAC-P/PM certified individuals
Agency	# of FAC-P/PM certifications by person, level, agency, industry for medium and small projects
Agency	# of training contact hours for FAC-P/PM certifications by person, level, agency, industry
Agency	% of projects (or invested funds) within agency led by FAC-P/PM certified individuals versus all projects and programs
Agency	% of projects on time, on budget and on scope led by FAC-P/PM certified individuals

FAC-P/PM requires a focused set of key performance indicators that address the fundamental questions was intended to Even the most basic performance metrics are hard to come by, for example, how many federal employees are FAC-P/PM certified. Many agencies maintain their own lists of who is and is not certified at the three levels.

Recommendation 3: Provide Implementation Guidance

Our research revealed very little implementation guidance on the FAC-P/PM program. While the program design suggested that FAI would develop implementation guidance for agencies, we found no evidence of official documentation to this effect. FAI does provide a host of resources via its website on coursework and the structure of the program. This information, while quite useful, does not provide guidance on how to create and mature a competent project and program workforce.

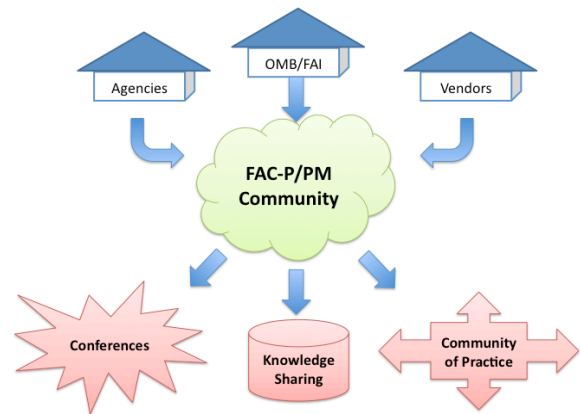
Implementation guidance is needed by agencies. Many agencies struggle with implementing the basic processes and methods of project management, let alone building a competency development program. For an agency to be successful in FAC-P/PM, there must be a solid project management foundation from which to build.

It is recommended that FAI develop an Implementation Guide for agencies. The guide should describe best practices, additional resources, core ideas and concepts behind FAC-P/PM, and any requirements. The guidance should also describe the specific steps required to implement FAC-P/PM and key alternative that can be tailored by each agency. A gap analysis tool could be developed to help agencies quickly identify areas of weakness and more. The implementation roadmap should be periodically updated to satisfy the needs of the community of practice.

Recommendation 4: Develop the FAC-P/PM Community

Our research revealed that there is little or no FAC-P/PM community of practice within the federal government. Individual agencies perform various activities in the context of training, however there is limited opportunity for FAC-P/PM practitioners and administrators to meet, share practices, and improve the program. OMB hosts occasional forums designed to evaluate the program and define new parameters, but these events are usually focused on specific purposes.

It is recommended that FAI invest in creating a community of practice focused on improving FAC-P/PM competency, sharing information across agencies on the design and implementation of FAC-P/PM. Establishing a FAC-P/PM community will enable FAI to host events, quickly disseminate new programs and provide a forum for information and knowledge sharing. As the graphic shows, the community might entail three distinct components:



1. **Periodic Conferences.** A periodic event enables the professional ranks of the federal workforce to network across organizational boundaries, and also enables specific topics to be discussed.
2. **Knowledge Sharing.** A database of best practices, implementation plans, training materials, and assorted other information would be of tremendous help to the majority of the FAC-P/PM certificate holders and associated agencies.
3. **Community of Practice.** The Community of Practice, or COP, would provide regular meetings of interagency working groups designed to share information on a more regular basis.

Recommendation 5: Develop Vendor Workforce Certification

There is currently no Vendor certification for federal project management

The federal government relies heavily upon the private sector in the completion of major acquisitions. The most popular certification for project management in the United States is the PMI Project Management Professional; the International Project Management Association also offers a widely recognized certification. Some corporations maintain internal programs for project management knowledge and competency development, but there is no standard across the private sector, especially as it regards to project and program management. Therefore, it is recommended that FAI provide a mechanism for contractors who support government projects and programs to obtain the FAC-P/PM program competencies. The federal government would benefit through being able to ensure that private sector project managers on large-scale projects are certified as competent.

Certifying private sector program managers involves a different set of processes than are currently found within FAI. For example, the focus on the FAC-P/PM program today is on acquisition, whereas the commercial equivalent would focus primarily on the delivery of those acquired goods and services. To assist, the FAC-P/PM program already provides a large portion of the content related to good program and project management.

Recommendation 6: Align Project Management With Industry

Our final recommendation for OMB is perhaps the most sweeping. It is recommended that OMB rethink their approach to project management and acquisitions. If project management is going to evolve within the federal government, it cannot remain strictly chained to the acquisition function. If implemented, this recommendation would be nothing less than a seismic shift in how the federal government approaches projects and acquisitions. It would involve regulatory re-trenching, to some degree. The benefits of elevating project management into its own function would be tremendous.

Specifically, the federal government should:

- Develop formal guidance in the form of a federal project management methodology. The methodology should incorporate key concepts associated with project management such as baseline management, earned value, schedule development, and more. Concepts inherent to modern project management, like portfolio management, governance, and programs, could be strengthened and aligned into a larger framework for effective project management.
- Align project management with core functions. Other, ancillary life-cycles like acquisition, business analysis, systems development, and

business process reengineering should be treated as separate lifecycles that align with project management lifecycle.

- Create a formal project manager title series across the federal government. The title series should align with FAC-P/PM qualifications.
- Provide real incentives for FAC-P/PM certification, including pay raises and recognition. As in industry, the federal government should develop real incentives for employees who pursue certification and career advancement.

While all federal agencies have some experience with project management, a number of agencies have not adopted project management across the organization. FAC-P/PM must have a foundation of the project management discipline in order to flourish. Lacking the tenets of project management, FAC-P/PM becomes an isolated curriculum that has no real relevance in the organization.

To be effective, FAC-P/PM should be combined with other essential components of PM in an Enterprise Project Management (EPM) framework. Consider the graphic below, where EPM is simply defined as an organization wide capability in the discipline of project management. In this context, agencies should consider adopting some or all of the practices endemic to project management.

Agencies should leverage FAC-P/PM to improve their overall project management practices.

1. **Delivery.** At the heart of project management is a commitment to getting work completed on time, on budget, and within scope. At the enterprise level, organizations must consider issues of coordination and consistency in delivery.
2. **Methodologies.** Project and program methodologies can assist in the coordinated, consistent delivery of services. Methodologies should be as much “what to” as “how to.” Similar to the DOD 5000 series regulations on performance acquisitions, the methodology should provide a common language and common lifecycle. Intelligence agencies are seeing value in having adopted a formal lifecycle.
3. **Project Management Office (PMO).** As organizations advance their project management capabilities, they also focus on creating a PMO to consolidate the knowledge, tools, and resources associated with project management.
4. **Portfolio Management.** At the enterprise level, agency leadership can adopt the tools and practices inherent in the Project Portfolio discipline to improve their investment strategies. Where Delivery is concerned with getting the work done right, Portfolio Management is concerned with getting the right work done.
5. **Tools.** As federal agencies move up the project management, many organizations invest in scheduling, resource management and portfolio management tool sets.
6. **Governance.** Governance is less of a project management process and more of an executive decision making process that project portfolio managers utilize to ensure that project investments continue to generate value.



Whether or not an agency adopts an EPM strategy, or simply pieces of it, FAC-P/PM will be better of if the organization is armed with solid project and program management practices.

For Federal Agencies

Recommendation 7: Focus on Competency, Not Just Training

Anecdotally, many agencies tended to view the FAC-P/PM program as more of an exercise in training than as a process for improving project and program manager competency. To realize the full promise that FAC-P/PM is designed to deliver, FAC-P/PM project teams must approach FAC-P/PM as a competency development framework.

Consider the following model below right. This model depicts competency as a mix of skills, knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes/beliefs. Once these four factors have been sufficiently influenced within an individual, the results will truly become known: a competent program/project manager.



Competency resides within the center of the model. Within this area, the individual can be expected to perform with a facile and adaptive approach that is based upon past experience and efficient execution. Individuals tend to be stronger in one quadrant or another, and no one can expect to attain the highest level of competency across all of the quadrants. For example, some project managers may truly understand the concepts and classic knowledge areas that drive project management, while another individual may operate more from their personal experience, behaviors, or skills areas.

To be successful, agency leadership needs to recognize that FAC-P/PM is competency based and can be satisfied by a variety of methods, per the program design. Agencies should seek to incorporate a variety of learning methods designed to mentoring and experiential components into the program, not just training. Agencies that approach FAC-P/PM as primarily a training initiative will not realize the full potential of the program.

Recommendation 8: Improve Outreach

The FAC-P/PM program is not well publicized within and across agencies. Pockets of expertise exist across the agency; however the communication channels around these practices are limited. On more than one occasion, our research indicated that the FAC-P/PM program

had not been adequately communicated across the full agency. Increase the communication and awareness of FAC-P/PM across the agency leadership population.

It is recommended that agencies consider the use of channels associated with the CIO, CAO, CIO and CHRO to penetrate deeper into those organizations. What should be communicated about FAC-P/PM? The program communicués need to address key issues like:

- Basic facts about the curriculum.
- Benefits of the program.
- What the program means to acquisition and project managers.
- Portability of the certification.
- FAC-P/PM and the career path
- Best practices.

**Best Practice:
Executive Support**

Senior executives should invest in understanding the basic concepts of FAC and PM. They should also understand the full cost of the implementation.

One option that some agencies have implemented involves using the Project Management Office as a central conduit that can facilitate the dissemination of information.

Recommendation 9: Improve Level 1 and 2 Adoption

Many agencies today have focused almost exclusively on Level 3, the Senior level, FAC-P/PM certifications. The reason for this is simple – it satisfies the OMB requirements on the Exhibit 300. Level 3 drives accountability across agencies for major projects and programs. The focus is often on getting level 3 resources into place at the expense of level 1 and 2.

While this strategy is useful early in the program to meet the letter of the regulation, agencies must also plan to invest in Entry and Mid-Level certifications to ensure that a steady supply of FAC-P/PM certified staff is available in the years ahead. Agencies should consider developing incentives for employees to obtain certification at the Entry and Mid-Level points. Incentives could include assignment to important projects, mentor roles, promotions, spot awards, and more. Level 1 and 2 project and program managers may not be readily identifiable.

Recommendation 10: Utilize a Framework for Implementation

In each agency, FAC-P/PM requires a project framework for an effective implementation. Based upon our research, many agencies implemented a standard project framework to move through the phases of developing FAC-P/PM. Agencies and directorates within agencies vary greatly in their project management maturity. Advancing FAC-P/PM within a mature project environment is no small feat, but making progress on FAC-P/PM in an immature project management environment can be painfully slow and difficult. Chief concerns in advancing FAC-P/PM include executive adoption.



It is recommended that agencies leverage a project lifecycle to implement the FAC-P/PM program. The lifecycle should define key stages, as shown below.

1. **Discover.** The agency must first understand what the program options exist, and how other agencies and have implemented FAC-P/PM. Discovery should also look internally at what project/program expertise exists, as well as at what training resources are available. Finally, the agency should seek to uncover the population of project and program managers within the agency. This can be tricky because the role of project or program manager is of-

ten informal.

2. **Design.** Armed with the information uncovered during Discovery, the agency FAC-P/PM team should begin to design the program. A roadmap should be constructed that depicts the program in its entirety against the agency in its entirety. Here, the agency should be seeking to leverage relevant training content and agency processes uncovered in the Discovery phase. Design should not be confused with Development, however the two phases may overlap. For example, the agency may choose to invest in the Senior certification first, as it represents the most immediate need. The agency could implement the Senior content to ensure compliance with OMB policy, while still designing the Mid-Level and Entry Level program content. Design should include key performance indicators to ensure that investment in competency can be tracked. See Recommendation 2.

3. **Develop.** During the Develop phase, the agency FAC-P/PM team should create the core materials that will become the program. Development efforts should incorporate existing materials as much as possible, but should not rely on these materials if they are not clearly aligned with the curriculum. Course modifications should be made to existing training content to ensure it is adapted for FAC-P/PM. Development should result in a validated list of candidates across the organization, by level.

**Best Practice:
Use Existing Materials**

Many agencies in the research are in the process of using extant training materials. Agencies can tailor existing training and certification programs to be FAC-P/PM compliant.

4. **Deploy.** Deploying FAC-P/PM within an agency should incorporate an organizing principle to ensure that all individuals receive the right curriculum. Examples of organizing principles include:
 - By FAC-P/PM level
 - By prioritized projects (major investments first)
 - By organizational unit

Best Practice: Run the FAC-P/PM Implementation Like A Project

Conduct FAC-P/PM implementations like a project that includes executive sponsorship, qualified project manager, and established project management practices.

As FAC-P/PM is deployed, the FAC-P/PM team will need to address such concerns as how to implement across field offices and how to integrate into a learning management system. FAC-P/PM adoption should result in increased competency, so the agency must take steps to ensure that the program is making a difference on programs and projects.

5. **Sustain.** Once the initial installation of the program is complete, the agency must take steps to ensure that the program does not fall into disrepair. Some of these steps can include:
 - Measuring the results.
 - Integrating FAC-P/PM across divisions within the agency.
 - Improve the project management and program management methodologies.
 - Improving the mentoring capabilities of the organization.

By leveraging a formal project lifecycle for FAC-P/PM, the agency will demonstrate an organized, coherent investment approach to FAC-P/PM.

Case Study:

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) – IT Department



The FBI IT department has embraced adoption of FAC-P/PM. By starting implementation of a formal project management methodology in 2005 they went through many of the implementation hurdles before FAC-P/PM was put into practice. Today, the FBI could be an example for many other agencies to follow, as they implement and work to gain benefit from the FAC-P/PM program.

The FBI IT department has a career progression and mentoring programs in place for project and program managers that brings project management newcomers in the office up to speed quickly. The FBI has recognized that customer involvement in the project is key to the success of a project. Customers participate in the decision process on acquisitions. The agency uses a stage gate process for management of projects.

In the initial implementation of the FAC-P/PM the FBI looked at the tools, training, and certification programs that already existed within the agency. The following are some insights that emerged from our analysis of the FBI in the implementation of the FAC-P/PM.

- The FBI's project management direction and offerings satisfied the needs addressed in initial establishment of the FAC-P/PM program. With the FBI having started early with a focus in project management there was a natural connection with what was required.
- The training programs that the FBI uses are also supported under the FAC-P/PM. Many of the early 3rd party courses were recommended to FAI from the FBI.
- Training is further complimented with formal rotational assignments, team leadership activities, formal education, supporting professional certifications, conference attendance, mentoring, and special project team leader/member opportunities.
- There was new learning as a result of the implementation, specifically in the area of acquisition.

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About the American Society for the Advancement of Project Management

Founded in the USA in 2001 by a handful of the PM practitioners who for over 30 years have helped make project management the World standard for effective enterprise and societal change, *asapm*®, the American Society for the Advancement of Project Management, is the USA Member Association of IPMA. A member-driven, volunteer-staffed not-for-profit organization, *asapm*'s differentiator is its emphasis upon “Demonstrating the PM Performance Competence Difference.”

An example of this *PM Performance Competence Difference* differentiator is **aPRO**, the *asapm* Performance Rated Organization standard, an assessment and certification of the extent to which organizations support competent and performing project and program management. As well, *asapm* offers a multi-role PM Competence Model, that helps establish the best use of learning and development funds, by assessing all project stakeholders, and supporting the development of learning and coaching action plans for the greatest performance improvement needs.

asapm leads the USA's advancement in PM Performance with a PM Certification program that applies the IPMA 4-Level-Certification approach. This approach offers the USA's full suite of professionally-assessed, role-based certifications of Performance Competence of Senior Program Managers, Program Managers, Senior Project Managers, and Project Managers. *asapm*'s website is rich with popular blog postings, and with insightful articles about competitive practices from thought and practice leaders in Program and Project Management. See more about *asapm* at www.asapm.org.

About IPMA: Founded in 1967 and registered in Switzerland, the International Project Management Association (IPMA) is the World's first project management professional organization, founded and contributing to the practice before any others. IPMA is an international federation of more than 50 national PM societies in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. Most people don't know that IPMA's first name was INTERNET, some 30 years before the name was used for the tool of rapid communication. See more about IPMA at www.ipma.ch. IPMA was also the first to establish competence-based, professionally assessed certifications in project and program management.

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