

**More Federal Project Management Attention**  
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**Introduction**

The trend of giving increased attention to project management within the U.S. civilian federal government is continuing to intensify. Recent action by Congress and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has the potential for significant benefit for project management and project managers. This benefit will include increasing the number of employees involved with project and program management, providing the employees with additional opportunities for training and certification, providing more opportunities to perform project and program management, and providing more funding. The following provides a summary of the recent history in this area.

**Looking Back**

Looking back a few years, we can see the official expansion of the field of acquisition to officially include project and program management; and we can see the establishment of a certification program just for U.S. federal civilian project and program managers. Evidence of this trend can be seen in the Services Acquisition Reform Act of 2003 (SARA, P.L. 108-136); when, for the first time, the definition of the term acquisition was expanded to include “program and project managers.” This significant expansion meant that civilian federal government program and project managers would now be subject to and benefit from actions taken to mature the acquisition workforce. As a consequence, OMB’s Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) issued Letter 05-01 dated April 15, 2005 authorizing the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) to form a cross-functional working group and develop recommendations for the “establishment of certification programs for program and project managers...” These actions resulted in the creation of The Federal Acquisition Certification in Program and Project Management (FAC-P/PM); now civilian federal government project and program managers have a certification and set of competencies specifically tailored to the unique aspects of their jobs.

**Lately**

Lately, 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. 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.

## **Conclusion**

A key to success in growing a more competent project management workforce within industry, as can be seen by examining the annual double-digit growth in membership during the past decade of the Project Management Institute, is constant attention and support of the profession. Trends unfolding within the U.S. federal civilian government suggest a similarly successful progression.