



**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503**

**OFFICE OF FEDERAL
PROCUREMENT POLICY**

November 26, 2007

MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF ACQUISITION OFFICERS

FROM:

Paul A. Denett
Administrator

Handwritten signature of Paul A. Denett in black ink.

SUBJECT:

The Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer
Technical Representatives

Contracting Officer Technical Representatives (COTRs) perform critical acquisition and technical functions, and Contracting Officers rely on them to ensure that contracts are managed properly to meet mission needs. This memorandum establishes a structured training program for COTRs and other individuals performing these functions, including Contracting Officer Representatives (CORs), that standardizes competencies and training across civilian agencies and improves our collective stewardship of taxpayer dollars. The attached Federal Acquisition Certification for COTRs (FAC-COTR) reflects recommendations from an interagency working group led by the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) and applies to all executive agencies, except those subject to the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act.

All COTRs appointed to a contract after the effective date of this policy must be certified no later than six months from their date of appointment and must maintain their skills currency through continuous learning. COTRs who hold delegation letters on active contracts as of the effective date of this policy have generally taken agency-required training. To recognize this earlier training, current COTRs must review their training in accordance with agency policy, ensure that all essential competencies articulated in the attached have been obtained, and be certified no later than 12 months from the effective date of this policy. Any training required to obtain needed competencies can count toward the continuous learning requirement for current COTRs.

The Chief Acquisition Officer of each agency is responsible for the policies and programs necessary to implement this certification program. Upon agency request, FAI will review existing agency programs against the FAC-COTR requirements to facilitate implementation. FAI, the Defense Acquisition University, private vendors, and other government agencies offer a variety of online and classroom courses that address these competencies.

If you have questions regarding the implementation of the program, please call Lesley Field on the OFPP staff at (202) 395-7579, or Karen Pica, Director of the Federal Acquisition Institute, at (703) 805-2333.

Attachment

cc: Chief Information Officers
Chief Human Capital Officers
Senior Procurement Executives

Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer Technical Representatives (FAC-COTR)

1. Purpose. The purpose of the Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer Technical Representatives (FAC-COTR) is to establish general training requirements for COTRs in civilian agencies. This certification program will promote development of essential, standard acquisition competencies across civilian agencies for COTRs. Under this program, COTRs are required to achieve certain competencies for certification and maintain their certification through continuous learning opportunities.

2. Authority. Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) Policy Letter 05-01 established a requirement for federal acquisition certification programs. The FAC-COTR is issued pursuant to 41 U.S.C. 403, et seq and OFPP Policy Letter 05-01, paragraph 9.

3. Background. The quality and effectiveness of the federal acquisition process depend on the development of a capable and competent workforce. The Services Acquisition Reform Act of 2003, P.L. 108-136, expanded the definition of acquisition to include functions performed by COTRs, such as managing and measuring contract performance and providing technical direction. COTRs and Contracting Officer Representatives (CORs) are terms given to individuals who are authorized in writing by the Contracting Officer (CO) to perform prescribed administrative and/or technical functions. For the purposes of this policy, the term COTR includes CORs and other individuals performing these functions.

OFPP Policy Letter 05-01 built upon this broader definition of acquisition workforce and required the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) to develop and the Chief Acquisition Officers Council (CAOC) to approve better standards for training and managing COTRs. An interagency working group chartered to develop the program and project management certification also recommended a separate certification for COTRs.

FAI published a report in 2003 on the competencies necessary for the COTR job function and the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board published a report in 2005 entitled “Contracting Officer Representatives: Managing the Government’s Technical Experts to Achieve Positive Contract Outcomes.” Both reports can be found on www.fai.gov. A common theme in these reports is the need to organize and support the COTR community to ensure that acquisition management is implemented effectively. Examples of their findings and recommendations are as follows:

- COTRs should be formally delegated authority to work on particular contracts
- COTRs should receive adequate training in contracting, their technical area, and general competencies at the right time and in the right way
- the COTR workforce should be strategically managed by identifying COTRs and tracking competencies and skills currency

4. Applicability. The FAC-COTR program applies to all executive agencies, except those subject to the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA, 10 U.S.C. §§ 1741-46). The certification shall be accepted by, at a minimum, all civilian agencies as evidence that an employee meets core training requirements to perform COTR functions, though authorization to perform COTR functions must be in accordance with agency policy.

All COTRs appointed to a contract after the effective date of this policy must be certified no later than six months from their date of appointment and must maintain their skills currency through continuous learning. COTRs who hold delegation letters on active contracts as of the effective date of this policy have generally taken agency-required training. To recognize this earlier training, current COTRs must review their training in accordance with agency policy, ensure that all essential competencies have been obtained, and be certified no later than 12 months from the effective date of this policy. Any training required to obtain needed competencies can count toward the continuous learning requirement for current COTRs.

The Chief Acquisition Officer (CAO) may waive, for a period not to exceed 12 months, all or part of the FAC-COTR requirements in writing, on a case-by-case basis, if granting the waiver is in the best interest of the agency. This authority shall be used only when necessary, the written justification shall include reasons for and conditions of the waiver, and the agency's Acquisition Career Manager (ACM) must maintain all supporting documentation to confirm information entered into the Acquisition Career Management Information System (ACMIS – see paragraph 7) and for program quality assurance.

5. Certification Program Oversight and Administration. The FAI Board of Directors, in consultation with FAI, the Interagency Acquisition Career Management Council (IACMC), the CAOC, and other organizations as appropriate, shall provide general program oversight and shall recommend program changes to the Administrator for Federal Procurement Policy to ensure the program reflects the needs of all civilian agencies. Changes to the program may be communicated formally through the CAOC or through other means depending on the significance of the change. FAI shall periodically revalidate the competencies and will maintain the most current version of the FAC-COTR on www.fai.gov. FAI will also maintain on its Web site a map of the COTR competencies and training to facilitate implementation.

FAI will administer the program through issuance of guidance and information dissemination, principally through its Web site. Upon agency request, FAI will review existing agency programs against the requirements contained in this document to correlate agency training and/or certification program with this policy.

The CAO, in consultation with other appropriate agency officials, is responsible for developing workforce policies that apply the FAC-COTR requirements, as necessary, to ensure agency COTRs have essential competencies. The certification process, including the assessment of applications, will be managed by each agency. Authority for overseeing the agency's FAC-COTR program, resolving disputes, and granting certifications will be at the CAO or designee level. The CAO may delegate, in writing, certain functional responsibilities as needed to ensure effective and efficient management

of this program within an agency. The agency ACM appointed by the CAO under OFPP Policy Letter 05-01, or designee, is responsible for administering the agency certification program, in accordance with this guidance and any subsequent guidance provided by OFPP or FAI.

6. Certification for Contracting Officer Technical Representatives (COTRs). The FAC-COTR will consist of competency-based core training and assignment specific training to achieve certification, and ongoing continuous learning to maintain certification. Obtaining the FAC-COTR does not mean that an individual will be assigned as a COTR; the agency shall make this determination in accordance with agency need.

Competencies for COTRs: The skills and competencies outlined in the table below are based on the COTR competencies report published by FAI in 2003 and are the core competencies on which the certification is built.

COTR Key Competencies	
Professional Business Competencies	Technical Competencies
Oral Communication	* Understanding COTR duties, responsibilities, and obligations
Decision-Making	Effective Communication of Contract Requirements
Teamwork	Effective Performance Management
Problem Solving	Strategic Planning
Attention to Detail	Detailed Evaluation Skills
Reasoning	Defining Business Relationships
Flexibility	Understanding the Marketplace
Interpersonal Skills	Effective Communication
Self-Mgmt./Initiative	Defining Government Requirements in Commercial/Non -Commercial Terms
Integrity/Honesty	Effective Negotiation Skills and Effective Analytical Skills
Planning and Evaluating	
Influencing/Negotiating	
Writing	
Project Management	

* These duties are articulated in FAI’s 2003 report. COTRs are reminded that their duties, responsibilities, and obligations are limited to those articulated in their delegation letters and must be exercised in accordance with agency policies.

Training: COTRs must have a minimum of 40 hours of training and must maintain their skills currency through continuous learning. The training can be obtained through FAI, the Defense Acquisition University, commercially-available sources, colleges or universities, or agency-specific courses. Twenty-two of the required 40 hours of training hours must cover the essential COTR competencies listed above. A suggested training curriculum includes the following courses. Agencies considering substituting other training for these courses must ensure that the curriculum covers all essential competencies.

CLC106 – COR with a Mission Focus (8 CLPs)
CLM024 – Contracting Overview (8 CLPs)
CLC004 – Market Research (3 CLPs)
CLC007 – Contract Source Selection (1 CLP)
CLM003 – Ethics Training for Acquisition Technology and Logistics (2 CLPs) or similar

Both the title and course number are provided for reference. These courses can be accessed by registering at www.fai.gov. Individuals who have completed FAI’s 24-hour “COR Mentor” course have satisfied this requirement.

The remaining 18 hours of the required 40 hours of training should include agency-specific courses, electives, and/or those identified by the COTR’s supervisor, in consultation with the Contracting Officer, as necessary, for managing a particular contract. The supervisor should assess the COTR’s previous experience as it relates to the type of contract the COTR will be managing to determine if additional training is needed. Examples could include additional training on services, performance-based acquisition, earned value management, time and materials contracts, green purchasing, socioeconomic issues, etc. Additional classroom and online training is available on the FAI Web site. Supplemental references and resources to further develop COTR skill sets can be found through the COTR online community of practice on the acquisition community connection (acc.dau.mil/cor) and also available through www.fai.gov or www.dau.mil.

Individuals certified as Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) Level I or Federal Acquisition Certification for Program and Project Managers (FAC-P/PM) Mid-Level/Journeyman are considered to have met the FAC-COTR requirements, but must still submit the necessary documents to their ACMs and obtain certification. However, an individual with a FAC-COTR does not necessarily meet the requirements for the FAC-C level I or the FAC-P/PM mid-level/journeyman.

Continuous Learning: To maintain a FAC-COTR, COTRs are required to earn 40 continuous learning points (CLPs) of skills currency training every two years beginning the first fiscal year following the effective date of this memorandum. ACMs, or designees, shall monitor the continuous learning requirements for employees holding FAC-COTRs to ensure they meet this requirement. Additional guidance on determining continuous learning points is included in Appendix A and learning is available on the FAI Web site. It is the individual’s responsibility to ensure the continuous learning requirements are met.

A FAC-COTR will expire if the 40 CLPs are not earned every two years, and the CAO, or other appropriate agency authority, shall recommend that the COTR’s delegation letters be revoked or modified if this condition is not met. The COTR must be notified in writing in a timely manner of any changes to his or her delegations of authority, and the contractor should be notified as appropriate.

Experience: There is no federal standard for experience and each agency is encouraged to nominate only those individuals with adequate technical and management experience to accommodate the complexity or visibility of the contract.

7. Acquisition Career Management Information System (ACMIS). ACMIS is the central acquisition workforce information system for all civilian agencies and will support the FAC-COTR program. Agencies and individuals are responsible for maintaining certification documentation for quality assurance purposes. FAI is responsible for managing ACMIS and will issue guidance, as necessary, to support ACMIS implementation. More information can be found at www.fai.gov.

In accordance with OFPP Policy Letter 05-01, COTRs must enter their training data into ACMIS. COTRs must update their existing ACMIS records in a timely manner and keep these records current to reflect their certification status and continuous learning points. OFPP, FAI, and agencies use ACMIS information to make strategic acquisition workforce decisions and agencies and individuals must ensure that this information is accurate.

Appendix A. Guidance on Meeting the Requirements for Continuous Learning Points (CLP)

These guidelines reflect best-in-practice recommendations for continuous learning. Agencies retain flexibility and supervisors remain responsible for working with COTRs to identify those activities and opportunities of greatest benefit to the professional development of an individual. The training, professional activities, education and experience that are used to meet the CLP requirements must be job related.

A. Training

- 1) Completing awareness training. Periodically agencies conduct briefing sessions to acquaint the workforce with new or changed policy. Generally, no testing or assessment of knowledge gained is required.
- 2) Completing learning modules and training courses. These may be formal or informal offerings from a recognized training organization, including in-house training courses/sessions, which include some form of testing/assessment for knowledge gained.
- 3) Performing Self-Directed Study. An individual can keep current or enhance his or her capabilities through a self-directed study program agreed to by the supervisor.
- 4) Teaching. Employees are encouraged to share their knowledge and insights with others through teaching of courses or learning modules.
- 5) Mentoring. Helping others to learn and become more productive workers or managers benefits the agency and the individuals involved.

B. Professional Activities

- 1) Participating in Organization Management. Membership alone in a professional organization will not be considered as fulfilling continuous learning requirements, but participation in the organization leadership will. This includes holding elected/appointed positions, committee leadership roles, or running an activity for an organization that one is permitted to join under current ethics law and regulation. The employee and supervisor must first ensure that participating in the management of an organization is allowed by the agency.
- 2) Attending/Speaking/Presenting at Professional Seminars/Symposia/Conferences. Employees can receive points for attending professional seminars or conferences that are job related. However, the supervisor needs to determine that the individual learned something meaningful from the experience. Because significant effort is involved in preparing and delivering presentations, credit should be given for each hour invested in the preparation and presentation.
- 3) Publishing. Writing articles related to acquisition for publication generally meets the criteria for continuous learning. Points will be awarded only in the year published. Compliance with agency publication policy is required.

4) Participating in Workshops. Points should be awarded for workshops with planned learning outcomes.

C. Education

1) Formal training. Supervisors should use Continuing Education Units (CEUs) as a guide for assigning points for formal training programs that award CEUs. The CEUs can be converted to points at 10 CLP points per CEU.

2) Formal academic programs. For formal academic programs offered by educational institutions, each semester hour is equal to one CEU. A three-hour credit course would be worth three CEUs and 30 CLP points, assuming that it is applicable to the acquisition function.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES	RECOMMENDED NUMBER OF HOURS *
Active Association Membership (in relevant subject area such as program/project management, acquisition management, or appropriate technical area)	5 hours for an active membership year OR 1 hour for each 60 minutes of activity attended during the year
Publication of related management or technical papers, etc.	20 hours for articles 25 for technical paper
Formal rotational assignments	40 hours per assignment
Conference presentations, training or seminar delivery	2 hours for 60 minutes of first-time presentation (1 for presentation, 1 for preparation, .5 credit for repeat delivery of same material)
Team leadership activities, participation on project teams for new products/activities	1 hour for every 60 minutes of participation
Formal education	1 hour for each hour of instruction up to 36 hours for a 3 credit course or American Council on Education (ACE) recommendation
Professional examination, license, or certification	40 hours in the year obtained
1 Continuing Education Unit (CEU)	10 hours

1 Continuous Learning Point (CLP), Professional Development Unit (PDU), or Professional Development Hour (PDH)	1 hour
1 credit hour (college course or ACE recommendation)	10 hours
Conference attendance	1 hour for each 50 minute presentation attended

* Note - Points are earned only in the year accomplished, awarded or published.