



ACQUISITION

## ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-3600

JAN 15 2021

### MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

**SUBJECT:** Summary of Program Management Functional Integrated Product Team Meetings Regarding the Defense Acquisition Workforce Back to Basics Initiative

**References:** (a) Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment Memorandum, "Back to Basics for the Defense Acquisition Workforce", September 2, 2020  
(b) Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment Memorandum, "Defense Acquisition Workforce Leadership Team (December 10, 2020) Meeting Minutes – Back-to-Basics Implementation", December 21, 2020

The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment announced the phased implementation for the Back-to-Basics streamlined acquisition workforce talent management framework and new governance structure with planned implementation by October 1, 2021 (reference a). In preparation for implementation, the Functional Leads were tasked earlier this year to lay the groundwork on how to implement such an initiative. A Program Management Development Task Force was formed with representation from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Services, the Defense Acquisition University, Human Capital Initiative, the Defense Information Systems Agency and the Missile Defense Agency. The Task Force studied the issues, developed options to implement the initiative, provided recommendations and briefed the Program Management Functional Leaders on June 10, 2020, and November 9, 2020, during Functional Integrated Project Team meetings. A summary of the discussion and decisions from these meetings follow.

- The Program Management (PM) approach to this initiative will clearly define more efficient and thorough certification standards for the Department of Defense program management workforce while delegating many aspects of training and development for specific positions to the Components.
- Mandatory training for program management certification has been significantly reduced by approximately 58% and allows for additional training beyond certification to be taken only when needed depending on the person, position, product and the acquisition lifecycle stage of the program.
- Currently, the three level certification construct of the PM career field created an unnecessary rush of the workforce to obtain certification ahead of need. This leads to training that will be forgotten or obsolete when needed, or receiving elements of training they will never use (referred to as "scrap training"). There will now be only two certification levels: Journeyman and Expert. The Journeyman level requirements have been developed to accommodate the vast majority of the PM workforce

positions. The Expert level certification will apply to a much smaller percentage of the workforce who require the highest level of expertise and are assigned the highest levels of responsibility (e.g., Acquisition Category Program Managers, Program Executive Officers, Directors).

- Journeyman and Expert Certifications will be supplemented with Specialty training that is taken at time of need and is based on specific abilities of the employee compared to the requirements of the position, product, and program lifecycle stage. Credentials (defined by specific training and or experience) may be a requirement for certain positions.
- Although mandatory training requirements for certification are being reduced, standards for achieving certification will be more rigorous. Increased standards include: a more comprehensive certification application that demonstrates the applicant has attained the core PM competencies; endorsement and validation by program management certified leadership; and a comprehensive exam. The amount of acquisition experience is also increased to four years for Journeyman and eight years for Expert. These increased standards will add more credibility, confidence and pride to the PM workforce.
- Given the size of the PM workforce and goal to fully implement the new framework by October 1, 2021, a grandfathering policy has been developed and approved that will automatically transition individuals with Level III certification and eight or more years of acquisition experience to the Expert. Level certification. All other Level III and Level II certified individuals will automatically transition to the Journeyman Level of certification. Individuals with Level I or no certification will follow the new requirements for obtaining Journeyman certification.
- A greater emphasis will be placed on continuous learning (CL) to maintain competence and currency in today's fast changing and agile acquisition environment. Journeyman and Expert certifications will expire if 80 hours of relevant CL are not achieved every two years. In this case, the full application process must be started again, including taking the Comprehensive Exam, in order to reinstate the certification.
- Individual Development Plans and routine discussions with Supervisors and mentors will become even more important under the new Framework of streamlined certification training, increased emphasis on obtaining training at time of need, and relevant Specialty Training and Credentials. This must be emphasized in order for the initiative to be successful. Individuals should discuss their Individual Development Plans with their supervisor in the context of the new framework while continuing to work towards meeting their current certification requirements during fiscal year 2021 while positions are being reviewed and position descriptions updated.

The Chair of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Leadership Team has approved of the functional area framework changes to date (reference b). Therefore, the Task Force will continue to work out implementation details of the above points as well as many other issues that

include credential development and implementation, knowledge area coordination, timelines, etc. The Task Force will continue to monitor and respond to the overarching Back to Basics initiative being worked for the entire acquisition workforce as a whole.

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