



OFFICE OF FEDERAL
PROCUREMENT POLICY

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OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

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MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF ACQUISITION OFFICERS
SENIOR PROCUREMENT EXECUTIVES

FROM: Lesley A. Field 
Deputy Administrator

SUBJECT: Establishment of Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting Core-Plus
Specialization in Digital Services (FAC-C-DS)

The President's Management Agenda prioritizes modernizing the government's information technology (IT), improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our services, and developing a 21st century workforce. A common component of these strategies is delivering data, information, and transactional services across multiple platforms to transform how citizens interact with their government. To develop this new generation of digital services, the workforce must learn and apply new skills.

Buying digital services is not a skill that is gained through the Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) curriculum, thereby necessitating a specialized and immersive training and development program called the Digital IT Acquisition Program (DITAP), which leads to the FAC-C-DS. This specialization, outlined in more detail in the attachment, meets an urgent need for digital services expertise and will be part of a larger effort to raise the overall competency of the acquisition workforce in acquiring IT solutions. To help government contracting professionals understand how to craft acquisitions to procure digital services, DITAP focuses on learning to design innovative and flexible procurements for services such as human-centered design, iterative development methods, cloud, and X-as-a-service.

This effort builds upon our earlier work to strengthen the skill set of those buying IT supplies and services, such as the "Guidance for Specialized IT Acquisition Cadres"¹ and the IT specialization for civilian agency Project and Program Managers.² Planned future efforts include a FAC-C-IT specialization along with strategies to improve major acquisitions and increase collaboration between contract specialists, program managers, and contracting officers' representatives (CORs), especially during requirements building.

¹ Available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/procurement/memo/guidance-for-specialized-acquisition-cadres.pdf>.

² Available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/procurement/memo/fac-ppm-revised-dec-2013.pdf>.

Both government and commercial training providers can offer DITAP to government contracting professionals. The curriculum will continue to evolve under the leadership of the U.S. Digital Service (USDS), in consultation with OFPP and the Federal Acquisition Institute, to ensure currency of content and inclusion of best practices. More information on digital services in general and DITAP specifically can be found at www.fai.gov and techfarhub.cio.gov/.

The specialization is effective June 1, 2018, and has a long implementation tail, with the intent of allowing federal agencies time to train the appropriate employees and have them in place to acquire digital services over the FAR Subpart 13.5 commercial item threshold over the next few years, as described in the attached FAC-C-DS.

If you have questions regarding the FAC-C-DS specialization or the DITAP program, or have suggestions for other core-plus specializations, please contact Joanie Newhart at (202) 395-4821 or jnewhart@omb.eop.gov.

Attachment 1: Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting Core-Plus Specialization in Digital Services (FAC-C-DS)

cc: Chief Information Officers
Chief Human Capital Officers
Acquisition Career Managers

Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting Core-Plus Specialization in Digital Services (FAC-C-DS)

1. General. The Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) introduced the concept of a core-plus certification for Information Technology (IT) acquisition professionals in its *Guidance for Specialized Information Technology Acquisition Cadres* dated July 13, 2011.³ As part of the overall effort to increase expertise in buying technology, OFPP, in concert with the U.S. Digital Service (USDS), has developed a FAC-C core-plus specialization in digital services for contracting professionals. While there are increased training efforts for broader information technology acquisitions, this program specifically addresses the acquisition and business advisor expertise needed to support the delivery of digital information (i.e., data or content) and transactional services (e.g., online forms and benefits applications) across a variety of platforms, devices, and delivery mechanisms (e.g., websites, mobile applications, and social media).

2. Background. To transform how the Government buys digital services, OFPP and USDS issued a challenge several years ago through challenge.gov to create and pilot an innovative training and development program to teach contracting professionals how to buy digital services. Two cohorts formed the basis of the Digital IT Acquisition Professional (DITAP) program, which is now being scaled up, to enable government and commercial acquisition training organizations to offer the DITAP program. The curriculum is based upon an open source learning management system, which allows participants from across the country to interact, and features self-directed, guided and applied learning, classroom instruction, case studies, guest speakers, and hands-on skills building through a live digital assignment. The curriculum will continue to evolve to ensure currency of digital service topics and best practices.

3. Effective Date. The FAC-C core-plus specialization in digital services (FAC-C-DS) specialization is effective June 1, 2018. Pilot program participants received the certification at the successful completion of the pilot and those certifications remain in full force and effect.

4. Applicability. The FAC-C-DS applies to all executive agencies, except the Department of Defense (DOD).⁴ The FAC-C-DS is primarily for those contracting professionals who are responsible for the acquisition of digital services. Initially, this FAC-C-DS core-plus specialization will only be used to certify those individuals who have completed a DITAP training and development program. Approved programs include those offered by either government or industry and validated by OFPP and USDS. A list of validated programs and information on how to apply shall be maintained by the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) on www.fai.gov.

5. Assignment. Contracting professionals assigned to acquisitions consisting primarily of digital services over the FAR Subpart 13.5 certain commercial item threshold, currently \$7 million (or \$13 million for acquisitions as described in 13.500(c)), are required to be certified.⁵ This threshold strategy is supported by modular contracting methods as described in FAR 39 Acquisition of

³ Available at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/omb/procurement/memo/guidance-for-specialized-acquisition-cadres.pdf>

⁴ Department of Defense (DOD) will continue to follow DOD policy.

⁵ The FAR can be found at <https://www.acquisition.gov/browsefar>.

Information Technology and the *Bringing Additional Software Developers into the Federal Marketplace*⁶ memo, which encourages iterative methodologies to be purchased as commercial item services. While all contracting professionals procuring digital services are encouraged to get this specialization, acquisitions over the above threshold introduce higher risk and require a FAC-C-DS certified contracting professional to participate in the acquisition.

As the DITAP training and development program is being scaled to accommodate greater demand, contracting professionals assigned to acquisitions consisting primarily of digital services in FY-19 thru FY-21 over the above threshold shall obtain the specialization within two years of assignment. Beginning in FY-22, contracting professionals assigned to acquisitions consisting primarily of digital services over the above threshold shall have the specialization prior to being assigned. Agency Senior Procurement Executives may waive this requirement and allow them to be certified within one year after being assigned. This decision must be documented in writing and provided to the agency Acquisition Career Manager.

6. Certification Levels. The ability to specialize implies a demonstrated level of skill beyond the entry level, so the FAC-C-DS specialization will only be granted to those holding Level II or Level III FAC-C certification. This requirement may be waived by the agency's Senior Procurement Executive and provided to the agency Acquisition Career Manager. This decision must be documented in writing. Level II FAC-C holders who have received a FAC-C-DS core-plus specialization carry this specialization to Level III, if and when it is achieved, as long as the continuous learning requirements have been met.

7. Competencies. The most current competency model for the FAC-C-DS is available on FAI's website at www.fai.gov. This site will be updated as needed to ensure currency of skills required.

8. Experience. Because the DITAP program is experiential, there are no additional experience requirements.

9. Continuous Learning. Contracting professionals completing the DITAP program shall receive between 60 and 80 continuous learning points (CLPs) depending upon their level of achievement during the program. Contracting professionals holding the FAC-C-DS specialization must achieve 20 CLPs of their overall FAC-C 80 CLPs (required every two years) within the area of digital services to maintain their certification. Emphasis of the continuous learning shall be to maintain currency in this quickly evolving discipline. A list of suggested classes and other ways to obtain continuous learning shall be maintained on the TechFAR Hub at techfarhub.cio.gov/ and at www.fai.gov.

⁶ Available at:

https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/omb/procurement/memo/memo_cao_cpe_bringing_additional_s_oftware_dev_fed_mktplace.pdf