

Pathways to Project Success

OCTOBER 2008

News You Can Use

Federal Acquisition Certification —Contracting Officers Technical Representative

By: Cynthia Yee, Acquisition Career Manager

The Department of Energy (DOE) has long recognized the importance of Contracting Officer's Representatives (COR) in ensuring the successful accomplishment of our acquisition mission. This is manifested both by explicit inclusion of CORs in the definition of the acquisition workforce, and by the requirement for COR certification.

DOE established the COR certification program in January 2007, as part of the larger Acquisition Career Management Program (ACMP). Our certification program was based in part on a report published by the Federal Acquisition Institute in 2003 on the competencies necessary for the COR job function and in part on the 2005 US Merit Systems Protection Board report entitled "Contracting Officer Representatives: Managing the Government's Technical Experts to Achieve Positive Contract Outcomes." Both reports are available at www.fai.gov.

A common theme in both reports is the need to organize and support the COR community to ensure acquisition management is implemented effectively. Some of the findings and recommendations of the reports are:

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

Accordingly, the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) issued a Government-wide certification program for CORs, the Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer Technical Representatives (FAC-COTR), through a policy letter issued in November 2007. FAC-COTR certification is a Government-wide certification program, much like the Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting for the contracting workforce. DOE was well ahead of the curve on the FAC-COTR in terms of implementing a COR certification program and because DOE's program follows the OFPP-issued FAC-COTR curriculum. The DOE program is also considered a Government-wide certification.

The FAC-COTR program as implemented by DOE establishes a curriculum for certification of

CORs based on the type of contracts they oversee: services; management and operation/management and integration; or capital and operating projects. One facet of the Department's certification program, which was adopted in OFPP's policy letter, is that certified Federal Project Directors qualify as CORs for capital/operating projects. But, **THEY HAVE TO APPLY**. Requesting COR certification is simple: merely complete the FAC-COTR certification request form, available in the Acquisition Career Management Program Handbook, which can be found at http://www.management.energy.gov/policy_guidance/Acquisition_Certification_and_Training.htm and send it to the Acquisition Career Manager.

DOE is head and shoulders above many of the other Federal agencies in terms of the maturity and success rate of our ACMP. That is something we can all be proud of. And we have made some progress in getting our CORs certified, but we're only halfway there. Only 49% of the Department's 1,013 CORs are certified. Help us get the rest of the way there.

Be the first on your block to get FAC-COTR certified. Apply today!

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Corrective Action Plan (CAP) Corner: Is Your EVMS Data Accurate?

By: Paul Bosco, Director, OECM

What is the purpose of EVMS? How much does it cost a contractor, and, by extension, DOE, to institute and maintain an Earned Value Management System (EVMS)? How much do the EVMS Certification and Surveillance Programs cost the Department?

Suffice to say, across the complex, the cost is in the millions of dollars.

Are we getting our money's worth? Are the EVM Systems serving your needs? Do they accurately reflect project execution, highlight problems areas in

a timely manner, and provide accurate forecasts of final costs and schedule milestones?

Lots of questions to ponder, but one thing is for certain— EVMS is a key project management tool if it accurately reflects actual project performance. The first level of EVMS surveillance resides with the Federal Project Director. If your EVM System says one thing and your “gut” says something else, it’s time to start asking some tough questions. (From past experience, my gut instinct is generally supported by walking the project and observing work -in-place and a quick review of a simple schedule display, planned versus actual, with an eye

focused on the critical path.)

To be sure, EVMS is not a panacea and it is just one tool in the project management toolbox. However, there is probably no greater value of EVMS than in highlighting discrepancies which prompt questions; questions that uncover project issues and root causes in (near) real time, which, in some instances, may allow timely and appropriate course corrections to stay on target – to deliver a successful project and maintain the project performance baseline. Does your EVM System do that?



The De-certification Process

By: Marylee Baker, Lead Professional Career Development Analyst

As you know, each certified Federal Project Director (FPD) is required to successfully complete 60 continuing education (CE) hours of approved training biennially to maintain certification. Unless extenuating circumstances such as illness or military service prevent an FPD from

remediating identified deficiencies, the Board will take action to revoke the individual's certification. If at the conclusion of the 2-year maintenance period and the 90-day notification period, a request from the sponsoring Program Office for an extension is not received by the CRB, the certified Federal Project Director will be automatically decertified.

The FPD-candidate may submit a new application package any time after decertification action for CRB consideration. The application must include an updated profile, project history, and a list of all courses, training, and experiences that comprise the approved 60 CE hours that have been completed for the deficient biennial period.

Upcoming PMCDP Courses

October

27-30 Integrating Safety into PM (L1), Richland

28-30 Contract Admin for Tech Reps (L1), Idaho Falls

November

3-6 Project Risk Analysis and Management (L2), DC

4-6 Project Execution & ORR (L3), Oak Ridge

4-7 Integrating Safety into PM (L1), Los Alamos

17-19 Contract Admin for Tech Reps (L1), Albuquerque

20-21 Planning for PBMC (L1), Albuquerque

December

2-4 Scope Management and Baseline Development (L2), Oak Ridge

2-4 Contract Admin for Tech Reps (L1), Cincinnati

January

12-15 Integrating Safety into Project Management (L1), Oak Ridge

13– March 6 (Blended Learning) Project Management Essentials (L1), Savannah River (onsite Feb 10-12)

13-15 Executive Communications (L4), DC

26-29 The Federal Budgeting Process in DOE (L2), Golden, CO

27– March 10 (Blended Learning) Advanced Concepts in Project Management (L2), Oak Ridge (onsite March 3-5)

February

2-6 Project Management Simulation (L2), Las Vegas

9-March 24 (Blended Learning) Advanced Concepts in Project Management (L2), Las Vegas (onsite March 17-19)

9-13 Program Management and Portfolio Analysis (L3), Los Alamos

10-12 Leadership and Supervision (L2), Cincinnati

10-11 Planning for PBMC (L1), Richland

24-26 Acquisition Strategy and Planning (L1), DC

For the most up-to-date course schedule, please visit: <http://www.colleagueconsulting.com/training.htm> and click on “Current Training Schedule”



Calling all Subject Matter Experts

By: Cynthia Yee, Acquisition Career Manager

The Acquisition Career Management Program Office is looking for a few good people to act as technical experts/course advisors for the following courses:

- Contract Administration for M&O Contractors (PRS19)
- Contract Administration for Technical Representatives (PRS17)
- Contract Administration for Technical Representatives Refresher (PRS18)
- Acquisition Management for Technical Personnel (PRS16)

In order to ensure that the DOE courseware remains accurate and up-to-date, we need input from DOE experts (i.e. the course advisors). The course advisors will review the current materials, make suggestions for revisions, and inform us when major changes in the contracting world affect the course material. The course advisors will also provide real-world examples which will aid in developing case study materials.

It will take at least two days to review a course, plus maybe a day or two to suggest updates, and then a review of the course every six months, again with suggestions for updates, plus

sending pertinent updates on an as needed basis.

We recognize that this is a lot of work, but this type of work will qualify for PMI Professional Development Units (PDU) to keep a PMP certification current. Additionally, certified Federal Project Directors can earn 15 continuing education credits for each course.

If you're interested, please send an email to Cynthia.yee@hq.doe.gov, indicating which class or classes you'd be willing to be a course advisor on.

Changing to Better Serve You

By: Marylee Baker, Lead Professional Career Development Analyst

We understand the steps and processes associated with PMCDP certification can seem complicated and we are working to improve the system.

In an effort to improve customer satisfaction, OEEM is performing significant upgrades to the PMCDP Website. Located under the “Project Management” link on the Office of Management’s web page, the new PMCDP site promises to be more user friendly and will provide readers with a plethora of information about the program to include:

- Instructions for participating in the PMCDP;
- Steps that detail the PMCDP’s registration and certification processes;
- “How-to instructions” for developing certification packages/profiles;

- Up-to-date certification and equivalency guidelines that detail how related project management experience can be applied to the different levels of certification;
- Continuing education requirements needed to maintain certification; and,
- PMCDP training schedules.

OEEM has also sponsored more modifications to the PMCDP module in ESS to better serve you by: (1) creating a batch notification process when submitting PMCDP competencies to your manager for final approval—you may now send one email notification to your approving official for all competencies within a certain PM level; (2) Deleting the duplicative reference to same competency for skills in integrating safety into project management at levels 1 and 2: Level 2 competency statement has been removed; (3) Deleting the need for OEEM and site manager

approvals of WAIVER requests. Requests are signed off by your approving official, similar to equivalencies; (4) Increasing the PMCDP project history data field for the name and description of projects to 255 characters from 100; and, (5) Expanding the Education section on the front page of the profile to include all education entries from an employee's personnel record, listed highest level to lowest.

If you have any other ESS improvement suggestions, please send them to us!

It is our belief that these new upgrades will allow our customers to develop a much clearer understanding of the requirements under the program, providing them with a pathway for success. For more information on what’s available on the site, please visit us at http://management.energy.gov/pm_certification.htm

Question of the Month

Question: On my profile, I only see my highest degree under Education. I have multiple degrees, why are they not reflected in my profile?

Answer: Based upon questions and feedback such as this, the ESS PMCDP module was updated to list all educational credentials currently entered into your personnel record. If you view your profile and do not see all your credentials, check your personnel records in ESS and update if needed.

COURSE MATERIALS CORRECTION

It has come to our attention that an older PMCDP Curriculum Learning Map chart is being used by some. Please note the Learning Map was updated this summer. Please replace any older versions of the Learning Map with latest version from our PMCDP website:

<http://management.energy.gov/1036.htm>

Questions or Comments?

General questions and comments about the newsletter should be directed to:

PMCDP.Administration@hq.doe.gov. Or visit our website at

<http://management.energy.gov/1036.htm>. For further information about the OEEM

PMCDP or Program Management Career Development Curriculum contact:

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