



DOE PROJECT MANAGEMENT NEWS

Promoting Project Management Excellence

July 2024



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DIRECTOR’S CORNER



An independent analysis of alternatives (iAoA) is a critical step in the DOE acquisition process. It ensures the exploration of viable solutions before significant investments are made. DOE Guide 413.3-22, *Analysis of Alternatives*, describes how GAO’s recommended AoA best practices are implemented in the department by DOE Order 413.3B, *Program and Project Management for the Acquisition of Capital Assets*. Learn more about this important step in the 413 process in the article on page 2.

Benchmarking allows a project team to identify areas for improvement by comparing processes, costs, and timelines, enhancing efficiency and productivity. By analyzing benchmark data, Federal Project Directors and program and project managers can set realistic goals and expectations, ensuring projects are completed on time and within budget.

Benchmarking fosters a culture of continuous improvement. It drives innovation and competitive advantage in the construction industry. Learn about some of the benchmarking tools available for DOE/NNSA projects in the article on page 5.

Finally, integrating social and technical dimensions can lead to more effective and adaptive organizational environments. Learn how this approach, part of the Integrated Project/Program Management (IP2M) study with Arizona State University (ASU), can improve project outcomes on page 7.

Keep Charging!

Paul Bosco

DOE GUIDE 413.3-22, ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES GUIDE

Joseph Grealish, Office of Project Analysis (PM-20)

Introduction

One of the most important phases during a capital asset project's lifespan is the development and comparison of various approaches to solving the mission need. During our busy and challenging days managing ongoing projects, we sometimes lose sight of the early phases of a project, particularly the phase where a decision is made on *what will be built!* This phase is referred to as the analysis of alternatives (AoA) and documents the decision on what approaches were considered, the criteria used to rank the alternatives, and the weighting of each criterion.



3. **Unbiased.** An unbiased AoA prevents “early favorites” from receiving unfair prioritization, is performed independently of the office or program sponsoring the project and is based on traceable and verifiable information.
4. **Credible.** The AoA process thoroughly discusses the limitations of the analyses resulting from the uncertainty that surrounds both the data and the assumptions for each alternative.

To support these four characteristics, GAO identifies twenty-two (22) “best practices” agencies should follow in evaluating alternatives. Note – the current version of DOE G 413.3-22 references the outdated GAO-16-22, *Cost Estimating Guide*), which has been replaced by GAO-20-195G. Fortunately for DOE G 413.3-22, the AoA section of the GAO *Cost Estimating Guide* received few revisions, though it did realign some of the best practices to better reflect a different characteristic.

The Department of Energy (DOE) Order (O) 413.3B, *Program and Project Management for the Acquisition of Capital Assets*, change 7, defines the full lifecycle of DOE's capital asset acquisition. Within this order, DOE defines the critical decision (CD) gates, from CD-0, *Approve Mission Need*, through CD-4, *Approve Start of Operations or Project Completion*. Prior to beginning a project, the program manager must define and describe a mission need. That is to say, what capability or function is not performable at the current time? By carefully articulating this mission need and gaining departmental approval of this mission need at CD-0, the program manager has now started the process of developing a project.

When proceeding from CD-0 to CD-1, *Approve Alternative Selection and Cost Range*, the selection of a preferred alternative is a major step. DOE Guide 413.3-22, *Analysis of Alternatives Guide*, provides important information and guidance on how Program offices, site offices, and nascent project teams should approach the AoA process. It lays out the process and identifies best practices and potential pitfalls.

Background

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) identifies four characteristics of high-quality and reliable AoAs:

1. **Well-documented.** Well-documented indicates the AoA process is thoroughly described in the relevant documents, including discarded alternatives, the criteria used to evaluate the alternatives, the relative weighting of the criteria, and the results.
2. **Comprehensive.** A comprehensive AoA includes the full life-cycle costs of the considered alternatives, is closely linked to the mission need statement, and considers the full range of viable alternatives.

Understanding the AoA Guide

The AoA Guide is well organized to support project teams and program offices conducting AoAs. It provides a concise overview of DOE's AoA process and adapts GAO's twenty-two best practices to DOE's purposes. DOE groups the practices into six “phases.” The flowchart on page 3 shows the steps grouped by phase. Please note that Phase V, Document and Review, is at the top of the table and encompasses the other five phases.

Phases I and II are combined into the “initialize” term. Phase I is differentiated from Phase II as these two activities occur at CD-0 (Define mission need and functional requirements) before the actual AoA process begins. By ensuring the CD-0 mission need requirements are clearly identified and defined by functional requirements, the Program office will give the AoA team a strong foundation on which to build. Phase III, Identify the Alternatives, includes an initial viability assessment. Phase IV is the brunt of the AoA, wherein criteria are developed, weights are applied, alternatives are scored, and a preferred alternative is identified.

Continued on Page 3.

Figure 1. Flowchart

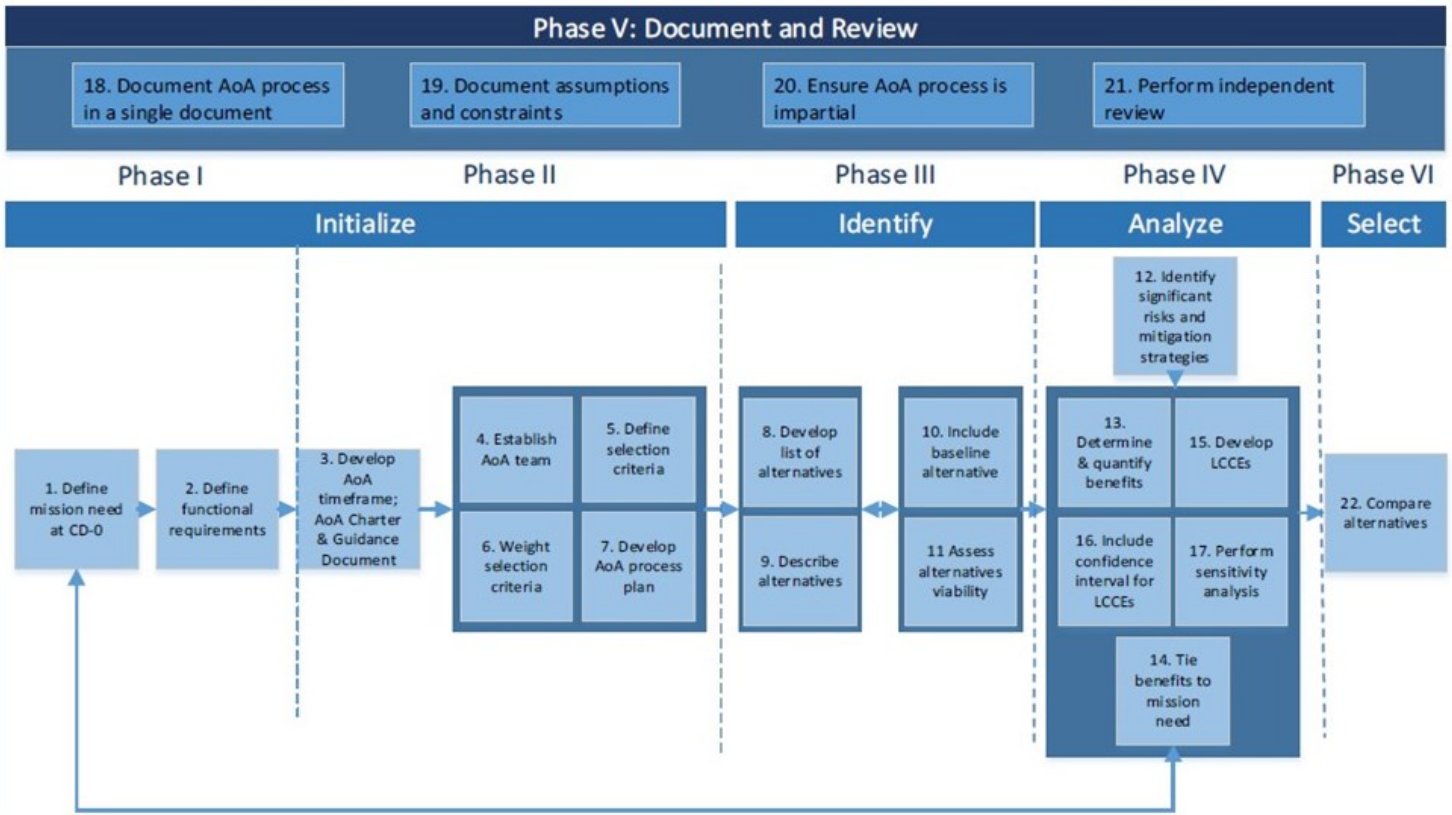


Table 1. Example of Key Roles During the AoA

DOE Stage	AoA Initiation	AoA Kick off	AoA Planning	AoA Analysis	AoA Preliminary Results Review	AoA Finalization	AoA Documentation and Review	Alternative Selection
Description	After CD-0, the <u>PME</u> tasks the <u>Project Owner</u> to conduct the AoA. The <u>PME</u> chooses an <u>AoA Team</u> and selects a Federal AoA Lead as the team lead.	The <u>Project Owner</u> conducts a kick-off meeting with the AoA Team relevant stakeholders, and other SME's as required.	The <u>AoA Team</u> describes the structure and methodology of the AoA, to include selection criteria and weighting, in a Study Plan.	The <u>AoA Team</u> conducts the AoA analysis based on the project functional and technical requirements, initial screening and evaluating alternatives, conducting a cost analysis, risk and opportunity identification, and a sensitivity analysis, and documenting the results.	The <u>Project Owner</u> and <u>AoA Team</u> present initial results to the <u>PME</u> who may provide additional guidance as necessary. An <u>Independent Review Team</u> may also conduct a review of the <u>AoA Team's</u> initial results, providing additional guidance as necessary.	The <u>AoA Team</u> compiles the results of the AoA analysis into one document with all supporting information and previous deliverables. The <u>Independent Review Team</u> reviews the Final Report and prepares the Sufficiency Memo.	The <u>Project Owner</u> reviews the validated Final Report and Sufficiency Memo and forward to the Program <u>PME</u>	The <u>PME</u> selects an alternative based on the results of the AoA
Deliverable	AoA Charter and Study Guidance Document		AoA Study Plan			AoA Study Final Report	Sufficiency Memo	Alternative Selection Document; CD-1 Authorization

Continued on Page 4.

Roles and responsibilities are covered in detail in the Guide, with Table 1 providing an example of key roles during initiation, kick-off, finalization, and other phases of the AoA. The four primary roles include the Project Owner (customer), the Project Management Executive ((PME) – the decision maker), the AoA team, and the independent review team.

Table 1 also lists the primary deliverables at each stage of an AoA. Section 3 of the AoA Guide discusses each deliverable, its purpose, and how it plays an important role within the AoA. This section assigns the responsible party to each deliverable, important items for consideration, and typical contents. This section should be the starting part for the PME or AoA team as they begin to develop their products.

Section 4 of the AoA Guide goes through the steps from developing the screening and evaluation criteria, through alternative development, and analysis. It is important to stress that developing the selection criteria and their relative importance, i.e., weight, comes *before* developing the list of alternatives. By developing the criteria before discussing alternatives, impartiality is maintained as clever proponents of one alternative might try to shape the evaluation criteria and weighting to favor their alternative. The Guide provides useful methods in developing, screening, and evaluating alternatives. It is very important for the team to develop a diverse range of plausible and credible alternatives to consider. The best solution to the mission need may not be a capital asset at all, but a change in procedures, a public private venture, or other technologies. The AoA team owe the PME, Project Owner, and the taxpayer their best effort in identifying a strong list of alternatives. Be wary of the many fallacies which can derail AoA efforts, such as including small-medium-large versions of an alternative as three separate cases, or “strawman” or non-realistic alternatives which only serve to improve the attractiveness of the preferred alternative by a biased project team. The Guide rightly stresses the importance of including the status quo option (i.e., do nothing) to serve as the baseline.

The scoring, weighting, and sorting of the alternatives is among the most important tasks of the AoA team. To ensure a credible and unbiased AoA, the scoring of alternatives must make every effort to not artificially *spread* the alternatives, nor artificially *compress* them. For instance, if the three non-status quo alternatives have life cycle costs of \$2.8B, \$2.95B, and \$3.15B, a common

AoA approach would rank those 1, 2, and 3 with an associated number of points assigned to each. This often makes alternative two twice as bad as option one, and the third alternative three times worse, even though all three costs fall within a relatively compact zone. Less common is when one alternative is so much better against one criterion that the first, second, third methodology actually compresses the scoring, and minimizes the impact of choosing one of the lesser alternatives. So it is imperative to ensure that an unbiased and defensible AoA’s scoring criterion is established early in the AoA process.

The Guide closes with a strong set of Appendixes, including detailed discussion on the GAO best practices, recommended templates for AoA deliverables, and a crosswalk of the GAO best practices against the four characteristics (based on the outdated GAO-16-22, not the slightly revised version found in GAO-20-195G).

Implications for Project Management

The adage, “well begun is half done” is the *raison d’être* (aka, reason for being) for AoA teams and the AoA Guide is the roadmap for the teams to follow. Congress does not provide infinite resources to DOE. By following a well-documented, comprehensive, unbiased, and credible path, the AoA team ensures the PME and Project Owner have the very best information and analysis available when they make the important decision at CD-1 to approve the selected alternative. Everything with the project that follows is based on the decision made in the alternative selection, which is a critical step in closing a mission capability gap and achieving project success.

Conclusion

The AoA Guide assists senior DOE leaders in selecting the best solution to their mission needs. It is also an important part of the DOE O 413.3B library of supporting Guides, Handbooks, and SOPs. It provides an excellent overview of the procedures for developing AoAs while also providing important tools to assist project teams in developing alternatives and assigning the evaluation of those alternatives to unbiased professionals to properly weight and rank the alternatives.

If you have any questions about the AoA process, please reach out to your assigned PM-20 Project Analyst.



PROJECT MANAGEMENT BENCHMARKS

Brian Kong, Robert Ogrodnik, Roxy Franks, Office of Project Controls and Policy (PM-30)

The Office of Project Management's (PM) [lexicon of terms](#) defines benchmarking as the process of looking at past projects, products, lessons learned or organizational processes, etc., to get ideas for improvement and to provide a basis to use in measuring quality performance. It is considered a [best practice](#) including by the [Construction Industry Institute \(CII\)](#) which offers several [benchmarking resources](#).

CII's Federal Facilities Data Analytics Research and Application Project ([FF-DARAP](#)) described in a prior [newsletter](#) is now complete. The final report [FR-FF-DARAP](#) covers the research and development of CII's data warehouse, a high-performance construction project benchmarking and performance assessment platform. It was a collaboration with five other government agencies including the Smithsonian Institution, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Commerce, the Naval Facilities Engineering Command, and the Ontario Power Generation. The report emphasizes the importance of adopting a data-driven approach which CII members can use for benchmarking capital projects and evaluating capital efficiency. It also highlights the benefits of benchmarking and the use of data science techniques in improving project performance. The implementation resource, [IR-FF-DARAP](#), is the associated guide on how to use CII's data warehouse. The FF-DARAP developed a structured and automated process for data collection, benchmarking, and project analytics to improve business and facility delivery. The data warehouse is available to the Department of Energy (DOE) and includes the online tools, including the data miner, the project performance assessment key reports, and dashboards.

DOE delivers light laboratories and administrative buildings among many types of capital asset projects, which are benchmarked using FF-DARAP \$/gross square feet metric. This benchmark has been utilized for PM reviews and communicated with program offices. For more info, please contact PM-30 Data Analytics (PMDA), [Robert Ogrodnik](#).

Following up on a prior [newsletter](#) article on benchmarking from November 2021, PMDA identified performance benchmarks based on data reported in DOE's Project Assessment and Reporting System (PARS). There are hundreds of data points for a single project in the PARS oversight and assessment (O&A) module and hundreds more in the PARS contractor project performance (CPP) module.

Further, the PARS document management system (DMS) houses additional data and documents that are cited in the DOE's project management directive [DOE Order 413.3B, Program and Project Management for the Acquisition of Capital Assets](#). This data is utilized to assess projects and compile the [PM Performance Improvement Metrics and Targets](#), [Monthly DOE Project Portfolio Status Reports](#), the [Monthly DOE Project Dashboard Performance Metrics](#), and the [Quarterly DOE Capital Asset Project Pipeline Reports](#) among other reports. They are also summarized in the performance baseline-contract (PB-K) tables and graphs in PARS.

- The PB-K table is a comprehensive project data matrix that consolidates PARS CPP and O&A data offering detailed analysis by the base work construct (BWC) (described in a prior [newsletter](#)), time-phased schedule/cost tracking, assessments by key personnel, and flags for data quality and integrity.
- The PB-K graph is a dynamic visual tool that integrates time-phased project performance data reported by the contractor including the budgeted cost of work scheduled (BCWS), budgeted cost of work performed (BCWP), actual cost of work performed (ACWP), and estimate to complete (ETC) [or the SPAE], estimate at completion (EAC), and reserves, as well as metrics and critical milestones, depicting the project's past, present, and forecasted performance. It also includes the PMDA independent EAC (iEAC(PMDA)) for the prime contract work as described in an article from the April 2023 [newsletter](#).

The PDF version of the PB-K table and graph deliverables are distributed monthly to the Project Management Support Offices (PMSO). These deliverables are analyzed and communicated utilizing various techniques such as time-phased trending to support data informed decisions. For more information on the PB-K pdf deliverables, please contact PMDA, [Roxy Franks](#).

To support PM's mission to add value to project management for the Department and the U.S. taxpayer, PMDA's research led to the development of the PB-K tables and graphs which in turn resulted in benchmarks described on page 6.

Continued on Page 6.

These benchmarks signal when to communicate data-informed insights with the project team and management that may lead to management actions such as recovery plans to improve performance so that the project is successfully completed.

Benchmark 01 – PMDA’s independent estimate at complete breaches performance baseline

If the iEAC(PMDA) is greater than the contract completion date or contract budget base, actions may be needed to avert an over-target-baseline (OTB) and/or an over-target-schedule (OTS). If the iEAC(PMDA) is greater than the approved critical decision (CD)-4 and/or the total project cost (TPC), actions may be needed to avert a baseline change proposal (BCP).

Benchmark 02 – Total project cost at CD-2 greater than high end of cost range at CD-1

The approved cost at each critical decision is recorded in PARS and are shown on the PB-K graph. If the estimated total project cost (TPC) to be approved at CD-2 is greater than the high-end cost range approved at CD-1, actions may be needed to reassess the TPC for approval. Approximately 50% of completed projects required a BCP when the CD-1 high end cost range was lower than the approved CD-2 TPC. The percentage is higher if the CD-0 high end cost range was lower than the CD-1 high end cost range.

Benchmark 03 – CD-2 approved outside of 18 to 21% complete

Historically, projects in PARS that were baselined when approximately 20% complete are less likely to encounter a BCP. Baselining a project too early or baselining after notable execution of work increases the probability of a BCP. The PB-K graph shows when CD-2 was approved as well as the time-phased historical percent complete.

Benchmark 04 – Schedule performance or cost performance indices are unfavorable

The schedule performance index (SPI) and the cost performance index (CPI) are key performance metrics. However, the cumulative SPI or CPI (SPIC or CPIc) mask more current performance because it includes work prior to the CD-2 baseline (or the sunk performance and cost). The relevant performance period of interest is that against the baseline that is post-CD-2 (or another more recent rebaseline) herein referenced as the reset indices. Notable level-of-effort (LOE) or apportioned effort work (in terms of the earned-value technique (EVT)) also masks true performance. Noting that most contractors utilize the same cost tool, the EVT acronyms utilized are A for LOE and J&M for apportioned, or nonAJM. The relevant performance then is that against the baseline post-CD-2 for discrete effort or herein referenced as reset-nonAJM indices. All three indices are shown in the PB-K table. If any of the following thresholds, based on historical data, are encountered actions may be needed to avert a BCP. $SPIC < 0.90$; $SPIC_{reset} < 0.90$; $SPIC_{reset_nonAJM} < 0.80$
 $CPIc < 0.90$; $CPIc_{reset} < 0.85$; $CPIc_{reset_nonAJM} < 0.85$

These benchmarks have been instrumental in PM’s ability to effectively assess project performance and proactively advise those responsible for project execution. The PB-K deliverables further enhance PM’s assessments by providing additional project characteristics and performance insight. PMDA continues to review data and determine additional proven benchmarks including the use of more complex algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI).

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEWLY CERTIFIED FPDs!

Level II

Christopher Pryor (SPR)



Level III

Karen Adams (EM)

Alan Harris (SC)

Crissy Kuhl (EM)

Steven Neus (SC)

IP2M METRR TRAINING OF THE MONTH

IP2M METRR Training of the Month: IP2M METRR – Report 5: Enhancing Project Success: The Impact of Sociotechnical Integration on Project and Program Management Using Earned Value Management Systems

The Integrated Project/Program Management (IP2M) Maturity and Environment Total Risk Rating (METRR) using EVMS is a novel assessment mechanism developed as part of a DOE-sponsored joint research study led by Arizona State University and representing more than fifteen government and industry organizations.

Click [here](#) to view IP2M METRR Publication– Report 5: Enhancing Project Success: The Impact of Sociotechnical Integration on Project and Program Management Using Earned Value Management Systems.

Summary: Earned value management systems (EVMS), also called integrated project and program management systems, have been greatly examined in the literature, which has typically focused on their technical aspects rather than social. This study aims to hypothesize that improving both the technical maturity of EVMS and the social environment elements of EVMS applications together will significantly impact project performance outcomes. For the first time, empirical evidence supports a strong relationship between EVMS maturity and environment. Data was collected from 35 projects through four workshops, attended by 31 industry practitioners with an average of 19 years of EVMS experience.

Continuous Learning Points (CLPS): Reviewing one hour of snippets will equate to one CLP. To receive credit, FPDs can submit a CLP request under the PMCDP menu in their ESS account. All others may send an email (indicating the snippets viewed) through their respective supervisor to [DL-PM-40](#) to receive a certificate with the appropriate CLPs awarded.

You can find additional IP2M METRR Training at the following links:

[https://www.energy.gov/projectmanagement/training-implementing-integrated-projectprogram-management-maturity](https://www.energy.gov/projectmanagement/training-implementing-integrated-projectprogram-management-maturity-and)

-and

OR

<https://community.max.gov/display/DOEExternal/PM+EVMS+IP2M+METRR+Training>

IP2M METRR Publications can be found at <https://ip2m.engineering.asu.edu/publications/>

APPLICATIONS OPEN FOR THE DOE PROJECT LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE 2025 COHORT

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) [Project Leadership Institute \(PLI\)](#) is a program designed to increase the successful outcome of DOE high-risk projects by building a culture of project management excellence and developing a network of successful project delivery practitioners across the entire Department of Energy complex.

The PLI is primarily aimed at experienced project leaders either delivering or in line to deliver projects. This includes both experienced contractor and federal employees looking to advance their careers and expand their leadership competence and capabilities as it applies to projects, programs, and portfolios and to leverage their organization's technical and managerial expertise through a strong project management capability.

The PLI program operates on a calendar year and each annual cohort begins in January. Applications for the 2025 cohort will open on July 15. A sample application and selection criteria are available on the [PLI website](#), and inquiries about the program can be directed to the PLI Director, Elaine McCluskey, at pli@slac.stanford.edu.





PMCDP FY2024 TRAINING SCHEDULE

The training schedule is posted on PM-Connect. Save the direct link to the Project Management Career Development Program training schedule to your favorites: <https://community.connect.gov/x/BgZcQw>

Course Title	LN Code	Dates	CLPs	Details
<u>Front-End Planning (FEP): Getting to CD-1</u>	003176	July 9-25, 2024	20	1-3pm ET Tuesdays/Thursdays
<u>Program Management and Portfolio Analysis</u>	001025	July 15-19, 2024	40	10:30am-4:30pm ET Webinar Daily
<u>Managing Performance-Based Contracts</u>	001952	July 23-25, 2024	24	10:30am-4:30pm ET Webinar Daily
<u>Leadership Through Effective Communication</u>	002366	July 30-August 1, 2024	24	10:30am-4:30pm ET Webinar Daily
<u>Advanced Earned Value Management Techniques</u>	002689	August 6-9, 2024	32	10:30am-4:30pm ET Webinar Daily
<u>Value Management</u>	001037	August 6-9, 2024	24	10:30am-4:30pm ET Webinar Daily
<u>Project Management Systems and Practices</u>	001024	August 12-16, 2024	40	10:30am-4:30pm ET Webinar Daily
<u>Project Risk Analysis and Management</u>	001033	August 19-23, 2024	28	10:30am-4:30pm ET Webinar Daily
<u>Project Management Simulation</u>	001029	August 26-30, 2024	40	10:30am-4:30pm ET Webinar Daily
<u>Capital Planning for DOE 413.3B Capital Asset Projects</u>	002152	September 3-17, 2024	16	12-3pm ET Tuesdays/Thursdays
<u>Executive Communications</u>	001031	September 10-12, 2024	24	10:30am-4:30pm ET Webinar Daily
<u>Systems Engineering</u>	001049	September 17-20, 2024	24	10:30am-4:30pm ET Webinar Daily
<u>Cost and Schedule Estimation and Analysis</u>	001044	September 23-27, 2024	40	10:30am-4:30pm ET Webinar Daily



PLUG INTO TRAINING!

TELL US WHAT YOU NEED FOR *YOUR* PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Click here to take the FY 2025 Training Needs Assessment Survey

If you would like to contribute an article to the Newsletter or want to provide feedback, please contact the Editor at [DL-PM-40](#).



FIND UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES ANYTIME!

All PMCDP Course Descriptions and Course Materials can be found in the Course Catalog on



Save the direct link to your favorites: <https://community.connect.gov/x/UAT3Rw>



Or, download the Interactive Curriculum Map: <https://community.connect.gov/x/sQd1Qw>

Have a question, bug or glitch in a PMCDP online course, or want to provide feedback? Submit your questions through: PMCDPOnlineCourseSupport@hq.doe.gov.

CONTACT US!

The Office of Project Management welcomes your comments on the Department's policies related to DOE Order 413.3B, *Program and Project Management for the Acquisition of Capital Assets*. Please report errors, omissions, ambiguities, and contradictions to: PMpolicy@hq.doe.gov. Propose improvements to policies at: <https://hq.ideascale.com>.

If you have technical questions about Project Assessment and Reporting System (PARS), such as how to reset your password, please contact the PARS Help Desk at: PARS_Support@Hq.Doe.Gov. And, as always, PARS documentation, frequently asked questions (FAQs) and other helpful information can be found at [Support : PARS Support \(doe.gov\)](https://community.connect.gov/x/m4IIY). The current PARS reporting schedule is located on PM-Connect at the following link: <https://community.connect.gov/x/m4IIY>

Need information to apply for Federal Project Director (FPD) certification? The Certification and Equivalency Guidelines (CEG) can be found here: <https://community.connect.gov/x/IQd1Qw>

Can't put your finger on a document or information you were told is available on PM-Connect? Looking for information on DOE project management? Submit your questions and queries to: PMWebmaster@doe.gov.

TO REACH THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DIVISION (PM-40) TEAM:



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Your feedback is valuable to us! Please rate your experience with this edition of the newsletter on a scale of **1 to 5** (rating of 5 stars being highly satisfied and 1 star being highly dissatisfied).



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