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Leveraging the Investment in FAC-P/PM

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by *Tim Jaques, PMP*

The Federal Acquisition Certification for Program and Project Management (FAC-P/PM) has been around for nearly four years, and still it remains largely unknown in the federal sector.

FAC-P/PM, managed by the Federal Acquisition Institute (<http://www.fai.gov>) is the only government-wide, government-sponsored certification addressing project management. For some agencies, FAC-P/PM is an administrative exercise that must be completed for all major investments. Yet for others, FAC-P/PM has become a strategic initiative yielding improvements to their organizational effectiveness in project management. FAC-P/PM can be a catalyst for project management competency improvement. While complying with the guidelines set out by OMB in Circular A-11, agencies leaders can simultaneously create a robust framework that builds on the FAC-P/PM competency model. In this article, we will explore the FAI recommendations and understand how they can be leveraged.

The FAC-P/PM program recognizes three levels of expertise:

1. **Entry/Apprentice:** At this level, the individual should have the ability to perform as a project team member, manage low risk and relatively simple projects, define and construct various project documents, and related activities.
2. **Mid-level/Journeyman:** At this level, the individual should have the ability to manage projects or program segments of low to moderate risks with little or no supervision, apply management processes, including requirements development processes, identify and track actions to initiate an acquisition program or project using cost/benefit analysis, and related activities.
3. **Senior/Expert:** At this level, the individual should have the ability to manage and evaluate moderate to high-risk programs or projects that require significant acquisition investment and agency knowledge and experience, apply and utilize earned value management, apply advanced management and acquisition practices, and related activities.

The levels of expertise are not necessarily sequential. Individuals may be certified at any level provided that he/she meets the agency standards set for the competency areas. The FAC-P/PM competency model is constructed around seven essential competencies:

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Competency	Aligned Skills
Requirements Development Management Process	Recognition of investment management requirements and acquisition policies, understanding of how to manage risk; understanding of factors that influence cost, schedule, and performance.
System Engineering	Recognition of the scientific, management, engineering, and technical skills used in the performance of systems planning, research and development.
Test and Evaluation	Recognition of efficient and cost effective methods for planning, monitoring, conducting, and evaluating testing environments.
Life Cycle Logistics	Recognition of performance-based logistic efforts that optimize availability, supportability, and reliability of materiel.
Acquisition/Contracting	Recognition of the supervision, leadership and management processes/procedures involving the acquisition.
Business Financial Management	Recognition of the forms of cost estimating, cost analysis, reconciliation of cost estimates, financial planning, formulating financial programs and budgets, budget analysis/execution, benefit-cost analysis, Earned Value Management (EVM).
Leadership Professional	Recognition of oral communications, flexibility, problem solving conflict management, interpersonal skills, resilience, accountability, customer service, and written communication.

Unlike other FAC programs, there is no predefined curricula for FAC-P/PM certification. Instead, agencies must define their own plan that links the competencies with learning outcomes. The FAI guidance defines five types of coursework that transcend the seven competencies.

1. **Acquisition** – Life cycle concepts, business strategy, technology development, and market research.
2. **Project Management** – Work breakdown structure, total cost of ownership, risk and opportunity management, test and evaluation, and logistics support.
3. **Leadership and Interpersonal Skills** – Effective oral and written communications, group dynamics, customer service, conflict management, accountability.
4. **Government Specific** – Acquisition roles and responsibilities, OMB's Capital Asset Planning, strategic planning and resource management.
5. **Earned Value Management** – EVM policies and methodologies, Integrated Baseline Review process, budgeting and estimating, financial management reporting.

By adopting the FAC-P/PM model, agencies will be starting with a well-constructed foundation that can be quickly mapped back to existing agency training programs and development initiatives. FAC-P/PM was originally designed to be a full-fledged competency development program, not just a training program. Agencies that recognize the value in a full competency program will save time, money and effort by adopting the FAC-P/PM model.

About the Editors

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