

Procurement Alert Notice

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: GOALS 2006

First of all, I hope all of you enjoyed a wonderful holiday during Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa and that your New Year will be happy, healthy and prosperous.



With the new year well underway, BMRA is gearing up for what appears to be a very busy year. BMRA's staff have set their goals in writing and are now committed to making it happen in 2006.

I want to share those goals with you now.

BMRA New Year Resolution: Bring Goals to Fruition in 2006

BMRA's action plan calls for across-the-board coordination and teamwork in four key areas: Courseware Development, New Business Development, Expanding Resources, and Administrative Support. Attaining the desired results and enhancements will require flexibility, coupled with personal involvement and commitment, not only on the part of BMRA management and staff, but our faculty as well. We encourage our instructors to advance their ideas, suggestions and comments throughout the year as we progress together toward bringing our goals to fruition, particularly with respect to those areas in which you would like to see improvement.

COURSEWARE DEVELOPMENT

Our highest priority is to update all CON course materials to assure equivalency with current DAU course materials and, as appropriate, alignment with requirements of the individual civilian agencies.



Completing DAU Core Curriculum





Last year, Mike Miller successfully revised and launched one of our core curriculum courses, CON 100, to meet the new DAU equivalency standards. Several sessions have been conducted and student and client responses have been favorable. Mike will continue to develop materials for the remaining CON 100 series courses during the first half of 2006. Potentially, these are excellent revenue producing courses. We anticipate that the DAU equivalent courses now on the drawing boards will become flagships for our 2006 training program.

Enhancing Classroom Tools

Development of PowerPoint presentations for all courses and instructor guide updates continue to be high priority for our Vice President of Training, Mary Ackerman.



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Distance Learning—Introducing CD-ROM Training for FTA Grantees

Tom Mara, BMRA's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) subject matter expert, and Anne Palmer Johnson, Director of Distance Learning, have teamed to produce a new revenue stream for BMRA: FTA CD-ROM based training. They have targeted late spring or early summer of 2006 for release of the first in a series of four CD-ROM courses, Orientation to Third Party Contracting (OTPC).

The target audience for OTPC will be Federal Transit Administration grantees. The primary objective of the course will be to provide a comprehensive overview of FTA and federal procurement systems and practices applicable to contracting funded with federal dollars for supplies, services and construction. Future additions to the FTA CD-ROM training line are: Basic Cost and Price Analysis, Contract Negotiations, and Contract Administration.

Continuing Education Credits & Transcripts

During 2006, BMRA is committed to becoming fully certified to award continuing education credits (CEU) for all of its courses.



Last year, Jenn Cary took on various projects for BMRA and she is looking forward to 2006 as a year of bringing them to completion. First on her list is BMRA's application to become an International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET) Authorized Provider. Once this lengthy application is completed, submitted and accepted, BMRA will be able to grant CEUs for all of our classes. BMRA soon will be able to provide our students with transcripts. The IACET application requires us to institute a tracking/transcript system. We should have every file imported and ready in just a few months.

NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

During 2005, we devoted much time and money in changing our approach to attracting new business. We will reap the rewards of our investment as we apply our newfound knowledge and effort to marketing our products and services throughout 2006.

BMRA's Executive Vice President, Mary Ackerman, will take the lead in continuing to diversify our customer base with new clients. As evidenced by BMRA's recent win of a contract award from DC Procurement, Mary's efforts have already borne fruit. Delivery is currently underway.

Creating a Compelling Professional Image

Creating verbage and images that will properly position our products and services in the marketplace has emerged as a top priority at BMRA. Last year, the entire staff participated in defining a mission statement for BMRA. This year, our Executive Vice President and VP of Education and Training, Mary Ackerman, is committed to introducing our new mission statement, along with a new BMRA logo, for the purpose of readily recognizable branding. BMRA's "new look" is expected to make its debut on BMRA's new website.

Launching the New BMRA Website

A creative, easy-to-navigate website has become a "must-have" for any business, so Jenn Cary has been assigned the "site makeover" project, which is a high priority in 2006. Along with a "new look", the website will include a "Why BMRA?" page, company and staff profiles, and a new page explaining BMRA's course certification program.

Perfecting Business Processes and IT Systems

John Dove, Vice President Operations will continue to streamline our business processes in all areas by refining and prioritizing all critical business processes whenever possible and cost-effective.

Balancing Marketing Goals



Over the holidays and throughout most of January, our proposal teams were busy preparing several proposals that were due shortly after the first of the year. We also are looking forward to receiving awards for other large proposals submitted last fall.

During 2005, we set a new record in successful responses to new solicitations. That achievement

has, however, imposed time demands that have handicapped other important marketing efforts. Therefore, our Marketing Director, Nancy Travis has reset her goals and priorities for 2006 as follows: Nancy will commit at least 25% of her time to “pure” marketing, building up to 5 to 8 customer contacts per week. Her objectives are threefold: (1) enhance relationships with current customers; (2) introduce new customers to our company, and (3) selectively exhibit at those tradeshows demonstrating a good return on investment, such as the upcoming OSDBU (Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization) Procurement Conference in April and the GSA Expo in May.

EXPANDING RESOURCES

Publication Goals: A Balancing Act

The Publications Department has two ongoing functional objectives that conflict to some extent: to produce the highest quality instructional materials and to do it as economically as possible. As always, our overarching goal for 2006 will be to balance the two. Accordingly, Publications Director, Peggy Kramer, and Publications Manager, Marilyn Holland, have set specific goals relating to quality and efficiency (cost).

Quality Goal: New texts will be more thoroughly proofread and copyedited before going to press. While subject matter experts review our materials to ensure their accuracy and substantive quality, we also need to critique our textbooks from the student’s viewpoint, addressing such considerations as understandability, language usage, and overall organization.



Efficiency Goal: We will expand and refine our document management system. In recent years we’ve tried to break course materials down into relatively independent units that can be used in different combinations. We assigned unique “control” numbers to each unit so they can be cataloged, tracked, and ordered from the printer separately.

In breaking sets of course materials down into smaller pieces, something is lost because transitions and context tend to get eliminated. The more we break things down, the more we rely on our instructors to

provide the lost information about relationships between the units.

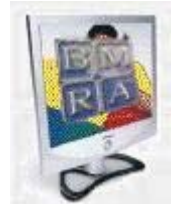
This brings us back to our quality goal: improving instructional materials to better support our instructors’ ability to maximize students’ use of our printed materials. Quality and Efficiency: Truly a balancing act.

Building Our Faculty Base

Last year we spent much time searching for and recruiting new instructors. While we were successful in our efforts we are always looking for new instructors that have experience in the contracting profession and on the platform, both in the procurement and human resources arenas. We ask both our staff and faculty to help by referring new instructors to BMRA.

Booking BMRA Classrooms

BMRA is well on its way to meeting our ongoing goal of increasing bookings for BMRA’s on-site classrooms. Both Classrooms A and B have been in use during the past three months and student evaluations have given us high marks on our classrooms. We are certainly pleased with this accomplishment.



ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Streamlining Business Practices

We have initiated many new management procedures that have integrated technology into our procedures. Most noteworthy is the system we are now using to track BMRA responses to requests for proposals and resultant contractual effort following award. As in any new system, it takes awhile for people to get used to it. However, I think most of us now feel comfortable in working with it.

Enhancements to Accounting System

Our new accounting system, which is now up and working, should enable us to more efficiently provide management with current and accurate information. However, we’ve detected a few minor bugs, including a problem on some 1099 forms. Although we believe this has been resolved, we

suggest you look over your 1099 and call our business office if you feel there is an error.

A big improvement last year was automation of our time cards. Detail is now more easily captured and our Finance Department is able to track an individual's time and the time spent on projects far more efficiently than in past years.

John Dove will continue to work with Edna Joyner and Angela Snyder in our Finance Department to realize a long-term goal that surely is near and dear to the hearts of our faculty: Paying our instructors on time, every time. To accomplish this goal, the finance team will work with our faculty to help them prepare "error-free" invoices, thus helping to eliminate unnecessary delays in processing paychecks.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT...



Michelle Robey to Leave BMRA

During her short but very productive tenure as our Administrative Assistant, Michelle played a pivotal role

as our central internal communications port. To facilitate in-house communications, Michelle set as her 2006 goal the initiation of an electronic "chron" file for BMRA correspondence. The benefits are obvious: desktop access and the ability to search not only by date, but by subject, addressee, and content as well. This will greatly facilitate in-house communications and we are hopeful Michelle's replacement will be able to pick up the reins and "make it happen."

Thank you Michelle and best wishes for your continued success as you pursue your career!

RESTRICTIONS ON CASCADING

Over the last ten years, many innovative ideas have entered into the procurement vernacular and yes, in some instance, actually changed our way of doing business. Well it hasn't stopped (and I don't believe it will) so we must be aware when these new provisions are introduced. Some are good and some should be looked at with some reservation.

The Contract Services Association (CSA), of which BMRA is a member, plays a proactive role in looking at such innovations and working to ensure they are not detrimental to businesses that support Federal Government Agencies. "Restriction on Cascading" is just one of the most recent practices they have opposed. The article below is reprinted, with permission, from the December 2005 issue of *CSA Public Policy News*.

During consideration of its version of the Fiscal Year 2006 Defense Authorization Act, the US Senate approved a provision restricting the use of a practice known as "cascading." CSA and its industry partners strongly advocated for this language, which would prohibit the use of "cascading" (or tiered evaluations) unless the contracting officer conducts market research to determine sufficient small business participation.

"Cascading" is a relatively new contracting tool in which a solicitation is issued, using full and open competition (for all large and small businesses), yet the contracting officer reserves the right to consider the offers on the basis of hierarchical tiers. Use of tiered evaluations allows the agency to evaluate proposals by socioeconomic category (i.e., HubZone qualified firms are evaluated first, 8a firms next, etc.). If at any phase of the tiered evaluation process a winner is identified, the competition comes to an end. This process makes it likely that many companies' submittals, including those of small businesses, will not be evaluated at all, resulting in the waste of valuable bid and proposal dollars.

In comments to the House and Senate conferees, the Acquisition Reform Working Group (which CSA co-chairs) stated that "Cascading appears to be primarily a tool of convenience for the Government as agencies seek to determine whether certain types of firms are capable of performing a given requirement. However, it is a poor proxy for the kind of market research that is supposed to be a part of all procurements—and which, if conducted properly, should obviate the need for cascading except in rare situations. Furthermore, the use of tiered evaluations is a fundamental departure from longstanding procurement practice, which guarantees that all bidders are fairly evaluated at the same time and under the same criteria."

CAOC APPROVES CERTIFICATION IN CONTRACTING PROGRAM

In December 2005 the Chief Acquisition Officers Council (CAOC) approved the Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) Program. In April 2005 the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) published Policy Letter 05-01, Developing and Managing the Acquisition Workforce. This Policy Letter required the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) to develop (and the CAOC to approve) a certification program for contracting professionals in civilian agencies that reflects common standards. The goal of the certification program is to standardize the education, training and experience requirements for contracting professionals, which will improve workforce competencies and increase career opportunities.

The program is similar to the requirements that the Department of Defense has established for its contracting workforce under the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA). Each agency will administer its program and FAI will periodically conduct a management review of the program.



Students might have questions in this regard. Below are selected questions and answers addressed in a Memorandum released January 20th.

What is the purpose of this program?

It is to establish core requirements for education, training, and experience for contracting professions in civilian agencies.

To whom does the program apply?

It is not mandatory for all GS-1102s; however, members of the workforce issued new Contracting Officer (CO) warrants on or after January 1, 2007, regardless of GS series must be certified at an appropriate level to support their warrant obligations, pursuant to agency policy.

Who doesn't the Requirement apply to?

This requirement does not apply to:

- Senior level officials responsible for delegating procurement authority;

- Non-1102s whose warrants are generally used to procure emergency goods and services; or
- Non-1102s whose warrants are limited as to be outside the scope of this program, as determined by the Chief Acquisition Officer (CAO).

Can waivers be granted?

Yes. The Senior Procurement Executive of a civilian agency may waive the requirement for obtaining a certification for warranting purposes in writing, on a case-by-case basis, if granting a waiver is in the best interest of the agency.

Who should provide Certification Program Oversight?

The FAI Board of Directors; in consultation with FAI, the Interagency Acquisition Career Management Council (IACMC), and other organizations as appropriate, shall provide general program oversight and shall recommend program changes to the Administrator for Federal Procurement Policy to ensure that the program reflect the needs of all civilian agencies.

Where can I find the core competencies?

The current competencies for GS-1102 workforce are maintained on the FAI website, www.fai.gov. The core competencies will periodically be updated, expanded, or otherwise modified to meet the current and future acquisition workforce requirements.

Does this program change the education requirements or the GS1102 Qualification standards?

This program does not change the education requirement in the Qualification Standard for Contract Specialist (GS-1102). In accordance with the Qualification Standard, available on www.opm.gov, persons in civilian (non-DoD) GS-1102 positions grades 5 through 12 are required to have, from an accredited institution, either 24 semester hours of business related education or a baccalaureate degree. Persons seeking positions subject to DAWIA must have both 24 semester hours of business related education and a baccalaureate degree at all grade levels.

What is meant by Continuous Learning?

Acquisition professionals are required to earn 80 continuous points (CLPs) of skills currency training every two years beginning October 1, 2007. During the transition to the FAC-C program, agencies are encouraged to be flexible on how this requirement is met initially to ensure that employees are given credit for earlier continuous learning activities. DAU equivalency is not required for continuous learning.

What are the FAC-C requirements for certification?

The FAC-C program is based on the DAWAIA requirements for certification at the junior, intermediate, and senior levels to reflect the need for an individual to meet increasingly more rigorous standards for education, training, and experience throughout his or her career. Federal certification levels are not directly associated with warrant limits as certification requirements for warrants are determined by each agency. However, agencies are encouraged to require a senior level certification for any employee issued an unlimited CO's warrant on or after January 1, 2007. The requirements for FAC-C levels I, II, and III are covered under a separate article in this PAN.

How training requirements must be met?

A candidate must meet the training requirements by taking DAU training, DAU-equivalent courses, or through fulfillment. A full list of the currently required courses and their predecessor courses is available on www.dau.mil/catalog and www.fai.gov. Candidates must provide evidence of satisfactory completion of these courses. Fulfillment may be obtained through alternative training, experience, education, and certification by a recognized organization.

OFPP POLICY LETTER No. 97-01

On September 12, 1997 the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) released Policy Letter No. 97-01 addressed to the Heads of civilian Executive Departments and Agencies. The subject of the letter is "*Procurement System Education, Training and Experience Requirements for Acquisition*



Personnel" This letter became effective 30 days after its issuance.

I believe all of BMRA's faculty members should be familiar with this letter as it places the responsibility for acquisition career management on the Head of the agency and directs the Senior Procurement Executive to ensure that the policies of the that individual are established in accordance with this Letter and are implemented throughout the agency.

This letter identifies the acquisition workforce as:

- a. All positions in the General Schedule (GS-1102) Contracting Series and non-DoD uniformed personnel in comparable positions.
- b. All Contracting Officers regardless of General Schedule series with authority to obligate funds above the micropurchase threshold.
- c. All positions in GS-1105 Purchasing Series.
- d. All Contracting Officer Representatives/ Contracting Officers Technical Representatives, or equivalent positions.

It also states that the Administrator of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy will consult with the agencies in the identification of other acquisition-related positions.

This letter also addresses Career Development and states that agencies shall identify and publish model career paths or "road maps" to ensure that contracting and other personnel interested in pursuing careers in contracting are knowledgeable of the education, training, and experience requirements for employment, progression and advancement to the most senior positions in the contracting field within the agency.

The letter provides guidance on the waiver authority for GS-1102 Education Requirements. It states that an agency's Senior Procurement Executive may, based on demonstrated analytical and decision-making capabilities, job performance, and qualifying experience, waive one of the two sets of education requirements for applicants for a GS-13 and above position based on a certification that the applicant possesses significant potential for advancement to levels of greater responsibility and authority. This waiver should be utilized only in

rare and unusual circumstances, i.e., when there are no qualified candidates readily available. This authority should be adequately documented and exercised on a case-by-case basis.

The letter also provides guidance for the Head of an executive agency to have separate funding levels for education and training of the acquisition workforce in the budget justification documents submitted in support of the President's budget submitted to Congress under section 1105 of title 31, United States Code. Funds appropriated for education and training under this section may not be obligated for any other purpose.

While this letter provides very specific guidance, that is exactly what it is—guidance. This is summed up in the final paragraph of the letter entitled Judicial Review, as stated below.

This Policy Letter is not intended to provide a constitutional or statutory interpretation of any kind and it is not intended, and should not be construed, to create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law by a party against the United States, its agencies, its officers, or any persons. It is intended only to provide policy guidance to agencies in the exercise of their discretion concerning Federal contracting. Thus, this Policy Letter is not intended, and should not be construed, to create any substantive or procedural basis on which to challenge any agency action or inaction on the grounds that such action or inaction was not in accordance with this Policy Letter.

Editor's comment: While this letter contains very good guidance and implements Section 37 of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy Act, as amended, it contains the above judicial review qualification statement (see italics), as have the Policy Letters issued in the past. This makes it very difficult to enforce this guidance or any Policy Letters issued by OFPP and it is probably one of the reasons that little attention is given to this and other Policy Letters outside of the Acquisition Community.

THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL IN 2008

This is the first in a series of articles that will appear in the PAN throughout 2006 (one of Anne PJ's goals this year) in an effort to share information gleaned at

last year's Learning 2005 Conference. A future view of "The Learning Professional in 2008" is a topic that received much attention at the conference. The discussion focused on how we are creating learning environments and experiences and addressed the question: "What are the core competencies for future learning professionals?"

Discussion Highlights

Within five years, retirement is going to have an incredible effect upon the learning profession. New employees will have only 60% of the skills required, and the workforce will be expanding globally. Learning is going to be built from a global view.



Learning professionals will have to make sure that they are a value added component of the business. They will need to understand global supply chains of learning and how they can globally distribute a training module. They will have to be learning object architects. Learning professionals will need analytical abilities. They will need to keep current on emerging trends and show their value. We will have to think of innovative ways to prove our value.

Learning Professional Competencies

- Be willing to innovate.
- Have good sense of cultural awareness.
- Use the old competency model.
- Ask participants—the "learners"— what is important to them and design learning strategically.
- Use Google (or any search engine) as a research and resource tool.
- Use webcasting and podcasting, both of which are gaining popularity because of their archival properties.
- Know how adults learn and apply those methods.

Will you be offering candy to your students this year? Maybe! "KAndy" is the contractor business strategies game developed by DAU for classroom delivery as part of the CON 100 series. Gaming, its complexities and its problem-solving components, will be featured in the next edition of the PAN.

WHILE WE'RE AWAY...

Both Annemarie and I will be taking our annual vacation in Florida, leaving late in February and return in March. Back home and in the Office will be; Mary Ackerman, Michael Miller, and John Dove our executive staff, and a host of other very reliable and helpful associates that can and will be ready to give you assistance when you need it.



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