

SYM-AM-18-037



**PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
FIFTEENTH ANNUAL
ACQUISITION RESEARCH
SYMPOSIUM**

**WEDNESDAY SESSIONS
VOLUME I**

**Acquisition Research:
Creating Synergy for Informed Change**

May 9–10, 2018

Published April 30, 2018

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

Prepared for the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA 93943.



ACQUISITION RESEARCH PROGRAM
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS & PUBLIC POLICY
NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

Embracing Structure and Discipline to Manage Challenges in the Department of Navy Acquisition Workforce

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Introduction

The Department of Navy (DoN) Acquisition Workforce Strategic Plan Fiscal Year (FY) 2016–2022 set three major goals for leaders of the Acquisition Workforce (AWF): (a) energize the workforce, (b) ensure there is a focus on professional and technical excellence, and (c) reinforce responsibility and accountability. Ensuring these goals are met, through a structured and disciplined process to build a workforce to compete and win, optimizes the DoN's ability to develop smart buyers who understand that every person matters, every day matters, and every dollar matters as we meet warfighter needs for affordable, agile, lethal capability.

The Naval Acquisition Workforce Is Itself a Major Acquisition Program

The DoN is committed to establishing and maintaining a specialized, professional, world class, agile, motivated AWF that consistently makes smart business decisions, acts in an ethical manner, and delivers timely and affordable capabilities to the warfighter. The workforce is comprised of over 60,000 Navy and Marine Corps civilian and military employees, in 14 career fields and more than 15 major commands. They are located worldwide in system command (SYSCOM) offices, research labs, industrial complexes, and test ranges. The DoN invests roughly \$7 billion per year in salaries and benefits for the AWF. This workforce is highly technical and is responsible for approximately \$60 billion of the Navy's budget per year. Within a context of legislation, regulation, and policy, they innovate, design, build, sustain, modernize, and maintain complex ships, aircraft, and vehicles with associated equipment, combat systems, weapons, and ordnance to support the DoN's military missions. Many of the major acquisition programs have life cycles exceeding 50 years and often span more than a single workforce generation.

Downsizing pressure and the focus on speed and cost control are greater than ever before. Recent sequestrations, pay freezes, and furloughs, along with associated budgetary turmoil, have had a negative effect on the AWF. With an operating environment characterized by constrained budgets, increasing threat profiles, increasing system complexity, limited competition, a shrinking industrial base, and cyber security challenges, maintaining our technological edge will require an even more innovative, astute, proactive, and responsive AWF. To operate effectively in this environment, the DoN must better understand the cost, productivity, and risk associated with AWF staffing to responsibly



manage this workforce throughout its life cycle (recruiting, hiring, developing, retaining, and retiring). Our challenge is to manage the AWF as a major acquisition program. Five enduring major acquisition program themes apply to the AWF when considering the workforce as a major program itself:

- Getting the Requirements Right—Understand the operational and technical requirements and the drivers of our workforce requirements over time.
- Performing to a Stable Plan—Hire and grow strategically, aligned to National Strategy and Naval Strategy documents.
- Making Every Dollar Count—Make every dollar count across the AWF life cycle phases. Leverage best practices and investments.
- Relying on Experienced AWF—Better define the career paths within the career fields to create experts with the proper education, training, and experience (hands-on, job rotations, industry knowledge).
- Fostering a Healthy Industrial Base—Understand the right balance of knowledge and experience between industry and government.

The Structure of the Naval Acquisition Workforce Begins With Chain of Command and U.S. Code

The DoN acquisition chain of command, responsibility, authority, and accountability flows from the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research Development and Acquisition (ASN[RD&A]) to program executive officers (PEOs) and to the program managers (PMs) supported by the systems commands (SYSCOMs). The chain of command serves several important purposes in the accomplishment of the DoN's acquisition mission. It defines responsibilities and identifies accountability, provides direction and clear communications, and promotes efficiency and effectiveness. Ensuring that the chain of command is carried through to all levels enables informed and sound business judgment in acquisition and empowers the DoN AWF to meet future challenges with resilience.

The DoN AWF must have technical and professional excellence to ensure a technological edge for our military, while balancing cost, schedule, and risk, in a complex legislative, regulatory, and dynamic policy environment. Within the DoN, strategies to strengthen the capability and capacity of this workforce continue to be a major element of emphasis, and significant efforts are on track to shape and improve productivity and quality with a focus on having the right people, in the right job, at the right time.

The Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA; 1990) and 10 U.S.C., Chapter 87 provide the foundation for a system of policies and processes used to effectively manage the AWF. The DoN AWF is represented by 14 career fields worldwide, listed in Table 1.



Table 1. DoN Acquisition Career Fields

DoN Acquisition Career Fields	
Business-Cost Estimating (BUS-CE)	Life Cycle Logistics (LCL)
Business-Financial Management (BUS-FM)	Production, Quality and Manufacturing (PQM)
Contracting (CON)	Program Management (PM)
Engineering (ENG)	Purchasing (PUR)
Facilities Engineering (FE)	Science and Technology Manager (S&TM)
Industrial/Contract Property Management (IND)	Small Business (SB)
Information Technology (IT)	Test and Evaluation (T&E)

The Mission of the Naval Acquisition Workforce Is Vital to National Security

The foundation of any organization is a set of values that connect women and men working together with focus on their mission. There is no more noble mission than to support the men and women who are protecting and serving our nation. The AWF is grounded in the values of integrity, trust, diversity, teamwork, dedicated service, and excellence. Having highly educated, highly skilled, and experienced acquisition professionals is key to providing the warfighters the products and services they need for success. For the DoN AWF, having the right people, in the right job, at the right time will translate to effective and efficient execution, delivering the finest warfighting capability in the world at an affordable price.

DoN Acquisition is a team sport. It requires us to be innovative and holistic in our thought. We recognize and embrace diversity as we recruit, develop, and retain the best and brightest to provide knowledge, oversight, and stewardship to our acquisition programs. By informed policy, sound understanding of scientific and technological advancements, and deliberate management of the AWF across all career fields, we demonstrate our commitment to our men and women in uniform who have dedicated their lives to the protection of our freedom.

The AWF must have professional and technical excellence to deliver the DoN's complex and highly technical warfighting capability. Highly educated and highly skilled professionals in engineering, cost estimating, financial management, and contracting, as well as in program management, science and technology, life-cycle logistics, information technology, facilities engineering, test and evaluation, small business, industrial/contract property management, and production quality and manufacturing, are required for the acquisition of these capabilities.

The Origin of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act

DAWIA was initially enacted by Public Law 101-510, dated November 5, 1990. This law, entitled Defense Acquisition Workforce, was subsequently incorporated into Title 10, U.S. Code, Chapter 87. The primary objective of DAWIA is to enhance the professional knowledge and capabilities of DoD personnel involved in the development, acquisition, and sustainment of warfighting capabilities, systems, and services. The law requires the DoD to establish a process through which persons in the AWF would be recognized as having



achieved professional status. It also requires the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) to establish policies and procedures for the effective management (including accession, education, training, and career development) of DoD military and civilian personnel occupying acquisition positions, referred to as members of the defense AWF. The law also requires the SECDEF to ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, that established AWF policies and procedures are uniformly implemented throughout the DoD.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Research, Development, and Acquisition)

The ASN(RD&A) serves as the service acquisition executive for the DoN. There are several key positions that support the ASN(RD&A), including the following:

- ASN(RD&A) Principal Military Deputy (PMD): The ASN(RD&A) PMD serves as the ASN(RD&A) principal deputy for executive oversight and leadership of the military AWF and as the co-chair of the Acquisition Career Council (ACC); This person plays a key role in the guidance and monitoring of the implementation of ASN(RD&A) acquisition career management efforts to ensure a qualified and capable AWF.
- ASN(RD&A) Principal Civilian Deputy (PCD): The ASN(RD&A) PCD serves as the ASN(RD&A) principal deputy for executive oversight and leadership of the civilian AWF and as the co-chair of the ACC, which plays a key role in the guidance and monitoring of the implementation of ASN(RD&A) acquisition career management efforts to ensure a qualified and capable AWF.
- Director, Acquisition Career Management (DACM): The DACM serves as the enterprise lead for the professional development and management of the Navy and Marine Corps AWF and is the chief advisor to the ASN(RD&A). This person serves as the focal point within the department for all matters related to the AWF, including strategic planning, policy development and guidance on all matters associated with DAWIA implementation.
- Director, Naval Acquisition Career Center (NACC): The NACC manages and executes the Navy Acquisition Development Program (NADP), the Acquisition Workforce Tuition Assistance Program (AWTAP) under the direction of the DACM, eDACM Support team, DAU course registration, DAU Travel, and on-site DAU training.
- DoN National Leads (NLs): DoN NLs are senior executives assigned to provide oversight of each DoN acquisition career field and to monitor the health of the acquisition career fields and promote acquisition excellence, validate the adequacy of education, training, and other developmental opportunities for respective career fields, and work with the acquisition commands to implement career paths and talent management. Note: Oversight for the PQM career field is the responsibility of DoN SYSCOMs.
- Acquisition Career Council (ACC): The ACC is a cross-competency group that consists of DoN NLs and the DACM and is co-chaired by the ASN(RD&A) principal civilian and principal military deputies. The ACC functions as an advisory council to the ASN(RD&A; see Figure 1).



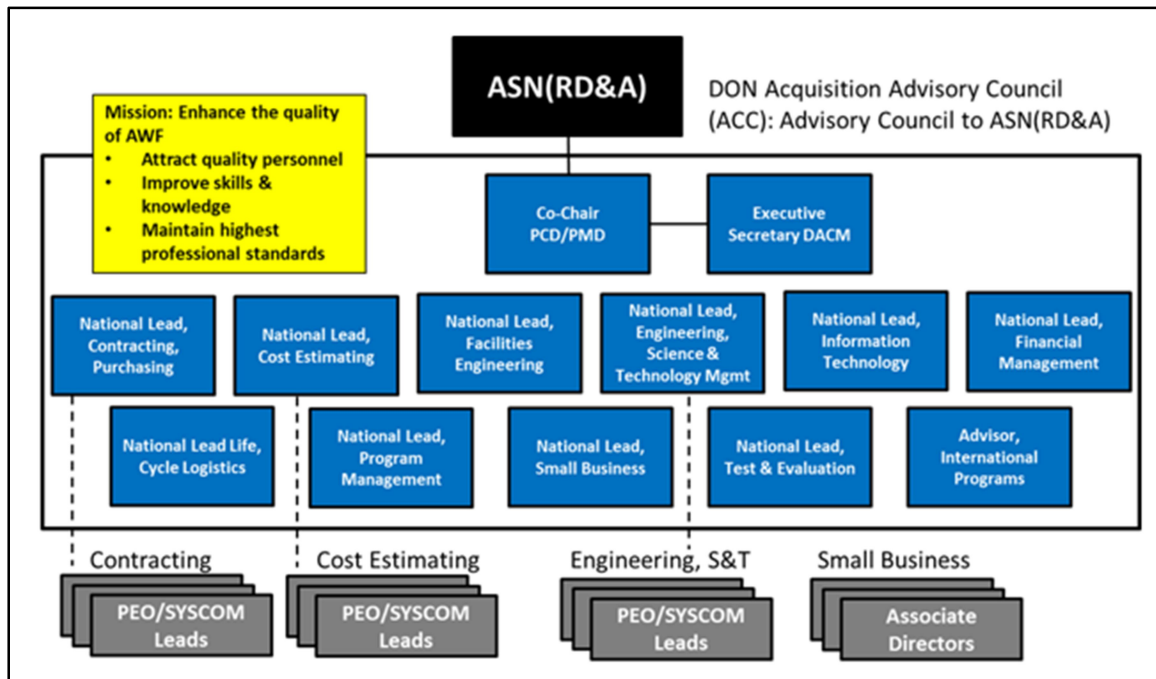


Figure 1. DoN Acquisition Career Council (ACC): Advisory Council to the ASN(RD&A)

Workforce Management Structure

Part of meeting the goal of ensuring technical and professional excellence, major acquisition commands and other organizations with significant acquisition functions must have a clearly defined management structure to support the implementation of DAWIA within the organization. The DAWIA management structure can be incorporated into an actual or virtual organizational structure. Roles and responsibilities at different levels may be consolidated if appropriate as long as the overarching goals are met.

The Governance Heartbeat

The ACC Charter

The rhythm of meetings, conversations, workshops and reports forming the foundation of AWF governance is anchored in the charter for the ACC. The group's name was chosen carefully to denote an emphasis on people and acquisition career development across all career fields over a 30+-year career life cycle. In the charter, the PCD and PMD declare that national leads shall

1. Establish a career field team
2. Meet quarterly
3. Make quarterly agendas, read-aheads, and minutes available to the ACC
4. Develop strategic implementation plans to deploy three goals from the AWF Strategic Plan
5. Define and promote productivity, innovation, and professional and technical excellence
6. Advise regarding talent management
7. Implement viable career path(s)



8. Collaborate at the ACC
9. Understand and articulate workload drivers
10. Understand and articulate links to other career fields
11. Understand and articulate sufficiency/risks of funded requirements with respect to demand signals and acquisition excellence
12. Provide progress report to ACC co-chairs (PCD and PMD)
13. Assess career field health using data, trends, and metrics to identify issues and make recommendations
14. Recommend continuous learning opportunities
15. Represent the DoN at the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) functional integrated product teams (FIPTs) and coordinate FIPT tasking with the DoN DACM
16. Nominate AWF members for acquisition awards
17. Plan for rotation of NLs (three-year term)
18. Establish annual plans and advocacy for DAWIA and other resources to support AWF career development
19. Validate the adequacy of acquisition training and development programs

Career Field Quarterly Reports

To promote effective dialog and problem-solving during meetings, the PCD directed NLs to provide a quarterly written report of progress and status. Elements of the report include

- State of the Career Field
 - Most significant accomplishment this quarter
 - Most troubling problem or issue encountered this quarter
 - Any substantial changes in CF AWF health or performance since last quarter
- Progress Implementing AWF (DoD, DoN, CF) Priorities (i.e., focus areas)
 - Progress on CF objectives and supporting initiatives. Reference progress against baseline POAM.
 - Report changes in measures that indicate progress or impact of implementing initiatives or objectives.
 - Report trend data rather than snapshot data.
 - Describe any new objectives or initiatives started since last quarter, if applicable.
 - Major actions planned (pulled from CF Action Tracker) and accomplishments expected for next quarter
- Major Problems and Issues Impacting the Career Field
 - Description of problem/issue and what has changed since last quarter
 - Steps being taken to address problem/issue
- Help Needed from RDA/PCD/PMD
 - Specific action requested
 - Next step(s) NL will take to support the requested action (e.g., draft correspondence for PCD)



Alternating ACC Meetings and AWF Summit Meetings

Participants in quarterly ACC meetings are typically the people named in the charter and a few invited guests. In alternate quarters, the PCD and PMD convene a larger meeting that includes SYSCOM and PEO flag officers and executive directors. Recent discussions suggest that soon there will be quarterly AWF summit meetings, convening the larger group on a more regular basis. Introduction of the written quarterly report precludes the need for status briefs during the meeting, and recent agendas have been constructed so that breakout groups of executive leaders (sprinkled with a mix of employees with one to three years' experience for a different point of view) can explore strategic focal problems and develop courses of action to address them.

Career Field Workspaces in the AWF War Rooms

A separate ARS 2018 paper by Clark discusses paper-based and digital war rooms developed by DACM to promote ready, relevant lateral learning across programs and career fields so that SYSCOMs, PEOs, national career field leaders, and their teams can move smartly and systematically toward managing the 60,000-member AWF like a major acquisition program. The career field workspaces in the AWF war room display content related to the ACC charter elements discussed previously. NLS often convene working group meetings in the digital AWF war room space to surround themselves with policy, models, measures, and data to guide career field development discussions.

Conclusion

Development of the AWF is a continuous and dynamic process that requires metrics and periodic re-evaluation to ensure that the AWF is meeting the demand signal dictated by the warfighter's need. Recognizing the unique skillset required by the DoD AWF, the focus continues to be on vertical and horizontal integration, increased military and civilian interaction, and an increase in diversity of thought.





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