

# Department of the Air Force

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*One Team, One Fight!*

## NPS 23rd Annual Acquisition Research Symposium



**Mr. Ruben Rios**  
Department of the Air Force (DAF)  
Director, Acquisition Career & Workforce Mgmt (DACM)  
6 May 2026



# Enabling the DAF's Warfighting Acquisition Workforce

**Mission:** Enable a world-class Acquisition workforce — ensure a professional acquisition workforce with the right competencies to execute Department of the Air Force acquisition programs

## SAF/AQ

Mr. William D. Bailey



Asst Secretary of the Air Force  
Acquisition, Technology & Logistics

## DAF DACM

Mr. Ruben Rios



Director, Acquisition Career Management

**Support to both Acquisition Executives  
Airmen, Guardians, and DAF Civilians**

## SAF/SQ

Mr. Thomas Ainsworth



Asst Secretary for Space  
Acquisition & Integration

### DAWIA Compliance



Ensures DAF compliance with law and policy

### Professional Development



Establishes acq professional development standards

### Career Field Policy



Implements career field policies across the enterprise

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# Evolution of the Workforce

~35 Yrs Ago

## DAWIA Enacted

Standardized education, training & certification requirements. Established career fields with defined competencies

2022

## Back-to-Basics (BtB)

Streamlined career fields into 6 functional areas. Simplified certification model for a more agile, tailored training approach.

2026

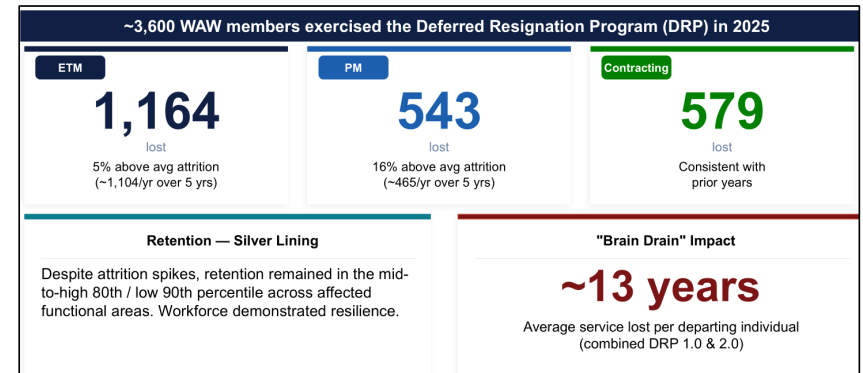
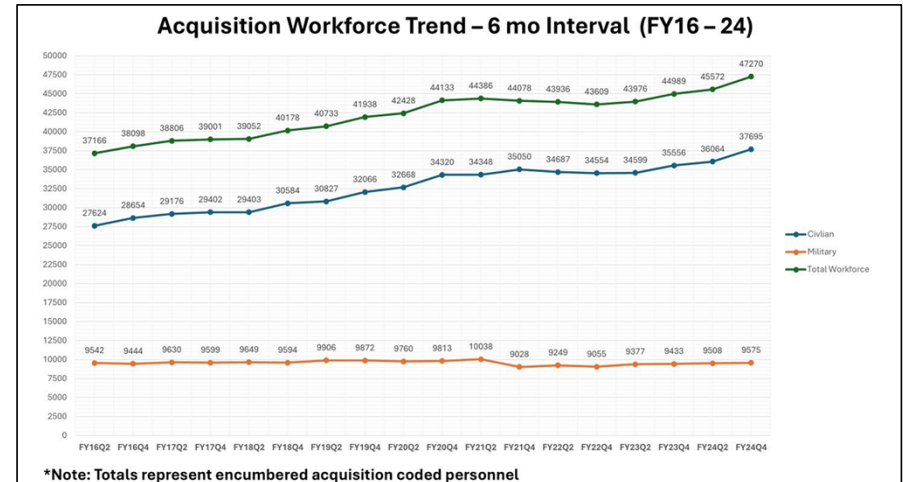
## SPEED & FoRGED Acts

Acquisition Transformation Strategy (ATS) — now the Warfighting Acquisition System (WAS). Focused on Speed, Accountability & Mission Outcomes.

Now

## Warfighting Acquisition Workforce

Shift toward Mission Acumen, Digital Acumen, and Business Acumen as essential competencies.



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# Scale & Composition Today

**44,311**

Total Acquisition Professionals

**78%**

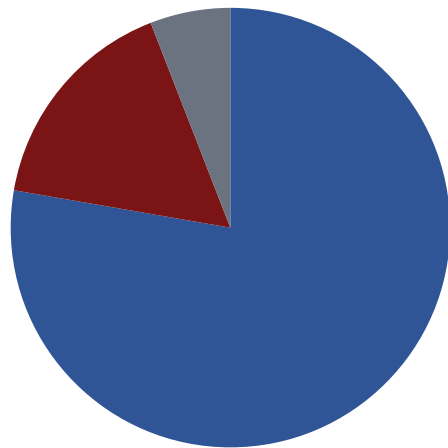
Civilian  
(34,106)

**22%**

Military  
(9,775 Off + Enl)

**73%**

Engineering, Contracting  
& Program Mgmt



■ Civilian 78% ■ Officer 16% ■ Enlisted 6%

## Functional Composition

■ Engineering & Technical Mgmt	16,426 (35.3%)
■ Contracting	9,454 (20.3%)
■ Program Management	8,169 (17.5%)
■ Life Cycle Logistics	5,029 (10.8%)
■ Test & Evaluation	4,391 (9.4%)
■ Business (FM/CE)	3,104 (6.7%)

Data: ACMS, FY26\_Q1 | Engineering, Contracting & PM ≈ 73% of total AWF

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# DRP Impact (2025)

~3,600 WAW members exercised the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP) in 2025

ETM

1,164

lost

5% above avg attrition  
(~1,104/yr over 5 yrs)

PM

543

lost

16% above avg attrition  
(~465/yr over 5 yrs)

Contracting

579

lost

Consistent with  
prior years

## Retention — Silver Lining

Despite attrition spikes, retention remained in the mid-to-high 80th / low 90th percentile across affected functional areas. Workforce demonstrated resilience.

## "Brain Drain" Impact

~13 years

Average service lost per departing individual  
(combined DRP 1.0 & 2.0)

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# Looking Ahead - Future Workforce Needs



## Digital / AI Skills

Integrating artificial intelligence and data tools into acquisition decision-making and workflow



## Data-Driven Decision Making

Leveraging analytics to improve speed, accuracy, and cost performance across programs



## Agile Acquisition Mindset

Adopting iterative, responsive approaches aligned with modern technology development cycles



## Industry Fluency

Deep understanding of commercial markets, technologies, and industry business models

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# Talent as a Strategic Advantage



## Beyond Foundational Training

Enterprise development extends beyond WarU with AFIT, AIQT, ALCP, and mission-focused training — ensuring workforce readiness for real-world execution



## Experiential Learning at Scale

Programs like Education with Industry (EWI) and career broadening assignments develop leaders with industry perspective and operational understanding



## Continuous Feedback & Adaptation

Training is shaped by senior leader input, workforce feedback, and real-world outcomes — ensuring ongoing relevance to mission needs



## Deliberate Talent Management

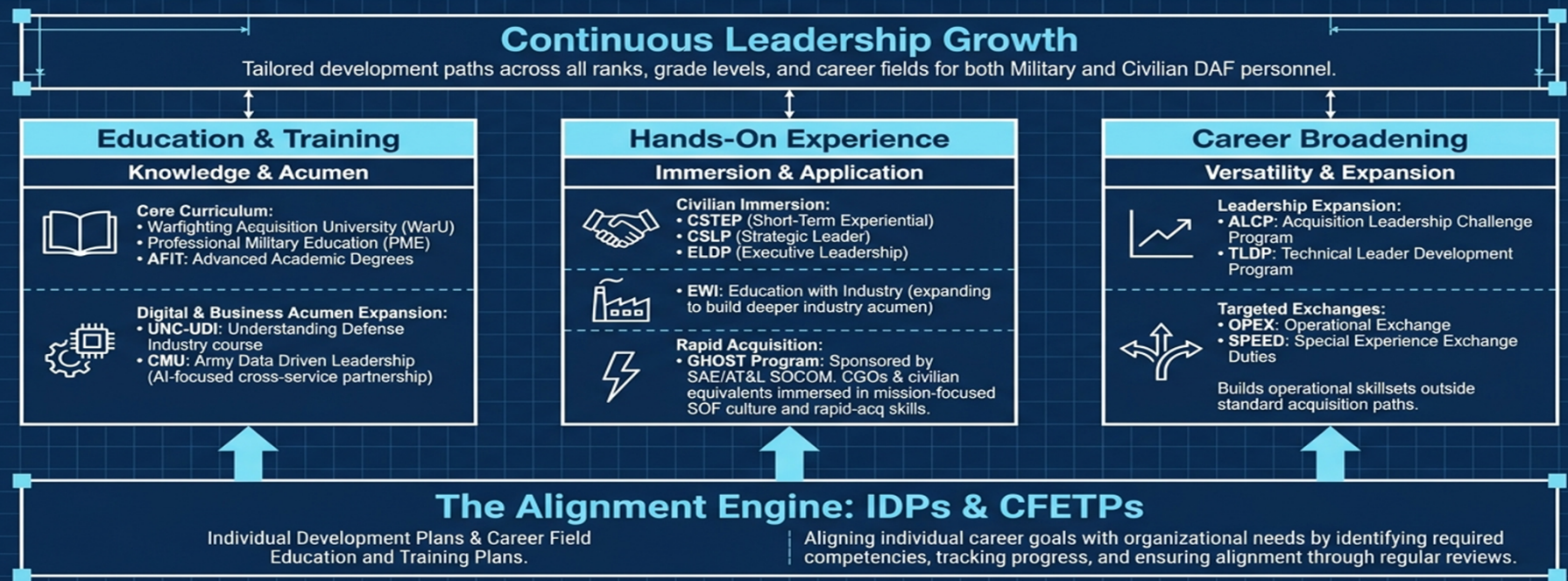
Structured programs (SPEED, TLDP, CSLP, SMART, ESEP) build a pipeline of technical experts and acquisition leaders aligned to future mission demands

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# Workforce Development

## Architecting the Acquisition Workforce: Tools, Programs, and Growth Paths



NotebookLM

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# Education & Continuous Learning

*Hands-on, experiential programs consistently earn the highest marks — exposing AWF members to new perspectives, best practices, and real-world application to produce agile, innovative leaders.*



## Education with Industry (EWI)

Consistently praised for exposing AWF members to industry best practices and broadening technical and management competencies



## Career Broadening Assignments

Experiential rotations providing AWF members with diverse perspectives and leadership experience across the acquisition enterprise



## Emerging Leader Seminar (ELS) & EIG

Highly regarded civilian development programs with strong workforce feedback — enduring offerings in the CD portfolio



## Senior Developmental Education (SDE)

Eisenhower School – SAC Program viewed as highly effective in developing senior acquisition leaders



## SMART Scholarship & STEM+M

Recognized for developing technical talent and providing mission-critical skills unobtainable through conventional means

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# Key DAF Initiatives

- **Acq Initial Qual Trng: Building Guardian Acquisition Professionals** - 10-week pilot for Space Force Guardians transitioning into acquisition (2025); partnered with WarU; industry exposure, senior leader mentorship, capstones. 2nd cohort: Summer 2026. Institutionalization: FY2028.
- **EWI Expansion: Scaling Industry Immersion** - 80 participants FY25 (51 officers, 16 civilians, 13 enlisted). AY2026/27: 5–10% more participants. Target AY2028: Senior Track EWI for O-5/O-6 and civilian equivalents.
- **Expand Acq Leadership Challenge Program (ALCP): Leadership Competency at Every Level:** Four-tier structure (B/I/II/III) from entry-level to senior organizational leadership. Offerings significantly increased CY25. Bridges technical proficiency and organizational leadership.
- **Revolutionary FAR Overhaul Training - Keeping the Contracting Force Current** - Three-phase delivery on FAR overhaul changes—what changed, what stayed, and how it applies across acquisition phases and other transaction authorities.
- **Partnering with Other Service DACMs/DATMS – Don't replicate – leverage each others programs to the greatest extent possible**



## Training

Experiential learning programs  
build technical depth and  
mission acumen



## Experience

Industry exposure and  
rotational assignments  
accelerate practical capability



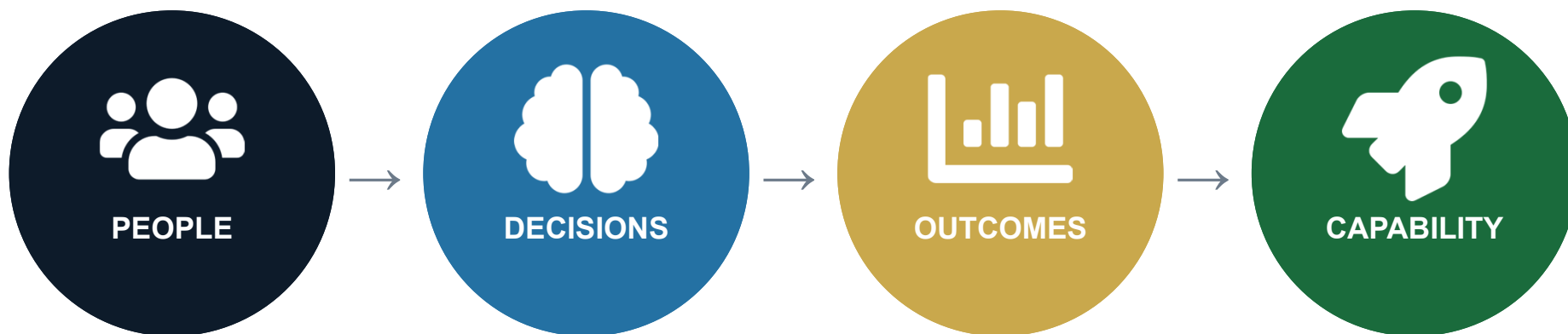
## Impact

Experiential learning programs  
build technical depth and  
mission acumen

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# Accelerating Capability Through People



Investment in talent & leadership

Better technical & business judgment

Cost · Speed · Risk reduction

Mission delivered faster, at scale

### Cost Avoidance

Improved negotiation outcomes

### Speed to Delivery

Accelerated program timelines

### Risk Reduction

Better technical decisions

### Industry Engagement

Stronger partnerships

***Talent drives acquisition outcomes — not just processes***

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# ***BACK UP/REFERENCE***

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# ***DACM Office - What We Do***

## **APDP Compliance & Policy**

DAF lead for DAWIA and APDP compliance. Develops and communicates acquisition career management policy across MAJCOMs, Space Force commands, and other DoD agencies. Maintain controls for APDP business system security and PII.

## **Workforce Identification & Coding**

Partners with commands and HR offices to identify and code DAF acquisition positions across DCPDS and MILPDS, ensuring accurate workforce data.

## **Training Management & ACQ Now**

Manages WarU course registration, certification tracking, event management, waivers and continuous learning — powered by the ACQ Now platform.

## **DAWDA Program Management**

Manages the \$48M Defense Acquisition Workforce Development Account to fund training, tuition assistance, tools, and recruiting/retention initiatives.

## **Data Analysis & Strategic Comms**

Delivers workforce analytics, manages the DAF Portal, APDP Info Hub, and AF website, and supports senior leadership and partner organizations with data-driven insights.

## **Help Desk & Customer Support**

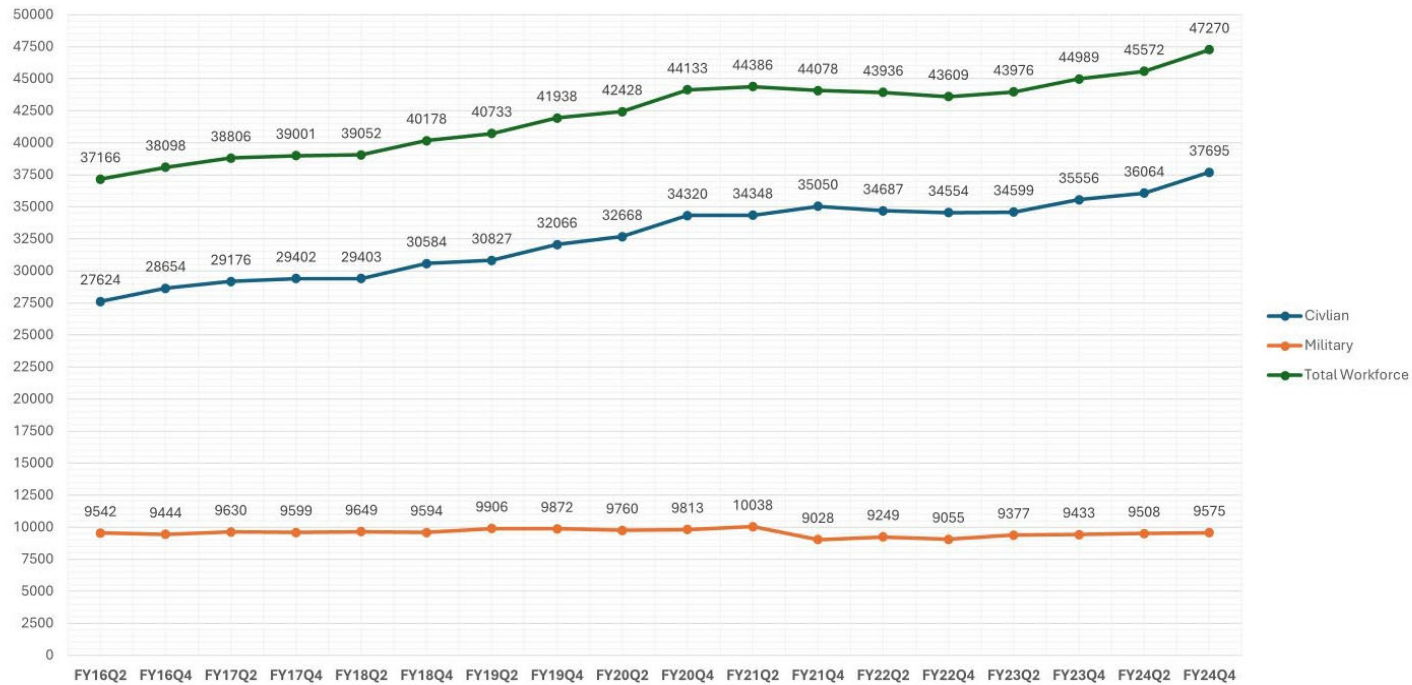
Fields and resolves workforce inquiries on certifications, course registrations, record issues, continuous learning, waivers and other APDP topics via the ACQ Now help desk.

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# Workforce Growth Over The Last Decade

## Acquisition Workforce Trend – 6 mo Interval (FY16 – 24)



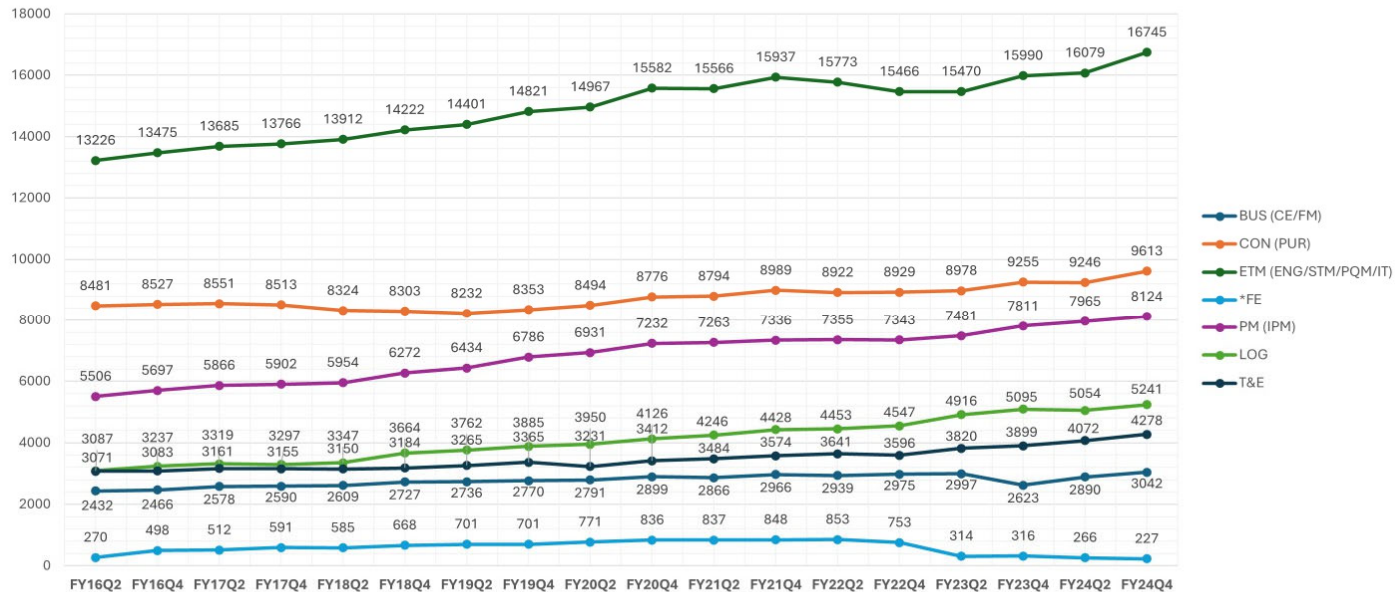
\*Note: Totals represent encumbered acquisition coded personnel

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# Workforce Growth Over The Last Decade

## Functional Area Acq Workforce Trend – 6 mo Interval (FY16 – 24)



\*Totals represent encumbered acquisition coded personnel

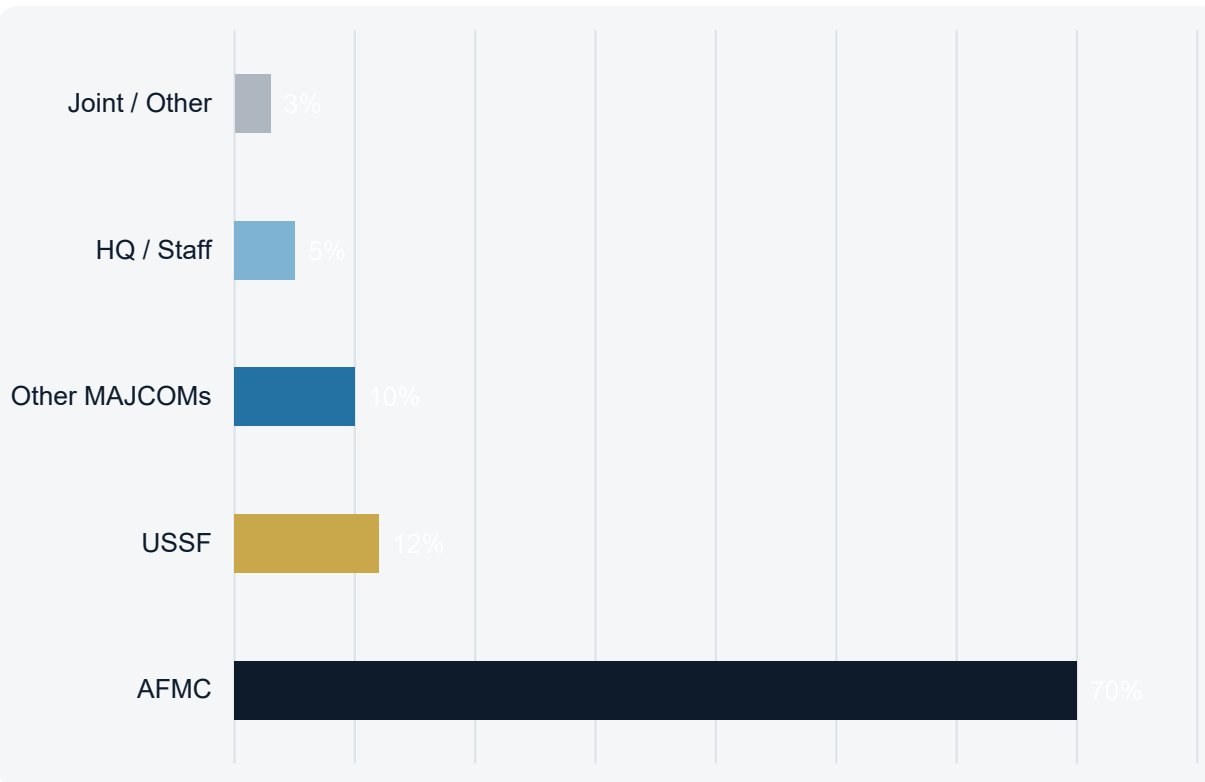
\*\*FY22Q2 Back-to-Basics began; eliminated acquisition coding from Facility Engineer (FE)

\*\*\*Back-to-Basics led to subsuming Functional Areas ENG, IPM, IT, PQM, PUR, STM

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# Acquisition Workforce: Distribution



**Center of Gravity**

# AFMC

~70% of acquisition execution workforce

**USSF**  
Growing space acquisition presence

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