

Job Rotation Opportunities for Acquisition Professionals: Assisting the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

FEDERAL ACQUISITION INSTITUTE ANNOUNCEMENT

The federal government is committed to an unprecedented level of transparency and accountability with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding. The resources provided under ARRA are in addition to existing acquisition programs and as a result, may create additional opportunities for temporary assignments in planning, awarding, managing, and overseeing contracts in support of acquisition programs.

This provides unique career development opportunities for acquisition professionals seeking to enhance existing or gain new competencies. The Federal Acquisition Institute, as the executive agent for the Federal Acquisition Intern Coalition, has added this new section to the FAIC rotation program site.

This site allows agencies to post rotation opportunities and provides the workforce a central location for acquisition rotation opportunities. Each rotation assignment describes the associated competencies to be gained and allows acquisition professionals an opportunity to gain experience while assisting with the ARRA objectives.

Agencies interested in posting rotation opportunities or interagency team assignments should submit information using the form found at www.fai.gov/RecoveryActRotationAssignments.asp.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Training Products and Services

The Federal Acquisition Institute is aligned to support agencies' efforts in preparing the workforce to meet additional challenges resulting from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act) of 2009. Outlined at www.fai.gov/pdfs/FAI.OnepagerRecoverAct.pdf is a list of training, products, and services available to the acquisition workforce as identified in the Recovery Act. For more information on the outlined programs, refer to the FAI Web site www.fai.gov.

DARPA Hosts Over 200 Service Chiefs' Interns

DEFENSE ADVANCED RESEARCH PROJECTS AGENCY NEWS RELEASE (MARCH 4, 2009)

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency has hosted over 200 Service Chiefs' Interns since the program began in 2002. DARPA's Service Chiefs' Interns program exposes mid-level career military officers and National Geospatial Intelligence Agency employees to the DARPA mission

and increases their awareness of DARPA research programs. Interns spend three months immersed in DARPA technology development activities. Upon return to their parent commands, these officers become ambassadors who can explain technical advances underway and provide advice to their leadership on how to take advantage of DARPA programs to enhance Service and joint warfighting capabilities.

During their time at DARPA, interns attend meetings and briefings with DARPA's senior leadership and visiting dignitaries. They meet individually with DARPA program managers to learn about ongoing technology development efforts, and to provide feedback and suggestions from a military user's point of view. The interns also visit DARPA contractor research locations at large and small businesses and government laboratories and universities. During their contractor visits, the interns are able to experience DARPA technologies in person and gain a better understanding of the future of DoD science and technology. The interns select DARPA programs of particular interest, and plan their visits and interactions accordingly.

"The Service Chiefs' Interns program is a vital way to connect DARPA and the warfighter. DARPA benefits from the insights the interns bring from their deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan. We are able to show them some of the newest technology we're working on, and they take that knowledge on to their next military assignments," explained Chris Earl, program manager of the Service Chiefs' Intern program.

Army Capt. Paul K. Chappell has written an article in *Air Defense Artillery* about his experience. His enthusiasm is echoed by other interns, including one who noted, "The intern program is highly important, especially now when our nation is at a time of war. The ability to get people who've just come back from the fight to help improve our science and technology efforts is something that is tremendously important to this country."

Servicemembers interested in participating in the program will find further information at www.darpa.mil/transtern.html.

New Pentagon Civilian Personnel System Faces Review

Gerry J. Gilmore

AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE (MARCH 16, 2009)

WASHINGTON—The Defense Department will undertake a comprehensive review of the National Security Personnel System to ascertain whether it is fair and transparent to participating employees, a senior Pentagon official said.

Deputy Defense Secretary William J. Lynn III directed the NSPS review, Brad Bunn, the Defense Department's program executive officer for NSPS told Pentagon Channel and American Forces Press Service reporters. Lynn is the senior civilian executive overseeing NSPS at the Pentagon.

The Pentagon's review will provide officials the opportunity to "look at the [NSPS] system in a comprehensive manner, to understand how it has been operating, and to chart a path forward for the future of NSPS and how it is going to go forward in the Department of Defense," Bunn said.

The Office of Personnel Management and the Defense Department will conduct the review jointly, Bunn said, adding that it probably will take "several months" to complete.

The scheduled transfer this spring and fall of about 3,000 additional Defense Department civilians into NSPS will be delayed pending the outcome of the review, Bunn said.

"We're going to delay any further conversions of organizations and employees into NSPS while leadership can conduct this review," Bunn said. Members of Congress, other federal agencies, personnel experts, labor organizations, and other stakeholders, he said, will be included as part of the review process.

The more than 200,000 Defense Department civilians who have been transferred into NSPS since the system began three years ago, Bunn said, will continue to operate under current NSPS policies and procedures. Most defense civilians who were slated for transfer into NSPS already have done so, he said.

NSPS was developed as part of former Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld's program to transform the way the Defense Department does business to better meet the challenges of the 21st century. The NSPS, a pay-for-performance system, replaced 50-year-old civil service rules that rewarded employees for length of service, rather than performance.

"NSPS is a pretty significant change in how we hire, pay, and compensate, and reward our civilian employees who support the national security mission in the Department of Defense," Bunn said.

There are "varying viewpoints that exist out there on NSPS," Bunn acknowledged. Internal surveys, he said, indicate that some defense employees are unhappy with NSPS, particularly with regard to performance evaluations.

"There are questions and concerns about the fairness of the system, its transparency, whether it is actually being operated based on the design principles," Bunn said. "So, those kinds of questions are being asked, and those are the concerns that a review will focus on."

The department is committed to operating fair, transparent, and effective personnel systems, Bunn said.

"And this review is a demonstration of that commitment," he said.

Science, Engineering Jobs Available To Transitioning Airmen

Air Force Maj. Beth Kelley Horine

*AIR FORCE PERSONNEL CENTER PUBLIC AFFAIRS NEWS RELEASE
(MARCH 17, 2009)*

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas—Air Force science and technology civil service career fields are in need of trained and educated applicants, which is ideal for veterans interested in post-military careers.

Science, technology, engineering, and math, called STEM, initiatives are available to train and educate transitioning airmen, or directly hire veterans coming from technical career fields and place them into needed federal jobs in the STEM fields.

At the Air Force Personnel Center, civilian jobs in science and engineering are available for skilled veterans. Historically, Air Force officials hire 500 to 600 civilian scientists and engineers per year, said Saul Ortigoza, AFPC's scientist and engineer career program administrator.

"This number is even bigger if you consider the civil engineering and the communications and information career fields as well," he added.

Numerous STEM programs exist to assist applicants in higher education leading toward careers in science, technology, engineering, and math. If interested in a STEM career in Air Force civil service, visit <www.afpc.randolph.af.mil> and click on the USAJOBS link under the "AF Civilian Employment" tab.

One newly created STEM program targets transitioning non-commissioned officers interested in post-military careers in science and technology. The NCO Enhanced Workforce in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, or NEW-STEM, initiative offers funded education and federal job placement. Part of a partnership between the Air Force and the Tennessee Valley Authority, NEW-STEM links NCOs (ranks E-5

through E-9) leaving military service with federal agency job openings in the North Alabama area.

“Government leaders have recently identified a shortage of scientists and engineers in the U.S., and with technically trained NCOs leaving military service, the NEW-STEM initiative hopes to capitalize on their training with further education and job advancement opportunities in federal civil service,” said Joseph M. McDade Jr., the director of force development for the Air Staff personnel directorate.

“The Air Force A1 community, in the spirit of good stewardship, is serving as a liaison between Air Force transition offices and the TVC to promote the NEW-STEM program, as it benefits our enlisted folks transitioning out of the Air Force,” McDade said.

Participating Department of Defense agencies include the Missile Defense Agency and the Aviation and Missile Research, Development and Engineering Center. MDA and AMRDEC have identified 10 positions to fill in the next three to four years requiring advanced education in scientific and technical areas.

“The NEW-STEM program leverages existing skill sets with federal agencies in need of scientists, engineers, and mathematicians,” said Lt. Col. Charles Arnold, the deputy chief of the Air Force Learning Division and chief of the Air Force Voluntary Education Branch at the Pentagon.

“Overall, any STEM program—be it through the Air Force or other federal agencies—is a win-win situation for veterans trying to find jobs in today’s challenging economy and for the governmental agencies in need of experienced, technical leaders,” he said.

The NEW-STEM initiative will choose candidates based on prescreening qualifications set by participating federal agencies, which includes a desire to pursue an engineering degree, acceptance to the University of Alabama in Huntsville, have eligible GI Bill benefits to use, and interviews with federal human resource representatives. Once selected, candidates will attend a special orientation given by UA Huntsville, will take a math placement test and, while working on their degree, participate in a paid co-op program through the participating federal agency. Upon graduation, the participants will permanently fill the federal job opening for which they were hired.

For additional details about the NEW-STEM eligibility requirements, how to apply and the program benefits, visit <www.tennvalleycorridor.org>. For information about civilian

STEM jobs with the Air Force, visit <www.afpc.randolph.af.mil> or call the Total Force Contact Center at 800-525-0102.

AF Officials Cite Quicker Process For Filling Acquisition Jobs

Air Force 2nd Lt. Gina M. Vaccaro

AIR FORCE PERSONNEL CENTER PUBLIC AFFAIRS (APRIL 6, 2009)

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas—In an effort to speed up hiring in the critically manned acquisition career fields, Air Force Personnel Center officials here announced a streamlined process to fill key civilian jobs in half the time.

The growing shortage in acquisition positions resulted in Department of Defense officials authorizing components to forego the typical hiring process in order to fill the vacancies more quickly.

There are approximately 16,000 acquisition positions in the Air Force in various career fields including: auditing, business, financial management, contracting, information technology, logistics, engineering, and science and technology management. The accelerated hiring policy pertains to mid- and senior-level positions and will be in effect through September 2012.

“Across the DoD, the acquisition workforce was short and needed to be rebuilt,” said Michelle Siples, a human resource specialist at AFPC. “The Air Force has seen a loss of experienced civilian employees due to retirements and other reasons and has been faced with critical skills gaps in filling mid-level and higher positions in the acquisition fields.”

The updated policy makes the civilian application process easier and more efficient for specified undermanned jobs. Interested parties will be able to submit their applications directly to the organization in which they would like to work. In turn, the organizations will be able to appoint qualified personnel directly to an open position without going through the typical application process.

“This accelerated hiring process will save a considerable amount of time for employers and applicants,” Siples said. “The policy will assist the Air Force in filling these critical positions and make it easier for a qualified individual to be hired on the spot, cutting down the recruitment process significantly.”

One of the challenges in filling these shortage positions is they require both experience in the field and specific educational backgrounds targeted to the job.

“Speeding up the hiring process does not negate the qualifications an individual has to meet to be hired,” she added. “It is a priority for the Air Force to fill these vital positions quickly to fill the needed space and reduce the workload for the current employees. All job-specific requirements, certifications, and qualifications still apply.”

While applicants will submit their resumes and supporting documents to the specific installations, all vacancy announcements will be posted on the Office of Personnel Management’s USAJOBS Web site at <www.usajobs.gov>.

Individuals may contact the local Air Force employment office, called the civilian personnel flight, at their nearest installation for more information. Applicants also are encouraged to visit the civilian employment Web page on AFPC’s “Ask” Web site to view the public notice. The site has information about how to apply, a list of vacancies and locations, a link to the qualification standards, and a link to the USAJOBS vacancy announcement.

AMSC Offers Interim Distributed Learning

Jennifer Brennan-Erickson

ARMY MANAGEMENT STAFF COLLEGE NEWS (APRIL 16, 2009)

Army Management Staff College has launched interim distributed Learning (dL) for three of its Civilian Education System (CES) courses to better serve its current and incoming students. Due to difficulties students at various locations have experienced with accessing lessons online, AMSC will offer the interim dL in the CES Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced courses while it continues the process of completing content updates and addressing technology challenges.

“AMSC is very aware of the challenges students are experiencing with accessing dL. Many of these problems are outside our control. We are working vigorously to correct what is under our control and to find solutions to mitigate problems that are not under our control,” said Dean of Academics Pamela Raymer. Instead of working through lessons online, students will be able to download all assignments and readings from the AMSC Web site at <www.amsc.belvoir.army.mil>. Enrolled students will also be informed via Web links in e-mails from the office of the AMSC Registrar. The links will bring students to a Web page that will include instructions on where to download readings and assignments. Students currently enrolled in the Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced courses will have options depending on how much dL material they’ve completed.

The interim dL will be available through September 2009. AMSC will provide updates as technology improvements progress and content upgrades are completed. Check the

AMSC Web site for updates. Above all, AMSC has developed this method to meet the needs of both current and new students.

In addition to the dL preparations, the faculty and staff are eagerly preparing for the students’ next phase of the CES courses—the resident phase.

“We look forward to seeing you at our resident phases for the BC, IC, and AC,” Raymer said.

For questions about the interim dL, contact the AMSC dL Help Desk at 703- 805-4720 or dLteam@conus.army.mil.

Brennan-Erickson is a Marketing Specialist/Public Affairs Officer for the Army Management Staff College.

Need A Refresher on DoD Best Practices?

The DoD Acquisition Best Practices Clearinghouse is now live at <<https://bpch.dau.mil/Pages/default.aspx>>. Many government organizations have attempted to develop systems to capture best practices or lessons learned, but have fallen short of success because guidance based on experience is missing, and the gap between “what is a best practice?” and “how do I implement it?” often isn’t addressed. The Defense Acquisition University has partnered with elements of the office of the secretary of defense to carefully design and implement the DoD Acquisition BPCh to provide an integrated set of processes and resources enabling users to share experiences and identify practices through evidence of practice effectiveness in environments like their own. Using this evidence-based approach, users can quickly browse, filter, and search stored evidence in a contextual manner that leads them to lessons and practices relevant to their particular program or issues. Note: Best practices are cross-referenced to career fields (job functions) for easy reference.