

Civilian Career Development Program Update

Rotational Career-developing Assignments for A&T Employees — An Initial Success

DR. JOSEPH FERRARA

On May 31, 1996, the USD(A&T) announced the establishment of a new career development program for OUSD(A&T) civilians at grades GS-13 through the Senior Executive Service. The purpose of the program is to provide an opportunity for OUSD(A&T)'s career civilian employees to complete long-term rotational assignments in government or industry. The intent is for rotational assignments to be voluntary, flexible, tailored to individual needs, and broadly based.

Since the announcement of the program, several A&T civilians have begun to participate. For example, an SES member from the office of the Director of Defense Research and Engineering will be doing a rotational assignment as a University Professor at the Uniformed Services University for the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland. Other participants are now planning assignments in the Components and with private industry. In addition, OUSD(A&T) is accepting individuals from other DoD Components for assignments in A&T. The Army, for instance, has sent a GS-15 ICAF graduate to do a one-year assignment with the Acquisition Program Integration (API) office.

Potential Candidate Organizations

Candidate organizations for developmental assignments would include OUSD(A&T), other organizations within

the Department, private sector organizations, other U.S. Government departments and agencies, even government departments of other nations. The program is *entirely voluntary*; no one will be required to participate in this program. The program will be available for career civilian staff members in grades GS-13 to the Senior Executive Service (SES) levels.

Program Objectives

This program will help both the overall A&T organization and individual members of the career staff to accomplish two key objectives. First, it will increase organizational productivity and effectiveness by providing A&T with a broader perspective and increased appreciation for diverse mission requirements. Second, it will broaden the ex-



Ferrara is the Executive Secretary to the Board and Executive Committee, Civilian Career Development Program. He is a member of the OUSD(A&T)/API staff.

perience base of the A&T career staff. The career development program will provide an opportunity for A&T employees to refresh their skills, learn more about other organizations, and gain additional career experience. It's the right thing to do for the organization and for our career professionals.

Program Management

The A&T Civilian Career Development Board will provide overall guidance and direction. This Board will be led by the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology (PDUSD[A&T]) and will consist of A&T executives (career and non-career). The PDUSD(A&T) will also appoint one career staff member each from the ranks of GS-13 through GS-15 to serve on the Board. In addition, the USD(A&T) has established an Executive Committee to support the Board by assisting A&T supervisors in program implementation. The Executive Committee consists of five members chosen by the Board; its membership and chairmanship will rotate biennially. The Director of Acquisition Program Integration will serve as the first chair of the Executive Committee (the charter of the Board and Executive Committee are outlined in the booklet).

How Does the Program Work?

The program depends fundamentally on the initiative and enthusiasm of individual A&T employees and their supervisors. The program is *voluntary* – individual staff members who want to complete developmental assignments in other organizations need to take the initiative to identify candidate organizations that may be interested in accepting them for developmental assignments.

While the success of the program depends on this type of personal initiative, there are resources upon which interested staff members can draw to help them identify potential assignments. The most important resource is the employee's immediate supervisor. Consult with him or her about your career plans and the types of profes-

sional experiences you would like to pursue. Another important resource is the Executive Committee. A central role of the Executive Committee is to act as an agent for staff members interested in identifying developmental assignments.

Finally, applicants are required to complete and submit an Individual Development Plan (IDP). The IDP is a basic "roadmap" of an individual's career objectives and the steps he or she plans to take to achieve these objectives. Completion of the IDP is a very useful exercise that will help applicants clarify their career goals and identify appropriate developmental assignments. The IDP form is included in the Information Booklet.

"Imports" and "Exports"

While the focus of the USD(A&T)'s initiative is on providing a supportive structure for A&T employees (our "exports") to seek out and complete challenging developmental assignments in other organizations, it is important that the entire defense acquisition and technology community, including the Military Departments and Defense Agencies, provide similar opportunities. A key element of enriching the career development of the Department's acquisition professionals is facilitating exchanges between organizations. Such exchanges provide an opportunity for employees to develop new skills and broaden their perspectives.

To facilitate this aspect of the program, the Board and Executive Committee will work closely with the Military Departments and Defense Agencies to identify individuals within their organizations (our "imports") who are interested in completing developmental assignments within OUSD(A&T). In addition, the Board and Executive Committee shall coordinate "import" personnel actions with the Director of A&T Administration to ensure compliance with Administrative Instruction 53, "Temporary Staff Augmentation." The A&T career development program is *not* intended to augment the OUSD(A&T) staff.

Types of Developmental Assignments

Staff members are encouraged to seek developmental assignments in a variety of organizations: within the Department, in other government agencies, in the private sector and academia, and in government departments of other nations. There is no "standard" assignment; each rotation will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis to ensure that it meets the needs of the staff member, A&T, and the "receiving" organization in which the staff member will be accepting an assignment.

To the greatest extent practicable, the A&T Civilian Career Development Program shall take advantage of administrative arrangements that *already exist* to support developmental assignments (e.g., temporary details, leaves of absence, internships, etc.) to implement the program. The main role of the A&T career development program is to establish a supportive management structure to assist employees in meeting their career development objectives and to help the overall organization become more productive.

Applicants should note that certain types of assignments may be more difficult to secure than others. For example, procurement integrity and conflict-of-interest statutes *may* prohibit certain staff members from accepting a developmental assignment with a defense contractor. Program participants shall work with the Executive Committee and the General Counsel's Standards of Conduct office to ensure that all government-to-industry and industry-to-government assignments are in full compliance with applicable statutes and regulations to avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest. This requirement is particularly important in the case of private sector organizations with which the Department does business.

Duration of a Developmental Assignment

Developmental assignments will generally be one year in duration, although a range of six months to three years is

permissible. The intent is for assignments to be of sufficient duration to provide a meaningful experience for the employee. Employees interested in multi-year assignments outside the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area should be aware that such assignments may impact state residency and state tax status.

Employee Rights

While on developmental assignment, A&T staff members are still employed by A&T. Therefore, the employee never leaves his or her position of record and continues to receive his or her full compensation package. While not formally a movement from one position to another, a developmental assignment under this program is considered to meet the definition of rotation for purposes of the five-year review of employees serving in critical acquisition positions. The five-year review is a requirement of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act. It is important to note that acceptance of a developmental assignment is a neutral choice as far as downsizing considerations. An employee incurs no more or no less risk by accepting a developmental assignment.

Performance Evaluations

The employee's home A&T organization will evaluate his or her performance for the period of the developmental assignment and will be the decision authority for any performance awards, quality step increases, or within-grade increases. The performance evaluation will be based on appropriate input from the employee's supervisor at the receiving organization.

Funding

The exporting and importing organizations will work together to arrange an equitable sharing of program costs. In general, Temporary Duty (TDY), training, per diem, and associated costs for program participants shall be borne by the individual's home organization, except that the receiving organization shall normally bear any costs *directly* related to the

individual's assignment while in the receiving organization.

Eligibility

Eligibility criteria are as follows:

- A&T staff members at grades GS-13 through SES (including Defense Support Activity employees).
- Most recent two performance evaluations at "Fully Successful" or above.

How To Apply

To apply, eligible employees should follow these steps:

- Discuss your intentions to seek a developmental assignment with your immediate supervisor.
- Solicit your supervisor's assistance in identifying developmental assignments that complement your career development plans.
- Complete a Statement of Interest and Individual Development Plan.
- Prepare an up-to-date resumé or job application form.
- Have your immediate supervisor *fill out the appropriate sections of these forms*.
- Submit your application, IDP, and resumé to the points of contact listed at the conclusion of this article.

How Assignments are Approved

In general, assignment approval is based on the employee and his or her immediate supervisor reaching agreement on the location and duration of the developmental assignment. If the employee and immediate supervisor agree on the specifics and are able to secure an appropriate assignment, then no higher-level approval is necessary (although some coordination with higher-level management may be necessary). In reviewing employee proposals, supervisors shall take into account the quality of the employee's supporting rationale and IDP.

In those cases where both the employee and immediate supervisor agree that completing a developmental assignment would be beneficial to the employee and the organization, *but* are unable to secure an assignment, the

Executive Committee will provide assistance to the employee and the immediate supervisor in identifying challenging assignments.

In *all cases*, employees should take the steps outlined in the "How to Apply" paragraph discussed previously. The application form, IDP, and resumé will serve as a central database for use by the Board and Executive Committee to monitor program status and implementation.

Required Paperwork

Program participants should be aware that, depending on the type of assignment being sought, there may be paperwork requirements in addition to that described previously. For example, an employee setting up an assignment with a defense contractor would need to complete certain forms as specified by the General Counsel's Standards of Conduct Office.

Program Status

The Executive Committee shall convene at least once a quarter to review applications. The purposes of this review shall be to:

- determine if there are any employees who require the Executive Committee's assistance in identifying developmental assignments;
- assign Committee members to intervene on behalf of employees requiring assistance. Assigned Committee members shall attempt to *match developmental* assignment application requests with available positions in other organizations; and
- assess overall program status.

The *Board* shall convene at least once a year to review overall program status and modify the program as appropriate.

Editor's Note: For more information, please contact **Dr. Joseph Ferrara** at (703)697-3459 or **Julie Bigler** at (703)697-9507. Ferrara is the Executive Secretary to the Board and Executive Committee. Bigler is a Personnel Analyst with OUSD(A&T) Administration.