



## DoD Announces Civilian Acquisition Workforce Personnel Demonstration Project



AT A PENTAGON CEREMONY ON FRIDAY, APRIL 17, PROJECT MANAGER GREG GIDDENS FROM THE OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (ACQUISITION AND TECHNOLOGY), DELIVERED A COPY OF THE *FEDERAL REGISTER* TO FORMER ACTING DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (ACQUISITION REFORM), DONNA RICHBOURG AND DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (CIVILIAN PERSONNEL POLICY), DR. DIANE DISNEY. BY ANNOUNCING DoD'S PROPOSED CIVILIAN ACQUISITION WORKFORCE PERSONNEL DEMONSTRATION PROJECT IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*, GIDDENS AND THE OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT FULFILL AN OBLIGATION, BY LAW, TO PUBLISH A NOTICE OF INTENT TO IMPLEMENT THE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT. PICTURED FROM LEFT: PAT STEWART, CIVILIAN PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT SERVICES; DR. JAMES McMICHAEL, DIRECTOR, ACQUISITION EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT; GIDDENS; RICHBOURG; DISNEY; HELEN ONUFRAK, OPM PROJECT MANAGER, DEMONSTRATION PROJECT TEAM; RICHARD CHILDRRESS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, ACQUISITION WORKFORCE PERSONNEL DEMONSTRATION PROJECT; THOMAS GARNETT, PRINCIPAL DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (CIVILIAN PERSONNEL POLICY).

of members of the acquisition workforce; and (2) the rest are supporting personnel assigned to work directly with the acquisition workforce. As proposed, this project will include various organizational elements of the Air Force, Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, Defense Accounting and Finance Service, Defense Information Systems Agency, and Defense Logistics Agency.

The Department of Defense, in cooperation with the Office of Personnel Management, announced last week its intent to conduct the Department's Civilian Acquisition Workforce Personnel Demonstration Project.

The demonstration project will examine proposed changes in employee development, classification, and compensation for the civilian acquisition workforce and supporting personnel. The Fiscal Year (FY) 1996 and FY 1998 National Defense Authorization Acts encouraged the Department of Defense to conduct this functionally based project.

The goal of the five-year project is to enhance the quality, professionalism, and management of the DoD acquisition workforce through improvements in the human resources management system. The Office of Personnel Management has approval authority for the project and will monitor its progress.

The demonstration is expected to cover a large segment of the civilian acquisition workforce, including organizations in the military Services and DoD agencies engaged in acquisition work. It includes employees assigned to positions under the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA). The project may, however, extend to non-DAWIA employees who are members of teams where: (1) more than half the team consists

Dick Childress, deputy program manager for the demonstration, estimates the project ultimately will cover up to 40,000 employees in the military Services and DoD Agencies. "This is potentially the largest personnel demonstration, not only in the Department of Defense, but in the entire Federal Government," Childress said.

A demonstration project process action team was chartered in September 1996, and hundreds of employees have been involved in project development. The Defense Partnership Council unions were briefed early in the project development stage. Demonstration project team members will continue to meet with these officials throughout the process. The Department of Defense will honor its bargaining obligations for union bargaining unit members proposed for coverage by the project.

The announcement of the demonstration and a 75-page project plan were published in the March 24 *Federal Register*. The notice was also posted on the demonstration's home page on the Internet at: [www.crfpst.wpafb.af.mil/demo](http://www.crfpst.wpafb.af.mil/demo). Publication of the plan in the *Federal Register* was "a milestone," said Childress.

The demonstration will examine the feasibility of instituting the following changes to current personnel practices:

**Developmental Assignments and Educational Opportunities** — expanded opportunities for employees to obtain temporary assignments with universities, industry, and other governmental or nonprofit organizations; and possible financial assistance if employees want to earn academic degrees or training certificates.

**Broadbanding** — a way to group the current [General Schedule] (GS) grades into broader categories. Instead of having 15 GS grades, the project will use three or four broadband levels that encompass multiple GS grades. Employees will be converted from their existing grades and steps to the new system without loss of pay. Similar occupations will be grouped together into one of three career paths: Administrative Support, Technical Management Support, and Business Management & Technical Management Professional. Pay ranges for broadbands will vary by career path. An advantage of broadbanding is that "Employees can move seamlessly within their broadband level without competitive personnel actions based on their contributions," said Greg Giddens, the project's program manager.

**Contribution-based Compensation and Appraisal System (CCAS)** — a system that forges a stronger link between employees' contributions and their compensation. Under the project, employees could rise faster through the pay range of their broadband, Giddens said.

The *Federal Register* notice provides two ways to submit written or oral comments on the project proposal. The first and primary way is by writing to OPM at the address provided in the notice. The second is through a series of public hearings, scheduled as follows: April 23 at Ft. Belvoir, Va.; April 30 in Los Angeles, Calif.; and May 5 at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. The 60-day period for public comment will remain open through May 26, 1998.

Process action team members will review all comments on the plan, Childress emphasized. "We will acknowledge receipt of all items and review everything that comes in. We will change things that look like they need to be changed and then publish a final notice in the *Federal Register*." Thirty days after publication of the final notice, DoD components may begin to implement the demonstration.

This project builds on the features of demonstrations now under way at the Air Force Research Laboratory, Department of the Navy (China Lake and San Diego), and National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). The long-standing Navy and NIST demonstrations have produced impressive statistics on employees' job satisfaction compared to figures for the federal workforce in general. "So in addition to other benefits," Giddens said, "we expect that this demonstration will result in more satisfied employees."

"We're really trying to create a system that is more suited to the acquisition environment than perhaps the current system is — that tries to recognize people for what they are contributing to the mission. We are really trying to make a better environment for the employees as well as the organization," Giddens stressed.

Project evaluation will be based largely on employees' perspectives, gathered via workforce surveys. An initial, baseline attitude survey will be distributed to employees in April. A full range of evaluation measures will be collected throughout the project's term.

**Editor's Note:** This information is in the public domain on the World Wide Web at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news> on the DefenseLINK News Home Page.