

**VA ACQUISITION CORPS (VAAC)**

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This handbook establishes implementation policy for VA Directive 7349, Department of Veterans Affairs Acquisition Corps (VAAC) Program.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENT/MAJOR CHANGES:** This is a new handbook which establishes the implementation procedures for VAAC.
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Acquisition and Logistics (003A) is responsible for the contents of this Directive.
- 4. RELATED DIRECTIVE:** VA Directive 7349, Department of Veterans Affairs Acquisition Corps (VAAC) Program.
- 5. RESCISSIONS:** None.

**CERTIFIED BY:**

**BY DIRECTION OF THE  
SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

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VA ACQUISITION CORPS (VAAC)

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## VA ACQUISITION CORPS (VAAC)

**1. PURPOSE:** This handbook establishes the procedures for the implementation of the Department of Veterans Affairs Acquisition Corps (VAAC).

**2. SCOPE:** These procedures apply Department wide and include all Administrations and Staff Offices. The VA Office of Inspector General is covered under this policy where it does not conflict with the authorities and responsibilities given to the Inspector General under the Inspector General Act of 1978 and its amendments.

### 3. BACKGROUND.

a. Per Section (b)(3)(G) of 41 U.S.C. § 1702, the Chief Acquisition Officer (CAO) is responsible for developing and maintaining an acquisition career management program to ensure there is an adequate and professional acquisition workforce (AWF).

b. With the expansion of the definition and scope of “acquisition” in the Services Acquisition Reform Act (SARA), the Department intensified its effort to professionalize the AWF. On April 1, 2010, the VA Secretary authorized the Principal Executive Director, Office of Acquisitions, Logistics and Construction (PED OALC) to establish a professional Acquisition Corps as part of the Acquisition Transformation Model. Subsequently, the Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs approved the VAAC program to ensure a high performing, competent, and well trained AWF.

**4. APPLICABILITY:** This handbook applies to VA AWF. Entrance in the VAAC is voluntary.

### 5. DEFINITIONS.

a. Acquisition Workforce (AWF) - Refers to all VA employees with an acquisition mission whose duties include planning, managing, and/or executing acquisition programs and or contract actions (program managers, contracting specialists, project leads, etc.).

b. Contracting Officer (CO) - A person in the GS-1102 Contract Specialist career series with the authority to enter into, administer and/or terminate contracts, and make related determinations and findings.

c. Deputy Program Manager (DPM) - The DPM directly support the Program Manager in execution of his/her duties, and serves as the Program Manager in his/her absence or if position is vacant.

d. Position of Influence (POI) - A member of the Senior Executive Service (SES), GS-15, or GS-14 position with management responsibilities and authorities that significantly influence program or project execution and/or acquisition outcomes.

**e. Project<sup>1</sup>** - A planned acquisition undertaking with a definite beginning and clear termination point which produces a defined capability. A project is an individually planned, approved, and managed basic building block related to a program. A project is not constrained to any specific element of the budget structure; however, basic research, maintenance of equipment and facilities, and operations are not considered projects.

**f. Program<sup>1</sup>** - Directed, funded acquisitions that provide new, improved, or continuing systems or services in response to an approved need. Programs are divided into levels established to facilitate decision-making, execution, and compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements and may be composed of multiple projects, services contracts, interagency agreements, and other types of acquisitions. With a systems or services capability focus, programs usually tie together an agency's higher-level programming and budgeting process with the agency strategic plan.

**g. Program Management** - The process of managing a group (portfolio) of related projects with the goal of improving an organization's business capabilities and performance outcomes. The focus of program management is to ensure the right projects are selected and that project execution is fully synchronized within a portfolio to deliver capability improvements as expected, in accordance with the organization's strategic plan.

**h. Program Manager<sup>2</sup>** - The designated official responsible for coordinating and prioritizing resources across projects; managing cross-project dependencies; synchronizing resource management, requirements management and program control functions; and optimizing overall investment returns while minimizing program risks. Within VA, examples of the programs (portfolios) managed by the program managers include, but are not limited to: information technology, construction and engineering, health care services and products, etc.

**i. Project Management** - The process of planning, organizing, and managing resources to ensure the successful completion of a discrete project focused on achieving specified objectives within a defined and limited time period. The focus of project management is to develop specific new capabilities to add to the existing portfolio of capabilities.

**j. Project Manager<sup>2</sup>** - The designated and chartered individual responsible for managing a discrete project and achieving specific cost, schedule, and performance

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<sup>1</sup> Definition for Project and Program are from Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) Memorandum for Chief Acquisition Officers and Senior Procurement Executives dated December 16, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this Directive, the terms program manager and project manager do not include similar generic job titles that are associated with the daily management of administrative support programs such as travel management, records management, budgeting, etc. Similarly, the terms program management and project management do not relate to typical supply chain commodity management functions such as demand planning, supply planning, distribution management, etc. Certain positions associated with these logistics management functions may require specialized training and job specific certifications, but they do not require Federal Acquisition Certification for Program and Project Managers (FAC-P/PM) certifications.

objectives. Project managers may or may not participate directly in the detailed work activities that develop the new capability. Project managers ensure all project activities are fully integrated and coordinated to ensure project success. This includes managing and conflating project stakeholder expectations. Project managers implement appropriate tenets of the integrated product and process development framework and synchronize interdependent and/or mutually supporting Integrated Project Team (IPT) activities. Project managers determine the necessary budget for their project; requirements within the defined scope; and establish, track, and adjust the schedule as the project progresses. Depending on project scope, some project managers may perform collateral duty as a contracting officer's representative, but this should be avoided whenever possible.

**k. Veterans Affairs Acquisition Corps (VAAC)** - Comprised of highly qualified acquisition workforce professionals at the grade of GS-14 or higher who meet the education, experience, training, and performance requirements for VAAC membership.

## **6. VAAC MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS.**

**a. Membership** in the VAAC is reserved for individuals who meet the highest standards of the acquisition and project/program management profession within VA. To obtain membership, individuals within the acquisition workforce must meet the following requirements:

- (1)** GS-14 and above;
- (2)** Eight (8) hours of leadership training<sup>3</sup> within the previous two (2) years (of application);
- (3)** Baccalaureate degree;
- (4)** Twenty-four (24) semester credit hours in the following disciplines: accounting, business, finance, law, contracts, purchasing, economics, industrial management, marketing, quantitative methods, organization management;
- (5)** Four (4) years of Acquisition Experience (government or industry);
- (6)** Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) Level III or Federal Acquisition Certification for Program and Project Managers (FAC-P/PM) Senior; and
- (7)** VA Performance Appraisal rating of Excellent or greater during last rating period.

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<sup>3</sup> As an example, leadership training could include (but are not limited to) VA Learning University leadership courses such as: Leadership & Management (358), Business Strategies (130), Leadership Development (180), Mentoring/Coaching (32), Management/Supervision Skills (205), Planning and Organizational Development (54), Strategic Communication (41), and Strategic Planning (45).

**b. Application** - Individuals who meet the requirements described above should complete an application for appointment in the Federal Acquisition Institute Training Application System (FAITAS) at <https://faitas.army.mil/Faitas/External/Login/?ReturnUrl=%2ffaitas%2f>. The application will be routed through the identified supervisor to VA's Acquisition Career Manager (ACM).

**c. Membership Approval Authority** - The PED OALC is the approval authority for membership in the VAAC. This authority may be delegated.



