



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

OFFICE OF FEDERAL  
PROCUREMENT POLICY

December 11, 2024

MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF ACQUISITION OFFICERS  
SENIOR PROCUREMENT EXECUTIVES  
CHIEF ACQUISITION INNOVATION ADVOCATES

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Performing by Delegation the Duties of the Administrator for Federal  
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SUBJECT: Scaling Innovative Buying Practices in Federal Procurement

Using innovative buying practices to achieve better contracting outcomes is a core principle of the federal acquisition system, recognized both in the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and government-wide management guidance.<sup>1</sup> Innovative buying practices and managed risk-taking contribute to a more effective and efficient procurement system and better delivery of government service for Americans.

In 2016, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) called on agencies to take initial steps to empower, enable, and encourage members of the acquisition workforce to test and share new and better ways of conducting procurements, beginning with the designation of Acquisition Innovation Advocates (AIAs) and the creation of acquisition innovation labs or similar mechanism (hereinafter referred to as “lab”).<sup>2</sup> These actions have had an increasingly positive impact, especially in inspiring innovation pioneers within the acquisition workforce. However, the growing range and complexity of goods and services needed by the American people requires agencies to expand the reach of innovative buying practices. The scaling of innovative buying practices will help the federal procurement system more effectively keep pace with national challenges and enable agencies to more consistently achieve better contract results in support of their missions, especially for high-priority acquisitions.

This guidance requires agencies to scale innovative buying practices through organizational improvements. These improvements center around the identification of a Chief AIA by the agency’s Chief Acquisition Officer (CAO) or Senior Procurement Executive (SPE)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See [FAR 1.102-5\(e\)](#) and Office of Federal Procurement Policy, *Acquisition Innovation Labs & Pilot for Digital Acquisition Innovation Lab* (March 2016), [https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/legacy\\_drupal\\_files/omb/procurement/memo/acquisition-innovation-labs-and-pilot-for-digital-acquisition-innovation-lab-memorandum.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/legacy_drupal_files/omb/procurement/memo/acquisition-innovation-labs-and-pilot-for-digital-acquisition-innovation-lab-memorandum.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See note 1.

(hereinafter referred to as the “SPE”) to manage a program of acquisition innovation activities that are set forth in an annual acquisition innovation plan. The plan shall address a core set of foundational activities, discussed below, that can help the acquisition workforce of the future deliver better outcomes for the American people.

For purposes of this memorandum, *innovative buying practices* refer to those flexible business techniques that produce new value for the customer or agency, such as accelerated time to award, contract and administrative cost savings, improved customer experience, better contract performance, reduced barriers to entry, increased awards to new entrants, greater efficiency in the award of a small business set-aside, or other process improvements to output or outcome that can be measured. The term includes (i) a practice adopted or adapted from a bureau or other component (hereinafter referred to as “component”) within the agency or another agency; (ii) an underutilized practice recognized in existing guidance, or (iii) a new practice that has not previously been tested. The term *high-priority acquisition* refers to procurements that require management attention because they address mission critical requirements or agency enterprise needs, involve reputational risk, support a stand up of a new program, involve heightened risk due to market conditions, or involve other issues that are important to agency leadership.

### **Foundational activities**

In the spring of 2024, the Chief Acquisition Officers Council (CAO Council) released a report, *Acquisition Innovation and Small Business Participation in Federal Procurement*,<sup>4</sup> (hereinafter referred to as “CAO Council report”) discussing the successful adoption of innovative buying practices achieved with AIAs<sup>5</sup> in all cabinet level agencies and a growing number of labs and acquisition innovation coaches. Positive outcomes produced through the use of innovative buying practices include billions of dollars in cumulative savings, shortened procurement lead-times by up to 50 percent, improved customer satisfaction with contract performance, and increased small business participation, including displacement of long-time incumbents with more agile, customer focused small businesses from underserved communities. Despite the progress, the report acknowledged that a more robust innovation organizational structure is needed within and across agencies to significantly expand on these benefits.

This guidance requires each agency subject to the Chief Financial Officers Act (CFO Act)<sup>6</sup> to take steps to implement the following organizational improvements, summarized in the table below, to the extent such roles and responsibilities are not already established within the agency:

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<sup>4</sup> See Chief Acquisition Officers Council, *Acquisition Innovation & Small Business Participation in Federal Procurement* (May 2024), [https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/SIGNED-Report-to-Congress\\_Acquisition-Innovation-Small-Business-Participation-in-Federal-Procurement.pdf?cb=1715634435](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/SIGNED-Report-to-Congress_Acquisition-Innovation-Small-Business-Participation-in-Federal-Procurement.pdf?cb=1715634435)

<sup>5</sup> The interagency AIA directory is available in the Acquisition Innovation Hub: <https://acquisitiongateway.gov/additional-resources/resources/4173>

<sup>6</sup> See section 901 of title 31, United States Code.

**Building An Organizational Foundation  
For Maintaining An Innovation Friendly Acquisition Environment**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
CAO or SPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies and empowers a Chief AIA<sup>7</sup> to oversee acquisition innovation activities under their leadership</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Works to remove impediments to acquisition innovation activities in the acquisition innovation roadmap,<sup>8</sup> including to provide the workforce with direct access to labs &amp; coaches</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approves an annual acquisition innovation plan developed by the Chief AIA</li> </ul>
Chief AIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides leadership to the agency's workforce on acquisition innovation, including on the utilization of buying practices, tools, and methods, as well as information sharing, under the management direction of the CAO and SPE and in consultation with Heads of Contracting Activities (HCAs)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serves as the primary acquisition innovation liaison to the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Represents the agency on the Acquisition Innovation Advocates Council (AIA Council)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops an annual acquisition innovation plan to prioritize acquisition innovation roadmap activities and track progress</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies component AIAs<sup>9</sup> in consultation with HCAs or other appropriate officials and routinely convenes component AIAs</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies acquisition innovation coaches in consultation with component AIAs</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considers acquisition innovation roadmap activities in addition to those described above in this table</li> </ul>
Component AIAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotes awareness and encouragement of innovative buying practices to the component acquisition workforce, including in the field, in coordination with the Chief AIA</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitates, in general consultation with the Chief AIA and HCAs, networking across the component for localized adoption of innovative buying practices, with the support of the agency's lab and acquisition innovation coaches</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports the Chief AIA in identifying acquisition innovation coaches in coordination with HCAs</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> CAOs and SPEs are encouraged to fill the Chief AIA role with an executive or equivalent senior level management official, typically at a level equivalent to the HCA, with operational contracting experience.

<sup>8</sup> See the Attachment.

<sup>9</sup> Because agencies have different organizational structures, the placement of a component AIA will vary between agencies and might include support for an agency bureau, operating administration, contract function, or other organizational component. Where possible, chief AIAs are encouraged to consider filling the component AIA role with individuals in operational contracting roles that have direct access to HCAs.

Lab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitates collaborative testing and information sharing</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically managed by the Chief AIA or an individual designated by the SPE or Chief AIA</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Makes recommendations to the Chief AIA on the suitability and feasibility of scaling tested ideas for broader workforce application</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports the development of acquisition innovation coaches</li> </ul>
Acquisition innovation coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consults with members of the acquisition workforce seeking to use innovative buying practices</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides operational advice to select acquisition teams, especially for complex high-priority and AI acquisitions, enhancing acquisition professionals' capacity to think critically and creatively with managed risk-taking</li> </ul>

*Chief AIA.* The SPE shall identify and empower a Chief AIA to provide leadership to the agency's workforce on acquisition innovation. The Chief AIA shall be responsible for utilization of buying practices, tools, and methods, under the management direction of the SPE and in collaboration with the HCAs. The Chief AIA will serve as the primary acquisition innovation liaison to the OFPP and represent the agency on the AIA Council.

The SPE shall support the Chief AIA in (i) maintaining an innovation infrastructure appropriate for the agency that leverages the existing organizational structure and workforce makeup, wherever possible, and (ii) removing impediments to acquisition innovation activities.

*Component AIAs.* The Chief AIA, in consultation with HCAs and other appropriate officials, shall identify component AIAs to broaden acquisition workforce awareness of innovative buying practices in the field and support local adoption. Component AIAs can be especially important in agencies with decentralized buying structures.<sup>10</sup> The Chief AIA has discretion to determine the best placement and scope of a component AIA's support, which will vary from agency to agency based, in part, on differences in organizational structure and workforce needs.

*Lab.* The Chief AIA shall ensure the agency maintains a lab to test, share, and scale innovative buying practices. According to the CAO Council report, the 14 CFO Act agencies with labs reported being able to support more than 80 percent of the activities that the AIA Council identified as being important to supporting a robust innovation ecosystem (e.g., workforce development training, sharing knowledge on innovative buying practices or innovative buying technologies, leadership communications, event sponsorship, workforce recognition, and maintenance of internal and external e-portals). The need for agencies to support experimentation and integration of successful pilots into everyday procurement practices is greater now than ever, as agencies face an increasing number of mission priorities involving complex acquisitions and work to capture the benefits of artificial intelligence and other commercial technologies that are trustworthy and best-suited for the needs of the agency.

<sup>10</sup> Because agencies have different organizational structures, the placement of a component AIA will vary between agencies and might include support for an agency bureau, operating administration, contract function, or other organizational component.

*Acquisition innovation coaches.* The Chief AIA or component AIA shall identify individuals who have developed expertise in using innovative buying practices such as those on the Periodic Table of Acquisition Innovations (PTAI),<sup>11</sup> and who have a desire to use the practices, provide consultation and help their peers unlock efficiencies in the acquisition process. Having a coaching *capability* available within the acquisition workforce on an as-needed basis for mentoring peers or providing operational advice to an integrated product team (IPT) or acquisition team offers a variety of benefits, including skill development and knowledge transfer, improved team collaboration, strengthened confidence and morale, and a team mindset focused on continuous process improvement and problem solving.

### **Annual acquisition innovation plan**

The Chief AIA shall submit to OFPP an annual acquisition innovation plan (hereinafter “plan”), approved by the SPE, that demonstrates a commitment to promote an innovation friendly acquisition environment. The plan shall focus on encouraging innovation pioneers and engaging the workforce at-large (including the acquisition “front line,” program, information technology, supply chain, and legal personnel) in the regular use of innovative buying practices, including managing risk associated with these practices. Achieving these objectives will make the federal procurement system more responsive to customers and more attractive to members of the workforce looking for opportunities to solve national challenges.<sup>12</sup>

The plan should include specific milestones and metrics or benchmarks, where possible. If the plan addresses the use of artificial intelligence (AI), such as in planned pilots, coaching, or information sharing for AI-driven innovative procurement tools or generative-AI software applications to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the acquisition process, the plan should speak to coordination with the agency’s Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer, including for consistency with any applicable governmentwide or agency-specific responsibilities set forth in procurement-related guidance on AI.<sup>13</sup>

The plan should build on accomplishments reflected in the agency’s profile in the CAO Council report and achievements reported to OFPP, such as under the President’s Management Agenda (PMA), to adopt practices from the PTAI. Measurable progress is expected by each CFO Act agency; however, the pace and nature of implementation activities will vary between agencies based on a number of factors, such as mission need, organizational structure, and available resources.

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<sup>11</sup> See Periodic Table of Acquisition Innovations: <https://acquisitiongateway.gov/periodic-table>

<sup>12</sup> These objectives align with efforts to strengthen the acquisition workforce. See *Building our Best: Recruitment and Retention of the Contracting Workforce* memo (October 2024): <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Building-our-Best-Recruitment-and-Retention-of-the-Contracting-Workforce-Final.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> For governmentwide guidance, see OMB Memorandum M-24-18, *Advancing the Responsible Acquisition of Artificial Intelligence in Government* (September 24, 2024): [M-24-18-AI-Acquisition-Memorandum.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/M-24-18-AI-Acquisition-Memorandum.pdf) ([whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov)); M-24-10 *Advancing Governance, Innovation, and Risk Management for Agency Use of Artificial Intelligence* (March 28, 2024): <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/M-24-10-Advancing-Governance-Innovation-and-Risk-Management-for-Agency-Use-of-Artificial-Intelligence.pdf>

OFPP has created an acquisition innovation roadmap to serve as a template to assist the Chief AIA in developing an impactful plan, built on the principles established by OMB's 2016 acquisition innovation memorandum and informed by the 2024 CAO Council report. See Attachment. The roadmap addresses the foundational activities discussed above as well as additional steps that are associated with high-performing acquisition organizations, including training, recognition, partnership, and outreach.

In developing the plan, the Chief AIA shall address the foundational activities and should also seek to address the other listed activities described in the roadmap. The Chief AIA may tailor the activities in the roadmap, defer action on activities as necessary, or add new activities, to address organizational or workforce needs identified by agency leadership, such as in the agency's strategic plan, budget submission, or acquisition workforce human capital plan. In addition, the Chief AIA should consider discussing acquisition innovation activities with the agency's OMB Resource Management Office,<sup>14</sup> as appropriate, that support improved results from any planned or ongoing high-priority acquisitions on which the agency and OMB are consulting. The Chief AIA is also strongly encouraged to work with OFPP and partner with other agencies with similar mission or functional interests (e.g., science, law enforcement, land management, medical, facilities management, construction, information technology (IT)) on government-wide and interagency strategies that may be leveraged in their plan to support more efficient and effective advancement of their individual innovation activities and accelerate the adoption of an innovative friendly acquisition environment across the federal enterprise.

The plan shall be submitted by June 30 of each year to OFPP and cover activities for the upcoming fiscal year.<sup>15</sup> Plans and questions about this guidance should be submitted to [MBX.OMB.OFPPv2@OMB.eop.gov](mailto:MBX.OMB.OFPPv2@OMB.eop.gov).

Attachment

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<sup>14</sup> OMB Resource Management Offices are organized by agency and program area. For more information visit <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/>

<sup>15</sup> The first plan shall be submitted by June 30, 2025 and cover activities from October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026.

## Acquisition Innovation Roadmap

An acquisition innovation plan is essential for promoting an acquisition environment that encourages innovation pioneers and engages the workforce at-large in the regular use of innovative buying practices. To help Chief AIAs in their development of an acquisition innovation plan, OFPP has created the following roadmap built on the principles established by OMB's 2016 acquisition innovation memorandum and informed by the CAO Council report, *Acquisition Innovation and Small Business Participation in Federal Procurement*.

The roadmap consists of three sections: (1) foundational activities, (2) training and recognition, and (3) partnership and outreach. In developing the plan, the Chief AIA shall address the foundational activities and should also seek to address the activities described in the latter two sections of the roadmap. The Chief AIA may tailor the activities in the roadmap, defer action on activities as necessary, or add new activities, to address organizational or workforce needs identified by agency leadership and to reflect available resources.

Initial plans shall be submitted by June 30, 2025 to OFPP at [MBX.OMB.OFPPv2@OMB.eop.gov](mailto:MBX.OMB.OFPPv2@OMB.eop.gov) and identify activities and milestones for the period of October 2025 through September 2026. Chief AIAs are encouraged to briefly describe actions already taken, as appropriate, to provide context for planned activities.

OFPP will periodically review the list of activities discussed in the roadmap with the AIA Council and the CAO Council and revise the list, as appropriate, ahead of future planning cycles. Future cycles will also include additional consideration of appropriate impact measures.

## Acquisition Innovation Roadmap at a Glance

### Foundational Activities

1. **Component AIAs:** Identify component AIAs to broaden acquisition workforce awareness of innovative buying practices & support local adoption, especially in agencies with decentralized buying structures.
2. **Lab:** Maintain & grow acquisition innovation labs for testing, sharing, & scaling innovative buying practices.
3. **Acquisition innovation coaches:** Identify acquisition innovation coaches to be consultants to the workforce and provide operational advice to acquisition teams, including program/project managers and product owners, especially those leading high-priority acquisitions.

### Training & Recognition

4. **Training:** Coordinate broad workforce development activities for acquisition innovation with the Acquisition Career Manager (ACM), labs and acquisition innovation coaches.
5. **Recognition:** Celebrate workforce members with achievement awards for impactful use of innovative acquisition practices.

### Partnership & Outreach

6. **Information sharing:** Advance knowledge management for acquisition innovation, by sharing insight and artifacts within the agency and across the government.
7. **Small business participation:** Meet periodically with agency small business offices to discuss progress in leveraging innovative buying practices to increase small business participation.
8. **Stories:** Share success stories with the public to demonstrate the beneficial impact of acquisition buying practices on the Government's delivery of services to Americans.
9. **Metrics and feedback:** Collect data, such as cost savings and time efficiencies through the use of innovative buying practices, and stakeholder feedback such as through the use of Acquisition 360 surveys, to make informed decisions on ways to scale the use of acquisition innovation.
10. **Public profile:** Maintain an agency access point to a public e-portal on acquisition innovation.



## **Acquisition Innovation Roadmap**

### **Foundational Activities**

1. **Component AIA**. Identify<sup>16</sup> component AIAs to broaden acquisition workforce awareness of innovative buying practices and support local adoption, especially in agencies with decentralized buying structures.<sup>17</sup>

*Background:* Component AIAs can enhance the impact of the AIA function by improving the agency's ability to promote greater workforce awareness of innovative buying practices and resources and encourage networking and information sharing. The Chief AIA has discretion to determine the best placement and scope of a component AIA's support, which will vary from agency to agency based, in part, on differences in organizational structure and workforce needs.

*Guidance for Chief AIA:*

- a) Describe the number and placement of existing component AIAs and plans to solicit or recommend additional component AIAs, as appropriate, and to the extent possible, in coordination with the HCA or equivalent.
- b) Discuss any additional steps to help component AIAs facilitate networking and information sharing at the local level, such as through an internal AIA council.
- c) Identify the name and email address of the Chief AIA and component AIAs in the agency's external e-portal for acquisition innovation (see action #10 below) and for inclusion in the acquisition innovation listserv distribution.<sup>18</sup>

*Resources and references:* Consider consulting with agencies, such as the Department of Commerce (DOC), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and U.S. Department of Agriculture, that have taken steps to strengthen innovation networking with the support of component AIAs, such as internal procurement innovation councils, brown bags and training sessions.

2. **Lab**. Maintain and grow acquisition innovation labs for testing, sharing, and scaling innovative buying practices.

*Background:* Labs and other mechanisms, such as experiential structures for testing, ideation, and sharing will play a critical role in the scaling of acquisition innovation. According to the CAO Council report, the 14 CFO Act agencies with labs reported being able to support more than 80 percent of the activities that the AIA Council identified as being important to supporting

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<sup>16</sup> In consultation with CAO or SPE and in conjunction with HCAs or other appropriate officials.

<sup>17</sup> Because agencies have different organizational structures, the placement of a component AIA will vary between agencies and might include support for an agency bureau, operating administration, contract function, or other organizational component.

<sup>18</sup> Consider including members with additional technical skills, such as at the DOC's The LAB who includes program and project management designees in its innovation council: <https://www.commerce.gov/oam/lab/about-the-lab>

a robust innovation ecosystem (e.g., workforce development training, sharing knowledge on innovative buying practices or innovative buying technologies on the PTAI, leadership communications, event sponsorship, workforce recognition, and maintenance of internal and external e-portals). By contrast, the agencies that lacked labs reported being able to support only about half of these scaling activities.<sup>19</sup>

The need for agencies to support experimentation and integration of successful pilots into everyday procurement practices is greater now than ever, as agencies face an increasing number of mission priorities involving complex acquisitions and work to capture the benefits of AI and other commercial technologies that are trustworthy and best-suited for the needs of the agency. Managers of labs have generally strived to create lean and agile support structures with branding that is relatable to the mission and the workforce.

*Guidance for Chief AIA:* For agencies with existing labs, describe planned activities involving these organizations to support scaling of innovation, including activities in furtherance of the following functions:

- a) Supporting the component AIAs to maintain and grow acquisition innovation coaches that can provide hands-on training and consultation and serve as a operational advisors to integrated project teams (IPTs) and acquisition teams, especially for high-priority acquisitions and AI procurements;<sup>20</sup>

*Note:* provide in the response #3 below, the approximate number of acquisition innovation coaches that have been identified as having experience and interest to support workforce consultation or operational advice to acquisition teams in FY 2026, subject to availability;

- b) Promoting an environment of continuous testing, analyzing, and sharing, through meaningful collaboration among stakeholder offices, such as those responsible for contracting, requirements development, program management, supply chain management, IT, participation of small businesses and individuals with disabilities, and legal support specialists (describe the approximate number, which may be a target or range, and nature of pilots for which the lab will provide specific support based on need and benefit to the agency, such as for high-priority acquisitions); and
- c) Providing advice and support to the CAO and SPE on the development of guidance, workforce tools and training, knowledge management, stakeholder feedback, and workforce recognition for the broadened application of innovative buying practices.

For agencies that currently lack a lab, describe the timeline for creating a lab that can address the functions enumerated above. If a lab cannot be established by the end of the second

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<sup>19</sup>See Appendix B of the [CAO Council Report](#) which provides an agency-by-agency government-wide snapshot of the progress CFO Act agencies are making in adopting and adapting the tools, resources, and cultural practices to support an innovation friendly acquisition environment. The individual agency innovation profiles in Appendix C reveal that agencies with labs are able to support a more robust set of workforce tools and needs assessments, including credentialing programs, bootcamps, idea competitions, workforce surveys and metrics.

<sup>20</sup> See note 13.

quarter of FY 2026, discuss challenges, and steps that have been taken or are planned with other agencies to provide workforce support (e.g., coaching, training, shadowing and/or experiential detail assignments at other agency labs).

*Resources and references:* Review DOC's The LAB paper on Starting an Acquisition Innovation Lab,<sup>21</sup> the DHS Procurement Innovation Lab (DHS PIL) Concept of Operations,<sup>22</sup> NASA's Acquisition Innovation Launchpad (NAIL) Framework,<sup>23</sup> and labs in the CAO Council report.<sup>24</sup>

**3. Acquisition innovation coaches. Identify acquisition innovation coaches to be consultants to the workforce and provide operational advice to acquisition teams, including program/project managers and product owners, especially those leading high-priority acquisitions.**

*Background:* Acquisition innovation coaches are individuals identified by the agency's Chief AIA or respective component AIA, who have developed expertise in using innovative buying practices such as those on the PTAI,<sup>25</sup> and who have a desire to use the practices, provide consultation and help their peers unlock efficiencies in the acquisition process. Acquisition innovation coaches, who might also serve as component AIAs, can provide instruction on the application of strategies through consultation, hands-on testing of practices, and related assistance. Acquisition innovation coaches may gain and demonstrate skills in innovative buying practices through training (e.g., the DHS' Procurement Innovation Lab Coaching Clinic), on-the-job application of practices to their own acquisitions, or strategizing innovative processes with other acquisition teams.<sup>26</sup>

Identifying individuals that have experience with innovative buying practices and are interested in helping their peers is an impactful way to scale innovation throughout the acquisition workforce. A community of "doers" can serve as consultants who share their hands-on experience to build the technical and critical thinking skills of the next generation of workforce professionals and enhance their confidence and ability to use innovative practices to improve the delivery of real time mission needs.

Acquisition innovation coaches can also help the agency improve outcomes on its high-priority acquisitions. Agencies who have assigned coaches as consultants to the workforce and operational advisors to IPTs and other acquisition teams (e.g., evaluation teams, source selection boards), particularly with program/project managers and product owners, have reported a variety of benefits, including skill development and knowledge transfer, improved team collaboration,

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<sup>21</sup> Visit: [https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2024-12/Starting%20an%20Acquisition%20Innovation%20Lab\\_Final.pdf](https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2024-12/Starting%20an%20Acquisition%20Innovation%20Lab_Final.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> See DHS' About the PIL: <https://www.dhs.gov/about-pil>

<sup>23</sup> See NASA's NAIL Framework: <https://www.nasa.gov/procurement-nail-framework/>

<sup>24</sup> See note 4.

<sup>25</sup> See note 11.

<sup>26</sup> DOC's innovation lab has created a Badging Program for coaches that encourages the pursuit of coaching badges by anyone who supports the acquisition process, including those who take part in requirement building, evaluation, contract management or other phases of the acquisition process. See <https://www.commerce.gov/oam/lab/badgingprogram>

strengthened confidence and morale, and a team mindset focused on continuous process improvement and problem solving.

*Guidance for Chief AIA:*

- a) Provide the approximate number of acquisition innovation coaches that have been identified as having experience and interest in working with their peers or providing operational advice to acquisition teams on innovative buying practices as of the date of the submission of the plan and the projected number as of the end of the reporting period. The plan should establish the approximate number of acquisition innovation coaches consistent with the agency and component organizational structures and acquisition and programmatic needs.

*Note:* The Chief AIA should focus on having an acquisition innovation coaching *capability* available within the acquisition workforce on an as needed basis for mentoring peers or providing operational advice to an IPT or acquisition team. The Chief AIA may wish to create an acquisition innovation coaching cadre to keep track of interested and experienced personnel, but is not expected to identify or maintain a minimal Full Time Equivalent *capacity*.

- b) Explain efforts to identify, develop and recognize the contributions of acquisition innovation coaches, as well as plans to make an acquisition innovation coach available, as an operational advisor to IPTs or other acquisition teams (e.g., evaluation teams, source selection boards), especially for high-priority and AI acquisitions where feasible.
- c) Identify if there are any specific high-priority or AI acquisitions on which the agency and OMB are consulting and whether a coach has or is expected to be identified to support the acquisition team for those acquisitions. Additionally, describe efforts to identify other than high-priority acquisitions that can benefit from piloting the use of innovative buying practices for acquisition teams to gain experience in smaller or less visible requirements.
- d) Describe the nature of anticipated gaps, if any, in the availability and need for acquisition innovation coaches (e.g., agency needs warranted contracting officers skilled in certain types of innovative buying practices, or IT, program, or other subject matter experts familiar with certain types of innovative buying practices). Identify if any needed coaching skills are required to support upcoming high-priority acquisitions. State if acquisition teams in need of acquisition innovation coaches are interested and willing to receive support from coaches at other agencies, including who have completed acquisition innovation training.<sup>27</sup>
- e) Identify if the agency and its components have acquisition innovation coaches who are interested in providing support external agencies and any particular areas of interest or expertise.

*Resources and references:* Encourage interested members of the acquisition workforce to register for the DHS PIL Coaching Clinic through the Federal Acquisition Institute's Cornerstone

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<sup>27</sup>Acquisition innovation trainings include the DHS' PIL Boot Camp, PIL Boot Camp-Next Generation, PIL Coaching Clinic, and FAI's FAC 098 Contract Innovation Exploration and Innovate to Win self-assessment.

OnDemand (FAI CSOD)<sup>28</sup> portal and consult with labs or conduct shadowing assignments or rotational details to develop hands-on coaching experience. Consider observing a Civilian Services Acquisition Workshop (CSAW)<sup>29</sup> or participating in a DOD Services Acquisition Workshop (SAW)<sup>30</sup> to gain insight into best practices for creating highly collaborative acquisition teams.

### Training & Recognition

#### **4. Training. Coordinate broad workforce development activities for acquisition innovation with the Acquisition Career Manager (ACM), labs and acquisition innovation coaches.**

*Background:* Agency acquisition career managers, labs, and acquisition innovation coaches play a central role in advancing workforce training. Coordinated action is needed to promote widespread awareness within the workforce of the meaning and importance of having an innovative mindset and resources available to help employees develop their capabilities.

Chief AIAs should consider the following when planning workforce development activities:

- Workforce development opportunities can take shape as traditional or virtual classroom training, on-the-job experiential learning, and even boot camps, badge programs, and clinics.
- Making workforce development resources available to all acquisition team members can increase early engagement, improve understanding of innovative practices, and lead to trusted partnerships.
- Requirement owners or program office officials, small business specialists, industry liaisons, contracting officer's representatives, and procurement attorneys should receive information about acquisition innovation learning assets and participate in sessions to the extent practicable so they can develop a greater understanding of the benefits of innovative buying practices and engage the agency's innovation lab and/or coaches to support better program outcomes.
- Innovation development resources should be made easily accessible to the workforce, such as through an internal e-platform, and share resources, whenever appropriate, on the Acquisition Innovation Hub for other agencies to adopt and adapt.

#### *Guidance for Chief AIA:*

- a) In consultation with the ACM, identify at least two recommended educational learning assets to facilitate understanding and use of innovative buying practices by the workforce, including for all members of the acquisition team. Identify whether the learning assets are required or recommended and the timeframe associated with any required learning. Leverage federal

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<sup>28</sup> See FAI CSOD: <https://www.dau.edu/topic/fai-csod-support/faq-category>

<sup>29</sup> Visit the PTAI for agency examples of CSAWs and other facilitated requirements development workshops: <https://acquisitiongateway.gov/periodic-table/resources/4933>

<sup>30</sup> See DOD SAW: <https://www.dau.edu/cop/ace/page/SAW>

wide training opportunities, such as FAI and Defense Acquisition University learning assets for the civilian and defense workforce, respectively, and promote cross-agency training opportunities when possible.

- b) In consultation with the ACM, track overall use of the learning assets (e.g., number of employees that completed the training and breakdown by job classification) for both required and recommended courses and report results in the next planning cycle.
- c) Offer continuous learning points (CLPs) to acquisition professionals preparing to become acquisition innovation coaches or serving as operational advisors to IPTs and other acquisition teams (e.g., evaluation teams, source selection boards). FAI guidance authorizes agencies to provide CLPs for activities such as coaching and consulting and using an innovative technique in an acquisition.<sup>31</sup>

*Resources and references:* Consider the workforce self-assessment in FAI's Innovate to Win skills-based learning model (see Appendix 1 to this Attachment), FAI hosted courses such as FAC 098 Contract Innovation Exploration<sup>32</sup> and FCL-A-0038 Procurement Innovation Lab (PIL) Primer,<sup>33</sup> DHS sponsored courses such as the PIL Bootcamp and PIL Bootcamp – The Next Level, and FAI CSOD's Connect for community building with acquisition professionals.

## **5. Recognition. Celebrate workforce members with achievement awards for impactful use of innovative acquisition practices.**

*Background:* Recognizing workforce members through agency-level award programs for the experimentation of innovative buying practices can create a higher degree of workplace and individual job satisfaction and encourage broader workforce interest and utilization.

*Guidance for Chief AIA:*

- a) Identify how employees will be recognized for exemplary efforts to adopt and adapt innovative buying practices (e.g., award, badge).
- b) Identify any plans to proactively consider government-wide awards, such as the Office of Federal Procurement Policy/Chief Acquisition Officers Council Acquisition (OFPP/CAOC) Acquisition Excellence Awards and government-industry award programs.

*Resources and references:* Review award information on FAI from past individual and group winners of the Acquisition Excellence Innovation Award<sup>34</sup> and The LAB's Badge Program.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> For example, an agency could provide 1 CLP per hour or maximum of 20 CLPs per year for coaching and mentoring and up to 3 CLPs for trying an innovative technique in an acquisition. See FAI Guidance on Meeting the Requirements for Continuous Learning Points: <https://www.fai.gov/training/continuous-learning-opportunities>

<sup>32</sup> See Contract Innovation Exploration: <https://www.fai.gov/node/17872>

<sup>33</sup> See PIL Primer: <https://www.fai.gov/media-library/item/procurement-innovation-lab-pil-primer>

<sup>34</sup> OFPP/CAOC Acquisition Excellence Awards: <https://www.fai.gov/about/award-programs#:~:text=OFPP%2FCAOC%20Acquisition%20Excellence%20Awards,of%20information%20about%20successful%20practices>

<sup>35</sup> See note 26.

Consult with internal AIAs and other Chief AIAs to learn about their workforce recognition programs. Review public award programs such as government-industry recognition programs.

### *Partnership & Outreach*

#### **6. Information sharing. Advance knowledge management for acquisition innovation, by sharing insight and artifacts within the agency and across the government.**

*Background:* Effective knowledge management is a critical component of scaling innovation. Workforce awareness and appreciation of the information and artifacts on the PTAI<sup>36</sup> and other resources that provide access to information in an organized, easy-to-understand manner, can give the workforce the boost it needs to more regularly consider the benefits of innovative practices in their everyday acquisitions. At the government-wide level, the PTAI, sponsored by the Chief Acquisition Officers Council, serves as the central knowledge management portal and currently houses 38 agency examples of successfully tested innovative acquisition techniques with more than 150 artifacts. Agencies with the most robust acquisition innovation activities have reported a heavy emphasis on collaborations and partnerships with stakeholders, including requirement owners, program officials, small business specialists, agency industry liaisons, IT specialists, contracting officer representatives, procurement attorneys, and acquisition career managers.

Under the PMA<sup>37</sup>, agencies developed internal guidance and related tools that adopt or adapt (refine or iterate on) innovative acquisition practices on the PTAI. Agencies reported a variety of tools and communication practices to support the workforce, such as slick sheets and starter guides, podcasts, webinars, and short learning videos. OFPP has created a space on the Acquisition Innovation Hub<sup>38</sup> for agencies to share copies of their management guidance as well as related learning assets so other agencies may efficiently adopt and adapt them, as appropriate, by building on the experience and insights of their peers.

#### *Guidance for Chief AIA:*

- a) Identify strategies to develop agency level guidance, workforce job aids, operational use cases, and/or other tools or resources to support adoption of at least two innovative buying practices in use where agency resources are not available or in need of updating. If the practice is not reflected on the PTAI, describe the innovative buying practice. Explain the expected mission benefits from the practices selected. If the practice has been the focus of prior guidance or tools, explain how the planned action will build on steps previously taken.
- b) Describe any plans to capture and share artifacts from agency testing of innovative buying practices within the agency and/or plans to propose new strategies for the PTAI.

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<sup>36</sup> See note 11.

<sup>37</sup> See the President's Management Agenda milestone on acquisition innovation:  
<https://www.performance.gov/pma/businessofgov/strategy/1/>

<sup>38</sup> See Acquisition Innovation Hub: <https://acquisitiongateway.gov/additional-resources/resources/4173>



- c) Describe approaches to share information with internal stakeholders (e.g., IPT members, senior level executives), cross-agency collaborators, and contract partners.

*Resources and references:* Review the repository of agency artifacts on innovative buying practices in the Acquisition Innovation Hub<sup>39</sup> and the PTAI.

**7. Small business participation. Meet periodically with agency small business offices to discuss progress in leveraging innovative buying practices to increase small business participation.**

*Background:* The PTAI includes well over a hundred artifacts contributed by agencies across the federal enterprise documenting successful results, including increased small business participation. Small business friendly practices include technical demonstrations that allow small businesses to showcase their capabilities as they would to their private sector customers instead of engaging in costly proposal writing contests, advisory notifications that can save a small business offeror the time and expense of pursuing a weak proposal, and debriefings that give small businesses the insight they need to be more competitive in future competitions. Use of these practices enables the agency to secure value in a timely manner while simultaneously advancing equity and contractor resilience.

*Guidance for Chief AIA:* Discuss with the small business director and small business specialists the specific proactive steps being taken to facilitate greater understanding and adoption of innovative buying practices to increase opportunities for small business contractors. Steps might include efforts to strengthen the relationship between acquisition, program, and small business members on the IPT or acquisition team through (a) training for contracting officers and small business specialists on PTAI small business friendly tools, including those that can strengthen acquisition plans and procurement forecasts for small business set-asides, (b) co-presentations at town halls, and/or industry interviews, and (c) award nominations for and recognition of individuals and teams, including small business specialists.

*Resources and references:* Review DHS PILCast episode #54 The Impact of Innovation on Small Businesses<sup>40</sup> and lab practices to reduce small business barriers with innovative buying practices that promote small business friendly innovative acquisition. For example, the DHS PIL post-award interviews include a specific question for small businesses: “With regards to the procurement innovations enhancing your ability to compete as small business, did you find them to be effective or ineffective? Why?”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> To view these resources, log in to the Acquisition Innovation Hub: <https://acquisitiongateway.gov/additional-resources/resources/4173>

<sup>40</sup> See DHS PILCast #54: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnNBB9niI7M&list=PLhvabmmbnveR2TrV1cE3iRgQE8NDGMqe&index=15>

<sup>41</sup> See DHS PIL FY 2023 Yearbook (see p.6): [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/24\\_0123\\_cpo\\_procurement-innovation-lab-yearbook-for-fiscal-year-2023.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/24_0123_cpo_procurement-innovation-lab-yearbook-for-fiscal-year-2023.pdf)



**8. Stories. Share success stories with the public to demonstrate the beneficial impact of acquisition buying practices on the Government’s delivery of services to Americans.**

*Background:* Storytelling amplifies the benefits of innovative buying practices and the impact to the people and communities served by the Federal Government. In their annual public reports on acquisition innovation, the DOC’s The LAB<sup>42</sup> and the DHS PIL<sup>43</sup> incorporate vignettes on the use of innovative buying practices and the CAO Council report<sup>44</sup> includes 30 short stories of processes used and outcomes achieved with agencies’ use of innovative buying practices. The stories demonstrate not only the inspirational steps taken by the workforce and acquisition teams, but also impactful results, including reduced barriers to entry in the federal marketplace and more efficient and effective delivery of service to citizens, including veterans, senior citizens, and farmers.

*Guidance for Chief AIA:* Annually submit at least one impactful agency story involving the use of innovative buying practices; for each story identify the fiscal quarter/year it will be shared and available for posting to the public on the Acquisition Innovation Hub or other OMB designated management site. The short narrative should succinctly explain the program and agency mission that is being supported with contractors, the types of innovative buying practices used (in a non-technical manner), and the beneficial impact for Americans.

*Resources and references:* Appendix 2 to this Attachment includes a compilation of short stories from across the Federal Government that illustrate how stories can help the public better understand how the acquisition workforce is partnering with program offices to help improve American lives through the use of innovative buying practices. Table 2 of the CAO Council report includes vignettes with outcome-oriented examples illustrating accelerated time to award, reduced barriers to entry, increased awards to new entrants, increased efficiencies in a small business set-aside, improved delivery, and contract cost savings and improved customer experience. These stories demonstrate better program delivery and critical mission support, many for the acquisition of digital services with a focus on customer experience.

**9. Metrics and feedback. Collect data, such as cost savings and time efficiencies through the use of innovative buying practices, and stakeholder feedback such as through the use of Acquisition 360 surveys,<sup>45</sup> to make informed decisions on ways to scale the use of acquisition innovation.**

*Background:* Surveying the acquisition workforce can provide important insight for the Chief AIA and SPE in assessing needs and developing tools, job aids, learning assets and other resources. Surveying program offices and end users can help in evaluating whether practices are advancing customer satisfaction and achieving desired outcomes. Seeking feedback from industry in connection with awards made using innovative buying practices can help in gauging

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<sup>42</sup> Review The LAB’s Yearly Digest FY 2023: [https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2024-07/TheLab\\_YearlyDigest\\_FY2023.pdf](https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2024-07/TheLab_YearlyDigest_FY2023.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> Review PIL Yearbook FY 2023: [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/24\\_0123\\_cpo\\_procurement-innovation-lab-yearbook-for-fiscal-year-2023.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/24_0123_cpo_procurement-innovation-lab-yearbook-for-fiscal-year-2023.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> See Acquisition 360: <https://acquisition.gov/360>

industry understanding along with comfort and concern with the practice and how its deployment might be improved.

General feedback tools include:

- OPM's Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) scores, specifically on workforce empowerment and use of innovation that can lead to organizational success;
- DHS' Procurement Culture Survey (PCS)<sup>46</sup> that helps the agency collect stakeholder perspectives on importance of four values (process control, innovation, human relations, and mission outcomes) of a procurement organization; and
- DOC's Innovation & Culture Assessment for FY 2023<sup>47</sup> invited feedback from their entire acquisition community to better understand their innovation readiness, application of innovative procurement techniques, barriers to innovation, innovation in program management, while also collecting the importance of four values (process control, innovation, human relations, and mission outcomes) of both the Bureau and the Bureau's contracting organization.

Feedback tools that can help the agency gauge its success in deploying innovative buying practices and readiness for scaling include:

- the "Acquisition 360" standard survey tool recently adopted in the Federal Acquisition Regulation to obtain feedback both from internal customers (e.g., program and IT offices) as well as vendors on their experience with buying offices using innovative buying practices; and
- GSA's Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) contracting benchmark tool which measures mission support customer satisfaction

*Guidance for Chief AIA:*

- a) Identify specific output milestones and metrics or benchmarks to address progress in advancing acquisition innovation management activities in the plan.
- b) Identify outcome metrics being used or planned for use to evaluate the impact of innovative buying practices being tested (e.g., reduction in procurement lead-time,<sup>48</sup> cost avoidance/savings, customer satisfaction).
- c) Track outcomes against metrics and document successful use cases of innovative buying practices that demonstrate clear mission or programmatic benefits.

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<sup>46</sup> Previously known as the DHS Competing Values Framework (CVF) assessment.

<sup>47</sup> DOC's Innovation & Culture Assessment: <https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2024-11/DoC%27s%20Innovation%20and%20Culture%20Assessment%20-%20FY23.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> See OFPP memorandum *Reducing Procurement Administrative Lead Time Using Modern Business Practices* (January 2021) for strategies and agency examples that drive process improvements with the use of innovative buying practices: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/OFPPPALTMemorandum-01-14-2021.pdf>

*Resources and references:* Review examples of metrics from acquisition innovation labs reported in the DHS PIL Yearbook<sup>49</sup> and DOC The LAB Yearly Digest.<sup>50</sup> Review survey tools, including OPM's FEVS,<sup>51</sup> DHS' PCS, DOC's Innovation and Culture Assessment, GSA's CSS, and the Acquisition 360 tool.<sup>52</sup>

#### **10. Public profile. Maintain an agency access point to a public e-portal on acquisition innovation.**

*Background:* Sharing information on innovative buying practices and other innovative acquisition activities on a dedicated portal for external access can strengthen cross collaboration within and across agencies and other acquisition innovation labs as well as increase vendor awareness and participation in acquisitions that use innovative buying practices.

*Guidance for Chief AIA:* For agencies that have public-facing portals, summarize plans to add any new information. For agencies that lack public-facing portals, identify when a portal is expected to be available and a general description of the information expected to be on the portal. At a minimum, public e-portals should (i) identify the name of the Chief AIA and component AIAs, and (ii) provide information, including links, to the agency's lab and other public resources, such as learning assets, award recognition programs and recent recipients, lab publications or reports and information about any upcoming outreach events. The e-portal on acquisition innovation should be a single access point for the agency on acquisition innovation, including component information. Information posted should be consistent with agency protocols on publishing public information.

*Resources and references:* Review agencies with public facing innovation sites, including DOC's The LAB,<sup>53</sup> DHS' Procurement Innovation Lab (PIL),<sup>54</sup> EPA's Cutting-Edge Contracting Innovation Lab (CECIL),<sup>55</sup> GSA's Procurement Innovation Resource Center,<sup>56</sup> and NASA's Acquisition Innovation Launchpad (NAIL).<sup>57</sup>

Appendix 1: Innovate to Win

Appendix 2: Examples of Public-Facing Stories

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<sup>49</sup> See the DHS PIL yearbooks in the PIL Library: <https://www.dhs.gov/publication/pil>

<sup>50</sup> See note 42.

<sup>51</sup> Review FEVS: <https://www.opm.gov/fevs/>

<sup>52</sup> See note 45.

<sup>53</sup> Visit DOC The LAB: <https://www.commerce.gov/oam/lab>

<sup>54</sup> Visit the DHS PIL: <https://www.dhs.gov/pil>

<sup>55</sup> Visit the EPA CECIL: <https://www.epa.gov/contracts/cutting-edge-contracting-innovation-lab-cecil>

<sup>56</sup> See the GSA PIRC: <https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/acquisition-policy/procurement-innovation-resource-center>

<sup>57</sup> See note 23.



## Innovate to Win

A Fact Sheet from the  
Federal Acquisition Institute

To achieve better acquisition outcomes, acquisition workforce members must have and grow an innovation mindset. To help build that innovation mindset, the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) launched a workforce development activity in FAI Cornerstone OnDemand called **Innovate to Win**. This tool is designed to equip acquisition professionals with fundamental knowledge to help drive value and achieve transformative results through innovative acquisition and procurement processes. Agency Acquisition Innovation Advocates (AIA) can leverage this training to inspire their teams, unlock new opportunities to meet mission goals, and obtain innovation-related training data.

### Innovation Competency and Skill Model

Based on an Innovation Competencies and Skills Model, **Innovate to Win** provides participants with a curated learning pathway following the results of a self-assessment. The model has 15 competencies and skills within three domains: Thinking, Collaborating, and Cultivating.



Table 1. Innovation Competencies and Skills

Thinking	Collaborating	Cultivating
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth Mindset</li> <li>• Risk Taking</li> <li>• Creativity</li> <li>• Critical Thinking</li> <li>• Futures Thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Networking</li> <li>• Allyship</li> <li>• Communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observing</li> <li>• Experimenting</li> <li>• Holistic Approach</li> <li>• Driving Change</li> <li>• Integrating</li> <li>• Lifelong Learning</li> </ul>

Figure 1. Innovation Domains of Practice

### Self-Assessment

The self-assessment should take about 10 minutes and provides insights on individual innovation readiness.

- To access, log into FAI CSOD and select Scheduled Tasks under the Home Tab. Then, select the title **Innovation Competencies and Skills FY25** to get started.
- Participants will receive an individual report with their results. Agencies will not see individuals' results.

### Curated Learning Pathway

The **Innovate to Win** tool will generate a customized learning pathway based on the participant responses. FAI estimates that most learning pathways will include 8-10 hours of recommended training.

- To access, log into FAI CSOD and select Development Plans under the Performance Tab.
- If an individual has previously completed training that is part of their learning pathway recommendations, the training will be counted as complete.
- Managers can view their employees' learning plan progress and details.
- Agency ACMS, SARs, AIAs, and those with FAI CSOD Federal Learning Admin, Federal Registrar, and Federal Student Support roles will have access to progress reports.

### Delivering Value to Americans with Innovative Buying Practices

#### Examples of Public-Facing Stories<sup>58</sup>

- **Streamlining of Medicare’s payment system.** The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) moved to a cloud platform and rolled out new online tools that make it easier to process more than a billion claims a year and pay medical providers. CMS used agile development methodologies and human-centered design to iterate on new technologies more quickly and reduce the deployment of new code in the cloud-based system by 75%, which benefits healthcare professionals and 53 million Medicare recipients who depend on the payments for their healthcare.
- **Improved delivery of [online social security services](#).** The Social Security Administration (SSA) modernized its platform, SSA.gov, the second most-visited federal website in the U.S., to improve the customer experience of online social security services. SSA partnered with the U.S. Digital Service, which used web design principles and best digital acquisition practices, such as data-informed decisions from user research. The improved navigation process takes a user through a customer journey, such as replacing a social security card or applying for social security benefits. SSA was recognized for its efforts as a 2023 Service to the Citizen Award recipient and was a finalist in the Digital category for the 2023 Clearmark Award from the Center for Plain Language.
- **Facilitating the IRS’s Direct File pilot allowing millions of Americans to file taxes for free.** The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has developed a new tool for citizens to file federal taxes for free directly with the agency. The IRS Direct File pilot is being tested in 12 states nationwide, where Americans can file their federal tax returns online, in English and Spanish, at no charge. The IRS contracted with small businesses using simplified procedures to access skilled software developers and deploy digital services, including the possibility of transferring federal tax information to the state's online tax tools.
- **Support for farmers and ranchers.** The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released its latest version of [Farmers.gov](#) which provides a single interface of Farm Production and Conservation services to farmers, ranchers, and foresters. More than three million customer interactions are logged per quarter, including access to agriculture loan options, educational materials, and business tools. The total small business set-aside procurement reduced burden on vendors and government evaluators using an agile acquisition methodology and an advisory two-phase down select approach with oral presentations and brief written submissions.
- **Enhanced benefits access for Veterans and dependents.** The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) modernized capabilities on the VA.gov platform for veterans, clinicians, and staff to better manage veteran benefits. New technology solutions enable secure

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<sup>58</sup> See action #8 Stories in the Acquisition Innovation Roadmap (see the Attachment) for additional references to examples of agency public facing stories with the use of innovative buying practices.

scheduling of medical appointments, digitizing forms, and submitting benefits claims. Procurement of the new VA.gov digital tools included multiple streamlined acquisition processes, such as live demonstrations, user feedback, and evaluation to the highest technically rated offer with the most reasonable price.

- **Protection of public health and safety of radioactive materials.** Through its Future-Focused Research Program, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission is conducting research and exploring new technologies to support the identification, prioritization, performance, and monitoring of activities in support of the agency's mission to license and regulate the Nation's civilian use of radioactive materials to provide reasonable assurance of adequate protection of public health and safety and to promote the common defense and security and to protect the environment. These advancements are achieved through a suite of innovative buying practices, such as providing affordability estimates in solicitations to help industry develop proposals that could meet the agency's needs within its budgetary parameters.
- **Advancing awareness for National Park Service visitors.** The Department of the Interior's Cane River Creole National Park Service rehabilitated the Texas and Pacific Railway Depot located in the heart of an African American neighborhood. The exhibits in the park's visitor center and administrative offices help share the rich history and stories of the people of Natchitoches and the story of slavery, to segregation, to civil rights. The procurement team made contract award to a small business in a little more than a month using a suite of innovative acquisition practices such as "show me don't tell me" demonstrations and interactive dialogues to identify the solution offering the best value to the taxpayer.