



CELEBRATING

20

Years of
AcqDemo

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THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) CIVILIAN ACQUISITION WORKFORCE PERSONNEL DEMONSTRATION Project (AcqDemo) is celebrating 20 years of enhancing workforce quality, management and professionalism.

AcqDemo has provided an inherently flexible pay and personnel management system. The Human Capital Initiatives (HCI) directorate, under the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD([A&S])), manages the AcqDemo program across the DoD. Continuously seeking greater efficiencies and flexibilities, HCI collaborates with stakeholders to streamline processes for significant improvements to AcqDemo and enhanced workforce quality and professionalism.

The most significant recent improvements since inception include simplification of the contribution assessment process; addition of a performance appraisal in compliance with changes in Reduction-in-Force (RIF) procedures; simplified and

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accelerated hiring; Contribution-Based Compensation and Appraisal System (CCAS) updates; modified appointment authorities; enhanced academic degree and certification training; student relocation incentives; and the Voluntary Emeritus Program. For the specific details, see the *Federal Register* notice (82 FR 52104) dated Nov. 9, 2017.

For 20 years, AcqDemo has provided a system that retains, recognizes and rewards employees for their contributions and supports their personal and professional development.

Background

AcqDemo was implemented on Feb. 7, 1999, in accordance with the *Federal Register* notice (62 FR 1426) of Jan. 8, 1999. One of the goals of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) was creation of well-trained, multi-skilled professionals who could effectively manage multi-million-dollar programs. AcqDemo supports DAWIA in demonstrating the effectiveness of DoD acquisition by allowing greater managerial control over personnel processes and functions and expanding the employees' opportunities through a more responsive and flexible personnel system. The introduction of AcqDemo increased flexibilities in recruitment, staffing, classification, performance management, compensation and employee development. AcqDemo also provided a dramatically different way of recognizing employee contributions in contrast to the very inflexible General Schedule (GS) system that based salary increases on meeting minimal performance standards and length of service.

Since AcqDemo's 1999 start, Congress has repeatedly extended AcqDemo's temporary authority. As a result of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 extension in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), AcqDemo's participation has doubled to more than 40,000 DoD employees. To enhance DoD's AcqDemo success, Congress, in the FY 2011 NDAA codified AcqDemo into Title 10 of the United States Code and, through the FY 2017 NDAA, transferred full management authority for AcqDemo from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF).

Benefits

AcqDemo has garnered numerous participants over its 20 years of service by offering a host of benefits. AcqDemo also is the first alternative personnel program to cross DoD component lines, and now includes representation from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, DoD Office of the Secretary organizations, Defense agencies and Field Activities.

AcqDemo provides multiple advantages to its diverse set of participants. The project offers the potential for faster promotion advancement than the standard federal GS

process. It also grants supervisors flexibility to adequately compensate employees through nontraditional salary increases and award payments.

"My experience as an AcqDemo employee was positive due to the negotiations of my salary upon assignment to an AcqDemo position, the salary increases that were sooner and greater than under the General Schedule, and the yearly performance awards due to my contributions to the mission and goals of my organization," said Jerold A. Lee, a former Department of the Army AcqDemo program director, who now works as a contractor with the DoD AcqDemo Program Office.

AcqDemo offers a simplified classification system. The current GS system includes 434 occupational series grouped into 22 occupational families. AcqDemo retains the occupational series and titles, but the occupational families are replaced by three career paths: Business Management and Technical Management Professional (NH), Technical Management Support (NJ), and Administrative Support (NK). In what is known as broadbanding, AcqDemo groups the acquisition occupations with similar characteristics into the three career paths with four broadband levels for each career path. The system is designed to facilitate pay progression and internal assignment of duties while allowing for more competitive recruiting of quality candidates at differing pay rates.

AcqDemo also uses a streamlined hiring process so that participating organizations can expedite the hiring and appointment of qualified persons to acquisition positions and direct support positions. AcqDemo includes appointment flexibilities designed to make DoD's acquisition organizations more agile and improve their ability to compete for talent, especially from the private sector. Hiring managers in participating organizations can make on-the-spot tentative job offers to candidates at recruiting events when using noncompetitive or direct hiring authority.

Table 1. AcqDemo Broadband Salary Ranges

Business and Technical Management Professional (NH)			
I	II	III	IV
(GS 1-4)	(GS 5-11)	(GS 12-13)	(GS 14-15)
Technical Management Support (NJ)			
I	II	III	IV
(GS 1-4)	(GS 5-8)	(GS 9-11)	(GS 12-13)
Administrative Support (NK)			
I	II	III	
(GS 1-4)	(GS 5-7)	(GS 8-10)	

Source of Figure and Table: AcqDemo Program Office



The introduction of AcqDemo increased flexibilities in recruitment, staffing, classification, performance management, compensation, and employee development.

Recruitment of students often is limited to the local commuting area of the employing organization or perhaps because it may prove cost prohibitive for college students to relocate for student intern job offers in a commuting area away from their college or university or their permanent home residence. To alleviate this barrier to recruiting the next generation of high performers, AcqDemo offers the option to the head of a participating organization to approve relocation incentives for new student interns and relocation incentives to student interns whose worksites are in a different geographic location than that of their college or university or their home residence each time the interns return to duty at their official worksites.

In addition to the Expedited Hiring Authority available to all DoD hiring officials, AcqDemo has four unique direct hire appointment authorities available for AcqDemo participating organizations, including Veterans, select positions within AcqDemo's Business Management and Technical Management Professional (NH) and Technical Management Support (NJ) Career Paths, Student Interns, and for specific scholastic achievements.

AcqDemo utilizes supervisory and team leader cash differentials as an additional incentive for difficult-to-fill or particularly challenging positions. Heads of participating organizations can use supervisory and team leader cash differentials as an additional tool to incentivize and compensate supervisors and team leaders as defined by OPM's General Schedule Supervisory Guide or Leader Grade Evaluation Guide.

AcqDemo offers an Accelerated Compensation for Developmental Positions (ACDP), which permits more frequent basic pay increases for developmental positions that would normally occur with the annual CCAS pay pool payout. This allows participating organizations to be more competitive with industry by advancing employees through their career progression and aligning pay with those advances. Eligible employees participate in formal training programs, internships or other developmental efforts that allow them to advance in their acquisition career.

AcqDemo offers sabbaticals. Eligible employees have opportunities to engage in a work or study experience that

will contribute to their professional development. The program lets employees use their sabbatical for training with business, manufacturing or on-the-job work experience with public, private or nonprofit organizations.

In 2000, the first sabbatical was approved by Program Executive Officer for Command, Control and Communications Systems (C3S) for a Field Artillery Tactical Data Systems Project Manager. The sabbatical allowed him to attend the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in Monterey, California, where he developed curriculum for the first-ever doctorate-level degree program in systems acquisition, taught graduate-level classes in systems management and systems acquisition, and instructed personnel enrolled in the NPS distance-learning program.

AcqDemo's Voluntary Emeritus Program ensures continued quality acquisition by allowing retired or separated civilian employees who served in either DAWIA-covered positions or positions directly supporting DAWIA-covered positions and non-AcqDemo retired or separated civilian employees and former military members who worked in DAWIA-covered positions to accept retirement while retaining ties to the acquisition community. Heads of a participating organization can temporarily retain the services of retired or separated individuals to provide on-the-job training, work on a special project or mentor less experienced employees.

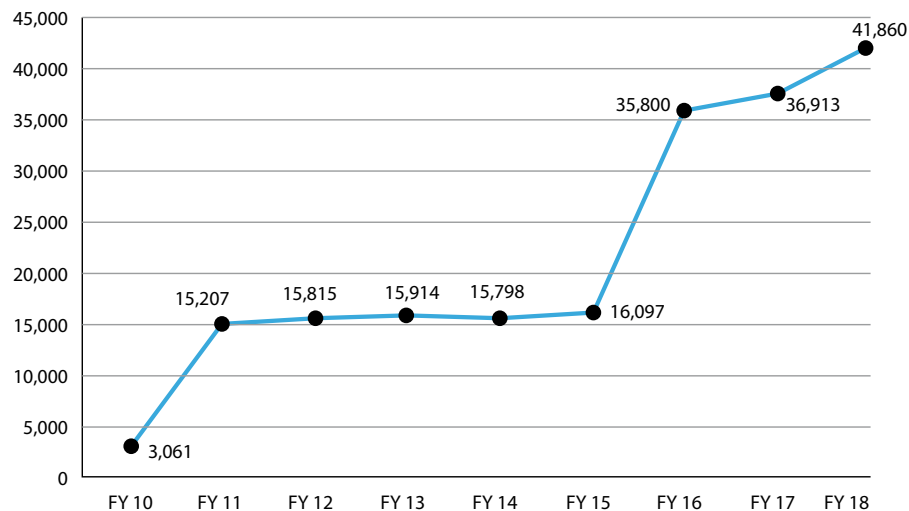
Permanence

To attract and retain a motivated, diverse and highly skilled civilian workforce, we must recognize that lock-step career progression is contrary to recognition and growth. The GS system fails to recognize the differences in individual capabilities and will never enable DoD agencies to compete with industry for essential talent. Simply stated, an inflexible, one-size-fits-all salary system is out of sync with reality.

AcqDemo is a proven and innovative performance management system. Recent growth indicates that more acquisition organizations realize the need for AcqDemo flexibilities in order to compete with the private sector, other demonstration projects, and other federal agencies in attracting and retaining a high-quality workforce.

Permanence of AcqDemo will greatly increase confidence by acquisition organizations to convert their acquisition workforce to AcqDemo. Permanence will enable DoD to retain the highly successful personnel initiatives implemented through AcqDemo; retain the ability to create new personnel programs expeditiously to meet emerging acquisition requirements; and maintain dedicated personnel systems designed to enhance the agility, effectiveness and professionalism of DoD's acquisition workforce and direct support personnel.

Figure 1. AcqDemo Growth and Expansion



With 20 years of success, increasing participation, and looking to the future, AcqDemo seeks permanency as an alternative personnel system in the DoD.

Join AcqDemo

HCI invites all eligible acquisition organizations that have not yet opted to join AcqDemo to check out the improved AcqDemo and to see if it will be a good fit for your organizations and your acquisition professionals. To participate, an organization must meet the following criteria: "at least one-third of the workforce participating in the demonstration project consist of members of the acquisition workforce; and at least two-thirds of the workforce participating

in the demonstration project consist of members of the acquisition workforce and supporting personnel assigned to work directly with the acquisition workforce." (NDAA of 2004), and comply with the eligibility requirements as outlined in the AcqDemo Operating Guidance. DoD organizations interested in participating in AcqDemo can contact the author of this article at scott.wortman@hci.mil.

Additional information about AcqDemo, including training and guidance resources, is available on the AcqDemo website (<http://acqdemo.hci.mil>).

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