

**DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

# Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer's Representatives (FAC-COR) Handbook



Issued by the  
**Office of the Secretary**  
**Office of the Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources (ASFR)**  
**Office of Grants & Acquisition Policy and Accountability (OGAPA)**  
**Division of Acquisition**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy's October 2009 Acquisition Workforce Development Strategic Plan, a multi-agency Functional Advisory Board (FAB) was established to improve the Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer's Technical Representatives (FAC-COTR) program and make recommendations to effectively manage this sector of the acquisition workforce. The revisions to the program reflect the recommendation from the FAB, Chief Acquisition Officers Council (CAOC), the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI), and other subject matter experts. The new program entitled the "Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer's Representatives (FAC-COR)," and the additional language in the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) are designed to strengthen the acquisition workforce to improve program outcomes, consistent with the President's March 2009 Memorandum on Government Contracting, and reflects the need to improve the management of high-risk contracts, such as those for large information technology contracts, consistent with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) "25 Point Implementation Plan to Reform Federal Information Technology Management."

Contracting Officer's Representatives (CORs) ensure that contractors meet the commitments of their contracts. CORs are often the first to recognize when a program or contract is under-performing, and are increasingly being asked to manage high-value, complex contracts that involve varying degrees of risk. To be sure that CORs are trained and developed appropriately, the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) issued a memorandum on September 6, 2011, entitled "[Revisions to the Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer's Representative \(FAC-COR\)](#)" which replaces OFPP's Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer Technical Representatives (FAC-COTR) originally issued in November 2007. The revised program will be a three-tiered certification program that will institute risk-based competency requirements for CORs. The new FAC-COR requirements will be effective January 1, 2012.

The term COTR is being changed to COR to align with the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), which now incorporates a definition for "Contracting Officer's Representative" and includes the designation of a COR as part of a Contracting Officer's responsibilities (See FAR Part 1.602-2 (Responsibilities) and FAR Part 2.101 (Definitions)).

[FAI's FAC-COR](#) program includes three different levels of certification, depending on the core competency, training, and experience required to manage different types of acquisitions:

- Entry/Apprentice – Level I
- Mid-level/Journeyman – Level II
- Senior/Expert – Level III

Core competencies vary by certification level and are designed to build commonality across the federal government's acquisition workforce.

As stated in the OFPP memorandum--

*“Strengthening the acquisition workforce is critical to ensuring that the government gets the best value for the more than \$500 billion of goods and services it procures annually.”*

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) shares this belief. This handbook represents the HHS implementation of the FAC-COR program. It addresses applicability; required competencies and related training; alternative means of satisfying FAC-COR certification requirements; time frames for certification; waiver authorities; and continuous learning activity requirements.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources (ASFR), Office of Grants & Acquisition Policy and Accountability (ASFR/OGAPA), Division of Acquisition (DA) is responsible for management of HHS' FAC-COR certification program. Staff Divisions (StaffDivs) and Operating Divisions (OPDIVs) may issue supplemental guidance and requirements for contract complexity, dollar value thresholds, additional skills, and competencies to meet organizational or mission needs. However, StaffDivs/OPDIVs may not reduce the requirements specified herein.

Additional information regarding the FAC-COR program is available at FAI website at: [www.fai.gov](http://www.fai.gov). “FAC-COR Frequently Asked Questions,” may be accessed at: [FAC-COR Frequently Asked Questions](#).

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** ..... 2
- CHAPTER 1 – IMPLEMENTATION OF HHS’ FAC-COR PROGRAM**
- A. Purpose ..... 5
- B. Authorities ..... 6
- C. Applicability ..... 6
- D. Governance ..... 6
- E. Definitions ..... 7
- F. General Program Structure ..... 8
- G. Key Competencies ..... 9
- CHAPTER 2 – REQUIREMENTS AND PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY**
- A. Certification ..... 10
- B. Performance Accountability ..... 14
- CHAPTER 3 – APPLICATION AND CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES**
- A. Basic Certification ..... 15
- B. Certification Transfer ..... 17
- C. Certification through Fulfillment ..... 18
- D. Recertification ..... 19
- E. Certification Waivers ..... 19
- CHAPTER 4 – CERTIFICATION MANAGEMENT**
- A. Federal Acquisition Institute – Training Application System (FAITAS) ..... 21
- B. Program Assistance ..... 21
- APPENDIX A – HHS’ COR Responsibilities ..... 22
- APPENDIX B – FAI’s Key Competencies for CORs ..... 23
- APPENDIX C – FAC-COR Curriculum Guidance ..... 24
- APPENDIX D – FAC-COR Guidance on Meeting Requirements for Continuous Learning Points ..... 26
- APPENDIX E – FAC-COR Appointment Letter Template ..... 30
- APPENDIX F – FAC-COR Certification Action and Training Request Form ..... 34
- APPENDIX G – FAC-COR Functional Experience Transcript Form ..... 39
- APPENDIX H – FAC-COR Certification through Fulfillment Form ..... 43
- APPENDIX I – FAC-COR Certification Waiver Request Form ..... 50

# CHAPTER 1

## IMPLEMENTATION OF HHS' FAC- COR PROGRAM

### A. Purpose

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Acquisition Policy Memorandum No: 2012-02, effective January 25, 2012, represents HHS' revisions to the Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer's Representative (FAC-COR) program; establishes FAC-COR certification as a prerequisite for serving as a COR within HHS and the Staff Divisions (StaffDivs)/Operating Divisions (OPDIVs); and promulgates interim acquisition guidance, pending formal incorporation in the HHS Acquisition Regulation (HHSAR).

HHS will maintain a program for training employees for certification and appointment as Contracting Officer's Representatives (CORs). Prior to appointment as a COR, all HHS COR candidates shall be certified eligible under HHS' Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer's Representative (FAC-COR) program.

This guide implements the requirements set forth in HHS' Acquisition Policy Memorandum No: 2012-02 "Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer's Representatives" and the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) Memorandum, "[Revisions to the Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer's Representatives \(FAC-COR\),](#)" dated September 6, 2011. These certification procedures and guidelines map out standard competencies HHS CORs must achieve .

HHS' current Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (FAC-COTR) policy will be revised to establish a risk-based, three-tiered FAC-COR certification program. The term Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) is being changed to COR to align with the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), which now incorporates a definition for "Contracting Officer's Representative" and includes designation of a COR as part of a Contracting Officer's responsibilities (See FAR Parts 1.602-2 "Responsibilities" and 2.101, "Definitions"). This handbook supplements the HHS Acquisition Policy Memorandum 2008-01 dated October 1, 2008.

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<sup>1</sup> Reflects recommendations from the Office of Federal Procurement Policy's (OFPP's) Functional Advisory Board (FAB) for CORs, Chief Acquisition Officers Council (CAOC), and the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI), and applies to all executive agencies, except those subject to the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA).