

AFMC Civilian AcqDemo

Town Hall FAQs

May 2016



Q1. Regardless of what the majority of the on-line training states, this system still seems very similar to NSPS (especially with regards to the pay banding). Can you identify specific differences and how/why this system is better?

A1. Instead of basing the appraisal on how well a specified job is done (i.e. performance), the appraisal is based on the job done well (i.e., contribution). Performance is a measure of how well an employee does what they are asked to do and usually takes the form of objectives and measurements relative to the job. Contribution is a measure of the value of what an employee did and takes the form of describing a continuum of work and job outcomes along a value scale from those of very low impact on the organization and its mission to those of very high impact. At the end of the year the employee's work and work outcomes are measured and placed along this scale to determine their value relative to the mission. The inflexibility of many personnel processes and the diffused authority result in a workforce that cannot posture itself for the rapidly changing technological and business environment. AcqDemo is designed to provide a personnel management system that increases our ability to attract, retain, and motivate a highly qualified acquisition workforce and highly qualified supporting personnel assigned to work directly with the acquisition workforce.

Q2. If/how does AcqDemo relate to the "New Beginnings" program we've been reading about and will AcqDemo employees transition again in another year or two?

A2. The New Beginnings program will not affect AFMC employees converting to AcqDemo. The DoD-wide performance management program, called the Defense Performance Management and Appraisal Program (DMAP) will replace the current GS and FWS "legacy" performance management programs and will cover those AFMC employees who are not currently covered by other pay systems. AFMC will participate in AcqDemo into the foreseeable future. The Federal Register requires that at the end of the demonstration period, the project be reexamined for: (a) permanent implementation; (b) modification and additional testing; (c) extension of the test period; or (d) termination. Current project authority terminates 30 Sep 17 with the National Defense Authorization Act for 2016 containing an extension until 31 Dec 20. In addition, the DoD AcqDemo Program Office has submitted an FY17 Legislative proposal for program permanency.

Q3. When will the Business Rules be finalized and made available to those converting to AcqDemo?

A3. The AFMC overarching business rules were recommended by the Civilian Workforce Management Executive Council (CWMEC) and approved by the AFMC Council by 12 April 2016. An AcqDemo Overview PowerPoint communication tool was provided to the Centers and HQs to assist with explaining the AFMC business rules to the workforce.

Q4. The proposed plan is to eventually convert bargaining unit employees to AcqDemo. If bargaining unit employees are not converted to AcqDemo, does AFMC plan to sustain the additional costs associated with administering two personnel systems?

A4. The addition of AcqDemo does not incur a significant additional cost, and management of multiple personnel systems is not a new concept for AFMC as we already have many years of experience with simultaneous management of several established systems. AF Laboratory Demonstration Project (Lab Demo), Defense Civilian Intelligence Personnel System (DCIPS), General Schedule (GS), Wage Grade (WG), and Physicians and Dentists Pay Plan (PDPP) are all examples of personnel systems in place today.

Q5. Are there any formal interchange agreements established between non-AcqDemo (GS), DCIPS (GG), and Acq Demo (NJ/NK/NH) personnel systems? In other words can a DCIPS civilian who has never worked in the Acq Demo system apply for an AcqDemo internal vacancy announcement? Can an Acq Demo civilian apply for a DCIPS internal vacancy announcement?

A5. DoD and OPM do not have a current interchange agreement which provides for the movement of DCIPS personnel between the expected service and competitive service (i.e., AcqDemo and GS). As DCIPS is not part of the competitive service, it does not convey competitive service status. Employees who served in the competitive service before entering a DCIPS position may have earned competitive status that is personal to them, and remains with them throughout their Federal government career. Therefore, DCIPS employees with personal competitive status may compete for positions for which such status is a requirement and they are otherwise eligible. If the employee do not possess a competitive status, they can apply for positions that are advertised as "open to the public". A competitive status employee (i.e., AcqDemo, WG, and GS) can apply to a DCIPS vacancy announcement.

Q6. Implementing AcqDemo is a major change to the organization. I would imagine a chance of this magnitude would require some form of Business Case Analysis on which to base the determination. Can civilian employees and the public see the Business Case Analysis that substantiates that the benefits derived through AcqDemo are worth the costs?

A6. Link to the 2007 Summative Evaluation:

http://acqdemo.hci.mil/docs/Summative_Evaluation.pdf , Appendix F contains Cost Study Results. Note that AcqDemo is to be cost disciplined, not cost neutral. AcqDemo is on-going and the next independent evaluation to Congress is due at the end of FY16.

AcqDemo survey data indicates that there was a positive shift in workforce satisfaction with the AcqDemo personnel management system. Analysis provided evidence that people who are covered by AcqDemo were retained longer than those in the GS pay plan. AFMC has first-hand AcqDemo experience with AFTC who has participated since 1999. General Pawlikowski stated, "This is a win-win for both employees and managers. It will support employee personal and professional growth..."

Q7. Apparently there will be two pools in HQs AFMC, one for 2-letters and one for A-Staff. If so, how large is it? Please explain how the pools will be established.

A7. Correct, there will be two HQs pay pools. A-Staff pay pool will cover approximately 167 employees and be comprised of A1, A3/6, A4, A5/8/9, A10, and Museum personnel. The Functional Staff pay pool will cover approximately 178 employees and be comprised of EN, JA, FM, IG and CC/CV/DS/CCP/CCK/HO/IP/SB/SE/SG/PA/PK personnel. Each will have a pay pool manager assigned.

Q8. Ultimately AcqDemo focuses on mission contribution. If a pay pool has multiple offices with different missions and goals, then what mission and goals are the pay pool evaluating individuals against? AF, AFMC, or their 2-Ltr or A-Staff offices? Will both pay pools be evaluating against the same mission contribution goals?

A8. All lower-level organization's missions are interrelated in that they contribute to the mission and goals of the next higher-level organization which in turn, contributes to the mission of the next higher level organization, and ultimately to the mission and goals of the Air Force. All employees need to understand their Center's strategic direction, their organization's goals, and how their contributions support that mission. The descriptors and discriminators associated with the six factors listed in the PRD (i.e., problem solving, teamwork/cooperation, customer relations, leadership/supervision, communication, and resource management) will be applied to each AcqDemo employee's work efforts to determine the impact and contribution to the organizational mission.

Q9. Why does it take so long to get through the review and appraisal process? The first quarter of the appraisal period will be complete by the time feedback is provided. Mid-term feedback would then occur only three months later.

A9. The CCAS closeout and associated pay pool process occur during the months of October and November, after the close of the annual CCAS cycle on 30 September. Although “formal” appraisal feedback (for the cycle ending 30 September) is not provided to employees until December, supervisors and employees should be communicating frequently. Too, instructions are that contribution plans for the new cycle beginning 1 October, be developed, finalized, and presented within 30 days, i.e., 31 October. Therefore, when mid-point feedback is due in late March, a contribution plan should have been in place for at least five months and a minimum of two “formal” performance discussions should have occurred. Ideally, informal feedback should also be occurring during this six-month period.

The GS/FWS appraisals are effective on 1 June, two months after the closeout of the annual performance appraisal cycle, and associated awards appear on employees’ Leave and Earning Statements (LES) in mid/late June. CCAS appraisals are not effective until 1 January and any associated salary increases or contribution cash awards are effective at the beginning of the first pay period in January (i.e., 8 January 2017). For the first CCAS closeout, salary increases and contribution awards will be reflected in the LES dated 27 January 2017. In summary, the CCAS closeout cycle takes about one month longer than the GS/FWS closeout, largely due to the time needed for the pay pools to deliberate.

Q10. When is the new contribution plan expected from the employee for the next rating period? If it is due in September, can the plan be adjusted in Dec/Jan based on the feedback that is provided?

A10. AFMC is instructing that contribution plans for the new cycle beginning 1 October 2016, be developed, finalized, and presented within 30 days, i.e., 31 October. However, the contribution plans can be modified throughout the cycle to allow for changing mission/workload.

Q11. Will there be training on how to write contribution plan objectives?

A11. Yes, in fact training is already available on the DoD AcqDemo site at <http://acqdemo.hci.mil>. AFMC will provide supplemental training on how to write contribution plans in the format approved by the Civilian Workforce Management Executive Council (CWMEC). This eight-hour CCAS tools seminar will cover the pay pool process, contribution planning and self-assessment writing and be offered in the June/July 2016 timeframe.

Q12. Will the mission we are writing our contribution objectives toward be the same across AFMC or will it vary by functional area? If it is to functional area, what about those that are not performing their function i.e. I am performing PM work on an FM slot?

A12. Contribution expectations or objectives are developed based on the duties described in Position Requirements Documents (PRD) as tied to the organizational mission. Although some PRDs may be broadly written to apply to different type of jobs, an employee's contribution objectives should address the employee's specifically assigned programs, projects, etc. Within AFMC, some of our pay pools will be organizationally aligned while others will be functionally aligned. A review process will be built into pay pool deliberations to allow functionals to review a functional employee's appraisal when the employee is assigned to an organizationally-aligned pay pool, and vice-versa.

Q13. What is the chain of command and who is in it for reviewing our awards/pay adjustments?

A13. Typically, the supervisors/managers serving as the sub-pay pool and pay pool managers, are in the employees' chain of command. Employees' Overall Contribution Score (OCS) and associated award/salary increases are determined through pay pool deliberations. Some pay pools will be organizationally aligned while others will be functionally aligned. A review process will be built into pay pool deliberations to allow functionals to review a functional employee's appraisal when the employee is assigned to an organizationally-aligned pay pool, and vice-versa.

Q14. Will AcqDemo create a situation where an employee's salary could drop from one year to the next dependent on either the employee not meeting performance goals and/or a situation where funding to a department or division is cut?

A14. Contribution-based Compensation and Appraisal System (CCAS) is not based on performance goals but on an individual's contribution to the organizational mission. An employee's potential to increase their base salary is not dependent on the funding level of a department or division. The dollar amount which is included in the pay pool will be computed based on the salaries (excluding locality pay) of the employees in the pay pool as of September 30 each year. The funds include what is now within-grade increases, quality step increases, and promotions between grades encompassed in the same grade level and funds which was formerly performance awards. Similar to the current Federal Government-wide personnel system an AcqDemo employee may be reassigned, pay may be reduced or they may be removed from the Federal Service based on a determination of inadequate contribution and after an initiation of a Contribution Improvement Plan (CIP).

Q15. What is the likelihood that the funding pool for any annual awards or permanent increases will be cut or severely curtailed in the future? Is there a planned stopgap to return to the GS system (or something similar) should Congress opt to restrict money for annual awards or other increases under the AcqDemo system?

A15. We are operating under a Federal Register Notice (FRN) that establishes a legal requirement for funding minimums that supersedes recent OMB/OPM guidance. That being said, a legislative ruling could alter the direction of the program.

Q16. In the recent past, fiscal constraints have resulted in pay freezes and annual awards being drastically cut or otherwise eliminated for periods of time. During these times, the step increases were not impacted and employees could still move through the steps even when there was a pay freeze and no annual awards available. How would AcqDemo be impacted should such fiscal constraints arise again?

A16. Contribution Rate Increases (CRIs) remained available under demo during the years when the General Pay Increase (GPI) was frozen. However, GPI was frozen for AcqDemo employees as well and the minimums and maximum salary ranges for the broad bands remained stagnant during that period. As for awards, minimum funding as detailed in our FRN has prevailed over the recent funding limits for awards mandated by OMB/OPM. The DoD AcqDemo Program Offices issues a funding memo each cycle to inform Personnel Policy Boards on limitations and options for establishing compensation policies and Business Rules.

Q17. One of the key historic benefits of working for the federal government has been stability and predictability, and the steps in the GS pay system have provided a predictable progression for federal employees. How should an employee undertake planning for the future when the amount and type of annual increase (if any) is based on relatively subjective criteria?

A17. You are correct. The current GS system is predictable because it is based on longevity for pay increases. Although predictable, the current system is also very inflexible with strict time-in-grade rules and 2 to 3 year waiting periods for pay increases for even exceptional performers. AcqDemo is designed with a Contribution-based appraisal system that allows an employee to be rewarded based on his/her contribution to the mission objectives. Therefore, employees may be eligible for a CRI (Contribution Rate Increase) year after year based on expected contribution and the overall contribution score when rated during the annual appraisal cycle. There is no guarantee, however, as this Contribution-based system allows employees to take on more responsibilities in order to contribute more to the organization.

Q18. Are the buyouts only retroactive? Therefore, no one should expect to receive any kind of pay increase until January 2018 after the first full cycle is complete or will there be contribution determinations made for the half-year evaluation from Jun-Sep 16?

A18. Buy-ins (not buy-outs) occur during AcqDemo conversion. GS employees who have accrued time toward the next Within Grade increase (WGI) or Step increase will receive a one-time "WGI buy-in" pay adjustment to compensate them for their time served under the GS pay system.

The first appraisal cycle in AcqDemo will cover a 90-day period from 12 June 2016 through 30 September 2016. Pay outs for this 90-day cycle will occur in January 2017.

Q19. A few supervisors have been concerned about their folks who are under "Special Pay" and have been wondering how those will be handled?

A19. Special salary rates are not applicable to demonstration project employees. Employees on special salary rates at the time of transition into the demonstration will receive a new basic pay rate. If the employee's new basic pay exceeds the maximum pay of the broadband in which placed, the employee will be placed on pay retention.

Q20. Will comp time carry over or be paid out at conversion to AcqDemo?

A20: Yes, compensatory time off or time off with pay in lieu of overtime pay for irregular or occasional overtime work remains unchanged and will carry over. It will not be paid out during conversion.

Q21. Attorneys are able to be promoted from GS-13 to GS-14 without competition once the grade qualification requirements of AFI 51-107, Employment of Civilian Attorneys, are met. Under the current system, you can become eligible for a grade increase at any point during a calendar year if you meet the requirements. How will that work under AcqDemo if you become eligible for a promotion that places you in a new pay band in the middle of an evaluation period? Asked differently, when are you eligible for a broadband promotion?

If the answer is only in the January timeframe when award distributions are made, does that mean one cannot promote to the next pay band until January 2018 when the first full cycle is complete?

If the answer is anytime, how does that affect the evaluation criteria and/or contribution for that reporting cycle?

A21. AFI 51-107, Employment of Civilian Attorneys, establishes the procedures and minimum qualifications for employment, transfer, reassignment, and promotion of Air

Force civilian attorneys. The Air Force Civilian Attorney Qualifying Committee (AFCAQC) functions as the qualifying authority for all GS-14 and GS-15 hiring actions. The accelerated hiring process which is outlined in AFI 51-107 will still be allowable under the AcqDemo pay system. Management will continue to be able to determine when an attorney is eligible for a promotion from the NH-III (GS-13) to the NH-IV (GS-14) broadband based on requirements and qualifications, at any time. After the promotion, an employee will be evaluated on the new position requirement document (PRD) factors and the Contribution Plan. Employee must be on the new position for 90 days to be evaluated/appraised on the higher broadband position.

Q22. Let's say a person enters AcqDemo as a GS-14 and later leaves that position as the pay equivalent of a GS-15 (i.e., enters at the bottom of the NH-IV band and leaves at the top of NH-IV band). If that person now goes to a non-AcqDemo position, will the gaining org (that is not participating in AcqDemo) officially recognize the person as GS-14 or GS-15? Is there a requirement for non-AcqDemo orgs to acknowledge the person's increases in pay and rank under AcqDemo, or will that person be pushed back to the same rank that they had when they came into AcqDemo (GS-14, with max pay set to top of GS-14 pay limit)?

A22. Specific procedures are outlined in Chapter 14 of the DoD Civilian Acquisition Workforce Personnel Demonstration Project Operating Procedures Guide to determine the employee's grade at the time of movement out of AcqDemo. Normally, the losing agency would provide the appropriate GS grade and step of the employee, and the gaining agency would be responsible for applying the appropriate pay setting rules. The employee's pay increases under AcqDemo will be taken into consideration when determining the equivalent grade when converting out of AcqDemo. However, any reduction in broadband level or reduction in pay based upon any adverse action, a contribution-based action, a Reduction-In-Force (RIF) action, or a voluntary change to lower broadband level will also be considered when determining the appropriate GS grade and step upon conversion out of AcqDemo.

Q23: How will unusual scenarios impacting the CCAS rating be handled? I will be absent due to military duty during the first CCAS appraisal cycle, 12 June - 30 September. How will I be rated?

A23. The "Rating Official Change and Employee Movement Matrix" addresses how CCAS ratings should be accomplished for different situations. This matrix was originally transmitted via OUSD Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, AcqDemo Memorandum (AM) 13-03 dated 1 July 2013, "AcqDemo Assessment Requirements upon a Rating Official Change or Employee Movement." The matrix may also be located on the AcqDemo website at <http://acqdemo.hci.mil/training.html> under "Tools." The answer to your question about absence due to military duty appears on page 11, Table 5, Item 2. In this scenario a presumptive rating is prepared.

Q24: How are contributions made during 1 Apr through 11 Jun 16 recognized and awarded?

A24. Employees will continue to be covered by [AFI 36-1001, Managing the Civilian Performance Program](#) and GS performance management rules for this period. Supervisors may use incentive awards as described in [AFI 36-1004, The Air Force Civilian Recognition Program](#), to recognize employees' significant achievements occurring during this timeframe. Although this last GS performance period consists of less than 90 days, supervisors are encouraged to provide performance feedback to their employees for this period, possibly during the AcqDemo contribution planning phase.