

Welcome to the Oregon Procurement Advanced Certification Program (OPAC)



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Preface

Purpose of the OPAC Program

Real growth and development in your career occurs when you take on new challenges and integrate learning into job assignments. The Oregon Procurement Advanced Certification (OPAC) program is designed as a structured independent work-study process. This format gives you the ability to gain credit for your accomplishments and capture the learning you gain on the job. Another major goal of the program is for your agency to benefit from lessons learned and process improvements developed and implemented during the project. Those benefits could extend statewide. In this program, lessons learned and process improvements are shared with your peer review group and with the State Procurement Office (DAS-SPO). They may even be adopted as statewide procurement best practices.

Advanced projects are meant to be real-time efforts that tangibly reduce risk, save money, or otherwise provide value. While procurement projects may be less-than-perfect, the benefits lie in engaging in a deliberate, thoughtful process, capturing the learning, and sharing what you learned with others.

Overview: How the OPAC Program Works

First, read the requirements for advanced projects described in this application packet. If your project appears to qualify, submit your **project proposal** to DAS-SPO training for approval. The project submittal and initial application process are similar to responding to a Request for Proposal (RFP). You will need to submit enough information to have your project proposal evaluated. If your project is approved, you then work out an independent work-study plan based on a self-assessment with a DAS-SPO training coordinator. As you progress through your project, you will have check points and reports or briefings with a training coordinator. At the end of your project, you will present your project to a peer review group. No two projects are alike and each will vary in time needed for completion. Every project is an opportunity to learn or to be creative. Even when a project is terminated early due to unexpected circumstances, great learning can occur. Your experiences are valuable and this process is intended to capture them in a way that can become the foundation for innovative change.

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General Guidelines for OPAC Projects

Criteria for OPAC projects are based on (1) duties and responsibilities that include planning and development, negotiation, contract administration, technical expertise, and relationships with stakeholders; and (2) the value that the project represents for the agency and the candidate. The guidelines are meant to be flexible enough to allow various types of projects. Projects can involve developing a complex solicitation up to award of a contract. However, projects also can focus on contract administration plans, process improvements that can be applied throughout an agency, or other endeavors that require high-level skills to bring the project to fruition.

Candidates and projects must have agency support. Your manager or Designated Procurement Officer (DPO) must endorse your project by writing a letter indicating agency support. This letter needs to list details such as timelines, constraints, desired outcomes, or other considerations that need to be included in your independent work-study plan in order for the project to be a good fit for the agency.

Examples of Advanced Project Attributes

The project may:

- be highly visible and politically sensitive;
- involve multiple funding sources;
 - be complex and have high-risk elements;
 - require extensive analyses and research; or
- introduce new or modified processes, procedures, or strategies that will provide value to the agency and provide a meaningful learning experience for the applicant.

Examples of Advanced Skills and Project Goals

As part of their project, applicants may:

- develop new contract terms and conditions, funding arrangements, or policy interpretation throughout the pre-award to post-award processes;
- develop and carry out a negotiation plan based on a best-practice model;
- analyze risks and develop effective ways, beyond insurance and bonds, to

- mitigate the potential losses;
- perform a price analysis to determine how to restructure or renegotiate rates;
- manage a multi-step solicitation;
- create processes to manage complex projects, such as public improvement or construction projects;
- meet with and involve internal stakeholders such as accounts payable, managers, and end users; or
- perform comparative analyses and recommend best solutions, e.g.; cost comparison of shipping alternatives for different situations.

Prerequisites for OPAC

1) **Three years of contract-related experience.** We will rely on the judgment of the DPO to determine if a candidate has met this requirement. Experience outside of the State of Oregon can be included in the three years of experience. The goal is to select candidates who have advanced knowledge and direct experience with procurement processes. Those who only have done occasional procurement work or mostly low-level tasks such as ordering off of price agreements may not have the level of experience necessary for an advanced certificate.

2) **Oregon Procurement Basic Certification (OPBC).** This requires:

- Completion of Principles of Public Contracting (BA161); **AND**
- Elective credits (35 points of which at least 21 must be obtained from DAS-SPO classes; remaining points may be obtained from other sources.) **OR** a current national certification such as NIGP or ISM.
- Passing a certification test.
- 21 points of continuing education every three years to keep the certification current. (14 points must be from DAS-SPO.)

3) **The Oregon Contract Administration Certificate (OCAC).** This requires completing three 7-hour training classes: Contract Administration, Rules, and Ethics. If any or all of these three classes have been taken as part of the Oregon Procurement Basic Certification (OPBC), credit can be applied to the OCAC.

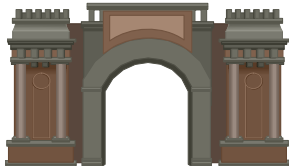
Developing an Independent Work-study Plan

Once your project is approved, you will meet with a DAS-SPO training team representative to develop your independent work-study plan; this is essentially a learning contract. During this meeting a schedule of check-in points will be developed that correlate with your learning goals and objectives. Check-in points can be meetings, phone calls or reports to your DAS-SPO training contact. The learning contract also will address details such as project completion, contingency plans if the project is cancelled due to outside circumstances, or dramatic changes in scope.

Your final report, at the end of your project, will be a presentation to a peer review panel. This presentation should include an overview of your project and what you learned. Your DAS-SPO training contact can assist you with planning your presentation.

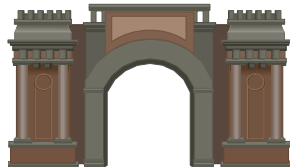
Think of the process like this...

1



**Gate 1:
Application and
Project Pre-work**

2



**Gate 2:
Project completion**

3



**Gate 3:
Presentation of lessons
learned**

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the DAS-SPO training contact's role in this process?

DAS-SPO trainers approve project applications; act as advisors; provide information; and monitor the progress of the project. The DAS-SPO advisor's goal is to help YOU be successful. DAS-SPO advisors strive not to create obstacles for you or your project and typically do not become involved in day to day activities.

What happens if my project is not approved?

You can discuss the project with a DAS-SPO training advisor who can help you reframe the project goals or select a more appropriate project proposal.

Is a project that involves my agency and other agencies acceptable?

Yes. In fact, collaboration is encouraged. When multiple agencies are involved, clear roles and responsibilities must be identified. You may have a project that involves a job rotation or a project at another agency.

Can more than one person get credit for an advanced certification from the same project?

Yes. Teams often work on large or complex procurements. As long as each applicant has a distinct focus, responsibility and independent work-study plan, credit can be granted.

What happens if I quit or change agencies in the middle of a project?

In most cases, projects will terminate and the applicant can choose to reapply with a new project and agency.

What do I specifically need to turn in when applying for advanced certification?

Submit the following: Letter of support from DPO or manager; description of your project; project criteria (timeline); and objectives. Use the self-assessment as you develop your personal learning objectives. You do not have to turn in the self-assessment with your project proposal. However, you will need it when developing your independent work-study plan with a DAS-SPO advisor.

Frequently Asked Questions, continued

Who will be on my peer review panel; what is the role of my DPO; and is there a rating scale or specific criteria used by the peer review panel?

The peer review panel consists of the DAS-SPO trainers and representatives from the DPO Council. You can talk with your DAS-SPO advisor about inviting your DPO to attend your presentation if you want your DPO to be in attendance. Your DPO is not your co-presenter, but can be your audience supporter. Rating criteria is based on the type of project, project goals and objectives and the learning that takes place. At the beginning of your project a scoring matrix, based on your project's components, will be developed to indicate what you need to do for a passing score on your presentation.



Appendix A

What to Submit

Initial Application: Request for Participation

1) Letter from your DPO, Manager, Director, or Person Endorsing Project

Submit a letter from a manager who is endorsing your participation. If you have questions about who this person should be, call a DAS-SPO training coordinator. In one or two pages, the letter should provide the following information:

- A statement of support for the project.
- A brief description of the focus and scope of the project. Refer to “General Guidelines . . .” on page four of this application packet.
- A description of the anticipated benefits the project will provide to the agency such as risk reduction, saving time or money, how effectively the project meets the agency’s needs, and how the project will help your professional growth as an OPAC candidate.
- Identify and list the areas of learning that the project will provide for you after completing the *Assessment for Advanced Procurement Professionals* and discussing the project with your DPO or manager.

Both the letter from the DPO or procurement manager and the answers to the initial application questions described in “2) *Project Description/Criteria*” below can be emailed as an attachment to the DAS-SPO trainers or sent to the State Procurement Office at 1225 Ferry Street SE, U140, Salem, OR 97301.

2) Project Description/Criteria

- 2.1 Describe your project and explain why you consider this to be an advanced project. Refer to “General Guidelines for Advanced Projects” for examples of advanced project criteria.
- 2.2 Identify and describe elements of the project that are substantially new endeavors for you.
- 2.3 Identify and describe any elements or aspects of this project that solve old problems with new approaches.

- 2.4 Describe how this project will incorporate best practices. See “Examples of Advanced Skills and Project Goals.” Best practices can come from a variety of sources: training classes, project management guidelines, process improvement analysis, or examples from other agencies.
- 2.5 Provide a project timeline. This can be a Gantt chart or a simple table. If appropriate, break the project into phases such as research, specification development, posting, and award.
- 2.6 For each phase, include desired outcomes, challenges, and any resources needed. For example, Phase One might be *Research*. A desired outcome might be “find similar contracts for this service and interview the contract managers.” A challenge might be “research must be completed within two weeks.” Resources needed might include help from research assistants at the Oregon State Library. You could have more than one outcome per phase depending on your project.
- 2.7 Describe people with whom you will partner on this project or phases of this project. For this application we are interested in knowing about collaborative efforts with other agencies or projects that will involve two or more people. Stakeholders and those who are involved in review or approval steps do not need to be listed.

Note: You may call the DAS-SPO training team to discuss other suggestions specific to your project.



Assessment for Advanced Procurement Professionals

The purpose of this assessment is to help you identify areas of focus for maximizing learning during your advanced certification project. Mark each statement with a 1, 2, 3, or NA (with 1 low, 3 high, and NA meaning “does not apply to my project”). If a statement does not make sense to you, either rate it a “1” or “NA” and go on to the next statement. **Hint:** Do not spend time analyzing the reason for the statement or trying to figure out how it correlates with something else; just move through this document quickly.

Once you are done, highlight all of your “1’s” and any other statements you feel are critical to your growth. Formulate self-development goals in the “Summary” section. Discuss these goals with your manager or Designated Procurement Officer in relation to your project.

Technical Skills & Knowledge

Assess yourself in the following areas using this scale:

1 = I need more skills, experience, or knowledge in this area

2 = I do an adequate to very good job with these tasks or functions

3 = I feel comfortable facilitating a project using the my skills and experience in this area

NA = Does not apply to my project

_____ I can locate and understand laws, rules, policies, and procedures that govern procurement activities.

_____ I use software to manage projects, analyze data, and keep track of details.

Procurement-Related Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

Assess yourself in the following areas using this scale:

1 = I need more skills, experience, or knowledge in this area

2 = I do an adequate to very good job with these tasks or functions

3 = I feel comfortable facilitating a project using the my skills and experience in this area

NA = Does not apply to my project

____ I am able to approve payments to contractors.

____ I can resolve shipping, receiving, or delivery problems.

____ I know how to audit contractor invoices for accuracy and compliance to contract terms.

____ I can maintain procurement files and identify/request documents that must be included.

____ I can prepare solicitation documents that are correct and clearly written.

____ I can coordinate communication among stakeholders; e.g., DAS, DOJ, and program managers, and incorporate this information into procurement documents.

____ I can write a statement of work that is performance based with payments tied to deliverables.

____ I can negotiate contract terms, including using multiple rounds of negotiations.

____ I can craft creative procurement solutions while following rules and policies.

____ I can perform market research using a variety of informational sources and analytical methods.

____ I am able to locate and use appropriate boilerplate contract terms, conditions, and language.

____ I can lead bid and award-related meetings with bidders or contractors.

____ I can prepare explanatory documents and reports for oversight agencies, management, customers, and co-workers.

____ I can screen proposals for MQ's and requirements and prepare for negotiation with proposers/bidders.

____ I know how to respond to protests, including determining if the protest is valid.

Procurement-Related Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities, continued

- _____ I know what documents must be and should be in a procurement file.
- _____ I can keep track of communication with suppliers and manage the paperwork associated with my job.
- _____ I can develop master agreements, formats and generic template agreements.
- _____ I provide advice on contract development procedures, rules, laws, policies, and ethics.
- _____ I can establish customized criteria for RFP's using a structured, multi-stakeholder approach.
- _____ I can evaluate proposals as part of an evaluation team.
- _____ I understand how solicit/evaluate "build to suit" proposals.
- _____ I can translate program requirements into contract terms.
- _____ I can evaluate contracts for potential risk and develop mitigating strategies.
- _____ I can analyze sole-source requests and determine which should be submitted for approval.
- _____ I can manage a contractor selection process.
- _____ I can take actions to enforce the terms of a contract and bring contractors into compliance.
- _____ I can negotiate contract terms, renewals, changes, amendments, and agreements for services.
- _____ I can work effectively with the Attorney General's Office to clarify legal issues and act as a liaison between private attorneys and the AG's Office.
- _____ I can audit and substantiate cost data.
- _____ I can participate in actions to settle contract claims (work may be over several years).
- _____ I can recommend changes to project work scope and budgets.
- _____ I can effectively assume a highly visible and politically sensitive role in the organization.

Communication and Analytical Thinking Skills

Assess yourself in the following areas using this scale:

1 = I need more skills, experience, or knowledge in this area

2 = I do an adequate to very good job with these tasks or functions

3 = I feel comfortable facilitating a project using the my skills and experience in this area

NA = Does not apply to my project

_____ I consider different sides of issues, and can think globally about the pros and cons of various solutions or remedies.

_____ I seek input and feedback from a wide array of contacts, including suppliers/contractors when appropriate.

_____ I can establish clear roles and boundaries with others, including being able to say “no” when something is not appropriate or is not a good use of my time.

_____ I provide status reports to managers or stakeholders on a variety of issues.

_____ I can provide honest and effective feedback to suppliers, co-workers, staff, and managers.

_____ I write documents that are easy to understand, well laid-out, and with a minimum of “legal-ese.”

Time Management and Planning Skills

Assess yourself in the following areas using this scale:

1 = I need more skills, experience, or knowledge in this area

2 = I do an adequate to very good job with these tasks or functions

3 = I feel comfortable facilitating a project using the my skills and experience in this area

NA = Does not apply to my project

_____ I determine desired outcomes, talking points, and questions prior to meetings with internal staff or stakeholders.

_____ I establish priorities with customers and management.

_____ I use a set of priorities, by identifying project components, that I can work on to keep things moving ahead.

_____ I manage project schedules in such a way that administrative staff can help me without incurring overtime or last-minute rushes.

_____ I can ask others for help rather than needing to do everything myself.

Summarize Your Results and Determine Priorities

Review the scores on the assessment items. What skills or areas of knowledge do you want to focus on during this project to gain greater proficiency? Highlight all of the items you rated “1” and determine if they have a common theme. Then, from the items you rated “2” or “3”, identify the ones you feel are critical to advancing in your career. Next, reduce your list to four or five priorities that you think you can achieve by completing your proposed project.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

Given the nature of your project, how will you accomplish your career development objectives?

This resource can help you formulate your project objectives.

Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals

From Paul J. Meyer's "Attitude Is Everything."

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Realistic
Tangible

Specific - A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set a specific goal you must answer the six "W" questions:

- *Who: Who is involved?
- *What: What do I want to accomplish?
- *Where: Identify a location.
- *When: Establish a time frame.
- *Which: Identify requirements and constraints.
- *Why: Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal.

EXAMPLE: A general goal would be, "Get in shape." But a specific goal might say, "Join 24-Hour Fitness. Work out at least three days a week for an average of forty minutes each session. Use proper form, breathing, and stretching to reduce chance of injury. Within the next 8 months, reduce percentage of body fat to 18% or less from the current level of 24%. Reduce resting heart rate to 68 beats per minute or less from the current rate of 74 beats per minute. Reduce total cholesterol reading to 175 or less from the current level of 226, and reduce triglycerides to less than 75 from the current level of 90."

Measurable - Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal you set. When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs you on to continued effort required to reach your goal.

To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as.....How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?

Attainable - When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them. You begin seeing previously overlooked opportunities to bring yourself closer to the achievement of your goals.

You can attain most any goal you set when you plan your steps wisely and establish a time frame that allows you to carry out those steps. Goals that may have seemed far away and out of reach eventually move closer and become attainable, not because your goals shrink, but because you grow and expand to match them. When you list your goals you build your self-image. You see yourself as worthy of these goals, and develop the traits and personality that allow you to possess them.

Realistic - To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective toward which you are both *willing* and *able* to work. A goal can be both high and realistic; you are the only one who can decide just how high your goal should be. But be sure that every goal represents substantial progress. A high goal is frequently easier to reach than a low one because a low goal exerts low motivational force. Some of the hardest jobs you ever accomplished actually seem easy simply because they were a labor of love.

Your goal is probably realistic if you truly *believe* that it can be accomplished. Additional ways to know if your goal is realistic is to determine if you have accomplished anything similar in the past or ask yourself what conditions would have to exist to accomplish this goal.

Tangible - A goal is tangible when you can experience it with one of the senses, that is, taste, touch, smell, sight or hearing. When your goal is tangible, or when you tie a tangible goal to an intangible goal, you have a better chance of making it specific, measurable, and thus attainable.

Intangible goals are your goals for the internal changes required to reach more tangible goals. They are the personality characteristics and the behavior patterns you must develop to pave the way to success in your career or for reaching some other long-term goal. Since intangible goals are vital for improving your effectiveness, give close attention to *tangible* ways for measuring them.

Note: For OPAC projects you can use *relevant* and *timely* in place of realistic and tangible. Relevant ties the goals to the situation and timely means you accomplish your goals within your identified time schedule.

Appendix B

Progress Reports

During your project you will submit regular progress reports that will be tailored to your goals. These reports may include date range, steps taken to reach goals or milestones, next steps, problem-solving techniques used, and a record of lessons learned during this portion of the project. Basically, the progress reports address *who, what, when, how, and to what extent* as you complete your project. The progress reports will result in an important record for you and your agency and will be used for process improvement and other discussions (such as your peer review final report). These are not meant to be an extraneous task, but rather an integral part of project management best practices.

Sample Format:

Goals: You can include information and expectations about meeting your self assessment goals, your project goals and agency goals.

Timeline: Meeting or exceeding timelines and describing how you did this is good information for best practice development. If you are encountering obstacles that keep you from meeting your timeline, identifying these areas can help you or your agency streamline processes and create efficiencies.

Team: Identify your team members. Why did you choose them? Are they helping you bring your project to fruition?

Roles and Responsibilities: Define these for you, your agency, team members and the contractor(s).

Achievement: Discuss your procurement plan. What methodology (procurement method) are you using?

Solicitation Development: Marketplace research, scope of work, terms and conditions, specifications or requirements, and solicitation letting.

Contract Development: Finalizing the contract, statement of work, kick-off meeting if planned, contract administration plan, clarifying roles and responsibilities with the supplier.