

**DRAFT**

**Statement of NCMA  
To the  
SERVICES ACQUISITION ADVISORY (“1423”) PANEL**

Madam Chair and distinguished members of the Services Acquisition Advisory Panel:

On behalf of the President and the 17,500 members that comprise the National Contract Management Association, we commend you on the vital work that your panel has done and continues to do and we thank you for the opportunity to address this body today. We are especially pleased that you have chosen this day and this location – at the site of our annual Aerospace and Defense Conference – to hold this public meeting of the Panel. And we are also proud to count several members of the Panel among our membership.

While NCMA is a non-lobbying organization and has maintained throughout the association’s 45-year history its position as a neutral forum for exchange of ideas between buyers and sellers, NCMA also has worked over the years to promote improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of the public procurement process, most notably in the acquisition reform movement of the 1990s and that interest continues here today.

NCMA would like to focus its remarks on the workforce issues facing the Federal government in the procurement function. We share many of the same concerns on the Federal procurement workforce as have been expressed by previous speakers before the Panel and by the Panel itself: decreasing size of the workforce at the same time that

workload as measured in dollars and complexity is increasing; gaps in competency especially in respect to performance-based acquisition, best value source selection, general business expertise and savvy, and adoption of appropriate commercial practices; attracting well-qualified, talented entry-level personnel to enter the profession of contract management and the Federal procurement workforce; increasing competition among Federal agencies for a limited pool of experienced journeyman contracting officers, specialists and administrators; and a looming problem with succession to the executive ranks in the Federal procurement workforce.

NCMA, within its resources, is working to address these issues. In the area of competencies, in recent years NCMA has completely revised its Contract Management Body of Knowledge or CMBOK to include commercial contracting and general business competencies. Concurrently we have expanded our educational offerings to cover topics such as risk management, financial aspects of contracts, negotiations skills, project management, recent changes to the Uniform Commercial Code, and this year we will publish a new book on performance-based acquisition as well as launching a new full-day seminar on that topic. NCMA has also teamed with the Defense Acquisition University, the Federal Acquisition Institute, and private sector training firms to encourage broadening of educational and training opportunities for the workforce. Further, NCMA restructured its certification programs, now consisting of a certification in Federal contracting, CFCM, certification in Commercial contracting, CCCM, and capstone certification, CPCM, to reflect the broader competencies demanded of a contract management professional today.

NCMA has made attracting well-qualified, talented entry-level personnel to enter the profession of contract management a key objective in its strategic plan for the future. In the last year we formed a University Outreach and Relations Committee and populated it with talented academicians as well as others with a strong interest in and connection to students and recent college graduates, we created a new membership category for students, we have made it more attractive for employers (including the Federal government) to post their entry-level job positions on NCMA's employment website, and we have planted the seeds for Student Chapters around the country. All of these efforts are designed to build awareness of contract management as a profession, encourage expansion of college and university programs in this field, and most importantly, to connect young people to mentors serving in this field and to future careers in procurement.

The challenges of increasing competition among Federal agencies for a limited pool of experienced journeyman contracting officers, specialists and administrators and a *looming problem* with succession to the executive ranks in the Federal procurement workforce are largely shared by the private sector, especially firms that do business with the Defense Department and the Federal government generally. This situation has its roots in the "Peace Dividend" of the early 1990s and a long series of years in which the Defense acquisition workforce was reduced in size, Defense prime contractors collapsed from many to only a few, and Defense spending was flat or reduced. During this nearly ten-year period hiring of new entry level personnel all but stopped and a "bathtub" in the

workforce was created. As the age of the workforce increases each year, this bathtub moves further to the right and is now being felt in a pronounced shortage of experienced journeyman-level contracting professionals. In another few years this bathtub will also impact at the executive level.

As a result, the Federal agencies are in relentless competition with one another for talented procurement professionals. But it is a fixed supply (due to barriers to entry into the Federal service, especially at other than the entry level) or a diminishing supply (due to retirements). NCMA encourages this panel to make recommendations that will help relieve some of these pressures. Specifically, NCMA encourages this panel to recommend adoption of appropriate professional credentials as a substitute for some or all of the mandatory training and education requirements for service in Federal procurement positions. Too often journeyman-level or senior contracting professionals from outside the Federal government are told that they can only qualify for entry-level Federal positions in the 1102 job series because they lack the mandated series of contracting courses at the 100, 200 and 300 level. Or, they face subtle discrimination in competing for mid-level and senior-level positions with current Federal employees because if selected they would have to spend their first weeks or months on the job going through mandatory training to “catch-up” with those who are already in the system.

We believe that this barrier for entry to Federal service in the 1102 series is harmful to attracting the best and brightest to civil service and is wasteful of limited human resources and training dollars. Individuals who have earned certification in the

contracting field as evidenced by holding the Certified Federal Contracts Manager or Certified Professional Contracts Manager designation have demonstrated mastery of many, if not all, the competencies acquired through the mandatory Federal training courses for 1102s. By adopting a formal policy of equivalence for professional certification in the contracting field the Federal government can remove one of the most daunting barriers to entry into the Federal procurement workforce for mid-level and senior professionals from industry. NCMA has been working towards this objective with the Defense Department for nearly two years now and would like to see this effort bear fruit and be expanded to the entire Federal government. While we can speak with credibility to only the contracting field, we believe in principle that the same barriers exist for other fields in the acquisition workforce, such as program management, logistics, and financial management, and that similar efforts to formally adopt equivalency policies apply equally in these fields.

In closing, NCMA would again like to commend the panel for the critical work it has done and continues to do in seeking to find ways to improve the Federal procurement process. NCMA appreciates having been given the opportunity to share its views today and welcomes the opportunity to contribute further to the Panel's work through or elected officers, members, and staff. Thank you.