



## OFPP to Clarify Inherently Governmental Jobs in July

- By Matthew Weigelt
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The Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) is expected to issue more guidance in mid-July to clarify inherently governmental functions, but with more attention on employees than on specific duties, a top acquisition official said today.

"I think we're taking the discussion in more of a human capital approach, going back to how many people you need and what kinds of skills do you need to staff a program office or a function in an agency," Lesley Field, acting OFPP administrator, said in a speech at Washington Technology's Top 100 conference and awards luncheon.

An inherently governmental function is a duty that only a federal employee can perform. It's "a function that is so intimately related to the public interest as to mandate performance by government employees," according to a 1992 policy letter from OFPP.

Field characterized talks among officials on clarifying those roles as focusing people and their skills. She wants to get agencies' chief human capital officers involved in discussions that Congress and the Obama administration are only beginning to hold.

The fiscal 2009 National Defense Authorization Act, which became law in October 2008, requires a clarification of what is inherently governmental work, and President Barack Obama's fiscal 2010 budget proposal also mentioned the need for that clarification.

Many officials and experts say the lines around government-only duties are blurred. Guarding these functions from contractors has grown in importance as the public and private workforces blend in federal offices. Contractors are deeply embedded inside agencies as the federal acquisition workforce struggles with tough demands.

Debates on government acquisition reforms often return to the need for a larger and better-skilled workforce. Congress and the administration are taking steps to boost the size of the workforce. The administration today said it welcomes support in an initial draft of the House's fiscal 2010 National Defense Authorization Act for the defense secretary's plan to increase the size of the civilian acquisition workforce. The administration also supports provisions that reduce the Defense Department's reliance on contractors for critical acquisition functions. The House is debating the bill this week.

As Congress debates the bill, OFPP has a September deadline for finding ways to know when an agency has enough people. In his March 4 memo on acquisition reforms, Obama said he wants to clarify when it's appropriate to outsource federal work while helping agencies find the appropriate size and experience for the federal employees who develop and oversee acquisitions.

There's a greater emphasis on building a strong workforce because without it, Field said other reforms most likely will fall flat.

Also at the Top 100 conference, Ed O'Hare, assistant commissioner, Integrated Technology Services at the General Services Administration's Federal Acquisition Service, talked about how GSA may phase out government-wide acquisition contracts and possibly merge them into schedules program.



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