

DITAP Refresh Project

Gap Analysis Report

Delivered in partnership by

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Introduction

The Digital IT Acquisition Professional Training Program (DITAP) is a specialized program created to equip federal acquisition professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to lead modern IT and digital services procurements.

CivicActions, in partnership with Experience Institute (Ei) and TandemGov, conducted an audit commissioned by the United States Digital Service (USDS). The audit is part of a large-scale curriculum redesign, the DITAP Refresh Project, and serves as the foundation for this report.

The audit evaluated the learning objectives, assessments, content accuracy, experiential learning, and accessibility. Alumni and stakeholder insights supported these findings. This report identifies areas for improvement to ensure DITAP continues to be an innovative and adaptable training program for federal procurement professionals.

It should be read in tandem with the *DITAP Refresh Project: Audit Findings Report* to provide a comprehensive understanding of the program's current challenges and opportunities.

The findings from the audit directly inform the recommendations by identifying specific gaps in the curriculum's content, structure, and delivery methods, which will guide targeted updates to modernize and enhance the program.

Overview of Gaps

Despite its strong foundation, the DITAP program requires updates to remain effective and relevant in preparing federal acquisition professionals for the demands of modern procurement:



Curriculum Design

- While 78% of learning objectives were found to be clear, measurable, and aligned with course outcomes, 22% of the learning objectives require updates to ensure clarity and alignment with program goals.
- Modernize assessments and curriculum content to reflect updated regulations, policies, and emerging trends.
- Experiential learning activities such as stakeholder interviews, shadowing and live digital assignments remain valuable but would benefit from enhanced visual design and modern instructional approaches.



User Experience and Accessibility Gaps

- Alumni feedback highlighted the overwhelming nature of self-paced materials, suggesting the need to present information in smaller, more digestible chunks to enhance readability.



We felt like we were teaching ourselves instead of being taught.

Quote from Alumni Survey

- Improved accessibility and consistency in plain language across all materials, including images, charts, and PDFs.



Digital Services and Procurement Practices Gaps

- Foundational content remains relevant, but many examples, case studies, and scenarios need to be updated to reflect modern trends and best practices.
- Tactical content should be streamlined, with actionable guidance added to areas currently lacking practical application.
- Content needs a better balance between providing detailed tactical guidance and offering clear strategic-level skills, as it is overly specific in some areas while too vague to be useful in others, leaving participants underprepared for the complexities of IT procurement.

The DITAP program requires targeted updates to address gaps in curriculum alignment, content accuracy, accessibility, and the integration of modern instructional practices. By focusing on these areas, the program can better equip federal procurement professionals for digital service acquisitions while ensuring inclusivity and usability for all learners.



Objectives

The gap analysis was conducted to identify performance gaps and opportunities for refreshing the DITAP training program to ensure it remains relevant, effective, and aligned with its mission. This analysis aims to evaluate the program's alignment with its core mission, address gaps in its current curriculum, and ensure accessibility and usability for all learners. By doing so, the program can better prepare federal procurement professionals to effectively meet the demands of digital service acquisition.

Objectives

The key objectives of this gap analysis are as follows:

- ① **Curriculum Alignment:** Ensure the curriculum aligns with the program's mission of equipping federal procurement professionals with the skills, behaviors, and knowledge required for effective digital service acquisition.
- ② **Evaluation of Course Materials:** Assess the accuracy, relevance, and accessibility of course materials, facilitator resources, and case studies.
- ③ **Modernization and Innovation:** Identify outdated elements and integrate innovative instructional methods, modern tools, and experiential learning practices.
- ④ **Accessibility Review:** Ensure materials and delivery systems comply with Section 508 and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).
- ⑤ **Actionable Recommendations:** Develop practical, prioritized recommendations for curriculum updates and enhancements to address the most pressing needs

Methodology

The audit process was the primary mechanism used to identify potential gaps in the DITAP Program curriculum. Each auditor role worked in tandem to identify meaningful updates that could be made to the training for considerations such as the accuracy of the content, the relevance of supplemental materials, and the effectiveness of learner engagement.

To identify gaps, the following steps were undertaken:

- 1 Defining Objectives:
 - Key objectives and benchmarks for success were defined in collaboration with stakeholders. These included alignment with the program's mission, relevance to current procurement challenges, and adherence to accessibility standards.
- 2 Evaluating the Current State:
 - Current processes, tools, and resources were assessed through:
 - Document reviews to analyze course materials, facilitator guides, and case studies.
 - Stakeholder interviews to gather insights from participants and facilitators.
 - Data analysis to evaluate engagement metrics and learner outcomes.
- 3 Defining the Desired State:
 - Industry best practices, instructional design standards, and relevant benchmarks, such as Section 508 and WCAG compliance, were identified to create a clear picture of the ideal future state for the program.

- 4 Mapping Programmatic Gaps:
 - Gaps between the current and desired states were systematically mapped. This process highlighted areas of misalignment, inefficiency, or unmet needs in the curriculum and its delivery.
- 5 Validating Findings:
 - The identified gaps were validated through internal and external stakeholder feedback to ensure accuracy and relevance, providing a strong foundation for actionable recommendations.

The analysis relied on several tools and frameworks to guide the process, including:

- **Human-Centered Design (HCD) Interviews:** Interviews were conducted with alumni to gain first hand understanding of the participant learning journey while taking the DITAP training program.
- **ADDIE Framework:** Used to assess the instructional design of the curriculum and its alignment with adult learning principles.
- **Accessibility Standards:** Section 508 and WCAG guidelines were applied to evaluate the inclusivity and usability of course materials.
- **Best Practices in Adult Learning:** Industry standards for experiential and active learning were used to benchmark engagement and effectiveness.

This methodology ensured a comprehensive and systematic approach to identifying gaps and enabling the development of clear, actionable recommendations to enhance the future state of the DITAP Program.

Current State



The assessment of the current state of the DITAP curriculum is based on a review of a total of 178 materials in the categories of orientation documents, instructional slide decks, in-class activities, participant packets, facilitator summaries, experiential learning and self-paced learning. In addition, feedback was incorporated from a survey sent to 775 DITAP alumni.

775
DITAP alumni
surveyed

178
materials audited

Alumni Feedback

Alumni generally viewed the curriculum as valuable, with most learning objectives being relevant and measurable (78%) and aligning with course outcomes (74%).

However, they identified work-life balance as a challenge due to the program's workload, suggesting either a reduction in content or a longer completion timeline. They also noted that some Agile-focused content could be replaced with more case studies and real-world applications, reflecting the growing adoption of Agile principles.

Content Accuracy and Relevance

A significant portion of the curriculum materials was found to be outdated. Only 46% of the content was accurate, while the remaining 54% was either inaccurate or had become obsolete, particularly regarding references to policies such as executive orders and Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR).

46%
of content
was accurate

This highlights the urgent need to modernize content to reflect current best practices and resources.



Experiential Learning

Experiential learning was identified as a major strength, with activities like Shadowing, Stakeholder Engagement, and Live Digital Assignments receiving high praise from survey respondents for their ability to connect theory to practice.

However, the audit also found that these activities lacked variety in learning modalities, modern instructional approaches, and updated visual design, which reduced their overall engagement and effectiveness. There was limited use of innovative instructional methods, such as interactive tools or gamified learning.

Experiential learning components, while valued, need updated design and better alignment with real-world digital service acquisition scenarios.

User Experience (UX)

The audit revealed significant gaps in user experience and accessibility. Navigation challenges and poorly structured content limited access and comprehension. Additionally, inconsistent use of plain language and inaccessible visual elements, such as images, charts and PDFs, made the material less effective for learners, particularly for those with accessibility needs.

Subject Matter Expert (SME) Feedback

Digital Services and Procurement SMEs found that some materials lack sufficient focus on modern digital procurement methodologies.

Program content needs to be updated with modern examples of current industry trends. They also noted that practical applications and actionable guidance were insufficient. There was an inconsistent alignment of learning objectives and materials with the program's overarching mission.

Finally, the audit and survey results found there is a misalignment in the level of detail across the curriculum, particularly from the lens of user experience and accessibility, impacting its effectiveness for acquisition professionals.

Desired State

The refreshed DITAP curriculum will be designed to empower federal acquisition professionals with the skills, strategies, and knowledge required to lead innovative and flexible IT procurements while fostering a culture of change and innovation within their agencies. It includes, but is not limited to the following:



Focus on Clear and Actionable Learning Objectives:

- Each learning objective will be measurable, relevant, and directly tied to real-world procurement challenges.
- The curriculum will balance strategic thinking, interpersonal skills, and practical application, empowering participants to address immediate needs while fostering long-term innovation.
- Objectives will guide every aspect of the curriculum, from content delivery to assessments, ensuring participants know what they will learn and how to apply it.



Integrate Modern and Practical Learning Approaches:

- Content will be modular, allowing participants to learn at their own pace and reinforce key concepts.
- Enhanced experiential learning activities (e.g., updated shadowing exercises, stakeholder interviews, and live digital assignments) will bridge theory with practice, ensuring participants can apply skills in real-world contexts.
- Gamification and collaborative tools will be introduced to boost interactivity, helping participants connect theory to practice more effectively.



Prioritize Accessibility and Usability:

- Materials will adhere to federal plain language standards and accessibility guidelines (e.g., Section 508 compliance) to ensure all learners can easily access and navigate the content.
- Content will include accessible visuals, charts, and navigation features, improving both usability and comprehension.

The refreshed curriculum will be guided by:



Adult Learning and Design Best Practices:

- Streamlining content to prevent cognitive overload and make self-paced materials easier to digest.
- Using modular learning to allow flexibility while reinforcing key themes throughout the program.



Government Accessibility and Digital Standards:

- Aligning materials with Section 508 compliance and incorporating accessibility features, such as screen reader-compatible PDFs and plain language content.
- Integrating modern examples and procurement tools, such as artificial intelligence (AI) applications and open-source solutions, to reflect the latest trends in digital services.



Industry Benchmarks for Effective Training Programs:

- Outdated content will be replaced with current industry examples and benchmarks, such as the USDS's procurement frameworks and modern digital acquisition tools.
- Streamlined case studies, modeled after concise formats like Harvard Business Review-style briefs, will encourage meaningful discussions and practical insights.
- Validating content through continuous feedback loops with procurement Subject Matter Experts and updating curriculum materials regularly through identified vehicles such as the Consortium to maintain relevance in the evolving IT procurement landscape.

DITAP Participants will leave the program equipped with the skills and confidence needed to act as both change ambassadors and effective acquisition professionals.

By incorporating modern instructional design principles and updated industry standards, the DITAP program seeks to not only enhance participant learning outcomes but helps ensure its longevity as a leader in federal acquisition training.

Gaps Identified and Recommendations

The audit revealed opportunities to streamline and enhance the competencies to align more effectively with the curriculum. The following recommendations for how to rectify deficiencies, or gaps, in the current curriculum have been outlined here by competency.

Competency 1: Digital Services in the 21st Century

Identified gaps

The current scope of content is outdated and no longer encompasses all relevant topics.

Notable gaps included the following:

- Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) applications
- The growth and evolution of cloud technology
- Changes and advancements in SaaS
- Changes in Agile methodology

Recommendations

- Research and analyze significant federal policies established since initial content development and program changes (e.g., FedRamp).
- Consider conducting a survey within the alumni community to spot procurement patterns.
- Identify relevant technology and digital service areas for agencies today.
- Identify major areas to cover for competency development.
- Identify relevant technology and digital service areas for agencies today.
- Initiate content development based on the identified areas.

Competency 2: Understand What You are Buying

Identified gaps

- Outdated materials
- More relevant case studies

Recommendations

- Update the scope of the competency based on procurement SME feedback.
- Focus on the areas of market research, effective engagement with industry, and acquisition strategy development
- Incorporate newly released case studies where appropriate.

Competency 3: How Do You Buy

Identified gaps

- Requires updated case studies

Recommendations

- Target development on the financial operations and acquisition framework sections
 - Incorporate newly released case studies where appropriate.
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Competency 4: Awarding & Administering Digital Service Contracts

Identified gaps

- Evaluation and award processes are underrepresented
- Lack of content on post-award delivery

Recommendations

- A deeper dive into the evaluation and award process

Competency 5: Leading Change as a Digital IT Acquisition Professional

Identified gaps

- Limited content on influencing key decisions and creating change

Recommendations

- Leverage new case studies to showcase influence opportunities
- Add more experiential learning opportunities to give acquisition professionals the opportunity to “practice” change management directly

Competency 6: Application of Skills

Identified gaps

- Outdated case studies
- Live digital assignment does not directly address anchor digital services acquisition needs.

Recommendations

- Revise both case studies and the live digital assignment

Next steps

This analysis provides a foundational roadmap for advancing the DITAP Refresh Project. By pinpointing gaps in the existing program and synthesizing findings from the audit report, participant interviews, and supporting documents, the team has laid the groundwork for guiding the program's redesign. The next steps focus on translating these insights into actionable improvements:

Establishing Design Criteria: The team will define clear, measurable goals and outcomes for the revised DITAP curriculum. These design criteria will guide every aspect of the redesign process, ensuring the curriculum aligns with program objectives and meets participant needs. This approach will provide a consistent framework for decision-making and help maintain focus on delivering a high-impact learning experience.

Reviewing Technology and Infrastructure: The team will assess the technology and infrastructure needed to support the delivery of the updated curriculum, including any new digital tools or platforms.

Communicating with Stakeholders: The team will update stakeholders about the progress of the DITAP Refresh Project and the upcoming changes to the curriculum. This will help ensure buy-in and support from key stakeholders.

Updating the Curriculum: Collaborating with procurement SMEs, the team will begin revising the curriculum to address identified gaps, update outdated content, and align with federal acquisition priorities. Procurement SMEs will work closely with the curriculum design team during Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the project to reaffirm the design approach, draft new content, and integrate best practices in procurement and modern acquisition methods.

Their expertise will also help incorporate innovative procurement strategies and ensure the curriculum reflects real-world needs. Enhancements will include integrating real-world examples, actionable insights, and case studies to improve relevance and engagement. These updates will ensure the curriculum reflects best practices and equips acquisition professionals with the skills they need for success in digital service acquisitions.

By taking these steps, the project team will establish a solid framework for moving forward with confidence. These actions will ensure the redesigned curriculum is both impactful and responsive to the evolving needs of federal acquisition professionals.

Meet the team

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