Digital IT Acquisition Professional Training

Acquire the skills you need to make procurement work for government in today's digital world.

Contents

Background

The internet era has fundamentally changed the nature of how the government intersects with technology and their constituents. The modern emphasis on technology-driven solutions has given rise to the critical suite of digital services used today. Great digital services are built by teams who effectively use technologies and techniques like user-centered design, agile software delivery, and cloud computing. From an acquisition standpoint, these solutions represent a fundamental change to the way government agencies need to approach procurement. We call this new and modern approach digital acquisition.

To increase the development of digital acquisition experts across the government, the U.S. Digital Service and the Office of Federal Procurement Policy launched the Digital IT Acquisition Professional (DITAP) training program. By 2022, all federal acquisition professionals managing contracts of $7M or more will require Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting Core-Plus Specialization in Digital Services (FAC-C-DS).

But DITAP training isn't just for contracting professionals seeking certification. This training is for anyone who plays a role in the lifecycle of an acquisition and wants to learn how to transform acquisition outcomes through digital acquisition methods. So whether you're a finance officer, legal counselor, procurement officer, program manager, or technical manager, you'll benefit greatly from this training.

Skylight offers DITAP training, led by experts who pioneered the field as former members of 18F and the U.S. Digital Service.

About our program

Our DITAP training program is designed to help you master the art of digital acquisition, as well as earn the [FAC-C-D certification](#) and up to 80 Continuous Learning Points (CLPs).

In an engaging, hands-on educational environment, we'll help give you the know-how necessary to answer the big questions facing the world of digital services and procurement:

- What exactly are digital services, and why are they so important?
- What kinds of problems can they solve?
- How do you develop or acquire a digital service?
- How do digital service vendors and contracts work?
- How can I create a culture of innovation in my own agency?

You'll learn all about these topics and more during the course of this program. Skylight's expert teaching and facilitation staff will work with you every step of the way as you complete online learning modules, work through activities, engage in critical discussions, and even develop your own team-based project!

Skylight

The Skylight advantage

We understand that as a working professional, your time is valuable. Skylight's facilitators aren't just master teachers (although they have an enormous amount of coaching, teaching, and training experience between them); they're acquisition professionals who live the world they teach about.

Our course staff is passionate about public digital services, and every one of them uses the skills they champion in this course in their daily lives. They have first-hand knowledge of the market landscape, and they have the industry know-how to explain not just the theory of a concept, but how it really works in practice. Best of all, they're excited to share their insights and experiences with you!

With Skylight's DITAP training program, you're not just "being taught"— you're actively working with the best in the business to master both theory and practice.

Program delivery

Skylight's DITAP program features both asynchronous, self-paced, online learning content, as well as in-person classroom sessions directly facilitated by an instructor. The combination of these two components creates a rich learning environment that can help learners of all styles engage with their peers in the pursuit of digital acquisition excellence. Our program's online content will be delivered using a web-based learning management system (LMS). Our LMS lets you work at your own pace through lessons, readings, videos, activities, and just about anything else you'll do as part of this course.

The course as a whole is broken down into five units called "releases." Each release is broken down into two iterations (A and B). While the releases address larger themes in digital acquisition (such as understanding the state of the digital services market), the iterations are the smaller-scale lessons that build to a comprehensive understanding of the whole unit (such as what a digital service is, or how you might buy or develop one). Most releases will last between 4 and 7 weeks with the time equally split between the two iterations of the release. Each iteration will include planning and retrospective webinars, online learning content, and activities.

Interacting with your facilitators

You're not taking this course in isolation. Your team of expert facilitators (learn more about them at the end of this document) will be with you every step of the way. If you're ever confused about lesson content, an activity's directions, how you're handling the program overall, or anything else you might have a question about, our instructors are available to help you. We encourage you to post questions in the discussion forums if you're uncertain about an assignment (odds are, if you're confused about something, someone else is too, so don't be shy!). Finally, our facilitators will be hosting weekly office hours during the program's various releases. These blocks of time will allow you to connect with a facilitator online to clear up any questions you might have or just chat about the course material. We know there's a lot of ground to cover when it comes to DITAP, so Skylight's instructors are here to make your learning experience as smooth and accessible as possible.

Online learning modules

The bulk of Skylight's DITAP course will be delivered through online learning modules within our LMS. Each module is a collection of information (both theoretical and practical) that your Skylight instructors have developed to teach a concept important to digital acquisition. Online learning modules often contain interesting multimedia elements such as charts, tables, and videos to help you process and retain course information in as many different mediums as possible. These modules are the bread and butter of the DITAP experience: you can think of them as a sort of "living textbook" that provides a good chunk of the information, but that also points out connections between the material and the real, practical side of the industry.

Readings

Most releases are accompanied by sets of required readings (and some optional readings, too). We've chosen these readings to ensure they reinforce the course material for you, as well as illustrate new perspectives on issues. Many of the readings also give you real-world examples of DITAP content in practice. The required readings are often written by people outside the DITAP program; our inclusion of them in the course is our way of helping you see for yourselves how digital services play a big role in the government, in problem solving, and in the world. With each reading you complete, you'll be asked to create a discussion post in the course forums that either answers a question posed by your facilitators or shares your experience or reaction to the reading. You can read more about discussion posts below.

Activities

All releases include a few required activities, which are designed to allow you to put your new skills into practice. They come in a wide variety of forms to allow you to showcase your abilities in different ways. Some will be creating written documents; others will be manipulating tables and charts; and still others involve role-playing through simulated case studies (these are some of our favorites — you'll have the chance to play the part of an acquisition specialist and work through interesting problems in buying and selling digital

services and information technology). In each instance, the activity should be a fun and engaging test of your DITAP knowledge.

Discussion posts

Collaboration is a cornerstone of the community Skylight hopes to foster with our DITAP course. Throughout the online learning content (modules, activities, and readings), you'll often be asked to write discussion posts in response to something you've done. In some cases, you'll be answering questions posed by your instructors about an interesting concept. In other cases, you'll be commenting on how the material you just read about has played into a personal or professional experience. And in other cases still, you'll be critiquing an article with a thought-provoking reaction or series of questions. At Skylight, we're big believers in the power of teams and communities, and as part of your DITAP education, we're excited to immerse you in our engaging, collaborative culture.

Course assessments

As part of Skylight's DITAP program, you'll take a number of tests, usually one at the beginning of each iteration and one at the end of each release. Why two series of tests? We believe that learning is all about growth. Taking pre- and post-tests lets you see firsthand how your knowledge and course mastery is growing, which is important when you reflect about how DITAP is training you in a plethora of new skills. It also lets you see the content areas you haven't quite mastered, which can help you focus more of your effort on that set of material. The tests will all be administered via our LMS, and the questions will have a variety of forms: multiple choice, "check all that apply," define and contextualize key terms, and even some case-study, scenario-style questions. Now for the fun bit: none of the tests you take during the releases will count toward your final grade. At Skylight, we're focused on development and growth, and we don't think that every bump you encounter along your DITAP journey should be counted against you. The flipside of this, though, is that your final capstone test is worth a big part of your final grade. This means that the tests you take during the releases are an important tool for you to understand the progress you've made and to recognize the content areas you haven't quite mastered.

Live Digital Assessment project

Throughout the program, you and a small group of classmates will be collaborating on a Live Digital Assessment (LDA) project. This is a course-long term project that will give you the chance to put your DITAP skills into practice. During each release, your project group will be given a series of tasks to work on related to the theme of that release. The tasks will start small, such as identifying a digital services need or problem you'd like to solve, but they'll build up to larger projects, such as creating a product vision and testing a hypothesis about your problem. At two points during your task development stages, you'll give a brief presentation of your work thus far to the entire cohort at one of the in-person classroom sessions. The Live Digital Assessment project is your chance to simulate being a digital acquisition expert and experience each stage of the agile process. It's a fun, hands-on learning experience that lets you collaborate with your classmates to work toward something you're all interested in.

The project will culminate with your group presenting its findings to the class during one of our in-person classroom sessions.

In-person classroom sessions

To help us all grow as a cohort of learners and instructors, we'll be hosting four in-person classroom sessions during the program's course. These sessions are three-day-long, intensive focus groups where we all meet as a team, go over some of the critical points of previous release material, review assessments and give feedback, work on your Live Digital Assessment project, and even spotlight some of the course content with special guest speakers and panels. Plus, as part of these four sessions, we'll host a program orientation before the online learning content officially launches, as well as a program graduation ceremony to celebrate your completion of Skylight's DITAP course. These sessions will be busy, make no mistake, but we've got some really exciting plans to keep them fun and engaging, ranging from role-playing to technical workshopping and even to some building activities.

Webinars

Much of this program is done online and at your own pace, but to help address confusions and clarify questions as they crop up, we'll be having webinars periodically throughout the course. Some of these webinars (the Iteration Planning Meetings) will be devoted to introducing and motivating the topic of the iteration you are about to study, as well as explaining how the coming weeks of the iteration will be laid out. Others (the Iteration Retrospective) will give you time to reflect about the material you've learned with the guidance of the instructors. The third kind of webinar we'll host are content highlight webinars, where the instructors want to devote some extra time to particularly tricky or interesting material. These webinars will also occasionally feature guest speakers and industry experts, who will give you their practical perspective on the material you're learning.

Shadowing

In order to complete this program, you'll be required to shadow industry professionals at some point during the course of the program. This is intended to allow you to observe digital and information technology work in action, so that you can map the core skills you learn here to their application in business settings. You'll also have to write up short reports about your shadowing experiences, including discussing some interesting things you saw and some things that you learned. These opportunities give you a chance to connect with the people who are living DITAP work — who knows, you might even learn about interesting possibilities for yourself and your agency!

Engagement interviews

The final component of Skylight's DITAP program is a series of engagement interviews you'll conduct with important stakeholders in your agency. You'll spend some time identifying a few individuals you believe wield influence over the digital acquisitions and information technology process. Then, you'll form some questions to ask these stakeholders, and you'll create hypotheses that you hope to answer during your interviews about how stakeholder influence works in practice. The goal of these interviews is to give you a perspective on how people in positions of leadership currently interact with digital services. After your interviews, you'll be asked to write up a short report explaining how the conversation went,

what you talked about, and whether your influence hypotheses were confirmed or disproved.

Schedule

Skylight's DITAP course is a 6-month program that provides a rigorous education in the world of digital services. For exact dates that the program will run (including the dates of the required in-person sessions), please see Skylight's DITAP webpage. All of the in-person sessions will take place in the Washington DC metro area, and we'll make sure the space we provide is ready to go for our lectures, seminars, guest speakers, and group breakout work.

Because Skylight's DITAP course is intended to be comprehensive and rigorous, you should expect a fair bit of time each week to go to course mastery. Between online learning modules, activities, readings, discussion posts, assessments, webinars, and collaborative group work, you should budget approximately 10–12 hours per week to be devoted to DITAP material during the course of the program. This estimate reflects not only the time spent progressing through and completing the material, but also the time necessary to reflect on the material, ask questions, attend virtual meetings (for webinars or group work), and complete most other facets of the DITAP course. It's all worth it in the end, though, because if you successfully complete the course, you'll earn the FAC-C-D certification and up to 80 Continuous Learning Points!

Syllabus

Release 0: Orientation

Week 0: *Getting started/orientation:* in-person session 1, covering the need and role of digital acquisition, the Digital Services Playbook, and an agile overview

Release 1: Digital services in the 21st-century government

Iteration 1.A: The digital services professional

Week 1: *What is a digital service:* classroom content to learn what a digital service is, why they're important, and who delivers them

Week 2: *How do we get digital services:* the "how" of delivering digital services

Week 3: *Embracing digital services:* your role in effecting digital transformation

Iteration 1.B: The digital services world

Week 4: *Supplying digital services:* sources of information and supply

Week 5: *Digital services best practices:* achieving efficiency, transparency, and innovation through cutting-edge, digital services best practices

Week 6: *Modernized service delivery:* a study of modern success stories

Week 7: *Release wrap-up:* includes release assessment and individualized facilitator meetings

Release 2: Understanding what you're buying

Iteration 2.A: Understanding your needs and agency readiness

Week 8: *Leadership and maturity:* product management and stakeholder analysis

Week 9: *The process of digital change:* the agile way to determine change readiness and change leadership

Week 10: *Iteration intermission:* in-person classroom session 2, covering the unique challenges and opportunities confronting stakeholders and digital acquisitions planning; also covers market research and strategy

Iteration 2.B: The digital services market

Week 11: *Analyzing market options and release wrap-up:* helping you build your market research toolkit and understanding the role of communications

Release 3: How do you buy?

Iteration 3.A: Understanding the acquisition strategy

Week 12: *All about acquisition strategies:* the intersection of acquisition strategy options with digital service agency maturity

Iteration 3.B: Developing an acquisition strategy

Week 13: *Building acquisition strategies:* the nuts and bolts of building your own acquisition strategy

Week 14: *Assessing acquisition strategies:* measures, metrics, and criteria evaluations to help you assess strategic themes

Week 15: *Release wrap-up:* instructor webinars and assessments

Release 4: Awarding and administering digital service contracts

Iteration 4.A: Awarding digital services contracts

Week 16: *Managing technical tradeoffs:* understand technical factors and balancing between them

Week 17: *Iteration intermission:* in-person session 3, covering the execution of the acquisition strategy via Statement of Objectives and Statements of Work, as well putting competitive exit strategies in place

Week 18: *Managing vendors:* understanding negotiation tactics and agile contracts to ensure successful service delivery

Week 19: *What happens after an award:* debriefing and the acquisition package

Iteration 4.B: Digital services delivery

Week 20: *Practices for successful delivery:* agile engineering practices to ensure timely and efficient solutions

Week 21: *Release wrap-up:* using warranties and incentives to drive agile development

Release 5: Leading change as a digital IT acquisition professional

Iteration 5.A: Change readiness

Week 22: *Difficult conversations:* using influence the right way

Iteration 5.B: Change ambassador role

Week 23: *Working toward change:* leading change using agile skills and human-centered technique

Program wrap-up

Week 24: *Final in-person classroom session 4:* reviewing change delivery and culminating in the program's graduation!

How you'll be evaluated

Grading in Skylight's DITAP program is a combination of participation (classroom sessions, lesson completion, activities, discussions, etc.), the Live Digital Assessment project, and the capstone program test. The grading breakdown is shown in the visual below.
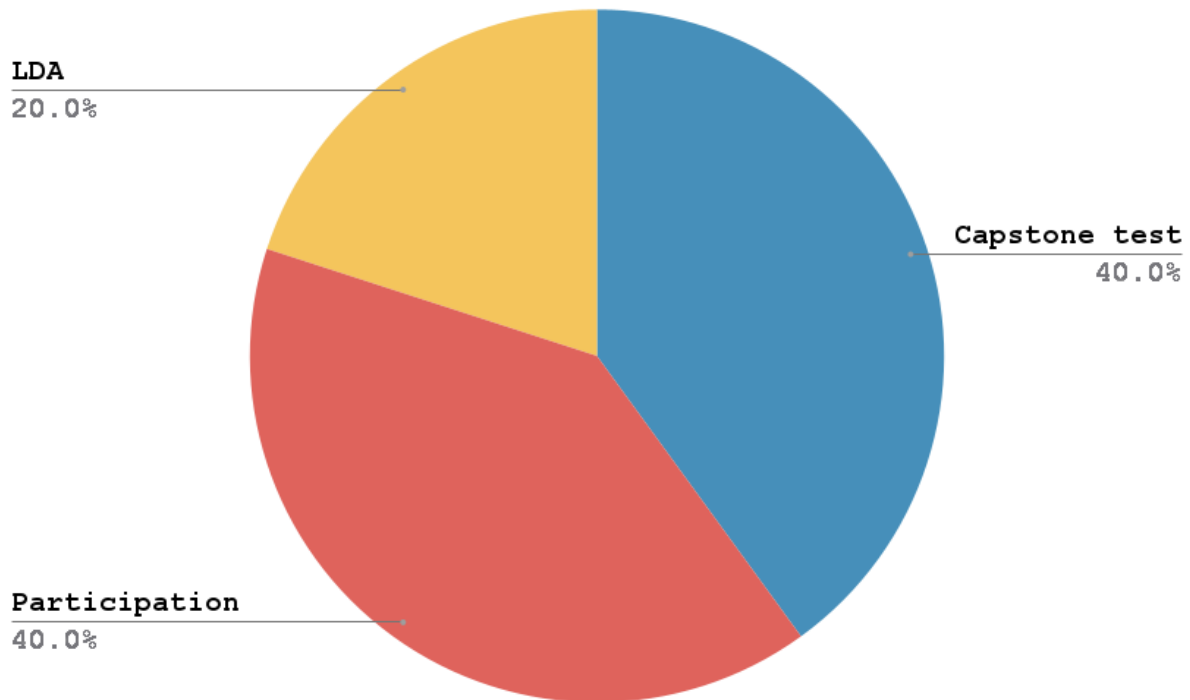
# About your facilitators

Chris Cairns

Chris served as a White House Presidential Innovation Fellow, and co-founded 18F. He started and built 18F's influential acquisition group, which specializes in digital acquisition methods. Chris is known for pioneering 18F's agile acquisition framework, and for architecting the government's first-ever agile vendor contract vehicle using a tech challenge.

Dan Levenson

Dan is a senior executive with Agile Six. He previously served as a certified digital acquisition expert and contracting officer for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). At CMS, Dan architected and managed a highly successful agile vendor contract vehicle, which supports programs such as the Quality Payment Program.
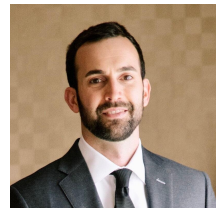
Robert Read, PhD

Robert served as a White House Presidential Innovation Fellow, and co-found ed 18F. Originally trained by agile pioneer Kent Beck, Robert has over 15 years experience as an agile practitioner and coach. He holds a PhD in computer science, and is best known for writing a popular, multilingual guide on how to be a programmer.

Leslie Garner Franklin

Leslie brings nearly two decades of experience in user research, user experience design, product management, digital leadership, and instructional design. She started her career at Teach For America, and has worked for notable design firms such as EchoUser.