DITAP
Vendor Playbook

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Welcome to the DITAP Vendor Playbook

This playbook is here to help you deliver the refreshed Digital IT Acquisition Professional (DITAP) program with clarity, confidence, and consistency. The DITAP program is a multi-modal training and development experience delivered over months at a time, built around a cohort-based learning approach that emphasizes collaboration, peer learning, and practical application. Inside, you will find the program structure, key requirements, competency-based content, and essential learning activities, along with tips, tools, and examples to make facilitation smoother and more engaging. While it provides a clear framework to ensure a high-quality experience for every cohort, it also leaves room for you to adapt delivery to your style and your learners' needs. Think of it as both a guide and a partner, supporting you from planning through delivery so together we can create impactful learning experiences that prepare participants to succeed in real-world acquisition environments.

Program Overview

The Digital Services Credential (DITAP), formerly FAC-C-DS, program aims to train and develop professionals for this certification, focusing on digital service acquisition. It requires a comprehensive approach that includes pre and post-course assessments, multi-modal training delivery utilizing a learning management system, and evaluation based on participation, mastery of content, and a live digital assignment. The program emphasizes a cohort-based learning approach which can be both in-person or fully remote for the majority of facilitation or the majority of content. The curriculum, structured in modules and sprints, covers competencies such as understanding digital services, effective buying techniques, contract administration, and leading change in digital IT acquisition, with the goal of providing participants with practical skill development through real-world application and problem-solving.

Program Structure

The DITAP program is organized to guide participants through a progressive learning journey that blends knowledge building with hands-on application. Its structure combines sequential modules, practical activities, and applied projects in a way that reinforces learning over time. The design ensures that each topic builds on the last, moving participants from understanding core concepts to confidently applying skills in real-world acquisition scenarios.

Core design principles for delivery
- **Cohort-based learning**: Participants move through the program together, building peer networks, sharing perspectives, and supporting each other's growth. This sustained engagement is key to the program's success.
- **Blended, multi-modal delivery**: Learning takes place through a mix of live facilitation, online modules, group discussions, and hands-on assignments.
- **Technology-enabled experience**: Vendors must use a learning management system (LMS) to host course content, track progress, and facilitate discussions. Webinars and other collaboration tools, such as discussion boards or shared workspaces, should be used to enhance interaction and access.
- **Integrated assessment**: Progress is measured through pre- and post-program assessments, active participation, demonstrated mastery of content, and successful completion of a live digital assignment (LDA).
- **Anchor learning in real work**: Use the case study, threaded activities, and Live Digital Assignment to give participants realistic scenarios where they can apply new skills in their own agency context.

Program Modules

The program is divided into five modules, each with multiple sprints that serve as subtopics within the module. These sprints break the content into focused segments, allowing participants to explore specific concepts in depth while building toward the module's overall learning objectives. The five modules are:

1	**Describe**	Explore what digital services are, who provides them, how they are delivered, and why they are important. Includes an overview of delivery methods (Agile, Human-Centered Design, DevSecOps) and a "Tech Bootcamp" covering data, software, cloud, AI, security, accessibility, and open source.
2	**Discover**	Learn how to assess agency readiness, map stakeholders, define success, and conduct effective market research to inform acquisition strategies.
3	**Design**	Translate discovery insights into a structured solicitation. Covers acquisition strategy development, solicitation creation, and evaluation planning.
4	**Build**	Manage vendor partnerships and guide delivery using agile and lean principles. Topics include performance measurement, kickoff facilitation, and problem resolution.
5	**Grow**	Strengthen the ability to lead change and foster innovation at both the individual and organizational level.

Target audience

- **Required:** FAC-C (Professional) holders with at least two years of experience in digital service acquisitions over the FAR 13.500(c) threshold.

- **Encouraged:** FAC-COR Level II/III and FAC-P/PM Level II/III holders with similar experience, especially those working in cross-functional teams.

Applicant Selection

Selecting the right participants is essential to creating a dynamic learning environment and achieving the program's intended outcomes. While the DITAP program includes formal eligibility requirements, vendors are encouraged to view applicant selection as an important step in shaping the cohort experience. Thoughtful selection can help ensure that participants bring a mix of relevant experience, motivation, and openness to learning, which in turn supports deeper engagement, richer discussions, and more meaningful application of skills back in the workplace.

Minimum requirement

For questions regarding minimum requirements and eligibility criteria, please refer to the "Who can enroll in the DITAP program?" section in the TechFarHub.

Recommended screening process

Although not required, vendors are encouraged to implement a screening process to assess fit for the program. This can include reviewing application responses, conducting brief interviews, or seeking input from the participant's supervisor. The goal is to ensure each participant is ready and able to engage fully in the cohort experience.

Attributes of an ideal candidate

An ideal participant will typically:
- Demonstrate a willingness to experiment, share knowledge, and collaborate with peers.

- Show commitment to applying new skills in their role rather than attending simply to complete a requirement.
- Work in an organization that supports applying the DITAP certification in practice after program completion.
- Have an interest in digital service acquisition, even without a formal IT background.
- Exhibit a positive, change-oriented mindset while acknowledging the realities and challenges of technology acquisition in government.

Orientation - Course Start

A strong program launch sets the tone for the entire learning experience. Orientation is an opportunity to establish the cohort community, build connections among participants, and provide a solid foundation for the content to come.

Optional enhancements

- **Cohort Connection**: Orientation must be delivered in person to foster a sense of community among participants and reinforce the cohort-based nature of the program.
- **Introduction to Agile**: A hands-on "Introduction to Agile" activity is required to give participants—especially those without a digital services background—a clear understanding of agile concepts and practices. This can be achieved through experiential exercises such as Play-Doh or LEGO simulations, or other interactive activities that make agile principles accessible and memorable.
- **Icebreaker activities**
- **Guest speakers** from government or industry
- Additional activities or topics tailored to the cohort's needs

Supporting materials

Orientation materials from the DITAP Refresh are provided in the Refresh GitHub Repo.

Graduation - Course End

Graduation is an opportunity to recognize participant achievement, celebrate the learning journey, and reinforce the value of applying skills back on the job. While not required to be in person, a meaningful closing event can help sustain momentum and strengthen the alumni network.

Required elements
- **Continuous Learning Points (CLPs)**: Participants are eligible to receive 60–80 CLPs based on the delivery approach. Vendors must clearly state in the course materials the total CLPs that can be earned and how they are awarded.
- **Certificate of Completion**: Each participant must receive a training certificate including:
    - Course title
    - Full dates of the course
    - Participant's full name
    - Name of the organization conducting the training
    - Number of CLPs earned
- **Graduate reporting**: Vendors must submit a final list of all certificate holders to USDS so that they can be added to the DITAP Alumni listserv.

Optional enhancements
- Guest speakers from government or industry
- Special recognition events or activities to mark completion

USDS review
USDS will review the CLP distribution approach, certification format, and graduation activities, whether in person or virtual.

Supporting materials

A sample certificate format is included in the Appendix.

DITAP Delivery: Required and Optional Components

To support consistency across all DITAP deliveries, the following section identifies which elements of the program are required versus those that are optional. Required elements form the foundation of the program and ensure participants meet the learning outcomes set by USDS. Optional elements provide flexibility for vendors to enhance delivery with activities and assessments that best fit their facilitation style, participant needs, or agency context. Assignment timelines are flexible based on vendor delivery needs; however, all assignment requirements must be met and participants must complete each assignment as instructed.

Program Element	Required / Optional	Notes
Self-Paced Content	Required	All core self-paced modules must be delivered and may be adapted as long as it meets the need of the learning objectives. Vendors may add supplemental materials, including images, video or audio files, charts and resources, to support the learning requirements; however, no content may be removed.
Activities (ILT or exercises)	Optional	Vendors may select or adapt activities to support facilitation style.

Applied skills assignments	Required	Includes shadowing, stakeholder activity, and live digital assignment. Vendors may add supplemental materials to support the learning requirements; however, no content may be removed.
Threaded case scenario	Required	Must be integrated across modules. Vendors may add supplemental materials to support the learning requirements; however, no content may be removed. The threaded case study may be replaced with an alternate case study, provided it includes original milestones, either at the designated points in the pacing guide or later in the course.
Pre- and post-surveys	Optional	Vendors may administer as part of evaluation, not mandatory.
Pre- and post-assessments	Required	A pre and post assessment must be administered. Vendors have the flexibility to adapt and adjust the choice of assessment as needed. Pre- and post-assessments are required, but vendors may enhance scenarios and adjust questions or responses as needed.

Assessment and Grading Guidance

Overview

The DITAP refresh reimagines assessment strategy to reflect modern adult learning principles. Rather than checking boxes, assessments build confidence through practice, feedback, and reflection while helping learners apply course concepts to real-world work.

Our assessment design is grounded in the **The Learning-Transfer Evaluation Model (LTEM)**, which moves beyond attendance and knowledge recall to measure decision-making, performance in realistic settings, and the foundation for on-the-job transfer and organizational impact.

Vendor Flexibility: Vendors have discretion to adapt their assessment strategy to their delivery format, learner needs, and agency-specific contexts while maintaining DITAP's core learning objectives.

Pass/Fail structure

DITAP uses a pass/fail approach that encourages learners to focus on growth, collaboration, and real-world application rather than point accumulation. This mirrors the real-world environments they'll operate in.

Requirements for Completion

To successfully complete DITAP and earn a certificate, vendors must assess two areas:

1. **Participation**: Meaningful engagement in course sessions as measured by the provided rubric
2. **Conceptual Fluency**: Understanding and application of key DITAP tools and frameworks through applied learning assignments and pre vs. post assessment comparison

Progress Indicators

Without formal grades, students need regular feedback to ensure they're on track. Use these indicators:

On Track to Pass
- Consistently contributes in discussions (see rubric)
- Accurately applies frameworks in assignments, no revisions required
- Completes all phases of the capstone project
- Demonstrates growth in post-assessment results

May Be At Risk
- Rarely participates (multiple "needs attention" ratings)
- Misses key deliverables
- Struggles to apply frameworks in assignments; revisions are required
- Shows little to no progress from pre- to post-assessment

Participation

The rubric evaluates three dimensions of engagement:

Participation rubric

	Fully Engaged	Progressing	Needs Attention
Cohort Contribution	Consistently contributes in live sessions; builds on others' ideas; prepared and engaged	Occasionally contributes; listens actively; sometimes prepared	Rarely participates or comes unprepared
Connections	Frequently connects course content to real work; shares relevant examples	Makes occasional connections between course and work	Struggles to relate content to context
Emergent Thinking	Regularly introduces new perspectives; demonstrates curiosity and depth	Sometimes surfaces thoughtful ideas	Rarely explores beyond surface-level

Participation rubric

Type of Assessment	Description	Suggest Cadence	Timing
Participant Self Assessment	Using the rubric, learners reflect on their own engagement and identify one area for growth.	Once per module	During/after interactive sessions, especially those tied to the threaded case scenario.
Assessment by Peers	Pairs or small groups provide one observation and one suggestion using rubric	Twice per course	
Assessment by Facilitators	Instructors use the rubric to guide individual or group feedback after observed sessions.	Twice per course	

Intervention Guidance

Schedule a facilitator check-in when a participant meets either criterion:
- Two consecutive "Needs Attention" ratings in the same dimension, OR
- Three total "Needs Attention" ratings across any dimension during the program

Use the rubric to guide conversations and offer concrete re-engagement strategies.

Conceptual Fluency Assessment

Conceptual fluency is the ability to understand, apply, and clearly communicate key DITAP tools and frameworks (Digital Services Playbook, TechFAR, human-centered design principles) in realistic work contexts.

Assessment Components

Pre- and Post-Course Assessments
- **Pre-Assessment**: Informational and diagnostic only. Establishes baseline understanding and helps vendors identify instructional emphasis areas
- **Post-Assessment**: 80% required for pass/fail determination. Confirms minimum conceptual fluency for DITAP framework mastery
    - Multiple attempts allowed
    - After first failure, redirect to challenging sections or schedule facilitator check-in
    - After multiple failures, provide additional interventions (peer coaching, office hours, targeted practice)

Applied Learning Assignments
- Stakeholder Research Assignment
- Shadowing Assignment
- Live Digital Assignment (LDA)

Stakeholder Research and Shadowing Assignments
- Specific instructions for what constitutes passing are provided in dedicated playbooks [link to playbooks]
- In short, both assignments have two phases:
    - Phase 1: Requires approval to proceed
    - Phase 2: Requires passing grade for completion

Live Digital Assignment (LDA)

- DITAP's capstone experience simulating the complete lifecycle of a digital services acquisition
- Participants apply key DITAP concepts in real-world context through four phases:
  - Discovery Sprint
  - Case Study Development
  - Peer Evaluation
  - Final Presentations
- The Case Study Package is assessed as a **gated Pass/Fail**, meaning learners must pass to continue. All phases are essential for learning and completion and pass/fail criteria are provided for each phase in the LDA playbook

Knowledge Checks

Knowledge checks are embedded throughout the self-paced modules to help learners identify misconceptions early, practice applying key concepts, and reinforce terminology, frameworks, and decision-making skills. They are strategically placed in modules that introduce complex material to help manage cognitive load and confirm comprehension before learners advance.

Continuous Learning Points (CLPs)

Participants in the full 6-month DITAP program should be eligible to receive 80 CLPs upon successful completion of all program requirements.

For shorter or adapted versions of the program, training providers should work with USDS to determine the appropriate CLP allocation. The total number of CLPs and the criteria for earning them should be clearly stated in the course materials provided to participants.

The Learning-Transfer Evaluation Model (LTEM) Alignment

DITAP assessments are intentionally designed using the Learning-Transfer Evaluation Model (LTEM), created by Will Thalheimer. LTEM provides a framework for measuring learning effectiveness beyond attendance or satisfaction surveys, progressing from basic measures of participation and engagement (Levels 1–3) to deeper measures of knowledge, decision-making, and performance (Levels 4–6), and ultimately to transfer and organizational results (Levels 7–8).

LTEM Levels in DITAP

	LTEM Level	Description	DITAP Examples
1	Participation	Learners are present for live sessions and complete required self-paced modules.	Zoom attendance logs; LMS completion records; average learning time.
2	Engagement	Learners actively engage with required learning activities and assignments.	Time spent in lessons; whether videos are watched in full vs. fast-forwarded; frequency and quality of questions asked during live sessions; self-paced knowledge check completion; assignment submission (before feedback).

3	**Learner Perceptions**	Learners report the relevance, quality, and effectiveness of the course.	End-of-course survey; mid-course pulse check; reflections on perceived skill growth and confidence.
4	**Knowledge**	Learners recall and accurately describe key facts, terms, and frameworks tied to course outcomes.	Knowledge checks in self-paced modules; accurate use of terminology in class; conceptual fluency demonstrated during discussion and assignments.
5	**Decision Making**	Learners choose appropriate actions or solutions in realistic scenarios.	Responses in the threaded case scenario; scenario-based knowledge checks; decision-making prompts in live sessions; conceptual fluency shown when weighing trade-offs or justifying choices.
6	**Performance (in the Learning Environment)**	Learners demonstrate skills effectively in realistic but low-risk practice settings.	Conducting stakeholder interviews; applying HCD tools in problem-framing exercises; delivering LDA case study presentations; all applied learning.

7	Transfer (on the job)	Learners apply new skills and approaches in their real work environment.	[Assessed post DITAP, Consortium to own] Alumni survey 30–60 days post-course asking for specific examples; Best practice: manager interviews to confirm observed behavior changes.
8	Results	Tangible, measurable organizational or mission-level improvements linked to the learning.	Tangible, measurable organizational or mission-level improvements linked to the learning.

Progressive Skill Building

This structure creates scaffolded learning:

- Participation and early activities establish engagement and basic knowledge
- Knowledge checks and applied assignments provide low-stakes decision-making practice
- Capstone project demonstrates comprehensive performance ability in realistic conditions

Beyond the course

LTEM Levels 7 (Transfer) and 8 (Organizational Results) are assessed after course completion, and the DITAP consortium is actively working on measurement strategies for these levels. Level 8 represents the gold standard of organizational impact but may be challenging to achieve given agency constraints and the multiple factors beyond DITAP training that influence

organizational outcomes. Successful completion of DITAP's assessment structure positions participants to achieve these higher levels after the program concludes.

Implementation Requirements Summary

Each vendor must implement an assessment plan that includes:

1. Meaningful participation measurement using engagement rubrics with ongoing feedback opportunities
2. Consistent conceptual fluency measurement across multiple elements:
    a. Pre-course and post-course assessment administration
    b. Embedded knowledge checks in self-paced learning
    c. Applied learning assignments (shadowing, stakeholder research)
    d. Cumulative capstone project simulating real-world digital acquisition challenges

Vendors may supplement with additional assessments based on delivery format, learner preferences, or agency-specific contexts.

Sample Communications

"Participation Needs Attention" Email Template

Subject: Quick check-in on participation

Hi [Student Name],
I wanted to touch base about your participation in the DITAP course. Based on recent reflections and observations, it looks like your participation needs attention. As you know, participation means contributing to discussions, connecting course material to your day-to-day work, and surfacing emerging insights. When those opportunities are missed, it becomes harder to get the full value of the course.

This isn't about being the most vocal person—it's about showing up in ways that support your learning and the group's. I'd love to help you get more out of the rest of the course. If you're open to it, let's connect and talk through what might help.

Warmly,
 [Facilitator/Vendor Name]

Sample reflective coaching prompts
- What's one way you've contributed to others' learning in the course so far?
- What connections have you been making between this session and your work?
- What's one question or insight you want to keep exploring?

Module Content Overview

Module 0: Orientation

Orientation		
Learning Elements	**Descriptions**	**Learning Objectives**
Program Overview and Navigation	This topic provides an overview of the DITAP training program, including its structure, learning objectives, and key curriculum components. Learners will gain clarity on how the course is organized, what to expect from each module, and how the program supports their development as digital service acquisition professionals.	N/A
Learning How to Learn	This topic introduces the principles of adult learning and the mindset needed for success in an applied, collaborative training environment. Learners will explore strategies for managing time, workload, and personal growth as they engage with hands-on activities and peer-driven discussions throughout the course.	Develop an understanding of how adult learning principles, personal learning strategies, and mindset shifts support success in a collaborative, experiential course environment.
Topics		
● Structure of the DITAP program		

- Learning objectives and competencies
- Key curriculum components and modules
- How to navigate course materials and resources
- What to expect from program pacing and delivery
- Principles of adult learning
- Mindset for success in a collaborative environment
- Strategies for time and workload management
- Approaches to personal growth and reflection
- Making the most of hands-on activities and peer discussions

Module 1: Describe

Describe: Explore digital services in the 21st century, including what they are, who provides them, how they are delivered, and why they are important.

Sprint 1: The Digital Services Landscape		
Learning Elements	**Descriptions**	**Learning Objectives**
What is Digital Service?	This topic introduces the foundational concepts of digital services within the federal landscape. Learners will recognize key characteristics of digital services, explore common examples in government, and build a basic understanding of the underlying systems and architecture that support their delivery.	Define digital services and the problems they can be used to solve.
Digital Services in Government	This topic introduces key players in the digital services ecosystem, both within government and in the private sector. Learners will identify major organizations and roles involved in digital service delivery and explore foundational resources such as the U.S. Digital Services Playbook and the TechFAR Handbook to understand their	Identify "who's who" in the digital services arena, including public and private sector organizations and individuals; Identify and understand the Digital Service Playbook and TechFAR Handbook concepts.

relevance to federal
procurement practices.

Topics
- Digital Services - The Who and What   - Then and Now: USCIS.gov Use Case   - Defining Digital Services: Another Take   - The Digital Services Ecosystem   - The Digital Services Ecosystem, Part 2   - Who's Who: A Starting List   - Activity Break (Optional)   - Recommended Readings   - Case Study Tie In: Module 1 Activity: Introducing Casey and the CRM Project

Sprint 2: Digital Service Methods, Roles and Sources of Supply		
Learning Elements	Descriptions	Learning Objectives
Digital Service Delivery Methods 1: Agile	This topic introduces agile software delivery as a foundational approach to modern digital services. Learners will compare agile and traditional (waterfall) development methods, explore core agile principles, and examine key team roles, ceremonies, and practices that	Identify modern design, development, and delivery methods used by digital services professionals.

	enable iterative and user-centered delivery.	
Digital Service Delivery Methods 2: Design / User Centered Design/DevSecOps	This topic explores complementary practice areas that strengthen agile digital delivery. Learners will examine user-centered design, DevSecOps, and related private sector practices that contribute to secure, iterative, and user-focused software development in government contexts.	Identify modern design, development, and delivery methods used by digital services professionals.
Digital Service Delivery Providers: Sources of Supply	This topic provides an overview of the current landscape of digital service providers. Learners will identify key government-led digital service organizations and understand how private sector vendors contribute to delivery. The topic also introduces sourcing considerations relevant to federal acquisition professionals evaluating potential partners.	Identify "who's who" in the digital services arena, including public and private sector organizations and individuals.
Topics		

- Digital Services - The Who and What
- Then and Now: USCIS.gov Use Case
- Defining Digital Services: Another Take
- The Digital Services Ecosystem

- The Digital Services Ecosystem, Part 2
- Who's Who: A Starting List
- Activity Break (Optional)
- Recommended Readings
- Case Study Tie In: Module 1 Activity: Introducing Casey and the CRM Project

Sprint 3: Digital Service Tech Bootcamp

Learning Elements	Descriptions	Learning Objectives
Introduction to Digital Service Tech Bootcamp	This topic provides a high-level overview of the core technologies behind digital service delivery. Learners will gain foundational awareness of data, software, cloud, AI, and cybersecurity to better understand technical proposals and engage with digital service teams during the acquisition process.	Identify and describe core technology domains that underpin digital service delivery, including data, software, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity.
Tech Topic 1: Data	This topic introduces the role of data in digital service delivery. Learners will explore different types of data, how data is stored, shared, and managed within government systems, and the importance of open data,	Explain key concepts related to data in digital services, including data types, storage, sharing, open data, privacy, and

	privacy, and security. Key considerations related to data lifecycle management and compliance will also be discussed.	compliance considerations.
Tech Topic 2: Software	This topic examines the software landscape in government procurement, including commercial software (COTS and SaaS), custom software development, and delivery models. Learners will identify key roles in software delivery, understand software acquisition considerations, and explore relevant policy areas that shape buying decisions.	Identify modern software design, development, and delivery methods used by digital service professionals, and describe key acquisition considerations across COTS, SaaS, and custom solutions.
Tech Topic 3: Cloud	This topic provides an overview of cloud computing in the federal environment. Learners will explore different types of cloud services, benefits and challenges of cloud adoption, and the policy frameworks that govern cloud usage in government digital service delivery.	Explain the benefits, challenges, and types of cloud services, and describe relevant policies that shape cloud adoption in government.
Tech Topic 4: AI	This topic introduces learners to the current landscape of AI tools and models used in digital services. Learners will examine	Describe the current landscape of AI tools and models, and explain key policy

	foundational concepts, applications in government, and key policy issues such as transparency, bias, privacy, and responsible AI use.	considerations including transparency, bias, and responsible use.
Tech Topic 5: Security	This topic explores essential principles of cybersecurity in digital service delivery. Learners will review concepts such as identity and access management (IAM), vulnerability management, continuous monitoring (e.g., SIEM), and compliance frameworks. The topic also connects these principles to relevant federal policies and acquisition considerations.	Identify foundational cybersecurity concepts such as IAM, vulnerability management, and compliance frameworks, and explain their relevance to digital service delivery.
Tech Topic 6: Accessibility	This topic explores essential concepts of accessibility in digital service delivery, emphasizing its importance in federal procurement. Learners will examine how accessibility ensures digital products and services are usable by all individuals, including those with disabilities, and how it benefits a wider audience such as seniors and veterans. The topic also covers common	Recognize the essential concepts of accessibility in digital services procurement, Identify common misunderstandings about accessibility and how to address them, Recognize the importance of ongoing accessibility maintenance throughout a project's

	misunderstandings, the integration of accessibility throughout the acquisition lifecycle, key laws and standards like Section 508 and WCAG 2.2, and available tools and templates to improve accessibility outcomes in procurement.	lifecycle, Use federal tools and templates to improve accessibility outcomes in your procurements.
Tech Topic 7: Open Source	This topic introduces procurement officers to the principles, risks, and opportunities of open source software (OSS) in digital government. It covers how OSS reduces costs, increases innovation, and supports vendor independence. Key areas of discussion include legal foundations, evaluation practices, and the role of OSS in long-term service delivery and transparency, addressing common misunderstandings and its integration into the acquisition lifecycle.	Recognize how open source software fits within federal procurement, Identify common myths and misunderstandings around OSS in government, Explain how open source software fits into Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS) procurement.

Topics

Tech Topic 1: Data
- What is data?
- Key Considerations for Government Systems
- Open Data

- Data Privacy

Tech Topic 2: Software
- What is software?
- How is software developed?
- How is software delivered?
- How is software updated?
- Considerations around Supply Chain Licensing
- Service Design and Delivery Standards

Tech Topic 3: Cloud
- Basics
- Considerations
- Why Understanding Cloud Computing is Critical for Government Contracting Officers
- Bottom Line for Contracting Officers

Tech Topic 4: AI
- What Is Artificial Intelligence?
- Types of AI
- Key Considerations for Government Systems
- Common AI Terms You May Encounter
- Why It Matters to Procurement Officers
- "What Contracting Officers Should Keep in Mind"

Tech Topic 5: Security
- Why is Cybersecurity Important?
- Cybersecurity in the current federal procurement context
- Four Key Areas of Cybersecurity for Digital Services

Tech Topic 6: Accessibility
- Must Know Concepts
- Common Misunderstandings
- Where Does Accessibility Show Up?

- Key Laws, Standards, or Frameworks

Tech Topic 7: Open Access
- Must Know Concepts
- Common Misunderstandings
- Why OSS Shifts Power Back to Government
- How Open Source Shows Up in the Acquisition Lifecycle
- Key Laws, Standards, or Frameworks

Module 2: Discover

Discover: Engage in a discovery process to set the foundation for informed acquisition strategy decisions. By assessing organizational maturity, identifying key stakeholders, analyzing mission and user needs, evaluating risks, and performing market research, you will gather the data necessary to shape a successful digital service procurement.

Sprint 1: Assessing Agency Readiness		
Learning Elements	**Descriptions**	**Learning Objectives**
Assessing Agency Readiness	This sprint introduces tools and strategies to evaluate an agency's readiness to pursue a digital service procurement. Learners will assess internal capacity including staffing, technical expertise, and leadership alignment while using frameworks such as the digital service maturity matrix to identify areas of strength and improvement.	Assess your agency's capacity, maturity, and alignment to support a successful digital service procurement.
Topics		
- Introduction to Assessing Agency Readiness - Determine Your Organizational Maturity - Strategy Table in Practice - Change and Innovative Readiness Survey Introduction - Change and Innovative Readiness Survey (in class / fillable)		

Sprint 2: Stakeholder and Customer Mapping		
Learning Elements	**Descriptions**	**Learning Objectives**
Stakeholder and Customer Mapping	This sprint focuses on identifying and engaging the individuals and groups who influence or are impacted by a digital service procurement. Learners will differentiate between stakeholders, users, and customers, and begin mapping relationships to better align acquisition strategies with mission needs and user outcomes.	Identify key stakeholders, users, and customers relevant to your acquisition and analyze their roles, influence, and engagement needs.
Topics		

- Navigating the Stakeholder Landscape: Introduction
- Navigating the Stakeholder Landscape Cont'd
- Role Play Activity: Stakeholder Influence Challenge
- Activity: Stakeholder Analysis Project Introduction

Sprint 3: Defining Success for Your Digital Services Acquisition		
Learning Elements	**Descriptions**	**Learning Objectives**

Defining Success for Your Digital Services Acquisition	This sprint helps learners define what success looks like for a digital service acquisition. Learners will develop product visions, user stories, and outcome-oriented objectives to clarify mission needs. The sprint also introduces methods for identifying constraints such as policy, technology, or capacity that may impact delivery, and offers tools to frame success criteria beyond traditional compliance metrics.	Develop a shared understanding of your agency's needs and constraints, and define success criteria for your digital service procurement.
Topics		

- Defining Success for your Digital Services Acquisition Overview
- From Discovery to Strategy
- Defining Constraints Before Acquisition Strategy Begins

Sprint 4: Conducting Effective Market Research		
Learning Elements	**Descriptions**	**Learning Objectives**
Conducting Effective Market Research	This sprint focuses on strategies for conducting meaningful market research in support of digital service procurements.	Apply effective market research strategies to assess vendor capabilities and inform

	Learners will explore how to assess industry capabilities, craft early needs statements, and apply research methods such as RFIs to inform acquisition planning. Emphasis is placed on minimizing burden to vendors while gathering actionable insights to shape a more responsive and competitive solicitation.	your digital acquisition approach.

Topics

- Introduction to Conducting Effective Market Research
- Introduction to Building Your Market Research Toolkit
- Acquisition Toolkit Worksheet
- The Magic Quadrant
- Responsible Pre-Solicitation Communication
- Acquisition Process Myths
- Why Pre-Solicitation Communication Matters
- Knowledge Check
- How to Communicate Effectively
- How to Communicate Effectively: Step 2
- Engaging the Industry Traditionally
- Activity: Signal or Noise? Evaluating RFIs with AI Insight
- How to Communicate Effectively: Step 3
- Understand the Cost-Benefit and Tradeoffs
- Conclusion: Leveraging HCD and AI in Federal Market Research

Module 3: Design

Design: Translate your discovery findings into a well-structured solicitation. Create acquisition strategy decisions around tradeoffs, evaluation processes, contract structure, and performance metrics which lead to the development of requirements, solicitation factors, and evaluation criteria that support user-centered outcomes and successful vendor partnerships.

Sprint 1: Developing a Successful Acquisition Strategy		
Learning Elements	**Descriptions**	**Learning Objectives**
Developing a Successful Acquisition Strategy	This sprint guides learners through the key elements of developing a digital acquisition strategy. Topics include making informed build-versus-buy decisions, selecting appropriate procurement methods (e.g., OTAs, GWACs, 8(a), CSO), and structuring modular contracts to support iterative delivery. Learners will also examine contract types, performance-based incentives, outcome measurement tools such as burndown and velocity charts, and considerations related to data rights and long-term reuse.	Identify how to apply flexibilities within the FAR to develop an acquisition strategy tailored for digital services. Select appropriate evaluation methods and criteria related to cost, pricing, terms and conditions, cybersecurity, and data rights. Assess vendor maturity and capability to deliver a digital product based on

		defined needs and success criteria
Topics		

- Introduction: Developing an Acquisition Strategy
- Why Do We Plan?
- What Feeds the Acquisition Strategy?
- The Acquisition Plan Lean Canvas Approach
- Common Risks
- Contract Exit Strategies
- Stakeholder Engagement: Capability and Cooperation
- Existing Contracts
- Streamline the Process
- Considerations for a New Contract
- Funding and Programmatic Considerations
- State of the Market
- Compliance & Other Legal Issues
- Getting to Know Your Office of General Counsel
- What is Intellectual Property?
- Types of IP
- FAR Subpart 27.4 Rights in Data and Copyrights
- Contribution, Attribution, Retribution...Oh My!
- Who Owns Open Source Code?
- Data in the Cloud (It's Cloudy Out There!)
- Legal Liabilities
- What Happens When Open Source Software Breaks?
- Case Study Tie In Module 3 Activity: Solution Evaluation with SWOT Analysis
- Multi-vendor Contracts

Sprint 2: Developing the solicitation		
Learning Elements	**Descriptions**	**Learning Objectives**
Developing the solicitation	This sprint focuses on developing the core elements of a digital service solicitation to drive successful acquisition outcomes. Learners will explore how to write a Statement of Objectives (SOO), apply appropriate award procedures under the FAR and non-FAR authorities, and incorporate pricing strategies and evaluation language aligned with outcome-based delivery. The sprint also examines emerging considerations such as the role of AI in acquisition and the balance between key personnel and performance outcomes.	Develop key elements of a digital service solicitation, including a Statement of Objectives (SOO), appropriate award procedures, and outcome-oriented evaluation factors. Evaluate how pricing structures, key personnel requirements, and emerging technologies such as AI may impact solicitation strategy and vendor response.
Topics		

- Strategic Planning and Execution in Digital Acquisitions
- Developing a Statement of Objectives (SOO)
- Key Sections of an SOO homework assignment (template)
- Understanding FAR 37.6: How Does Agile Methodology Fit Into Federal Acquisitions?
- Key Personnel vs Outcome-based
- Artificial Intelligence and the Acquisition Strategy
- Discussion

- 7 Strategies for Evaluating the Ethical and Legal Impact of Implementing AI in Federal Agencies

Sprint 3: Running a Successful Evaluation		
Learning Elements	**Descriptions**	**Learning Objectives**
Running a Successful Evaluation	This sprint prepares learners to run effective evaluations of vendor proposals in digital service procurements. Learners will explore how to define and apply technical evaluation criteria, select a skilled evaluation team, and use debriefing and negotiation techniques to support tradeoff decisions, strengthen vendor relationships, and ensure transparent, mission-aligned outcomes.	Evaluate agile vendors using solicitation criteria, oral presentations, and past performance to assess alignment with agile practices and technical requirements. Design and apply evaluation strategies that incorporate down-selects, interactive techniques, and tradeoff approaches to support fair and best-value acquisitions. Deliver effective post-evaluation feedback that builds trust, strengthens future proposals, and aligns with FAR guidance. Conduct strategic vendor negotiations that clarify assumptions, manage risks, and secure best-value outcomes in digital service procurements.

Topics
● Evaluation Criteria Overview ● Negotiating with Vendors ● Knowledge Check ● The Power of Debriefing

Module 4: Build

Build: Manage vendor partnerships and support delivery through contract administration practices grounded in agile and lean methodologies. Track project health using real-time, objective indicators, support continuous delivery, and adapt to change while ensuring alignment with mission goals. Focus on transparency, collaboration, and outcomes throughout the contract lifecycle.

Sprint 1: Management of Digital Service Delivery		
Learning Elements	**Descriptions**	**Learning Objectives**
Management of Digital Service Delivery	This sprint introduces key roles and practices that support effective post-award delivery of digital services. Learners will explore the function of product ownership, how product managers and contracting officer representatives (CORs) collaborate, and how agile ceremonies and tools support iterative delivery. The sprint also emphasizes cross-functional team alignment and the importance of celebrating shared successes.	Describe what product ownership looks like in federal digital service delivery environments. Explain how contracting officer representatives (CORs) and product owners (POs) collaborate to support agile delivery. Recognize the importance of communication, shared understanding, and agile rituals in effective digital service teams. Identify ways to celebrate progress and success across cross-functional teams.

Topics
• Managing Digital Service Delivery • Amplifying Agile Delivery • Activity: Who Does What? Agile Role Round Robin • Activity: Digital Service Project Charter

Sprint 2: Performance Measurement Under Agile Delivery Contracts		
Learning Elements	**Descriptions**	**Learning Objectives**
Performance Measurement Under Agile Delivery Contracts	This sprint explores how to measure performance in agile digital service contracts using meaningful, real-time metrics. Learners will examine approaches that go beyond traditional compliance tools like the QASP, including milestone tracking, contractor self-reporting, CPARS, and quarterly performance reviews. The sprint also covers strategies for incentivizing outcomes and monitoring vendor performance in multi-vendor environments.	Identify and apply performance metrics that help detect delivery risks or failure points early in agile digital service contracts.
Topics		
• Using Value-Based Metrics and Modern Incentives in Federal Agile Procurement		

- Post-Award Multi-Vendor Management
- Knowledge Check: Managing a Multi-Vendor Environment
- Warranties in Agile Development Readings

Sprint 3: Contract Kickoff

Learning Elements	Descriptions	Learning Objectives
Contract Kickoff	This sprint focuses on how to successfully launch a digital services contract. Learners will explore strategies for preparing both government and vendor teams, setting clear expectations, aligning on scope and delivery approach, and establishing communication and collaboration rhythms that support agile execution from day one.	Determine the key activities that occur after contract award, including kickoff planning, team ramp-up, and establishing a shared delivery baseline.

Topics

- Contract Kickoff
- Introduction to Readings: Cloud and Xaas Procurement Best Practice
- Activity: Cloud Breach Facilitation Exercise Facilitation Guide

Sprint 4: Contract Management and Problem Resolution

Learning Elements	Descriptions	Learning Objectives

| Contract Management and Problem Resolution | This sprint focuses on managing digital service contracts after award, with an emphasis on identifying and addressing performance issues. Learners will explore techniques for monitoring vendor progress, resolving delivery challenges, and applying remedies within the bounds of the contract. The sprint also highlights the importance of proactive communication and documentation throughout the performance period. | Determine appropriate strategies for course correction or exit when digital service delivery is off track.

Demonstrate how to negotiate consideration or remediation actions within the context of agile delivery. |
| --- | --- | --- |

Topics

- Federal IT Acquisition, Management, and Software Engineering Practices
- Activity: Federal IT Acquisition, Management, and Software Engineering Practices
- Exit Strategy
- Exit Strategy: Key Questions for Analysis

Module 5: Grow

Grow: Apply techniques to create the culture of innovation within your sphere that enables you and others to effectively lead and influence customers to the best solutions.

Sprint 1: Leading Change As An Individual		
Learning Elements	**Descriptions**	**Learning Objectives**
Leading Change As An Individual	Defines change agents; described effective influence strategies; and approaches to building networks and coalitions to facilitate change	Identify your spheres of influence within the acquisition environment. Recognize common challenges that arise when engaging stakeholders across those spheres. Plan influence strategies and conversations tailored to the challenges and opportunities in your agency or live digital assignment.
Topics		

- Preparing for and Having an Influence Conversation
- Difficult Conversations
- Knowledge Check
- Building Your Resilience
- Cultivating Your Growth Mindset
- Wellness Rituals to Support You in Times of Transition
- Analyze Where the "No" Came From

- Should I Fight This Battle, or How Might I Adjust My Approach To Make It More "Winnable"?
- What to Do When You're Told No Framework in Action
- Adjust Approach & Identify Lessons Learned
- Telling Your Procurement Story

Sprint 2: Leading Organizational Change - Continuous Improvement and Scalable Practices		
Learning Elements	Descriptions	Learning Objectives
Leading Organizational Change - Continuous Improvement and Scalable Practices	This sprint focused on strategies for staying current with emerging technologies and continuously improving acquisition practices, as well as approaches to scaling successful methods across organizations, supported by examples from the broader federal agency community.	Assess your strengths and change style to develop a personal plan for contributing to and promoting change within your agency and the broader government community.
Topics		

- Staying Current and Driving Change: Your Role in Continuous Improvement
- Staying Current with Emerging Tech and Trends
- Continuous Improvement in Everyday Procurement
- The Case for Creating Practical Guides: From Playbooks to Toolkits and Beyond
- Exploring your role as an ambassador of change
- Kotter Model Introduction

- Self-Assessment: What's Your Change Style?
- Create Your Change Contribution Plan
- Wrap-Up & Call to Action

Module 6: Apply Skills

Apply: Apply techniques learned in the course through various activities

Module 6: Apply		
Learning Elements	**Descriptions**	**Learning Objectives**
Stakeholder Interview Assignment	A structured opportunity for participants to engage agency leaders who influence digital services, procurement, or policy. By conducting 2–4 interviews, participants practice influence, build empathy, and deepen their understanding of organizational dynamics. Full guidance and criteria for this assignment can be found in the Appendix.	Demonstrate the ability to conduct discussions and interviews with stakeholders across your sphere of influence.

Apply shadowing, detailed observations, or rotational assignments with digital service experts to better understand and integrate into the culture.

Utilize a "small team of teams" approach to design, execute, and reflect on a live digital assignment |
| Shadowing Assignment | An observational learning experience where participants spend at least four hours with a digital service delivery team. By witnessing agile workflows, user-centered design, and cross-functional collaboration, participants gain firsthand insight into modern delivery practices. Full guidance and criteria for this assignment can be found in the Appendix. | |

| Live Digital Assignment | The program's capstone project, simulating the full lifecycle of a digital service acquisition. Working in teams, participants identify a real procurement challenge, apply agile and human-centered design principles, and produce proposals, reviews, and presentations. Full guidance and criteria for this assignment can be found in the Appendix. | |

Threaded Case Scenario Guidance

Purpose of Case Scenario Integration

This guide provides a high-level overview of how vendors delivering the DITAP program should approach the integration of a case scenario across the course modules. It outlines the purpose of the case scenario, expectations for integration across the curriculum, and guidance for selecting alternative case studies if needed.

Case Scenario Overview

The recommended case scenario for the DITAP program is *Navigating Stakeholder and Decision-Making Challenges*, written by Cynuria. This case provides a multi-phase scenario aligned with key DITAP competencies and supports learners in connecting theory to practice in a realistic digital acquisition context.

The Cynuria case scenario includes multiple milestones and decision points designed to evolve alongside the course curriculum. It is structured to:

- Introduce a realistic digital acquisition challenge (CRM procurement)
- Showcase policy, technical, and stakeholder complexity
- Enable applied learning through scenario-based activities
- Foreshadow and revisit decision-making moments in alignment with course content

Two versions of the Cynuria case scenario are available:
- **Comprehensive version**: This version includes both facilitator and student guidance. It is structured with clear milestones and aligned touchpoints for integration across modules. It's the most thorough and detailed resource.

- **Narrative version**: This version presents the same core scenario in a shorter, story-driven format. It's designed for readability and engagement, and may include narrative cliffhangers to spark discussion. Vendors may choose to use this version as a supplemental or primary reading depending on audience and delivery style.

Pacing guide

The threaded case scenario unfolds alongside the course modules, with each activity reinforcing key concepts and building toward an integrated understanding of digital service procurement. Some activities are core milestones drawn directly from the Cynuria case materials; others are extension activities designed to deepen learning or connect to real-world application. The pacing chart below outlines when each case activity appears, which sprint it aligns to, and how it connects to major course milestones.

Module	Sprint	Activity Title	Case Scenario Milestone Alignment
Module 1	Sprint 1	Introduction to Cynuria Case	Not a formal milestone, serves as Case scenario narrative intro
Module 2	Sprint 1	Stakeholder Mapping	Milestone 1
Module 2	Sprint 4	Market Research Planning	Not a formal milestone, builds on Milestone 1
Module 2	Sprint 4	FAR 10 Integration Assignment	Not a formal milestone. It's an extension activity.
Module 3	Sprint 1	Solution Evaluation with SWOT Analysis	Milestone 2

Module 3	Sprint 2	Evaluating Data Security Solutions with SWOT & Cost Estimation	Milestone 3
Module 3	Sprint 3	Designing a Solicitation Strategy	Not a formal milestone, builds on Milestones 2 and 3
Module 4	Sprint 3	Laying the Groundwork for Agile Delivery	Applies prior decisions from Milestones 2 and 3
Module 4 or 5	-	Laying Out a Recommendation	Milestones 4 & 5
Module 5	Sprint 3	Leading Change and Navigating Resistance	Integrates entire case context

Integration guidance

Vendors are responsible for ensuring the case scenario is threaded throughout the curriculum in a way that:

- Aligns with the learning objectives of each module
- Reinforces key digital service delivery principles and practices
- Provides a common anchor for group discussion, assignments, and applied activities

Integration may vary slightly depending on program design, but generally includes:

- Early exposure to the full case scenario (Module 1)
- Deep dives into individual milestones aligned with module competencies (Modules 2–3)
- Continued reference during planning and implementation content (Modules 4–5).
- Synthesis and final presentation using the case (Module 6)

Vendors should ensure that:
- Participants receive the full case scenario early in the program
- Assigned readings are clearly communicated in advance of each module
- Participants are given multiple opportunities to apply tools and concepts to the case throughout the course

Facilitating the Threaded Case Study

General facilitator guidance

Purpose of the case scenario

The threaded case scenario is a tool for deepening understanding and sparking application across the course. Through a fictional—but realistic—procurement scenario, participants explore the complexity of digital service delivery in government and connect course concepts to their own day-to-day challenges. The case scenario helps participants:

- Apply concepts in a realistic, evolving context.
- Practice critical thinking, stakeholder engagement, and strategic decision-making.
- Surface parallels to their own work and identify opportunities for influence and improvement.

Each case scenario activity reinforces the sprint's learning objectives and serves as a springboard for meaningful, context-specific conversation.

Detailed guidance for each activity—including suggested framing, timing, and prompts—is available in the corresponding facilitator guide.

Flexible format

Most case activities are run in small groups with a brief whole-group share-out. Refer to the pacing guide for timing recommendations and feel free to adjust based on group size, energy, and time available. There's plenty more room for creativity in how you run these sessions. Think of what's provided as a springboard.

Key facilitation moves

Anchor in course content

Use the case scenario to reinforce frameworks and key ideas introduced in each sprint—drawing from both live session slides and self-paced materials.

Create call-back moments

Encourage learners to connect current decisions to earlier moments in the case or in their own work. What patterns or assumptions are still at play? How have past decisions shaped the present?

Promote evidence-based reasoning

Ask learners to ground their analysis in specific details from the case—emails, timelines, decisions, and organizational behavior.

Bridge to lived experience

If groups get stuck, invite reflection on their own environments. What makes collaboration hard across functions? What constraints or opportunities do they see in their work?

Challenge assumptions

Prompt participants to identify and question assumptions Casey's team may be making. What's being overlooked? What alternate paths are possible?

Broaden perspectives
Encourage groups to consider nontraditional sources of insight, such as frontline staff, legacy system documentation, or indirect stakeholders.

Connect discovery to design
Especially in Modules 2–3, guide learners to see how early discovery findings shape later acquisition and implementation decisions.

Elevate learner expertise
Your role is to create space for rich discussion—not to lecture. Emphasize the expertise in the room.

Right-size the vendor role
Encourage analysis of how participants themselves can lead and influence—rather than focusing only on vendor behavior or external constraints.

LMS Guidance

Overview

As part of the course introduction, vendors should provide learners with a brief orientation to the Learning Management System (LMS). This orientation should be tailored to the specific LMS being used and designed to help learners feel comfortable navigating the system from the start. The goal is to set learners up for success, reduce confusion, and ensure they can focus on the course content.

Key elements to cover in your LMS orientation include:

- **Accessing the LMS**: Provide clear instructions for logging in, setting up accounts, and accessing the course. Include relevant links and any credentials learners may need.
- **Course layout and structure**: Give an overview of how the course is organized, including the modules, lessons, and any assessments. Highlight where learners should begin and the recommended progression through the content.
- **Finding key course elements**: Show learners where to locate modules, assignments, assessments, required materials, and other resources. Clear navigation instructions will help learners find what they need quickly.
- **Tracking progress**: Explain any progress indicators available in the LMS, such as completed modules or scores, and how learners can use these tools to monitor their own learning.
- **Communication tools**: Outline how learners can interact with instructors/facilitators, support staff, and peers. This might include discussion boards, messaging features, announcements, or office hours.
- **Technical support**: Provide information on how learners can get help if they encounter technical issues, including contact points and response expectations.

Integrating materials into your LMS

Vendors should ensure that all course materials, modules, assessments, and other materials are properly integrated into their LMS. This includes uploading files, linking to external resources, and configuring assessments so that learner progress and completion are tracked accurately. Clear labeling, consistent module sequencing, and accessible navigation are critical to providing a seamless learner experience. Whenever possible, test the course in the LMS environment before launch to confirm that all interactive content, links, and tracking functions work as intended.

Vendors should design and integrate course materials in accordance with accessibility standards, ensuring all learners, including those with disabilities, can engage with the content. This includes providing alternative text for images, captions or transcripts for videos, keyboard navigation for interactive elements, and clear, consistent formatting for readability. Vendors should also ensure that color choices, font sizes, and contrast meet accessibility guidelines, and that all links and instructions are clear and descriptive. Incorporating these practices from the start helps provide an inclusive learning experience and supports compliance with accessibility requirements.

LiaScript integration

This course was built using LiaScript, an open-source framework for interactive online learning. LiaScript allows for dynamic content, such as embedded quizzes, multimedia, and branching scenarios. Learners can complete exercises directly within the course environment, receive immediate feedback, and track their progress in real time. For course providers, LiaScript supports flexible formatting and consistent presentation across modules, making it easier to maintain quality and accessibility standards.

Appendix

Appendix A

Live Digital Assignment (LDA) Guidance

Overview

As part of the DITAP program, participants complete a capstone project that simulates the end-to-end lifecycle of a modern digital service acquisition. Known as the Live Digital Assignment (LDA), this experience reinforces core DITAP objectives by immersing participants in real-world procurement practices.

The LDA fosters empathy by engaging participants in vendor constraints and the storytelling skills required to craft compelling proposals. It strengthens stakeholder engagement through interviews with real agencies or companies, and sharpens communication skills through proposal writing, peer review, and formal presentations. Participants apply Agile and Human-Centered Design (HCD) principles throughout, deepening their ability to scope problems, engage vendors, and assess technical solutions.

A key enhancement in this LDA model is the shift toward independent project discovery. Rather than working from a pre-written case, participant teams identify their own real-world digital service procurement challenge that meets a shared set of criteria. This mirrors how acquisition professionals begin by researching the landscape and identifying mission-driven needs before issuing solicitations. While each team's project is self-defined, all responses follow a fixed format aligned to a Technical Factor from the VA's SPRUCE solicitation.

Facilitators and program managers play a vital role in helping participants apply lessons from the LDA to their day-to-day work, thereby bridging the gap between learning and impact across government agencies.

The LDA is structured into four phases:
- Discovery Sprint
- Case Study Development

- Evaluation & Feedback
- Final Presentations

Learning objectives reinforced
- Scoping problems using Human-Centered Design and Discovery Sprint methods
- Applying modern, agile-friendly acquisition practices
- Conducting market research and engaging vendors empathetically
- Evaluating digital service proposals based on artifact-first approaches
- Delivering constructive feedback and collaborating cross-functionally

Capstone timeline & phases

Phase	Weeks	Focus	Deliverables	Key Learning Outcome
Phase 1	Weeks 2–6	Discovery Sprint	Discovery Summary	Human- centered discovery, framing
Phase 2	Weeks 7–12	Case Study Development	Case Study Package	Agile procurement, proposal writing
Phase 3	Weeks 13–16	Review of other teams' case studies	Rubric + Feedback + Blind Ranking	Evaluation skills, empathy for vendors, constructive critique

| Phase 4 | Weeks 17–20 | Present what you learned, not what you built | Team Presentation & Reflections | Team reflection, learning insights, and future application |

Phase 1: Discovery sprint simulation

Objective: Introduce participants to human-centered problem scoping using the Discovery Sprint model. This phase simulates how agencies and vendors define problems before writing solicitations, emphasizing stakeholder engagement, constraints, and opportunity identification. Teams must select a digital service project that enables the creation or thoughtful simulation of key artifacts used later in the LDA. Facilitators should help teams validate their selections early to ensure the project supports the full LDA lifecycle, reinforcing the continuity and real-world relevance of user-centered acquisition strategy.

Instructions to facilitators:
- Form teams of 4–5.
- Assign or allow teams to select a recent (within 2–3 years) digital service project to analyze.
- Encourage outreach to a real digital service company or agency partner for stakeholder interviews.
- Require each team to conduct at least 2–3 simulated or real stakeholder interviews.
- Provide excerpts or summaries of the USDS Discovery Sprint Guide.

Team deliverables:
- 3-page Discovery Summary that includes:
    - Background & problem framing
    - Stakeholders identified
    - Research and insights
    - Pain points and opportunities

Facilitator Prompt: "You're the Vendor—Make It to the Next Round"

You're now stepping into the shoes of a digital services company responding to a real government RFQ. This is Phase 2 of your capstone, and your goal is to submit a complete, clear, and compliant case study package that demonstrates your ability to deliver user-centered, iterative digital services.

The solicitation you're responding to uses a pass/fail evaluation for Round 1. This means the government is not comparing you to other companies yet—they're simply asking: Did you meet the bar or not?

Your task is to submit a comprehensive, understandable, and compliant package of artifacts and a case study that meets all the listed requirements. If you miss a piece, lack detail, or fail to tie things together clearly, you will fail. If you do everything well, you pass and move on.

So ask yourself as you build your package:
- Does our design file connect to the usability research we conducted?
- Do our insights logically lead to the implemented feature we're showing?
- Does our two-page narrative guide the reviewer through this story without making assumptions?
- Are we treating this like a real submission—professional, focused, and tight?

This is a simulation, yes—but treat it seriously. You're building your response like your company's future depends on it. Because in this scenario? It does.

You will submit four artifacts:
1. A design file or prototype used in research
2. A usability research summary that shows your insights
3. A visual or screenshot showing an implemented change
4. A 2-page narrative case study connecting the dots between them

Think of this like Round 1 of a real procurement: if anything is missing, vague, or disconnected, you don't cut.

But Here's the Twist…

In Phase 3, you'll step into the role of a government evaluator and review other teams' submissions—completely blind, with no team names.

You'll apply a rubric, provide constructive feedback, and determine whether those teams pass or fail. So as you build your own response now in Phase 2, remember:

Other teams will be evaluating your work.
- Are you making it easy for a reviewer to follow your logic?
- Are your insights tied to your design?
- Is your implementation traceable to your research?
- Is it professional, well-organized, and within scope?

Bottom line:
Your team's job right now is to submit a case study that passes the bar.
- Phase 1 was your discovery and research.
- Phase 2 is your formal response.
- Phase 3 is where you'll find out what it's like to sit on the other side of the table.

Phase 2: Case study development

Objective: Give participants experience responding to an agile-focused RFQ using real-world digital service evaluation criteria. Teams simulate vendors by creating a case study package that highlights design thinking, usability testing, and implementation.

Instructions to facilitators:
- Introduce the SPRUCE-aligned RFQ Case Study:
    - One project, four artifacts:
    - Artifact 1: Design File or clickable prototype
    - Artifact 2: Usability Research Summary
    - Artifact 3: Screenshot or evidence of implementation
    - Artifact 4: 2-page Case Study tying everything together

Team deliverables:
Submit all four artifacts as a complete Case Study Package

Phase 3: Peer evaluation & feedback

Objective: Participants simulate the technical evaluation process, assessing vendor submissions using a structured rubric. This reinforces understanding of evaluation criteria, fairness in scoring, and the value of artifact-based reviews. Emphasize that this is a simulation of a government evaluation team using real-world procurement techniques such as artifact-first down selection and blind review.

Instructions to facilitators:
- Assign each team to evaluate 2-3 anonymized case study packages from other teams.
- Use a standardized evaluation rubric to assess each one.
- Provide written feedback to each team using coaching-style language.
- Rank the submissions blindly (no team names).

Team deliverables:
- 1 completed rubric + feedback memo per case reviewed
- Participate in feedback exchange

Phase 4: Final team reflections

Objective: The goal of Phase 4 is to create space for teams to reflect on their full capstone journey, not to defend a product, but to learn from the process, each other, and the feedback loop. Teams will revisit their discovery and case study work, discuss how their submission was evaluated by peers, and explore their own role as evaluators.

This phase emphasizes:
- Synthesis of learning from the discovery sprint to case study submission
- Analysis of feedback received during the peer evaluation phase
- Insights from blind rankings, including surprises and alignment
- Reflection on team growth, challenges, and empathy
- Translation of lessons into participants' real roles and agencies

Instructions to facilitators:
- Host 15–20 minute team presentations.
- In this final phase, each team will give a 10–15 minute presentation, not to pitch a solution, but to reflect on what you've learned across the whole capstone experience.
- Use this as a chance to talk honestly about challenges, growth, and surprises.

Each team presentation should include:
- Capstone Highlights
    - Quick recap of your case study submission (1–2 minutes).
    - The aspect of your work you're most proud of.
- Feedback Received
    - What did you hear from peer reviewers that affirmed or surprised you?
    - Was the feedback clear, actionable, or eye-opening?

- ○ What would you improve if you revised your case study?
- Blind Rankings
    - ○ How did your team's ranking compare to your expectations?
    - ○ Did the rank or rubric feedback highlight anything unexpected about how your work was perceived?
- Evaluator Experience
    - ○ What did you notice while reviewing others' submissions?
    - ○ What made a case study stronger or harder to evaluate?
    - ○ What would you take into future solicitations or evaluations?
- Takeaways & Application
    - ○ What practices from this capstone will you bring into your real-world work?
    - ○ How do you view digital procurement, collaboration, or discovery differently now?

Presentation requirements:
- Visuals encouraged
- All team members speak

Assessment breakdown:
- Case Study Package: 35%
- Peer Evaluation: 25%
- Presentation: 25%
- Reflections/Assessment: 15%

Support materials to distribute:
- Capstone Orientation Slides
- Discovery Sprint Guide (USDS or summary)
- Interview Templates + Stakeholder Tips
- Case Study Template (aligned with SPRUCE)

- Artifact Writing Guide
- Blind Evaluation Rubric Template

Capstone Impact Summary

Area of Growth	How Capstone Delivers It
Empathy	Simulates vendor constraints & storytelling
Stakeholder Engagement	Research & interviews with real companies
Communication	Proposal writing, presentations, peer review
Agile & HCD Literacy	Aligns with agile & user-centered methods
Technical Evaluation	Rubric-based peer evaluations
Readiness	Mirrors real government procurement cycles

VA Spruce case study #1: Actual text

Technical Factor 1 – Case Study #1. Offerors must submit the items (a) -- (d) listed below. The Government will use these items to evaluate the Offeror's conformance with the minimum requirements for Technical Factor 1. Items a–d must be from the same project, which shall be described in the Case Study (Item d).

- Artifact 1 – Design File: A production-ready design file or prototype that was created for usability research with users. This file is format-agnostic and can be created in code, Figma, Sketch, or other similar tools.
- Artifact 2 – Usability Research Report: A usability research report that includes evidence of one-on-one facilitated, task-based, usability research sessions (either remote or in-person) with a minimum of 4 participants. The report must include research insights or findings from these sessions related to the product or feature shown in the Design File.
- Artifact 3 – Screenshot: A screenshot of the live product or feature in a production environment where it is available for use by users. The screenshot must display the implementation of a change based on the insights or findings from the Usability Research Report.
- Case Study: A 2-page case study describing the project context for Artifacts 1, 2 and 3 (Items a, b, and c above). The Case Study must include a clear explanation of the design process that demonstrates the Design File (Item a) was used for the Usability Research (Item b) and that the resulting insights or findings were the basis for the modification or addition of a design element that was released to production for users (Item c).

Offerors are advised that they shall NOT be given credit for responses exceeding the minimum requirements in items (a) - (d) above. Technical Factor 1 will be evaluated as either Pass or Fail. Offerors will receive a "Pass" if the Offeror's Case Study and Artifacts are confirmed to conform to each of the conditions above. It is incumbent on Offerors to ensure sufficient detail is provided in their Technical Factor 1 response to allow the Government to evaluate conformance with these requirements. The VA will make no assumptions of conformance. Offerors will receive a "Fail" if any responses are not confirmed to conform to each of the conditions above. Offerors who receive

a "Fail" will not have their remaining proposal Volumes evaluated and will be ineligible for award.

After Technical Factor 1 Evaluations are completed, those Offerors who receive a "Pass" will be notified accordingly, and the Government will begin evaluation of Technical Factor 2. Offerors who receive a "Fail" will be notified accordingly.

Phase-by-Phase Implementation Guide: Detailed Facilitator Instructions

This section provides comprehensive, actionable guidance for facilitators across the four LDA phases, emphasizing the integration of the new independent acquisition discovery element and reinforcing the fixed Case Study requirements.

Phase 1: Discovery sprint simulation (Weeks 2–6, Module 2 Sprints 1 & 4)

The objective of Phase 1 is to introduce participants to human-centered problem scoping utilizing the Discovery Sprint model. This phase simulates how agencies and vendors define problems before writing solicitations, with a strong emphasis on stakeholder engagement, constraint analysis, and opportunity identification. Key learning outcomes include human-centered discovery and framing. This phase commences with the identification and approval of an appropriate product in Module 2, Sprint 1, culminating in a Sprint Report deliverable in Module 2, Sprint 4.

Facilitator guide:

Facilitators begin by forming teams of 4 to 5 participants. A crucial aspect of this phase involves guiding teams on the specific characteristics of a recent (within 2–3 years) digital service project suitable for analysis. This guidance must explicitly connect to the types of projects that can generate the Vendor Case Study-aligned artifacts required for Phase 2. Facilitators should emphasize the importance of identifying projects where user research was demonstrably conducted and where a clear, iterative change was implemented based on that research.

The facilitator's role here extends beyond simple approval; it involves actively assessing whether the chosen project can realistically yield the necessary Vendor Case Study artifacts. If a team selects a project lacking a clear user research component or a demonstrable iteration based on feedback, it risks setting the team up for failure in Phase 2. Therefore, the facilitator acts as a compatibility gatekeeper, ensuring the selected project possesses the inherent characteristics to support the subsequent phases. This may involve probing questions such as: "Can a specific feature or design element that underwent user research be identified?" or "Is there evidence of an iterative change based on user feedback?" This proactive guidance, provided early in Phase 1, is fundamental to preventing teams from investing time in a project that cannot meet the Phase 2 requirements, thereby ensuring the cumulative learning experience remains viable.

Teams are encouraged to conduct outreach to real digital service companies or agency partners for stakeholder interviews. Facilitators should provide strategies and templates for these interactions, highlighting the value of gaining authentic insights into problem definition and stakeholder perspectives. Teams are required to conduct at least 2–3 simulated or real stakeholder interviews, with facilitators providing scenarios or role-playing exercises if real interviews are not universally feasible. Participants should utilize provided excerpts or summaries of the USDS Discovery Sprint Guide to effectively frame their problem scoping and research activities. Finally, facilitators must explicitly link the Phase 1 Discovery Summary to the upcoming Case Study Development, explaining that the research conducted in this phase forms the foundational context for the vendor response in Phase 2.

Team deliverables:
Each team is required to submit a 3-page Discovery Summary. This document must include a background and problem framing, identification of stakeholders,

research and insights, and a discussion of pain points and opportunities. This deliverable is also referred to as a Sprint Report.

Phase 1 Facilitator Checklist & Key Prompts

Task	Key Prompts/Considerations
Form Teams	Ensure equitable distribution of skills.
Introduce Independent Discovery	Explain the rationale for self-selection and its connection to real-world scenarios.
Guide Project Selection (Criteria for Case Study Evaluation compatibility)	"Does the chosen project allow for demonstration of a design file used in usability research?" "Can an implemented change based on research insights be clearly identified or simulated?" "Are teams aware that this discovery will directly feed into a fixed, pass/fail Case Study requirement?"
Encourage Outreach	"Have teams identified key stakeholders for interviews, and are their insights relevant to a digital service problem?" Provide templates and best practices for professional engagement.
Facilitate Interviews	Guide teams on conducting effective interviews and provide simulated scenarios as needed.
Review Discovery Summary	"Is the Discovery Summary clearly articulating a problem that a digital service solution could address?" Assess clarity, completeness, and alignment with HCD principles.

Phase 2: Case study development (Weeks 7–12, Module 3 Sprints 1 & 4)

The objective of Phase 2 is to provide participants with hands-on experience responding to an agile-focused Request for Quotation (RFQ) using real-world digital service evaluation criteria. Teams simulate vendors by creating a comprehensive case study package that highlights design thinking, usability testing, and implementation. Key learning outcomes for this phase include agile procurement and proposal writing. This phase builds directly on the Discovery Sprint, with teams developing a case study in response to their RFQ, starting in Module 3, Sprint 1, and concluding with the submission of the Case Study with artifacts in Module 3, Sprint 4.

Facilitator guide:

Facilitators must guide teams on how to effectively map their independently discovered project from Phase 1 to the specific, fixed Case Study Evaluation-aligned Case Study requirements. The suitability of the initial project selection becomes paramount at this stage. Facilitators must ensure that teams understand that while their Phase 1 research provides the context and problem, Phase 2 demands a specific type of vendor response that meticulously aligns with the Case Study Evaluation framework.

Detailed guidance is essential for creating each of the four required artifacts:
- Artifact 1: Design File or Prototype: Teams must develop a production-ready design file or prototype that was specifically used in usability research with users. This file is format-agnostic and can be created using various tools such as code, Figma, or Sketch.
- Artifact 2: Usability Research Summary - This report must include evidence of one-on-one, facilitated, task-based usability research sessions conducted with a minimum of four participants. The report must

present research insights or findings directly related to the product or feature shown in the Design File.

- Artifact 3: Screenshot of Implemented Change: A screenshot of the live product or feature in a production environment is required. This screenshot must visually demonstrate the implementation of a change that is directly based on the insights or findings from the Usability Research Report. This causal link between research and implementation is a critical element for evaluation.
- Artifact 4: 2-Page Narrative Case Study - This concise document should describe the project context for the other three artifacts. It must include a clear explanation of the design process, demonstrating that the Design File was used for Usability Research, and that the resulting insights formed the basis for the modification or addition of a design element subsequently released to production. Teams are prompted to ensure their narrative walks the reviewer through this story without requiring assumptions.

A critical aspect for facilitators to emphasize is the "Pass/Fail" evaluation criteria for Round 1, as explicitly outlined in the Case Study Evaluation requirements. This evaluation is not comparative; it simply assesses whether the submission meets the bar. Any missing component, lack of detail, or unclear connection will result in a "Fail". This strict gate serves as a powerful pedagogical tool, simulating the harsh realities of initial government procurement stages where meticulous proposal writing and strict adherence to solicitation requirements are paramount. The "no assumptions" clause in the Case Study Evaluation framework is particularly impactful, mirroring actual government evaluation practices where ambiguity or omission leads to disqualification. This high-stakes environment directly contributes to cultivating empathy for vendors, as participants experience the pressure of meeting stringent, non-negotiable

criteria. Facilitators must consistently remind teams of this "pass/fail" reality, emphasizing precision, clarity, and the explicit connection between artifacts.

Teams are also informed that their submissions will be evaluated blindly by other teams in Phase 3. This encourages them to create clear, well-organized, and easily understandable packages, making it easy for a reviewer to follow their logic, trace insights to design, and connect implementation to research.

Team deliverables:
Teams must submit a complete Case Study Package comprising all four artifacts. This deliverable is a key milestone in Module 3, Sprint 4.

Case study evaluation: Case study artifact requirements & evaluation criteria
Technical Factor 1 – Case Study #1 (Pass/Fail Evaluation)
- **Description of acquisition**: Short introduction of the procurement, why it was chosen, and what the product being developed is.
  - **Artifact 1**: Design File
    - A production-ready design file or prototype created for usability research with users. Format-agnostic (code, Figma, Sketch, etc.).
  - **Artifact 2**: Usability Research Report
    - Includes evidence of one-on-one facilitated, task-based usability research sessions (remote or in-person) with a minimum of 4 participants. Must include research insights or findings from these sessions related to the product or feature shown in the Design File.
  - **Artifact 3**: Screenshot
    - A screenshot of the live product or feature in a production environment, available for user use. Must show the

implementation of a change based on the Usability Research Report insights or findings.

- ○ **Artifact 4**: Case Study Narrative (2-page)
    - ■ Describes the project context for Artifacts 1, 2, and 3. Must include a clear explanation of the design process demonstrating the Design File was used for Usability Research, and that resulting insights were the basis for modification or addition of a design element released to production.
- ● **Evaluation criteria**:
    - ○ **Pass**: If the Offeror's Case Study and Artifacts conform with each of the conditions above. No credit for responses exceeding minimum requirements. No assumptions of conformance will be made. Documentation supports evaluation decisions.
    - ○ **Fail**: If any responses are not confirmed to conform with each of the conditions above. Documentation supports evaluation decisions.

Phase 3: Peer evaluation & feedback (Weeks 13–16, Module 4 Sprints 1 & 4)

The objective of Phase 3 is for participants to simulate the technical evaluation process, assessing vendor submissions using a structured rubric. This reinforces their understanding of evaluation criteria, promotes fairness in scoring, and highlights the value of artifact-based reviews. Key learning outcomes for this phase include developing evaluation skills, fostering empathy for vendors, and practicing constructive critique. Teams commence reviewing anonymized packages in Module 4, Sprint 1, with deliverables including a completed rubric, evaluation memo, final ranked score, and feedback provided in Module 4, Sprint 4.

Facilitator guide:

Facilitators manage the blind evaluation process, emphasizing its importance in eliminating bias and focusing solely on the submission's merit. Each team is assigned at least 3 anonymized case study packages for review. Depending on the size of the class, it could be that they receive all other team's packages to review.

This simulation of a government evaluation team utilizes real-world procurement techniques such as artifact-first down selection and blind review. The blind nature of the review is particularly impactful; it compels evaluators to focus purely on content and compliance, removing any personal bias or prior knowledge of the submitting team. This direct experience of evaluating others' work, especially after having just navigated the complexities of creating their own Case Study Evaluation-compliant submission, creates a powerful bridge of empathy. Participants gain firsthand understanding of the reviewer's perspective, appreciating what makes a submission clear, compliant, and easy to assess, and conversely, what leads to confusion or disqualification. This directly

enhances their capacity for empathy towards vendors and improves their own future proposal writing.

Facilitators provide and thoroughly review the standardized evaluation rubric, guiding teams on its consistent and objective application, with a focus on the Case Study Evaluation criteria. When providing feedback, teams are encouraged to use coaching-style language, focusing on actionable insights rather than mere criticism. They should explain precisely why a submission passed or failed based on specific Case Study Evaluation criteria. Facilitators also guide teams through the process of blind ranking submissions, encouraging discussion on what made a case study stronger or harder to evaluate. This reinforces the learning from both the vendor and evaluator perspectives.

Team deliverables:

Each team is responsible for submitting one completed rubric and feedback memo per case reviewed, actively participating in feedback exchange, and contributing to a final ranked score.

Peer evaluation rubric key elements

Criteria Category	Description
Description of Acquisition	Short introduction of the procurement, why it was chosen, and what the product being developed is.
Artifact 1: Design File	Assessment of production-readiness and clear evidence of its use in usability research.
Artifact 2: Usability Research Report	Verification of evidence of one-on-one, task-based sessions (min. 4 participants) and clarity of insights/findings.

Artifact 3: Screenshot	Confirmation of a live product/feature screenshot showing a change directly based on research insights.
Artifact 4: Case Study Narrative (2-page)	Evaluation of the narrative's ability to provide project context, clearly explain the design process, and logically connect all artifacts.
Compliance/Clarity	Adherence to page limits, professional presentation, logical flow, and ease of understanding for the reviewer.
Pass/Fail Determination	Clear indication of whether the submission meets all minimum requirements as per Case Study Evaluation.
Feedback Quality	Assessment of feedback for constructiveness, actionability, and specificity to the evaluation criteria.

Peer evaluation rubric key elements

Component	Requirement Description	Pass Criteria	Fail Criteria
Artifact 1: Design File	A production-ready design file or prototype created for usability research with users. Format-agnostic	Design file/prototype is production-ready AND clearly demonstrates its use for usability	Design file/prototype is not production-ready, OR its use for usability research

	(e.g., code, Figma, Sketch).	research with users.	is not evident, OR it is missing.
Artifact 2: Usability Research Report	A usability research report including evidence of one-on-one facilitated, task-based usability research sessions (remote or in-person) with a minimum of 4 participants. Must include research insights or findings from these sessions related to the product or feature shown in the Design File.	Report includes evidence of one-on-one, task-based usability research sessions with at least 4 participants AND clearly presents research insights/findings directly related to the product/feature in the Design File.	Report lacks evidence of required usability research (min. 4 participants), OR research is not one-on-one/task-based, OR insights/findings are missing/unclear, OR insights/findings do not relate to the Design File.
Artifact 3: Screenshot	A screenshot of the live product or feature in a production environment, available for user use. Must show the implementation of a change based on the Usability Research Report insights or findings.	Screenshot is of a live product/feature in a production environment AND clearly demonstrates an implemented change directly based on insights/findings from the	Screenshot is not of a live product/feature, OR it is not in a production environment, OR it does not show an implemented change, OR the change is not clearly linked to the Usability Research Report

		Usability Research Report.	insights/findings, OR it is missing.
Artifact 4: Case Study Narrative (2-page)	A 2-page narrative describing the project context for Artifacts 1, 2, and 3. Must include a clear explanation of the design process demonstrating the Design File was used for Usability Research, and that resulting insights were the basis for modification or addition of a design element released to production.	Narrative is 2 pages AND clearly describes the project context for all three artifacts AND explicitly explains the design process, demonstrating the Design File's use in usability research, and how insights led to the implemented change in production.	Narrative exceeds 2 pages, OR fails to describe project context for all artifacts, OR does not clearly explain the design process, OR fails to demonstrate the link between Design File, Usability Research, insights, and implemented change, OR it is missing.
Overall Submission	The complete Case Study Package must conform to all specified conditions for each artifact. No assumptions of conformance will be made.	All four artifacts (Design File, Usability Research Report, Screenshot, and 2-page Narrative Case Study) are submitted and each individually meets all "Pass Criteria" as outlined above.	Any single artifact fails to meet its "Pass Criteria," OR any required component is missing, OR the submission requires assumptions to confirm conformance.

Phase 4: Final team reflections (Weeks 17–20, Module 5 Sprints 1 & 2)

The goal of Phase 4 is to provide a dedicated space for teams to reflect on their entire capstone journey. The emphasis is not on defending a product, but on learning from the process, from each other, and from the feedback loop. This phase highlights the synthesis of learning from the discovery sprint to case study submission, analysis of feedback received during peer evaluation, insights derived from blind rankings (including surprises and alignment), reflection on team growth and challenges, and the translation of lessons into participants' real roles and agencies. Team presentation work begins in Module 5, Sprint 1, culminating in the final team presentation and LDA Retrospective deliverable in Module 5, Sprint 2.

Facilitator guide:

Facilitators host 15–20 minute team presentations, guiding teams to focus on reflection and learning rather than pitching a solution. Teams are encouraged to discuss honestly the challenges, growth, and surprises encountered throughout the LDA. This phase represents the crucial point where the experiential learning from the preceding three phases is consolidated and internalized. It is where the active engagement in "doing" (Phases 1 & 2) and "evaluating" (Phase 3) transforms into actionable understanding and application. By centering on reflection rather than defense, the program ensures participants extract maximum value from their successes and failures, fostering a growth mindset crucial for continuous professional development. This phase also implicitly validates the efficacy of the LDA's design in achieving its learning objectives, particularly vendor empathy and practical procurement skills.

Presentations must cover specific required elements:
- Capstone Highlights: A brief recap of their case study submission (1–2 minutes) and the aspect of their work they are most proud of.

- Feedback Received: Discussion of what affirmed or surprised them from peer reviewers, and whether the feedback was clear, actionable, or eye-opening. Teams should also consider what they would improve if they revised their case study.
- Blind Rankings: Reflection on how their team's ranking compared to expectations and whether the rank or rubric feedback highlighted anything unexpected about how their work was perceived.
- Evaluator Experience: Insights gained while reviewing other teams' submissions, what made a case study stronger or harder to evaluate, and what they would incorporate into future solicitations or evaluations.
- Takeaways & Application: Identification of practices from the capstone that they will integrate into their real-world work, and how their view of digital procurement, collaboration, or discovery has changed.

Facilitators must ensure all team members speak during the presentation to promote collective reflection and shared learning. The use of visuals is encouraged to aid communication. Facilitators should leverage this phase to foster deep discussions about the challenges of evaluation, the importance of explicit evidence, and the impact of clarity on a "pass/fail" decision. This experience directly feeds into Phase 4's reflection on "Evaluator Experience" and "Takeaways & Application," solidifying the practical lessons learned from being on both sides of the procurement table. Facilitators should view Phase 4 not merely as a presentation, but as a critical assessment point for the program itself. The quality and depth of participant reflections can provide invaluable feedback for continuous improvement of the DITAP curriculum. It also serves as the final, reinforcing loop for the program's core message: bridging the gap between government and industry in digital services procurement. The "Evaluator Experience" and "Takeaways & Application" sections are particularly important for measuring the transfer of learning to real-world roles.

Team deliverables:

The primary deliverable for this phase is the Final Team Presentation and an LDA Retrospective.

Assessment and Evaluation Framework

The overall assessment of the Live Digital Assignment is broken down into four weighted components:

- Case Study Package: 35%
- Peer Evaluation: 25%
- Presentation: 25%
- Reflections/Assessment: 15%

Facilitators are responsible for applying this assessment breakdown consistently across all teams, ensuring fairness and objectivity in grading. It is important to reiterate that the "Pass/Fail" evaluation in Phase 2 for the Case Study Package serves as a critical gate; successful completion of this phase is a prerequisite for further assessment and progression through the capstone.

DITAP LDA capstone impact summary

Area of Growth	How Capstone Delivers It
Empathy	Simulates vendor constraints & storytelling
Stakeholder Engagement	Research & interviews with real companies
Communication	Proposal writing, presentations, peer review
Agile & HCD Literacy	Aligns with agile & user-centered methods
Technical Evaluation	Rubric-based peer evaluation
Readiness	Mirrors real government procurement cycles

Conclusion

The Vendor Evaluation Live Digital Assignment for the DITAP training course represents a significant evolution in experiential learning for government acquisition professionals. By integrating independent acquisition discovery with a rigorous, fixed Case Study requirement aligned with the Case Study Evaluation framework, the program provides an unparalleled simulation of the digital services procurement lifecycle. This comprehensive approach not only builds essential technical skills in agile procurement and evaluation but also cultivates a profound sense of empathy for vendors, a critical attribute for fostering more collaborative and successful government-industry partnerships. The structured, phase-based progression, coupled with the emphasis on self-directed learning and peer feedback, ensures that DITAP graduates are not merely knowledgeable but are truly ready to lead the transformation of digital service acquisition within their respective agencies.

Appendix B

Stakeholder Assignment Guidance

Overview

The Stakeholder Interview Assignment is a cornerstone of the DITAP learning experience. It provides participants with a structured opportunity to:

- Engage with influential figures in their agency
- Practice leading strategic, high-stakes conversations
- Deepen their understanding of internal dynamics and readiness for change
- Begin building a network of champions and collaborators to support digital transformation

Participants will conduct two to four structured interviews with stakeholders who influence digital services, procurement, or policy within their agency.

This assignment is not just about conducting interviews. It's about practicing influence, building empathy, and gaining real-time insight into the systems participants are trying to understand, influence, and improve.

Who will DITAP participants interview?

Stakeholders that DITAP participants identify to interview should meet the following criteria:
- Currently work in the participant's agency
- Are not enrolled in the DITAP cohort
- Are not direct peers or regular collaborators
- Hold influence or decision-making power in areas like digital services, procurement, operations, or policy

Suggested roles include: CIO, CAO, HCA, SPE, CFO, product owners, procurement officials, policy leaders, digital services champions, or others with relevant influence.

Suggested project timeline:
- Module 2, Sprint 2: Introduce the assignment.
- By the end of Module 2: Participants submit 2–4 proposed stakeholders for facilitator review via Learning Portal.
- Module 3: Check in on progress, troubleshoot challenges.
- By penultimate class: Participants conduct and submit two completed interviews (including summaries and reflections) via Learning Portal.

Facilitator guidance

Facilitators are responsible for:
- Introducing the assignment in class
- Reviewing proposed stakeholders for relevance and fit
- Providing feedback on participant interview plans if needed
- Checking in on participants' progress and troubleshooting as needed
- Verifying that interviews are completed thoughtfully and submitted on time
- Encouraging learners to be bold but respectful in their outreach

Preparing participants

Introduce this assignment live during Module 2, Sprint 2.
- Set context: why stakeholder engagement matters in digital service delivery.
- Review the assignment instructions and FAQs.
- Demonstrate how to identify stakeholders using "stakeholder landscape map" or "circle of influence" (like the one in Navigating the Stakeholder Landscape Cont'd, Module 2, Sprint 2).

- Preview the interview guide.
- Normalize the discomfort: acknowledge that reaching out to senior or unfamiliar stakeholders may feel daunting.
- To help participants build confidence before reaching out to actual stakeholders, consider adding time for peer-to-peer practice interviews in class.

Approval & Evaluation process
1. Reviewers will locate the submitted assignments in the designated platform (LMS, email inbox, shared folder, etc.) and evaluate the assignments using the criteria below.
2. Reviewers approve the assignment or return it for revision, with constructive and specific feedback.
3. Send the participants confirmation.
4. Log in the tracker.

Evaluation metric for selection
Each interview selection will be assessed Pass or Fail based on the following criteria:
- Selected 2–4 potential interviewees with name, role
- Interviewees are from current agency
- Interviewees are not regular collaborators
- Interviewees are major influencers or gatekeepers
- Interviewees are not in DITAP

When reviewing stakeholder selections, facilitators are encouraged to verify that proposed stakeholders meet the criteria and are likely to provide a meaningful learning experience. This may include:
- Verifying the stakeholder's position via GovTribe or agency websites

- Reviewing the stakeholder's public-facing career information (e.g., LinkedIn) to understand their expertise and sphere of influence
- Reviewing participant-submitted interview questions to ensure they are likely to spark thoughtful, strategic discussion

Sample responses:
- "Your Stakeholder Interview Selections are received and approved."
- "Selections received and approved pending receipt of the following missing information: XXXX."
- "Selections are approved, however please include why you consider the stakeholder a gatekeeper or major influencer in your final assignment submission."

Evaluation metric for interview

Submissions are reviewed for completeness and alignment with the approved stakeholder list. Facilitators assess the quality of the summaries and confirm all required components are present before approving in the portal and updating the tracker.

Each interview selection will be assessed Pass or Fail based on the following criteria:
- Interviewed same names from approved selection
- Included interview questions and summary of answers
- Included a comprehensive summary
- Submitted two interviews
- Passed stakeholder selection metric

Sample responses:
- "Your Stakeholder Interviews are received and approved."

- "Interviews approved pending receipt of the following missing information: XXXX."
- "Interviews are approved, but due to a change in selections, please include why you consider this stakeholder a gatekeeper or major influencer in your final assignment submission."

This assignment is often one of the most powerful experiences in the program. Encourage participants to reflect not just on what their stakeholders said—but how those conversations shifted their own thinking about influence, communication, and systems change.

Sample Interviews

Sample Template 1
- **Stakeholder group**: Digital Services Acquisition Partnership
- **Stakeholder positions**: Product Owner, COR, Digital Services Team
- **When to engage**: From Pre-Award Requirements/Goal Definition (and throughout the process)
- **Key considerations**: Describe the purpose and outcomes of the interview (e.g., gain an initial understanding of the digital service initiative needs, goals, and requirements that will drive the acquisition strategy, market research, and plans.) Assume you are a member of the team and gathering information to do a good job in your role on the team.

Pre-award questions to ask:
1. Please describe what you are trying to accomplish in your digital services initiative/product/service. How was it initiated and funded? Where did the impetus come from? Is there an executive sponsor?
2. What kind of customer or user research and data gathering have you done? Can I have access to that and engage with you on it?

3. Why do you need a contractor or product provider to support this work?
4. Have you explored other options in getting this work done (or products/services we may already have available) – details, existing agency contractors with scope and ceiling on their contracts that fit this need, interns, etc.? Would you like any assistance exploring these options?
5. Do you have clear requirements or goals you are looking to accomplish with the contractor/product or service? Are there any ambiguities or nuances in these requirements or goals?
6. Where does the contractor/product or service fit in? What are you looking for the contractor/product or service to be able to do and for how long?
7. What are important characteristics of the contractor/product or service you are looking for? What kind of experience or track record? What talents, expertise, skills, and proficiency does the contractor need to have?
8. How will they best support what you are trying to accomplish?
9. What amount of funding, kind of funding, and budget timing is available for this work?
10. Who are the other players, inside and outside the agency, interested in this work?
11. Are there other considerations we need to be aware of?
12. Do you know firms or categories of firms, or existing products or services that may be suitable for this kind of work?
13. What is your timeline and/or release schedule?
14. How can I best help you get the job done?

Sample Template 2
- **Stakeholder group**: Acquisition Stakeholders

- **Stakeholder positions**: Acquisition Policy Office, Senior Procurement Executive (SPE), Head Contracting Authority (HCA), Procurement Operations
- **When to engage**: From Pre-Award (and throughout the process depending on complexity, size, timeline and how out-of-the-ordinary your acquisition strategy and procurement approach may be)
- **Key considerations**: Describe the purpose and outcomes of the interview (e.g., understand the process for gaining management approval for an unusual acquisition strategy and plan for your digital services procurement). Arm yourself with the appropriate references to the FAR, the TechFAR, and agency policy that demonstrate how your procurement plans fit well within the regulatory/policy framework. Do your research on whether and how these players have been involved in OFPP initiatives regarding digital services acquisition, category management, and overall acquisition transformation. As much as possible, identify precedents that are the same as or similar to your digital services acquisition strategy and plan at your agency or an agency your stakeholders work with often and respect. Take a somewhat deferential attitude, be clear, to the point, and stick to the facts.

Pre-award questions to ask:
[*Briefly describe what you are trying to accomplish, the benefits to the agency mission, and how the digital services initiative will help meet constituent or administration objectives. Let them know you are looking for their best advice and counsel on navigating your procurement through the agency processes for suitability, risk, and compliance. Describe background of OFPP's support for digital services procurement.*]

1. What general advice do you have on the steps I should take to reduce the likelihood that my acquisition strategy and plans will raise concerns

during our regular policy, compliance, and risk reviews? Other than making sure it adheres to our policy templates, is there anything that comes to mind so that I can avoid delaying or re-doing my acquisition strategy as my procurement goes through our review process?

2. What risk factors do you look at? What raises "red flags" for you? What will raise red flags during higher level reviews?

3. What regulatory or policy factors or characteristics do you look at? What raises red flags in this area?

4. Would you be willing to look through my acquisition strategy and plan for any of those red flags prior to my going in front of the Contract Review Board?

5. Are there any conditions in which you streamline our review and oversight processes so that they can go faster?

6. My procurement is a little different from common agency practice [describe how] but fits well within the FAR and our policies. Is there anything in my description that raises issues or challenges for you?

7. Is there anything I am not thinking of that I should be concerned with as I move forward with my strategy and plan for this procurement?

Sample Template 3
- **Stakeholder group**: Advocates, Influencers
- **Stakeholder positions**: Related Category Manager(s), Other Agency Leaders
- **When to engage**: From Pre-Award Acquisition Strategy and Plan (and throughout the process if needed)
- **Key considerations**: Familiarize yourself with the various government-wide categories under category management and which one best matches the market you are in for your digital services procurement. Go onto the Acquisition Gateway prior to the interview to the resources and tools available in the Hallway(s) associated with this category and

prepare additional questions on the basis of this understanding. Describe the purpose and outcomes of the interview (e.g., gain an initial understanding of how a category manager within the agency or government-wide can help identify market research, vehicles, evaluation, and contracting options that suit your digital services project needs and requirements).

Pre-award questions to ask:
1. Are you familiar with any other current or past procurements agencies have done that are similar to mine? (assuming you could not find any on the Gateway or through the Federal Procurement Data System – Next Generation [FPDS-NG])
2. We are looking for contractors, products or services to fill this need. [Briefly describe need]. What are some market trends in this area? Who are the suppliers currently serving this part of the market?
3. Are there innovators, replacement services, or market disruptors entering this part of the market? What are you hearing about them? What are the risks of making them aware of this procurement?
4. Are there GWACs, BPAs, or IDIQs from other agencies that fit the scope of what I am trying to do?
5. Are there shared services providers inside or outside the government that fit the scope of what I am trying to do?
6. Are there strategic sourcing initiatives in agencies I can leverage that fit the scope of what I am trying to do?
7. Are there other ways you can help me find the set of contractors, products or services that will perform at the right price and deliver for us?
8. What advice do you have for me as I move forward with this procurement?

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q1: How do I select the right stakeholders for this assignment?
Choose individuals within your agency who have significant influence over digital services, procurement, or operations—especially those you don't normally interact with. Ideal stakeholders might include CIOs, CAOs, HCAs, SPEs, CFOs, or policy leads. Aim for those whose decisions impact digital transformation efforts.

Q2: What if I already know who I want to interview?
That's fine—as long as they meet the assignment criteria: influential, within your agency, not a peer or frequent collaborator, and not currently enrolled in the DITAP program. Be sure to explain why they're a relevant and strategic choice.

Q3: Can I interview more than two stakeholders?
Yes. While the requirement is to complete at least two interviews, participants are encouraged to interview up to four stakeholders. More conversations often lead to a richer understanding of your agency's landscape.

Q4: What should I include in my interview summary?
Your summary should capture the stakeholder's insights about innovation, digital services, and procurement in your agency. Include what you learned about their priorities, perspectives, and any challenges or opportunities they raised. Reflections and next steps are also valuable.

Q5: Do I need to follow up after the interview?
Yes. Following up is considered best practice—it shows professionalism and helps build relationships. Use the follow-up to thank them, share any takeaways, and keep the door open for future collaboration.

Q6: What if a stakeholder is unavailable or declines to participate?

If a stakeholder is unavailable, select someone else within your agency who meets the same general criteria. Be flexible, but intentional in finding someone who can offer insight into your agency's systems and decision-making.

Q7: Are there any questions I should avoid during the interview?

Avoid overly personal, irrelevant, or closed-ended questions. Focus on open-ended prompts about their work, priorities, pain points, and views on innovation and change. Stay curious, professional, and respectful of their time.

Q8: How should I prepare for the interviews?

Research your stakeholder's role and any related digital or procurement initiatives in your agency. Use the interview guide to draft thoughtful questions. Practice your introduction and clarify your goals for the conversation in advance.

Q9: Can I ask the stakeholder for feedback on how I conducted the interview?

You can—especially if you're aiming to build rapport or improve your communication skills. But keep the focus on their insights, not on evaluating your performance. If you ask for feedback, do so briefly at the end of the conversation.

Q10: How will I know if my assignment is approved?

You'll receive confirmation through the learning portal or directly from your facilitator. If anything is missing or needs revision, your facilitator will follow up with clear guidance.

Q11: Can I conduct interviews virtually or asynchronously (e.g., by email)?

Interviews should ideally be conducted live—via phone, video call, or in-person—to allow for dynamic conversation and follow-up questions. Email

can be used if scheduling is a barrier, but it may limit the depth and spontaneity of the dialogue.

Q12: What if I learn something sensitive or surprising during the interview?
Respect confidentiality. Use your summary to reflect on themes and insights, but avoid including identifying details unless they were shared in a public or professional context. When in doubt, check with your facilitator.

Appendix C

Shadowing Assignment Guidance

Overview

This guidance provides a high-level overview of the Shadowing Assignment for vendors responsible for delivering the DITAP program. It outlines expectations for facilitators, assignment structure, key deliverables, and guidance for ensuring a consistent learner experience.

The Shadowing Assignment requires participants to observe a digital services delivery team for at least four hours. The goal is to expose learners to modern practices such as agile workflows, user-centered design, and cross-functional collaboration in real-world settings. Vendors seeking shadowing opportunities shall first contact their respective agencies to identify appropriate points of contact; if additional support is required, contact the U.S. DOGE Service (USDS) for further assistance.

Example shadowing opportunities include:
- A team performing customer experience work at GSA's Customer Experience Center of Excellence
- Attending backlog grooming and sprint planning sessions with a team at an agency
- Attending a private sector company's sprint planning session The goal is to expose learners to modern practices such as agile workflows, user-centered design, and cross-functional collaboration in real-world settings.

See the full list of past placements below.

Recommended timeline & key milestones

- **Orientation**: Assignment introduced during live session
- **By the end of Module 2**: Participants submit shadowing proposal for approval
- **Throughout course:** Check in on progress, troubleshoot challenges
- **By penultimate class**: Participants complete shadowing and reflection submission

Role of vendor & facilitators

Vendor organizations are responsible for ensuring their facilitators:

- Introduce the assignment clearly and on time
- Provide coaching on identifying appropriate teams to shadow
- Review and approve participant submissions using consistent criteria
- Offer support when participants encounter barriers to access. Normalize participant discomfort with outreach
- Offer a short in-class peer activity to brainstorm potential shadowing options
- Review and approve the final reflection deliverable
- Encourage post-experience in-class storytelling to reinforce learning

Vendors should equip their facilitation teams with:

- Access to example shadowing partners (optional)
- Templates for outreach or approvals (optional)
- A clear escalation process if learners cannot secure a shadowing opportunity

Approval & evaluation criteria

Shadowing opportunity approval:

- The selected team is actively working on digital service delivery
- The proposal includes clear timing and description

- The experience totals a minimum of four hours

Final submission acceptance criteria::

- Summary is 2–3 pages and addresses core reflection questions
- Participant demonstrates understanding of digital practices observed
- Reflection includes observations on team dynamics, tools, blockers, and takeaways

Sample language for facilitators

Proposal is Approved [Pass]:

"Your shadowing opportunity has been approved. Looking forward to your reflections after the experience."

Proposal Needs Clarification:

"Can you clarify how this team relates to digital service delivery and confirm your proposed shadowing dates?"

Final Submission Accepted [Pass]:

"Your shadowing reflection has been received and approved. Well done."

Final Submission Revision Needed:

"Thanks for submitting your reflection. Please expand on what you observed about team roles, challenges, or tools used during the experience."

Escalation guidance

If a participant is unable to secure a shadowing experience by the Class 2 deadline:

- Encourage them to reach out to their peers
- Refer to a list of optional organizations (if your vendor uses one)
- Escalate to your internal program lead if additional support is needed

Coordination & questions

Vendors should coordinate with their internal teams to ensure alignment on:
- Approval workflows
- Consistent messaging to participants
- Shared repositories of sample organizations or feedback templates (if applicable)

Thank you for ensuring a high-quality shadowing experience for all DITAP participants.

Shadowing assignment placements

Past program participants have shadowed the following teams and events:
- PBGC.gov Migration Team
- VA Digital Service Team
- FBI Strategic Sourcing Technology Office
- CIO (Information Technology Unit, Testing Lab – Customer)
- Enterprise Program Management Office (EPMO) at Social Security Administration (SSA) Office of Finance (OF) at SSA
- GSA Acquisition Gateway Product Team
- Director of Stakeholder Management, GSA Acquisition Gateway Marketing/Communications Team
- FBI Sentinel Application Development Team
- Digital Service team for the Flight Standards (AFS) Safety Assurance System (SAS)

Appendix D

Sample Certificate for Digital Services Credential (DITAP)

Example

Federal Acquisition Certification In Contracting

The Digital Services Credential (DITAP)

Student's Name

80 CLP Awarded For Completion Of

Digital Information Technology Acquisition Professional (DITAP) Training Cohort
Month day year - Month day year

Training Facilitated By **Name of Vendor**