FEDERAL ACQUISITION CERTIFICATION FOR
CONTRACTING OFFICER'S REPRESENTATIVES (FAC-COR) PROGRAM

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** This Handbook issues revised guidance, establishes requirements, responsibilities, and implements processes and procedures for obtaining the Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer's Representatives (FAC-COR) within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This Handbook also provides notification on the revisions to the FAC-COR Certification Program as prescribed in the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB), Office of Federal Procurement Policy's (OFPP) policy memorandum, "Revisions to the Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer's Representatives (FAC-COR)," dated September 6, 2011, which became effective, January 1, 2012.

2. **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This Handbook sets forth VA implementation procedures and responsibilities for FAC-COR.

3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Office of Acquisition and Logistics (003A).

4. **RELATED DIRECTIVE:** VA Directive 7403, Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer's Representatives (FAC-COR) Program.

5. **RESCISSION:** The Office of Acquisition and Logistics' Information Letter 049-08-02, dated April 10, 2008, is rescinded by this Handbook.

CERTIFIED BY:

BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:

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FEDERAL ACQUISITION CERTIFICATION FOR
CONTRACTING OFFICER'S REPRESENTATIVES (FAC-COR) PROGRAM

1. **PURPOSE.** The purpose of this Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer's Representatives (FAC-COR) Handbook is to issue guidance, establish requirements, and identify responsibilities for certifying, appointing, and/or revoking FAC-COR certifications within VA.

2. **AUTHORITIES.** This Handbook is issued pursuant to the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) OFPP Policy Letter 05-01, "Developing and Managing the Acquisition Workforce," dated April 15, 2005, which established a requirement for Federal Acquisition Certification (FAC) programs; and the OFPP Policy Memorandum, "Revisions to the Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer's Representatives (FAC-COR)," dated September 6, 2011, which better reflects the important role of a COR and a 3-tiered structure. VA Senior Procurement Executive (SPE) exercises leadership and authority to the extent delegated over VA's contracting activities and programs. VA SPE is accountable for the integrity and oversight of the contracting functions and has the responsibility to lead the Agency's acquisition career management programs and ensure compliance and the proper management of the FAC-COR certification requirements as prescribed by OFPP and the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI). VA Departmental Acquisition Career Manager (ACM) is responsible for administering the Agency's acquisition career management programs.

3. **APPLICABILITY.** This Handbook is applicable to all VA Administrations and Staff Offices. All VA employees appointed by a Contracting Officer (CO) as a Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) must meet or exceed the Department's FAC-COR certification requirements. VA Office of Inspector General is covered under this guidance where it does not conflict with the authorities and responsibilities given to the Inspector General under the Inspector General Act of 1978 and its amendments.

4. **VA ACQUISITION WORKFORCE DEFINITION.** VA's acquisition workforce refers to all VA employees who perform acquisition-related duties to include planning, managing, and/or executing acquisition programs and contract actions (e.g., Contract Specialists, CORs, program/project managers, project leads, etc.), which generally requires (with limited policy exceptions) a Federal acquisition related professional certification to effectively perform their acquisition related duties. As such, the acquisition workforce does not include all members of the acquisition team as defined in Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 1.102.

5. **VA FAC-COR PROGRAM.** Duly appointed CORs ensure that contractors perform in accordance with the requirements of the contract. CORs are often the first to recognize when a program/project or contract is under-performing, and are increasingly being asked to manage high-value, complex contracts that involve varying degrees of risk. To be sure CORs are trained and developed appropriately, OFPP issued a memorandum on September 6, 2011, entitled "Revisions to the Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer's Representative (FAC-

COR)." To meet this requirement, VA's 3-tier FAC-COR program became effective on January 1, 2015.

6. FAC-COR CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES. A COR, who must be a Federal government employee, may be nominated from any career series and any grade as long as he/she meets and maintains the specific competency and training requirements identified in this Handbook. The COR's training and experience must support the specific duties delegated by the Contracting Officer in the COR's appointment memorandum (See Appendix A: FAC-COR Experience and Training Requirements for detailed information and guidelines on contract dollar values). CORs play a critical role in ensuring contractors meet their contractual commitments. Candidates for FAC-COR certification are required to earn the minimum requisite hours of training associated with the level of certification for which they are applying. <u>Training must have been completed within the last 2 years of submitting an application.</u>

   a. **FAC-COR Program Levels:**

   (1) FAC-COR Level I – Required for CORs appointed to perform contract management for low-risk contract awards such as firm-fixed price service or supply contracts. No prior experience is required.

   (2) FAC-COR Level II – Required for CORs appointed to perform contract management for moderate to complex contracts. This level requires 1 year of previous COR experience (See Appendix B).

   (3) FAC-COR Level III – Required for all CORs appointed to perform contract management for complex contracts. This level requires a minimum of 2 years of COR experience on Federal projects (See Appendix B).

   b. **Initial Certification Requirements:** Each FAC-COR certification level is independent of the others (e.g., applicants for Level III are not required to have been certified at Level I or II). A combination of experience, training, and/or professional certification is required. Each certification level requires a specific number of continuous learning points (CLPs) and/or experience, depending upon contract complexity and value. Any position that requires the incumbent to officially perform as a COR will also require a FAC-COR certification level commensurate to the contract's complexity and value.

   c. **Additional Mandatory Training Requirements for Levels II and III:** The Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS) is a government-wide evaluation reporting tool for all past performance reports on contracts and orders. CPARS training is mandatory for FAC-CORs at Levels II and III. Newly-appointed CORs and CORs certified before April 1, 2016, are required to complete CPARS training within 90 calendar days of appointment to a new contract. Information about these courses can be found at the CPARS website. CORs who have completed CPARS training must upload their certificates of completion into the Federal Acquisition Institute Training Application System (FAITAS).

d. **Continuous Learning:** FAC-COR certified professionals are required to earn the requisite number of CLPs, based upon certification level, every 2 years (see Appendix A). The 2-year anniversary date is set by the initial certification date. Individuals who do not timely complete the required CLPs for certification will have their certification revoked. Once a certification has been revoked, the achievement request button is no longer visible in FAITAS. In order to be recertified, individuals must satisfy all initial COR requirements specific to the level of certification. Once all requirements are met, individuals will submit a new application request via FAITAS for a new FAC-COR certification.

e. **Achievement (Recertification) Requests:** FAITAS will alert users of their status and when they are required to submit an achievement request. All CLPs earned are subject to approval and must have been earned during the 2 year certification maintenance window. To avoid a revoked certification, it is recommended that the recertification process be initiated in FAITAS 60 days prior to the existing certification expiration date. Revoked certifications will prohibit an individual from continuing as a certified COR professional. Applicants should contact their Acquisition Career Management Liaison Officer (ACMLO) for specific details related to these certification guidelines.

f. **Acquisition Training:** The VA Acquisition Academy (VAAA) is the mandatory provider for acquisition-related training for VA acquisition professionals. While Federal Acquisition Certification (FAC) training from other providers will be recognized, VA acquisition professionals pursuing or continuing an initial FAC-COR certification must use the VAAA as the primary training source. FAITAS serves as the registration portal for all acquisition training. Any waiver request to use an alternate training provider must be reviewed by the ACMLOs, and approved by the Departmental ACM.

7. **CERTIFICATION RECIPROCITY AND EQUIVALENCY.** FAC-COR certification from other Federal agencies will be reviewed by the ACMLO and Departmental ACM to ensure continuous learning requirements have been met and the certification is current. The FAC-COR Experience and Training Requirements Table in Appendix A identifies certification reciprocities and equivalencies.

8. **COR APPOINTMENT AND TERMINATION PROCEDURES.**

a. **Appointment and Acceptance:** The CO determines the appropriate certification level required for the contract and appoints the COR. Upon receipt of the Appointment Letter, the COR shall acknowledge in writing that he or she has received the appointment and accepts the COR responsibilities. All VA COR appointment letters must contain a signature acceptance line that allows the COR to acknowledge and accept the appointment.

b. Appointment of an Alternate: A COR appointment is unique to an individual and may not be further delegated. An alternate COR may be nominated by the program office and then appointed by the CO to act in the absence of, or in additional support to, the primary COR. This guidance pertains equally to the appointment of alternate CORs. Both the primary and alternate (as applicable) appointments are retained in the official contract file.

c. Termination of an Appointment: A COR appointment remains in effect for the life of the contract unless circumstances dictate earlier revocation. The CO ensures appointments are terminated when the appointments are no longer valid or required. The CO may also terminate a COR appointment for failure or inability to appropriately fulfill the responsibilities outlined in the Appointment Letter or this Handbook. The termination of the COR appointment must be in writing and be given to the COR and the COR's supervisor. Copies of appointment terminations must be forwarded by the CO to the HCA and ACMLO to ensure necessary records are updated. The contractor must also be notified. A copy of the termination is retained in the official contract file.

9. **AUDITING.** VA Departmental ACM collaborates with the HCA and ACMLO to ensure consistent recording and maintenance of COR certification information by conducting periodic compliancy audits.

10. **POINTS OF CONTACT.** Questions regarding this Handbook should be directed to Acquisition Human Capital Management Services (AHCMS) at (202)461-6770, via email at AHCMS@va.gov or through the AHCMS Website.

FAC-COR Experience and Training Requirements Table

Certification Level	Level I	Level II	Level III
Contract Type/Complexity	Low-risk Contract Awards such as Firm-Fixed Price or Supply Contracts	Moderate to Complex Contracts	Complex or Major Capital Investment Contracts
Suggested Total Contract Dollar Value[1]	Up to $1M	>$1M to $7M	>$5M
Experience Requirements	No Experience Required	1 Year	2 Years Federal
Training Requirements[2]	8 hours VAAA (Computer-Based Training) **or** VAAA (Classroom)	40 hours VAAA (Virtual Instructor Led Training – 32 CLPs + 8 CLPs training course) **or** VAAA (Classroom) **and** CPARS Overview (2 hours) and CPARS Quality & Narrative Writing (2 hours)	40 hours VAAA Virtual Instructor Led Training (FCR COR II)[3] **and** CPARS Overview (2 hours) and CPARS Quality & Narrative Writing (2 hours) **and** 20 elective hours. The following courses are suggested: CLE028; CLM031; CLM017; FAC033; CLM014; CLV016.
Certification Equivalency/Reciprocity	FAC-C Level I FAC-P/PM Level I	FAC-C Levels I and II **or** FAC-P/PM Level II	FAC-C Level III **or** FAC-P/PM Level III
CLP Requirements	Eight (8) Hours Acquisition-Related Structured Training (online/classroom)	Forty (40) Hours Acquisition-Related Structured Training (online/classroom)	Forty (40) Hours Acquisition-Related Structured Training (online/classroom)

[1] In an effort to support the business needs of Administrations and Staff organizations, HCAs or their designees have the discretion of adjusting the "Suggested Contract Dollar Value" thresholds to align with FAC-COR certification levels.

[2] In addition to the mandatory number of training hours associated with each FAC-COR certification level, HCAs or designees, Contracting Officers, ACMLOs, and/or a COR's immediate supervisor may impose additional training requirements necessary for COR fluency.

[3] FAC-COR certification levels are independent of each other. If an individual that is applying for FAC-COR Level III has already taken the FCR 202 vILT module during his/her FAC-COR Level II certification period, the applicant is required to take FPM 120A (20 CLPs) **and** 120B (22 CLPs) instead.

FAC-COR Professional Experience

Applicant's Name	FAC-COR Certification Level: ☐ **Level II** ☐ **Level III**	
Applicant's Organization:	**Phone Number:**	**Email Address:**

Contract Type(s): (List types and dollar value estimates of contracts you have worked on. Level II: Moderate to high complexity such as cost-reimbursement, firm fixed price, service/supply.   Level III: Most complex or major capital investment contracts; includes all contract types.)

Professional Experience: (Level II: Required knowledge of the General Business and Technical Competencies for CORs identified on FAI's Website AND at least one (1) year of previous COR experience within the last 4 years. Level III: Required knowledge of the General Business and Technical Competencies for CORs identified on FAI's Website AND at least two (2) years of previous COR experience on Federal projects within the last 4 years.)