



# NATIONAL ACADEMY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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## **Plan for Executing Senior Manager Focus Groups Regarding the Independent Review of the Defense Civilian Intelligence Personnel System**

**February 18, 2010**

### **Background**

The National Academy of Public Administration (the Academy) is conducting a Congressionally-mandated review of the Defense Civilian Intelligence Personnel System (DCIPS). This review will include a systematic analysis of the design of DCIPS, including its regulatory framework; an evaluation of the DCIPS implementation strategy; and an analysis of the DCIPS bonus pool and mock payout. Particular emphasis is needed regarding:

- DCIPS's impact on career progression;
- Its appropriateness in light of workforce complexities;
- Its protections for diversity in promotion and retention; and
- The adequacy of training, policy guidance, and other preparations for transition to DCIPS.

This review will result in the production of a Panel report including findings, conclusions, and recommendations for the Secretary of Defense and Congress by June 1, 2010.

### **Purpose and Value of the Focus Groups**

The perspectives and actual experiences of senior managers who are responsible for managing the transition from the General Schedule to DCIPS are an important part of the information that is required for this review. While the Human Capital Management Office will be conducting employee surveys, it is uncertain that results will be sufficient or obtained in time to be included in the Academy's review. In addition, these surveys will canvass the entire workforce, and are not specifically focused on eliciting the perspectives of senior managers. Organizing and conducting one or more Focus Groups will allow the Academy to explore issues in much greater depth with senior managers than is possible with surveys.

The Focus Group results will be one data source within the larger context of several primary and secondary sources in the overall review. The Focus Groups fill a critical gap by engaging senior managers from a variety of DOD organizations in an open exchange of ideas and experiences and will be the primary mechanism for gathering data from senior managers for this review. The information obtained from Focus Groups cannot be easily obtained from individual interviews

because the participants in a focus group react to each other's comments and differences in experiences and perceptions are more easily discerned.

The questions to be discussed in these Focus Groups will be based upon the three research questions that are fundamental to this review and are incorporated in the Academy Work Plan:

1. Design: To what extent does DCIPS align with sound design principles of performance management and pay-for-performance based systems, as well as take into account the complexities of the affected workforce?
2. Implementation: To what extent does the DCIPS implementation plan reflect sound change management strategies and principles?
3. Impact: Based on the current design and implementation approach, what identifiable issues or concerns will impact career progression and diversity?

### **Focus Group Structure and Participants**

The questions to be discussed in the Focus Group are summarized in Attachment A. These questions will be open-ended and will be used by a moderator (an Academy study team member) to guide Focus Group discussions.

The Focus Groups will last for at least two hours to ensure there is adequate time to address the full list of questions the Academy has prepared, as well as to allow time for in-depth discussion. Light refreshments and beverages will be provided for the convenience of the participants.

The Focus Group participants will be senior managers, primarily at the SES or GS-15 levels. These senior managers are in a unique position, in that they are the recipients of the results of the performance ratings across their organizations, and they have the ability to use the results from DCIPS for resource planning, re-deploying employees and other human resources management purposes in support of their missions. In addition to their perspectives on DCIPS design, implementation, and impact, these managers should be able to discuss whether DCIPS provides them with the data they need to make decisions, as well as how DCIPS supports mission achievement.

Each Focus Group will consist of 10-12 participants selected at random from managers who respond to the Academy's invitation. This number of participants is manageable, while still providing a useful variety of perspectives and experiences. To the extent possible, participants will represent all of the DOD component agencies affected by DCIPS.

### **Target Dates/Timeline**

The Academy will convene at least two Focus Groups of senior managers. These Focus Groups must take place by early March in order for the Academy to have sufficient time to prepare and analyze Focus Group results and include them in the preliminary findings and conclusions to be presented to DOD in early April.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Email to POCs	February 17, 2010
Logistics planning (location, date, time)	February 17, 2010

Finalize Plan for Executing Focus Groups	February 18, 2010
Receive RSVPs from Senior Managers	February 24, 2010
Make random selection of invitees	February 25, 2010
Confirmation email to participants	February 25, 2010
Convene Focus Groups	March 1 and 2, 2010
Prepare Focus Group notes	March 9, 2010

### **Analytic Capabilities and Limitations**

The Focus Groups are not designed to provide a fully representative sample of managers across the components implementing DCIPS. Therefore, results cannot be generalized to all senior managers. In addition, the Focus Group discussions are not meant to develop consensus on issues. Instead, these Focus Groups are intended to provide a forum to capture a variety of experiences and views and provide in-depth information about participants' perspectives, their reasons for holding certain attitudes about specific aspects of DCIPS, and insights into the range of concerns about and support for DCIPS.

The Academy will use the information gained in the Focus Groups, along with the various other data sources, to help address the research questions outlined in the Work Plan. The Academy will analyze the content of the Focus Group results and identify themes in perceptions held by senior managers. Comments will not be attributed to individual participants, but will be discussed in the Academy reports in the aggregate as part of larger themes that emerge. In some cases, specific comments may be quoted to illustrate a theme, but without identifying the speaker in any way.

## Appendix A: Senior Manager Focus Group Questions

<b>Meeting:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Location:</b>	
<b>NAPA Attendees:</b>	
<b>Other Attendees:</b>	
<b>Purpose and Summary</b>	
To capture the opinions of managers and supervisors on the design, implementation and impact of DCIPS.	
<b>Notes of Interview/Meeting</b>	
<b>TOPIC: INTRODUCTION</b>	
<b>TOPIC: DESIGN</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is your understanding of the overall goal of DCIPS?</li> <li>2. How does the system support the achievement of your mission, goals and objectives?</li> <li>3. In your view, what are the most positive features of the DCIIPS system? The most negative features? [Follow-up, if not raised by participants: To what extent does the performance management system provide managers the ability to effectively differentiate between various levels of performance?]</li> <li>4. What specific flexibilities does DCIPS provide that you did not have under the GS system?</li> </ol>	
<b>TOPIC: IMPLEMENTATION</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are your views on the overall strategy for implementing DCIPS?</li> <li>2. How visibly engaged have agency leaders been in communicating the importance of DCIPS implementation to the workforce?</li> </ol>	

3. How well do you think managers and supervisors have been trained to carry out their performance management duties under DCIPS? How would you describe the scope, timing, and quality of the training provided to managers, supervisors, and employees on DCIPS?
4. Have senior managers been consulted about DCIPS design, development, and implementation? If so, do you believe your feedback was seriously considered? Do you know if changes have been made as a result of employee feedback?

**TOPIC: IMPACT on CAREER**

1. What impact do you think DCIPS is having or will have on employees' career progression?
2. In your view, will DCIPS impact employees differently depending on their race/ethnicity, gender, veteran status, or age?

**TOPIC: OTHER**

**Action Items**

Item	Owner	Due Date

**Relevant Documents**


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 LAST EDITED: