Reflection on My Journey So Far

Over the past several years, I've had the privilege of growing as an educator, creative mentor, and lifelong learner and now, I'm charting a path into government contracting. Each chapter has uniquely honed my skills and broadened my view of how thoughtful systems can shape people's success.

As a high school English and creative writing teacher, I developed expertise in communication, analysis, and building processes that help others thrive. Leading students through complex texts and guiding them to find their voices required patience, structure, and a knack for translating dense concepts into accessible steps, all strengths I'm eager to bring into the acquisition field.

About a year ago, sparked by conversations with friends, I took a deep dive into contracting. Since then, I've been actively studying the procurement life cycle, compliance, and the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) even as it undergoes major modernization. I've earned certificates through Coursera and NCMA, built a robust learning portfolio, and attended the NCMA World Congress virtually on a full scholarship, gaining exposure to best practices and expanding my professional network.

This journey has confirmed what motivates me most: unraveling complex systems, finding clear pathways forward, and doing work that directly supports critical missions.

What I've Learned About Myself

- I'm process-driven but people-focused. I enjoy mapping out regulations and frameworks, then helping others navigate them confidently.
- I thrive on collaboration. Whether co-leading curriculum initiatives or now networking with acquisition professionals, I value shared goals and mutual growth.
- I genuinely love learning. Hand me a dense regulation, a new contracting method, or even a student's creative short story I'll approach all of them with curiosity and energy (and, predictably, a large Matcha latte).

Goals for the Year Ahead

Short-Term Goals (Next 6-12 Months)

- Complete my CCMA certification through NCMA to deepen my contracting foundation and showcase my commitment to professional growth.
- Continue rigorous FAR study especially as it's overhauled. With significant revisions underway to streamline acquisition processes, I'm dedicated to keeping my

knowledge current and updating my learning logs accordingly.

- Pursue multiple Department of Defense civilian entry-level pathways, including:
 - The NAVAIR NADP (Naval Acquisition Development Program), where I
 originally applied and continue to engage with mentors and hiring managers.
 - The Air Force COPPER CAP / PALACE ACQUIRE program, which offers a structured path with rotations and formal training to prepare civilians for Contract Specialist roles in Air Force contracting commands.
 - The Army Contracting Career Field intern programs (CP-14), including the Army Contracting Career Fellow Program, designed to develop well-rounded acquisition professionals through comprehensive training and on-the-job experience.
- Expand my professional network, reach out to more acquisition professionals across these branches, attend chapter meetings, and seek mentorships to build a broad perspective on DoD contracting.

Longer-Term Goals (1-3 Years)

- Advance to a GS-11 Contract Specialist or equivalent role, building on hands-on experience from these programs and continuing education.
- **Develop expertise in specialized areas,** such as negotiation strategy, source selection methodologies, or complex cost/price analysis.
- Contribute to acquisition teams handling mission-critical contracts, ensuring transparency, efficiency, and value for the taxpayer.

A Note on Mindset

Transitioning from education to contracting is more than just a career pivot — it's a bold move into a highly regulated, mission-driven world. I know the learning curve is steep (especially with the FAR being rebuilt in real time), but I find that both challenging and exciting. Every new clause mastered, every process understood, is another step toward becoming the kind of acquisition professional who combines rigorous compliance with thoughtful stewardship.

(And yes, a good sense of humor is still required when wrestling with FAR Part 15 or agency supplements.)

✓ Bottom line:

I'm proud of how far I've come and energized by where I'm heading. I see these goals as living documents — evolving as I grow. As I reach new milestones, I'll revisit and refine them, always with a focus on how best to serve, learn, and make a positive impact in this field.