

# The Federal Manager

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## PRESIDENT'S PAGE



*FMA National President  
Patricia Niehaus*

### Happy New Year, Team FMA!

Federal managers had a tough year in 2011 and still face many challenges in the years ahead. The supercommittee failed in its task to come up with a preliminary answer to our nation's debt and deficit problems (see article on page 10). This failure to reach an agreement may have postponed further federal pay freezes or other cutbacks, but the attacks on our pay and benefits will surely keep coming. Federal employees have frequently been called the "low hanging fruit" of politics and that has never been more true than it is today. Our Government Affairs staff continues to send action letters urging you to contact your Senators and

Representatives. I would also like to urge you to step up to the plate. This is YOUR association and we are only as strong as our members. When you get these e-mails from FMA's Katie Maddocks, please take a moment to personalize the action letter with your own experiences and send them to the D.C. offices of your Senators and Representative. Make appointments with the staff in the local offices to let them know you are a federal employee or retiree. It is all too easy for our elected representatives to take feds for granted. It is up to you to make sure they know we are not faceless bureaucrats – we are their constituents and we vote! If you are not receiving FMA action letter e-mails, please send the National Office your non-government e-mail address today ([info@fedmanagers.org](mailto:info@fedmanagers.org)).

2012 promises to be a lively campaign year and that means FMA's Political Action Committee (FMA-PAC) will be very active. If you are not currently contributing to FMA-PAC on a regular basis, please consider doing so. Our preferred method is payroll deduction and that option is now available to retirees as well. Donating just a few dollars per pay period allows FMA to increase its contributions and continue to build on the legislative successes we have had in the past. Additionally, you will be entered in the FMA-PAC Raffle held at FMA's 2012 National Convention and every convention. PAC prizes are donated by chapters and the grand prize is a vacation to an exciting destination!

I wholeheartedly encourage you to join your fellow federal managers at FMA's 74th National Convention and Management Training Seminar, March 11-14, 2012, in Arlington, Virginia. Our convention theme this year is, *Federal Managers – Doing More with Less*. We are all asked to do more than ever before and the presenters will offer advice on how to succeed, even as resources dwindle. Please see the advertisement inside the front cover for more information. Of course, our leaders and staff will report on the work done in the previous year, and what we expect to be focusing on in the coming year.

As I announced in December, we have signed a contract for our 2013 National Convention at the Mayflower Hotel in downtown Washington, D.C. I would love to see every member-at-large and chapter at FMA's 100th Anniversary celebration. You will be hearing more about this historic event to take place in a legendary hotel. With your help, we will start the celebration in the coming months!

Finally, I want to tell you how proud I am of our National Office staff. It has been amazing what they have accomplished for this great association. FMA is quoted in the media more than any other management organization, and as much or more than most other federal employee organization or union. All you have to do is monitor the various publications to see that FMA is looking out for you.

Thank you for being an FMA member. I wish you a wonderful 2012! ■

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### Article Submission

All materials submitted to *The Federal Manager* should pertain to public service managers. Copy should be double-spaced, no longer than 10 pages.

High resolution color images, charts, or illustrations should be included if possible. Text should be submitted by email or on compact disc. Include a biography of the author.

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# Investing in the Future at the Federal Aviation Administration

Managers Working Together  
to Accomplish More with Less



# Investing in the Future

*Investing in the Future continued from page 3*

## By Anthony Gagliardo

*How do I modernize my organization, efficiently use resources, and accomplish more with less? FAA managers responsible for training today's air traffic control workforce have worked to answer these questions since the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) established its technical training organization in 2007.*

*The training organization's formula to create an effective organization has changed over the years, but the fundamental ingredients include the right organizational structure and processes, technology and infrastructure, and people to develop the best students at the lowest cost possible. This approach enables the FAA to invest cost savings derived from efficiencies in its training system into the future of air traffic control technical training.*

I work at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) with a dedicated group of managers and training professionals who are responsible for training the nation's air traffic controllers. To stay ahead of generational, technological and economic changes, we are continually improving the system by focusing on four key areas: organizational structure and processes; technology and infrastructure; people; and, cost.

The Office of Technical Training has responsibility for training new air traffic controllers and assisting the more than 15,000 certified professional controllers at 315 facilities across the U.S. and its territories to keep their skills sharp. The office's managers help training supervisors and instructors at each facility to maintain currency with rapid advances in learning best practices. Since the FAA consolidated technical training into a single organization in 2007, managers have focused on enhancing how students learn so that we can successfully meet the air traffic controller workforce's training

needs. Getting so many employees, facility managers, and other stakeholder organizations to work together is a real challenge. That is why I have asked all Office of Technical Training managers to diligently pursue mutually beneficial initiatives that use resources smartly to increase the number of certified controllers.

## Finding Opportunities through Challenges

Our management team is determined to maintain the FAA's high safety standards while undergoing significant changes that are beyond our control, such as a generational shift in the air traffic controller workforce. Seventy percent of controllers will become eligible to retire this decade<sup>1</sup>, driving the FAA to undertake an aggressive effort to hire, train and backfill a majority of the air traffic workforce. Our team must educate the next generation of students quickly during a sustained period of fiscal uncertainty for many government organizations, including the FAA.

The FAA's culture of safety – we conduct the safest operations in the world's most complex air traffic system – helps us navigate these significant changes. To support this culture, our technical training team proactively sought ways to strengthen our training operations. For example, in spring 2011, FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt commissioned an Independent Review Panel (IRP) as part of the FAA and the National Air Traffic Controllers Association's (NATCA) Call to Action on air traffic controller safety and professionalism. The members of this panel represented the union, universities, a commercial airline and FAA Aviation Safety. They collectively brought a deep and diverse range of knowledge to the review.<sup>2</sup>

Babbitt commented at the time that "our air traffic controllers do a phenomenal job every day helping passengers reach their destinations safely. As we move towards [the future], we need to make sure that our controllers are getting the best training possible. This report shows us we are doing a great job, but there are things we can and will do better."<sup>3</sup>

The panel did an excellent job reviewing the FAA's process for selecting air traffic controllers, our work at the FAA Academy at the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center in Oklahoma City, and our partnerships with collegiate training institutes. Additionally, the IRP reviewed our air traffic controller professional standards and our organizational structure for controller training and placement.<sup>4</sup> The IRP report, released in fall 2011, contained nearly 50 recommendations that provided us with a deeper understanding of opportunities to improve training. With the independent assessment in hand, our leadership team recalibrated its ongoing initiatives and put in place a plan to implement many of the IRP's recommendations.

Our team worked hard to seize the opportunity to make improvements across the entire training organization. To implement the panel's recommendations while still meeting the training demands of the controller workforce with limited time and resources, our team focused on what we could control: good stewardship over our people and processes. By creating efficiencies in these areas, our organization positioned itself to stay one step ahead of the FAA's needs by reinvesting cost savings into other technical training initiatives, such as enhanced technology.

## The FAA's Strategy

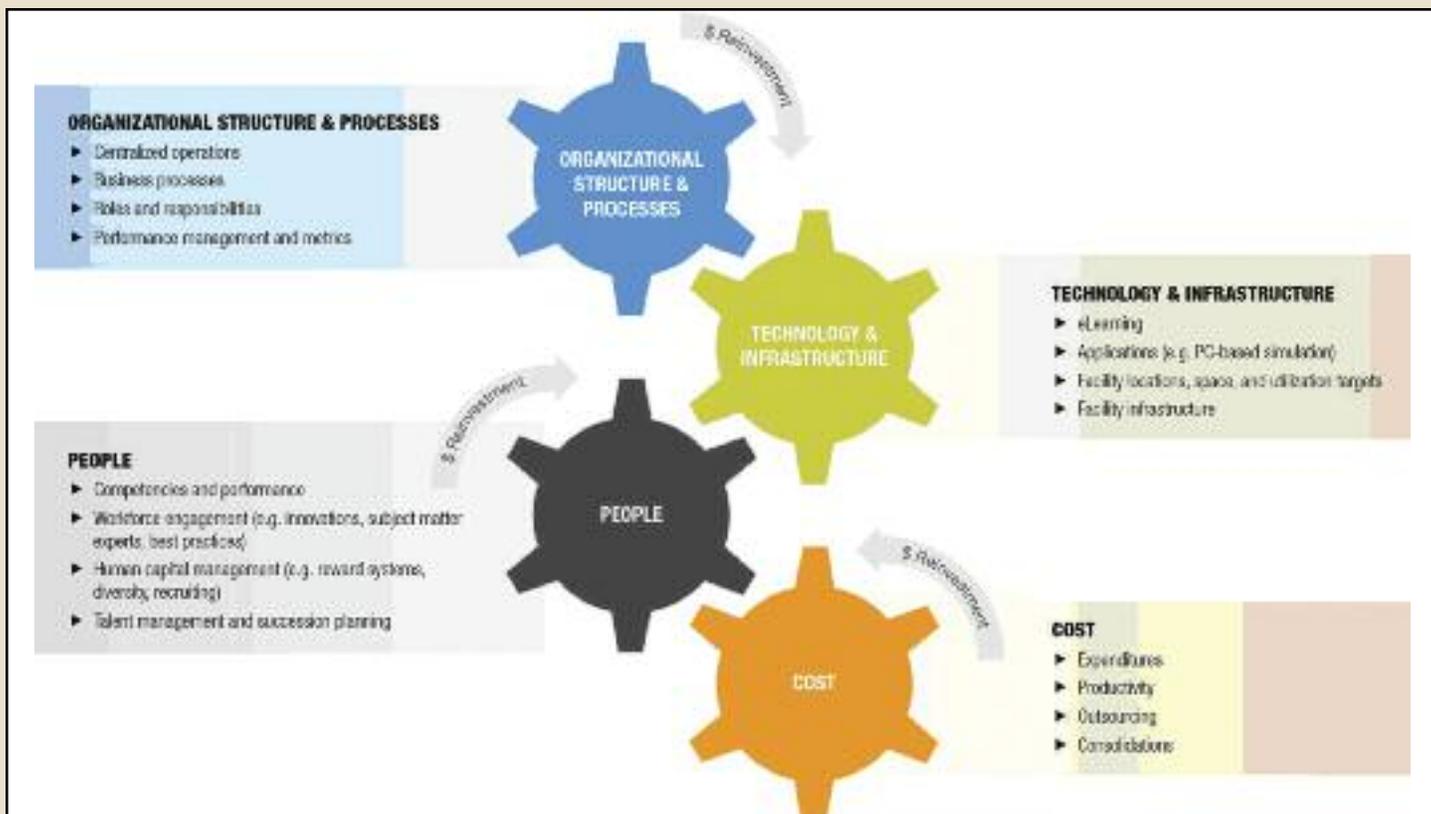
To develop the best air traffic controllers possible each year, our training team

<sup>1</sup> A Plan for the Future: The Federal Aviation Administration's 10-Year Strategy for the Air Traffic Control Workforce 2008-2017.

<sup>2</sup> FAA Independent Review Panel on the Selection, Assignment and Training of Air Traffic Control Specialists Final Report, September 22, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> FAA Press Release, "FAA Releases Independent Panel Report on Air Traffic Controller Training," October 3, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



*Four Elements Drive the Technical Training Organization's Success*

works with FAA leadership to implement a comprehensive strategy across the entire organization. This approach controls resources, such as time and funding, in the four key areas of organizational structure and process, technology and infrastructure, people, and cost. This strategy leverages more from the training organization's processes and people and improves our ability to manage investments and do more with less.

## Getting More from What We Have

### Organizational Structure and Processes

To provide the right training to the right employees at the right time, our team worked on two key activities during the past 12 months – the implementation of a new organizational structure and

improved internal processes.

Given the geographic dispersion of the workforce and student population, I also worked with our management team to decide how to best manage our decentralized environment. Through organizational analysis and input from stakeholder groups such as the IRP, we determined our best approach to manage a decentralized organization was as a centralized unit with enhanced processes, such as:

- Restructured training operations performing as a centralized function
- Improved placement of employees based on skill level
- Improved alignment of training between the FAA Academy and the 315 field facilities that receive its graduates
- Streamlined business processes to reduce redundancies
- Increased transparency

These actions promote additional

efficiency and position the training organization to better coordinate resources. Clear and transparent business processes provide training managers greater clarity and unvarnished information from the field. They also improve communication with the FAA Academy and the facilities that receive Academy graduates. Better communication across the organization and with management improves our stakeholders' understanding of training requirements. Increased coordination refines the development and execution of training requirements, ultimately creating a better end product.

### People

Certified controllers have mastered a specialized skill set and have a strong knowledge base, so my management team and I work collaboratively with our workforce to tap into the existing wealth

*continued on next page*

*Investing in the Future continued from page 5*

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Encouraging and empowering employees to support the FAA's training mission by going above and beyond in their work has been a great success...

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of knowledge among current employees.

I emphasize to our managers and other staff the importance of sharing training best practices and exchanging ideas. These activities lead to new opportunities to improve training at other facilities across the country. Recently, a team of instructors from Southern California Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON) led the development of a customized training tool that used Google Earth to give students three-dimensional awareness of airspace in scenarios depicting realistic interactions between pilots and air traffic controllers. These employees demonstrated the tool and scenarios at a recent NATCA conference, and the Google Earth tool is now under consideration for nationwide implementation.

At Minneapolis TRACON, another team of employees developed a proof of concept modifying existing technology to train staff at remote facilities. The technology was originally designed for in-house training. In a similar fashion to a help desk representative remotely operating the customer's PC, the training team used the Internet to run and record training scenarios giving students hundreds of miles away full audio and visual capabilities. The additional playback features helped instructors pinpoint where students can improve how they manage planes in the airspace. All the training teams deserve a lot of credit for initiating, developing and testing effective, low-cost programs and methods to teach students. They display the essential attributes of entrepreneurship and an eye for efficiency.

Encouraging and empowering employees to support the FAA's training mission by going above and beyond in their work has been a great success in identifying methods to train future air traffic students. Often, employees on the ground are the first to see new opportunities to increase efficiencies or improve products. Our managers understand the benefits of tapping into their perspectives and partnering with them to develop viable training solutions

that provide mutual benefits to the organization and the students.

## Cost

By improving the training organization's ability to manage staff and coordinate resources, we gained efficiency over time and recorded lower costs each year to train students at the FAA Academy.

The FAA achieved major cost savings by contracting many of the instructors and training developers, enabling us to reinvest millions back into the training program. The fact that our overall training quality remained steady is a testament to the work our instructors and support staff accomplish every day. Contracting also allows for more flexibility. In 2008, the FAA consolidated two distinct training contracts with multiple vendors into one contract with a single vendor responsible for its execution, creating the ability to reimage and better streamline the training structure and processes. This contributed significantly to the overall goal of producing a higher number of qualified, certified controllers at a lower cost.

## Reinvesting in Technology

By getting more out of our processes, people, and budget, we can reinvest the savings to upgrade our training technology and infrastructure. The result is a greater use of electronically-supported learning and teaching (eLearning) and technology-based training methods. These tools help training leadership operate the decentralized training population in a more centralized manner. The increased use of eLearning allows our training to maximize reach at the 315 various locations so that people can easily access and take training from any location, and managers can better monitor training needs. Our organization is already realizing benefits, which include:

- Better training assessments that allow instructors to target each student's

- training needs
- New tools, such as a learning content management system, that provide the capability to centralize training development
- Record keeping and metrics reporting that identify training trends and enable better use of critical training resources

These benefits help training teams train controllers quickly and at a greater rate, helping to mitigate the challenge of upcoming workforce retirements.

The FAA is implementing the use of simulators – technology that allows instructors to duplicate and “play back” actual operating events to give students opportunities for improvement in a safe environment. Simulators enable students to not only see the cause and effect, but also to avoid mistakes in the future. Until recently, controllers working in airport traffic control towers trained solely on live air traffic. Since live traffic is inconsistent and unpredictable due to weather and system delays, a controller may have to wait days or weeks for an opportunity to learn a particular procedure, and even longer to become proficient at it. The FAA uses simulation to help compress the training timeline while also improving the students’ learning experience and reducing training costs.

## Planning for Future Success

The FAA is continuing to take the right steps to address training challenges by examining the entire organization to find ways to work smarter in four key areas: organizational structure and processes; technology and infrastructure; people; and, cost. Right now, this approach gives us the ability to reinvest savings into training technology. It also allows the training organization to continue to produce the competent, qualified controllers who are the heart of the organization’s success, but at a growing volume and pace that keeps up with the

demand of the changing workforce. Continuing this comprehensive method will position the FAA to invest in other types of technical training initiatives in the future.

All of us who support training for air traffic controllers are committed to new and existing partnerships with employees and stakeholders. We are strengthening technical training programs that promote proficiency and safety to ensure every passenger has a safe flight. More than two million people choose to fly in an airplane each day in the United States, and this number is forecast to grow during this decade. They expect to travel to their destinations quickly and safely. To maintain the FAA’s safety culture, our training teams must develop the most proficient and capable air traffic controllers possible. By continuing to re-invest in ourselves, the FAA’s technical training team has managed to accomplish more with less without sacrificing quality. ■

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*Anthony (Tony) Gagliardo leads the Federal Aviation Administration Air Traffic Organization’s Technical Training Support Directorate, where he guides efforts to modernize and transform training for the Federal Aviation Administration’s 20,000 air traffic controllers. In addition to directing training technology infrastructure, content design and architecture, quality assurance and metrics initiatives, contract programs, and simulation strategy, Gagliardo oversees the Air Traffic Control Optimum Training Solution (ATCOTS) contract, a \$1.2 billion air traffic training support contract at the FAA Academy in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and at more than 300 operational facilities across the U.S. The ATCOTS team provides a breadth and depth of experience to ensure the Office of Technical Training provides training solutions and improvements that support our customer’s mission. Under the ATCOTS contract, the team provides training for air traffic controllers and is focused on integrating new technologies and best practices to improve air traffic operations.*

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The FAA uses simulation to help compress the training timeline while also improving the students’ learning experience and reducing training costs.

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