



## Interagency Aviation Training Subcommittee

### Winter Meeting

01/13/26 – 01/15/26

0900 – 1600 Mountain Time

*Holiday Inn Express*

*475 W Parkcenter BLVD*

*Boise, ID 83706*

*Parkcenter Meeting Room or Virtual Component via Teams*

## Winter Meeting – Day 1 Meeting Notes

Date: January 13, 2026

### Attendees

**In Person:** Matt Shaddle, Michael O'Brien, Dave Rosser, Chris Greeley, Tori Leshuk, Colbey Richmond, Anissa Derrick, Woody Kessler, Simone Aguero

**Virtual:** Meyer Jay, Andrew Wareham, Jeremiah Henry, Dirk Hart, James Foreman

## Item 1: Welcome / Logistics / Game Plan for the Day & Week

### Introductions

Participants conducted introductions both in person and online. Meeting logistics were reviewed, including housing, meeting room arrangements, security considerations, and room availability. The group confirmed this is a three-day meeting running from January 13–15, 2026.

## Item 2: Program Updates

### USGS Update – Dirk Hart

Dirk provided an overview of the current state of the USGS aviation program. Over the past year, USGS has experienced significant staffing impacts due to the shutdown, retirements, DRPs, and personnel departures. As a result, approximately **40 years of aviation program management experience** was lost, including the departure of Brian Wachter, Lisa Faust (RAM/IAT subcommittee), and Dan Morgan (Alaska RAM). James Foreman has joined as the USGS Northwest-Pacific Island RAM and as an IAT alternate subcommittee member replacing Lisa Faust.

USGS is currently in the “walk” phase of rebuilding under a crawl–walk–run aviation safety program model. Operational highlights from last year include:

- Approximately 1,500 UAS (drone) missions
- Approximately 1,500 flight hours in helicopters and airplanes

This level of activity aligns with the agency’s three-year operational averages. The primary focus for the coming year is qualifying **Project Aviation Managers (PAMs)**. USGS anticipates increased participation at upcoming ACE events and is emphasizing expanded training and education at the aircrew level to improve safety and operational effectiveness.

## Forest Service Update – Tori Leshuk

Tori reported that regional representation is being maintained.

Any required **committee restructuring or adjustments** will be communicated as needed.

Forest Service leadership has communicated clear priorities, including continued emphasis on **resource and timber programs**, resulting in the retention of a significant portion of the workforce.

The FAM group remains in transition to **Interim OPS** status. Approval has not yet been finalized, as briefings are currently underway in Washington, D.C., with regional foresters. While **supervisory structures will not change**, work direction and project assignments may shift geographically. Many details remain in development and are expected to be implemented throughout the calendar year.

## Fish and Wildlife Service – Chris Greely

Chris reported progress on the **National Aviation Training Plan**, which is being developed chapter-by-chapter to standardize aviation business practices across agencies.

The lack of new pilot hiring has allowed additional focus on plan development rather than execution. Alaska training remains open, with efforts underway to schedule training including A-312 and A-219. Coordination with National Park Service continues, and Woody confirmed the M3 **course** is under development with Cannon.

## OAS Update – Woody Kessler

Despite shutdown-related delays, Woody was able to fly a single-position announcement with multiple selections. Due to extended processing timelines, the announcement was not finalized until late December. Once a DRP cleared, **two selections** were made from the certificate.

Pending HR approval, OAS anticipates hiring:

- One **GS-12 Training Specialist** in Boise
- One **GS-12 Training Specialist** in Alaska

These positions will backfill prior vacancies.

Additionally, OAS will be absorbed into the U.S. Wildland Fire Service, resulting in future organizational changes.

## Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) Update – Dave Rosser & Meyer Jay

BOR has experienced significant staffing losses, creating leadership gaps but also opportunities for restructuring. The bureau has been working closely with law enforcement, particularly utilizing drone technology.

Jay noted cross-agency interest in **tethered systems** for Emergency Management applications.

## BLM Update – Matt Shaddle

BLM fire employees will transition under the **U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS)** structure. As of **February 8**, employees will begin using USWFS email addresses. Current management structures, duties, and responsibilities will remain unchanged during the transition period.

Employees should expect a period of **dual roles and responsibilities** until new positions are filled and the organizational transition is complete.

## **Item 3: NWCG Reorganization / Implementation Plan & SOPs**

### **Overview – Matt Shaddle**

NWCG reorganization has been in development for approximately one year. Key changes include:

- **NIAC will be replaced by the Aviation Management Committee (AMC)**
- Interagency Aviation Training subcommittee (IAT) will transition to the **Aviation Training Subcommittee**

The **target implementation date is July 1**, with a soft shutdown period between **June 1 and July 1**. June meetings may be limited or cancelled.

A kickoff meeting with NWCG leadership is scheduled for the week of Jan 19 and will address:

- Selection of committee chairs and vice chairs
- Establishment of rotation schedules
- Standing up the new committee structure

Under the new model:

- The **U.S. Wildland Fire Service will have a single AMC representative**
- Matt Shaddle will serve as the primary representative, with Kristin Swoboda supporting

For future USWFS participation in IAT, the executive board initially identified **Colin Milone and Dave Underwood**. These assignments may be adjusted once new aviation leadership (GS-15/GS-14 positions) is fully established. Only organizations with official NWCG representation may hold **primary or associate membership**. All other entities will participate as **liaisons**.

### **Chair Transition**

Current SOPs identify a chair transition to BOR representative. With the upcoming restructuring of NWCG and USWFS proposal for Matt Shaddle to remain Chair until the NWCG reorganization is complete or transition Chair to USFS representative due to unique considerations affecting IAT and AMC during the transition.

#### **Continuation:**

This item will continue on **Thursday, January 15, 2026**. Supporting NWCG reorganization documents will be posted to SharePoint.

### **Working Groups**

NWCG intends to reduce formally standing working groups and side projects. Some functions may continue under AMC oversight or as ad hoc groups, but they will no longer be tracked as official NWCG working groups. Critical work will continue through task-based efforts as needed.

## **Item 4: IAT System Transition– Update & Demonstration**

### **Overview – Woody Kessler (OAS)**

Woody provided a comprehensive update on the IAT system modernization effort. Extensive evaluation of **DOI Talent** and **Totara** was conducted, including testing a Totara tenancy within Fed Talent. While the software functioned well, limitations associated with a tenancy (lack of administrative control and flexibility) made it unsuitable for IAT’s needs.

A dedicated Fed Talent server is now being pursued to allow full system control. OAS has engaged extensively with OPM, OCIO, and IBC and has developed a strong justification for maintaining an independent learning platform due to IAT’s unique operational requirements.

### **System Demonstration**

Woody demonstrated the new Totara-based platform, highlighting:

- Navigation and structure similar to the legacy IAT website
- Custom dashboards based on user roles
- Role-based access for students, instructors, managers, and administrators
- A full course library with classroom and online offerings
- Certification and task book integration
- API connectivity with **IRWIN** and **IQCS**

#### **Key Q&A Highlights:**

- Certifications can auto-populate required training and tasks
- Task books can be uploaded and validated through the help desk
- Existing certifications and course history will migrate to the new system

The platform will maintain existing IAT functionality while improving usability, flexibility, and reporting capabilities.

## **Item 5: IAT Position Description Project Review & Curriculum**

### **Analysis**

#### **Overview – Woody (OAS)**

This effort began approximately two years ago to develop **standardized, universally accepted position descriptions (PDs)** for IAT roles. Phase one focused on defining roles and responsibilities across bureaus/agencies. Significant progress was made during an October 2024 working session, resulting in broad agreement on baseline definitions, particularly for **Aircrew Member** roles.

Participants were asked to re-review the draft PDs within their organizations. DOI leadership review has occurred; however, the material has not yet been formally presented to EAS and Forest Service Leadership.

#### **Discussion Topics**

Key questions and discussion points included:

- Whether an **infrequent flyer** position or training requirement is needed
- Whether **low-level minimum requirements** should be established

- Clarifying the definition and authority of an **Aircrew Member**
- Avoiding inconsistencies that could affect interagency portability of qualifications

The group emphasized that Aircrew Members should possess sufficient knowledge to recognize and question unsafe conditions, rather than perform pilot or aircraft manager duties. Ultimate responsibility remains with the **Pilot-in-Command (PIC)**.

## **Training Approach**

Rather than adding extensive training requirements that could slow qualification, the group discussed developing **micro-learning modules** focused on specific knowledge gaps (e.g., manifests, load calculations, CRM concepts). These modules would provide targeted knowledge without overburdening trainees. Curriculum mapping tools were demonstrated to show how learning objectives could be tied directly to position requirements and gaps.

## **Wrap-Up**

Participants were asked to:

- Review previously drafted position descriptions
- Review the **Hybrid Learning Model** document (posted in chat)
- Be prepared for continued discussion during Day 2

**Next Day Start Time:** 9:00 AM

# Winter Meeting – Day 2 Meeting Notes

Date: January 14, 2026

## Attendees

**In Person:** Matt Shaddle, Michael O'Brien, Dave Rosser, Chris Greeley, Tori Leshuk, Colbey Richmond, Anissa Derrick, Woody Kessler, Simone Aguero

**Virtual:** Meyer Jay, Andrew Wareham, Jeremiah Henry, Dirk Hart, James Foreman

## Welcome & Day 2 Logistics

The meeting opened with a review of the Day 2 agenda and objectives, focusing primarily on curriculum modernization, hybrid learning models, and future implementation strategies.

## Item 5: IAT Position Description Project Review & Curriculum

### Analysis (Continued)

#### Micro-Learning Concept

The subcommittee continued discussions from Day 1 on transitioning portions of existing aviation training into **micro-learning units**.

- **Key Benefits Identified**
  - Micro-learning is more digestible than traditional longer instructor-led courses.
  - Learners may be more engaged with short, targeted learning modules.
  - Modular content allows for flexibility and easier updates over time.
- **Concerns Raised**
  - Risk of losing valuable in person interaction and experiential learning.
  - Need to avoid turning aviation training into generic, checkbox-style online training.
  - Importance of maintaining aviation-specific context and professionalism (e.g., avoiding a “DOI Talent” look and feel).

#### AI-Enabled Content Development

- Demonstration of AI-generated Articulate 360 micro-learning modules.
- Advantages noted:
  - Faster content creation.
  - Reduced reliance on contractors.
  - Ability for subject matter experts to make real-time edits.
- Recognition that examples and scenarios must remain aviation-relevant and realistic.

#### Curriculum Mapping & Gap Analysis

- A shared spreadsheet (via Microsoft Teams) was introduced to map:
  - Existing courses
  - Position requirements
  - Identified gaps (“plus marks”)
- Purpose:
  - Identify where micro-learning can replace or supplement full courses.
  - Develop position-specific learning pathways.
  - Support future modular “stackable” course designs.

## **Item 6: Hybrid Learning Model**

### **Rationale – Woody Kessler**

- Many current courses measure **completion**, not **competency**.
- Few courses include meaningful evaluations or final assessments.
- There is no consistent method to measure whether training changes behavior or improves job performance.

### **Proposed Hybrid Model**

- Combine:
  - Online/asynchronous learning
  - Limited performance-based evaluation
- Proposal includes a **simplified task sheet**, not a full NWCG or All-Hazards style task book.

### **Key Characteristics**

- Focused on demonstrating capability, not exhaustive sign-offs.
- May include:
  - Scenario discussions
  - Knowledge demonstrations
  - Verbal walkthroughs with experienced personnel
- Can be completed without field deployment (e.g., virtual or modeled scenarios).

### **Tradeoffs Discussed**

- **Pros**
  - Increased confidence that personnel are prepared.
  - Better linkage between training and real-world expectations.
  - Encourages mentorship and knowledge transfer.
- **Cons**
  - Slower speed to qualification.
  - Additional administrative burden.
  - Potential resistance from bureaus not currently using task books.

### **Bureau Perspectives**

- **Forest Service**
  - Expressed interest, particularly on the fixed-wing side.
  - Shared prior challenges with unsanctioned task books becoming overly restrictive.
- **USGS**
  - Generally supportive of the concept.
  - Significant concern about:
    - Who approves evaluations
    - Policy implications
    - Making task books a formal requirement
  - Preference for an **audit-style model** rather than a qualification gate.

### **Audit vs. Qualification Debate**

- Strong discussion on whether:
  - A failed demonstration should prevent mission participation, or
  - The tool should serve as an audit, mentoring, or remediation mechanism.
- Consensus leaned toward:
  - Avoiding rigid qualification barriers.
  - Using results to identify gaps and improve training effectiveness.

## Evaluation Alternatives Discussed

- Scenario-based final exams
- Interview-style discussions with aviation managers
- Knowledge-based assessments combined with reflective learning
- LMS-driven diagnostics to identify strengths and weaknesses

Emphasis was placed on **setting learners up for success**, especially those directed into aviation roles by supervisors without adequate support or context.

## Position Descriptions & Training Pathways

- Strong support for:
  - Clearly defining expectations for each aviation role.
  - Linking position descriptions directly to training plans.
- Proposed approach:
  - Introductory video or module when selecting a certification path.
  - Explanation of role expectations, responsibilities, and relationships.
  - Clear explanation of *why* specific courses are required.

This moment—when a user selects a certification path—was identified as a critical opportunity to engage learners. IATS agreed that the preferred alternative is to utilize current and future position descriptions as a means of clearly communicating position expectations to students rather than the addition of a Task sheet/Task book.

## Item 7: IAT Guide Revision

- No immediate, high-priority revision needs identified.
- Few recent Requests for Change (RFCs).
- Proposed phased approach:
  - Stand up new definitions and training modules under the existing guide.
  - Allow 2026 for development, testing, and approvals.
  - Target January 1, 2027 for full implementation under a revised guide.
- A working group will be formed after July 1 to manage updates and approvals.

## BINN Items: ACE Event Planning

### ACE Event Confirmation

- **Location:** San Diego (same property as prior event; now under Hilton branding)
- **Dates:** April 13–17, 2026
  - Monday morning start
  - Friday ends by noon (no afternoon classes)

## Special Topics (Based on ACE Poll)

Top interest areas:

1. Aviation Management
  2. CRM / Risk Management
  3. Aviation Psychology
  4. Aviation Mishaps & Incidents
- Sessions will be optional and run alongside required training.
  - Need to clearly denote these are not intended to replace core curriculum (e.g., A-200).

## Confirmed Speakers

- **Dr. Chadwick Burgdorf** – Psychiatry (Pilot Ground School)
- **Jennifer Stroozas** – Aviation Weather (National Weather Service / FAA)

Sessions are likely to be ~1 hour, staggered later in the week.

## Additional Notes

- Potential to offer prerequisite webinars ahead of the event.
- Open to additional topic proposals if speakers are available.
- Attendance capacity estimated at ~300.

## Alaska ACE Event Discussion

- ACE Event will not be held in AK in 2026.
- Funding is likely not the primary constraint.
- Staffing and travel logistics remain the biggest challenges.
- Majority of personnel located in Fairbanks; Anchorage locations still require travel.
- Concerns expressed that an ACE event is needed in Alaska and needs to be prioritized in the coming years.

## Wrap-up

- Strong consensus that:
  - Training should be more modular, role-based, and learner-focused.
  - Evaluation methods need improvement, but must remain practical.
  - Any new system must avoid excessive bureaucracy or unintended policy burdens.
- Emphasis on phased implementation, transparency, and data-driven justification moving forward.

# Winter Meeting – Day 3 Meeting Notes

Date: January 15, 2026

## Attendees

**In Person:** Matt Shaddle, Michael O'Brien, Dave Rosser, Chris Greeley, Tori Leshuk, Colbey Richmond, Anissa Derrick, Woody Kessler, Simone Aguero

**Virtual:** Brandon Spencer, Meyer Jay, Andrew Wareham, Jeremiah Henry, Dirk Hart, James Foreman, Liz Younger

## Welcome & Game Plan for the Day

The meeting opened with logistical notes and an overview of the agenda. Day 3 was anticipated to be shorter, with a limited number of remaining discussion items and the goal of finalizing outstanding decisions.

## Discussion: Chair Position

Due to changes in NWCG structure and some ambiguity around primary members and liaisons, the subcommittee revisited the chair rotation outlined in the SOPs.

- Based on rotation, the chair role would normally transition to USGS.
- Given ongoing transitions and the need to develop new SOPs, **Tori (Forest Service)** volunteered to step into the chair position temporarily to guide the committee through this period.
- USGS representatives (Dave and Meyer) indicated their support for this approach.

## Decision

- A vote was held.
- **Result:** Unanimous approval (100%) for Tori to assume the Chair position.
- **Matt will retain Chair position through February 2026 and transition to Tori for the March 2026 meeting.**
- SOPs will be updated/modified post July 1, 2026 NWCG restructuring.

## Item 9: RFC 23-06 Implementation Update

Woodie provided a live walkthrough of the new system using a projector, with virtual attendees following along.

## Key Topics Discussed

- Review of progress and outstanding work related to **RFC 2306**.
- Discussion of why momentum on system development slowed and the need to re-engage and finalize functionality.
- Anticipation that ITS functionality will become increasingly important as more events and courses are delivered.

## Instructor Qualification & Visibility

- Clarification that:
  - Courses formerly under the A-454 umbrella that are not make/model specific (e.g., mapping workshops, aerial mission workshops) likely need to be converted into standard courses.
  - Instructor eligibility is being configured so that only appropriately qualified instructors populate instructor lists based on course selection.
- Backend logic allows Forest Service and DOI requirements to be managed separately, while ensuring end users only see approved options.
- Current issue identified:
  - When searching for 454 instructors, all instructors appear.
  - Further filtering may be required so users can easily identify instructors qualified for specific platforms or authorizations.
  - FS and DOI will need to provide a list of all make/model qualified instructors and/or vet current lists.

## Item 8: A-225 RFC Review – Modify and Finalize

### Background

- The Draft A-225 RFC was introduced at the November meeting but had not yet been formally submitted.
- Feedback from participants generally praises instructors but questions the value proposition of A-225 for experienced users.
- Current shortage of available A-225 virtual sessions noted.

### Purpose of A-225 (Reframed)

- A-225 primarily serves:
  - New instructors entering via the **M-410 pathway**
  - Instructors unfamiliar with the ITS system
- With the transition to a new system, the proposed model emphasizes:
  - **Asynchronous, self-paced tutorials** focused on:
    - Instructor role functionality
    - Required actions (course setup, closeout, compliance)
    - System navigation and limitations

### Proposed Enhancements

- Development of optional **monthly “brown bag” sessions**:
  - Informal, instructor-focused discussions
  - Topics may include:
    - Teaching techniques
    - Scenario development
    - AI-assisted instructional tools
    - Emerging best practices
- Sessions could be hosted by:
  - Committee members
  - Guest instructors
  - Volunteers from the instructor community

## Currency & Tracking Discussion

- Strong concern about imposing additional mandatory requirements.
- Consensus leaned toward:
  - Keeping the **three-year currency requirement**
  - Allowing brown bag sessions as **optional continuing education**
- Tracking participation in optional sessions may be difficult given instructor volume.
- Teaching a course was viewed by several members as a more effective way to stay current than attending informational sessions.

## Key Perspectives

- Teaching itself keeps instructors engaged and current.
- Instructors vary widely in preferences (online vs. interactive formats).
- Avoid duplicating effort or creating requirements that some bureaus cannot support (e.g., AI tools unavailable in certain environments).

## Consensus Direction

- Split the concept into two components:
  1. **Mary Loan will Update RFC for official submission**
  2. **Required asynchronous A-225 module** (system use and instructor responsibilities)
  3. **Optional professional development opportunities** (brown bags, webinars, community of practice)

## Tentative Timeline

- Target March–April to complete the revised A-225 module.
- Begin populating a schedule of instructor-led sessions in parallel.

## Closing Meeting Statement

Shaddle (BLM) provided closing remarks:

- Will review meeting notes and ensure no action items are missed.
- Upcoming **NIAC in person meeting** in March:
  - All subcommittee Chair/Vice Chair members invited.
  - Shaddle will not attend and will coordinate with Tori to ensure continuity.
- Reviewed the action item log and acknowledged the need to close out several recurring or outdated items.
- Noted that:
  - Most open items are recurring (ITS guide updates, position analysis).
  - Near-term priorities are:
    - Closing out **RFC 23-06**
    - Completing **A-225 RFC**
    - **Smooth transition to new NWCG Committee and Subcommittee structure**
- Commitment made to update the group once action items are reconciled and closed.

## Adjournment

The meeting concluded with no additional business brought forward.