Introduction
The purpose of this guide is to provide employees and supervisors with an awareness and fundamental understanding of competencies and a standard approach for using competencies across DoD and the civilian workforce.

This document further clarifies the guidance in Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1400.25, Volume 250, DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Volume 250, Civilian Strategic Human Capital Planning, November 18, 2008 to ensure the implementation of a competency based approach throughout DoD and across the DoD Framework for Career Lifecycle Management.
How to Use this Guide

This guide has been prepared for various audiences (e.g., employees, supervisors) and has search-friendly features and a list of contents on each page.

Searching the Guide
This guide was developed in PDF format that allows you to search by topic. Press Control-F to open the search field, then enter keywords (e.g., “training”) to locate information. The search feature will highlight all relevant words in the document.

Quick and Easy Navigation
The menu on the right hand side of each page allows you to access specific content by clicking on the topic, allowing for quick and easy movement through the guide.

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Understanding Competencies
A **competency** is an observable, measurable pattern of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics needed to perform work roles or occupational functions successfully.*

**What differentiates competencies, knowledge, skills, and abilities?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TERM</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competency</td>
<td>An attitude and/or behavior pattern that underpins how people do their jobs. Competencies influence how well people apply their knowledge, technical and management skills, as well as their innate abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Knowledge is the education and/or understanding necessary to do a job. Examples include professional and institutional knowledge (e.g., knowledge to be an accountant, engineer, IT specialist, etc.). This is what people need to know to do their jobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>Skills are needed to perform a functional job role. Examples include technical and management skills (e.g., project management, time management, data analysis). Skills can be learned and improved through training and experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>Abilities refer to a person’s innate capacity to perform physically or mentally (e.g., mathematical reasoning, finger dexterity). Abilities can be improved through a combination of experience and individual aptitude.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from DoD Instruction 1400.25, Volume 250, “Civilian Strategic Human Capital Planning”, November 18, 2008
The Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1400.25, Volume 250, DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Civilian Strategic Human Capital Planning, November, 18 2008 establishes the policy for the Department Strategic Workforce Plan process that supports a systematic approach to developing, evaluating, and aligning civilian workforce competencies with mission and job requirements throughout the DoD Framework for Career Lifecycle Management.

Competencies, when effectively integrated into the DoD Career Framework and used in accordance with established DoD and Component/agency procedures, support the development of:

- Position descriptions
- Vacancy announcements
- Competency-based applicant assessment questionnaires
- Training and development initiatives
- Individual Development Plans (IDPs)
- Succession planning

Why Use Competencies?

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Validation is verifying that a competency model accurately reflects the knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics employees need to perform specific work roles or occupational functions successfully.

- Validation methods include:
  - Surveys
  - Questionnaires
  - Expert panels/focus groups

- Validating competency models within DoD:
  - Supports DoD’s ability to legally defend personnel decisions (e.g., hiring, promotion, selection for training, reassignment, performance management, compensation and separation)
  - Ensures DoD competency models comply with federal guidelines and professional standards
  - Comply with Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures*

*http://www.uniformguidelines.com/
DoD employs a five-tiered competency framework.
## Types of Competencies

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<tr>
<th>Tier</th>
<th>Competency Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Core Competencies</td>
<td>Apply across DoD regardless of Component or occupation (e.g., DoD Civilian Leadership Competency Model).</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Primary Occupational Competencies</td>
<td>Apply across discrete occupational series/functions, (i.e., one or more functionally related occupations that share distinct, common technical qualifications, competencies, career paths, and progression patterns).</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Sub-Occupational Specialty Competencies</td>
<td>Unique to sub-occupational specialty (e.g., set of geo-technical competencies within the civil engineering occupation).</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Component-Unique Competencies</td>
<td>So unlike any of the other competencies identified that they exist at the Component level and are unique to the context or environment in which the work is performed (e.g., competencies related to ship building for the Navy).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Position-Specific Competencies</td>
<td>Required for a particular position within an occupation and are not addressed in the Tiers above (e.g., a specific civil engineer may require financial management competency).</td>
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**DoD Competency Model Library**

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Proficiency Levels

Proficiency Levels indicate *the degree to which employees have mastered a competency.*

DoD assesses proficiency on a five-point Likert scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Proficiency Level Definition</th>
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</table>
| 5 Expert          | • Applies the competency in exceptionally difficult situations.  
                     • Serves as a key resource and advises others. |
| 4 Advanced        | • Applies the competency in considerably difficult situations.  
                     • Generally requires little or no guidance. |
| 3 Intermediate    | • Applies the competency in difficult situations.  
                     • Requires occasional guidance. |
| 2 Basic           | • Applies the competency in somewhat difficult situations.  
                     • Requires frequent guidance. |
| 1 Awareness       | • Applies the competency in the simplest situations.  
                     • Requires close and extensive guidance. |
DoD Framework for Career Lifecycle Management
Competencies underlie all activities related to the DoD Framework for Career Lifecycle Management. Applying competencies throughout the framework helps DoD maintain a stable and capable civilian workforce.

The framework encompasses all activities associated with an employee’s tenure at DoD. The framework begins with recruitment and concludes with transition out of the Department. Throughout this progression, the use of competencies is essential to sustaining a capable and ready civilian workforce.
Workforce Planning

Right people. Right competencies. Right time.

Workforce planning helps organizations understand their current and future workforce requirements, develop strategies to close gaps, and provide employees with guidance to improve proficiency and self-direct their careers.

DoD’s workforce planning process is guided by DoDI 1400.25, Volume 250, DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Civilian Strategic Human Capital Planning, November 2008, which establishes a competency-based approach to workforce readiness.
Competency-based Approach to Workforce Planning

- Provides a common enterprise competency taxonomy.
- Defines the technical and non-technical competencies needed to operate in a career field at the entry, mid, and full levels.
- Provides standard proficiency-level definitions for assessing employee competencies, as well as the best methods for attaining proficiency.
- Identifies and assesses competency gaps in the DoD workforce using the Defense Competency Assessment Tool (DCAT).
- Informs emerging and future competencies extending beyond traditional career groups (e.g., cyber, acquisition) for future mission readiness.
- Identifies training and development opportunities for closing competency gaps through Individual Development Plans (IDPs).
- Serves as the foundation for career maps, which outline educational, training, and experiential opportunities for career progression.
Talent Management

Talent management involves using strategic human capital planning to help organizations achieve their mission goals, and encompasses activities related to the DoD civilian hiring process. Activities include developing recruitment strategies, conducting job analyses, developing position descriptions, implementing initiatives to improve applicant experience, and increasing supervisor involvement and accountability in the hiring process. These Talent Management activities, as well as the role of competencies in the hiring process, are addressed in this section.

Talent Management activities begin with the selecting official and Human Resources (HR) staff. Contact your HR point of contact for specific information about the processes/procedures for initiating hiring actions at your installation.
Talent Management – Use of Competencies

Competency Related Activities related to Talent Management

1. Recruitment
2. Job Analysis
3. Position Descriptions
4. Vacancy Announcements
5. Personnel Assessment

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Recruitment

Recruitment is the process of finding and hiring the best-qualified candidate for a job, in a timely and cost-effective manner. The recruitment process includes analyzing the requirements of the job, identifying the competencies and proficiency levels for successful performance, attracting and hiring qualified applicants, and integrating the new employee to the organization.

DoD supports the use of competencies as the basis for assessing candidates throughout the recruitment process, as well as advertising and communicating the position requirements to potential applicants.
Competency-based Approach to Recruitment

Competencies provide the framework for making systematic, valid decisions in recruitment and hiring.

Incorporating competencies into the recruitment process can:

- Provide valid, unbiased, and job-related criteria against which to assess applicants’ position-related competencies
- Improve selection process transparency by clearly communicating the competencies and required proficiency level for success in the position
- Serve as the basis for standard, competency-based assessment questionnaires
Job Analysis

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) defines **job analysis** as a systematic examination of the tasks performed in a job and the competencies required to perform them.*

Typically, a job analysis articulates the competencies and tasks critical to each grade level for a position.

Consistent with the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures, a job analysis should be conducted when no standard position description exists.

Further, a job analysis helps identify relevant talent pools from which to recruit candidates. A job analysis also ensures the vacancy announcement and candidate evaluation criteria reflect the current competencies required for the position.

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*http://www.opm.gov/faqs/topic/assessment/index.aspx?cid=53ba7f0d-6d08-4b1d-aa0f-1688056c7b7b
Position Descriptions

OPM defines a position description (PD) as a statement of the major duties, responsibilities, and supervisory relationships of a position. In its simplest form, a PD indicates the work to be performed by the incumbent.*

A well-developed PD serves as the basis for hiring and performance plan processes. This can be accomplished by performing a job analysis. However, as many positions have already undergone job analysis, supervisors should begin with the appropriate standardized PD.

Competency-based Approach to Position Descriptions

A competency-based PD includes job tasks, responsibilities, and qualifications that align to competencies associated with the position requirements. Creating competency-based PDs emphasizes demonstrable behavioral competencies.

PDs must align with OPM’s Position Classification Standards, and are typically developed by DoD’s HR staff in conjunction with the selecting official. Contact your installation’s HR point of contact for assistance and/or questions regarding PDs.

*http://www.opm.gov/FAQS/QA.aspx?fid=d2dc8952-41ec-434a-ac7e-bcb6ee8206ba&pid=c9df01f3-8580-4f87-88a4-3e26125f1205
Vacancy Announcements

When filling a position, a **vacancy announcement** is developed that *defines the position’s responsibilities and expectations, and includes the required competencies and level of experience*. An accurate vacancy announcement is critical for communicating position information and attracting qualified applicants.

A competency-based vacancy announcement should:

- Clearly communicate information about the job (e.g., duties, responsibilities, position requirements, necessary competencies, experience/education/training requirements).
- Attract job applicants whose experiences and background match the competencies needed to perform the job.

Done effectively, the vacancy announcement informs candidates of the competencies needed for success in the position.

Vacancy announcements are typically developed by the HR staff and the selecting official. Contact your installation’s HR point of contact for assistance and/or questions regarding vacancy announcements.
Personnel Assessment

Personnel assessment refers to any method of collecting information on individuals for the purpose of making a selection decision. Selection decisions include, but are not limited to, hiring, placement, promotion, referral, retention, and entry into programs leading to advancement (e.g., apprenticeship, training, career development).*

Using Competencies for Selection

Competencies specify the "how" of performing job tasks, or what the person needs to do the job successfully (Shippman et al., 2000**). Competency-based selection ensures that all job applicants are evaluated against the competencies required to perform in a job. It is up to the selecting official to evaluate applicants’ capabilities and experiences to determine their suitability for the position using competencies and associated proficiency levels.


Performance Management

Performance Management (PM) is the process of planning, monitoring, developing, assessing, and rewarding employee performance that contributes to the achievement of DoD’s mission.

DoD’s civilian PM program creates a strategically linked set of performance expectations that are applicable to employees and their supervisors. It is focused on two-way communication between employees and supervisors and holds both accountable for results.

All DoD civilian employees have a Performance Plan that provides an understanding of expected outcomes and results throughout the year, how work assignments are linked to the organization’s goals, objectives, and strategic priorities, as well as how performance will be measured at the end of the appraisal period.
Use of Competencies within Performance Management

- By incorporating competencies into Performance Plans, supervisors can assess employees’ proficiency levels against the pre-defined criteria and agreed-upon expectations established at the beginning of the PM cycle.

- Linking competencies to the PM cycle builds a shared understanding of position-specific performance expectations.

- The Individual Development Plan (IDP), an official planning and record-keeping document for training and development goals and activities, is another critical competency-related component of the DoD's PM program. The IDP helps track employees' competency-building, thus ensuring a knowledgeable and skilled workforce. (Employee participation in IDPs, though highly encouraged, is non-mandatory.)
The DoD has discretionary authority to provide additional direct compensation to support recruitment, retention, and relocation efforts, per mission requirements and candidate/employee competencies.

Recruitment, relocation, and retention (3Rs) incentives are used to strategically address human capital needs, as well as build and maintain a high-performing workforce with essential competencies.
Compensation incentives commonly linked to competencies

- Recruitment incentives
  - For highly competitive, hard-to-fill positions

- Retention incentives
  - If current employee’s proficiency is critical to mission accomplishment

- Relocation incentives
  - To encourage employee's geographic relocation for highly competitive, hard-to-fill positions

For more information about these and other available incentives, contact your servicing Human Resources Office.
Additional compensation options commonly linked to competencies

- Superior qualifications appointments
  - Authority for advanced in-hire rates for newly appointed employees
- Quality step increases
  - Provides incentive and recognition of high quality performance
- Monetary awards based on accomplishments (individual and group)
  - Used to motivate and reward individual and group excellence

For more information about these and other available incentives, contact your servicing Human Resources Office.
Succession Management

Succession management is a systematic approach to building a talent pipeline, or bench, to ensure continuity in leadership and other critical positions. Succession management is essential to DoD’s mission success and creates an effective process for recognizing, developing, and retaining top talent.

Succession management does not identify those employees who demonstrate the competencies DoD needs now. Rather, it projects which competencies will be needed in the future, and prepares a pipeline to meet those requirements. By nurturing and developing employees from within, organizations can develop a talent pipeline and increase their bench strength. Employees perceived to have the necessary competencies, experience, and motivation can be prepared for more responsible and critical positions in the future.
A Competency-based Approach to Succession Management

- Competencies can facilitate informed decisions regarding DoD’s talent pipeline, such as projected workplace requirements and position vacancies.
- Competencies can be used to identify employees as candidates for developmental assignments, working groups, and special projects (e.g., as part of career planning).
- Developing competency-based career paths for employees improves DoD’s ability to recruit and retain high-potential employees.
- Competencies provide a consistent set of expectations to support career advancement, evaluation, and employee development.
- Using competencies to identify workforce gaps enables DoD to more effectively close those gaps over time.
Separation & Sustainment

As employees retire and/or move on to other jobs, DoD faces the loss of key competency-related knowledge, organizational information, and institutional memory.

With a significant number of retirements expected over the next several years, DoD must preserve the institutional memory of long-term employees and transfer vital organizational information. This is done through the process of Knowledge Management Capture.
Importance of Knowledge Management Capture

Knowledge Management Capture is the process of identifying and retaining organizational information from the tenured, experienced employees and sharing it across the organization. The goal is to ensure the transfer of critical competency-related knowledge and lessons learned from the most experienced employees before they leave the organization.

Knowledge Management Capture helps preserve the institutional memory of long-term employees, ensuring continued workforce effectiveness.
Potential Knowledge Management Capture Strategies:

- **Job-Shadowing** – less-experienced employee paired with a more tenured employee, who shares competency-related expertise and provides hands-on experience for dealing with difficult on-the-job situations.

- **Communities of Practice** – groups that meet to share information about common issues, problems, or best practices.

- **Process Documentation** – creation of flowchart to document how work is performed; may include what employees should do or how it should be done in special circumstances.

- **Critical Incident** – documenting “difficult cases,” how they were handled, and the competencies involved; lays the foundation for developing realistic training scenarios.

- **Mentoring programs** – pairing employee with senior employee (not their direct supervisor) for an extended period; mentors advise on what to do, how to do it, and why it is important to the organization.
Development

Development involves the combined use of competency assessment, training, and evaluation to develop employee proficiency and promote their success within the organization. The desired outcome is a cadre of highly competent and results-oriented leaders, a critical component of mission success.

Competencies can drive a deliberate and sustainable approach to learning and development programs, supporting employee retention, engagement, and career progression.
Using Competencies for Development

One of the most critical steps in the DoD Career Framework is developing the talents of employees. Employee development not only benefits the individual by increasing relevant competency proficiency levels, but promotes employee engagement, organizational productivity, and mission accomplishment.

Competencies can be used to help employees focus on future career planning and develop strategies for meeting their career goals.

Employees who improve their proficiency in critical competencies through training and development often work more efficiently, independently, and effectively.

Integrating competencies into training and development increases workforce efficiency and reduces costs.
Five Uses of Competencies in Training and Development

1. Curriculum Evaluation and Development
2. Individual Training Needs Assessment
3. Organizational Training Needs Assessment
4. Training Effectiveness Evaluation
5. Self Development and Career Pathing

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Curriculum Evaluation and Development

With a list of well-defined, technical competencies for occupational series, organizations can determine those required for mission accomplishment. Only validated competencies should be used to develop training objectives and evaluate training and development programs.

Questions to ask:

- Do training programs address the competencies required for position success?
- Do the learning objectives align with the intended competencies?
- Is the training or course content consistent with the possible career paths of the occupational series?

A variety of training methods can be used to develop proficiency in technical competencies. Adult learning methods enable the transfer of competency-related learning goals to actionable training outcomes. Method selection should be based on employee learning style, the aspects of the emphasized competency, desired proficiency level, training attendance availability, and available funding and/or resources.

Where gaps in training curricula exist, program adjustments may be warranted (e.g., updating the curriculum, providing more training, seeking additional training resources). Work with your organization’s training and professional development representative to ensure employee training needs are met.
Individual Training Needs Assessments

DoD employees are responsible for working with their supervisors to periodically evaluate their own individual training needs. Performance Plans and Individual Development Plans are critical sources of information for employee development.

Supervisors can use competencies to objectively identify employees' training and development needs, both for their current positions and long-term career goals. In addition, employees who actively participate in selecting their training opportunities are more likely to accept their supervisors' suggestions and be more engaged in their own development.
Group Training Needs Assessment

Group-level workforce assessments provide organizations with a method for gathering valuable workforce planning data. These assessments reflect the “supply” of workforce capabilities, including group-level proficiency in a set of competencies.

The Defense Competency Assessment Tool (DCAT) is a Department-wide competency assessment tool for validating occupational competency models and assessing civilian employees’ proficiency levels in the technical and/or non-technical competencies within their occupational series. Results are used to develop strategies to close identified gaps and inform future training and development initiatives.

For more information regarding DCAT, please check the Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service (DCPAS), Strategic Human Capital Planning Division (SHCPD) website.

Evaluating Training Effectiveness

Training employees is a significant investment for DoD. Therefore, it is critical to continually evaluate this training's effectiveness.

Competency-based training effectiveness can be evaluated using Kirkpatrick's Model*, which has four components:

- **Level 1: Reaction** - The thoughts and feelings participants had regarding the training. Did participants like the training?

- **Level 2: Learning** - The change in participants’ proficiency level. Did participants learn something?

- **Level 3: Behavior** - The transfer of learning from the training session to the workplace. Is there behavioral evidence of the competency being applied on the job?

- **Level 4: Results** – Assessment related to the bottom line or outcome metrics of the organization. Was there a return on the investment of the organization and the employee?

Self Development and Career Pathing

Career pathing is *the process used by an employee to chart a course for his or her future career development and progression*. It involves understanding which competencies, experiences, and other characteristics are required for an employee to progress within a chosen career field.

Ultimately, employees are responsible for their own careers. Career pathing helps an employee to self-assess career goals in light of current competency proficiencies, experience, knowledge and personal characteristics. This information will help the employee determine a course of action to achieve career aspirations.

Career pathing actions might include maintaining currency on certifications, keeping informed of new technologies within career fields, and identifying development opportunities to prepare for future positions and roles of increased responsibility.
DoD Competency Model Library
Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service (DCPAS), Strategic Human Capital Planning Division (SHCPD) has created a repository of DoD competency models that have been validated and/or approved for use.

SHCPD’s website provides access to the DoD Civilian Leadership Competency Model as well as number series-based models organized by Functional Community.

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<td>Competency Assessment</td>
<td>A method of measurement for evaluating an individual’s competency sets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency Model</td>
<td>A framework describing the full range of competencies required to succeed in a particular occupation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency Proficiency Scale</td>
<td>Scales used to evaluate an individual’s proficiency levels in job-related competencies using pre-defined criteria.</td>
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<td>The framework encompassing all activities associated with an employee’s tenure at DoD.</td>
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<td>Proficiency Level</td>
<td>The degree to which an individual has mastered a competency.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Process of announcing and filling job openings with the best-qualified candidates in a timely and cost-effective manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>The process of matching open positions with the best candidates based on qualifications, competencies and job requirements.</td>
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<td>---------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talent Management</td>
<td>Activities related to the DoD civilian hiring process.</td>
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<td>Vacancy Announcement</td>
<td>Statement describing a specific position opening. Typically contains the Job Description, Qualifications, Competencies and Application Instructions.</td>
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<td>Workforce Assessment</td>
<td>An assessment of employee competencies meant to assist in strategic workforce planning.</td>
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<td>Process meant to help organizations understand their current and future workforce requirements, develop strategies to close gaps, and provide employees with information and guidance to improve proficiency and self-direct their careers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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