



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**



# **Career Planning Guide Army Career Program 18 Engineers and Scientists**



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|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>                                      | <b>iii</b> |
| <b>INTERN.....</b>  | <b>1</b>   |
| Who Is This Section For? .....                                | 1          |
| Who Can I Turn To For Help? .....                             | 1          |
| <i>Mentoring</i> .....  | 1          |
| Begin With the Destination.....                               | 2          |
| <i>Goals and Personal Career Planning</i> .....               | 2          |
| Career Paths .....  | 2          |
| <i>Specialist Career Path</i> .....                           | 2          |
| <i>Generalist Career Path</i> .....                           | 3          |
| Where Am I? Self Assessment .....                             | 3          |
| <i>Individual Development Plans (IDP)</i> .....               | 6          |
| <i>Performance System</i> .....                               | 6          |
| <i>Desired Knowledge, Skills And Abilities (KSAs)</i> .....   | 6          |
| <i>Qualities of a Professional</i> .....                      | 7          |
| What Do I Need To Do And How Do I Get It?.....                | 8          |
| <i>Education, Experience, and Training</i> .....              | 8          |
| <i>Flexibility and Mobility</i> .....                         | 8          |
| <i>Details and Rotational Developmental Assignments</i> ..... | 9          |
| <b>SPECIALIST/JOURNEYMAN.....</b>                             | <b>11</b>  |
| Who Is This Section For? .....                                | 11         |
| Who Can I Turn To For Help? .....                             | 11         |
| Begin With the Destination.....                               | 12         |
| <i>Individual Development Plans (IDP)</i> .....               | 13         |
| Career Paths .....  | 13         |
| Where Am I? A Self-Assessment.....                            | 14         |
| What Do I Need To Do And How Do I Do It? .....                | 15         |
| <i>Leadership Programs</i> .....                              | 15         |
| <i>Civilian Education System (CES)</i> .....                  | 17         |
| <i>Formal Training</i> .....                                  | 18         |
| <i>Technical Conferences</i> .....                            | 18         |
| <i>Cross Training</i> .....                                   | 18         |
| <i>Developmental Assignments</i> .....                        | 18         |
| <i>Coaching and Mentoring</i> .....                           | 19         |
| <i>Professional Societies</i> .....                           | 19         |
| <i>Strengthsfinder®</i> .....                                 | 19         |
| <i>Communication Skills</i> .....                             | 20         |
| <i>Personal Skills</i> .....                                  | 20         |
| <i>Acquisition Workforce Training</i> .....                   | 20         |
| Where Do I Go From Here? .....                                | 21         |
| What Can I Give Back To The Organization?.....                | 21         |
| <b>INTERMEDIATE/SENIOR SPECIALIST.....</b>                    | <b>23</b>  |
| Who Is This Section For? .....                                | 23         |
| Who Can I Turn To For Advice and Help? .....                  | 23         |
| Begin With the Destination.....                               | 24         |
| Career Paths .....  | 24         |
| <i>Knowledge, Skills, And Abilities</i> .....                 | 27         |
| Where Am I? A Self-Assessment.....                            | 28         |
| What Do I Need To Do? .....                                   | 32         |
| Where Do I Go From Here? .....                                | 32         |
| What Can I Give Back To The Organization?.....                | 33         |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>MANAGEMENT/SENIOR LEADER.....</b>                                  | <b>37</b> |
| Who Is This Section For? .....  | 37        |
| Who Can I Turn To For Help?.....                                      | 37        |
| Begin With the Destination.....                                       | 38        |
| Career Paths .....  | 38        |
| <i>Senior Executive Service</i> .....                                 | 38        |
| <i>Senior Technical Experts</i> .....                                 | 38        |
| Where Am I? A Self-Assessment.....                                    | 38        |
| What Do I Need & How Do I Get It?.....                                | 39        |
| <i>Qualification Requirement For SES</i> .....                        | 39        |
| <i>Qualification Requirement Senior Technical Experts</i> .....       | 39        |
| <i>Fellowship Opportunities</i> .....                                 | 40        |
| Secretary of the Army Research & Study Fellowships.....               | 40        |
| Army Congressional Fellowship Program (ACFP) .....                    | 40        |
| <i>Defense Senior Leader Development Program</i> .....                | 40        |
| Eligibility Requirements and Area of Consideration .....              | 41        |
| Program Requirements .....  | 41        |
| Program Goals .....   | 41        |
| Where Do I Go From Here? .....  | 41        |
| <i>Selection Factors for SES</i> .....                                | 41        |
| What Can I Give Back To The Organization?.....                        | 42        |
| <b>YOUR CAREER PLANNING .....</b>                                     | <b>43</b> |
| Introduction.....   | 43        |
| Career Planning For Today, Tomorrow, and Your Future .....            | 43        |
| <i>Your Role</i> .....  | 43        |
| <i>Role of Your Supervisor</i> .....                                  | 43        |
| <i>Role of Your Activity Career Program Manager (ACPM)</i> .....      | 43        |
| Mentors & Mentoring.....  | 44        |
| <i>What Is Mentoring?</i> .....                                       | 44        |
| <i>How to Select Mentors</i> .....                                    | 44        |
| Develop Individual Specific Mentoring Plan.....                       | 44        |
| Career Goals and Objectives .....                                     | 45        |
| Prepare Individual Development Plan (IDP) .....                       | 46        |
| <i>List Career Goals and Objectives</i> .....                         | 46        |
| <i>List Planned / Desired Developmental Assignments</i> .....         | 46        |
| <i>List Training History</i> .....                                    | 46        |
| Prepare Career Development Plan.....                                  | 47        |
| <i>One – Five Year</i> .....  | 47        |
| <i>Beyond Five Years</i> .....  | 47        |
| The Path Forward For Continuing Career Development .....              | 47        |
| <i>Communities Of Practice (COP)</i> .....                            | 47        |
| <i>Civilian Education System (CES)</i> .....                          | 50        |
| Additional References .....   | 50        |
| Army Knowledge Online .....   | 50        |
| Engineering Knowledge Online .....                                    | 50        |
| Parallel Career Programs and Training.....                            | 50        |
| CP16 Engineers and Scientists (Non-Construction) Career Program ..... | 50        |
| Acquisition Career Field .....  | 51        |
| DAWIA Training.....   | 51        |
| Project Management Certification .....                                | 51        |
| Individual Plan For Where Do I Go From Here .....                     | 52        |
| A Vision for Tomorrow – It Is Your Career – Own It.....               | 52        |
| <b>ACRONYMS .....</b>   | <b>53</b> |

# INTRODUCTION

Career Program 18 (CP-18) is the Engineers and Scientist career program, and is the only Army Career Program assigned to the Corps of Engineers. The main objective of the E&S Career Program is to facilitate career development for all engineers and scientists throughout the Army so that we have a highly trained, world-class workforce to fill current and future technical, managerial, and leadership positions in support of our National interest. For a full description of the scope of CP-18, please see the Engineers and Scientists (Resources and Construction) CP-18 Army Civilian Training, Education, and Development System (ACTEDS) manual at <http://pdsc.usace.army.mil/>.

Every journey begins with a single step. This guide will help with career management for the Army's engineers, scientists, architects and technicians working primarily for the Installation Management Command (IMCOM) and the Corps of Engineers. This planning guide will help you determine the next step in the continual journey commonly referred to as a career. The responsibility is yours, but the CP-18 Engineers and Scientist career program is here to help you achieve professional growth and career satisfaction. This guide in combination with an understanding of your personal goals will provide the essential ingredients to planning a meaningful career.

The guide defines two major career paths: specialist and generalist. Previously, it was said a choice needed to be made between the two, but we now recognize that people move freely between positions. The specialist path leads to full performance abilities and possibly subject matter expertise in a focused area. The generalist path has taken on multiple faces: management of products by project managers or construction management positions, or personnel management opportunities as a supervisor or leader. Integral to both career paths is leadership, whether you are under the General Schedule (GS) personnel system or the National Security Personnel System (NSPS).

Each section of this guide encompasses different levels in your career. Section 1 is primarily for interns, although personnel new to the Army may find it useful as well. Section II contains guidance on entry-level specialist and journeyman level positions. See Section III for senior specialist /intermediate positions, and Section IV for management/senior leader positions. Section V provides general career guidance for use in your career planning.

Like other career programs, CP-18 applies to all Army personnel. There are terms used and programs referenced in this guide that are specific to certain organizations. For example, the Corps of Engineers has a leadership development program specifically for Corps personnel. Interested employees should talk to their leadership about pursuing cross-organizational opportunities.

We encourage you to use this guide and other sources such as coaches and mentors to establish a firm grasp of who you are now, and where you want to go. It is your journey, in the words of Kahlil Gibran "For the vision of one man lends not its wings to another man." We challenge you to establish your vision and take flight.

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## INTERN

### ***Who Is This Section For?***

The goal of this section is to give you information on how to develop and manage your career while you are in an entry level position. Entry level positions start with the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) (formerly, Co-operative Education Program (CO-OP)). SCEP allows students to be appointed to positions related to their academic field of study, generally at the GS-3/4/5 level (NSPS Pay Band (PB) YP-1). Next, is the Intern Program, which requires a 4-year degree in an engineering or science field. Appointments are generally at the GS-5/7/9 level (NSPS PB YD-1/2), depending on your educational qualifications. The Intern Program typically lasts two years.

### ***Who Can I Turn To For Help?***

Your supervisor can provide a great deal of useful guidance and information as you plan your career. You should meet with your supervisor, either during a scheduled performance review or separately, to discuss your career plans.

#### **Mentoring**

It is frequently advantageous to have a mentor—a person who has a good perspective of the mission and how your organization fits into the broader goals and objectives that transcend day-to-day routine operations.

A mentor is a person willing and able to devote time to discuss and review your career plans with you and to guide and direct you in your career planning. This person is usually a supervisor or manager who knows your background (or is someone you are willing to share this information with) and who also knows or can surmise where you fit most comfortably in your organization. A mentor may serve as a sounding board for you to clarify your career plans in your own mind. They can help you incorporate your personal and family requirements more cohesively with your work situation.

You will want to review your options for a mentor and decide whether to discuss your career desires and needs with:

- A person in another function where you may have an interest
- A person who does mentoring for a number of employees and has an excellent overview of all types of training, education, and development avenues
- An individual who is a personal friend and can guide you in career and personal goals and objectives

If a formal mentoring program is not available, your supervisor, Intern Coordinator, or an organizational manager can provide the name(s) of possible mentors.

## ***Begin With the Destination***

### **Goals and Personal Career Planning**

The first step in planning your career is to recognize that it is your responsibility. Your supervisor(s) and mentor(s) are people available to you as advisors; however, it is you who must commit to developing your skills and implementing your plan. Additional factors inherent in this plan are discussed in more detail in subsequent sections.

Experience, performance and communication skills will be key factors in consideration for advancement and development. You should prepare a personal career plan to help meet your objectives. Make it a living plan and update it as goals and personal plans change. You should expect to develop a five-year career plan in conjunction with your performance evaluations and to assist with preparation of your annual Individual Development Plan (IDP). Counseling will be available from your supervisor to help you prepare your career plans.

Professional credentials and registration should be part of all career plans regardless of the career path chosen. You may also consider obtaining Acquisition Workforce Certification. Acquisition Workforce Certification can enhance your mobility between Department of Defense organizations and broaden your exposure to methods, policies and missions beyond your home agency. For more information on Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) training, see the Defense Acquisition University website at <http://www.dau.mil/>.

There is no set time limit on when career development should be performed. The times presented in the plan should be used as guides only. Employees who seek to attain senior leadership positions should practice and obtain experience in at least two fields and learn to manage and lead others. Often, E&S personnel do not target a managerial position until the mid-point of their career, but early planning can still be useful.

## ***Career Paths***

### **Specialist Career Path**

A technical career path is very important in being successful in achieving the Army's mission. You can strive to become a recognized expert in a focused aspect of science or engineering and devote a major portion of your time at work to the application of this specialty to current problems. If you choose this path, you must keep abreast of new technical developments in that specialty and take the lead in prompt application. You can also strive to be a technical career employee on the foundation of a broader field, such as design, construction, operations, or environmental restoration. Both options require field experience and participation on cross-functional teams.

In most organizations, to advance beyond the full performance level as a specialist, you have to become a regional or national expert in your field and/or consider technical position opportunities at higher levels within your organization.

Such positions include regional technical specialist positions, National Expert positions, and positions in special laboratories or research organizations. In the Corps of Engineers, the Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC) offers many opportunities like this. ERDC consists of the Coastal and Hydraulics Lab, the Environmental Lab, the Geotechnical and Structures Lab, and the Information Technology Lab in Vicksburg, MS; the Construction Engineering Research Lab in Champaign, IL; the Cold Regions Research and Engineering Lab in Hanover, NH; and the Topographic Engineering Center in Alexandria, VA. Other opportunities can be found at any of the numerous Corps of Engineers Centers of Expertise. Within IMCOM, MACOM, or HQs, positions that require expert technical knowledge such as facilities engineering, scientists, energy conservation, utility systems, infrastructure, planning and development, and environmental compliance could be targeted. Most high graded positions will require some type of professional credential or certification. Advanced degrees are desirable when developing a career plan that targets higher graded positions.

### **Generalist Career Path**

The generalist career path encompasses management of people as a section or branch chief, but also the management of projects as a project manager. In most technical E&S organizations, it is highly desirable for these personnel to be well grounded in a technical field, have professional credentials, and have a broad range of experience through cross training.

A generalist does not have to be a top technical expert in his/her field, but must thoroughly understand the fundamental principles of the technical area and the basic ideas of related fields. If you decide to prepare yourself for a generalist career, experience in a wider segment of the engineering-scientific field will benefit you. As assignment opportunities become available, you should be prepared to take advantage of them.

If you want to follow a project management career path, you should seek cross-training in at least two technical functions (e.g., planning, engineering, operations, construction) to compete effectively for advancement. This cross-training should be pursued in GS-11 through GS-13 (Pay Band 2) positions to give you a broad base of experience to draw upon.

Cross training is advantageous because it allows you to:

- Learn how to adapt to changing conditions
- Become adept at several technical and organizational functions
- Develop managerial skills such as work planning and organization effectiveness
- Expand working relationships with varying groups of people & specialties

### **Where Am I? Self Assessment**

Take a look at your career and see where you are on the career path. Are you a student, gaining some meaningful experience while you are finishing up

your degree work? Have you a recently graduated as an engineer or scientist who is now working full time in a rotational intern program?

**Student programs** refer to individuals who are currently in college working on their undergraduate degree in engineering or the sciences. Your basic focus here is to complete your school work and learn how to contribute in an office setting. You will receive on-the-job training for the assignments you are asked to complete. Formal training classes would not necessarily be provided at this point. This is a time to explore and see if you like working in an office setting or out in the field. You should get a variety of experiences if you can, so you get a better idea of whether you might like one specialty over another. Generally, you won't have much travel or opportunities to work in other geographic areas unless you can move around during summer breaks from college. Use this opportunity to learn more about your field of study and decide if your college curriculum needs any adjusting. Learn about office procedures and working on teams. Making a good impression as a student may lead to a formal job offer when you graduate.

**Master Intern Training Program (MITP):** The next step in an engineering and science career with the Army is the CP-18 Intern Program. To be selected as an intern, you must have completed your Bachelor's degree in an accredited engineering or science program. The Intern program provides an opportunity to learn what different parts of the Army are really like. While you will get valuable technical experience, you should also be learning the ins and outs of your organization and how it all fits together. Experience every aspect of what your office has to offer, and see if you can work out some rotational experiences at other agencies. If you are with the Corps of Engineers, see if you can have a rotation at a military installation in their Directorate of Public Works for example. If you work at an installation, see if you can have a rotation at a Corps district. Be involved in your rotational schedule and maximize your learning opportunities. Apply your education at each rotation to gain valuable information for future decisions on your career path.

There are two types of intern programs that are essentially similar. One is the Department of the Army (DA) Intern Program and the other is a local intern program. The DA program is funded through the Department of the Army and is meant to expose the interns to the wide range of career options throughout the Army. If you are a DA Intern, you are an Army resource and have the ability to move around and be placed in any Army agency. Local interns are generally hired by a specific office to fill a need for positions at that location. The rotational programs can be similar, but the local intern program may have a less global focus, related more specifically to one agency.

The CP-18 Intern Training Program provides a full range of education, training, and developmental opportunities to build up the competencies you will need to participate effectively in the workforce. When you graduate from this program you will have a strong foundation for future professional growth and advancement. The program consists of three major components: a common set of requirements, Functional Area and/or Community of Practice requirements, and the Army Civilian Education System (CES) requirements. The CP-18

Common and Functional Area Training Plans provide technical and business process experiences, while CES provides the Army values and doctrine and team building experiences, designed to develop you into the “Pentathlete” leader for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The program uses on-the-job rotational training, committed supervision, and well-timed training to supplement your self-development efforts to be ready for progressive assignments of increasing scope and responsibilities. The Intern program encourages you to develop competency in the areas of Army Values and Organization, Technical and Functional Requirements, Business Processes and Building the Project Team.

You will progress through the program by way of noncompetitive promotion when you meet performance, training and time-in-grade requirements. The length of training varies according to your entry qualifications, the grade you started the program and your progression during the program. The employing organization determines the length of training for you as well as your final job placement. Generally your program will be 24 months if you are hired at a GS-7 (NSPS PB YD-1/2), to achieve the GS-11 full performance level (NSPS PB YD-2). If you are hired at the GS-5 level (NSPS PB YD-1/2), 36 months is required to reach the GS-11 full performance level (NSPS PB YD-2).

The program generally follows three phases. Phase I is for orientation and training. You should get some experience networking with your organization’s staff support areas and some initial technical and functional orientations. This phase may include an initial assignment in your targeted functional area. Phase II is for technical and rotational assignments. These Army-wide assignments provide you with career-broadening experiences. Phase III is for your target area assignments. This phase is composed of functional assignments in major areas of concentration and a final assignment in a targeted position or a functional area.

Where applicable, planning for acquiring related professional certification and registration is very strongly encouraged during this point in your career. Many positions require professional registration, which further demonstrates your technical expertise. At the entry level, for engineering, you can sit for the Fundamentals of Engineering exam to become an Engineer-in-Training (EIT).

An Employment and Mobility agreement is required as a condition of your employment. Mobility allows management to place you in available permanent target positions DA wide. Most likely, you will be able to achieve your career goals in your respective geographic area; however, a geographic move may be necessary to obtain developmental experience. You need to consider the ability to be mobile so that you can develop skills at a variety of organizational levels consistent with career goals and the needs of the Army.

More detail on the MITP is available at <http://ulc.usace.army.mil/>

After you know more about where you are on the career path, then you need to identify where you want to go. One of the best ways to do that is through creating your Individual Development Plan. Keep in mind that this is a living document and you should keep updating and adjusting it, based on your experiences and future goals.

## Individual Development Plans (IDP)

Part of career counseling and development is looking at your Individual Development Plan (IDP). IDPs should reflect your short term and long term career goals and the actions needed to achieve them. You need to be fully informed about career patterns, opportunities for progression, and appropriate training and development opportunities. Examples of things to include when preparing an IDP are: self-development programs to improve personal skills; planned on-the-job-training; attendance at formal training courses; developmental assignments to include short details or task force assignments; participation in professional societies; obtaining any professional registrations; and any other activities that may support attainment of your career goals. You should apply your long-term goals too and document any thoughts about supervisory positions or technical specialist goals. IDPs are not to be used only as a means to enter information to form the agency's yearly formal training plan. The 5-year IDP form, [ENG Form 5055-R](#), is used to document your short and long term goals, courses, developmental assignments and self-development activities.

Short-term goals are things for you to consider and accomplish one to two years out. They will vary depending on the stage of your career. Long-term goals should focus on the five to ten year time frame. As an **intern**, your short term goals could include things like completing your rotational intern assignments, gaining experience in a variety of functional areas, staying active in professional societies, pursuing advanced degrees and other training opportunities, and working toward your Professional Engineer or other necessary certification.

## Performance System

There are three sides to career development: performance, training, and attitude. Each factor is critically important to your career advancement. Emphasis will be placed on the quality of performance in each position held. Each employee must "earn his or her way up" rather than "learn his/her way up." Whether you are under the Total Army Performance Evaluation System (TAPES) or the NSPS performance system, you will be assigned numerous job objectives and standards that define successful performance. Your supervisor will review your performance during rating periods. Your performance must be maintained at or above acceptable levels to progress to higher level jobs.

You will want to make your input to the performance evaluation report as meaningful as possible. To prepare for the annual evaluation process, you should summarize your achievements, outline your training and development needs, and indicate how follow-through will improve your performance and contribution to the organization and mission. Use your IDP to request the necessary training, learn from the course, and apply it in your work.

## Desired Knowledge, Skills And Abilities (KSAs)

In planning for your career goals, you should continually make "reality checks" to assure that you have the required KSAs to prepare and qualify

yourself for the position or positions for which you want to be considered. The higher the grade you are seeking, the more your KSAs should be developed.

You may acquire KSAs:

- In your current position
- Through details to other positions
- By developmental/rotational assignments
- By reassignment to other functions
- By continuing education
- Through varying/diversifying work assignments
- Through supervisory/leadership training and assignments
- By participating in local, national or regional efforts

### **Qualities of a Professional**

The Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage establish a baseline standard for professionalism. While an all-inclusive list of qualities is impossible to provide, the following list is significant. These qualities are general, but are typical of those used to establish personnel selection criteria.

A technical professional in an engineering or scientific organization can be described as a person who has:

- Current technical competencies in a specialty
- A confident attitude and willingness to accept responsibility for decisions with respect to technical problem solving
- Willingness to consider new or different ideas or divergent points of view with respect to the technical specialty
- Ability to share and work well with others as a team
- Ability to focus on the details of technical work
- A managerial professional in an engineering or scientific organization can be described as a person who has:
  - Objectivity and fairness in evaluating people on ability and in judging situations on facts and circumstances
  - Capacity to adjust to change, work pressures, or difficult situations without undue stress
  - Capacity to "see the job through"
  - Technical competence in the engineering or scientific field
  - Competent in both oral and written communication
  - Ability to focus on integrated concepts and look for holistic solutions rather than thrive on details
  - Ability to seek out alternative solutions from a broad span of opportunities
  - Relational skills
  - Leadership acumen

These characteristics and qualities can be learned and mastered. Individuals who attain them will be among those selected for coveted assignments.

## ***What Do I Need To Do And How Do I Get It?***

### **Education, Experience, and Training**

In order to progress in either the specialist or generalist career direction, you need to complete education, training, and experience basics for each path; however, individuals will not be denied promotion solely because of the lack of specific training courses. If you haven't taken mandatory training, you will have to complete the necessary coursework within a reasonable time. Generally, completed training, performance and/or experience in a specific area can help you be rated best qualified. For any position, education, training, and experience, whether considered basic or desirable, will provide you with avenues for professional growth while enhancing your value to the operating efficiency and effectiveness of the organization.

If you decide to focus your career goals on a generalist path, it is important to understand that you will need to give up some of your hands-on technical work. You will need to learn to effectively lead teams and delegate responsibility and accountability to subordinates. This will require a different set of skills than you may have received through your engineering or scientific curriculum in college. There is a wide range of supervisor, project management, personnel management, and leadership training offered by the Department of the Army, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and at the major command (MACOM) level to help you develop the skills necessary to make a successful transition into management. Counseling discussions with your supervisors, your Activity Career Program Manager (ACPM), and mentors can help you objectively assess your strengths and weaknesses and develop an Individual Development Plan (IDP) to suit your needs. As you and your supervisor review your IDP you need to consider your present job responsibilities, the performance objectives for your job, your career goals, and a plan to achieve those positions you want in the future.

You should also strive to develop your oral and written communication skills. There are a variety of courses available to you through both government and non-government sources to help you enhance these skills. In addition, many communities have chapters of Toastmasters International ([www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)) or similar organizations that can provide you with practical speaking experience in a supportive atmosphere.

### **Flexibility and Mobility**

Lateral assignments often help meet the objectives of your career development plan. Moreover, your desire and willingness to be flexible in lateral assignments will be an added advantage when you are considered for a promotion. Seek opportunities to volunteer to work on local, organizational, regional, or national teams to broaden your experience and application of your abilities. It can be especially rewarding to support contingency missions, such as

emergency management efforts, Katrina, and Iraq/Afghanistan.

Another consideration is mobility: "geographic mobility" involves a move to a different location for job purposes, and "occupational mobility" involves a job change (e.g., construction project engineer to design engineer). Occupational mobility may or may not involve geographic mobility.

Generally, no geographic or occupational mobility is required for the technical specialist career person to reach first-line supervisor positions. However, the number of upper-level managerial positions is very limited; to obtain higher level positions, a specialist may have to consider moving to other locations or organizations. Relocation decisions are personal, but geographic mobility may be necessary or desirable to achieve individual goals. It can also provide exciting opportunities unavailable in your current organization.

### **Details and Rotational Developmental Assignments**

To expand your knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs), you can be detailed to another position in your own or another work area when a person is on extended leave or assignment to another position. Or you can enhance your KSAs by filling in when other employees are on vacation.

Development/rotational assignments within organizations may be for a one-year period; however, 6-month and 120-day assignments are frequently offered. If you have an interest in such assignments, you should let your supervisor know and indicate it on your Individual Development Plan (IDP).

Activity Career Program Managers (ACPMs), Deputy ACPMs, and supervisors usually rotate persons by an exchange with another functional element within their organizations, or to backfill behind someone deployed or on long-term training (LTT) or other temporary vacancies. If the job experience or requirement is critical to the employee or to the organization, a development/rotational assignment can be initiated without an exchange. Your supervisor can give you information on developmental and rotational assignments.

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## SPECIALIST/JOURNEYMAN

### *Who Is This Section For?*

The goal of this section is to give you information on how to develop and manage your career after you have been promoted above an entry level position. This section will be most applicable to you when you reach a journeyman level position at the GS-11/12 level (NSPS PB YD-2).

A successful career with the Army is what you make of it. You have many choices along the way and need to choose the path that makes the most sense for you. While others can help you with guidance and advice, you are the best person to manage your own career. Decisions you make early in your career will influence your path. You also need to consider the possible problems with pursuing a career field that might not be a core business line for your organization. Consider asking others to see what the future prospects are for various career fields that interest you.

CP-18 has an excellent web site that can help you with many aspects of your career planning: <https://ekopowered.usace.army.mil/cp18/>. Visit this site and read through the material that pertains to you. Book mark this site for future reference so that you can go back to it for additional information as you move along your career path.

### *Who Can I Turn To For Help?*

Several people can help you with your career. Among them are your supervisor, senior leaders in your office, your Activity Career Program Manager, and mentors that you discover along the way. Different points of view will help you think through your options and come up with the decisions that will work best for you. Throughout your career you will find new coaches and mentors to help you. These individuals will help you identify your short-term and long-term career goals and help develop plans to achieve your goals. A realistic, well-conceived career plan should be flexible enough to accommodate changes and unexpected developmental opportunities and to recognize that there are many ways of arriving at your goals.

**You** are your own best advocate. No one knows what is best for you, better than yourself. Think about what career options will achieve your desired level of success. You may receive what seems to be conflicting advice, but you need to make your own choices. Not all advice may be applicable to your particular situation. Consider the things you hear, and the advice you get, and make your own decisions. It's all about getting the right person in the right job and finding where you fit best. Supervisory positions require specific skills and an internal drive to want to work with people. Get some learning opportunities to see if a particular career path is a good fit for you before you decide. The Army has a wide variety of career options for you to choose from, including many different geographic locations as well as a successful career within one location.

**Your supervisory chain** can be a great source of information for you. At various points in your career you will have first and second line supervisors who

can assist you. As you work together, they will recognize your skills and strengths and may be able to show you options in a different light. As they are aware of your performance, they may be a good reality check for you, identifying whether you really have the skills to pursue a specific career direction. They can help provide you work assignments to further your career goals. They will assist you on training opportunities that benefit you and the organization. They can share with you their experiences and the career decisions they made for themselves. They can get you in contact with others who can give you advice and mentoring.

**Senior Leaders** in your organization can be a great help too. Much of your career counseling should come from your first and second line supervisors. Senior leaders can provide a different perspective as well, but can be stretched pretty thin and may not have a lot of available time. They can help you refine your plan and focus on more long range aspects of your career – 5 to 10 years out. They may be able to get you involved in regional teams or assignments that can stretch you beyond your comfort zone.

**Your Activity Career Program Manager** can help you as well. That is part of their job. By networking with others at a national level, they can help provide you information about opportunities beyond your own organization. They can set you up with advisors and mentors outside your local area to get you a broader perspective. They are frequently the first person to know about long-term training opportunities and leadership development programs.

### ***Begin With the Destination***

As with any planning exercise, it helps to start out by figuring out where you currently are and where you plan to go. Take a look at your career and see where you are on the career path. Are you a GS-11 or GS-12 (NSPS PB YD-2) journeyman engineer/scientist, working on a variety of projects to expand your knowledge base? As a **journeyman** engineer or scientist, you should be thinking about expanding your technical skills and knowledge, obtaining professional registration/licensure, expanding your leadership skills, networking with others in your field, learning about the financial end of your organization, and expanding your knowledge of the larger organization.

What are your near term, intermediate term and long term goals?

Near Term: How can I become better at accomplishing my current job? Usually this means increasing your hard skills.

Intermediate term: Gain licenses, advanced degrees, developmental details and assignments, etc. to advance in your chosen profession or to diversify your skills sets and experience to prepare for positions in other career paths/fields. For someone following the generalist career path, this is a combination of increasing both hard and soft skills, and beginning to seek developmental management leadership details that may also include supervisory details. For someone on the technical career path, gaining increased depth and recognition for your expertise is important.

Long term: On the generalist path, you might plan for increased

diversification of knowledge and experience with increased mentoring of others, increasing leadership development and often supervisory roles. On the technical path, you might plan to become a national expert, with professional publications in your chosen area of expertise.

For example: a near term goal might be to become the best structural engineer with diversified experience across MILCON & Civil works programs, In the intermediate term, you might seek to obtain a Master's degree & professional engineer license & potentially become a Regional Technical Specialist in structures & long term: acquire management & leadership details & move into organizational leadership positions in either a technical or management organization. You will need to strategically think through these milestones in your career plan so you can proactively take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves.

### **Individual Development Plans (IDP)**

Long-term goals (five to ten year time frame) are particularly important to those in the journeyman category. Things to think about here include advanced degrees, plans for specialist/generalist career paths, cross-training opportunities, developmental assignments, functional area diversity, geographic diversity, involvement with national teams, leadership programs, and much more.

### **Career Paths**

At the journeyman level, you should carefully consider whether you want to pursue a specialist or a generalist career path. Both career paths can be further subdivided, in terms of geographic or functional areas. You could spend all your time becoming a specialist (technical, managerial or generalist) in a certain part of the country. Each section of the country has its own issues, programs, design criteria, political climate, and natural conditions that are unique. Knowing those details inside and out is very valuable to any project. Or you could spend your time becoming an expert in a certain functional area (planning, hydraulics and hydrology, regulatory, geotechnical) where a diversity of experiences can set you up to handle any new project that might come your way.

As you can see, there are many paths you can take for a successful career, based on what works best for you. Do what you like to do, but also stay flexible and ready to accept new challenges as they arise. The Automobile Association of America (AAA) provides maps and options for the shortest route, the quickest route, or the most scenic route to your vacation destination. You should develop an analogous approach to your career plan. What will attain your objective(s) the fastest? What path would be the most enjoyable? What path would require the fewest sacrifices?

Where should you begin? Although personal circumstances may result in folks starting in another career path, it is generally recommended that folks start as a specialist for the following reasons:

- It builds an understanding of the timelines, challenges & processes involved in producing products.
- It builds a sense of collaboration and teamwork at the team level

- It enhances your credibility to your staff & peers to provide effective technical oversight or management of technical teams.
- It provides critical technical discipline & process knowledge to increase your future potential to lead & supervise technical sections or branches.

**Career ladders** are recommended paths for progression to key positions in the major functional areas that you can use to help chart your career (see [https://ekopowered.usace.army.mil/cp18/program\\_basics/progression\\_levels/](https://ekopowered.usace.army.mil/cp18/program_basics/progression_levels/) for links to sample career ladders). These career ladders are NOT the only way to reach a key position, but they are the most likely way. They demonstrate possible cross-functional moves based upon similarities in missions (i.e., certain functional areas inter-relate in achieving the mission). Lateral assignments for cross-training within a given function are possible. Cross-training in more than one subspecialty is highly recommended to rise to key positions, and is highly desirable.

### ***Where Am I? A Self-Assessment***

As you plan your career path, you need to periodically take a step back and look at yourself. Honestly look at your knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) to help determine what else you need to do and where you should be going. You may want some input from your co-workers, mentors and advisors about how they see you. Objective input can be very helpful in your self-assessment as you progress on your career path.

**Functional (hard) skills** are those technical elements you need to qualify for future positions. Do you have the breadth and depth of experience that might be needed for a technical specialist position? Do you have the supervisory and leadership skills that will be required to move into a management position?

**Education levels** vary depending on the position. Do you have the required advanced degree for your target position? If an advanced degree is not required, would it be helpful anyway? Do some research and talk to your senior leaders to see what level of education is best. Do you have what you need?

**Relationship (soft) skills** are equally important. Assess your oral communication skills. Can you communicate well in various situations: one-on-one; in small groups and team settings; with large audiences; with senior staff; or with subordinates. Assess your writing skills. Do your ideas come across clearly from a technical standpoint and can you express ideas in a way that others and members of the public can understand them? Do you have skills in conflict resolution, leading teams, motivation, or other interpersonal areas?

**Credentials, Professional Registrations, Certifications** may be required for many positions. Do you have your Professional Engineers license or other related professional registrations? Do you have the required level of acquisition training?

A variety of **experience** may be needed. You may have spent several years in one location, but did you get a variety of experience on diverse projects to increase your technical expertise?

## ***What Do I Need To Do And How Do I Do It?***

Effective career planning means you are looking at where you are now, where you want to be in a few years and where you want to be years down the line. In order to manage your career well, and make appropriate choices to further your goals, you need to look two positions ahead of where you are. If you are currently a GS-12 (NSPS PB YD-2) structural engineer and you want to be the Chief of Engineering at a GS-15 level (NSPS PB YD-3), you need to make sure you are taking the courses necessary, getting any helpful cross-training, and taking on developmental assignments. Think longer term about what you want to be doing 10 years out. Talk to the people who currently hold the position you would like to attain. Ask them what they did to progress to that point in their careers. Keep in mind that there are many ways to reach your goal, and what works for others may not work for you. You also need to stay somewhat flexible to take advantage of any opportunities that become available along the way.

**Seek opportunities** that will help with your career goals. These will differ depending on the career path you are following. A technical specialist needs varied and complex technical project experience. An aspiring manager needs to get some supervisory experience and learn more about the inner workings of the organization. These opportunities may take the form of additional training, attendance at regional or national meetings, involvement with leadership groups, or many other non-traditional assignments.

### **Leadership Programs**

These programs typically involve a combination of formal leadership training, reading and discussion groups, leadership projects, developmental assignments, and shadowing senior leaders and commanders. Their purpose is to instruct and develop your collaboration, communication, and leadership skills, and provide some perspective on the diverse set of knowledge, skills, and experience required to prepare you to effectively lead a team, and potentially lead an organization. As you progress to each higher echelon program, you evolve from learning and understanding leadership roles and principles, to developing this knowledge, and then to applying and enhancing these skills by training and mentoring others, leading teams, and participating in organizational change and process improvement.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has recently established a uniform policy and minimum requirements for all **USACE Leadership Development Programs (ULDPs)**. An essential principle in the programs is to develop leaders at all levels, recognizing that individuals can be leaders of processes or situations, regardless of their role in the organization. The new ULDP programs will consist of 4 levels; levels 1 and 2 will have local District oversight, level 3 will have regional Division oversight and level 4 will have national HQ oversight.

Level 1 is Basic Training and Orientation. It is envisioned that all new employees and current employees who have not completed the stated subject matter will participate. Level 1 content is general about the Corps and the project management business process.

Level 2 is Self and Teams. The main content is participating in the StrengthsFinder assessment and quarterly coaching sessions, Learning Organization and Strengths Workshops, team projects and personal reflection and journaling. The District is given flexibility to augment the basic program requirements with material it finds appropriate as well.

Level 3 is Regional Leadership while Level 4 is National Leadership. At this point in your career, you should be focusing on Level 1 and Level 2.

The **CP-18 Leadership Development Program** is available as well. It is designed to get you out of your local area/agency so you can see the big picture. You will receive management and leadership training and it can be a bridge to senior positions discussed later in this handbook. The target audience is careerists at the GS-12/13/14 level (NSPS PB YD-2/3), but you can start planning for making this part of your training

The Army CP-18 LDP provides participants the opportunity to receive formal classroom training in Army leadership and government-wide management, a mentoring relationship with a senior civilian leader, and a six-month developmental assignment that is outside the candidate's functional and geographic area. Announcements and applications are posted at <https://eko.usace.army.mil/careerprograms/cp18/>.

Over 140 CP-18 employees have graduated from the LDP from across all areas of USACE, IMCOM, and the Army. Between 1998 and 2008, over 50% of the graduates have assumed new and greater positions of responsibility throughout the Army, putting their valuable experience to full use in all of the Army's mission areas. The LDP is designed to benefit CP-18 employees who are willing to stretch their personal and professional boundaries, develop a broader view of the Army and the Federal Government, and incorporate an expeditionary mindset to enable Army engineers and scientists to meet present and future challenges.

If you meet the following criteria, you are eligible to apply for the LDP:

- All permanent GS-12 through 13, or equivalent Pay Band 2, who are in positions included in the CP-18, Engineers and Scientists Civilian Career Program.
- Employees at lower grade levels who previously held a permanent GS-12 or equivalent Pay Band 2 position.
- GS-11 and higher (or Pay Band 2 equivalent) IMCOM employees at the garrison/installation level.
- Careerists in the Park Ranger series (GS-0025) who are GS-9 or higher (or Pay Band 2 equivalent).

If selected, you will be required to sign a mobility agreement for the developmental assignment. Your supervisor and career program manager will develop several possible developmental assignments, meeting the requirements of both functional and geographic diversity. The assignments may be a one-to-one swap between activities provided that the swapping candidates gain functional and geographic diversity of experience. There may be opportunities for you to experience developmental assignments. Deployment to the USACE

Gulf Region Division, Afghanistan Engineer District or USACE's Task Force Hope in New Orleans for at least six (6) months, within one year prior to application, will fulfill the developmental assignment requirement.

Completing the three-year LDP will greatly enhance your knowledge of the Army, management and leadership abilities, enabling you to become more competitive for future personal growth and professional opportunities. Discussions with LDP graduates bear out that completing the LDP was instrumental in expanding their awareness of the Army, instilling new confidence in their personal abilities to take on new challenges, and making them more competitive towards attaining their present positions.

### **Civilian Education System (CES)**

The Army CES also has leadership training. CES is a progressive and sequential leader development program that provides enhanced leader development and education opportunities for Army civilians throughout their careers. The CES leader development program includes four courses that replace the previous inventory of legacy courses offered for Army Civilians-- Foundation, Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced.

The **Foundation Course** is designed to both provide an orientation to the Army and some of its systems and to begin the development of an effective Army team member. This is a distributed learning course which should take the average student 57 hours to complete. Students in this course will develop an understanding of the Army including its composition, rank, structure, customs, traditions, and values and how it fits into the Department of Defense; the basics of Army leadership doctrine, leadership styles, and Army ethical standards; group development theories, strategies for dealing with conflict, and basics of communication including Army communication types, and the skills of listening, providing feedback and the basics of oral and written communication. From self-development skills, the course progresses to the subjects of career progression, to maintaining competence and developing self-awareness to the subject of personal health. Finally the course will introduce the student to a series of administrative requirements for Army personnel. This course is required for all interns.

The **Basic Course** is to educate the direct level supervisor or team leader on the basic foundations of leadership and management skills to facilitate mission accomplishment. This course is designed using a combination of distributed learning through the Internet, followed by classroom education. The Basic Course focuses on how to develop a cohesive team, while applying leadership skills to achieve results. These underpinnings are supported using Army doctrine; educational and leadership theories; small group instruction; along with a combination of behaviorist, cognitivist (information processing), and constructivist knowledge theories. The course is geared for Army civilian employees who lead teams, or in supervisory or managerial positions and Army civilian program / project managers. This should be considered during this portion of your career as you are looking forward to career progression.

The Intermediate and Advance courses should be considered at future

levels of your career. Further information on the CES can be found at [www.amsc.belvoir.army.mil/ces/](http://www.amsc.belvoir.army.mil/ces/).

### **Formal Training**

Participating in formal training can be a great way to increase your knowledge and prepare you for future positions. Most agencies have their own training program so you should ask your supervisor and training coordinator for sources. Local universities can be a great option too. You don't have to get a degree, but can take related course that many times fit around your schedule. Professional Societies often sponsor training courses too at reasonable costs. Check their web sites to see what they offer. The USDA Graduate School offers many leadership, management and supervisory courses at various locations across the country. Make sure you work with your supervisor to ensure training classes are documented on your IDP and become a part of your agencies yearly training plan. Training can be costly so it needs to be well researched and planned ahead of time.

### **Technical Conferences**

Professional conferences are another great way to gain knowledge, keep up with the latest information and network with other engineers and scientists. Many professional societies host annual conferences that focus on specific specialty disciplines. Many organizations also host conferences that range from technical skills to project management practices. You can learn about new ways to approach a project, new software and tools that are available and it gives you an opportunity to talk with others who may be working on similar projects. Many times there are exhibitor booths to visit as well which can give you further information about new products that may be useful to your work.

### **Cross Training**

Cross training is the process of having staff learn more than one specific job or skill set in their regular job assignment. In most offices, there are multiple missions being accomplished. In order to become well rounded and to increase your technical competency, it would benefit you and your office to have a variety of experiences that cross many of the missions of your specific office. You should be made aware of cross training possibilities by your chain-of-command so you can consider these options in your career development. Think about other missions assignments in your area and ask your supervisor about working in those areas that interest you. It benefits you with greater knowledge and it benefits your supervisor by giving them additional trained staff for particular assignments.

### **Developmental Assignments**

A developmental assignment involves a staff member completing a temporary promotion or lateral assignment to a different functional area for the purpose of gaining knowledge and experience in that area. For example a civil engineer in a Geotechnical or Structural Engineering position may gain broader experiences in backwater modeling in Hydraulics and Hydrology or project authorities in a Planning position. This broadened experience base may give you

a deeper understanding of the entire office which is useful in successfully applying for other positions. Occasionally, some office staff may switch positions for a year to gain additional experience and perspective on the business of their whole office.

You should also consider the many possibilities that exist for developmental assignments at other offices, overseas and deployments for disaster assistance. These experiences also offer excellent opportunities to broaden your skill set and gain exposure to other geographical and functional areas.

### **Coaching and Mentoring**

Mentoring is an excellent way for you to gain career advice at this point in your career. While you are still learning and deciding on which career paths suit you best, advice from others can be key. You may find several different coaches and mentors can provide you with different points of view for you consider. As always, you need to consider the advice and make your own decisions on what is best for your career.

### **Professional Societies**

These societies can be a great source of career help too. They offer training, conferences, networking and mentoring. Most societies have State and local chapters to help supplement the national organization and that helps you meet more people in your area. Many have journals which are a great source of information as well. Ask around your organization to see which ones might be good for you to consider. Check out their web sites for more information.

### **Strengthsfinder®**

The Army is embarking on an initiative to work with all staff to determine and capitalize on each individual's talents and strengths. Everyone should consider participating in this profile. The theory is that we will only excel by maximizing our strengths. To do this we must understand our dominant talents and then take deliberate steps to acquire knowledge and skills to turn those talents into strengths. Talents can be identified by paying attention to these clues: your spontaneous reactions, yearnings, rapid learning, satisfaction, flow and glimpses of excellence. The StrengthsFinder Profile is designed to reveal your 5 strongest themes of talent. They might not yet be strengths, but are areas of greatest potential. The first step is an awareness of your talents. The second is ownership. The third is intentionality, or putting this knowledge into practice. The fourth step is impact, or using your strengths to have an impact on the world around you. The StrengthsFinder Profile is developed and administered by the Gallup Organization. There is a cost, relatively small, which needs to be taken into account for budgeting purposes. Make sure you put this on your IDP as a training course. After taking this instrument, you should complete the on-line learning modules and schedule a meeting with a Strengths Coach. The Coach will help you better understand your talents and help you discover ways to build upon them. Check with others in your agency to see if you have a Strengths Coach. If not, one can be found for you within the Army.

## Communication Skills

**Public speaking** is also important to many CP-18 positions. The best way to get better and more comfortable is by speaking in public. As an intern, present a project you are working on to the rest of the interns or others in your organization. As you grow in experience and responsibility, you can branch out into presentations at professional conferences, presentations to senior leadership in your organization and public meetings. Attend workshops on public speaking. Have professionals watch you and offer comments. Look for organizations, such as Toastmasters, that specialize in helping people grow in their public speaking skills.

**Writing skills** are also important in most positions. You have to be able to communicate information at various levels. Different writing styles are required for reports being read by the public versus other technical staff. Technical writing is an area you should strive for continued learning. Get as much experience as you can with different writing assignments. Make sure you seek reviews by people with good written communication skills. Your public affairs office can help you prepare documents for public release to convey the appropriate message. Legal reviews may be necessary as well to ensure wording is conveying the correct legal connotations.

## Personal Skills

Personal skills such as **resume writing and interviewing** are also very important. Find opportunities to work on these skills. You might be the best in your field, but if you can't present yourself well on paper or in person, you won't get that job you want. Talk with the human resources personnel, your supervisor and your coach or mentor. Consider contacting selecting officials for the type of job you want, and ask them what KSAs they are seeking for that position. Have them review your resume. Don't wait until a position becomes open but keep your resume up to date and ready to go. Search out typical interview questions. Think about your responses. Participate in mock interviews so you can get comfortable with the process and get some constructive feedback. Make sure your responses match how you currently perform your work.

## Acquisition Workforce Training

For many positions in the Army, you will be working with contracts and all the associated legal and contractual policies and regulations. This is called the Acquisition Workforce. Talk with your supervisor, and perhaps with the chief of the construction and contracting offices in your organization to see how you fit in. There are specific certifications and training courses required. At this point in your career, you should attain entry level certification. This requires that you complete Acquisition 101 (Fundamentals of Systems Acquisition Management). This is an online class and the details for the class can be accessed at <http://training.dau.mil/>. There are further certification levels for you to consider as you grow in your career, should the positions you aspire to require these advanced certification levels.

## ***Where Do I Go From Here?***

Now that you have some ideas about how to manage your career, you need to lay out a road map to get where you want to go. Getting noticed for your achievements will help you progress. Ensure that your senior staff knows who you are. Find opportunities to network with other professionals to expand your knowledge, skills and abilities. Try some volunteer efforts as well. These can give you opportunities to exercise your leadership skills, work with a broader group of people, and to get noticed. There are many jobs that people don't want to do, but these can be great growth experience and senior staff will appreciate your willingness to help out. Things like project closeouts, end of the fiscal year crunch or deployments. Take advantage of developmental opportunities. These can give you deeper experience in some areas as well as allow you to expand into new areas.

You should also be thinking about obtaining any required credentials for positions you want in the future. You can't wait for a position to open, then try to amass the credentials required to get the job. Think about the educational requirements for other jobs – do you need a Masters Degree or maybe other functional training classes. What computer skills do you need? Some positions will require knowledge of project management software, financial management systems, computer programming languages, etc. Keep up with the state-of-the-art. Will you need managerial and supervisory skills for your target position? Do you need any professional licenses or certificates? Decide what you need to further your career, and figure out your plan of attack.

## ***What Can I Give Back To The Organization?***

At many stages of your career, you can give back to your organization. What can you do? Think about ways you can pass along what you know.

- Use your technical skills to help train others.
- Hold briefings where you can explain your project or some new technology to others.
- Management and leadership skills can be utilized to help run a variety of programs in your office, from technical to after hours social events.
- You can become a coach and mentor for others. Even as an intern, you can provide some coaching & mentoring advice to students and fellow interns. Further along in your career you can help with CP-18 program or managing the intern program.

You can find many ways to help shape the future of your organization through a variety of strategic planning options. You can work within your CoP to help further the technical aspects of your chosen discipline. You can work on regional teams to help ensure consistency across the country and help further the goals of a regional approach to projects. Professional societies are also a great place to give back. You can share your technical expertise with many others outside your organization and get people in your office involved too. One of the keys to a good organization is planning for the future. You can share your views and skills on a Succession Planning team to ensure continuity of skills into

the future. And don't forget the role you can play on your offices recruiting team. If you are passionate about your job, you can communicate that to others and help bring great new people to your organization.

## INTERMEDIATE/SENIOR SPECIALIST

### ***Who Is This Section For?***

Planning a career presents exciting possibilities. What career paths are open to me - what credentials do I need – where can my talents be best utilized – how can I improve my potential for greater positions of responsibility & leadership - who can advise me? This section will help guide you in answering these types of questions as you transition from the journeyman level to advanced positions. You need to keep one key point in mind – “The person most responsible for managing your career is...You!” No one else possesses the same level of personal knowledge, insight, or passion for advancing your career.

### ***Who Can I Turn To For Advice and Help?***

Every important enterprise has a Board of Trustees to oversee strategic planning, goal setting and decision making. Shouldn't your career planning have the same support network? Look across your organization; seek out the process owners, the people you respect at all levels and establish your own “Mentor Group” incorporating representatives from the following areas:

- Technical Expert: helps teach you technical competencies in your job or a job you aspire to.
- Organizational Advisor: Provides organizational advice, helps you to determine how things get done in your organization, and understand how the environment your organization operates in affects decisions and decision makers
- Career advisor: Activity Career Program Managers (ACPMs) & their assistants for CP-18 help you plan your long term professional growth and how to get ahead in the role(s) you have set as your goal(s).
- Role Model(s): Someone you want to emulate or learn from who demonstrates effective leadership practices. Remember that there are both positive and negative role models – learn what works well from the positive model and what NOT to do from the negative role model.

Seek out your ACPM and the assistant ACPMs in the various functional offices. These folks are like the Automobile Association of America (AAA), they can guide you as to the different potential routes/paths available to get you from your current career location to your desired career destination.

Whatever your functional area, seek out your CoP for guidance. They are a tremendous resource for advice on career development in your field, and advice on challenging/complex situations, best practices, and lessons learned.

The ACTEDS web site <http://cpol.army.mil> has guidance on career paths; mandatory and recommended technical, contractual, and leadership training; licenses and certifications; and other suggestions to increase your potential for advancement to more senior technical, management, and supervisory leadership positions.

## ***Begin With the Destination***

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” Every journey begins with a destination or a general direction in mind and conforms to Stephen Covey’s No. 1 habit: “Begin with the end in mind” in his book “7 Habits of Highly Successful People.” Remember: Every day is the first day of the rest of your life. Each day you need to reevaluate your goals and do an azimuth check to see if yesterday’s near and intermediate term goals will lead to today’s vision of your target destination.

What skills and credentials do I need? Remember you need to be thinking about and planning for two promotions ahead. Research the positions you are interested in, review their position descriptions and seek out those in these positions and their supervisors to discern what credentials and skills you need to be competitive.

To lead functional organizations at the section and branch level positions requires strong functional credentials. In addition, senior leadership positions require a broad and diversified level of experience across multiple programs and an operational knowledge of integrated functional organizations. You need to evaluate your intermediate and long term goals, and insure that you develop the required credentials and take on the diversification of assignments and details that will give you the greatest potential to achieve those goals.

## ***Career Paths***

As you advance beyond the journeymen level, the specialist and generalist career paths discussed in Section II expand both in competitive requirements and options. The management path extends beyond the manager role to include the first line supervisor and senior leadership role as discussed below:

The specialist path is focused on the production of products and services. To advance in this arena you need to become an expert or regional technical specialist in your functional specialty which will often require advanced technical degree(s), and acquiring licenses or certification associated with a professional in that functional specialty, joining regional or national task forces/teams, industry forums, etc. As a technical expert you will focus your talent into a single or relatively narrow band of interconnected disciplines. You will handle the more complex projects, work on criteria development committees and task forces, develop standards and procedures, perform independent technical reviews, and generally act as a technical consultant across a region. To reach this level you will need to acquire advanced degree(s) in your specialty, become registered in your discipline, and stay abreast of the state-of-the-art in your specialty through continuing education, regional conference, papers, and interaction with others in your specialty and related fields.

The generalist path includes the ranks of supervisors, resource providers and senior managers who strategically lead the organization into the future. In these positions you need to visualize emerging mission areas for the Armed Forces and the Nation, then strategize and implement action plans on the

recruitment, development, and retention of the skills and resources required to support these missions while concurrently protecting the environment and being stewards of the taxpayers dollars. To have the best potential for these positions you need a good blend of both technical (functional) and management knowledge and experience. In addition, the best candidates will have sought out and obtained diverse developmental assignments to obtain a broad perspective on our diverse programs along with a systemic understanding of how the functional organizational elements integrate to execute our missions. Since supervision is normally a key requirement in these positions, it is important to take developmental assignments and training for supervisors.

Whether your final choice will be as a generalist or eventually as a technical expert it is recommended that you diversify your skills and experience early in your career when it is relatively easier to move around to different technical positions. This diversity will maximize your potential and the variety of future career paths choices. In addition, to become competitive for advancement in your chosen technical career field(s) often requires the following:

- Cross-functional assignments in related disciplines
- Experience across different mission areas and geographic locations.
- An advanced degree in that discipline or a related field
- Professional License or certifications to practice in that field
- Participation/membership on regional or national teams and committees
- Deployments on National Disasters & Global War on Terror (GWOT).

A solid technical background is critical to diversify your potential for future organizational leadership (supervision) opportunities. As you advance beyond the journeyman level, the management path expands to include both senior manager roles and first line supervisor to senior leadership positions with their own set of competitive requirements and options for advancement. The technical specialist path has many branches to it. The choice as to which branch you choose is a personal decision that may change with time and may be influenced by the workload and diversity of the programs and missions within your duty station. Of course depending on how strongly you feel about this choice you can seek to relocate to pursue your goals.

You may choose to learn and develop diverse skills in several disciplines, handle routine projects, and be able to diversify your experience by moving relatively easily into related fields and organizations as needed. Due to your diverse and broad level of experience you will become an asset for both disaster and OCONUS mission deployments, where limited staff requires each staff member to have a broad spectrum of skills to execute the mission.

To become competitive for advancement in your chosen manager career fields often requires the following:

- Architect-Engineer contracting training and experience
- DAWIA certification for construction contract activities
- Cross-functional assignments in related management arenas.

- Experience across different mission areas and geographic locations.
- An advanced degree in business, management, or a technical field.
- Participation/membership on regional or national teams and committees.
- Deployments on National Disasters & Global War on Terror (GWOT).

A solid manager background will diversify your potential for future supervisor and senior leadership position opportunities as discussed subsequently.

How is a supervisor and senior leader different from a manager? As a manager you will organize people and resources towards the effective and efficient pursuit of predetermined objectives. As you advance on the management path to the first-line supervisor and more senior leadership positions you become the one who establishes the vision and objectives for those you lead and supervise. In addition to solid technical and/or management knowledge and experience, candidates for the first-line supervisor positions have a resource provider and supervisory role that include resourcing, oversight, training, development, and mentoring responsibilities. These skills are often gained through leadership training and developmental assignments and details. As you advance along this path to higher senior leadership positions, this front line resourcing and supervisory role expands into a more holistic leadership role involving greater strategic vision and planning with a regional focus. These managers and higher senior leadership positions require cross functional and corporate knowledge supported by strong supervisory, interpersonal, and relationship building skills. The first-line supervisor to senior leadership destinations can be accessed through various paths but generally requires a combination of the skills, knowledge, and abilities gained from some time spent in both the technical path and the manager component of the management path.

What does it mean to be a supervisor and senior leader? Some of the more important things you need to do as a supervisor and senior leader are:

- Strategically plan for emerging mission areas and the resources necessary to execute those missions, and then communicate this vision to others and gain their buy-in.
- Set the tone for your staff by remaining calm during chaos and motivate them with an optimistic outlook that becomes a force multiplier.
- Recruit, develop, and retain great people and mentor your staff.

An organization has its processes and its procedures but it is its people who make up the culture and develop the brand-name recognition that goes along with that Organization's reputation for success or failure. You are responsible for everything your people do or fail to do, so surround yourself with great people and play a proactive role in advancing both their technical, managerial, and leadership careers to proactively provide the technical experts, managers, and great leaders for the future.

## Knowledge, Skills, And Abilities

The soft skills of listening to understand, communication, facilitation, consensus building, and dispute resolution become increasingly critical to success as you advance in your career. Soft (relationship) skills like communication, facilitation, relationship building, and mentoring skills become more and more important as you move beyond journeyman level positions. As a manager or team leader, you need to develop, train and guide other employees.

Remember that grade-controlling duties are based on the complexity, independence, and level of contacts in your position. These grade-controlling duties and corresponding hard and soft skills are outlined in the position descriptions for each position in our organizations. To be ready when opportunities arise you need to plan up to two positions ahead. Therefore, after evaluating your career goals and potential career paths with your supervisor and "Mentor Group" (see below), you need to seek out the PDs for those positions that meet your career plan to see what hard and soft skills you will need. In addition, you need to talk to those already in these positions and their supervisors to see what emerging mission impacts may have on the required and desired KSAs.

Professionalism exists at all levels of our organization. Each employee needs to strive for this excellence and obtain the professional registration or certification that demonstrates that level of professionalism. Some examples are as follows:

- Professional Registration: Due to public life and safety issues and quality assurance roles, many senior technical positions, regional technical specialists, technical supervisory positions, and leadership positions require professional registration. Examples of professional registrations are Professional Engineers (P.E.), Professional Geologists (P.G.), and Registered Architects (RA). Even if your position or target position does not require professional registration, obtaining it, just like getting advanced education, can enhance your career. The world is becoming increasingly complex and obtaining these credentials is highly encouraged and better prepares you for the challenges to come.
- Project Management Professional (PMP) certification indicates your achievement of a high level of professionalism and competence in the management of studies, design, construction, operations and maintenance, and overall project management. Managers with this certification will often be the ones sought out to lead the most complex projects, strategic planning missions, and to mentor and lead other managers.
- Contracting Officer Representative (COR) and Administrative Contracting Officer (ACO) appointments requiring Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) training and certification. The authorities provided by these designations are critical to the management of Architect-Engineer contracts (COR) and construction

contracts (COR and ACO). This certification requirement insures the proper oversight of our contracting processes, effective and efficient execution of these contracts, and a strong focus on the integrity of our contract actions.

You should consider advanced education as part of you Individual Development Plan (IDP). It is important to obtain a Masters Degree or Doctorate in your discipline or in another mission area. Training funds may be available to achieve expertise in the highly diverse functional and management positions within our organizations. Consider attending school at night, which often reduces the total cost of training by eliminating travel and per diem costs.

As noted in Section II, there are leadership development programs available at many different levels. At this stage in your career, it is prudent to evaluate the different opportunities available to you. The programs are generally competitive in nature and involve an application and selection process.

### ***Where Am I? A Self-Assessment***

You need to ask yourself the following questions:

**What do you need to succeed?** Draw a nexus between your skills and the position requirements: Start out by drawing a line down the center of a piece of paper. On the left side, make a bulleted list of what the position(s) require based on the position description(s) and talking to the supervisor(s) of the position(s) of interest. On the right side, make a bulleted list of the skills and qualities that you possess that meet these requirements and the ones you need to acquire.

**What makes you different from all others?** Divide another piece of paper into three columns and label them with “previous experience”, “portable skills” and personal traits”.

- Previous experience: Skills learned through past experience and education; i.e., knowledge based skills, technical/functional skills, computer skills, etc.
- Portable skills: Skills you bring to any job (transferable or portable skills); e.g., customer focus, communication, organization, problem solving, team leader, time management, etc.
- Personal traits: The things that make you who you are; e.g., self-starter, well-organized, good judgment, quick learner, good attitude, flexible, etc.

Prepare a strategy for selling yourself for the position(s) of interest by using the prepared lists to put together your resume. Target your resume to each position and prepare separate resumes for each position.

To prepare for job interviews, write a 60-second personal statement: Your answer to the “Tell me about yourself” question. The secret to successfully responding to this free- form request is to focus, script, and practice.

**Focus:** List five strengths you have that are pertinent tot this job (experience, traits, skills, etc.). What do you want the interviewer to know about

you when you leave?

**Scripting:** Prepare a script that includes the information you want to convey. Begin by talking about past experience and proven success. Next mention your strengths and abilities. Conclude with a statement about your current situation.

**Practice:** Practice with your script until you feel confident about what you want to emphasize in your statement. Your script should help you stay on track, but you should not memorize it – you don’t want to sound stiff and rehearsed. It should sound natural and conversational.

Research the position(s) and write at least 5 success stories to answer critical position KSAs and behavioral interview questions (“Tell me about a time when...” or “Give me an example of a time...”). For every positive statement you plan to make about yourself, prepare a **STAR** analysis:

**S** = name a **SITUATION** facing you or

**T** = a **TASK** you had to complete

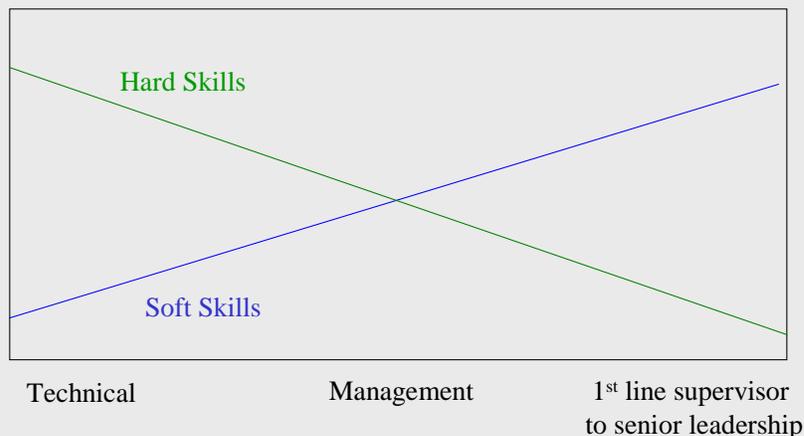
**A** = describe what **ACTION** you took

**R** = tell the **RESULTS** of your actions

The blend of “Hard” skills (technical/process) vs. “Soft” Skills (relationships, communication) changes if you elect to pursue a generalist career path. Technical skills play a critical role in your success as the technical expert for your discipline on a project delivery team and a significant role as a first-line supervisor with the responsibility to train and provide effective QC/QA on the products and services provided by your staff. First-line supervisors need to balance their hard skills with effective soft skills to effectively execute their



## Hard Skills vs. Soft Skills



mission in collaboration with their peers and partners. As a manager and increasingly as you advance as a supervisor and senior leader, developing interpersonal skills, learning collaboration and facilitation skills, communicating effectively, and building relationships with customers, peers, regulators, and partners becomes increasingly critical to the mission success.

Technical and process skills are critical to providing quality products and services that meet the functional needs of our customers in a safe, environmental sound, and economical manner. By acquiring and enhancing these skills you will also develop a solid foundation for subsequently organizing and leading teams by gaining a realistic perspective on the level of effort necessary to properly scope, budget, and schedule projects and programs. This is true whether we are talking about the planning process, design and construction methods, financial management or contract acquisition. The more you gain an appreciation of the diverse hard skill components of our mission, the better you will become as an integrated team player, an effective manager, and/or a successful leader.

Hard skills include:

**Technical:** The functional knowledge, skills, and abilities gained through education and experience to execute and coordinate your particular portion of the project/product in accordance with all appropriate codes and regulations.

**Process:** The procedural knowledge gained through training and experience to effectively follow the appropriate steps, provide the necessary coordination, and obtain the required approvals to execute the project/product in accordance with all regulations, statutes and laws.

**Educational Credentials:** Education gets you into the game and advances your chances for promotion to more senior level positions.

**Minimum education requirements:** Many positions have minimum educational requirements. Search out the position description and talk to the unit supervisor and your human resources office to see what is required for the position(s) in your career plan. If you don't have the necessary education or if you are interested in changing your career field and already have a related degree see what additional credits are needed to gain the required degree. Coordinate with your supervisor to see if the organization can fund the necessary courses and offer to go to school at night since this provides the best leveraging of limited training funds for the organization.

**Advanced degrees:** An advanced technical degree will be a differentiator or a selection factors for technical expert and technical first-line supervisor positions. An advanced degree in technical, business administration or organizational administration is often a differentiator in senior supervisory and leadership positions.

As we move from technical positions into the manager, first-line supervisor and especially the more senior leadership positions, we begin to rely less and less on just our "hard" skills. Rather it is our communication skills, and our understanding of human nature and interpersonal relationships that becomes the drivers and differentiators for success.

True communication involves not only talking and writing in a clear,

concise manner but also involves a lot of listening and seeking feedback. Your chances of successful communications increase in direct proportion to the effort you put into making sure that you understand the positions of others, and ensuring that you have not been misunderstood by them. For critical communications there is no substitute for talking face-to-face. Phone conversations are next in the hierarchy and e-mail and correspondence is only effective in providing information or documenting actions. Neither of these written communications are good when true dialogue is required to gather information, determine perceptions and priorities, work through differences, or alleviate a challenging situation.

Relationships require dedicating time and effort in getting to know the person, opening up so they get to know you and building trust and respect based on honest, two-way communication in all activities. Once developed, these relationships are the glue that holds partnerships together; especially during chaotic and challenging situations. Solid relationships can survive bad times and require you to provide bad news just as fast, or even faster, than good news, accept responsibility for errors, and stand by your partner until whatever challenges they face are resolved. Conversely, as these relationships grow, you can rely on these partners to collaborate honestly with you and commit to common goals.

Facilitation/collaboration encompasses another important soft skill set. In interest based negotiations, everyone comes to the table with his or her own goals, perceptions, and filters. Taking the time to seek out and understand the vision, goals, and perceptions of your peers and customers is critical to reaching consensus on the project/program or mission to be accomplished.

Successful managers and leaders seek first to understand the positions and needs of others before asking them to understand their own position. This involves getting the leadership training and gaining the experience necessary to become attuned to the perceptions and needs of others, and being forthright in explaining the reasons behind your position. Successful facilitation means being willing to integrate good ideas from others and reach consensus with appropriate compromises to ensure a win-win solution for all partners. It does not mean sacrificing safety or violating codes or regulations. Gaining these interpersonal skills greatly enhances the ability of managers, supervisors and leaders to collaborate and reach consensus with others on what we need to do as partners to succeed.

Many times the optimal product to meet the functional needs of the client is not made up of the most sophisticated and technologically advanced individual components for each technical discipline. For example, an expensive, highly energy efficient, smart building HVAC system with sophisticated digital controls is probably not needed for a 5 yr seasonal facility. As a manager, supervisor, or leader you need to use both your "Hard" and "Soft" skills. Your "Soft" interpersonal skills help you to seek out and delineate the needs of your customer, to establish common goals and to work holistically towards the desired end product. Your "Hard" technical skills ensure that the end product meets all

codes and regulations, and is economical and environmental safe.

You need to review your career experiences and compare them to the duties and requirements for your targeted positions. Check the position description and talk to the position supervisor to determine what experiences are required vs. desired. Write down the experiences you have outright and some examples demonstrating your level of experience. Also write down where you have similar experiences from which you can show a connection to the required experience or a potential to execute the required role. Here also you want to write down some examples demonstrated your level of experience. List all your developmental assignments and details, and provide examples use the “STAR” format discussed previously. Do this for all your experiences or potential in each of the following areas:

- Technical (Functional)
- Management:
- Supervisory and leadership

### ***What Do I Need To Do?***

Work two promotions ahead: Everyday you come to work you are working on your next promotion. If your long-term goal is are to become a first-line or second-line supervisor and particularly if your long term goal is to become a senior leader, that’s NOT enough! You need to start thinking about not just your next promotion but your Second level promotion. Research the positions of interest, work with your mentors and begin to lay out what you will need to be competitive as follows:

Work with your supervisor, ACPM, and mentors to explore opportunities to expand your skills and experience. Developmental assignments and details are great ways to gain exposure and try out positions and roles before taking them on permanently. Keep your intermediate and long-term goals in mind when you look for assignments or details that diversify technical skills and broaden managerial experience.

### ***Where Do I Go From Here?***

Study after study has concluded that getting ahead is a function of three factors:

- Technical (functional) skill
- Opportunity
- Recognition

What is the relative importance of these factors? Most of your serious competition is just as good technically as you are, with the exception of technical expert positions. When a given opportunity arises, recognition of your skills and abilities can make the difference.

Building a good network is critical to not only advancing in your career but also in getting the guidance, lessons learned, and advice that can often be a key to successfully handling a challenging project or crisis in your current position.

Some great networking opportunities exist in the following:

- Across your organization
- Sister organizations
- Communities of practice (COP) in your functional area.
- Customers, partners, and stakeholders
- Professional Societies

Do you know your senior leaders? More importantly - do they know you? Networking is a good way to establish contacts but volunteering is better to get noticed! What gets you noticed? The dirtier the job the better it is to volunteer. Doing the following types of jobs will get you noticed:

- Project closeouts and end of year crunch
- Field/task force details and process teams
- Disaster relief and OCONUS deployments

As discussed previously, these details not only enhance and augment your existing knowledge, skills, and experience but they are a great way to get noticed. The leaders will see you as someone willing to take on new challenges and help the organization with a current need.

### ***What Can I Give Back To The Organization?***

Become a mentor, work on process improvements, develop SOPs and checklists, and build the bench strength of your organization in as many of the following skills for which you have knowledge and experience that will benefit others. Folks are usually their own worst critics and many of us need someone to objectively evaluate our strengths and weaknesses, help us with our blind spots, and give us a boost. In every successful person's life there was someone who told them they had the potential to do great things and helped them achieve their goals. These folks were mentors. Mentoring can be done on many different levels and from any of the career paths. As a senior technical staff member, senior manager, and particularly as a front line technical resource provider and organizational leader you should commit to serve on the "Mentor Group" for your team or staff and welcome the opportunity to serve on the Boards for others.

There is a comforting cycle on mentoring – you are able to pass on and retain the good institutional knowledge you received and learned to others who develop that knowledge, enhance it, adapt it to the times at hand and then share it with others who do the same in their time.

It's the people who make the difference: An organization has its processes and its procedures but it is its people who make up the culture and develop the brand-name recognition that goes along with that organization's reputation for success or failure. There is no greater feeling than to be needed or a greater joy than helping others – you can fulfill both of these by being a mentor. It is your duty to do that for your folks. It is a further pleasure to be invited to do it for others. Remember, encourage those you mentor to be open to opportunities to share their knowledge and mentor others

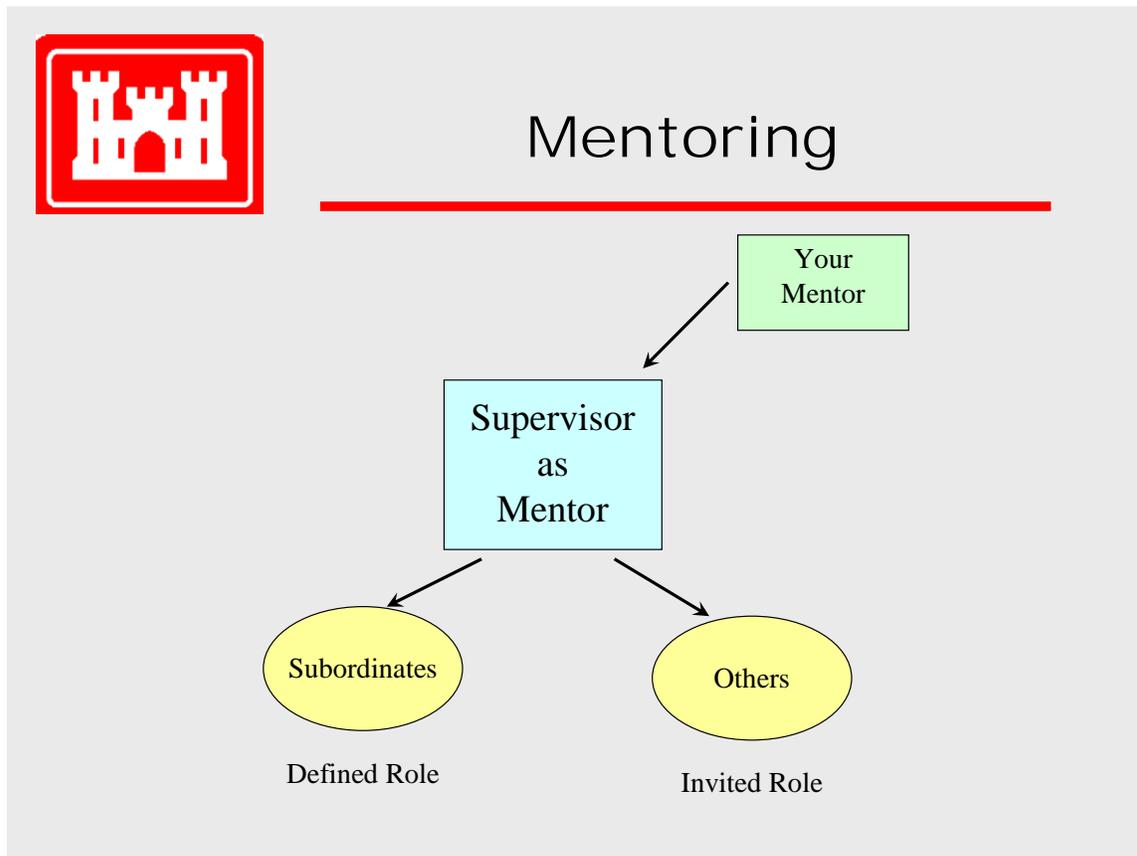
Another opportunity to give back to the organization is to **become an**

**Assistant ACPM for CP-18.** In this role you will assist with the recruitment, career development, training, mentoring, and career guidance of the folks in your activity or functional area. The more diverse our pool of assistant ACPMs the more holistically we can evaluate the needs of our multidiscipline engineering and scientific staff. The greater the number of assistants the more extensive our coverage and the more comprehensive the assistance we can provide to all CP-18 staff to ensure our folks get the attention and assistance they need to achieve their career goals.

Work within your organization, career group, or community of practice to **pass on best practices**, lessons learned, make yourself available to others and seek out advice on challenging and complex situations. You not only help the organization but you also build your network and get noticed. Work regionally with your peers on Lessons Learned (LL).

**Be active in your professional societies.** Again you expand your network, remain aware of the state-of-the art and innovation in your profession and industry, and gain a different perspective on solving challenges common to your profession.

Assist with successor planning. Support the organization by recruiting, mentoring, training, and developing others, sharing challenging work, and



working collaboratively with others to retain the talented people we need to succeed. As you gain first-line supervisor and senior leadership positions, you can provide increasing input into the strategic planning to seek out emerging mission areas, develop recruitment, training, and development plans and implement a strategic workforce successor plan to ensure a competent workforce to execute our missions for successive generations.

Assist with recruiting. Go out to you alma mater, work with local universities to build interest in not only engineering and science but also in the challenging and fulfilling career in the Federal government. Students want to talk to folks actually doing the work in the organizations that recruit them - not just the Human resources folks. Your enthusiasm and real world examples of current projects and the diverse work opportunities that they will experience is a great selling point in attracting great talent.

**Work with student groups.** We all need to do our part to increase interest in engineering and science so our nation will have the necessary pool of talent to accomplish future missions. Engineering and the sciences are not easy curriculums, but you can make the effort to increase student interest at the local elementary, middle and high schools, as well as, the local universities. There are science fairs, a day with an engineer, student mentoring groups with professional societies, guest lecture opportunities, career days, etc. that are available for us to peek student's interest in what they can accomplish and help the nation and our environment at the same time. We accomplish a diverse set of missions in infrastructure, water resources, environmental restoration and remediation, disaster recovery, war fighter support, and recreation that has something that will peak the interest of almost everyone. We just need your time and help in getting our story to the students.

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## MANAGEMENT/SENIOR LEADER

### *Who Is This Section For?*

In an ever-changing world and nation, the government needs a special class of great achievers to make things happen, to serve the people, and use their leadership, management, science and engineering skills to help improve the world around them. This need is met through three personnel systems for positions that are classified above the GS-15/NSPS Pay Band 3: the Senior Executive Service (SES), the Senior Level (SL) system and the Scientific/Technical (ST) system. The nature of the work determines under which system a given position is classified.

The focus of this section is on the senior level for technical specialists, managers, and generalists. At this point in your career, you are relatively locked in to your chosen path. You have been seeking and obtaining positions of increasing responsibility and authority, and now you want to serve in the highest echelons of government.

As manager of your own career, you have held a succession of jobs that ensured personal development to meet the many challenges of future assignments. Generalists should have worked in a variety of areas and have formed a broad base of experience. Technical experts should have achieved regional or national status as a subject matter expert, with concomitant research experience. Managers should have led teams and organizations of increasing size, variety and complexity.

### *Who Can I Turn To For Help?*

The ACTEDS Training Catalog offers a number of educational and training opportunities for scientists and engineers who aspire to the top levels of civilian service. Fellow senior leaders can be a rich source of information about valuable opportunities, as can mentors and supervisors.

If you are a generalist, you should look for Army training that will cement your status as a Pentathlete civilian leader of the 21st-Century. You should select coursework and training that demonstrate you personify the warrior ethos in all aspects, from war-fighting support to statesmanship to business management.

If you are a technical expert, you should seek educational opportunities that allow you to further your own research as well as serve the Department of Defense as a scientific reviewer, program advisor, and instructor of less experienced scientists and engineers.

If your specialty is management, you should pursue leadership enhancement opportunities that will groom you to become future Senior Executives. You should select coursework and training to burnish your management and leadership skills so that they complement those of your uniformed General Officer counterparts.

## ***Begin With the Destination***

If your goal is SES, SL or ST, you will want to review and study the program requirements. You will want to continue to expand your knowledge, skills and abilities with continuing education, training and developmental/rotational assignments so that you will be able to display that level of excellence that is essential for all managers and executives who the President depends upon each and every day to implement his mandate.

## ***Career Paths***

### **Senior Executive Service**

The Senior Executive Service (SES) includes key positions just below those of Presidential appointees. SES members all share a broad perspective of government, with a commitment to public service that is grounded in the Constitution. The keystone of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, the SES was designed to be a corps of executives selected for their leadership qualifications. They operate and oversee nearly every government activity in approximately 75 Federal agencies. Over half of SES positions are concentrated in the National Capital Region. There are 260 SES positions in the Army. Most SES members serve in the Army Secretariat (22%), Army Materiel Command (32%), and the Corps of Engineers (17%). For example, in IMCOM, the Director, Installation Services for the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management is an SES position. In USACE, example SES positions are the Regional Business Director for each of the division headquarters. The CP-18 career field makes up less than 20% of the civilian Army workforce, yet accounts for over one-half of the Army's total SES population.

### **Senior Technical Experts**

The SL and ST systems are for non-executive positions above GS-15/NSPS Pay Band 3 that do not meet the criteria for the SES. SL positions do not involve the fundamental research and development responsibilities that are characteristic of the Scientific/Technical (ST) system. There are currently no SL positions in the Department of the Army. Example SL positions outside CP-18 include a high level special assistant or senior attorney in a highly-specialized field who is not a manager, supervisor, or policy advisor.

## ***Where Am I? A Self-Assessment***

The Army Benchworks site (<http://benchworks.army.mil/>) offers Army personnel immediate, relevant and compelling feedback for your personal assessment. The Leader Development Portfolio provides a professionally supported forum to strengthen the pillar of self-development by promoting leader adaptability through increased self-awareness. You can perform a 360° assessment, get a personality evaluation, or apply other instruments to gauge your leadership characteristics.

## **What Do I Need & How Do I Get It?**

### **Qualification Requirement For SES**

Senior executive service (SES) applicants will be evaluated on the possession of executive abilities. Applicants will be evaluated against the five executive qualification requirements listed below, which the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has determined to be necessary for successful performance as a SES member. For a full description of the qualifications necessary to be selected for an SES position, see OPM's Website at <https://www.opm.gov/ses/qualify.asp>. OPM has identified five Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ). These ECQs assess executive experience and potential – not technical expertise. Successful performance in the SES requires competence in each ECQ. The ECQs are interdependent; successful executives bring all five to bear when providing service to the Nation. These ECQs assess executive experience and potential – developing and implementing actionable ideas. The five ECQs are:

#### **Leading Change**

This core qualification involves the ability to bring about strategic change, both within and outside the organization, to meet organizational goals. Inherent to this ECQ is the ability to establish an organizational vision and to implement it in a continuously changing environment.

**Leading People** This core qualification involves the ability to lead people toward meeting the organization's vision, mission, and goals. Inherent to this ECQ is the ability to provide an inclusive workplace that fosters the development of others, facilitates cooperation and teamwork, and supports constructive resolution of conflicts.

#### **Results Driven**

This core qualification involves the ability to meet organizational goals and customer expectations. Inherent to this ECQ is the ability to make decisions that produce high-quality results by applying technical knowledge, analyzing problems, and calculating risks.

#### **Business Acumen**

This core qualification involves the ability to manage human, financial, and information resources strategically.

#### **Building Coalitions**

This core qualification involves the ability to build coalitions internally and with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, nonprofit and private sector organizations, foreign governments, or international organizations to achieve common goals.

### **Qualification Requirement Senior Technical Experts**

The Army centrally manages selection for its approximately 40 ST positions. If you are working toward top-level ST positions, it is imperative to pay special attention to the quality of your work. You will want to demonstrate outstanding achievement in serving the Government's clients: the public.

Scientific/Technical Experts are professionals who are judged by the degree to which they possess technical expertise in research, scientific, and engineering disciplines on a broad scale. Core competencies are:

- Ability as an internationally recognized expert in the individual's field of endeavor to provide significant accomplishments in the civilian and military sector.
- Skill in achieving significant technical contributions such that honors and awards are received from the Department of the Army.
- Ability to recognize new and expanded concepts in science and engineering as evident through authorship of patents and publications with references to these publications and patents appearing in the publications of others.
- Ability to serve professional technical organizations through active participation as a member, advisor or chairperson of national and international committees and membership in professional societies.
- Skill in maintaining and fostering professional competency through active participation in teaching and university research supervision.

### **Fellowship Opportunities**

#### *Secretary of the Army Research & Study Fellowships*

Fellowships are granted with the intent to: support study and research on selected projects relevant to Army's mission; develop and increase the use of the best talents among Army career civilians; and support basic creativity of selected individuals. Fellowships may be awarded to include study or research at institutions of higher learning or in comparable educational/research environments that best support the project. Proposed projects must indicate a high potential value to the Army and benefit the applicant as well. The applicant must be able to complete the project within the time proposed.

#### *Army Congressional Fellowship Program (ACFP)*

Applicants should be identified by their organization as being on the track for executive-level service. This program provides assignments for personnel whose current or prospective positions may require working knowledge of the operations of the Congress. Selected fellows will begin the Fellowship by participating in a HQDA orientation including attendance at the 40-hour Force Integration course and six to eight one-day seminars. In August, fellows will receive an orientation on the operations and organization of Congress, and guidance and assistance in identifying an assignment. Fellows will then serve a full-time assignment on the staff of a Member, committee, or support agency of Congress, January - December. Fellows are typically given responsibility for drafting legislation, arranging congressional hearings, writing speeches and floor statements, and briefing Members for committee deliberations and floor debate. The service obligation is three times (3x) the length of training.

### **Defense Senior Leader Development Program**

The Defense Senior Leader Development Program (DSLDP) will institute

a competency-based approach to the deliberate development of senior civilian leaders with the enterprise perspective needed to lead organizations and achieve results in the Joint, interagency, and multi-national environment. DSLDP will be announced to components in early spring 2008, with nominations for the class of 2009 due in summer 2008. For a complete description of the course, eligibility requirements, application forms, and funding process, interested individuals can refer to the FY08/09 Catalog of Army Civilian Training Education and Professional Development Opportunities on the CPOL website at <http://cpol.army.mil/library/train/catalog/ch04dsldp.html>.

#### *Eligibility Requirements and Area of Consideration*

DSLDP will be open to experienced leaders at GS-14/15 and equivalent (generally NSPS Pay Band 3). DoD components will each nominate potential candidates, who will compete for entrance into the program. Selection is expected to be highly competitive, with rigorous DoD-wide competition.

#### *Program Requirements*

DSLDP is intended to complement Army leader development initiatives and strengthen the Senior Executive Service corps. The program will be multi-faceted, combining training, education, experience, and self development. Requirements will include senior-level Professional Military Education, generally in a different component or at the National Defense University. Developmental assignments will be included as needed to increase an enterprise perspective. Participants will attend defense-focused leadership seminars, designed to ensure application of critical leader competencies in the joint environment.

#### *Program Goals*

DSLDP will be the DoD-wide leadership development program for senior defense civilians and a key component of the Department's succession planning strategy.

## ***Where Do I Go From Here?***

### **Selection Factors for SES**

Applicants are evaluated on the extent to which they meet the five Executive Core Qualification criteria stated above. An evaluation panel will consider experience, education, training and development activities, awards, publications, appraisals, and other information provided with the application forms to evaluate the extent to which applicants meet the executive abilities stated above. Applicants may be requested to participate in a leadership assessment evaluation and/or interviews.

There is no single path to becoming an SES member, but supervisors of SES members identified the Selection Factors below as some of the things they look for:

Assignments – The most important factor. Broad experience: Headquarters, field, cross functional. Geographic mobility is a plus.

Supervisory experience – Very important, almost a prerequisite.

Education, self-development, and training – Could be a tie breaker. A

Master's degree is a plus, as is graduation from a Senior Service College such as the Army War College or the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

Professional Reputation – 50% of supervisors said it weighs heavily, because several highly qualified people from within the hiring organization may apply. Your professional reputation is extremely important.

Seek a mentor and be one – If you have not already done so, find out who the SES members are in your agency. Talk to them and ask them what you must do to become an SES. Volunteer to mentor others. Being a mentor is important - it establishes your reputation for grooming and growing your people.

### ***What Can I Give Back To The Organization?***

At this stage in your career, you probably have a wide sphere of influence in your organization. Consciously or not, you lead by example. Subordinates learn how to lead and do their jobs by copying your model. You exemplify standards, show respect for discipline, and demonstrate the organization's culture through your actions. You should ensure that you "walk the walk" in your day-to-day undertakings, because people are watching and learning from you.

Another way to give back to the Army is to help your employees do their jobs better. You have a large responsibility for the success of your subordinates. Their career success can depend on how effectively and meaningfully you evaluate their performance. Their development is affected by the quality, honesty and frequency of feedback. It is critical that you provide performance counseling with qualitative and quantitative goals geared toward facilitating improvement during the rating period.

# YOUR CAREER PLANNING

## ***Introduction***

This section will provide the outline and framework to assist you in developing your short and long term goals and objectives, as well as documenting your prior experience and training. This section will help you to put into action the guidance and information presented in the previous sections. Also include in this section are additional resources as well as information on other career programs for you to be aware of.

## ***Career Planning For Today, Tomorrow, and Your Future***

### **Your Role**

There are many resources available to you for charting your career growth and development. Ultimately only you can develop and follow a plan that is the best fit for you. By taking charge of your own growth and career you will be able to develop the plan for what you would like to accomplish during your career. Choose the destination that you would like to reach and utilize the information available in this planning guide in addition to other resources and develop the roadmap for getting there. Look ahead, identify career goals and objectives, and document these goals and objectives on an Individual Development Plan (IDP). Your IDP is a living document: should you so desire at some point in the future, your IDP can be revised or changed as you develop and further refine your goals and objectives. Remember, it is your career. In the final analysis, only you can know what's right for you. So plot a course and enjoy the exciting adventure!

### **Role of Your Supervisor**

Your supervisor, mentor, Career Program Manager (CPM) and Deputy CPM will answer your questions and assist you in securing the information you need regarding the knowledge, skills and abilities you now can identify, or those which you must acquire in order to work to your fullest potential on your current job or any future position you have established as your goal.

Supervisors, middle managers and top-level managers have a dual responsibility:

To carry out the Army mission and to assure that their employees are fully trained to perform their specific jobs; and

To work closely with each of their employees to clarify individual goals and objectives; to secure needed training, education and development for the employee; and to work that employee's skills, knowledge and abilities into the framework of the mission.

### **Role of Your Activity Career Program Manager (ACPM)**

The ACPM monitors and evaluates the execution of CP-18 requirements at the activity level and provides advice and guidance to supervisors and employees on training, education, and development opportunities and

requirements. The ACPM can advise you and assist in planning career program training and assignments. The ACPM can assist you in understanding the big picture of the organization's mission and future direction. The ACPM can work with you to develop your role and awareness of the opportunities that will potentially be available.

## ***Mentors & Mentoring***

### **What Is Mentoring?**

It is the rare leader, manager or executive who did not receive valuable help along the path of career development from one or more mentors. A mentor serves as a counselor, information provider, friendly critic, interpreter of organization policies and politics, sounding board, and link to the pulse of the organization.

Perhaps without our even fully realizing it, mentors have oftentimes been in our lives from the beginning. Some perhaps were more positive, realistic, or directed toward our individual interests in life and in our careers. Some of the following are examples of individuals that potentially function as mentors:

Initially our parent(s) or guardians may have had a significant impact in one form or another on our career decisions. School teachers may serve as a mentor and have significant impact on the direction our careers have taken; we remember them for something they said or did that aided in making career decisions. They were possibly our first career advisor. Others such as friends, associates or previous supervisors may have served as career advisors who assisted us in making key career decisions.

### **How to Select Mentors**

Choosing a mentor can be an important decision in selecting and achieving career goals. Some aspects to consider:

Know where you want to go, and choose a mentor who has a breadth and depth of understanding and experience in your chosen career path.

Choose a mentor that has the demonstrated knowledge, skills and abilities you seek to develop personally.

Choose a mentor that is well along and advanced in your chosen career path. In so doing, you are selecting a mentor that has traveled the road upon which you wish to travel.

As your career progresses, seek out other or additional mentors. No two people are exactly the same, or will have exactly the same experiences and opportunities presented to them. As you seek out and get advice from others, you will broaden your understanding with input from varying perspectives.

Take action! Be forward in choosing an individual and take the initiative in developing a rapport with potential mentors.

## ***Develop Individual Specific Mentoring Plan***

The following a list of items to develop into your Specific Mentoring Plan:

Mentors who have had an impact on MY life and/or MY career:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Specific thing(s) the mentor did or said; or specific ways that person impacted MY life and MY career:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

In my current job/position, who are the people I want as mentor(s):

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

What do I want from each of these people? (Direction/guidance; information or reassurance)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

### ***Career Goals and Objectives***

Identify Short-Range Career Goals and Objectives (one to two years):  
(Example: Obtain professional engineer license)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Identify Long-Range Career Goals and Objectives (during the next three to five years): (Example: Attain development assignment in Hydraulic Engineering Section)

- 1
- 2

3

4

Identify Other Life Interests that May Impact Career Goals and Objectives

1

2

3

4

### ***Prepare Individual Development Plan (IDP)***

Throughout this and previous sections, this manual has discussed the basic elements that go into the Individual Development Plan (IDP). Now it is time to utilize the information that you have developed to complete your IDP. The 5-Year IDP form is likely obtainable from within your District or Installation office or may be obtained from USACE publications at the web address:

<http://www.usace.army.mil/publications/forms/e5055r.pdf>

#### **List Career Goals and Objectives**

The Developmental Objectives section is divided into two major parts, “Short-Term Objectives” and “Long-Term Objectives.” While completing this section, keep in mind the career path –specialist or generalist technical– that you have chosen. Your objectives should lead towards development in the chosen path.

Under “Short Term Objectives,” summarize your career objectives for the next one to two years. In “Long-Term Objectives,” describe your objectives for the three to five year timeframe.

#### **List Planned Short-Range Training (One – Two Years)**

Part 2, “Required Training” is for the training needs most vital in light of your career goals and organizational requirements. Your supervisor or ACPM can help you determine the requirements that are most crucial for the immediate future and thus should be included here. Part 3, “Recommended Training” is for training that is still beneficial but fall within a lower priority than the previously listed requirements.

#### **List Planned / Desired Developmental Assignments**

Part 4, “Developmental Assignments Required/Recommended” can include items such as long-term training, rotational assignments or deployments. Discuss with your supervisor or others within your organization the potential opportunities and timing regarding when these might occur. As with training, developmental assignments should build towards your chosen career path.

#### **List Training History**

Part 5, “Training or Self Development Completed During Last FY” is the place to list your previous training and developmental activities. Although this section is for recording activities in the last fiscal year, it is a good idea to keep a

personal record of the last five or more years.

### ***Prepare Career Development Plan***

Similar yet distinct from your IDP, your Career Development Plan provides an outline and roadmap for where you are planning to go in the future.

#### **One – Five Years**

List your short-range career goals and objectives (one to five years).

Based on your chosen career path, aspects to consider including are:

Technical Training

Personnel Training

Supervisory/Management/Leadership Training

Developmental/On-the-Job Assignments

Personal Development (Include professional society activities)

#### **Beyond Five Years**

List your long-range career goals and objectives (five years and beyond).

Based on your chosen career path, aspects to consider including are:

Technical Training

Personnel Training

Supervisory/Management/Leadership Training

Developmental/On-the-Job Assignments

Personal Development (Include professional society activities)

### ***The Path Forward For Continuing Career Development***

There are many resources to assist you with career development that will be important tools for your continuing growth. The sites listed in this section will prove useful for such things as expanding your technical expertise and influence, as well as making you aware of opportunities you might want to consider pursuing.

#### **Communities Of Practice (COP)**

Website <https://eko.usace.army.mil/usacecop/>

The 50<sup>th</sup> Chief of Engineers, LTG Robert Flowers, stated the following regarding the establishment of Communities of Practice, “Communities of Practice (CoP) are at the center of a true learning organization - they ensure we maintain and expand our technical expertise.” The CoPs are a forum for exchange of information and provide opportunities for mentoring, learning and sharing ideas. CoPs are a key component in functioning as a team of teams capable of operating virtually in a Learning Organization. The Engineering Knowledge Online website <https://eko.usace.army.mil/usacecop/> is the main menu page for CoPs.

#### **CoPs Defined**

A Community of Practice is made up of individuals who practice and share an interest in a major functional area or business line. The engine that drives a

CoP is learning, and over time the CoP is the history of that learning. A community consists of its practice and the sharing of that practice among its practitioners. Communities are held together by a common sense of purpose and a real need to know what each other knows, and not the organizational structure requirement. CoPs encourage a shift away from stovepipes -- from islands of isolation to communities that share their knowledge and learn from one another. Communities of Practice are a different perspective on the organization's structure: one that emphasizes the learning that people can gain from communicating with those experiencing similar challenges beyond than the unit they report to, the project they work on or the people they know.

#### CoP Purpose

The purpose of a CoP is to facilitate the maintenance and advancement of technical expertise. The primary functions of a CoP are to develop and maintain: policy and doctrine, a capable workforce, national and interagency relations and coalitions by accelerating organizational communication and implementing learning organization doctrine. The real value in CoP will be found in:

Developing and spreading better practices and tools faster

Connecting islands of knowledge into self-organized, knowledge sharing networks of professional communities

Feeding and being fed by web-based repositories of both proven solutions and new approaches

Fostering cross-functional and cross-divisional collaboration (very key).

There are five significant benefits of using CoPs. First, transfer of best practices and latest business innovations often leads to significant time and cost savings, which benefit customers and shareholders first and foremost. One method is that CoPs transfer the latest business and “technology” innovations for cost savings.

Second, CoPs prevent knowledge loss from the organization through exchange and transfer of cross-generational expertise. CoPs often develop web-base ‘libraries’ containing crucial information for practice of the profession. It also contributes to the generation of new ideas, capabilities, and provides a means for access to tacit knowledge. CoPs provide increased links with real operations where much expert knowledge exists.

Third, CoPs are a critical-job knowledge sustaining tool that sustains the organization through promotions, turnover, and organizational change. It leverages experience from others, to others, with others—thus reducing learning curves.

A fourth benefit is that CoPs promote innovation through collaboration and problem-solving situations in and on projects. Similarly, they shape a “boundary-less” culture for greater synergy.

Finally, members have access to relevant, high-quality information from both inside and outside the community. It connects people into a wider network for greater speed, and maintains valuable business contacts. No longer do concerns remain regarding organizational boxes. Over time, CoPs cut through

traditional “silos” both internally and externally which combats isolation and fosters the creation of teams and valuable networks.

The following is a listing of the major CoPs involving those in CP-18:

|  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Engineering & Construction                   | Security Engineering                 |
| E&C CoP Sub-CoPs                             | Specifications                       |
| Architecture                                 | Structural Engineering               |
| CADD/BIM                                     | Value Engineering.                   |
| Civil Engineering                            | Environmental                        |
| Construction Management                      | Installation Support                 |
| Cost Engineering                             | Interagency & International Services |
| Dam Safety                                   | Operations & Regulatory              |
| Electrical & Electronic Engineering          | Planning                             |
| Engineering Management                       | Program & Project Management         |
| Fire Protection Engineering                  | Research & Development               |
| GeoSpatial                                   | Safety                               |
| GeoTechnical & Materials                     | Security Engineering                 |
| Hydrology, Hydraulics, & Coastal Engineering | Strategic Planning                   |
| Mechanical Engineering                       | Emergency Management                 |

Within CP-18, there are several tools and websites active in promoting CoP initiatives:

- Technical Excellence Network (TEN)
- Science Engineering Technology (SET)
- Enterprise Lessons Learned Program (ELLP)
- Enterprise Quality Management System (eQMS)
- Natural Resources Management (NRM) Gateway

Tools, like TEN and commercially available collaboration and online meeting software, are key enablers to CoP, and must be universally made available to all CoPs. However, working virtually requires more than just tools to use to gather information. Knowledge is different from information. Information is provided on these various web sites and tools. Knowledge resides in people, and the best way to transfer this knowledge from one person to another is through personal contact where there is some interaction. CoPs fit within business units and projects, across business unit and projects, at the boundaries of organizations, and across distinct organizations.

There are several rules of engagement for participation in a CoP:

- CoP is an open unclassified system. Do not contribute classified info.
- All community members are eligible to submit content
- If you see something inaccurate or out-of-date alert the responsible

content editor.

- Keep your personal contact information updated
- Use the CoP for its intended purpose: share knowledge, solve problems, and accomplish tasks.

### **Civilian Education System (CES)**

Websites <http://www.amsc.belvoir.army.mil/ces/#>  
<http://www.cp26.army.mil/training/ces.cfm#>

The Civilian Education System (CES) is a new, progressive and sequential leader development program that provides enhanced leader development and education opportunities for army civilians throughout their careers.

### **Additional References**

*Army Knowledge Online*

Website [www.us.army.mil](http://www.us.army.mil)

The Army's Enterprise Portal, Army Knowledge Online (AKO), is a primary component of the Army Knowledge Management (AKM) strategy and The Army Transformation. As the single point of entry into a robust and scalable knowledge management system, AKO is strategically changing the way the Army does business. By enabling greater knowledge sharing among Army communities, AKM fosters improved decision dominance by commanders and business stewards in the battle space, organizations, and Army's mission processes.

Use of this site requires the user to log in, which may be done with a Common Access Card (CAC) or an AKO username and password. Contact your organization for assistance with obtaining registration.

*Engineering Knowledge Online*

Website <https://eko.usace.army.mil/>

The Engineering Knowledge Online (EKO®) Portal is currently maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) as a service to all Army installation community members, and serves as the USACE Installation Support Community of Practice portal. Much of the information on this site requires the user to log in, which may be done with an AKO or EKO username and password. Contact your organization for assistance with obtaining registration.

### **Parallel Career Programs and Training**

Within the Army and USACE are numerous career programs and training opportunities. A few of these are highlighted in this section.

*CP16 Engineers and Scientists (Non-Construction) Career Program*

Website <http://www.dacp16.net/index.html>

The CP16 Engineers and Scientists (Non-Construction) Career Program is comprised of all Army civilian engineers and scientists working in acquisition and acquisition-related fields. Career program members perform research, develop

equipment for fielding, provide technical support to all phases of contracting, and continue to support the Army's equipment throughout its life cycle.

#### *Acquisition Career Field*

Websites <http://www.dau.mil/> <http://asc.army.mil/>

Certain engineering positions within the Army and USACE require development in acquisition career fields. These include USACE Resident Engineers and the Facilities Engineering Career Field. Fulfillment of the applicable requirements will need to be completed to fill these positions. If interested, discuss with your supervisor or ACPM the positions available within your organization.

The acquisition career field is broad in itself and covers numerous focus areas. The acquisition position categories are Program Management; Communications-Computer Systems; Contracting (including Construction); Purchasing; Industrial Property Management; Systems Planning, Research, Development and Engineering; Test and Evaluation; Manufacturing and Production; Quality Assurance; Acquisition Logistics; Business, Cost Estimating, and Financial Management; Program Management Oversight; and Education, Training and Career Development. Each acquisition position falls into one of three levels for purposes of establishing certification standards. The level is determined by the grade of the position. Except for the Purchasing career field, these three levels are: Level I (GS- 5/8) and military 0-1/3); Level II (GS-9/12) and military 0-4); and Level III (GS-13 and above and military 0-5 and senior). The certification levels for the Purchasing career field are: Level I (GS-5 and E- 4/5); Level II (GS-6/8 and E- 6/8); and Level III (OS-9 and E-9).

#### *DAWIA Training*

Website <http://www.dau.mil/>

The Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA, Title 10 U.S.C. 1701-1764) was enacted in 1990. DAWIA's purpose is to improve the effectiveness of the military and civilian acquisition workforce through enhanced education, training and career development and thereby improve the acquisition process. DAWIA requires the DOD to establish formal career paths for those people who want to pursue careers in acquisition. DOD has accomplished this by dividing acquisition positions into position categories and establishing a formal certification process. To hold a designated acquisition position, DOD's certification standards must be fulfilled. There may also be DAWIA legal qualification requirements that apply.

#### *Project Management Certification*

Website <https://eko.usace.army.mil/usacecop/ppm/>

USACE is responsible for the execution of projects throughout the world. Accomplishment of the mission requires highly qualified and motivated Project Delivery Teams (PDTs) that are led and managed by Project Managers (PM) and programs with multiple PDTs that are led and managed by Program Managers (PgM).

In order to ensure project and program managers are properly trained to

lead teams, certification of PMs is a requirement. The Project Manager and Program Manager Career Development Program (PPM-CDP) is a document that provides a framework for the training, education, and experience necessary to ensure the systematic and consistent development of Project Management and Program Management career civilians within USACE. Additional information can be found on the EKO website <https://eko.usace.army.mil/usacecop/ppm/>

### ***Individual Plan For Where Do I Go From Here***

Throughout this manual, you have been presented with information regarding various careers options. Aspects to consider and extensive resources available to assist and guide you through the process are included. Utilizing the materials, outline your individual plan, tailoring it according to your interests and where you feel you can most vitally serve. Develop an individual plan that will work best for you. Your career, like an individual development plan, is a work in progress. As your career develops and you make choices, revisit your individual plan and revise it accordingly. Setting goals and developing a plan that focuses on the details and actions needed maximizes your potential for success.

### ***A Vision for Tomorrow – It Is Your Career – Own It***

It is up to you as an individual employee to determine your own personal needs, goals, values and ambitions. Develop a personal plan of action and begin right away to put the plan into action. As you move forward with your plan you will be able to refine and further develop your plan.

At this point in your career, you may already have reached or be close to reaching your career goals, and have no need for an extensive plan. Or may wish to review and examine present goals in relation to the possibilities presented in this Career Planning Guide.

While not necessarily easy, your career development is an exciting challenge only you can accomplish. Supervisors, managers and the ACPM can provide tremendous guidance and assistance, but the management of your career is ultimately up to you. Making decisions regarding your career and taking the necessary action cannot be delegated nor should it be postponed. To attain your goals will require commitment to the personal development necessary to meet the challenges you will face.

"Success is when preparedness meets opportunity"

## ACRONYMS

**AAC**

Army Acquisition Corps

**AAW**

Army Acquisition Workforce

**ACCES**

Army Civilian Career Evaluation System

**ACES**

Army Continuing Education System

**ACFP**

Army Congressional Fellowship Program (ACFP)

**ACO**

Administrative Contracting Officer

**ACPM**

Activity Career Program Manager

**ACSIM**

Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management

**ACTEDS**

Army Civilian Training, Education and Development System

**AKO**

Army Knowledge Online

**AKM**

Army Knowledge Management

**AR**

Army Regulation

**CIPMS**

Civilian Intelligence Personnel Management System

**CES**

Civilian Education System

**COP**

Community of Practice

**COR**

Contracting Officer's Representative

**CP**

Career Program

**DA**

Department of the Army

**DAWIA**

Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act

**DOD**

Department of Defense

**E&C**

Engineering & Construction

**ECQ**

Executive Core Qualifications

**ELLP**

Enterprise Lessons Learned Program

**eQMS**

Enterprise Quality Management System

**ERDC**

Engineer Research and Development Center

**FC**

Functional Chief

**FCR**

Functional Chief Representative

**FOA**

Field Operating Agency

**FY**

Fiscal year

**HQDA**

Headquarters, Department of the Army

**IDP**

Individual Development Plan

**IAW**

in accordance with

**IMCOM**

Installation Management Command

**KSA**

Knowledge, skills, and abilities

**LDP**

Leadership Development Program

**MACOM**

Major Army command

**MCPM**

MACOM Career Program Manager

**MITP**

Master Intern Training Plan

**MSC**

Major Subordinate Command

**MTP**

Master Training Plan

**NSPS**

National Security Personnel System

**OJT**

On-the-job training

**OPM**

Office of Personnel Management

**PB**

Pay band

**PDT**

Project Delivery Team

**PM**

Project manager

**PMI**

Project Management Institute

**SCEP**

Student Career Experience Program

**SES**

Senior Executive Service

**SL**

Senior Level (SL) system

**SME**

Subject matter expert

**ST**

Scientific/Technical (ST) system

**TAPES**

Total Army Performance Evaluation System

**TDY**

Temporary duty

**USACE**

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers