

# THE ENLISTED FORCE STRUCTURE



**U.S. AIR FORCE**

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## CMSAF PERSPECTIVE

Fellow Wingmen,

Our role in the United States Air Force is more than just a job; it is a calling to serve our country, the Air Force mission, and our fellow Airmen.

The foundation of our enlisted force is deeply rooted in a rich heritage, commitment to duty, and dedication to upholding and living a high set of standards. As Airmen, our Core Values directly align with our steadfast ability to serve in a demanding profession and embody the trust our Nation places in us.

The framework, development levels, responsibilities, and standards of our enlisted force are the subject of this guide. They apply to all of us. My expectation is for each one of us, together, to know, learn, and embody the contents of this handbook as we continue the storied history of those who have come before us. This is how we will deliver Airpower.



**JoAnne S. Bass**  
**19<sup>th</sup> Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force**

## PURPOSE

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We are the world's greatest Air Force...powered by Airmen and fueled by innovation. This guide defines our enlisted force structure and serves to identify established standards and expectations. It provides the foundation for the enlisted force to meet mission requirements and individual Airman proficiency and competency development, both foundationally and for their specific occupations. The "Brown Book" describes what makes us enlisted Airmen, not merely functional specialists.

Our force is comprised of a diverse group of Airmen in the *Profession of Arms*. Despite the differences across functional and operational lines, there is a compelling need for a deliberate and standardized approach to force development and career progression as well as the assumption of increased supervisory and leadership responsibilities.

Force development synchronizes the pillars of education, training, and experience. Each is complemented by the *Air Force Foundational Competencies*, career field specific *Occupational Competencies*, and *the Airman Leadership Qualities (ALQs)*. These provide individuals with a common framework, set of priorities, and expectations based on rank, experience and/or position.

Information presented within this guide helps Airmen understand the structure, values, principles, and standards of our enlisted force. It supersedes Air Force Handbook 36-2618, *The Enlisted Force Structure*, dated July 5, 2018.

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# THE ENLISTED FORCE STRUCTURE

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## Chapter 1 – WHY WE SERVE: DEFEND AMERICA

### A CALLING

The choice to serve is always a personal one. Together, we as Americans accept and carry the torch of the generations who came before us and fought for our freedoms. We stand watch to defend the homeland and our way of life – from north to south, east to west, and sea to shining sea. Strengthened and enriched by diversity across our lands, the United States remains a global symbol of freedom, democracy, human rights, and opportunity.

America expects us to be exemplary role models, competent experts, thoughtful counselors, committed advisors, approachable mentors, and leaders of character. To meet these expectations, we continually invest in our people and, by doing so, develop them as professionals and citizens. These actions directly fuel the Department of Defense’s mission to provide combat-credible military forces needed to deter war and protect the security of our Nation.

We willingly take the *Oath of Enlistment*, which demonstrates a public commitment to the country and the Air Force. In this oath, we are accepting responsibility to support and defend [The Constitution of the United States](#), as well as the orders given to us by officers appointed over us. We take the oath at the start of our career and with each reenlistment to signify this commitment.

### THE OATH OF ENLISTMENT

“I [*state your full name*], Do solemnly swear (*or affirm*) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God (*optional*).”

### A PROFESSION OF ARMS

[A Profession of Arms](#) defines our service as a higher calling, in which we hold ourselves to higher standards. We abide by a code of conduct that demonstrates our Air Force Core Values, serves as our compass, and provides the fortified foundation of our service. The Airman’s Creed highlights the strength of our Airmen who fly, fight, and win as one Air Force.

Inherent in the *Profession of Arms* is warrior ethos. It forms the foundation of what it means to be an Airman. Warrior ethos is the hardiness of spirit as well as moral and physical courage. It instills a combat mindset and emphasizes that every Airman is part of the fight regardless of their career field or what capacity they serve.

### OUR CORE VALUES

The expectation for all Airmen is to embrace and actively demonstrate their commitment to the [Air Force Core Values – Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do](#). These foundational, enduring, and guiding principles aid in creating a culture of respect and trust while ensuring we continue to meet the standard against which our fellow service members and the American public hold us. In every position we serve, it will always be our responsibility to uphold and enforce our Core Values.

## **AIRMAN'S CREED**

In order to be effective as a service, we must all share the same understanding of how we contribute to the mission. The Airman's Creed describes our commitment to our fundamental warfighting beliefs. It also defines us as American Airmen, reminds us that we are warriors, and instills our dedication to serve our Nation. Each line of the Airman's Creed defines the essential fundamental and foundational responsibilities we abide by. [Video: The Airman's Creed.](#)

The Airman's Creed also sets the tone of our personal and professional lives while serving in the Air Force. This is where we embrace our Air Force family with our brothers and sisters in arms by connecting to the past, serving in the present, and preparing for future generations.

***I AM AN AMERICAN AIRMAN.  
I AM A WARRIOR.  
I HAVE ANSWERED MY NATION'S CALL.***

***I AM AN AMERICAN AIRMAN.  
MY MISSION IS TO FLY, FIGHT, AND WIN.  
I AM FAITHFUL TO A PROUD HERITAGE,  
A TRADITION OF HONOR,  
AND A LEGACY OF VALOR.***

***I AM AN AMERICAN AIRMAN.  
GUARDIAN OF FREEDOM AND JUSTICE,  
MY NATION'S SWORD AND SHIELD,  
ITS SENTRY AND AVENGER.  
I DEFEND MY COUNTRY WITH MY LIFE.***

***I AM AN AMERICAN AIRMAN.  
WINGMAN, LEADER, WARRIOR.  
I WILL NEVER LEAVE AN AIRMAN BEHIND,  
I WILL NEVER FALTER,  
AND I WILL NOT FAIL.***

*"I have been recognized as a hero for my 10 minutes of action over Vietnam, but I am no more a hero than anyone else who has served this country."*

**Sgt. John L. Levitow  
Medal of Honor Recipient**



## Chapter 2 – WHO WE ARE: AIRMANSHIP

### A CULTURE OF RESPECT, TRUST, AND INCLUSION

Respect in the *Profession of Arms* goes beyond professional courtesy or deference to those in a position of authority. Respect is a positive way of treating or thinking about others. It is the foundation for accepting others for who they are, including their previous experiences. Exhibiting respect in our organizations builds a culture of trust. Airmen in high-trust organizations are more productive, collaborate better with their teams, and have an increased commitment to the mission. Every Airman's responsibility is to utilize these tools toward a healthy environment where everyone is welcome to be the best version of themselves while supporting each other and contributing to a common cause.

Airmen can build a culture of respect and trust in their organizations by practicing these behaviors:

- ★ **Value Diversity and Uphold Equality.** Embrace differences allowing us to solve problems in collaborative ways. Actively learn from others with different worldviews and life experiences. Seek multiple perspectives and opportunities before making decisions that affect the group. Ensure every Airman feels free to offer their skills, abilities, and ideas while rejecting prejudice and injustice in all forms.
- ★ **Intentionally Build Relationships.** Express interest in and concern for team members' success and well-being. Seek out and build connections with others, especially those who may see the world differently. Remember that connection is a basic human need (regardless of being an introvert/extrovert) and trust is built in small moments, not grand gestures.
- ★ **Actively Share Information.** Open communication is key in inclusive cultures. Strive to reduce uncertainty and create a shared understanding of opportunities and decisions.
- ★ **Give Airmen Discretion When Able.** Empower Airmen to practice what they have been trained and to execute tasks and projects in a way that they will own and feel valued. Actively train replacements for the future responsibilities and provide opportunities across the entire team to foster inclusion.
- ★ **Facilitate Whole-Person Growth.** Develop personally as well as professionally. Acquiring new skills is not enough if you are not growing at a personal level. To understand others, you first must understand yourself. A growth mindset and self-development are key to better communication and teamwork. Foster opportunities for teammates to maximize their potential.
- ★ **Professional Communication.** As an Airman, you must be a professional 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Your actions on- and off-duty are a representation of yourself, the Air Force, and our Nation. The Air Force respects Airmen's rights to self-expression, and at the same time, you must recognize that in the *Profession of Arms* there are certain limitations placed on freedoms of speech. Each one of you, as an Airman, are personally responsible for the messages conveyed across all communication mediums, both online and off. In both official and unofficial capacities, your actions can shape public opinion. Therefore, everyone should strive to demonstrate the highest standards of conduct and professionalism to convey the Air Force's Core Values. See [\*DAFI 35-101, Public Affairs Operations\*](#) for more information.

### WINGMAN, LEADER, WARRIOR

**What it means to be an Airman — on Duty and in Life.**

**Wingman.** Everything we do is about teamwork. This means looking out for and always being willing to help each other. Wingmen bear an inherent responsibility to understand this and assist others in meeting this expectation. Wingmen are there for each other in good and bad times. Wingmen are dependable and act whenever the moment calls. Regardless of rank, we must never forget what it means to be a teammate first and to be a Wingman.

## The Enlisted Force Structure

**Leader.** Leadership starts with serving others. We should all continuously set the example, be approachable, show humility, actively listen, and strive for excellence. Leaders own their culture, set a vision, share, and translate decisions. Leaders elevate teams with impacts that echo throughout organizations.

**Warrior.** Being a warrior is not easy, but is vital for our Nation to sustain its way of life and the values and principles we hold dear. Being a warrior means we have taken an oath to protect those who count on us. This requires courage, grit, honor, pride, resilience, self-discipline, and determination.

### FOLLOWERSHIP, LEADERSHIP, AND TEAMWORK

**Followership.** Followership is reaching a specific goal; while exercising respect for authority, taking the initiative, having humility, a positive attitude, integrity, and self-discipline. When joining the Air Force, we agree to be professional, act morally and responsibly, complete tasks to the best of our ability, and have a willingness to serve our community. Effective followership is an essential element of the development of all Air Force leaders.

**Leadership.** Leadership is the art and science of accomplishing the Air Force mission by motivating, influencing, and directing personnel. This highlights two central elements: the mission and the Airmen who will accomplish it. Leadership motivates and inspires people to interact and understand one another by encouraging a sense of achievement, self-esteem, recognition, and belonging. Qualities that help leaders gain respect are credibility, a positive influence on others' self-awareness, cultural awareness, and empathy. Leadership attributes are described in the Joint Staff's [\*Developing Enlisted Leaders for Tomorrow's Wars\*](#).

**Teamwork.** Teamwork is essential at every level. We must recognize the interdependency of every Airman's contribution toward the mission and strive for organizational excellence. We not only give our personal best but also challenge and motivate each other. We gain respect through our actions and strong work ethic, thus increasing team trust. We carry our weight and, whenever necessary, help our Wingmen carry theirs.

✦ **Self-Accountability.** Self-accountability is the courage to unbiasedly reflect on and take personal responsibility for your actions. Avoid blaming others and be open to constructive feedback as this exposes blind spots. Self-accountability enforces standards and strengthens mission effectiveness. One must take failures in stride, as failures lead to growth and development. Mistakes met with learning and transparency are essential to the foundational trust within an organization.

✦ **Team-Accountability.** Team-accountability means the team works together to follow command standards, commitments, completion of projects on time, and always toward the goals. The inability to take ownership of one's faults can directly lead to team degradation and a toxic work environment. Every team shares a culture and each of us plays a part in setting the tone of what is acceptable.

*"When I think of the enlisted force, I see dedication, determination, loyalty, and valor."*

**CMSAF Paul W. Airey,  
1st Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force**  
\*Prisoner of War in World War II





## Chapter 3 – OUR MISSION: AIRPOWER

### CORE MISSIONS

As members of the Department of Defense, we deliver airpower to the Nation. *Air Force Doctrine Publication 1, The Air Force (AFDP-1)* further describes why we fight, who we are, what we do, and how we do it. Our Total Force is comprised of three components: the Regular Air Force (RegAF), the Air National Guard (ANG), and the Air Force Reserve (AFR).

The service's focus is to develop, train, sustain, and integrate the elements of airpower to execute its functions across the spectrum of operations. Key capabilities are at the forefront of the Air Force's strategic perspective and, therefore, at the heart of the service's contribution to our Nation's total military capabilities and strategic vision. The key capabilities are not doctrine, but they are enablers of our doctrine. These capabilities begin to translate the central beliefs of doctrine into understandable concepts and thus contribute to a greater understanding.

To best contribute to the mission, we must understand our role within these critical capabilities and define our contributions so that all Airmen understand how they fit into the overall success of defending our Nation through airpower. No matter where our Airmen serve or what they do, they contribute to at least one of these five core missions:

- ✦ **Air Superiority.** Our freedom from attack and our freedom to attack. We continually build distinctive capabilities that enable joint forces to dominate enemy operations in all dimensions: land, sea, air, space, cyber, and information.
- ✦ **Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR).** The eyes and ears on our adversaries. ISR is about helping leaders make informed decisions to maintain deterrence, contain crises, and achieve success in battle.
- ✦ **Rapid Global Mobility.** Delivery on demand. We maintain and improve our ability to respond quickly and decisively anywhere we are needed around the globe.
- ✦ **Global Strike.** Any target at any time. Global strike missions include a wide range of crisis response and escalation control options, such as providing close air support to troops at risk, interdicting enemy forces, inserting special operations forces, and targeting an adversary's vital centers.
- ✦ **Command and Control.** Pervasive and highly interconnected, command and control networks will be extremely contested. The capability to deliver airpower is intimately dependent on the ability to operate effectively in cyberspace, a domain in and through which we conduct all of our core missions and is critical to many of our command and control systems.

### AIR FORCE SPECIALTIES

The military personnel classification system is designed to match personnel qualifications with job/career field requirements. *AFMAN 36-2100, Military Utilization and Classification*, provides examples and notes regarding enlisted and officer Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSC.) AFSCs are structured with five (enlisted) and four (officer) digits/characters that indicate specific identifiers within the military classification structure.

**Airmen + Core Missions = Global Vigilance, Global Reach, Global Power for America.**

- ★ **1XXXX – Operations:** includes jobs such as aircrew operations and support, special warfare, cyber, intelligence, remotely piloted aircraft, and weather.
- ★ **2XXXX – Logistics and Maintenance:** includes logistics, aerospace maintenance, missile and space systems maintenance.
- ★ **3XXXX – Support:** includes force support, civil engineering, equal opportunity, and security forces.
- ★ **4XXXX – Medical and Dental:** includes all medical and dental positions.
- ★ **5XXXX – Legal and Chaplain:** includes paralegals and religious affairs.
- ★ **6XXXX – Acquisition and Finance:** includes contracting and financial management.
- ★ **7XXXX – Special Investigations:** used for special investigation careers.
- ★ **8XXXX – Special Duty Identifiers:** used for specialized roles outside of career fields.
- ★ **9XXXX – Reporting Identifiers:** is a designation for temporary use or for specialized positions.

## **MULTI-CAPABLE AIRMEN**

**Mindset and Approach.** The speed and pace of threats have changed in today’s world, and so must we. Our people possess capabilities that we often cannot see and do not keep track of formally. Mindset, flexibility, innovation, initiative, and a desire to contribute in any space and in any way that adds value will be critical in the coming years. Airmen must become force multipliers broadening their cross-functional competencies while building teamwork, communication skills, and resiliency. Airmen must adapt and overcome critical challenges in a dynamic environment to achieve mission results.

**Presentation of Forces and Capabilities.** *Multi-capable Airmen (MCA)* are members capable of accomplishing tasks outside of their core Air Force Specialty. Specifically, these personnel are trained as a cross-functional team to provide combat support and combat service support to Agile Combat Employment (ACE) force elements. MCA are enabled by cross-utilization training (CUT) and can operate independently in an expeditionary environment to accomplish mission objectives with acceptable levels of risk. MCA supports ACE operating concepts, which align with Adaptive Operations in Contested Environments (AOiCE.) ACE is an operational concept that supports joint all-domain operations, enable convergence across domains, and presents an adversary with dilemmas at an operational tempo that complicates or negates adversary responses and enables the joint force to operate inside the adversary’s decision-making cycle.

*“Regardless of our respective ranks and positions, we must execute to the best of our abilities and we must do right the first time because the application of Airpower is serious business where half-hearted efforts and playing for second place are not options.”*

**General Charles Q. Brown, Jr.**  
**22nd Chief of Staff, United States Air Force**



## Chapter 4 – WHAT WE DO: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### COMMAND TEAMS

Our command teams play a vital role in the successes or failures of our units. *A commander (a civilian director or equivalent), the Senior Enlisted Leader, the First Sergeant, and where possible, a Key Spouse,* can set constructive conditions at all levels of command and be the catalyst for positive experiences for our people. There is no single checklist on how command teams should operate. In general, command teams should be *visible, accessible, and engaged*. Airmen, both above and below command teams, must stay in sync to support the chain of command and mission priorities. The personnel in these positions are all responsible for fostering a culture of dignity and respect within the unit by ensuring supervisors, wingmen, and enlisted Airmen do their part.

✦ **Commander.** Special authorities and responsibilities are inherent with command. In addition to leading people to accomplish an assigned mission, commanders have the lawful authority and responsibility to promote and safeguard the morale, physical well-being, and general welfare of persons under their command. Commanders are responsible for executing the mission, leading people, managing resources, and improving the unit. [\*Air Force Instruction 1-2, Commander's Responsibilities.\*](#)

All commanding officers and others in authority in the Air Force are required to:

- (1) Show themselves as a good example of virtue, honor, patriotism, and subordination;
- (2) Be vigilant in inspecting the conduct of all persons who are placed under their command;
- (3) Guard against and suppress all dissolute and immoral practices and correct, according to the laws and regulations of the Air Force, all persons who are guilty of them;
- (4) Take all necessary and proper measures, under the laws, regulations, and customs of the Air Force, to promote and safeguard the morale, the physical well-being, and the general welfare of the persons under their command or charge.

✦ **Director.** A director may serve in conjunction with or in place of a commander, depending on the structure of an organization. They typically carry responsibility commensurate with that of a commander. A director may be in charge of an agency, activity, department, or other large organization types.

✦ **Senior Enlisted Leader (SEL).** Senior Enlisted Leaders are a part of the leadership triad and are charged with readiness, training, health, morale, welfare, and quality of life for the unit or group of assigned personnel. Additional responsibilities include managing and directing resource activities, interpreting and enforcing policies and applicable directives, establishing control procedures to meet mission goals and standards, and actively supporting and maintaining robust recognition programs. **NOTE:** *Regular Air Force Senior Enlisted Leaders may support and advise commanders on the Enlisted Force Distribution Panel (EFDP) process, as well as the nomination and selection of Airmen for career-broadening opportunities.*

✦ **First Sergeant.** The First Sergeant works directly for and derives authority from the unit commander. They are a dedicated focal point for all readiness, health, morale, welfare, and quality of life issues within their organizations. At home stations and in expeditionary environments, their primary responsibility is to build and maintain a mission-ready force. The First Sergeant ensures the organization understands the commander's intent, policies, and goals. They conduct quality force reviews on all performance reports, decoration recommendations, and other personnel actions. Working with their fellow senior noncommissioned officers and supervisors, First Sergeants ensure impartial and effective discipline and the highest levels of esprit de corps. They are the organization's experts for connections to base agencies and overall resources. [\*Air Force Instruction 36-2113, The First Sergeant.\*](#)

★ **Key Spouse.** An extension of the command team is the Key Spouse, who connects our military families with their respective unit. They serve as a vital resource to support Air Force families. The purpose of the Key Spouse is to increase resilience and unit cohesion amongst military members and their families throughout the military life cycle. The Key Spouse is typically a spouse volunteer in the unit who is appointed by the commander and serves as a communication link between the chain of command and families for timely information and referral services supporting overall family readiness. Resources: [Key Spouse Program Link](#) and [Five And Thrive](#).

## TEAMING AND PARTNERSHIPS

Teaming is the collaboration of unique specialties coming together to accomplish the overall mission and advance the commander's priorities. Teaming can occur within all units, at all levels, and amongst all ranks. Additionally, through the power of partnership, we can work with our local communities, sister services, joint and allied partners, inter-agency organizations, industry, and academia partners to accomplish mission and community tasks together. Some of these common tasks or goals are focused on academia, driving innovation, industry building, and problem-solving. We must work within our force (internal) and extend out (external) to increase the opportunities to succeed in airpower.

Teams solve problems and produce solutions more effectively when we are diverse. Creating teams by including mixed ranks, status, level of responsibility, and experience will drive better results and increase relationships in and outside of organizations. These partnerships strengthen our service and increase our ability to meet and exceed mission priorities.

★ **Officer Corps.** Enlisted Airmen should understand the officer structure, duty titles, and corresponding responsibilities within their organizations. The officer force structure is comprised of three distinct and separate tiers. The tiers are Company Grade Officer, which includes grades O-1 thru O-3, Field Grade Officer, comprising of grades O-4 thru O-6, and General Officer, including grades of O-7 through O-10. Progression through the tiers correlates to increased levels of leadership and managerial responsibilities, with each tier building on the responsibilities of the previous one. The focus of each tier is to develop the appropriate Airman Leadership Qualities and foundational competencies associated with their tier and position.

★ **Civilian Corps.** Civilians are fundamental to the strength of our Air Force. They provide corporate knowledge and stability across the Air Force and may deploy to various contingency areas. Like the enlisted and officer corps, civilians have a compelling need for a deliberate and common approach to force development, career progression, and the assumption of increased supervisory and leadership responsibilities. [AFMAN 36-606, Civilian Career Field Management and Development](#), outlines career field governance structure, centrally managed positions, career paths, and career progression models.

★ **Civic Partners.** We collaborate with many entities in the local community to accomplish our missions effectively. Establishing these relationships is key to base and mission sustainment. Different civic partners we may work with are local law enforcement, chamber of commerce, local contractors, honorary commanders, local government, healthcare partners, education institutions, industry partners, and many more.

## EXPECTATIONS AND DUTIES

The enlisted force is comprised of three distinct and separate tiers: Junior Enlisted Airmen, Noncommissioned Officers, and Senior Noncommissioned Officers. Each tier correlates to increased levels of education, training, and experience, as well as leadership and managerial responsibilities. The primary goal in each tier is mission accomplishment. However, every tier and every Airman has a personal expectation to maintain personal wellness and readiness. **NOTE:** A full list of terms of address for each rank, including required education levels, can be found on [page 26](#).

✪ **Air Force Leadership Levels.** The Air Force operates in a dynamic global context across multiple domains requiring leadership skills at three levels: tactical, operational, and strategic. These levels emphasize a different mix of qualities and experience. The leadership level at which an Airman operates determines the level of Airman Leadership Qualities and foundational competencies required to lead Airmen in mission accomplishment. As Airmen progress from the tactical to strategic leadership levels, emphasis on the use of Airman Leadership Qualities and foundational competencies shifts from a personal focus to an organizational focus. The nature and scope of leadership challenges and preferred leadership methods differ based on the level of leadership and duties. These levels apply across the entire spectrum of the enlisted force structure.

✪ **Foundational Competency Levels.** A competency is a combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities, and other characteristics that manifest in an observable and measurable pattern of behavior. There are four levels which are basic, intermediate, advanced, and expert. Competence levels are used to describe observable and measurable behaviors. These levels are not dependent on the member's rank, they are based on their experience level demonstrated through specific behaviors on assigned tasks. **Example:** An A1C can demonstrate an advanced level of communication based on previous knowledge, skills, and abilities. Where a SMSgt can demonstrate a basic level based on their overall experience or need to develop these same skills and abilities. [\*AFH 36-2647, Competency Modeling\*](#)

✪ **Airman Leadership Qualities (ALQs) Proficiency Levels.** The ALQs are the most important sub-elements of performance, derived from those same validated behaviors identified in the foundational competencies. ALQs are designed to guide the rater and facilitate discussion when providing constructive feedback. A rater should use their best judgment when determining the proficiency level of a ratee bearing in mind that each definition should be applied using a whole-person concept relative to the rank, AFSC, and assigned duties. There are four levels, which are *Developing, Proficient, Highly Proficient and Outstanding*. Proficiency levels should be described and evidenced in feedback utilizing examples of behavior rooted in the foundational competencies.

### **Practicing Personal Wellness and Readiness:**

✪ **Comprehensive Airman Fitness (CAF).** All Airmen must ensure self-care and wellness remain a priority. While facing personal and professional demands, it is essential to work to find a harmony between life at work and home. The CAF model provides a holistic approach for Airmen, including mental, physical, spiritual, and social health.

✪ **Financial Readiness.** The Air Force's goal is to ensure all Airmen have access to financial literacy education to support choices that are best for their financial goals in and out of uniform. Airmen and their families are encouraged to take advantage of Air Force programs and plan for life after transitioning from military service. For more information visit: [\*AFPC – Air Force Family Readiness Programs\*](#)

**Meeting Expectations through Deliberate Progression.** All members are expected to understand and practice the Air Force leadership levels, Airman Leadership Qualities, and foundational competencies. Airmen must show increased development through career progression and will have expectations, duties, and responsibilities commensurate with their rank. Below you will find the expectations and responsibilities for each tier outlined through *Developing Self, Developing Others, Developing Ideas, and Developing Organizations*.

✪ **Junior Enlisted Airmen:** The fuel to our daily missions. This tier's focus and priority is on learning and consists of Airman Basic (AB), Airman (Amn), Airman First Class (A1C), and Senior Airman (SrA). This tier should be developing their Airman Leadership Qualities and be familiar with foundational and occupational competencies to perform at the basic and intermediate levels. As Airmen progress, their focus will be on developing:

**Airman Basic.** Primary focus is to adapt from a civilian to a military lifestyle.

**Airman.** Are still learning and adapting to the military profession and are expected to understand and conform to military standards, customs and courtesies while beginning to show occupational proficiency.

**Airman First Class.** Apply their knowledge and skills to become highly efficient in their career field and focus on earning their 5-skill level.

**Senior Airman.** Encompass all the previous junior enlisted requirements to perform as skilled technicians and become well-versed trainers. They begin developing supervisory and leadership skills to advance their professional growth. Senior Airmen gain supervision experience of individuals and begin building skills in leading teams. Upon completion of Airman Leadership School, a Senior Airman may have an opportunity to become an official supervisor.

### **Responsibilities of all Junior Enlisted Airmen:**

#### **Developing Self:**

- ★ Act as an Air Force ambassador both on- and off-duty.
- ★ Abide by all things that build a military professional; these principles are described in detail in previous chapters.
- ★ Accept and accomplish all duties, responsibilities, and lawful orders in an efficient manner. Work to find harmony between your personal desires and Air Force needs.
- ★ Address any issues that could detract from mental readiness. Seek assistance through support agencies. Be proactive in contacting a Wingman to seek help.
- ★ Work toward identifying, correcting, and reporting behaviors that may put yourself or others at risk. Provide clear guidance and follow-up as necessary through appropriate channels.
- ★ Contribute to a culture of dignity and respect by enforcing a zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment, sexual assault, and discrimination.
- ★ Maintain spiritual and physical readiness to establish a sense of purpose or personal priorities to develop the skills required to persevere in times of distress.
- ★ Properly maintain financial responsibilities and make informed decisions on budgets, investments, and life-long goals.
- ★ Be knowledgeable and stay informed on current events affecting the Air Force.
- ★ Ensure no discredit to the Air Force or compromise to operational security occurs while using personal and government information systems, including but not limited to, social media.
- ★ Pursue development through voluntary education (school, certification, reading, etc.), base organizations, and community partnerships.

#### **Developing Others:**

- ★ Contribute to a professional climate and culture by supporting leaders' decisions, seeking clarification when needed, and aiding others in understanding.
- ★ Be alert for behavioral changes and/or signs of stress, depression, and self-harm.
- ★ Build relationships that promote well-being and optimal performance. Key components of social readiness are teamwork, communication, and social support.
- ★ Foster inclusion by actively learning from, listening to, and engaging with teammates from diverse backgrounds and perspectives.
- ★ Identify and communicate any barriers regarding equal opportunity, toxic leadership, or toxic followership for all Airmen.

#### **Developing Ideas:**

## *The Enlisted Force Structure*

- ★ Use technology to identify data and information; explore, create and manage digital content; and appropriately interact in a virtual environment. Follow organizational protocols for the use of electronic devices. Get help for computer system problems as needed and participate in online training.
- ★ Apply learned concepts or methods to new situations and consider previous solutions to generate new ideas.
- ★ Gain buy-in through seeking input from others and use facts to support points of view when meeting with team members. Work to validate sources of information prior to seeking support.

★ **Noncommissioned Officers:** The “backbone” of the United States Air Force. This tier focuses on training, supervision, and task execution and consists of Staff Sergeant (SSgt) and Technical Sergeant (TSgt). NCOs lead by example as role models to all and ensure proper use of resources within their control. They become proficient and internalize the Airman Leadership Qualities and progress toward intermediate and advance foundational competency levels. Additionally, they continue their development through Enlisted Professional Military Education and career-broadening positions, as they begin building a strong network within and outside their organizations. As Noncommissioned Officers progress in this tier, the focus will be on establishing proficiency:

**Staff Sergeant.** Earn the 7-skill level and further develop as technicians, supervisors, and leaders. Responsible for their subordinate's development and effective accomplishment of all tasks.

**Technical Sergeant.** Further development by striving to be the technical expert while providing excellent attention to detail, establishing effective communication, and fostering a positive culture of trust within the organization.

**Responsibilities of all Noncommissioned Officers:** In addition to meeting all Junior Enlisted Airmen responsibilities, Noncommissioned Officer responsibilities include:

### **Developing Self:**

- ★ Increase knowledge and understanding of the occupational and foundational competencies required to accomplish the mission. These competencies are gained through a combination of education, training, and experience.
- ★ Embrace and demonstrate personal and team resilience by embodying the social, physical, mental, and spiritual domains of Comprehensive Airman Fitness and encouraging others to do the same.
- ★ Uphold physical readiness. Lead the way by promoting, supporting, and participating in physical fitness programs. Incorporate physical training into the team's duty schedules as the mission allows to ensure a fit and ready force.

### **Developing Others:**

- ★ Contribute to a professional climate and culture by supporting leaders' decisions, seeking clarification when needed, and defining expectations to their subordinates, as well as identifying, highlighting, and correcting behaviors that might detract from their teams.
- ★ When needed, exercise authority to issue lawful orders to complete assigned tasks in accordance with Article 92 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.
- ★ Practice and promote mental readiness. Be actively aware of challenges that subordinates may be facing. Advocate seeking help for individuals and remain engaged to ensure continued mental readiness and effectiveness.
- ★ Allow and encourage team members to develop spiritual skills needed in times of stress, hardship, and tragedy. This may or may not include religious activities.

## *The Enlisted Force Structure*

- ★ Stay professionally engaged with team members both on- and off-duty. Be familiar with a subordinate's environment/residence or living spaces and visit installation support facilities to understand off-duty opportunities and living conditions.
- ★ Recognize and reward individuals whose performance clearly exceeds standards. Ensure subordinates and peers are held accountable when deviating against standards.
- ★ Provide feedback and counseling to subordinates on development, performance, career opportunities, promotions, benefits, and entitlements. Use continuous informal and formal feedback to optimize a subordinate's potential and performance. On an annual basis, Noncommissioned Officers must discuss and provide the [\*Benefits Facts Sheets\*](#) to subordinates during feedback.

### **Developing Ideas:**

- ★ Demonstrate and facilitate a healthy climate of effective followership by willingly owning, explaining, and promoting leaders' decisions. In some circumstances, Noncommissioned Officers who are lower ranking may be placed in charge of others of the same grade as determined by the unit commander.
- ★ Use multi-media to learn and expand partnerships to explore potential ideas. Protect sensitive personal and operational information on social networking sites or other online forums.
- ★ Develop insights into new situations; question conventional approaches by applying and modifying complex learned concepts or methods appropriately. Question existing methods or processes and identify novel alternatives.
- ★ Prototype and test potential solutions. Use experts and other influence tactics to build support for ideas. Appeal to ideals or values to overcome resistance and sway the opinions of others.
- ★ Use multiple digital resources at the same time to conduct research. Select communication mediums based on situational needs. Provide others with advice on new digital technology.

### **Developing Organizations:**

- ★ Encourage retraining opportunities to balance the force and meet mission requirements.

★ **Senior Noncommissioned Officers:** This tier preserves our legacy and heritage by focusing on leading teams and shaping the future force. The ranks consist of Master Sergeant (MSgt), Senior Master Sergeant (SMSgt), and Chief Master Sergeant (CMSgt). As Senior Noncommissioned Officers progress in this tier, they actively integrate subordinates' talents, skills, and abilities with other teams to effectively accomplish the mission. Additionally, they seek joint and interagency professional development opportunities to build partnership capacity. Senior Noncommissioned Officers should be highly proficient at the Airman Leadership Qualities and have a comprehensive knowledge of the foundational competencies operating at the advanced and expert levels. All Senior Noncommissioned Officers mentor their subordinates and peers through continual education, training, and experience to develop ready and disciplined teams. They also play a unique and critical role in developing and advising officers to lead teams successfully. As Senior Noncommissioned Officers progress in this tier, they focus on:

**Master Sergeant.** Technical experts that begin transitioning from first-line supervisors and trainers to leaders of teams with operational competence and overall effectiveness.

**Senior Master Sergeant.** Experienced operational leaders that continue to develop their leadership and management skills. They strive to learn the art of strategic leadership and earn the 9-skill level.

**Chief Master Sergeant.** Serve in the highest enlisted grade and hold strategic leadership positions with tremendous influence at all levels of the Air Force.



**Responsibilities of all Senior Noncommissioned Officers:** In addition to meeting all Junior Enlisted Airmen and Noncommissioned Officers responsibilities, Senior Noncommissioned Officers responsibilities include:

**Developing Self:**

- ★ Dedicate time to develop a greater understanding of leadership, operational, and managerial concepts and advance communication skills to reach and connect with diverse audiences.
- ★ Leverage appropriate data collection techniques by identifying root causes, involving others, and gathering information, to rationally weigh all sources in the decision-making process.
- ★ Respond proactively to unexpected or ambiguous situations, opportunities, or risks. In static environments, find and implement constructive methods to exercise flexibility.
- ★ Show self-control by remaining visibly calm in stressful situations when others are not, control emotions or other stress, and take action to respond constructively to the source of the problems.

**Developing Others:**

- ★ Contribute to a professional climate and culture by ensuring their teams understand leadership orders by clarifying expectations as well as identifying, highlighting, and correcting behaviors that might detract from a professional climate and culture.
- ★ Empower Noncommissioned Officers and maintain harmony between caring for people and mission execution.
- ★ Support professional development by sharing knowledge and experience and enforcing standards to best meet the organization's mission requirements. Build and maintain professional relationships and strive to create effective leadership teams.
- ★ Continue to develop themselves and their subordinates through available education, leadership seminars, and content provided through senior leaders' respective official libraries.

**Developing Ideas:**

- ★ Reframe issues to evaluate them from different perspectives and identify useful relationships among complex data from unrelated sources.
- ★ Create a sense of urgency to overcome inaction and take steps to develop trust among the various parties. Teach and influence tactics and strategies to others.

**Developing Organizations:**

- ★ Be an active and visible leader to effectively cultivate a climate of inclusion and excellence.
- ★ Study leaders' decisions to understand their rationale and goals. Translate and communicate tasks and responsibilities up and down the chain of command in order to facilitate mission accomplishment. Foster unit cohesion, connectedness, and belonging as a team.
- ★ Leverage personal experience/knowledge to effectively accomplish and advance the mission.
- ★ Understand, manage, and explain manning health and capabilities based on unit requirements and manpower documents. Help commanders best balance risk to mission and risk to force.
- ★ Work to improve resource management (to include personnel, manpower, facilities, funding) in organizations, teach and encourage others to do the same.
- ★ Understand and be prepared to advocate for both current and future fiscal budget requirements.
- ★ Define how your organization/specialty coordinates with partners to execute the mission. Establish and expand relationships to advance priorities and connect teams to solve problems.
- ★ Understand and educate your team on how to respond, support events during deployments and emerging situations. Foster enduring team readiness for wartime actions and decisions.

## The Enlisted Force Structure

**General Duty Titles:** When properly applied, duty titles facilitate a quick understanding of a person's role and level of responsibility. The following duty titles are common throughout the enlisted force but may vary based on organizational structure. When published, duty titles may be specified in career field governing directives. In each of these positions, Airmen are responsible for *Executing the Mission, Leading People, Improving the Unit and Managing Resources* at a level commensurate to their title.

★ **Supervisor.** Used for Junior Enlisted Airmen and Noncommissioned Officers who are first-line supervisors. Junior Enlisted Airmen will not have the duty title "Supervisor" unless they are at least a Senior Airman and supervise the work of others. Supervisors are responsible for prepping the line by ensuring those under their charge are meeting all responsibilities and continuing to develop.

★ **Noncommissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC).** Used for Noncommissioned Officers responsible for a work center or element that typically have subordinate supervisors. Noncommissioned Officer in Charge is also used for those whose primary duty is a unit-wide program or function management, even if they do not directly rate on personnel.

★ **Manager.** Used for Noncommissioned Officers and Senior Noncommissioned Officers who are program, project, and policy managers at higher headquarters and staff levels. Managers may or may not have personnel working for them and may be the enlisted leader of the branch, division, or directorate.

★ **Flight Chief.** Used for Senior Noncommissioned Officers, and occasionally Noncommissioned Officers, who are the enlisted leaders of a flight.

★ **Section Chief.** Used for Senior Noncommissioned Officers and occasionally Noncommissioned Officers responsible for a section with at least two subordinate work centers or elements.

★ **Superintendent.** Used for Senior Noncommissioned Officers in Charge of functional responsibilities. Only Senior Noncommissioned Officers will hold the duty title of Superintendent.

★ **Chief.** Used for Chief Master Sergeants and civilians who are program, project or policy managers at Numbered Air Force, Major Command, Direct Reporting Unit, Field Operating Agency, Joint Staff, or Air Staff. Chiefs may or may not have personnel working for them and may be the enlisted leader of the branch, division, or directorate.

**Specific Enlisted Positions:** Enlisted Airmen may serve in a variety of special leadership or duty positions inside and outside of their functional specialty. **NOTE:** *Airmen may serve in joint leadership positions and ranks such as the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (SEAC), Combatant Command Senior Enlisted Advisors, and the Senior Enlisted Advisor of the National Guard.* Specific enlisted positions include, but are not limited to:

★ **Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF).** The Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force is both a distinctive rank and a duty position. It represents the highest enlisted level of leadership in the United States Air Force. The position provides direction for the enlisted force and represents their interests, as appropriate, to the American public and to those in all levels of government. The Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force serves as the personal adviser to the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of the Air Force on all issues regarding the welfare, readiness, morale, and proper utilization and progress of more than 600,000 Total Force Airmen. The CMSAF consults with the SEAC and sister service senior enlisted advisors on issues affecting all enlisted Airmen and families across the Department of Defense. The CMSAF engages with foreign military leadership regarding theater security cooperation and partner nation's development efforts and is the Air Force functional manager for command chief master sergeants and group senior enlisted leaders.

★ **Command Chief Master Sergeant (CCM).** The command chief is the Senior Enlisted Leader of the

## *The Enlisted Force Structure*

command at wing or higher levels and is a key member of the command's leadership team. A CCM is the commander's key enlisted advocate and advisor on operational effectiveness and the organization. They are responsible for training and equipping the enlisted Airmen. CCMs ensure the commanders' directions and policies are carried out and the Airmen understand and are dedicated to the mission of the command. CCMs are responsible for the professional development and proper utilization of the command's enlisted force. CCMs work in concert with other senior enlisted leaders and first sergeants to oversee the readiness, training, health, morale, welfare, quality of life, and force development of assigned personnel.

✦ **Career Field Manager (CFM).** Enlisted career field managers are typically Chief Master Sergeants, located at Headquarters Air Force, responsible for organizing one or more enlisted career fields. Their responsibilities include establishing career field entry requirements, developing/managing training plan requirements, evaluating training effectiveness, monitoring career field manning health, collaborating with other career field managers on issues affecting their Airmen, and providing input on programs and policies. Additionally, through Enlisted Development Teams, CFMs ensure the most qualified Noncommissioned and Senior Noncommissioned Officers are placed into key leadership or key development positions utilizing talent management practices.

✦ **Major Command Functional Manager (MFM).** Enlisted Major Command Functional Managers are Senior Noncommissioned Officers who manage designated career fields across their command as well as serve as liaisons to their Air Force Career Field Manager. Responsibilities include visiting the organizations, monitoring the health, balancing manning, elevating concerns, evaluating command training, and disseminating programs and policies for their designated career fields. MFM's are responsible for coordinating with Air Force Personnel Center, through their major command, to distribute personnel. This ensures the prioritization of personnel, manpower, and resources by providing functional and subject matter expertise to Air Education and Training Command.

✦ **Senior Enlisted Leader (SEL).** Senior Enlisted Leader is a duty title reserved for the commander-appointed senior enlisted member at a detachment, squadron, or group. Additionally, this title may be used for appointed Senior Noncommissioned Officers at higher headquarters who lead directorates and/or divisions. Senior Enlisted Leaders provide vital leadership and management experience regarding organizing, equipping, training, and mobilizing the unit or group to effectively meet home station and expeditionary mission requirements. SELs must be well versed and able to advocate for future resources and evolving mission requirements.

✦ **First Sergeant.** The First Sergeant is a key leader serving in a time-honored career-broadening position rich in custom and tradition. They epitomize the highest qualities of Air Force Senior Noncommissioned Officers. These qualities require the First Sergeant to always remain perceptive and credible and to exemplify the core values of the United States Air Force. **NOTE:** *a description of the First Sergeant is covered on page 11.*

**Career-Broadening Opportunities:** *The Air Force Enlisted Classification Directory* contains official specialty descriptions for all military classification codes and identifiers used to identify each Air Force Job and describes the minimum mandatory qualifications for personnel to fill these jobs. *The Special Duty Category Guide* provides additional mandatory eligibility qualifications and requirements for a wide variety of career-broadening positions. Airmen should seek these opportunities throughout their careers to build experience and understanding of how each career field contributes to the overall mission.

**Force Generators:** As part of career-broadening, Force Generators comprise Airmen in key roles to

## The Enlisted Force Structure

*recruit, build, and develop* the Airmen we need. These priority positions are integral in the development of our force and provide a robust experience in training, management, mentorship, and leadership skills that provide greater opportunities upon return to the career field. Airmen that serve in these roles are often the first impression and first line of impact on our newest recruits. Force Generators develop Airmen at every level and are catalysts to elevate character, competence, and commitment within our formations. For this reason, Force Generators must be strong examples of professionals, have a passion for developing others, and be screened for selection in these duties.

✦ **Recruiter.** The Air Force recruiter is the first Airman potential enlistees will ever meet. They represent the Air Force in communities throughout the world and must exhibit the highest levels of integrity, professionalism, military bearing, respect for authority, and exceptional dress and personal appearance. Recruiters are responsible for interviewing, screening, testing, and evaluating applicants from civilian sources; assisting and participating in special events such as state and municipal ceremonies, exhibits, fairs, parades, centennials, and sporting events; and performing other duties as required to achieve recruiting goals.

✦ **Military Training Instructor (MTI).** Military Training Instructors are responsible for shaping newly enlisted trainees into Airmen ready to serve in the United States Air Force. They must exhibit the highest levels of professional behavior, military bearing, respect for others, dress, and personal appearance. MTIs plan, organize, direct basic and initial military training, and determine requirements for training, facilities, space, equipment, visual aids, and supplies. They instruct trainees in dormitory setup, drill, and other training subjects using demonstration-performance and lecture methods and inspect and evaluate military training activities, personnel, and facilities. MTIs must be attuned to trainees' interpersonal interactions to identify and correct behaviors that are incompatible with military service and the *Profession of Arms*.

✦ **Military Training Leader (MTL).** Military Training Leaders supervise all assigned non-prior service Airmen during technical training. They evaluate standards of conduct, performance, military bearing, discipline, and create a culture of dignity and respect. While scheduling and conducting military training functions. MTLs establish incoming, outgoing, and student entry briefings; conduct individual and group interviews; motivate personnel to develop military attitudes, effective human relations, and social skills for improving interpersonal and military relations; and assist students in their personal adjustment to military life.

✦ **Academy Military Training (AMT) Noncommissioned Officer.** Academy Military Training Noncommissioned Officers lead, mentor, instruct, develop, and supervise the United States Air Force cadets. AMTs serve as the principal advisor to the Cadet Squadron Commander on all issues relating to cadets. These trainers provide military training, exercise general supervision/leadership, and prepare cadets to support mission requirements to ensure cadet and squadron success.

✦ **Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corp (AFROTC) Training Instructor.** AFROTC Training Instructors serve as the detachment's key enlisted leader and as the primary enlisted advisor to the detachment commander/Professor of Aerospace (PAS) on cadet academics, professional development, military training, and discipline. They promote health, welfare, and morale for all assigned cadets and provide oversight of administrative tasks for Enlisted Commissioning Programs (ECP) students, supporting cadet life cycle management, and completing actions for contracting and commissioning.

✦ **Technical Training Instructor.** Technical training instructors provide initial skills training and education for their Air Force specialty. They are technical experts in their career field and work closely with Air Force career field managers to develop training and education requirements necessary to award the 3-skill level; and plan, organize, and direct the training of all non-prior service Airmen and career Airmen cross-training into a new Air Force specialty.

## *The Enlisted Force Structure*

★ **Professional Military Education (PME) Instructor and Curriculum Developer.** Professional Military Education Instructors use informal lectures, case studies, teaching interviews, guided discussions, and a variety of other teaching methods to provide instruction and education necessary to facilitate knowledge and understanding of *The Profession of Arms*. They plan, organize, and direct programs at Airman Leadership School, Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy, and the Chief Leadership Academy. These instructors are responsible for delivering Professional Military Education courses that develop the foundational competencies for enlisted Airmen along their career continuum.

★ **Airmen Development Advisors (ADA).** Formerly known as Career Assistance Advisors, Airmen Development Advisors serve at the base level and advise commanders and supervisors on force development and force management programs. ADAs counsel Airmen on career progression and planning, monitor mandatory pay and benefits briefings, and conduct advertising and publicity programs. Airmen Development Advisors are critical in connecting the force development ecosystem across military installations to support tiered competency-based progression.

*"It's very hard for someone to find a job they truly love,  
and I truly love serving my country."*

**SMSgt Israel Del Toro,**  
\*First 100% combat disabled Airman  
allowed to continue serving



## Chapter 5 – HOW WE DO IT: COMPETENCIES AND ALQs

As a warfighting force, the Air Force has a vast array of mission requirements. Therefore, we need a basic set of Air Force standards to build upon for all Airmen. From these, supervisors lay out a set of specific and relevant expectations for each member to execute their assigned missions and duties. We must also acknowledge that our Airmen all have different talents, goals, and aspirations. It is why we should not treat everyone the same. Leaders must keep these things in mind when developing objectives, providing feedback, and assessing performance.

### FEEDBACK AND DEVELOPMENT

As an institution, *the Airman Leadership Qualities (ALQs) and Air Force Foundational Competencies* are driven directly from the four major graded areas of the Air Force Unit Effectiveness Inspection Program; *Executing the Mission, Leading People, Managing Resources, and Improving the Unit*. Additionally, each career field develops occupational competencies that are tailored to the requirements of their specialties. All of these development mechanisms are intertwined to deliver Airmen that are competent on their missions, remain adaptable problem-solvers, and have human skills to connect on a professional level.

★ **Airman Leadership Qualities (ALQs).** The ALQs are the most important behavior measures of specific enlisted performance. The ALQs are derived from how Airmen perform using the foundational competencies. The ALQs are the cornerstone to a more transparent and collaborative feedback system and the deliberate development of Airmen. The ALQs solidify how we perform. They are grouped under major performance areas that are aligned to the major graded areas critical to unit effectiveness. Through competency-based performance management founded on the ALQs, Airmen can be better informed about their performance to reach their full potential. Furthermore, they provide the foundation of how the Air Force develops leaders of character and competence by defining and rewarding the behaviors we value.

★ **Foundational Competencies.** The Air Force Foundational Competencies will assist Airmen in taking ownership in the development of themselves and their subordinates. Knowing is one thing, but “doing” is what turns thinking into action. Today’s competency-based approach to force development will allow us to capture what Airmen “know and can do.” A competency is a combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities and other characteristics that manifest in an observable and measurable pattern of behavior. These competencies, along with occupational competencies (specific for each career field), are part of the service’s systematic, competency-based approach to develop specific behaviors. This identifies what success looks like, to create a pathway that deliberately develops Airmen to become their most effective selves. The four primary categories of the foundational competencies are *Developing Self, Developing Others, Developing Ideas, and Developing Organizations* and include 24 sub-categories. The foundational competencies provide Total Force Airmen a pathway to success in their respective careers, lay the foundation for developing the Airmen we need, and are universally applicable to all Airmen. These levels are fluid based on the Airman’s experience and position. *Resource: Air Force Foundational Competencies – AFH 36-2647, Competency Modeling*



## MENTORING AND COACHING

A mentor talks *to* you, and a coach talks *with* you. [Mentoring resources](#) provide additional support and information to assist Airmen in developing these skills. While the Department of the Air Force has programs to become a certified coach, supervisors and other leaders can use coaching skills or a coaching methodology to empower their Airmen. Some skills include active listening and asking open-ended and thought-provoking questions.

★ **Mentor.** A mentor is a wise, trusted, and experienced individual who shares knowledge, experience, skills, and advice with a less experienced person. Mentorship is a professional relationship in which a person with greater experience and wisdom guides another person to develop personally and professionally. This relationship helps achieve mission success and motivates individuals to achieve their goals. Mentoring promotes a climate of inclusion that can help foster and develop diverse strengths, perspectives, and capabilities of all Airmen. More guidance can be found in [AFH 36-2643, Air Force Mentorship Program](#)

★ **Coach.** A coach collaborates with individuals in a thought-provoking, empowering, and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. Influential leaders often serve as coaches who must thoroughly understand the strengths, weaknesses, and professional goals of members of their teams. Coaches improve their teams by reinforcing goals, gaining a shared perspective on developing and implementing action plans, and providing oversight and motivation throughout the process. Successful leaders must accept the responsibility of being both a master student and a master teacher by embracing the role of both a follower and a leader.

**Roles of a Mentor versus Roles of a Coach**

Mentor	Coach
Talks more	Listens more
Shares their thinking	Challenges your thinking
Shares their ideas	Challenges you to find your own ideas
Pours their wisdom into you	Draws wisdom out of you
Solves your problems	Creates a problem solver
Expertise resides with the mentor	Expertise resides with the client

**PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION**

**Enlisted Evaluations.** The focus within the Enlisted Evaluation System is to effectively capture how effectively Airmen are performing in their assigned duties as well as provide evidence of their readiness to assume increased responsibilities in the future.

Overall, a competency-based evaluation system enables increased transparency and more direct feedback between Airmen and their supervisors. It is the supervisor’s responsibility to provide timely feedback on an Airman’s performance and act as a mentor or coach to assist them in maximizing their potential. It remains every Airman’s responsibility to take ownership of their individual actions and to actively work toward achieving specified goals and objectives both, personal and professional.

Supervisors should aim to capture evidence of their Airman’s performance level during official feedback and denoting plans for improvement and goals along the way. Supervisors should explain and record any additional standards with the foundational competencies and ALQs so their subordinates are never surprised or unclear on the standards and expectations to which they are held. Transparency of standards, expectations, and evaluation of a member’s performance is paramount in establishing trust in the work center and as a supervisor.

Performance assessment, along with input from supervisors at all levels, helps to identify and advance the right Airman at the right time. Recent duty performance and demonstrated potential to serve in the next grade remain the most important factors when considering Airmen for promotion. The ALQs provide a lens to evaluate these factors on promotion boards, endorsement panels, and stratification processes. The combination of all these approaches serves to best develop the Airmen we need to serve and defend America for today and tomorrow.

*“I wasn’t educated to memorize and pretend;  
I was educated to think and take action.”*

**SEAC Ramon “CZ” Colón-López,  
Senior Enlisted Advisor  
to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff**  
\*First Airman to serve in this position





## CONCLUSION










Our Airmen power the world's greatest Air Force, which is fueled by their innovation, leadership, followership, mentorship, training, and development. This guide provides the standards and foundation for the enlisted force to meet mission requirements.

The Air Force is comprised of a diverse group of functionally and operationally specialized Airmen in the *Profession of Arms*. To best leverage the strength of our force, we must have a consistent, well-defined set of expectations and opportunities for the growth of all Airmen, regardless of rank or specialty.

No matter where they are, no matter what they do - our enlisted force is essential to our Air Force mission: *Fly, Fight, and Win...Airpower Anytime, Anywhere.*

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**Terms of Address and Basic Requirements by Rank**

Rank	Grade	Terms of Address	Abbreviation	Required Education & Skill
Airman Basic	E-1	Airman Basic Airman	AB	- BMT - Technical Training
Airman 	E-2	Airman	Amn	- Technical Training - OJT
Airman First Class 	E-3	Airman First Class Airman	A1C	- Technical Training - OJT
Senior Airman 	E-4	Senior Airman Airman	SrA	- Technical Training
Staff Sergeant 	E-5	Staff Sergeant Sergeant	SSgt	- ALS - 5 Level completed
Technical Sergeant 	E-6	Technical Sergeant Tech Sergeant Sergeant	TSgt	
Master Sergeant 	E-7	Master Sergeant Sergeant	MSgt	- NCOA - 7 Level completed - CCAF or equivalent f/eligibility to SMSgt
Senior Master Sergeant 	E-8	Senior Master Sergeant Senior Sergeant	SMSgt	- SNCOA
Chief Master Sergeant 	E-9	Chief Master Sergeant Chief	CMSgt	- 9 Level completed
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force 	E-9	Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Chief	CMSAF	

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**Force Development Model**

**OUR MISSION:  
FLY, FIGHT, & WIN...  
AIRPOWER ANYTIME, ANYWHERE**

