
Army Talent Assessment Strategy

Building an Assessment Ecosystem for 21st Century Talent Management

31 January 2024

Department of the Army

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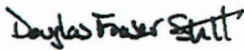
Army Talent Assessment Strategy (ATAS)

People are the Army's greatest strategic asset. To empower the development and employment of its people, the Army is committed to building a culture of assessments that validates talent data in order to drive a modernized and holistic approach to talent management in the Army.

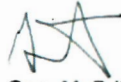
We are pleased to present the Department of the Army Talent Assessment Strategy (ATAS). The ATAS focuses our efforts to expand and maintain the Army's broader talent assessment ecosystem to enable greater effectiveness and efficiency in the utilization of talent data by the Army, its units, and the individual.

Significant work remains ahead. This document provides the necessary foundation to further energize the synchronization, prioritization, and modernization of the Army's talent assessment ecosystem. This ecosystem will drive our progress towards data-centricity and provide us with greater capacity to strategically adapt the way we acquire, develop, employ, and retain talent.

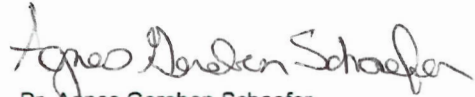
This we'll defend!



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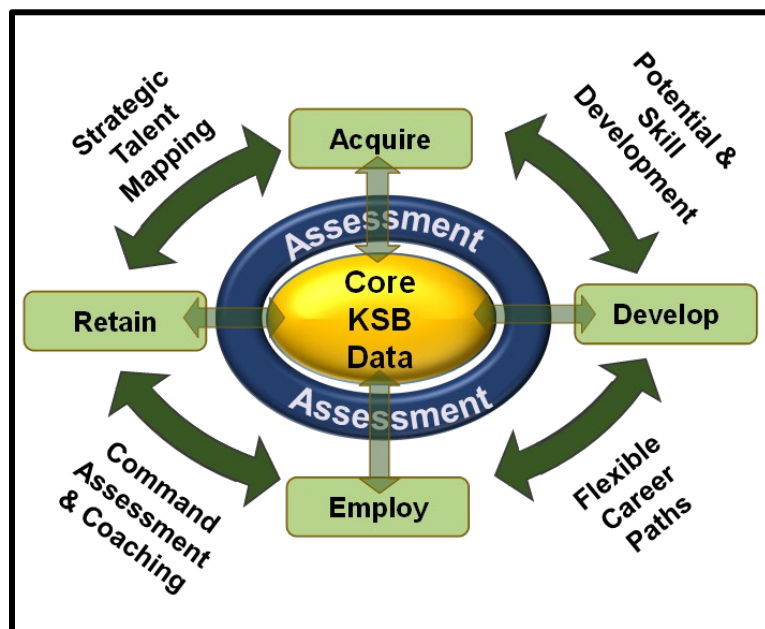
Army Talent Assessment Strategy (MIP 2.0 Task 5.1.b)

Building an Assessment Ecosystem for 21st Century Talent Management

Introduction

The Army Modernization Strategy (2021) articulates the need to fundamentally change how we fight, what we fight with, and who we are – specifically calling for a modernized 21st century talent management system and leader development and education approach. The Army People Strategy (APS) identifies multiple pressure points that are leading the Army to re-evaluate how it manages the capabilities of its people in the 21st century. Most critically among these pressures are geopolitical adversaries who are increasingly challenging the Army’s decisive edge in the quality of our people, and labor market competitors increasingly competing with the Army for technologically and cognitively capable individuals.

The APS lays out the vision of transforming the principles and practices through which the Army will acquire, develop, employ, and retain its people. Talent management integrates all people practices to develop and leverage each individual’s knowledge, skills, behaviors, and preferences for the mutual benefit of the Army and the individual. The knowledge, skills and behaviors (KSBs) of an individual constitute *talent*, and the assessment of Army *talent*, specifically in uniformed service members, is the primary focus of this document. The APS identifies several requirements for building and implementing assessments and assessment infrastructure. This document brings



together those requirements and will enable a shared understanding within the Army for operationalizing the APS vision into an Assessment Ecosystem that will efficiently and effectively meet the needs and requirements of the Army and its people. This document will identify and inform resourcing decisions that will be made to meet the assessment related requirements within the APS, and in turn drive implementation of these requirements through APS

Implementation Plans.

Fundamental to all aspects of the APS is the use of talent data to acquire, develop, employ, and retain our people. The APS outlines a strategic end-state of using a range

of technologies, programs, and tools to identify the talents of Army personnel in timely, accurate, and granular detail, and the application of data-driven analytic tools to the employment and development of people. The APS calls for building training and development systems that will enable the Army to maximize individual talents and strengths and strengthen their developmental needs. Two of the critical enablers supporting this vision are a robust assessment ecosystem to generate data on personnel talents, and a robust data system for the secure storage and ethical use of that data to meet the strategic goals of the APS. The APS specifies the need for researching, designing, and piloting a suite of talent assessments for scaling up with future and emerging requirements.

An Assessment Ecosystem for Modernized Talent Management

The current personnel, training, and development capabilities of the Army do not provide the depth and breadth of data about each person's attributes and capabilities that is necessary for a modernized approach to holistic, integrated talent management. Modern assessments must include a full range of methods to systematically quantify the talents – the knowledge, skills, and behaviors (KSBs) – of our people. These include traditional personnel tests and other methods like interviews, work samples, assessment centers, multi-source evaluations, and biographical information collection. For decades, the Army has used assessments (e.g., Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), physical fitness testing) to quantify individual talents and used this data to predict how well our Soldiers will perform in training and in combat. Future assessments will provide detailed, quantifiable measurements of a broad spectrum of individual talents, and further improve prediction of individual performance at a task or job, as well as giving insights to help Soldiers develop as leaders and Army professionals. The intent of the APS is to use data from a wide array of talent assessments as the foundation for developing and employing our people in ways to maximize each individual's ability to contribute to the Army's missions throughout the force. To do so, the Army must not only consider the benefit of assessments on individual personal development, but also create a system that allows for the integration of talent assessment data to inform Army systems and processes to ensure that the right Soldier is placed into the right job at the right time, consistently and at scale throughout the Army.

The ATAS complements the Army People Strategy and Army Data Plan. Through alignment with the Army Data Plan, the ATAS will enable talent management processes to further the Secretary of the Army's Objectives for the Army to become more data-centric and to strategically adapt to the way we recruit and retain talent.

Strategic Intent

These broad principles for assessments derived from the APS will guide planning and decision making in building an assessment ecosystem. Talent data must be interoperable across all people practices using the same talent lexicon, standards, and metrics to permit integration and maximize the efficiency of the assessment ecosystem. To support the effective development and employment of our people, assessments must be available, timely, and informative. Assessment data must be available, accessible, and protected to sustain relevance and usefulness while maintaining the trust of our people through responsible and fair protections of individual rights and privacy.

Strategic Endstate

At endstate, the assessment ecosystem will be the primary source of talent data on Army personnel for career decision-making, career management, and professional development. The ecosystem will be accessible, understood, and trusted by Army personnel as a method for identifying, understanding, and gaining data on their strengths and weaknesses.

Decision Guidance

Army assessments will:

- Be linked to a unified standard lexicon and taxonomy of talents and attributes for the Army (e.g., Army Talent Attribute Framework (ATAF)).
- Measure the characteristics and abilities when they are needed and at the relevant level of expertise to inform development or decisions as required.
- Be available and easily accessible to our people when and where they want to take them.
- Give transparency to individuals on their strengths and weaknesses to inform individual development and career decision making.
- Give the Army granular, valid, and legally defensible data to make critical decisions about its people.
- Match assessment quality and validity to the assessment's purpose.

Assessment data will be secure and protected while also available and accessible to authorized agencies who need it to achieve the strategic endstate of the Army People Strategy.

What are talent assessments?

Talent assessments quantify the attributes— the KSBs – that one possesses and brings to a job or position which will enable successful performance. Talent assessments are not measures of job performance, like the officer and noncommissioned officer evaluation reports (OER, NCOER). Talent management assessments are also not measures of unit effectiveness, like command climate surveys. While both job performance and unit effectiveness are critical to understand, they are the outcomes of the talents of individuals and teams in the Army. Talent assessments are also not programs, program evaluations, or personnel decisions. Army programs may use assessments in combination with a specific programmatic purpose to make decisions or recommendations, but the assessments themselves serve as the tool to provide the informing data, and not as the decision vehicle itself.

Talent assessments will be used in different ways throughout the APS lines of effort.

- **Acquire:** Talent assessments can help the Army identify people who will perform well in the Army and align them into career fields in which they can best succeed.
- **Develop:** Talent assessments can be instrumental to enable the individual and the Army to understand each person's strengths and weaknesses and to focus attention and effort for growth and learning in formal and informal training, education, and career-long professional development.
- **Employ:** Talent assessments provide a rich source of critical information for individuals to understand the types of jobs in which they would perform well as they move through their career, as well as information for Army unit leaders and hiring officials to identify the specific individuals who would be best suited to performing in positions in their units.
- **Retain:** Talent assessments allow Army Senior Leaders to see the military workforce in terms of the skills and capabilities present (rather than only by rank, career field, and similar general characteristics) and inform policy decisions and development to build and sustain the force.

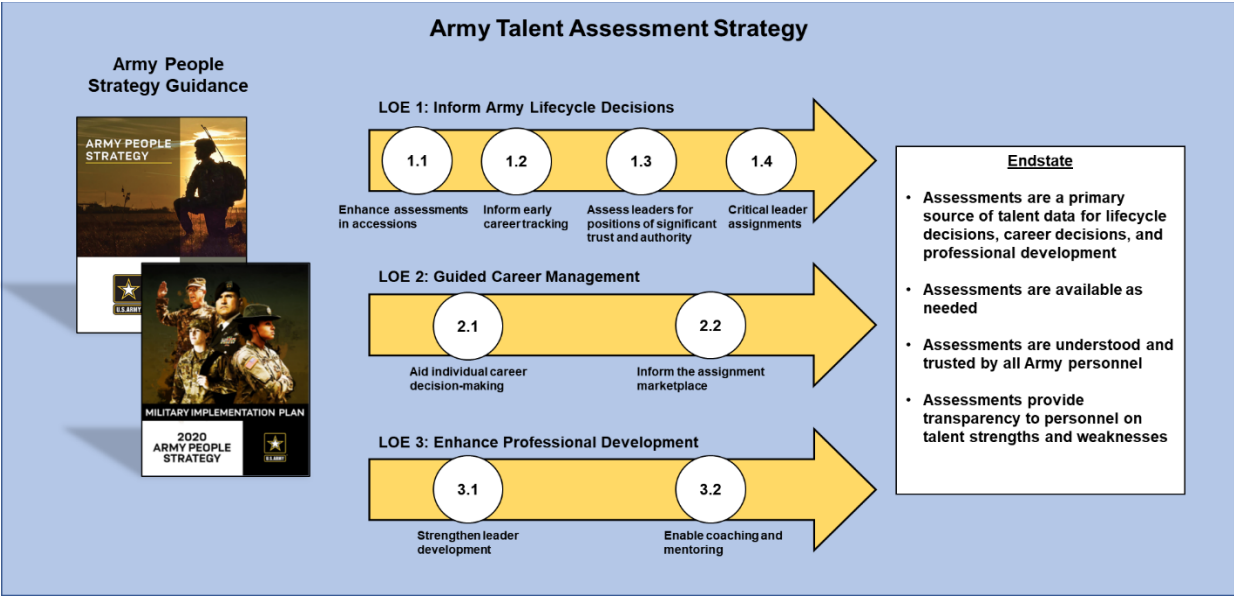
Regardless of their primary use, talent assessments across all APS lines of effort must be linked within a broader assessment ecosystem that supports assessing key attributes at the right time in a Soldier's career, and which accumulates information to map individual capability trajectories. As such, all talent assessments must meet quality standards for reliability, validity, and fairness to ensure the resulting talent data can support the needs of the Soldier, leader, and Army.

Approach

To achieve the desired endstate conditions, the Army will institute assessments across three major lines of effort that correspond with three general purposes of assessments and their implementation across the Army.

- Inform Army Lifecycle Decisions. The Army requires assessments to inform Service decisions made about personnel at key points throughout the career lifecycle. These include entry into service or cohort, early career tracking for officers and non-commissioned officers, and assignment into critical leadership positions and positions of significant trust and authority. As such, assessments used for lifecycle decisions will be mandatory for personnel subject to these decisions being made by the Army. These decisions, however, are infrequent and will result in a small number of mandatory assessments for each individual spread across a career.
- Guide Career Management. Individual Army personnel will require assessments on a periodic basis to aid them in successfully managing their own careers in the Army. These assessments will be used by individuals for understanding and defining career paths, supporting pursuit of specific assignments in the assignment marketplace, or otherwise supporting their individual career management activities. Career management will be primarily an individual responsibility, and assessments to support career management will be voluntary. Because these assessments will be predominantly self-initiated, the frequency of assessments will vary across individuals to meet their needs.
- Enhance Professional Development. The Army will use assessments to support professional development across the continuum of military education. These assessments will inform individuals on their strengths and weaknesses during the career points focused on developing our personnel. While these assessments may be a mix of mandatory and voluntary assessments, individuals who opt to not fully engage these assessments will be less well-informed on their own strengths and weaknesses and less able to guide their own development appropriately.

These three purposes are primarily focused on the personnel career decisions made by individuals and the Army as well as individual professional development within a career path. However, the talent data yielded by all assessments will enable the improvement of Army readiness, by enabling strategic workforce planning and management. Integrated assessment information will allow for the creation of strategic workforce maps and identification of talent gaps before they arrive. These strategic improvements will require that assessments and the resulting talent data be integrated in meaningful ways to serve this greater purpose. Assessments must not stand alone within the ecosystem.



LOE 1: Inform Army lifecycle decisions. The Army will require assessments at key points across the career lifecycle for all Soldiers and all cohorts – officer, warrant officer, and enlisted. Lifecycle assessments must meet high quality and validity standards to ensure that the Army’s personnel decisions are fair, transparent, and effective. These assessments ensure that the right Soldiers can be matched with the right jobs and positions based on their KSBs from accession throughout their entire career, with periodic reassessment as needed to support future placement or selection for positions of greater responsibility.

Within this line of effort are four sub-objectives for assessment implementation.

Objective 1.1: Enhance assessments in accessions. The Army will use assessments to support Army decisions related to service entry and individual decisions on career choice.

Objective 1.2 Inform early career tracking. The Army will incorporate assessments to support individual decisions to change career tracks, redirect into special roles and assignments, and allow the Army to begin identifying personnel with strong potential for growth in high value domains. Assessments aligned to this objective may also support Objective 2.1 “Aid individual career decision-making” from an individual Soldier perspective. However, these assessments will also inform decisions made by the Army based on organizational needs and requirements.

Objective 1.3 Assess individuals for positions of significant trust and authority (PSTA). The Army will utilize focused assessments to identify and assign individuals to these positions that will perform well and are least likely to abuse the trust and authority of these positions.

Objective 1.4 Critical leadership assignments. The Army will use assessments to ensure the Army is selecting and assigning the right leaders with the best skills to perform in critical leadership roles.

LOE 2: Guide career management. The Army will ensure that assessments are available on a consistent basis to all personnel to support their career management needs. These career management assessments will allow individuals to build their own talent data profiles and actively manage their own careers. They will also allow the Army to maintain visibility on the strategic inventory of talents across the force. Career management assessments must meet the quality and validity standards to ensure the talent data produced is accurate and reflects the actual strengths of the individual assessed.

Objective 2.1 Aid individual career decision-making. Individuals may take assessments on their own initiative outside of mandatory lifecycle assessments to help inform their personal decisions on their careers within the Army.

Objective 2.2 Inform the assignment marketplace. Assessments are tools for unit commanders and hiring officials in the marketplace to find the best individuals for their open assignments and inform the interview and selection process. This also allows more focused marketplace searches for applicants in the marketplace and matches their assessed skillsets and individual resumes with available positions.

LOE 3: Enhance professional development. The Army will require assessments at key points of individual professional development, which are often concurrent with the Army's professional military education stages. In addition to providing the Army with regular strategic view of the force, these assessments will allow the Army to maintain visibility on the holistic effectiveness of the professional military education system and better understand the career development of its people. Professional development assessments must meet established testing standards to ensure the talent data produced is sufficiently accurate to identify developmental strengths and needs, and to gauge the overall strengths and developmental needs of the force at these critical career stages.

Objective 3.1 Strengthen leader development. Assessments will be implemented during Professional Military Education (PME) to increase a Soldier's understanding of their own talents and provide insights supporting individual development to PME instructors and cadre.

Objective 3.2 Enable coaching and mentoring. The Army will implement assessments that may be used outside of the professional military education environment to further develop Soldiers and Leaders and enhance coaching and mentorship programs for aided self-development.

Building the Assessment Ecosystem

A functional, efficient, and effective ecosystem of assessments for the Army will minimize the burden on personnel, maximize the utility of the assessment information derived, and connect assessment information for an individual Soldier to that Soldier's various needs to use it. Accomplishing this will require an integrated, holistic ecosystem approach to assessment rather than pursuing single-purpose assessments for each need. This ecosystem approach allows the accumulation of talent data on each Soldier across their career and will enable the Army to shift to a data-centric approach to talent management that emphasizes what a Soldier can do rather than what she or he has done previously. Assessing our personnel is resource intensive and takes their time – perhaps the most critical resource – away from other tasks. The Army must ensure efficiency through assessments that are timely, available at need, and produce assessment data useable for multiple purposes whenever possible, without sacrificing the original purpose.

As the Army builds an assessment ecosystem, there are operational and technical considerations for deciding when, why, and how to assess. These considerations and decisions will dictate whether the Army procures or develops each assessment as well as the resources required to sustain each assessment and the assessment ecosystem as a whole. In all cases, Army talent assessments will conform to industry best practices and the relevant standards for testing and assessment in organizations.

Operational and Technical Considerations

Operational and technical considerations influence decisions on when, why, and how to assess, and these will be addressed for each assessment considered for inclusion within the Army's assessment ecosystem. Operational considerations impact the decisions on how to obtain and maintain an assessment, including test and data security concerns. Operational considerations are significant factors that impact cost and resourcing to obtain and maintain each assessment. These considerations include the ability to practice or prepare for an assessment, the origin and ownership of an assessment, and assessment security and maintenance. Technical considerations impact the decisions on when or whether an assessment is of sufficient quality for inclusion in the assessment ecosystem, and how an assessment should be used and maintained. The accuracy, consistency, predictiveness, and fairness of an assessment must all be considered in the initial decision to allow an assessment to be introduced into the assessment ecosystem. The extent to which an individual's scores on an assessment can be intentionally or inadvertently affected through practice, coaching, or 'gaming the test' are factors to be considered for administration policies and practices, appropriate uses of the assessment data, and test maintenance schedules. A more detailed discussion on each of these operational and technical considerations can be found in Appendix A.

Purpose	Technical Considerations	Operational Considerations
Inform Life Cycle Decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High accuracy • High consistency • High prediction of performance • High fairness • High resistance to response distortion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent maintenance & content renewal • Resource assessment preparation • Significant test security requirements
Guide Career Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate-High accuracy • High consistency • High fairness • Moderate resistance to response distortion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular maintenance & content renewal • Encourage assessment preparation • Moderate test security requirements
Enhance Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate-High accuracy • Moderate consistency • High fairness • Low resistance to response distortion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular maintenance • Periodic content renewal • Permit assessment preparation • Basic test security requirements

Sustainment of the Assessment Ecosystem

The Army regularly plans and resources the lifecycle sustainment of critical equipment and systems. The lifecycle sustainment of the Army’s suite of talent assessments will require similar planning and resourcing from research and development through fielding and operational maintenance to lifecycle overhaul and divestment. Assessment lifecycle sustainment approaches will differ based on the purpose or use of specific assessments. Assessments used to support career lifecycle decision-making will be high stakes assessments and therefore will require more resources and investment for sustainment, as well as often having higher research and development and operational maintenance costs. Assessments used to guide career management and enable professional development will also require significant resources to procure and sustain, though at a lower rate and threshold than many of the high-stakes assessments used in career lifecycle decision-making. Sustainment for commercially available assessments is the responsibility of the commercial vendor. While commercially available assessments may be appealing because of the low direct sustainment cost, there are commonly ongoing procurement costs to continue to use these assessments, and these assessments are

typically the most vulnerable to assessment security breaches. Commercial assessments also may not perform as well within the Army because they are not tailored to specific applications or the Army population, among other risks. Lowest cost assessments are also commonly associated with lower quality on technical quality metrics and are least likely to have regular assessment maintenance updates.

Assessment Ecosystem: The Way Forward

Army talent assessments must be created, implemented, and integrated into a holistic ecosystem, which emphasizes the effectiveness of assessments and efficiency of the ecosystem as a whole. Assessments should be able to serve multiple purposes when it is feasible and will not harm the trust of our personnel nor undermine security requirements for the assessments or talent data. Ongoing review and maintenance of the ecosystem will ensure that assessments continue to meet quality and effectiveness requirements and allow for paring of redundant assessments. To achieve this, the Army must focus on near, mid, and long-term goals for creation and sustainment of the talent assessment ecosystem.

To support lifecycle sustainment for this assessment ecosystem, The Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower & Reserve Affairs) (ASA (M&RA)) will organize a planning team to develop and recommend options to Army Senior Leaders for establishing and sustaining the assessment ecosystem. The planning team will also ensure that data security and structural requirements for assessment data are addressed in all options.

The requirements for assessments laid out here are significant, and realistically cannot be accomplished simultaneously within the resource constraints of the Army as a whole. Therefore, the research and development or procurement of assessments must be phased in time to meet the most critical needs first and allow time for development of specialized assessments critical to the Army of 2030, Army of 2040, and beyond. The Deputy Chief of Staff, G1 (DCS, G1) and ASA (M&RA) will consider resourcing options and opportunities to ensure that the near-term, mid-term, and far-term objectives below are able to be fully coordinated and accomplished. These resourcing considerations will be addressed in coordination with the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, & Technology (ASA (ALT)) to identify research and development requirements and advocate for appropriate resourcing to address them. To the extent that objectives beyond the near-term require actions, investments, and decisions now, leaders will develop and implement the long term plans necessary to ensure accomplishment.

The availability of existing assessments to meet the needs of the Army is uneven across the seven talent domains described in the ATAF. The cognitive and disposition domains have significant coverage for some cohorts (e.g., enlisted) and purposes (e.g., accessions lifecycle decisions), but not other cohorts or purposes. The leadership and management

domain has some coverage for developmental purposes but will require significant investment for addressing other assessment purposes and applications. The communication and interpersonal domains have very sparse coverage of assessments for any purpose. The warfighter expertise and personal expertise domain also has very sparse coverage of talent assessments but may be able to be more easily addressed than other domains in some ways. The physical domain has robust coverage through the Army's physical fitness assessment program but may require additional assessments to meet particular needs of specific career fields.

Near-Term: In the near term, the Army will focus on filling gaps and meeting the needs of current Army People Strategy initiatives. This phase will emphasize developing or acquiring, validating, and implementing robust, valid assessments for common core talents within the cognitive, disposition, communication, and leadership talent domains. Assessments for these talents will enable the initiatives within the Army People Strategy to begin a full shift to a data-driven talent management system consistent with the Army Data Plan and the Secretary of the Army's objectives to become a more data-centric Army. Where assessments need to be developed for these talents aligned to a specific cohort (e.g., company-grade officers), the Army will move quickly to ensure there are assessments developed to meet the specific purposes for which they will be used. Assessments that can serve multiple purposes will be pursued in those situations where it will not compromise assessment security. Existing assessment programs will evaluate the validity, reliability, and fairness of their assessments and processes, and undertake efforts as needed to ensure and document that the assessments being used meet the technical standards required for their assessments.

Mid-Term: In the mid-term, the Army will focus on addressing significant gaps in assessments for the talent requirements of the current and future force. This will include (but not be limited to) an emphasis on developing assessments that can be easily deployed to enable individual career management. These assessments must be able to be administered remotely through digital platforms and have supporting materials and mechanisms for easy interpretation of scores. Finally, this phase will focus significant research investment on assessing skills and talents required for enabling Army modernization. These include advanced cognitive skills, technology-focused talents, and team-related talents. The resulting assessment approaches will expand the Army's ability to meet assessment needs for lifecycle decisions, individual career management, and professional development for the future force.

Long-Term: In the long term, the Army will focus on implementing new assessments to support emerging competencies driven by the Army Operating Concept for 2040 and beyond, talent potential within each of the talent domains, and assessments to facilitate future talent management initiatives. The Army will continue to increase the efficiency of

assessments within the ecosystem and integration of talent assessments into regular events, job performance, and training to further reduce the impact of separate assessments on our personnel. These objectives will require significant research investment synchronized with implementation planning as the assessment process shifts to include other settings.

Across both the mid-term and long-term the Army will continually monitor the assessment ecosystem to identify assessments that are no longer meeting their intended needs or are unnecessarily duplicative for revision, replacement, or removal. This will ensure the continual maturation and refinement of the ecosystem as a whole to maintain efficiency and effectiveness.

Conclusion

Talent data will drive the Army's modernized, holistic approach to talent management. It is critical to create an effective and efficient ecosystem of assessments that will accurately and fairly deliver talent information to our Soldiers and Leaders, as well as the Army organizations responsible for acquiring, developing, employing, and retaining our people. Equally critical is building and sustaining the trust of our people in this assessment ecosystem – trust that assessments are fair, data is accurate, and their privacy is protected. The Army will take all necessary steps to prevent talent data derived from assessments from being intentionally or inadvertently misused against our people. The Army will develop and sustain methods and applications to use talent data to help our people grow and develop in their careers, obtain career opportunities suited to the strengths and capabilities, and align the right person with the right job at the right time for the benefit of the Army, the individual, and their unit.

Enclosures: 2

Appendix A: Operational & Technical Considerations

Appendix B: Preliminary Army Talent Assessment Ecosystem Analysis (TBP)

Appendix A: Operational and Technical Considerations

Operational Considerations

There are several operational considerations to be addressed for each assessment within the Army's assessment ecosystem. These operational considerations are significant factors that impact cost and resourcing to obtain and maintain each assessment.

Assessment practice and test preparation can improve or change test scores in critical ways. It is well known that some individuals are "better" at taking tests and assessments than others. Test preparation courses (e.g., for the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), or the Future Soldier Preparatory Course for ASVAB) are commonly accepted practices and take advantage of this knowledge to teach people how to improve their scores. Assessment scores may change (and usually improve) for these reasons when an individual takes the same or similar assessments multiple times. These changes are commonly referred to as 'practice effects.' Other reasons are related to more detailed knowledge about test-taking strategies, guessing strategies, and understanding how scoring of the assessment is done. These are all referred to as test-taking skills. Most test preparation courses use a combination of practice effects and test-taking skills to improve individuals' test scores. Test preparation courses can inadvertently introduce assessment bias or unfairness into the assessment if test preparation is available for some subgroups but not others. The Army should consider the extent to which it makes available test preparation courses to individuals to remove this as a significant influence on assessment scores.

Assessment security and updating are critical aspects of maintaining all assessments, especially high stakes assessments. Assessments require constant maintenance and revision to ensure they are valid, reliable, and fair. Assessment security and updating are two of the major protections¹ against efforts by individuals to "score high" or "get the right answer." Assessment security is a process taken to prevent test items, interview questions, assessment materials, and scoring keys from being accessed and distributed by individuals other than those who need to know. Assessment security implies that assessment scores and data will be appropriately protected or masked to ensure the assessments are not compromised through reverse engineering. Assessment updating involves actions that change or refresh test items, interview questions, or assessment materials in a way that maintains the validity and security.

Assessment origin and ownership is one of the critical considerations that differs between assessments used for different purposes. Assessment ownership affects the Army's

¹ Test design and methodology, such as the use of item pools or computer adaptive testing, is another major protection.

ability to control access to assessment content and items, scoring keys, and to ensure assessment updating and maintenance as needed. As with many technologies or materiel investments, assessments may be commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) (e.g., the NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI)), government off-the-shelf (GOTS) (e.g., an OPM personality test that is available on a for-fee basis) or custom developed by or for the Army or Department of Defense (e.g., ASVAB or the Tailored Adaptive Personality Assessment System (TAPAS), which are wholly owned, operated, and maintained by the Department of Defense). When purchasing access to a COTS or GOTS assessment, the Army will not have the ability to control who can see assessment items, scoring key, or key components of an assessment. Nor can the Army undertake or demand that test maintenance activities be undertaken. Custom assessments allow the Army or DOD to tightly control access to the assessment components and can be maintained on the Army's desired schedule. Regardless of the assessment origin (e.g., COTS, GOTS, custom-developed) talent data will only be collected, stored, accessed, and reported from secure platforms that conform to DOD and Army regulations in order to protect individual privacy and the security of this valuable source of information on our people.

Technical Considerations

There are a variety of technical issues that will be primary or secondary decision factors when deciding to incorporate an assessment into the ecosystem, appropriate uses for the talent data produced by an assessment, and the operational administration and maintenance needs to sustain an assessment. The accuracy, consistency, predictiveness, and fairness of an assessment must all be considered in the initial decision to allow an assessment to be introduced into the assessment ecosystem. These factors become very significant when developing cut scores used in assessments informing personnel lifecycle decisions. The extent to which an individual's scores on an assessment can be intentionally or inadvertently affected through practice, coaching, or 'gaming the test' are also factors to be considered for administration policies and practices, appropriate uses of the assessment data, and test maintenance schedules.

Accuracy and consistency are critical technical and legal aspects of any talent assessment. Validity as it is most commonly understood² is the extent to which an assessment accurately measures what it is supposed to measure and does not measure what it is not supposed to measure. For example, a graduated measuring cup would be a valid measure of volume, but a much less valid measure of weight. Reliability is the extent to which an assessment will consistently produce the same score for the same individual when the KSB being assessed has not changed. Tape measures made from

² Predictive validity, also known as criterion validity, refers to the extent to which an assessment accurately predicts performance, behavior, or some other outcome of interest. Predictive validity is critical for personnel assessments that may be used by the Army as part of making decisions affecting individuals' careers – selection, promotion, assignment into key positions that enable or block future advancement.

metal are typically very reliable in producing the same score (e.g., “18 inches”) when measuring an object that has not changed. In contrast, a tape measure made from elastic is likely to be very unreliable and may produce different scores with each measurement. Assessments that are both reliable and valid will consistently produce scores that accurately reflect how much of a KSB or attribute an individual has.

Assessment bias and fairness are critical technical and legal considerations when used in making decisions affecting individuals’ careers. Assessment bias is the extent to which the assessment will systematically produce different scores for people from different subgroups (e.g., race, sex, ethnicity, religious affiliation) despite individuals having the same actual level of the measured KSB or attribute. An assessment of quantitative reasoning should produce scores that are the same or equivalent for everyone with the same level of quantitative ability regardless of their subgroup(s). Assessment fairness is the extent to which the assessment equally predicts performance or other outcomes (e.g., “predictive validity”) for all individuals across subgroups. An assessment that accurately predicts performance for one subgroup (e.g., Hispanics) but does not predict performance for other subgroups (e.g., non-Hispanics) would be considered unfair. Bias and (un)fairness both undermine the overall validity of an assessment and must be guarded against in using assessments to make decisions about individuals’ careers.

Intentional response distortion must be guarded against when assessments matter most. In situations where individuals know that their score(s) on an assessment will be used to make decisions about their career some people will be motivated to try to “score high” or “get the right answer” to obtain the decision that they personally desire. This is a normal reaction for achievement-oriented individuals – and in fact is why many of them seek out the test-preparation courses and materials discussed previously. It is also a reason that some people will try to game the system or respond in a way that does not accurately reflect their true capability and temperament. When some people distort their responses to present an inaccurate representation of themselves, it harms everyone. It may prevent opportunities from going to those who truly merit them, and it may put some people in positions for which they are not suited or not capable. As a result, assessments that will be used to make decisions about careers must be resistant to intentional response distortion so that they remain valid and reliable while ensuring that decisions made as a result of them are fair and equitable, and do not introduce potential harm to the Army or its people.