UNITED STATES ARMY TRAINING AND DOCTRINE COMMAND

NCO 2020 Strategy

NCOs Operating in a Complex World

04 December 2015

Leader development is a process that aligns training, education, and experience to prepare leaders who exercise mission command to prevail in unified land operations.

-The Army Leader Development Strategy 2013

For more than 240 years the American Soldier has answered the call to action and in every era of conflict and war, the professional Noncommissioned Officer has played a significant role as a leader of Soldiers. The roles and responsibilities of the NCO have always been to lead, train, and care for Soldiers and equipment while enforcing standards. The NCO Creed galvanizes the ideal that NCOs are professional soldiers who are also members of a time honored corps known as "The Backbone of the Army." Though the values associated with the NCO Corps will never change, the future operating environment will most certainly be more complex and uncertain than we've ever known.

The Army Operating Concept (AOC) describes how future Army forces will prevent conflict, shape security environments, and win wars while operating as part of our Joint Force and working with multiple partners. The AOC guides future force development by identifying first order capabilities that the Army needs to support U.S. policy objectives. It provides the intellectual foundation and framework for learning and for applying what we learn to future force development under Force 2025 and beyond. This begs the question, "How do we win in such an ambiguous and complex world?" While the answer will require that "Army forces must provide the Joint Force with multiple options, integrate the efforts of multiple partners, operate across multiple domains, and present our enemies and adversaries with multiple dilemmas," it is assured that the role of the NCO will be as critical as ever in our Army's ability to win our nation's wars. We must leverage our experiences to prepare our Soldiers and develop the future NCO Corps to meet those challenges and remain ready as the world's premier combat force.

To best prepare our NCO Corps for the challenges of an uncertain future, we must fundamentally change and evolve the Noncommissioned Officer Education System into a comprehensive leader development system that links training, education, and experiences spanning the operational, institutional, and self-development learning domains.

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Part I Introduction

Introduction

Leader development is fundamental to the readiness of our Army. This Noncommissioned Officer 2020 Strategy (NCO 2020) provides vision and guidance on ends, ways, and means for developing NCOs that exercise Mission Command while planning, preparing, executing, and assessing Unified Land Operations to meet the challenges of the 21st Century and preserve the combat readiness of our force. NCOs must understand the strategic environment, be able to think critically and creatively, visualize solutions, and describe and communicate crucial information to achieve shared understanding, collaborate, and build teams.

Leader development is the deliberate, continuous, and progressive process—founded in Army values—that grows Soldiers and Army Civilians into ***competent, committed*** professional leaders of ***character***. Leader development is achieved through the career-long synthesis of the training, education, and experiences acquired through opportunities in the institutional, operational, and self-development domains, supported by peer and developmental relationships.

In the decade following 2015, the NCO Corps must evolve its Noncommissioned Officer Education System (NCOES) to focus on ways to optimize human performance. A key part of this will be the evolution and expansion of the NCOES into what will be the NCO Professional Development System (NCOPDS). The NCOPDS will serve as the vehicle to operationalize the concepts and lines of effort as outlined in this strategy. To be successful we must strategically shape new policy, leverage innovation, and focus on closing performance gaps using an organized framework and establishing achievable milestones.

The NCOPDS represents a transparent and grounded approach to managing future changes in the way the Army trains and develops Soldiers. As a strategy it is intended to support imperatives related to the Army profession, Mission Command doctrine, human performance optimization, and overall combat readiness of the force. The NCO 2020 strategy is focused on creating a production system that provides NCOs with access to developmental and broadening experiences needed both in garrison and within the operational environment.

The most enduring legacy that we can leave for our future generations of noncommissioned officers will be leader development.

-SMA Julius W. Gates

Part II Strategic Vision

Vision

A cohort of competent and committed Noncommissioned Officers of character as trusted Army professionals who thrive in chaos, adapt, and win in a complex world. A professional, trained, and prepared NCO Corps is central to the Army's ability to remain ready as the world's premier combat force.

Part III Ends, Ways, and Means

Ends

A Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development System (NCOPDS) integrated and synchronized in the development of the next generation of competent and committed NCOs of character as trusted Army professionals capable of thriving in chaos, adapting and winning in a complex world. From a deliberate, data-driven analytical process, examining the current model of developing NCOs using The Army Leader Development Strategy, the Enlisted Desired Leader Attributes for Joint Force 2020, the Army Learning Concept and the Army Learning Model, the NCOES evolves into an integrated NCOPDS.

This approach will ensure the NCO Corps is prepared to fight and win our nation's wars and enhance overall readiness of our Army while remaining consistent with the NCO Corps vision. Desired end state includes: providing the Army a more adaptable, resilient NCO Corps; improving the professionalism of the NCO Corps; improving training and education expertise in the NCO Corps; providing challenging, relevant and rigorous leader development training, education and experiences; articulating learning responsibilities and requirements across the three learning domains and integrating them into a synchronized, effective and efficient development system; improving professional development models and learning curriculums so that Soldiers and leaders can assess leader development progress, track learning events, create goals and certify professionals; supporting the identification and development of NCOs to serve at operational and strategic levels; Army, commanders and NCOs are satisfied with development programs and performance; policy, doctrine and programs fully support a lifelong learning environment and support the needs of both active and reserve organizations and Soldiers.

Ways

Central to this strategy is that leaders at all levels understand their responsibility for continually developing other leaders. Army senior leaders set conditions for the Army to develop NCOs by teaching them, training them, and providing the supporting experiences they need to grow as leaders. Additionally, leaders help individuals realize that commitment to career-long learning is essential to development, as well as, maintaining readiness of the force.

The NCOPDS will adhere to seven leader development imperatives that will guide policy and actions in order to develop NCOs with the required qualities and enduring leader characteristics. These guiding principles remain constant and consistent from initial entry into the Army to transition creating a leader development continuum that is deliberate, continuous, and

progressive. These imperatives will drive the synchronization and implementation of the NCO 2020 Strategy:

- Commitment to the Army Profession, lifelong learning, and development.
- Balance the Army's commitment to the training, education, and experience components of leader development.
- Manage talent to benefit both the institution and the individual.
- Select and develop leaders with positive leader attributes and proficiency in core leadership competencies for responsibility at higher levels.
- Prepare adaptive and creative NCOs capable of operating within the complexity of the operational environment and the entire range of military operations.
- Embed Mission Command principles in leader development.
- Value a broad range of leader experiences and developmental opportunities.

To achieve the desired strategic ends, the Noncommissioned Officer Education System (NCOES) must fundamentally change and evolve into a comprehensive leader development process that links training, education, and experiences spanning the operational, institutional, and self-development learning domains. The NCO 2020 Strategy is organized into three distinct lines of effort:

1. **Development**. NCOs develop as leaders over time through deliberate progressive and sequential processes incorporating training, education, and experience across the three learning domains throughout the Soldier Lifecycle.
2. **Talent Management**. The purposeful expansion of an NCO's core MOS proficiency and leadership provided through developmental positions, opportunities, and assignments both within and outside of their Career Management Field (CMF).
3. **Stewardship of the Profession.** Strengthen the NCO Corps by emphasizing the role of the NCO in building and sustaining trust; constantly improving military expertise; setting an example of honorable service; fostering a climate rich in esprit de corps; and serving as stewards of the Army profession.

These LOEs have several key supporting tasks associated with each:

Our fundamental task is like no other-it is to win in the unforgiving crucible of ground combat.
-General Mark A. Milley

LOE#1: Development. NCOs develop as leaders over time through deliberate progressive and sequential processes incorporating training, education, and experience across the three learning domains throughout the Soldier Lifecycle.

Major Objective 1.1: Select, Train, Educate, and Promote (S.T.E.P.)

- Career Management Model
- Deferment Policy
- Promotions Policy
- Scheduling Priorities

Major Objective 1.2: NCO Professional Military Education

- Integrated into Army University
- Establish Level V PME (Master Leader Course)
- Incorporate NCO General Learning Outcomes (GLOs)
- Develop common NCO learning content
- Include nominative CSM/SGM PME
- Curriculum rigor and relevance
- Structured Self Development (SSD)
- Instructor screening, selection, development, and recognition
- Optimize use of the One Army School System (OASS)
- Joint Professional Military Education

Major Objective 1.3: Credentialing

- Identify and validate credentials
- Resource examinations
- Facilitate credentialing process

Major Objective 1.4: Validate, Record, and Track

- Digital Job Book
- Army Career Tracker (ACT)
- Skills Qualification Test (SQT)
- Assessments

Good NCOs are not just born- they are groomed and grown through a lot of hard work and strong leadership by senior NCOs.

-SMA William A. Connelly

LOE#2 Talent Management. The purposeful expansion of an NCO's core MOS proficiency and leadership provided through developmental positions, opportunities, and assignments both within and outside of their Career Management Field (CMF).

Major Objective 2.1: Broadening assignments and opportunities

- Strategic broadening opportunities
- Fellowships
- Training with Industry
- Institutional Army assignments

Major Objective 2.2: Operational assignments

- Broad range of assignments
- Duty positions
- Unit NCOPD

Major Objective 2.3: Professional Development Model

- Coherent progressive and sequential career map common to all NCOs
- CMF specific overlays
- Key Professional Development Positions for SGM (7T/8T)
- Reorg CMD/SGM/SMMO Talent Management Branch
- CSM/SGM Timelines and Professional Development Models
- DA Pam 600-25 update
- Update Army Career Tracker

The Sergeant is the Army.
-General Dwight D. Eisenhower

LOE#3 Stewardship of the Profession. Strengthen the NCO Corps by emphasizing the role of the NCO in building and sustaining trust; constantly improving military expertise; setting an example of honorable service; fostering a climate rich in esprit de corps; and serving as stewards of the Army profession.

Major Objective 3.1: Doctrine

- NCO Creed
- NCO Guide/NCO Corner
- FM 6-22
- ADP-1/ADRP-1 The Army Profession

Major Objective 3.2: Self Development

- Professional Reading
- Professional Writing
- Competitive Boards

Major Objective 3.3: 2020 Year of the NCO

- Timeline
- Key events
- STRATCOM

Means

The Army's combat readiness depends on leaders at all levels embracing the importance of developing NCOs and commit to placing emphasis and value on the training, education, and experiences individuals obtain in the operational, institutional, and self-development learning domains.

Successful leaders recognize that continually developing their subordinate leaders is the key to the long-term readiness of the Army. Subordinates guide units and organizations through the challenges of tomorrow. If today's leaders do not adequately develop their subordinates through personal example, counseling, and mentorship, then today's leaders have not succeeded in accomplishing tomorrow's mission. Senior leaders must hold subordinate leaders accountable for leader development and reward those who take this to heart.

As members of the Army Profession, individuals have an inherent responsibility to continually self-improve. Whether through pursuing civilian education, obtaining technical credentials, participating in competitive boards, reading professional journals, or volunteering in local communities, NCOs contribute immensely to their individual leader development.

Organizations play a critical role in the development of NCOs by placing them in positions of responsibility during daily missions, training exercises, and deployments. There are several leader development opportunities every day for our Soldiers, and leaders must seize these opportunities to adequately manage NCO development in the operational domain.

The institution is obligated to develop NCOs through a progressive and sequential professional military education (PME) that has rigor and relevance. Likewise, policies, regulations, programs, and assessments must support the NCOPDS. The TRADOC CSM is designated to serve as the Army's lead for development of the enlisted cohort and will ensure synchronization, collaboration, and standardization occur throughout the establishment of the NCOPDS and across all stakeholders.

Part IV Conclusion

Conclusion

Army noncommissioned officers provide the foundation to unit readiness and are responsible for setting and maintaining high quality standards and discipline while conducting daily missions and making intent-driven decisions. They are faithful to the Army Values and are standard-bearers and role models critical to training, educating, and developing subordinates. NCOs are accountable for caring for Soldiers and setting the example for them. NCOs have roles as small unit leaders, trainers, mentors, communicators, and advisors. NCOs, at all echelons, understand and practice the mission command philosophy in order to execute unified land operations. Staff NCOs effectively support execution of mission command warfighting function

staff tasks and are proficient in employing their aspects of the mission command system. As experienced and expert Soldiers, they play a role in the development of junior officers. NCOs form professional and personal bonds with officers based on mutual trust and common goals. Senior NCOs advise commanders at all levels and are an important source of knowledge and discipline for all enlisted matters.

Soldiers look to their NCOs for solutions, guidance, inspiration, and development. Soldiers can relate to NCOs since they were developed through the enlisted ranks and the NCO education system. Soldiers expect them to convey information and provide day-to-day guidance to accomplish the missions in a complex world.

The NCO 2020 Strategy represents an analytical, data driven process for evolving the NCOES of today into the NCOPDS of the future. Professional NCOs – *adaptive, trained, and ready* – will be supported by a holistic development system that provides appropriately designed learning experiences at the point of need. NCOPDS will be a production system for developing the next generation of competent and committed NCOs of character as trusted Army professionals who thrive in chaos and ambiguity, adapt, and are prepared to win in a complex world.

We cannot expect to capture the imagination of combat-seasoned forces that have been in some of the most complex environments imaginable for almost a decade by sitting them in a classroom and bludgeoning them with PowerPoint slides. We must make the 'scrimmage' as hard as the 'game' in both the institutional schoolhouse and at home station.

-General Martin E. Dempsey

Appendix A: NCO 2020 Strategic Framework

Lines of Effort

End State

LOE#1: Development

Noncommissioned Officers develop as leaders over time through deliberate progressive and sequential processes incorporating training, education, and experience across the three learning domains throughout the Soldier Lifecycle.

Major Objectives
1. S.T.E.P.
2. NCO PME
3. Credentialing
4. Validate

LOE#2: Talent Management

The purposeful expansion of an NCO's core MOS proficiency and leadership provided through developmental positions, opportunities, and assignments both within and outside of their Career Management Field (CMF).

Major Objectives
1. Broadening
2. Operational
3. PDM (Career Map)

LOE#3: Stewardship of the Profession

Strengthen the NCO Corps by emphasizing the role of the NCO in building and sustaining trust; constantly improving military expertise; setting an example of honorable service; fostering a climate rich in esprit de corps; and serving as stewards of the Army profession.

Major Objectives
1. Doctrine
2. Self Develop
3. 2020 Year of the NCO

A Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development System (NCOPDS) integrated and synchronized in the development of the next generation of competent and committed NCOs of character as trusted Army professionals capable of thriving in chaos, adapting and winning in a complex world.

ENDS

A Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development System (NCOPDS) integrated and synchronized in the development of the next generation of competent and committed NCOs of character as trusted Army professionals capable of thriving in chaos, adapting and winning in a complex world.

WAYS

Lines of Effort

LOE#1 DEVELOPMENT	LOE#2 TALENT MANAGEMENT	LOE#3 STEWARDSHIP of the PROFESSION
Major Objectives		
1.1: S.T.E.P.	2.1: Broadening Assignments	3.1: Doctrine
1.2: NCO PME	2.2: Operational Assignments	3.2: Self-Development
1.3: Credentialing	2.3: Professional Development Model	3.3: 2020 Year of the NCO
1.4: Validate, Record, Track		
Key Tasks		
1.1.1- Career Management Model	1.2.4- Develop Common Core	1.3.1- Identify and Validate Credentials
1.1.2- Deferment Policy	1.2.5- PME for Nom CSM/SGM	1.3.2-Facilitate Credentialing Process
1.1.3- Promotion Policy	1.2.6- Curriculum relevance/rigor	1.4.1- Digital Job Book
1.1.4- Scheduling Priorities	1.2.7- Review Structured Self Development	1.4.2-Army Career Tracker
1.2.1- Integrate into Army University	1.2.8- Instructor selection, development, recognition	1.4.3- Skills Qualification/ Certification
1.2.2- Establish Level V PME	1.2.9- One Army School System	1.4.4- Assessments
1.2.3- Update/Incorporate NCO GLOs	1.2.10- Joint PME	1.4.5- Digital Rucksack
2.1.1- Strategic Broadening Opportunities	2.3.1- Common career map for all NCOs	3.1.1- NCO Creed
2.1.2- Fellowships	2.3.2- CMF career map overlays	3.1.2- NCO Guide/NCO Corner
2.1.3- Training with Industry	2.3.3- Update DA Pam 600-25	3.1.3- FM 6-22
2.1.4- Institutional Army Assignments	2.3.4- Update Army Career Tracker	3.1.4- ADP-1/ ADRP-1
2.2.1- Broad range of assignments	2.3.5- Establish Key PDs 6T/7T/8T	3.1.5- Soldier Manual STPs
2.2.2- Duty positions	2.3.6- CMD/SGM/ SMMO Branch	3.2.1- Professional Reading
2.2.3- Unit NCOPD Program	2.3.7 CSM/SGM Timelines/PDM	3.2.2- Professional Writing
3.2.3- Expert Action Badge		
3.2.4- Competitive Boards		
3.3.1- Timeline		
3.3.2- Key Events		
3.3.3- STRATCOM		

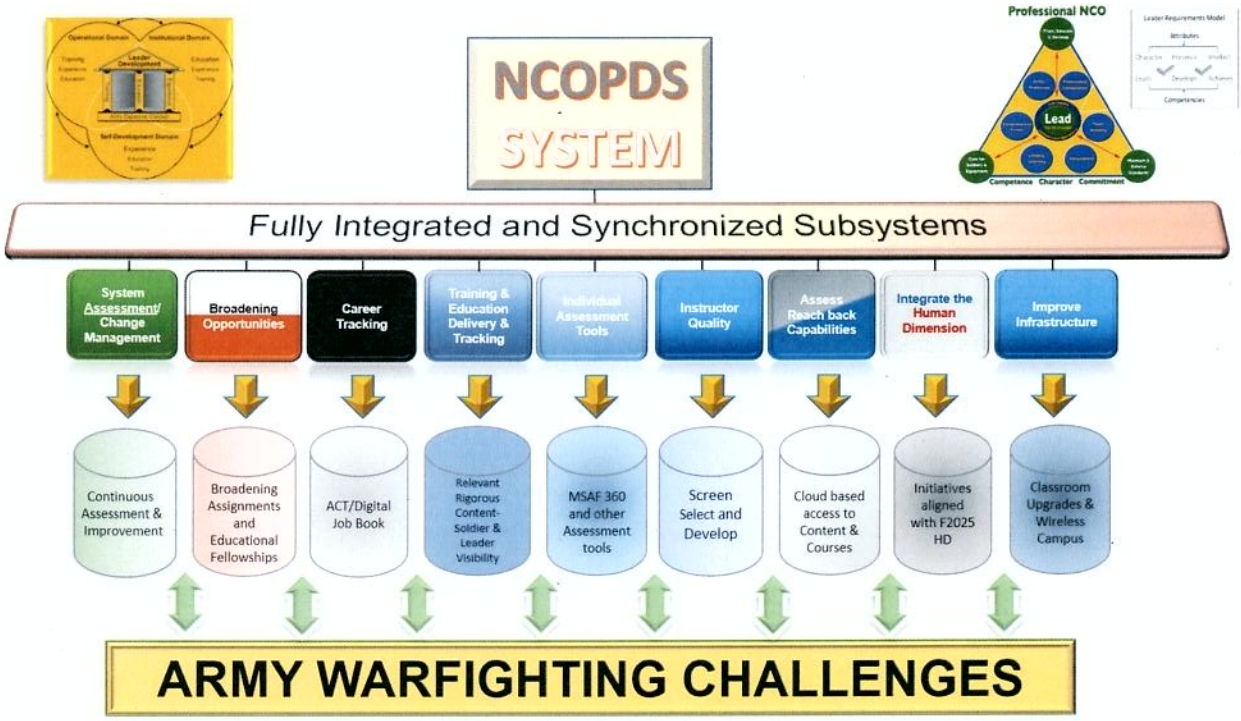
MEANS

POLICY | PROGRAMS | SYSTEMS | TRAINING | EDUCATION | EXPERIENCE | ASSESSMENTS

INSTITUTION – INDIVIDUAL – ORGANIZATION

Appendix B: NCOPDS

A Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development System (NCOPDS) integrated and synchronized in the development of the next generation of competent and committed NCOs of character as trusted Army professionals capable of thriving in chaos, adapting and winning in a complex world.



Appendix C: Sources

NCO 2020 Survey

Army Leader Development Strategy

Army Learning Concept/Army Learning Model

Army Operating Concept

Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL)

Review of Education, Training, and Leadership Study (RETAL)

TRADOC Quality Assurance Program

Department of the Army Inspector General Army Leader Development Report

Human Dimension Strategy

Army Warfighting Challenges

Sergeant Major of the Army NCO Solariums

Not in My Squad (NIMS) Workshops

RAND Arroyo Research on NCOES 2001-2015