2024 ACQUISITION AND SUSTAINMENT
WORKFORCE FRAMEWORK

INVESTING IN TOMORROW'S LEADERS

Our people are our most important resource in the Department of Defense, and Secretary Austin and Deputy Secretary Hicks remain focused on growing and developing our talent. Meeting the security challenges of today and tomorrow as outlined in the National Defense Strategy is only achievable with the dedication and professionalism of our total workforce—military and civilian.

Every day, the Department's acquisition and sustainment professionals deliver integrated capabilities to our Warfighters, allies, andpartners at speed and scale. In recent years, the criticality of this mission has only become more apparent, and it is vital that we are enabling our workforce to pace the challenge. As we continue building out the full range of workforce skills and capabilities required for this decisive decade, I am proud to release the attached Acquisition and Sustainment Workforce Framework to guide our efforts.

Across four key pillars, the Acquisition and Sustainment Workforce Framework aims to empower success in recruiting, training, and retaining the best and brightest to serve across our ranks. Leveraging workforce trends, lessons learned, and direct feedback, this Department-wide framework will be fundamental in shaping the trajectory of the defense acquisition and sustainment enterprise for years to come.

Defense acquisition and sustainment is a profession and an expertise, and the achievements of our professionals are nothing short of remarkable. I look forward to implementing this framework to build and develop the world-class talent we need to support our enduring mission.

WILLIAM A. LAPLANTE
UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ACQUISITION AND SUSTAINMENT

PRISM

The inaugural Personnel, Retention, Incentives, Skill-Building, and Mentorship (PRISM) Symposium was conducted on December 7, 2023. The PRISM Symposium brought together Acquisition and Sustainment Senior Leadership from across the Department to share lessons learned, challenges, barriers to talent development and real-world examples of excellence. The content captured from this event served as a foundation stone of the Acquisition and Sustainment Workforce Framework.

The Department of Defense (DoD) must invest in the talent development of a robust workforce of acquisition and sustainment professionals who provide the procurement, management, delivery, and maintenance of products and services – from advanced weapons systems to raw materials. This workforce is a crucial national defense asset, and the Department's approach to recruiting, developing, and retaining acquisition and sustainment professionals should evolve accordingly.

The acquisition and sustainment enterprise must compete more effectively for talent across a broad spectrum of skillsets and positions – from staffing maintenance depots to managing multi-billion-dollar procurement programs.

The Department must also consider the health of the wider commercial and organic industrial base, whose talent pool and mission are inextricably linked to the success of the Department's acquisition and sustainment goals.

Finally, DoD must anticipate and address issues facing our workforce today as well as the challenges of recruiting, developing, and retaining, the workforce of tomorrow.

This first-ever Acquisition and Sustainment Workforce Framework (ASWF) provides a guiding set of principles, or 'pillars' that better align existing human capital efforts with National Defense Strategy (NDS) priorities. The four key pillars are:

- Acquisition Innovation to Match the Pacing Threat
- Make DoD an Employer of Choice
- Talent Development in the Acquisition Ecosystem
- Continuously Improve Workforce Policies, Programs, and Processes

Within each pillar is a set of signature initiatives prioritized by Acquisition & Sustainment (A&S) leadership that will be pursued and measured against identified metrics of success.

These signature initiatives are only a piece of the overall effort. Functional communities will continue to execute specific strategies and programs for their specific technical needs.

This new Framework and the culture of continuous improvement it represents will enable DoD to better attract, develop, and retain the best talent to support our no-fail mission to deliver capabilities to warfighters at speed and scale.

LABOR MARKET FRAMEWORK

The pipeline of workers supporting America's defense industrial base – a wide swath of companies and organizations producing and servicing weapons and equipment, ranging from ships to military uniforms to microelectronics – has atrophied in recent decades.

Within the context of a more widespread national decline in manufacturing skills and experience in recent decades, the DoD faces a more basic challenge of geography. In many cases, skilled workers are not located where they are needed most, which is an especially challenging predicament for shipyards and depots.

The obstacles facing the broader civilian industrial workforce directly impact the Department's Acquisition & Sustainment mission, which depends upon attracting, developing, and retaining, the best available talent to equip and sustain our Warfighters.

ACHIEVING THE FOUR PILLARS

The ASWF is nested within the broader labor market framework outlined by the Chief Talent Management Office (CTMO).

Building on this broader CTMO framework, the ASWF will include recruiting from non-traditional communities, promoting industrial careers, increasing apprenticeship programs, growing manufacturing and STEM skills, and upskilling the existing acquisition and sustainment workforce.
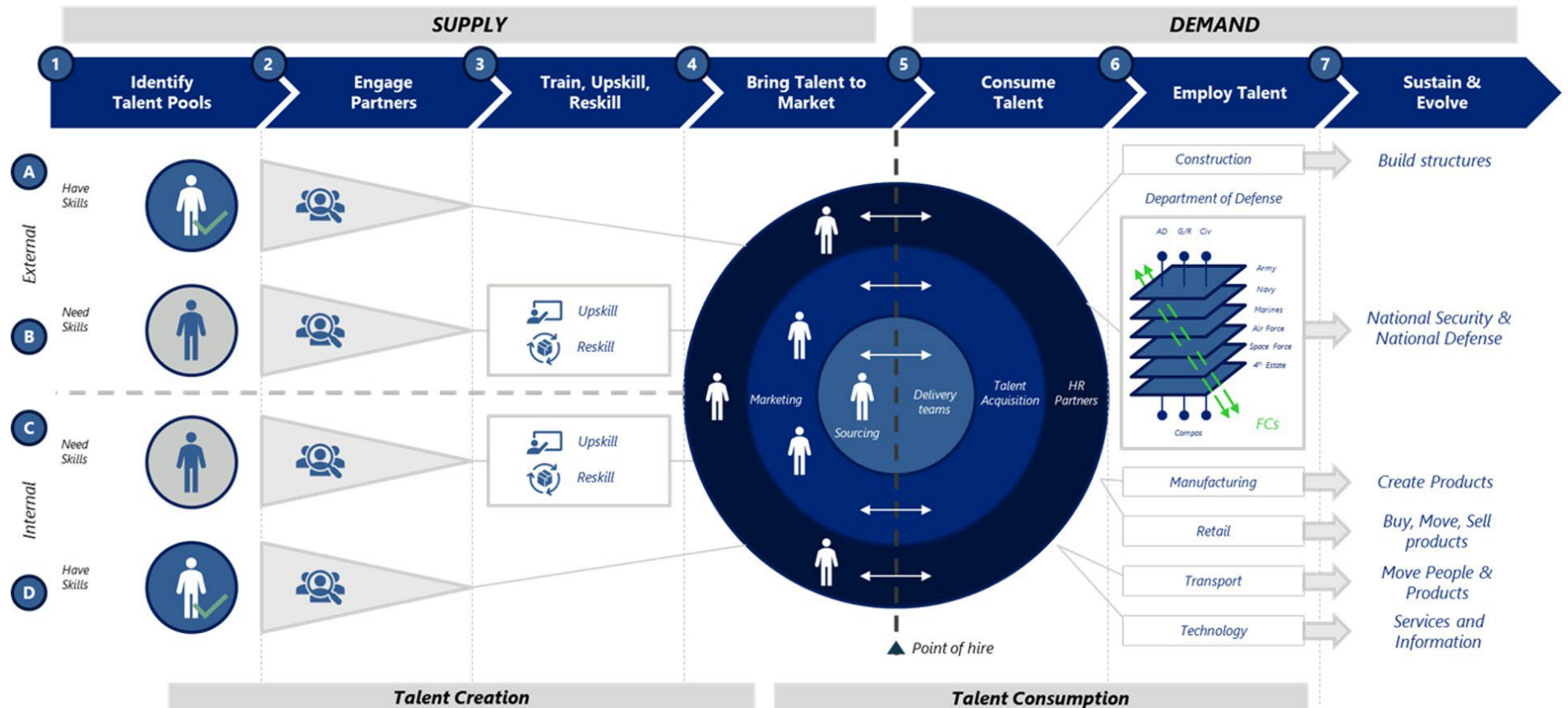
THE FOUR PILLARS

1. ACQUISITION INNOVATION TO MATCH THE PACING THREAT

To maintain a competitive edge in a world of rapid technological change and evolving threats, we need to adopt innovative practices that can deliver solutions faster and at scale to ensure resilient and effective warfighting capabilities. The objective of this pillar is to share and expand adoption of innovative acquisition and sustainment practices across the workforce.

SIGNATURE INITIATIVE:

- Build business case study models of successful acquisition outcomes using lessons from real world case studies.
  - Create DAU learning content that helps scale both specific acquisitions models, such as Competitive Advantage Pathfinders (CAPs), as well as conveying the type of forward thinking and innovation the Department is seeking. The variety of learning content will also offer an opportunity to clearly communicate A&S leadership intent and support for such initiatives.

OTHER EXEMPLAR INITIATIVES:

- **Supply Chain Illumination Tool:** Redefine the Supply Chain Risk Management process and taxonomy to help program managers assess and mitigate the risks associated with our suppliers and their products, especially in the context of cyber threats, foreign influence, and the constrained availability of energy and critical minerals.
- **Scale and Increase Accessibility of Priority Training Content:** Incentivize self-directed learning among the acquisition and sustainment workforce and provide relevant and engaging content formats such as playlists, virtual & in-person courses, podcasts, and webinars. A&S is focusing on best practices to adapt current offerings into a more personally tailorable, and mobile-friendly format. By prioritizing self-directed learning, the acquisition and sustainment workforce will have easily accessible and critically relevant tools and skills at their fingertips throughout their careers and in times of national crisis.

- **Data-Driven Best Practices on Use of Adaptive Acquisition Framework Authorities:** Review best practices in the use of the Adaptive Acquisition Framework where the Department has leveraged the authorities Congress has provided. A&S will continue to collect data surrounding such authorities to highlight their usage and benefits, then integrate best practices into the learning opportunities highlighted above.
- **Leverage OSD Awards Program:** The Under Secretary of Defense for A&S annually recognizes the "best of the best" across the workforce. A&S will recognize application of effective acquisition approaches that creatively leverage authorities to accelerate delivery.
- **A Digital Platform to Receive New Ideas:** Democratize how to expand innovative approaches by encouraging employees to take part in smaller, incremental changes and provide them with the opportunity to collaborate across the DoD acquisition and sustainment enterprise. This digital platform will showcase and identify best practices, effective pilots, and key blockers to encourage the acquisition and sustainment workforce to collaborate across the DoD enterprise and apply novel acquisition approaches and innovative solution sets.

RELATED FUNCTIONAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVES:

- Establish DAU job support tools to assist international acquisition to include strategy, defense exportability integration, foreign military sales, international business planning, and an international acquisition and exportability assessment tool. (Program Management)
- Develop training and continuously update training courses to support the use of key acquisition tools such as Broad Agency Announcements, Commercial Solution Offerings, and Other Transaction Authority (OTAs). (Program Management)

THE FOUR PILLARS

2. MAKE DoD AN EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

One of the primary challenges across the Federal Government is making a compelling case for public service by highlighting the benefits and opportunities of government employment. The broader perception that government employment is a challenge to enter and is rigid and constraining underscores the need to build and develop career paths that cross different areas of acquisition and sustainment. We should provide options for a full career path, rather than a single job, to emulate the best practices of permeability and flexibility prevalent in the broader labor market.

The objective of this pillar is to ensure we have the programs and messaging in place to attract, develop, and retain talent in the acquisition and sustainment workforce.

SIGNATURE INITIATIVE:

- **Defense Civilian Training Corps (DCTC):** DCTC is a collaboration between the DoD and academia. The pilot program offers students a tailored curriculum, capstone projects, immersive learning experiences, and DoD internship projects that, upon graduation, will launch their career within the DoD acquisition workforce.

OTHER EXEMPLAR INITIATIVES:

- **Adopt Best Recruiting Practices:** Pursue active sourcing of key candidates, take advantage of social networks such as LinkedIn, and explore referral programs to invest in civilian recruiting.
  - A&S is partnering with the Offices of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness and the Director, Administration & Management, and with the military departments to develop pilot recruiting programs that better mirror private sector best practices. These include applying recruiting lessons and exploring cross-referrals of candidates between the manufacturing sector and enlisted accessions.

- **Link Community and Installation Investment to Recruiting and Retention:** Engage key communities in the defense and organic industrial base and advocate for the infrastructure that allows for a diverse workforce to thrive, such as access to childcare and opportunities for spousal employment. A&S will leverage the Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC) to look holistically at areas that require additional investments for a talented workforce to thrive.

- **Create an Acquisition and Sustainment Recruitment Campaign:** Build media products and an online hub that can be amplified through DAU and commercial social media platforms to highlight the importance of civilian A&S roles and their unique benefits and pride of mission they offer. This recruitment campaign will build awareness of opportunities for professional development, career mobility, and cross-sector collaboration. These programs include the DCTC, the Public-Private Talent Exchange, partnerships with other government agencies such as the Departments of Education, Energy, Labor, and Commerce. Strategic communications efforts provide messaging in schools, universities, technical/trade colleges, and job fairs.

- **Increase Participation in DoD College Acquisition Internship Program (DCAIP):** DCAIP is a summer internship program that provides college students with real-world exposure to an acquisition workforce career. DCAIP interns gain hands-on functional area experience while working within the acquisition workforce. A&S will work to expand DCAIP as a complementary program to DCTC to create a new pipeline to public service.

RELATED FUNCTIONAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVES:

- Partnering with the Departments of Education, Energy, Labor, and Commerce to support the Organic Industrial Base (OIB) campaign such as hosting town halls with Career Technical Education (CTE) state directors, influencing the CTE curriculum to impact the workforce, reviewing competency models to determine workforce gaps, and analyzing a job quality toolkit. (Logistics)

- Utilize the comprehensive contracting workforce retention compendium issued in August 2023 and identify strategies that Components may use to reduce turnover. (Contracting)

THE FOUR PILLARS

3. TALENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE ACQUISITION ECOSYSTEM TO INCLUDE UPSKILLING AND TRAINING

The objective of this pillar is to improve the pipeline, quality, and professionalism of the workforce while increasing the permeability of the workplace.

SIGNATURE INITIATIVE:

- **Link Talent Development to Outcomes:** The Defense Acquisition Workforce Development Account (DAWDA) is an enterprise resource and key enabler. To better align DAWDA funded initiatives, A&S will work with the Military Departments to streamline and focus efforts to reflect broader acquisition and sustainment practices and priorities.

OTHER EXEMPLAR INITIATIVES:

- **Technical Skills Training:** Partner with the Department of Education and the Department of Labor to create pipelines for technical skill training near the depots where the organic industrial base workforce operates.

- **Create a Centralized Platform to Consolidate Training and Upskilling Opportunities:** Provide a user-friendly interface with curated training options that build out potential career paths that span the entirety of the A&S mission. Improve access to learning resources to build in-demand skills and certification in areas such as program management, data analytics, software engineering, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence.

- **Re-invigorate and Broaden Public-Private Talent Exchange (PPTE) Program:** The PPTE program is an acquisition-focused professional development exchange program between government and industry. The program affords DoD and industry professionals an opportunity to enhance mutual understanding of business operations and innovative best practices. A&S is reinvigorating the PPTE program to create communication and trust with the private sector as well as to retain talented individuals through career development opportunities. A&S will broaden the reach of the program through the inclusion of non-traditional industry partners.

- **Expand Participation of Leadership Development Programs:** Identify, amplify, and expand programs to support emerging leaders at all levels.

FUNCTIONAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- Pilot program at an OIB-covered depot under the National Imperative for Industrial Skills program, creating a training opportunity for students to learn the skills needed to work at the depot. (Logistics)

- Expand use of DoD Contracting Career Field Model to promulgate the competencies, professional/leadership development opportunities, and typical assignment experiences our Contracting professionals will use to plan their successful careers. (Contracting)

- Deploy two Services Acquisition Credentials as well as a Category Management Credential. The Services Acquisition Community of Practice (CoP) has also been revised and updated to reference the latest DoD policy. DAU will continue to deliver Services Acquisition Workshops to customers worldwide to assist with all phases of the Services Acquisition process and development of required documentation. (Program Management)

THE FOUR PILLARS

4. CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE WORKFORCE POLICIES, PROGRAMS, AND PROCESSES

The objective of this pillar is to develop forward-looking talent management tools that reflect private sector best practices.

SIGNATURE INITIATIVE:

- **Acquisition and Sustainment Workforce Hub:** Develop a single workforce hub with resources to simplify and consolidate workforce resources, ranging from upskilling and training resources to hiring and retention. This platform will provide a user-friendly interface with curated options, categorized by areas, skillsets, and levels.

OTHER EXEMPLAR INITIATIVES:

- **Modernize Workforce Management:** Enhance talent management, professional development, and retention such as on-demand educational opportunities. A&S will continue to be responsive to employee demand signal and modernize opportunities accordingly.

- **Streamline and Simplify Workforce Policies and Processes:** Reduce administrative burden and increase efficiency, ensuring we understand the "why" behind labor intensive workforce requirements.

- **Ensure Breadth and Depth of Workforce:** Ensure the workforce is recruited from a cross-section of the nation, reflecting the myriad experiences that help shape creative thought and innovative ideas.

FUNCTIONAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- Reinvigorate key Logistics Workforce Development interservice/interagency forums such as the Logistics Functional Community Forum. (Logistics)

- Defense Pricing, Contracting and Acquisition Policy (DPC&AP) leads the chartered Contracting Workforce Functional Integration Team, a bi-monthly forum with representatives from the Services, Fourth Estate Agencies, and DAU to enable nearly 36,000 contracting professionals to better negotiate, award and administer contracts. (Contracting)

- DPC&AP will execute a reciprocity agreement between DoD and OMB's Office of Federal Procurement Policy to recognize parity of the contracting certification standards between the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act Contracting Professional Certification and the Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) Professional. (Contracting)

- Software and Information Technology – DAU established a Mission Assistance Software Acquisition Cadre to identify and leverage commercial learning assets on emerging technologies that could benefit the defense acquisition workforce in addition to providing focused mission assistance to programs on software development and software acquisition. (Program Management).

CONCLUSION

A more expert, agile, and resilient acquisition and sustainment workforce is one of the best investments the Department — and our nation – can make. From shipyard to depots, these investments in personnel we make today will pay dividends into the future.

This Acquisition and Sustainment Workforce Framework does not provide all the answers. Rather it is intended to establish guideposts for the acquisition and sustainment workforce and provide the framework under which functional communities can further develop their own strategies and initiatives.

Finally, A&S will measure progress and track metrics for the workforce framework as detailed in Appendix A. We intend to establish benchmarks and then evaluate for progress every six months.

These signature initiatives are only a piece of the overall effort. Functional communities will continue to execute specific strategies and programs for their specific technical needs.

This new Framework and the culture of continuous improvement it represents will enable DoD to better attract, develop, and retain the best talent to support our no-fail mission to deliver capabilities to warfighters at speed and scale.

APPENDIX A: GOALS/BENCHMARKS

A&S intends to measure the outcomes and progress against the four pillars above to better understand workforce trends over time and improve the outcomes of pilot initiatives to recruit and retain the workforce. To evaluate the effectiveness of DoD's talent development strategy and implementation methods, we need to define and track the following metrics:

- Outcome Metrics: These are the indicators that show how well we are achieving our desired results. For example:

  o Recruiting: The number and percentage of qualified applicants and hires for each occupation code, as well as the diversity and inclusion of our talent pool.

  o Churn / Turnover / Loss Rates: The number and percentage of employees who leave the organization voluntarily or involuntarily, as well as the reasons and costs of turnover.

  o Workforce Experience: The level of satisfaction, engagement, motivation, and well-being of our employees, as measured by surveys, feedback, and performance reviews.

  o Pipeline Creation: The percentage of participants in programs such as DCTC that continue serving in government and the conversion rate of internships to full time employees as measured by acceptance of return offers.

- Process Metrics: These are the measures that show how well we are implementing our strategy. For example, we can monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of our recruiting, training, and retention processes, as well as the engagement and performance of our employees through:

  o Gap Time to Fill Acquisition Vacancies: The average number of days between the identification of a vacancy and the hiring of a new employee, as well as the factors that affect this time span.

  o Self-Directed Learning by Continuous Learning Rates: The number and percentage of employees who participate in self-directed learning activities, such as online courses, webinars, podcasts, etc., as well as the outcomes and benefits of these activities.

  o Use of Hiring Authorities: The percentage of positions eligible for use of a direct or excepted hiring authority in which that authority is used.

- Strategy Metrics: These are the metrics that show how well we are maintaining and improving the workforce strategy over time. For example, we can assess the alignment and adaptation of our strategy to the changing needs and expectations of our stakeholders, as well as the innovation and learning culture of DoD at the enterprise-level.

  o Strategy Alignment: The degree to which the workforce framework is aligned with DoD's vision, mission, values, and goals at the enterprise level.

  o Strategy Adaptation: The degree to which the workforce framework is flexible and responsive to the changing needs and expectations of our stakeholders.

  o Innovation and Learning Culture: The extent to which DoD fosters a culture of innovation and learning, where employees are encouraged to experiment, collaborate, share knowledge, and learn from failures.

Based on these metrics, DoD can set the following benchmarks and targets for its Talent Management strategy:

- Benchmark Data where DoD is now, based on the most recent data available from DCPAS and other sources. Our current workforce is diverse, skilled, and motivated, but also faces some challenges such as retention, skill development and succession planning. We have established some key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure our progress and identify areas for improvement.

  o 1-Year: This is where we want to be in one year, based on realistic and achievable goals that reflect our priorities and resources. Based on the initial KPIs, DoD will determine the level in which we will increase:

    - The employee retention rate,

    - Employee satisfaction, and

    - Increase awareness of training / education opportunities for upskilling and development.

  o 5-Years: This is where we want to be in five years, based on ambitious goals that reflect our vision and potential.

    - DoD will be recognized as a leader in our field, with a workforce that is diverse, inclusive, innovative, and high performing, as measured by percentage of applications that make the certification list, number of applications for job openings, and the diversity of the applications received.

    - DoD will have a culture of excellence, collaboration and continuous learning that attracts and retains the best talent, as measured by retention of employees consistently rated as outstanding, selected for competitive development and educational assignments, and rate of application/transfer from other federal agencies to DoD.

    - DoD will be recognized as leading innovation in acquisition, with successful CAPS a standard practice, streamlined software acquisition practices, and effective usage of MTAs/OTAs.