This publication provides the reference for competency modeling and augments Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 36-26, Total Force Development, and Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2640, Executing Total Force Development. This publication provides information and instructional material on how and when competency models are planned, built, and executed in support of the Air Force mission. This publication applies to all Airmen—officer, enlisted, civilian, Regular Air Force, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve. This publication has been developed in collaboration with the Chief of Air Force Reserve (AF/RE), the Director of the Air National Guard (NGB/CF), and the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel, and Services (AF/A1).

This Air Force publication may be supplemented at any level; supplements must be reviewed by this publications office of primary responsibility (OPR) prior to a supplements certification, approval and implementation. Refer recommend changes and questions about this publication to the OPR using the AF Form 847, Recommendation for Change of Publication; route AF Form 847 from the field through the appropriate functional chain of command.

Ensure all data collected as a result of processes described in this publication is handled in accordance with current regulations, procedures, and law (e.g., privacy act) for the data type (e.g., personal identifiable information) collected.

Ensure that all records created as a result of processes described in this publication are maintained in accordance with Air Force Manual (AFMAN) 33-363, Management of Records, and disposed of in accordance the Air Force Records Disposition Schedule located in the Air Force Records Information Management System.
SUMMARY OF CHANGES

This is a new publication and must be reviewed in its entirety. This publication aligns competency modeling to force development and talent management objectives and tasks outlined in the USAF Strategic Master Plan. This publication outlines broad roles and responsibilities for competency modeling enabling the Air Force and its leaders to apply an agile competency-based learning paradigm to develop the Airmen we need to operate successfully in constantly changing tactical, operational, and strategic environments across multiple domains. This publication constructs the basic framework and processes the Air Force to plan, build, and execute competency models, while allowing commanders, functional authorities, functional managers, and career field managers the flexibility needed to tailor this tool and its processes to their organization. This publication describes when competency models may be used in relation to numerous force development activities like writing job descriptions; recruiting, hiring, and retaining personnel; developing curriculum and selecting training materials; creating and evaluating individual development plans; and identifying licensure and certification requirements without limiting their use in other applications. This publication creates a foundation and new way for the Air Force as a Service to ascertain the knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics an Airman needs to WIN…IN AIR, SPACE, AND CYBERSPACE.

1. Overview.

1.1. Competency models are an organized collection of various competencies describing observable and measurable patterns of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics required to perform the mission successfully. Competency models provide a framework to effectively assess, maintain, and monitor the competencies required for mission success.

1.1.1. Competency models used within the context of total force development enable the Air Force to maintain or modify its assignment, classification, learning and development, recruitment, retention, and other talent management policies, strategies, operations, tactics, procedures, and techniques to meet mission requirements.

1.1.2. Competency models used within the context of the continuum of learning enable Airmen to identify competency gaps and determine the education, training, and experiences needed to meet mission requirements.

1.2. An institutional competency model describes competencies common to all members of the organization, while an occupational competency model describes competencies unique to members within a specific occupational category. When used together, these models identify the competencies required to meet the multi-dimensional challenges of a dynamic military environment over a wide range of mission areas.

2. Roles and Responsibilities.

2.1. Assistant Secretary of the Air Force Manpower and Reserve Affairs (SAF/MR).

2.1.1. Functions as the Air Force’s lead proponent for competency modeling and approving official for Department of the Air Force-level (departmental) competency modeling policy.

2.1.2. Establishes priorities for all competency modeling policies, concepts, analysis, development, reviews, capabilities, and investment strategies based on Secretary of the
Air Force (SECAF) guidance and advice from the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF).

2.1.3. Oversees applications of this manual and ensures they comply with policies, procedures, information, requirements, and responsibilities set in public law, Executive Orders, Presidential Memoranda, Department of Defense (DoD) policies and issuances.

2.1.4. Establishes strategic thinking policy and oversee the cognitive development of the force.

2.2. **Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel, and Services (AF/A1).**

2.2.1. Facilitates the Air Force’s ability to identify, develop, measure, and track competencies across the service and certifying authority for departmental-level competency modeling policy.

2.2.2. Ensures competency modeling-related policy meets Chief of Staff of the Air Force intent and aligns with other departmental-level guidance, initiatives, plans, and processes.

2.2.3. Ensures military and civilian personnel within Air Education and Training Command serve on boards/teams convened to develop strategic thinking and cognitive force development policy and institutional and occupational competency models.

2.2.4. Ensures functional authorities, functional managers, and career field managers establish competency models and use them to guide the force development activities and initiatives within their respective mission areas.

2.2.5. Ensures competency models are published as a part of Air Force classification directories, career field education and training plans, or other such documents used to establish or describe the observable and measurable patterns of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics that Airmen require to perform a mission.

2.3. **Commander of Air Education and Training Command (AETC/CC).**

2.3.1. Develops and executes competency modeling policies, plans, programs, processes and other activities necessary to guide, measure, implement, assess, and oversee all aspects of competency modeling for the Air Force.

2.3.2. Executes office of primary responsibility (OPR) duties for departmental-level competency modeling policy.

2.3.3. Executes functional authority for the institutional competency modeling.

2.3.3.1. Establishes and approves the Air Force institutional competency model.

2.3.3.2. Establishes and performs a comprehensive periodic review of the institutional competency model.

2.3.4. Formulates recommendations for policy decisions and resourcing levels to enhance competency modeling ensuring their effectiveness and efficiency in meeting current, emerging, and future U.S. security requirements.

2.3.5. Creates agile, collaborative, and integrated networks (teams) to plan and build institutional and occupational competency models ensuring the ability to modify
competency models and associated development programs quickly and proficiently to
immersing missions.

2.3.5.1. Assigns AETC competency modeling experts to lead institutional and
occupational competency-modeling teams.

2.3.5.2. Provides financial support to AETC competency-modeling experts assigned
to lead competency-modeling teams.

2.3.6. Ensures institutional competency-modeling teams use the competency modeling
process as outlined in this manual.

2.3.7. Enters into agreements with non-Air Force institutions (which cannot be covered
by this manual) to obtain necessary data, information, and services to develop
competency models. **Note:** Review and follow Air Force and DoD directive guidance
(e.g., AFI 25-201, *Intra-Service, Intra-Agency, and Inter-Agency Support Agreements*
*Procedures* and DoDI 4000.19, *Support Agreements*) prior to entering into an agreement
with a non-Air Force institution.

2.3.8. Develops metrics and processes to validate competency models.

2.4. **Functional Authority / Functional Manager / Career Field Manager.**

2.4.1. Establishes and approve occupational competency models for use within their
functional area.

2.4.2. Partners with AETC to establish or modify the occupational competency models
needed to execute force development activities and initiatives within their respective
mission areas.

2.4.2.1. Assigns functional and subject matter experts to occupational competency
modeling teams.

2.4.2.2. Provides financial support to functional and subject matter experts assigned
to competency modeling teams.

2.4.3. Supports AETC’s data collection efforts required to develop or revise competency
models.

2.4.4. Ensures occupational competency-modeling teams use the competency modeling
process as outlined in this manual.

2.4.5. Establishes a comprehensive periodic review of occupational competency models.

2.5. **Commander / Director / Supervisor.**

2.5.1. Implements the guidance outlined in this manual and ensures compliance with
policies and procedures established herein.

2.5.2. Partners with AETC, functional authorities, functional managers, or career field
managers when there is a need to develop or modify an occupational competency model
used within their respective mission areas.

2.5.3. Uses approved institutional and occupational competency models to execute force
development activities and initiatives within their respective mission areas.
2.5.4. Supports higher headquarters’ data collection efforts required to develop or revise competency models.

2.5.5. Establishes a periodic review schedule for occupational competency models used within their respective mission areas to ensure relevancy and, if required, formulate recommendations or submit waivers to institute changes to approved models.


3.1. Planning the Model.

3.1.1. Identify and select team members. (See Attachment 2 for more information)

3.1.2. Research information by reviewing scientific literature, source/reference material, and existing competency models/dictionaries.

3.1.3. Define and document the model’s purpose, scope, and milestones.

3.2. Building the Model.

3.2.1. Collect the data and information necessary to build the model through a combination of research methodologies. Review of existing data (e.g., behavior and competency catalogs, lists, or models; existing task and mission analyses) should be supplemented by personal interviews, focus groups, and/or surveys/questionnaires of subject matter experts.

3.2.2. Once the data and information has been gathered, team members use a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis methods to identify categories, patterns, or themes. The goal is to quantify major behavioral categories, patterns, or themes outlining the model.

3.2.3. Once the data and information has been collected, team members, label (name) and write definitions for relevant behavioral competency themes. For instance, a major behavioral category, pattern, or theme may emerge involving interpersonal relationship with crews and squads. If focus groups and/or interviews with subject matter experts (SME) indicated that the relevant interpersonal dynamics and effective behaviors in crews and squads were similar, the competency modeling team may combine crew and squad interpersonal relationship themes into an overarching competency of “teamwork.” The team may describe the competency theme based on the SME data collected using a definition like “Builds cohesive teams within organizations. Shares wins and successes such that each team member feels valued.” Refine or revise competency group names and definitions as necessary to reach consensus. The Q-sort technique and/or statistical methodologies, leveraging psychometrics, such as factor analysis or cluster analysis, may also be used when sufficient data exists.

3.2.4. Once major groups have been named and defined, team members will repeat paragraphs 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 to create sub-groups for the data within each major group. Continue this process until the team has named and defined the sub-groups for each major group.

3.2.5. Once sub-groups have been named and defined, team members must describe the ideal behaviors associated with each sub-group. These ideal behaviors may be separated into distinct proficiency levels (e.g., basic, proficient, advanced, expert, etc.). Ideal
behaviors are observable, measurable, and learned. Ideal behaviors describe what a person can actually do at a specified proficiency level. Education and training programs and experiential learning opportunities provide the mechanisms in which to learn and enhance these ideal behaviors. Once the ideal behaviors have been identified, the competency model’s basic structure is complete. A typical model includes defined competencies, sub-competencies, and a list of ideal behaviors that may have been separated into distinct proficiency levels.

3.2.6. Once the competency structure is established, diagram the model by creating a graphic. A graphic helps users quickly grasp the key features and relationships of a model. (See Attachment 3 for example)

3.2.7. Once the model is diagramed, validate the model. For example, have an independent group of SMEs not involved in the original data collection effort review the competency model to ensure accuracy and relevance. Document the data collection methods, analyses, and results with sufficient detail to allow another researcher to replicate the competency model development and validation process.

3.2.8. Once the validation is complete, submit the model to the appropriate official for approval.

3.2.9. Publish the approved model.

3.3. Executing the Model.

3.3.1. Prior to executing a model for an intended application, validate the model for that application. Note: Professional guidelines related to the intended application should be reviewed and followed to validate the model. For example, if the competency model will be used as a basis to assess and select personnel for assignments or training programs, Society for Industrial/Organizational Psychology Principles for Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures and Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures should be followed.

3.3.2. Use approved competency models as a primary resource for developing the force and managing talent. Applications for using a competency model include but are not limited to:

3.3.2.1. Writing job descriptions.
3.3.2.2. Recruiting, hiring, and retaining personnel.
3.3.2.3. Developing curriculum and selecting training materials.
3.3.2.4. Creating and evaluating individual development plans
3.3.2.5. Identifying licensure and certification requirements.

3.3.3. Periodically review models for relevance to its application; suggest any modifications to the applicable team lead.

SHON J. MANASCO
Assistant Secretary of the Air Force
(Manpower and Reserve Affairs)
Attachment 1

GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

References
AFI 33-360, Publications and Forms Management, 1 December 2015
AFI 36-2640, Executing Total Force Development, 30 August 2018
AFPD 36-26, Total Force Development, 22 December 2015
AFMAN 33-363, Management of Records, 1 March 2008
USAF Strategic Master Plan, May 2015

Adopted Forms
AF Form 847, Recommendation for Change of Publication

Terms
Ability—a present competence to perform an act, either innate or the result of learning and practice.
Assess—a systematic method of gathering, documenting, analyzing, and interpreting empirical data to refine plans, programs, and processes to improve effectiveness or efficiency.
Behavior—an activity performed to achieve objectives of the job. Involves observable (physical) components and unobservable (mental) components. Behaviors consist of the performance of one or more tasks.
Build—to construct something by putting smaller components together.
Cluster Analysis—a statistical methodology, which aims to classify a set of objects (or individuals) on the basis of a set of measured variables in such a way that the objects (individuals) in the same group (called a cluster) are more similar to each other than to those in other groups (clusters). For example, this method may be used to determine clusters of jobs or career fields that are most similar on a given basis.
Career Field Manager—appointed by a functional manager and represents a functional community. A career field manager may be responsible for more than one specialty or multiple career field managers may be appointed within a single career field. Officer and civilian career field managers are O-6/GS-15 (or equivalent); enlisted career field managers are E-9s.
Competency—an observable and measurable pattern of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics needed to perform an institutional or occupational function successfully.
Competency Model—a collection of competencies that together defines successful performance in a particular work setting. Competency models are the foundation for important human resource functions such as recruitment and hiring, training and development, and retention. Competency models can be developed for specific jobs, job groups, organizations, occupations,
or missions. Some competency models include information about the levels of competence, mastery, or proficiency required at different occupational levels.

**Continuum of Learning**—career-long process of individual development where challenging experiences are combined with education and training events. This process produces Airmen who possess the tactical expertise, operational competence, strategic vision, and joint proficiency to lead and execute the full spectrum of Air Force missions.

**Development**—the process of growing or causing to grow and becoming more mature, advanced, or elaborate.

**Education**—process of imparting and then assessing general bodies of knowledge and habits of mind applicable to a broad spectrum of endeavors to prepare individuals intellectually to deal with dynamic environments and solve ill-defined problems by using critical thought and reasoned judgment. AF education programs prepare Airmen to anticipate and successfully meet challenges across the range of military operations and build a professional corps.

**Execute**—to carry out or put into effect a plan or order.

**Experiential Learning**—an Airman’s active participation or involvement in positions, events, or activities leading to the accumulation of knowledge or skill that can be utilized to meet mission requirements.

**Factor Analysis**—a statistical methodology, which aims to reduce a large number of variables into a smaller number of underlying dimensions (factors) based on how those variables co-vary or correlate. For example, this method may be used to determine behaviors or competencies that are most similar on a given basis.

**Force Development**—a deliberate process of preparing Airmen through the continuum of learning with the required institutional competencies to meet the challenges of current and future operating environments. Institutional development generally results in leadership, management, and warrior ethos proficiency. Occupational development generally results in flying and technical skill proficiency.

**Functional Authority**—a senior leadership position to include Assistant Secretaries (Presidential Appointees confirmed by the Senate), Deputy Chiefs of Staff (three-star), and other selected HAF two-letter General Officer or SES-level leaders that provide corporate perspective of institutional requirements and force management and development. The functional authority serves as a final authority to ensure all policies, established in accordance with this document, are implemented within their functional community. Functional authorities are supported by functional managers who are supported by career field managers.

**Functional Manager**—a Regular Air Force general officer or senior executive service member, designated by the appropriate functional authorities, who provide day-to-day management over specific functional communities.

**Institution**—an established organization.

**Institutional Competency**—a competency common to all the members of the organization.

**Knowledge**—specific information required of an individual to develop the skills and attitudes for effective accomplishment of the jobs, duties, and tasks.
Methodology—a system of practices, procedures, and rules used by those who work in a discipline or engage in a particular area of study, inquiry, or activity.

Modeling—the process of creating or expressing a simplified or idealized understanding of a process or system, which maintains general relationships between its fundamental aspects in order to make improvements using general concepts, structures, or rules.

Objective—a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable goal toward which an operation is directed. The specific goal of the action taken which is essential to the concept or plan.

Occupation—a principal activity, duty, function, job, or task to which someone is assigned, devoted, engaged, or employed.

Occupational Competency—a competency unique to the members within a specific occupational category.

Operation—a sequence of tactical actions with a common purpose or unifying theme. A military action or the carrying out of a strategic, operational, tactical, service, training, or administrative military mission.

Organization—a planned administrative, functional, or operational framework or structure; formed by a logical or systematic arrangement of smaller functions or parts; whose efforts, when combined, integrated, and unified produce a complete and functioning whole to reach a common goal or purpose.

Other Characteristics—things, such as, attitudes, values, and traits, which often have an emotional or personality component. These “enabling behaviors” include work habits, ways of interacting with others, or manners of conducting oneself that contribute to effective work performance.

Plan—a written account of intended or future courses of action aimed at achieving specific goals or objectives within a specific timeframe. It explains in detail what needs to be done, when, how, and by whom, and often includes best case, expected case, and worst-case scenarios.

Procedure—a standardized action, phase, stage, or step that prescribes how to perform specific duties, jobs, missions, or tasks.

Process—a set of planned or prescribed actions or activities that interact to produce a product or result

Psychometrics—a field of study concerned with the theory and techniques for objective measurement of psychological constructs (e.g., aptitudes, skills, personality characteristics).

Q-sort—a form of analysis in which multiple raters systematically classify (sort) a larger set of objects (e.g., behaviors) into a smaller number of factors that are judged most similar on a given basis.

Qualitative Analysis—a scientific method of analysis for non-numerical data. Examples of qualitative analysis may include case studies, or identification of common themes from personal observations, interview transcripts, written narratives, or other non-numerical data sources. A common goal of qualitative analysis is to generate preliminary findings to be further evaluated through quantitative studies.
**Quantitative Analysis**—a statistical, mathematical, or numerical method emphasizing objective measurements, such as closed-ended responses to polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or the frequency of observable behaviors. The goal of quantitative analysis is to represent a given behavior, reality, or phenomenon in terms of a numerical value.

**Records Disposition Schedule**—a document providing mandatory instruction for the lifecycle management of records (and non-record materials) in any format or media type. The records disposition schedule provides for the disposition of records when agency business need for the records ceases, i.e., destruction of temporary records and transfer of permanent records to the National Archives of the United States.

**Skill**—a present, observable, and measurable capability to perform related tasks. For example, in the domain of work, example skills may include time management, typing, or physical lifting.

**Statistics**—a branch of mathematics dealing with data collection, organization, analysis, interpretation, and presentation.

**Strategy**—a practical idea or set of ideas for employing or engaging resources in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve planned goals or objectives.

**Tactics**—the employment and ordered arrangement of actions and resources in relation to each other.

**Team**—two or more people who coordinate their activities to accomplish a common goal. Teams are a way of organizing people to support interdependence and cooperation that requires close coordination among the team members. Team performance includes both the outputs produced by the group or team as a whole, as well as the contribution of individual team members to the success of the team.

**Technique**—a non-directive or non-prescriptive way or method used to perform a mission, function, or task.

**Total Force**—all-inclusive term used to categorize the individuals that comprise the Air Force organization; includes the Regular Air Force, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve military personnel, and Department of the Air Force civilian personnel.

**Training**—a set of events or activities presented in a structured or planned manner through one or more media for the attainment and retention of knowledge and skills required to meet job performance requirements. This involves the coaching and mentoring of Airmen, resulting in proficiency development.

**Validation**—the process of determining if a model’s or program’s implementation actions accurately reflect the conceptual description and specifications and used to determine reliability, suitability, and usefulness, whereby all the data and associated records are confirmed error-free and accurately reflect the planned attributes and parameters as identified in planning documents.
CRITICAL ELEMENTS FOR SELECTING COMPETENCY MODELING TEAM MEMBERS

A2.1. Developing a competency model takes considerable effort. To develop a competency model, development teams need an in-depth understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and tasks within the mission and the organization. To ensure a reasonable return on investment, the model must be relevant to the Airmen using it. A relevant model allows an Airman to take ownership of their own development and allows commanders to monitor individual and unit readiness.

A2.2. To ensure a successful outcome, involve the Airman actually doing the job, those who can describe and evaluate the behaviors required for mission success. Equipped with increased level of job understanding and ability to link individual roles and responsibilities to organizational performance makes the effort of selecting the right team members to plan, execute, and improve a competency model, well worth it.

A2.2.1. Involve the Airmen doing the work – Competency models should not be developed in isolation by force development personnel who do not always understand the details of what each role within the organization actually demands. Nor should they be left to the commanders, functional managers, or supervisors, who are not performing the job every day. To understand a role and the required institutional and occupational competencies fully, planners must go directly to the Airmen doing the job, as well as, getting a variety of other inputs from commanders, functional managers, supervisors, and stakeholders into what makes someone successful in that job.

A2.2.2. Communicate the purpose of the model – People tend to get nervous about change, when they do not understand the why the change is needed. Let them know why you are developing or revising the model, how it will be created, who will be creating it, and how it will be used. The more you communicate in advance, the easier the implementation will be.

A2.2.3. Use relevant competencies – Ensure the competencies included in the model only apply to the role covered by the model. If you include irrelevant competencies, people may have a hard time relating to the model in general. For example, if you created an institutional competency model to cover the whole base/wing, then an airfield management competency would not be included unless every Airman had to demonstrate that behavior. However, if you created competency model covering an installation manager’s role on an installation, with an active airfield, it would almost certainly include an airfield management competency.
Figure A3.1. Example: Develops Others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEADERSHIP</th>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Proficiency Levels</th>
<th>Observable Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|            | **Definition:** Investing in others to maximize their contributions to the mission by inspiring and providing an environment of continual feedback and learning opportunities. | **Expert**         | - Designs a new program to meet a training/development need.  
- Designs, implements, and communicates development opportunities for staff at all levels in the organization. |
|            | **Example Behaviors:**  
- Arranges appropriate training and experiences to foster the learning and development of others.  
- Identifies a training/developmental need and designs a new program to meet it.  
- Assesses subordinates’ competence; delegates full authority and responsibility for them to complete a task their own way. | **Advanced**        | - Provides helpful advice about improving an individual’s performance.  
- Arranges appropriate training and experiences to foster the learning and development of others. |
|            | **Others Marketing Strategy:**  
- Emphasize continuous improvement.  
- Link to selfless leadership.  
- "These Airmen leave others better than how they found them." | **Proficient**      | - Assesses subordinates’ competence; provide tools to improve that specific competency.  
- Provides subordinates tasks that give them the opportunity to develop and strengthen new skills. |
|            |                                                                             | **Basic**          | - Tells how to do the task; makes specific helpful suggestions.  
- Makes positive comments regarding others’ abilities or potentials. |
|            |                                                                             |                    | - Sustains application of competency over time.  
- Impact to subordinates.  
- Sustained applications of competency over time in a variety of situations.  
- Impact to subordinates and peers.  
- Sustains application of competency over time in a variety of situations.  
- Impact to individuals in the work center. |