Research Brief

RAND PROJECT AIR FORCE

Workforce Management Requires an Analysis-Based Approach

The U.S. Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC) is responsible for developing, acquiring, and maintaining most Air Force weapons and other military systems. Many of AFMC's 100,000 personnel are civilians (56 percent) or contractors (26 percent) with specialized technical skills. As technology changes, so do AFMC's personnel requirements. To ensure that it has the right number of people with the right sets of skills in the right jobs at the right time, AFMC needs a stronger, analysis-based approach to planning and developing its workforce.

RAND Project AIR FORCE (PAF) described the four main steps involved in analytically grounded workforce planning and development; the policy decisions that need to be made; and the set of methods, data, and tools that should be used or developed to support each step.

Step 1. Describe workforce demand—what the workforce should be now and in the future—in terms of

- *Size*. AFMC should determine how many staff members it needs.
- *The proportions of military, civilian, and contractor personnel*. Planning requires well-defined criteria for workforce composition. The criteria might stipulate, for example, that some positions must be filled by military personnel who have combat or field experience.
- *Job competencies required*. AFMC needs to know up front what competencies (for example, technical or management skills) it needs to develop or acquire and should update this information regularly.

Step 2. Describe workforce supply as it is now and is likely to be in the future given existing personnel practices and policies. Supply should be described in terms of size, composition, and job competencies.

Step 3. Compare demand with supply to identify gaps and allow AFMC to consider alternative strategies for filling the gaps, such as hiring, training, and changing workforce composition.

Step 4. Implement changes to meet demand. This includes developing the processes, practices, and monitoring tools needed to ensure that the force is managed from day to day and over time to meet workforce requirements.

AFMC should focus planning and development efforts on its core business units—including its products and logistics centers, laboratories, and test units—and on the positions within these organizations that are central to the units' respective missions.

PAF recommends assigning responsibilities for workforce management to the core business units. Headquarters AFMC's primary role should be to guide the process, provide support and assistance, and choose among trade-offs that may need to be made among business units. Similarly, career managers should have an advisory role.

Before it can fully engage in workforce planning and development, AFMC needs to strengthen its analytical capabilities, both at Headquarters AFMC and in its business units.

The four steps PAF has outlined should allow AFMC to manage its workforce using proactive analysis and to continue to meet Air Force manpower needs even as warfighting requirements, technology, and Air Force demand for products change. ■

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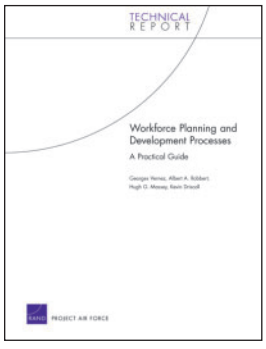

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