

Modernizing talent management in the Army for a stronger future

By Christine Matchell 10 April 2024



Christina Freese, deputy chief of staff for Resource Management (G-8), Army Materiel Command, speaks at the Warrior's Corner during the Association of the U.S. Army Global Force Symposium in Huntsville, Ala., March 27, 2024. (photo by Eben Boothby)

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. — The Army and Army Materiel Command have paid attention to modern circumstances, challenges and needs in how both military and civilian employees enter and approach their careers, modernizing the way talent is managed from the bottom to the top.

Christina Freese, AMC's deputy chief of staff for personnel, G-1, led the conversation at the Association of the United States Army's Global Force Symposium and Exposition March 27, 2024, in Huntsville, Alabama, speaking to catalysts for change and where they've led AMC.

"We're in a race for talent in a competitive and even a contested environment — and that demands that we rethink strategies and methods," she said.

Army leaders recognize that there has been a shift in career mindset, as more people think about the immediate future rather than career longevity.

People want their careers to better align with personal needs and wants, and people stay in careers when they feel like they matter as people.

“Behavior of people is not what we’ve presumed it to be,” Freese said. “We’re making sure we understand generational differences and tendencies, and what people are looking for to satisfy them and make them feel like contributors.”

For both military and civilian employment, the end game is to acquire, develop, employ and retain top talent to achieve Total Army readiness.

The Army onboarded 55,000 new military recruits in 2023, according to Freese. High school prospects account for about 20 percent of new recruits. For the Army’s needs that’s too small of a pool to solely rely on. The Army is developing plans to expand recruiting to pools of people with more specialized skill sets, like young professionals already in the workforce as well as college and trade school students, with the ultimate goal of reaching new communities.

A first-of-its-kind Army recruiting initiative will take place in Arlington, Texas, in April, aiming to reach less traditional prospects for Army jobs. The special event, called the [Total Army Career Fair](#), aims to draw those interested in both uniformed and civilian roles, with all skill sets and any experience level accepted.

“The Army is a million careers in one company, so to speak,” Freese said. “We just need to have the data and tools available to us to understand what people want.”

Also new on the talent management frontier for military roles is the incorporation of the Integrated Personnel and Pay System – Army, or IPPS-A, as an online human resources system. For the first time ever, this will provide Soldiers with user-friendly personnel, pay and career management capabilities within a single system for all Army components.

The Army is also standing up a new three-star command with U.S. Army Recruiting Command in acknowledgement that recruiting diverse military talent is a crucial mission.

“All of these initiatives are posturing the Army to continue being the service of choice,” Freese said.

On the other side of the coin, Army civilians make up over 21 percent of the Army’s personnel, and recruiting and retaining top talent in those roles is

just as important to Army leaders.

While carefully vetting applicants remains a priority, the lengthy time it takes to properly vet and hire people has often put the Army at a disadvantage. A new five-page resume pilot is designed to expedite hiring procedures and candidate evaluation processes, aligning the Army with industry best practices. So far, this initiative has reduced some hiring times by up to 51 days.

AMC is also leading a rapid hiring initiative in collaboration with other agencies, aimed at making job offers on par with industry timelines. This helps the Army to keep the best applicants and talent, and will “quickly become a best practice,” said Freese.

AMC’s Civilian Implementation Plan, [published in January](#), guides hiring, onboarding and training processes throughout an Army civilian’s career while leveraging 21st century talent management practices, aiming to close gaps and capture opportunities across the civilian talent lifecycle.

Freese said talent management is about having the right information to guide an employee through their career.

“The Army needs to be forward-looking and data-driven to make sure we have the right people in the right place at the right time,” she said.

Another AMC-led pilot is leveraging career mapping tools, which will help assess workforce competence, track goals and visualize progress, so employees can facilitate their careers more closely and determine what training they need.

“Having this info not only helps our employees as individuals, but also assists the Army in succession planning and longevity,” Freese said.

In total, the goal of these strategic talent management outcomes will be a ready, professional, diverse and integrated Army workforce.