



# FUTURE OF WORK CONCEPT

MAINTAINING A COMPETITIVE EDGE

FOR THE FUTURE

# MESSAGE FROM DEVCOM LEADERSHIP

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DEVCOM Team and Strategic Partners,

As the world and our Army's operational environment rapidly change, we continue to evolve as a Command. This includes embracing our 'Team of Teams' philosophy, building cohesive teams through mutual trust and shared understanding, and enabling our team members to exercise disciplined initiative within our shared intent.

Our dedicated Team of Teams is leading its way through significant challenges — even through the COVID-19 pandemic that continues to impact our daily lives. As a global enterprise, we continue to deliver capabilities in support of Army Modernization and Readiness, while driving research to enable the AimPoint 2035 Force and Beyond. In 2020, we accomplished this largely in a remote work posture, pushing us to take a hard look at how we've operated in the past and the ways we can work differently — and more effectively — in the future.

DEVCOM's Future of Work Concept modernizes our approach to the traditional workplace. It serves as part of the natural progression of our Competency-Based Talent Management Strategy signed in March 2020. This concept will further enable us to hire and develop diverse, world-class talent in ways never previously possible.

If the past year has taught us anything, the future is unpredictable. The DEVCOM Future of Work Concept will evolve as we do, providing a set of guiding principles that allow us the flexibility for implementation at the lowest level and the agility necessary to tackle any challenge the future brings.

We look forward to leading our way through this next chapter of DEVCOM's efforts to boldly change the way we acquire and develop the talent necessary to deliver next-generation Soldier capabilities faster than ever before.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John A. George'.

**John A. George**  
MG, USA  
Commanding General



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John S. Willison'.

**John S. Willison**  
DtCG, DEVCOM  
Deputy to the Commanding General

# INTRODUCTION

Throughout 2020, Army leadership affirmed “people as the #1 priority”. The Combat Capabilities Development Command (DEVCOM) has invested significant energy in the development of the DEVCOM Talent Management Strategy and has made operationalizing Talent Management a top priority, specifically how we acquire, employ, and engage our talent to ensure we can retain the world class talent we have and attract the new talent we need.

Consideration of the “future of work” is a natural component of our initiative to operationalize Talent Management and has been pushed to the forefront as we lead our way through the COVID-19 pandemic, implementing a range of necessary measures to both protect the health of our Soldiers, civilians, and contractors, and to continue executing our mission. The management of the tension between these two priorities and the response of our team has been impressive and effective. It is imperative for the Command that we define an enduring “future of work” concept beyond the current pandemic that builds on what we have learned and maximizes our ability to execute our mission.

# THE FUTURE IS NOW.

# DEVCOM IS READY.

# OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

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There has been a lot of research and writings on the opportunities and challenges associated with remote work, or the “work from anywhere” culture. Reported benefits for individuals include greater flexibility, availability of increased opportunities, enhanced quality of life, and improved financial posture. Reported benefits for organizations include increased employee morale, productivity, and engagement; access to a broader and more diverse talent pool, and reduced infrastructure and environmental footprint and costs. Such benefits cannot be realized without overcoming associated challenges, which include organizational communication, employee engagement, fostering interpersonal teamwork, information protection, and performance evaluation [1].

One point is clear. To maximize our potential and impact, our Command must embrace a future of work environment that is different from the past. Pursuit of the broad concepts must be tailored to the specifics of context and competency through the implementation of domain and competency based strategies. Flexibility in implementation is essential.

# FRAMEWORK

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The DEVCOM future of work concept includes six fundamental components: the “Why” of our work, “What” work we do, “Where” we do that work, “How” we work, “Who” does the work, and “When” we work. This framework provides a basis for evaluating and defining those components that will remain constant and those we choose to adapt and evolve for the future.

# THE CONSTANTS

Our "Why" and our "What" remain constant.

The "Why" of our work is our purpose. The DEVCOM mission is to provide the research, development, engineering, and analytical expertise required to deliver capabilities that enable the Army. This important mission is critical to the current and future operation of the Army. Our "Why" remains constant.

The "What" of our work represents the activities we execute to implement our mission: Foundational Research, Applied Science & Technology, Lifecycle Engineering, Data & Analysis, Business, and Leadership. These activities align to the "domains" defined in the DEVCOM Talent Management Strategy. These domains are in turn comprised of competencies and core competencies that are largely enduring and represent recognized and unique areas of expertise required to meet current and future Army challenges. Our people are our greatest asset and the expertise of our people is the embodiment of "What" we do. Maintaining and advancing the health of our talent domains and competencies will remain a top priority and a constant.

Everything we have done, and will continue to do, is underpinned by the Army and Army Future Command values. We continue to have the shared Command goal of operating as an interdependent team with a shared set of strategic priorities, aligned under a synchronizing and integrating higher Headquarters. We continue to embrace the 'Team of Teams' concept, building cohesive teams through mutual trust and shared understanding, enabling our team members to exercise disciplined initiative within our shared intent.

# ADAPTING FOR THE FUTURE

We have worked under a different model of work since March 2020. While prompted by necessity, it has opened a range of opportunities for the future. In September 2020, of the 56% of our total workforce that responded to an enterprise telework survey, 40% indicated that they would prefer to work remotely 100% of the time, and less than 5% indicated that they would prefer to not work remotely at all, with a range of preferences in between [2].

As a learning organization determined to succeed in the future and deliver maximum impact for the Army, we will adapt elements of our future work to ensure continued success.

## "WHERE" WE WORK

Historically, our work by default was performed primarily at assigned duty locations. Moving forward, "Where" we work will be driven by the concept of enabling our Command, our teams, and our people to work where

they are most productive. Where we execute our mission will differ across domains, competencies, locations, priorities, and projects. Affording flexibility in “Where” we work aligns with the range of preferences identified by a significant portion of our workforce and our experience in effectively executing our mission during the pandemic. We must be able to allow flexibility while also enabling discipline and predictability.

This change will have a significant impact on our infrastructure over time. As “Where” we work changes, the design and purpose of our workplaces will also change. There will be a comparable “future of workplace” viewed as much as a product as a place [3]. Our physical infrastructure will need to continue to accommodate specialized work performed in world class facilities as well as to provide for shared space to enable open, adaptable collaboration [4]. And we will likely need less of it [5].

## **“HOW” WE WORK**

In some respects, “How” we work will not change, specifically as it relates directly to our activities in carrying out the “what” of our work. We will still employ scientific and technological methods, engineering disciplines, and professional business practices.

In other respects, “How” we work will evolve to even more effectively meet new challenges, operate at the speed of relevance, and deliver increasingly integrated capabilities.

“How” we have worked has been historically performed by local, discrete teams operating largely within organizational boundaries. As we implement the future of work concept, we will enable implementation of agile, cross-competency and cross-organization teams, formed rapidly to deliver increasingly integrated solutions.

We will fully embrace soldier-centered design principles to maximize the impact of our work. We will be co-working remotely, requiring collaboration tools and virtual environments that enable a geographically dispersed workforce [6]. With a premium on knowledge sharing, we will need to rely on virtual protection as much if not more than physical protection of our data, network, and devices. In a highly mobile environment, we will work towards employing capabilities that enhance not hinder a shift in the way we operate. Importantly, our approaches will shift from managing processes and people to emphasizing collaboration and output [4].

## **“WHO” DOES THE WORK**

The DEVCOM workforce as the embodiment of our competencies has been the basis for everything the Command has achieved and contributed. Our intent is to embrace the “future of work” concept to ensure we remain competitive in attracting and retaining the best talent.

To date, our ability to attract talent has been within the construct of those willing to physically “come” work for us at prescribed duty locations. Embracing the range of remote work opportunities will enable us to expand our impressive existing talent pool to new potential sources of talent. We will shift to recruiting and retaining the best talent, anywhere [3]. There will be opportunities to take our work and compelling challenges to the best talent. It will also enable us to be more broadly inclusive and to integrate a more diverse set of talent into the DEVCOM team [4] [5].

Shifting from reactively filling vacancies defined by past and current work to proactively building competency-based talent pools will enable us to better deliver on current and future needs [7] [8].

The foundation of the DEVCOM Talent Management Strategy is on defining "Who" we need to execute our mission. Definition of the knowledge, skills, and behaviors will need to account for the ability to work remotely, develop as part of a competency cohort, and contribute as members of adaptive, highly collaborative cross-competency teams.

Implementation of Talent Management in our Leadership domain will need to account for the critical leadership skills needed to effectively lead in a dynamic, complex context involving managing a workforce with varying degrees of remote working and the leveraging of cross-organization coalitions [6]. It will require that we redefine "leadership presence."

There is a health in our system when there is movement of talent. As we operationalize talent management, we will continue to build movement into the system through defining competency-based talent pools, exposing alternative career paths, and providing a range of career development opportunities. This shift parallels current general workforce trends of employees increasingly pursuing diverse work experiences and desiring portability of skills. Our future of work must enable movement of talent within our system.

#### **"WHEN" WE WORK**

Driven by past practices, logistical considerations of primary duty locations and infrastructure, and a dated view of what it means to manage a workforce, our default for time management has been a prescribed set of "core hours" and a synchronous work environment. In the future, we will expect our workforce to work where as well as when they are most productive, inclusive of team and organizational considerations and supportive of asynchronous work. Such an approach will afford our workforce new flexibility to manage their time while also increasing productivity [4].

# LEADING OUR WAY THROUGH IT

# CONTRASTING THE PAST/ CURRENT AND THE FUTURE

	PAST/CURRENT	OBJECTIVE
WHY	Remains constant	
WHAT	Remains constant	
WHERE	Work primarily at official duty location	Work where you are most productive
HOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local, discrete teams operating within constraints of organizational boundaries</li> <li>Linear, requirements-driven process</li> <li>Local management of networks/devices/ data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agile, cross-competency/cross-organization teams rapidly formed to deliver integrated solutions</li> <li>Iterative, Soldier-centered design</li> <li>Enterprise solution enabling broad collaboration</li> </ul>
WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The best talent to “come” to us</li> <li>Reactively filling organizational vacancies</li> <li>Permanent positions, “career” development</li> <li>Limited, local view of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&amp;I)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The best talent...anywhere</li> <li>Proactively building competency-based talent</li> <li>Movement built into the system</li> <li>Fully inclusive – opportunities with few boundaries</li> </ul>
WHEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locally defined “core hours”</li> <li>Largely synchronous operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work when you are most productive</li> <li>Asynchronous operations emphasizing output</li> </ul>

# IMPLEMENTING THE CONCEPT

An important tenet of the DEVCOM Talent Management Strategy is the shift from reactively filling vacancies to proactively building the talent needed to execute the DEVCOM mission now and in the future. The Strategy is based on the definition of six talent domains (Leadership, Foundational Research, Applied Science & Technology, Lifecycle Engineering, Data & Analysis, & Business) and seventy competencies within those domains. Competency based strategies for defining the talent we need, assessing the talent we have against the talent we need, acquiring talent to fill gaps, developing our talent, and managing and engaging our talent are being developed and implemented across the Command.

To maximize our potential and impact, our Command must embrace a future of work environment that is different from the past. It is our intent to implement the concept through the development and implementation of domain and competency based strategies. These strategies will adopt the elements of the concepts defined, tailored to the unique aspects and demands of the different domains and competencies. Again, flexibility is essential.

## CONCLUSION

We benefit from being a learning organization. Reflecting on this past year as a Command, we have learned a lot. Considering the future, we are presented with a range of opportunities and challenges. Our intent is to embrace "The Future of Work" to maximize the impact we will continue to have on Army readiness and modernization.

### REFERENCES

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- [6] Marker Medium (marker-medium-com.cdn.ampproject.org), "Is the Office Dead? Not Exactly", 5 January 2021
- [7] DEVCOM Talent Management Strategy, 2020
- [8] Forbes, "What Will the Future of Work Look Like in 2021?", December 2020