



*A Department of the Army civilian student practices his briefing skills on classmates during a class at the Army Logistics University at Fort Lee, Va. (Photo by Julianne E. Cochran, Army Sustainment)*

# Civilian Professional Development: What's in It for You?

**The Army has developed an extensive program to enhance civilian professional development. Online tools are available to help civilian employees map their career course using training, education, and other resources.**

■ **By Valerie Helms**

**A**rmy civilians number 330,000 and comprise over half of the Army's generating force. This means that Soldiers, leaders, and units at all Army levels benefit from multiskilled civilians with varied experiences and perspectives. A competent, engaged civilian workforce helps secure our freedom by removing distractions from the operational force.

Soldiers must have confidence in their support elements in order to fight and win wars. Army civilians perform critical tasks, often deploy with Soldiers, and provide continuity that Soldiers cannot because of fre-

quent deployments and assignments. A well-trained professional civilian workforce is essential to the successful execution of Army missions. Although civilian training and development opportunities are not as mature as those for the military, the Army is trying to close the gap.

## **Civilian Workforce Transformation**

The Civilian Workforce Transformation (CWT) was initiated in 2010 by the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. CWT was chartered to offer recommendations and modifications

to existing civilian workforce programs to realize the Army's vision of a civilian development program. The intent was to recruit and retain top talent and prepare the civilian workforce to succeed in leadership positions throughout the Army.

One of the first actions under CWT was to assign each Army civilian to a career program (CP), which is similar to an occupational branch for Soldiers. In order to complete this, seven new career programs were created, bringing the Army's total of civilian career programs to 31. The next step was to review the position descriptions for all 330,000 civilians and assign each employee to the correct CP.

### Army Career Tracker

Army civilians were also spiraled into the Army Career Tracker (ACT) between April 2011 and September 2012. ACT is a leader development tool that integrates training and education into one personalized, easy-to-use website. Users can search multiple education and training resources, monitor their career development, and receive personalized advice from their leaders.

ACT was first implemented for enlisted Soldiers and has expanded to include officers and Army civilians. It offers a road map to help civilians determine what they have to do to reach the highest levels in their career programs so that they can put a plan in place to reach their goals.

Anyone can review the information in ACT by going to the website at <https://actnow.army.mil>. The site contains career maps for most GS (general schedule) occupational series, which are similar to military occupational specialties for Soldiers. This is helpful for employees working toward promotion or changing jobs or veterans trying to become Army civilians.

### CP Administration and Training

Each career program has a functional chief representative and a functional point of contact. This can be related to a military branch man-

ager with one very important difference: career program offices deal only with training and development, not assignments or promotions.

Each career program office receives

an IDP, so check with your command to find out which one you should use. However, ACT also has an IDP capability. The key to IDP success is for supervisors and employees to work

---

## Although supervisors need to be involved, civilian employees are ultimately responsible for taking the initiative for their own professional development.

---

Army Civilian Training, Education, and Development System (ACT-EDS) funds annually for training and development. ACTEDS funding is only one of five sources of funding and is distributed using a competitive process. The other sources of funding are Headquarters, Department of the Army central funds, organizational funds, personal funds, and Defense Acquisition Workforce Development funds (only available for personnel in acquisition-coded positions).

The ACTEDS catalog outlines various types of training and development available for civilians. Because not all CP offices offer the same opportunities, you must also consult the ACTEDS plan for your CP. The types of training for civilians include long-term training (120 days or more), short-term training (less than 120 days), and academic degree training, which allows civilians to obtain an associate, bachelor's, or master's degree.

The training sources range from internal government sources, such as the Army Logistics University and Defense Acquisition University, to external institutions, such as Penn State, Georgia Tech, or Harvard. The key is to identify your training or competency gap and find a course curriculum that can help you to close it.

A very important tool for every civilian to design, develop, and use is the individual development plan (IDP). Multiple manual forms and automated systems can be used to create

together to complete the employee's development plan. Although supervisors need to be involved, civilian employees are ultimately responsible for taking the initiative for their own professional development.

Many tools are available to assist you in developing your professional road map for success. Mentorship, formal training, developmental assignments, the Civilian Education System, and the Senior Enterprise Talent Management Program are just a few options and programs.

Invest the time to research your options. Your personal investment in lifelong learning will help you achieve your personal and professional goals. You will enjoy a rewarding career and contribute to fulfilling the Army's mission. People, both Soldiers and Army civilians, are the Army's most valuable resource.

---

Valerie Helms works with the Career Professional Development Program, Civilian Logistics Career Management Office, at Fort Lee, Va. She holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Saint Leo University and a master's degree in logistics management from the Florida Institute of Technology. She is a graduate of the Sustaining Base Leadership and Management Program at the Army Management Staff College.

Visit us online: [www.army.mil/armysustainment](http://www.army.mil/armysustainment)