



John Sparks, director of the Institute of NCO Professional Development, answers questions during a presentation about the Army Career Tracker. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command)

Army Career Tracker helps Soldiers in the Army and those on way out

By Clifford Kyle Jones

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Several initiatives are under way to let Soldiers develop personally and professionally while they're in the Army and to better prepare them for life after their service. And the Army Career Tracker is there to help. The online portal, originally launched in June 2011, is continually being updated to assist Soldiers and their leaders to define career goals, create and ensure timetables are met for those goals, and help fulfill objectives both inside and outside the Army.

"The idea here of the Army Career Tracker is to support what we call the lifecycle of the Soldier," said Jeffrey Colimon, a project officer with Training & Doctrine Command's Institute of NCO Professional Development. "In other words: to provide a development program and

development opportunities with a timetable that must be formally instituted as soon as individual service members enter the military to ensure not only that they are military-ready, but that they are also career-ready."

The ACT encourages Soldiers to develop an Individual Development Plan, with both short- and long-term goals related to their military careers and their careers after the Army. The IDP can be used by Soldiers and their leaders to track training, military education, civilian education and a host of other development paths. The ACT is also open to Department of the Army civilians.

Sgt. Maj. Jerry Bailey is the course manager for Structured Self-Development, based at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss, Texas. The ACT

This screen shot from the Army Career Tracker site lists the certifications recommended for a 29E electronic warfare specialist. The site includes certifications available for a variety of military occupational specialties. (Image courtesy of the Institute of NCO Professional Development)

has become an important part of his briefings when he's telling Soldiers and leaders about SSD.

"The No. 1 way I tell them to access SSD is through the Army Career Tracker, because it eliminates a lot of steps and gets Soldiers where they're supposed to be at the level they're supposed to be. It takes out the guess work."

That's one of the big advantages of the ACT — it consolidates information from several systems and presents it at one central site, said Master Sgt. Chadwick Wormer of INCOPD's Learning Integrations Division, which oversees the ACT.

The ACT "is still up and coming, he said. "There are still a lot more enhancements that we're working on. But as far as what it can do and what it's really designed for, it's a leadership development tool. It will integrate training, education and on-the-job experience, and it puts everything into one easy-to-use interface. It gives you search capabilities, mostly for other systems that house education and training resources. It's more efficient and effective for a Soldier to use it to monitor their career development. It's something that I never had when I was a young Soldier. I was only as good as my first-line leader, so what my first-line leader knew is all I knew. What the Army Career Tracker does is it puts younger Soldiers on a level playing field."

The ACT includes the Integrated Total Army Database, GoArmy Education, the Army Learning Management System, the Army Training Requirements and Resources System, and nearly a dozen other resources. And the LID is constantly working on including more systems, Wormer said.

Among the latest improvements to the ACT being worked on is the full integration of available credentialing, which will help Soldiers obtain private-sector certifications they qualify for based on their military occupational specialties and work within the Army.

In June 2012, President Barack Obama announced the "We Can't Wait" initiative, which is intended to let service members obtain civilian credentials and licenses for manufacturing and other high-demand skills they received from attending military schools. "Our economy needs their outstanding talent," Obama said in his address in Golden Valley, Minn., announcing the initiative.

Under the president's direction, the Department of Defense established the Military Credentialing and Licensing Task Force, which identified military specialties that readily transfer to high-demand jobs and worked with civilian credentialing and licensing associations to address gaps between military training programs and credentialing and licensing requirements.

In October, the Defense Department launched a pilot program that included five occupational areas — aircraft mechanics, automotive mechanics, health care, supply and logistics, and truck drivers. Seventeen military specialties are included in those occupational areas.

“What we’ve asked the services to do ... is to look at those five areas. Look at their specific military occupational codes, marry them up and get some people into the pilot program,” said Frank C. DiGiovanni, the Defense Department’s director of training readiness and strategy.

The program began in October, he said, and as it progresses, officials will examine whether existing military training is sufficient to qualify service members for civilian credentials. Where the current training is found to be insufficient, DiGiovanni added, the department will determine if the program can be adjusted or if training from external sources is necessary.

The pilot is one of several Defense Department Credentialing and Licensing Task Force initiatives, Defense Department spokeswoman Eileen Lainez said.

“We’re looking at how we can better document and translate military training and experience so that civilian credentialing agencies and states can better understand the nature of military training and award appropriate credit,” she said.

Although the credentialing program is still in the pilot phase and Colimon said MOS-credentialing information won’t be completely integrated until 2014, the ACT already includes a bevy of information on civilian accreditations and their relationships to military MOSs.

“We’ve been working a lot of things with [credentialing],” Wormer said. “Because we link to training, and we link to not only the training you’ve completed in the past but the training you’re scheduled for, we also show other training that you might want or need to enhance your career. And some of that training is credentialing.

“Credentialing is, for some MOSs, very specific. For instance, the Army has truck drivers; well, civilians have the CDL, the commercial driver license. It pretty much goes hand-in-hand. What we work to do is to bridge the gap between what the civilian equivalent and the military is training. In other words, when you go to school to be a truck driver in the Army, you’re going to get about 90 percent of the training and you would need an additional 10 percent to finish your CDL. Army Career Tracker is working to bridge that gap, so that you’re receiving almost 100 percent. So when you complete your AIT in the Army, it’s a done deal: You’re CDL qualified. And it’s not just the truck drivers; it’s many MOSs. And some of them are more obvious and more comparable than others.”

A complete list of MOS-specific credentialing opportunities is available at the Credentialing Opportunities On-Line site, www.cool.army.mil, and that information is also available through the ACT.

“The idea of the IDP inside the Army Career Tracker to support the military lifecycle is actually to provide [users] an integrated approach — an integrated approach to supporting the Soldiers’ personal and professional development that capitalizes on the mutual needs of lifelong learning,” Colimon said. “So the Soldier does not concentrate on trying to get a degree, trying to get some credentialing at the point of transition or at the point of departure. Instead they start throughout their career, whether they’re a one-term Soldier or going to retire from the Army. They actually supplement the military training with civilian training and education so that, at the point of the departure, they are more credible. This approach is mutually beneficial to the Army because it gets a better-prepared Soldier while he or she is serving and potentially a better civilian at the exit point — whatever that is at the point of transition, whether it’s separation or retirement.”

In addition to promoting the ACT as a tool for SSD, Bailey has used the system to track his Soldiers’ and employees’ goals.

“It builds a counseling report for you, so that you don’t have to guess,” Bailey said. “It gives me that information that I can use to provide the positive feedback or the things that I think we need to get after. Then I can provide that input into the Army Career Tracker. It provides a lot of data.”

Soldiers and their leaders build goals together in the ACT, and Soldiers can also request that users who are not necessarily their supervisors act as mentors through the system.

“Soldiers had asked me to be their mentor when they signed up,” Bailey said. “Now I can look at those Soldiers, and the same things that I do for my employees, I can do for those Soldiers as a mentor.”

That reinforcement from mentors can be invaluable, Bailey said. “If you see information and direction from a leader and a mentor, you’re more apt to do it.”

Bailey has also used the system for his own professional development.

“At USASMA, we’re not doing MOS-material things. It’s all educational stuff,” he said. “I’m an Army engineer, and there’s not an Army engineer department over there. So I’m not necessarily keeping up with all the different gates or things that engineering has to offer. But through the Army Career Tracker, it keeps me in tune with: Here are upcoming things for engineers, here are what engineers are now doing, or here are the credentialing classes or schools or courses out there for engineers. I don’t have to go through GoArmy and all this other stuff to find out this same information. It’s already there on that site.”

Colimon said growth in users of the ACT has grown quickly, with the site adding about 4,000 users a week and more than 25,000 goals already created. And Wormer said reaction to the site has been universally positive.

“We have very good reviews. Our hardest part is getting the word out there about our system,” he said. “We use a profile communication, where we are able to target certain profiles of people, whether it’s by installation, whether it’s by MOS, whether it’s by their rank, or maybe we just want to target somebody Armywide. . . . When we send the profile communications out, we often get feedback: ‘Hey, what’s this? I’ve never heard of it,’ or sometimes we just assume they’re deleting it because we don’t get anything. But we send these out, and the users who have never seen it, the very first time we show them the functionalities, immediately you can see a lightbulb come on: ‘Hey, I wish I’d known about this. It’s amazing.” ■

The American Forces Press Service contributed to this story.

Top Army Career Tracker questions

- **What is an Individual development Plan?** It is a document completed by individuals to track self-development, both short-term (a year or less) and long-term. This plan is then reviewed and discussed with a leader or mentor to match the individual’s goals with an organization’s goals. Various options and approaches to
- achieve the plan are discussed. This plan is reviewed and updated at a minimum annually.
- **Why is it important to have an IDP?** IDPs can be a win-win strategy because they benefit both the Soldier and the Army as a whole. Implementing an IDP helps Soldiers enhance their knowledge, skills and experiences. The Army benefits by developing improved Soldier capabilities and enhanced communication. IDPs also support a Soldier’s lifelong learning and transition lifecycle by allowing him or her to plan and track development from enlistment to transition.
- **Why do you have to create an IDP?** The Secretary of the Army Memorandum, “Army Transition Policy,” dated Aug. 29, 2011, established mandatory use of the IDP. It ensures first-term Soldiers receive counseling within 30 days of arrival to their first permanent duty station; part of the process is creating an IDP.
- **How does the ACT help Soldiers develop an IDP?** The Army Career Tracker allows users to plan and track their development in concert with their leaders and mentors. ACT provides an easy-to-use interface for users and supervisors to create, approve and track an IDP. — *Source: INCOPD*



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