



The new Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Report, approved in August and expected to be implemented in September 2015, was designed to more accurately assess Soldiers' performance. (Photo by David Vergun)

New NCOER Expected to More Accurately Assess Soldiers' Performance

By David Vergun

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On Aug. 1, the secretary of the Army approved the new Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Report. Implementation will be in September 2015.

"The new NCOER will come out in five phases: inform, educate, train, roll-out and after-action review. Human Resources Command is beginning to build the NCOER into the Evaluation System now," said Command Sgt. Maj. Charles E. Smith, senior enlisted adviser for Human Resources Command.

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III provided his take on the new NCOER:

"The biggest challenge during the preparation and transition of the new NCOER over the next year will be

to ensure NCO leaders at all levels clearly understand the new report, and its role in evaluations. We must ensure the new NCOER is perceived as a tool that delivers the best measures available to review and evaluate performance.

"NCO leaders must understand the process on how to effectively manage rating profiles," Chandler continued. "It is very important to the future of the Army that Soldiers view the Army as an institution which is clearly able to identify premier leaders in a highly competitive environment. Therefore, as we prepare for the system to roll out around September 2015, I expect all NCOs to take the time to learn and understand how the evaluation system works, and how it supports the selection and promotion processes."

The new NCOER will require insightful narratives instead of what are often nondescript, bulleted lists in the current NCOER. Also, the evaluations themselves will be different for junior and senior NCOs, explained Sgt. Maj. Stephen J. McDermid, with HRC's Evaluations Selections & Promotions Division, Evaluations Branch.

The interval between approval and implementation will allow enough time for training on how to use the new NCOER. The months ahead will also ensure that the critical information technology portion of the implementation goes smoothly upon launch, he said.

In the coming weeks and months, regulations and pamphlets will be updated and Soldiers from installations Armywide will travel to HRC at Fort Knox, Ky., for two weeks of training so they can go back and train their assigned units and personnel, he added.

Besides training at Fort Knox, HRC will send out mobile training teams Armywide, to include the active component, Guard and Reserve," to train the whole force from sergeants through general officers in this process," Smith said.

"If more training is required, we'll send out additional teams, because we've got to make sure the foundation is done properly," he added.

Why change?

In 2010, the chief of staff of the Army directed a review of the current NCOER, which has been in place since 1987, McDermid said. The chief had concerns that it did not reflect current leadership doctrine and was over-inflated. He also wondered whether or not there needed to be more than one type of NCOER, instead of the one currently used for all NCO ranks.

By 2012, the sergeant major of the Army, his board of directors, and NCO working groups had reviewed the process and came up with some recommendations, which were then validated by a Council of Colonels and General Officer Steering committee.

HRC was then tasked with gathering feedback from the field and reviewing the Department of the Army Centralized Selection Board after-action reviews and also leader engagements with general officers and command sergeants major.

Earlier this year, the new Officer Evaluation Report was implemented. It has some similarities to the new NCOER, so feedback and after-action reviews on that were helpful in preparing the launch of the NCOER, McDermid said.

How it works

There will actually be three different NCOERs, McDermid said.

The direct level form is for sergeants, and it's pretty straightforward, he said. It will have only two categories:

"Met Standard" or "Did Not Meet Standard." Whichever category is selected for this NCOER will require a bullet comment, also called a "task statement," to support the checked category, he said.

The organizational level form is for staff sergeant through first sergeant/master sergeant and will have four categories. "Far Exceeded Standard" is the highest or best, he said. The next highest category is "Exceeded Standard;" the third category is "Met Standard;" the least desirable category is "Did Not Meet Standard."

The strategic-level form is for command sergeants major and sergeants major. It will contain an in-depth narrative on his or her effectiveness to the organization. Because a narrative style of writing is much different than bulleted lists, training will focus on effective writing and how to write clear, accurate, descriptive, and thorough assessments, McDermid said.

Rater responsibilities

There will be "a delineation of rating roles and responsibilities for the raters and senior raters," McDermid said. The current NCOER has both rater and senior rater assessing performance and potential. In the new NCOER, the rater will focus only on "performance" and the senior rater only on "potential."

"Senior raters will provide an assessment of the rated NCO's overall potential compared to NCOs in the same grade, establishing a Senior Rater Profile for senior raters of staff sergeants to command sergeants major. Similar to Officer Evaluation Report, each senior rater's profile will limit assessments of 'Most Qualified' to less than 50 percent. The supporting comments from the senior rater must send a clear message through enumeration, performance and potential. When properly articulated, this will assist the selection boards in selecting our top athletes to serve in positions of increased responsibilities," said Smith.

A supplementary reviewer will be used in two situations, he added. The first is when there are no uniformed Army advisors or rating officials within the rating chain and second is when the senior rater or someone outside the rating chain directs a relief for cause.

Doctrinally, the new NCOER is expected to benefit the Army by better identifying talent within the Army, moving that talent to the best location and billet, and providing the Army with a better means of identifying which Soldiers should be put in key assignments. The new NCOER will also identify top-notch performers and provide them with educational and professional development opportunities. The NCOER will also be a useful tool in moving Soldiers around in the Army as they change assignments, McDermid said.

One of the key advantages of the new NCOER, is that it will "ensure depth and experience are met before an individual is promoted," Smith said. "Once

a leader is selected for the next grade, that person will be developed and mentored to assume that next highest grade.”

Smith said that “in the past, rating officials were not held accountable.” The new evaluation and assessment tools will ensure rating officials assess more accurately.

Successful training and IT efforts in the coming months alone will not ensure that the NCOER is a

success, Smith cautioned. Leaders have to buy in and take ownership of it.

“I recommend the top leader in each formation serve as the master trainer during this critical time,” Smith said. “We’ve got to get this right. Folks’ careers are on the line as we write these new evaluation reports. If we do this right, it will lay the foundation for success in the future.” ■



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