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Alignment of U.S. Space Force Military Human Capital Management Functions

A Qualitative Review



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About This Report

The U.S. Space Force (USSF) is the nation’s newest military service and therefore has a rare opportunity to revolutionize military human capital management (HCM). The service is placing considerable emphasis on pushing the boundaries of traditional approaches to HCM and adopting innovative approaches to talent management. Recognizing that an organization’s structure creates a framework for effective and efficient mission execution, the USSF deputy chief human capital officer (deputy S1) asked RAND Project AIR FORCE to assess the alignment and effectiveness of HCM functions at all organizational levels. This report presents the results of that assessment. The primary audience for this report is individuals involved in developing and implementing policies and procedures for HCM. A wide variety of senior USSF leaders in other specialties will also be interested in this report.

The research reported here was commissioned by the USSF and conducted within the Workforce, Development, and Health Program of RAND Project AIR FORCE as part of a fiscal year 2023 project, “Analysis of Barriers to the U.S. Space Force Talent Management Transformation.”

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Summary

Issue

Last December, having recently celebrated its fourth anniversary, the U.S. Space Force (USSF) has a rare opportunity to revolutionize military human capital management (HCM). The service is placing considerable emphasis on pushing the boundaries of traditional approaches to HCM and adopting innovative approaches to talent management. Recognizing that an organization's structure creates a framework for effective and efficient mission execution, the USSF deputy chief human capital officer (deputy S1) asked RAND Project AIR FORCE to assess the alignment and effectiveness of HCM functions at all organizational levels.

Approach

The research team's assessment of USSF HCM functions was based on a review of policy and doctrine and subject-matter expert interviews with key stakeholders. The research team reviewed relevant HCM policies, doctrines, and plans to gain an understanding of the breadth and depth of HCM policies, programs, and practices. During May and June 2023, the team conducted semistructured interviews with 26 subject-matter experts from across the HCM enterprise, with the aim of gaining insight from stakeholders across all organizational levels. These stakeholders included the USSF chief human capital officer (S1), the Enterprise Talent Management Office, field commands, deltas, force support squadrons (FSSs), the Air Force Personnel Center, Air Force Materiel Command, and the Department of the Air Force headquarters organizations.

Key Findings

- USSF leaders acknowledge that HCM functions are evolving as the USSF determines what works best for the nation's newest military service.
- Senior leaders appreciated the importance of getting HCM right and have significant insights into what is working well in HCM, as well as what improvements are needed.
- Areas that need improvement include personnel policy; force development; completion of USSF macro force design; processes related to interservice transfers; functionality of the myFSS personnel platform for USSF use; and resourcing HCM functions.

Recommendations

Recognizing the challenges inherent in establishing and building a new military service, the research team developed 25 implementable recommendations divided into the following eight categories:

- Implement robust personnel policy development efforts.
- Adjust current S1 staff structure.
- Adopt myFSS for USSF use.
- Improve communication.
- Increase commander involvement in HCM.
- Improve the transition experience for guardians transferring to the USSF from the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps.
- Prioritize completion of USSF macro force design and expand force development efforts.¹
- Increase resourcing for HCM functions.

¹ As the newest military service, the USSF will likely make refinements to the alignment, structure, and composition of various units. These refinements will have implications for the numbers of people the USSF can make available for force development (e.g., professional military education, advanced education).

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Alignment of U.S. Space Force Military Human Capital Management Functions: A Qualitative Review

In December 2019, the U.S. Space Force (USSF) became the sixth military service. At that time, the new service adopted many of the U.S. Air Force (USAF) human capital management (HCM) policies and procedures. However, the USSF has a rare opportunity to revolutionize military HCM; therefore, the service is placing considerable emphasis on pushing the traditional HCM boundaries and adopting innovative approaches to talent management.

Acknowledging that an organization's structure creates a framework for effective and efficient mission execution, the USSF deputy chief human capital officer (deputy S1) asked RAND Project AIR FORCE to assess key HCM military functions and determine optimum organizational alignment and effectiveness of these functions at all organizational levels. In consultation with the sponsor, the team narrowed its focus to the following five functions: (1) assignments; (2) evaluations, including performance reporting; (3) force development, including professional military education; (4) promotions and demotions; and (5) separations and retirements. Although separations and retirements were included as a function, the stakeholders with whom we met did not offer comments about these activities, likely because guardians who transferred to the USSF only recently became eligible to separate or retire.

Many of the respondents applauded the USSF chief human capital officer (S1) for undertaking this review. They expressed that guardians are too important to not get HCM right in this new service.

Approach

Our assessment of USSF HCM functions was based on a review of policy and doctrine and subject-matter expert interviews with key stakeholders. We conducted a review of relevant HCM policies, doctrines, and plans to gain an understanding of the breadth and depth of USSF HCM functions and of HCM policies, programs, and practices. During May and June 2023, we conducted semistructured interviews with 26 subject-matter experts from across the HCM enterprise, with the aim of gaining insight from stakeholders across all organizational levels—including the USSF S1, the Enterprise Talent Management Office (ETMO), field commands, deltas, force support squadrons (FSSs), the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC), Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC), and the Department of the Air Force (DAF) headquarters organizations. A detailed discussion of our approach to uncovering themes from the interviews is in the appendix.

We used the information obtained in our policy review and interviews to identify three groups of topics relevant to our objective of determining optimal alignment and effectiveness of HCM functions: (1) topics concerning specific USSF HCM policies and functions, (2) crosscutting topics, and (3) additional concerns outside the scope of this effort but that warrant senior leader attention.

Our research results must be considered in the context of three limitations. First, at the direction of the sponsor, our analysis focused on HCM functions relevant to uniformed military personnel only. The analysis related to the HCM of civilian personnel, though important to many of our interviewees, was outside our scope. Second, our scope was limited to five critical functions within military HCM: assignments, evaluations, force development, promotions, and separations and retirements. Other HCM functions, such as compensation or recruiting, could merit additional study. Third, our stakeholder interviews were not representative of all USSF units; most participants were senior officers and service members with backgrounds in and current responsibilities for HCM.

USSF Human Capital Management Policies and Functions

During interviews with stakeholders across the USSF enterprise, we identified four topics that recurred frequently in response to the questions we asked and that merit special attention:

- HCM policies and their effectiveness
- efficiency and effectiveness of the current USSF S1 structure
- HCM functions being performed at the appropriate level
- the myFSS personnel platform and current talent management systems.²

These topics relate to the efficiency and effectiveness of various aspects of HCM, including the tools and systems currently in use.

Human Capital Management Policies and Their Effectiveness

We asked whether relevant HCM policies and activities were effective. Most respondents said that USSF HCM policies were effective, but that there were gaps and room for improvement. It was noted that *The Guardian Ideal* (USSF, 2021) is a good vision, but several pieces still need to fall into place to get that vision across the finish line.³ Respondents also noted that it was challenging to translate that vision into coherent and viable personnel policies that can be executed within the USSF.

Leaders find it very challenging to keep up with the simultaneity of all the HCM changes, especially in the assignments and evaluations domains. There is a noted gap in acquiring data and conducting commensurate data analysis on the potential impacts of proposed personnel policies before leadership makes decisions to change them. There is a strong desire for more data analysis and

² myFSS is an abbreviation for my Force Support Squadron. The DAF is combining information and services previously provided via myPers and the virtual Personnel Center into myFSS (e.g., myEval, myFitness). The intent is to improve services provided to airmen and guardians, consolidate human resource applications, and reduce information technology investments and vulnerabilities.

³ *The Guardian Ideal* is a strategic document that provides the rationale and vision for how the USSF will approach talent management and the associated expectations of guardians and their military service (see USSF, 2021).

rationale via increased strategic communications about why changes to the USAF approach and the associated personnel policies are needed for the USSF. When policy changes are made, there is insufficient time for members to digest the information and prepare the guardians in the field. There was also recurring feedback from the FSS commanders supporting both airmen and guardians on space bases that the more the USSF differentiates its HCM from the USAF approaches, the harder it becomes for military *personnelists* (administrators who work in personnel management) to keep up with managing two distinct personnel systems.

Respondents were vocal with their concerns about current and proposed personnel policies, specifically assignments and evaluations. There was broad agreement that allowing guardians to go to their location of choice and stay for longer periods would be a good policy that supports family stability. But there were also concerns about how to entice enough guardians to take assignments in remote areas and less desirable locations, and that the need to fill such positions would create dissonance with *The Guardian Ideal* (USSF, 2021), which encourages guardians to pursue career paths informed by both their preferences and an understanding of USSF requirements.

Regarding evaluations, respondents noted that not stratifying enlisted personnel (which is the current policy) probably resulted in more teamwork and less focus on negative competition.⁴ However, many respondents were unsure about whether commanders would have sufficient influence in a guardian's talent management without stratification.

Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Current USSF S1 Structure

One of our interview questions asked about whether the current S1 level 3 structure is functioning efficiently and effectively and whether adjustments should be made.⁵ From a field perspective, the USSF S1 staff is performing effectively overall while attaining additions in resourcing and formalizing the roles and missions for subordinate field command consumption. We heard two wide-ranging perspectives: either that “the S1 was OK,” although “we need to see more formal personnel policy statements” from the field commands, or that “we are unsure what they really do.” These differing perspectives are understandable given the varied backgrounds of the delta commanders regarding service headquarters experiences and that delta commanders tend to engage in HCM tasks at the tactical or ETMO level and not in policy development.

There was a sense that the S1 staff lacks some expertise and experience and that this was due to a lack of staff resourcing when compared with staffing for similar personnel functions in the USAF Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services (A1). Many of the complementary level 3 and 4 organizations in the A1 have two to three times as many people to cover the various headquarters personnel mission sets. There was also consistent feedback that leaders want to see the documentation of the roles and missions of the S1 and the ETMO (i.e., the mission

⁴ *Stratification* is the process by which a rater (or senior rater) compares the performance and/or potential of their subordinates of the same rank and indicates the individual's placement on their performance evaluation.

⁵ Level 1 is an organizational level that consists of the chief of space operations, the vice chief of space operations, and the chief master sergeant of the Space Force; level 2 is the next level under these principals that includes, for example, the chief human capital officer and chief technology innovation officer; level 3 contains the directors working for individuals in level 2 positions; and level 4 contains personnel working for the level 3 directors.

directive), as these roles and missions affect subordinate field commands and delta organizations and their supporting structures.

Human Capital Management Functions Being Performed at the Appropriate Level

We asked whether the USSF HCM functions were being performed at the appropriate organizational levels. Most of the stakeholders we spoke with agreed that functions were being performed at the appropriate levels; however, two concerns were raised. About three-fourths of interviewees described a lack of clarity about the S1 roles and responsibilities at the field commands. For example, AFMC is the servicing major command for the USSF in several areas (including HCM functions) and supports airmen assigned to USSF organizations. One interviewee said, “The . . . field command S1 doesn’t know their role, and sometimes they’re not even sure if they are the one we should talk to, suggesting maybe AFMC, [or] AFPC.” Another made the point by describing the S1s at the field commands as “still working on county options.”⁶

Another concern, expressed by about one-third of the interviewees, was the difficulty discerning between AFMC and S1 roles at the field commands. An interviewee told us, “When we go to AFMC for our Air Force overhires, our 4G airmen, civilian positions, AFMC will say ‘yeah it’s fine, but you have to talk to the field command S1.’ Then the field command S1 tells us to find offsetting positions and we go down the rabbit hole with them.” This is an example of the confusion created when roles and responsibilities are not clearly delineated.

myFSS and Current Talent Management Systems Effectiveness

Most interviewees seemed to accept that myFSS applications are a *fait accompli*. The interviewees said that they understood how these technological changes could improve the delivery of HCM services. They indicated that these applications were helpful; however, some need tailoring for USSF use.

Some interviewees indicated that the current version of myEval (version 2.0) was much better than it was 12 months ago (version 1.0). About the same number commented about myVector; however, there was greater variation among their views. For example, one interviewee noted that myVector “works well and is user-friendly.” Another suggested that myVector needs to “shoot” him reminders—for example, “you haven’t talked with your subordinates in five months.” A senior USSF leader observed that to enable the USSF’s goal of personalized, one-on-one mentoring, myVector needs significant improvement.

A common annoyance expressed by interviewees was the lack of uniformity among the application portals. One interviewee stated, “It is frustrating to track all these different tools—let’s make a common interface that incorporates all of these.” Another annoyance noted was the absence of secure messaging in myPers. One interviewee said, “We were supposed to get a message explaining where to

⁶ The “county options” metaphor was used to indicate that the S1 staffs at the field commands were each organized differently, and the rationale for this was not readily apparent.

see secure PSDMs [personnel services delivery memorandums]. I've never gotten one.” Other interviewees discussed having problems with various applications. myDecs, the online hub for processing award nominations, was described as being a little “glitchy” and requiring more instructions and on-the-job training to use. myFitness was considered to be worse than the earlier application and somewhat cumbersome.

Crosscutting Topics

We also identified five crosscutting topics that interviewees at each organizational level repeatedly raised, but not necessarily in direct response to questions about specific HCM functions:

- Effectiveness of communication needs improvement.
- Commanders want greater involvement in talent management.
- Personnel support for interservice transfers remains challenging.
- Force development and macro organizational design continue to evolve.
- Resources and staffing are insufficient.

Interviewees considered these topics important because they will impede the USSF's ability to achieve its desired HCM goals if they are not appropriately addressed.

Effectiveness of Communication Needs Improvement

About half of interviewees mentioned the need for more effective coordination and communication of HCM policy changes. Timeliness and synchronization issues surfaced in various ways. As described by one interviewee,

As commanders, we should understand the system and rationale for changes, but I'm not getting communications and guidance from higher headquarters. When people come to me with questions, I'm only just finding out about the changes myself. Strategic communication to personnel leaders would really be helpful.

Another offered that the “USSF's plans are not thought out or tested” and that service members “are constantly reaching out for clarification.” One person suggested the “need for middle-level policy connecting top-level guidance with specific policies that better define intent and key concepts as a possible remedy.”

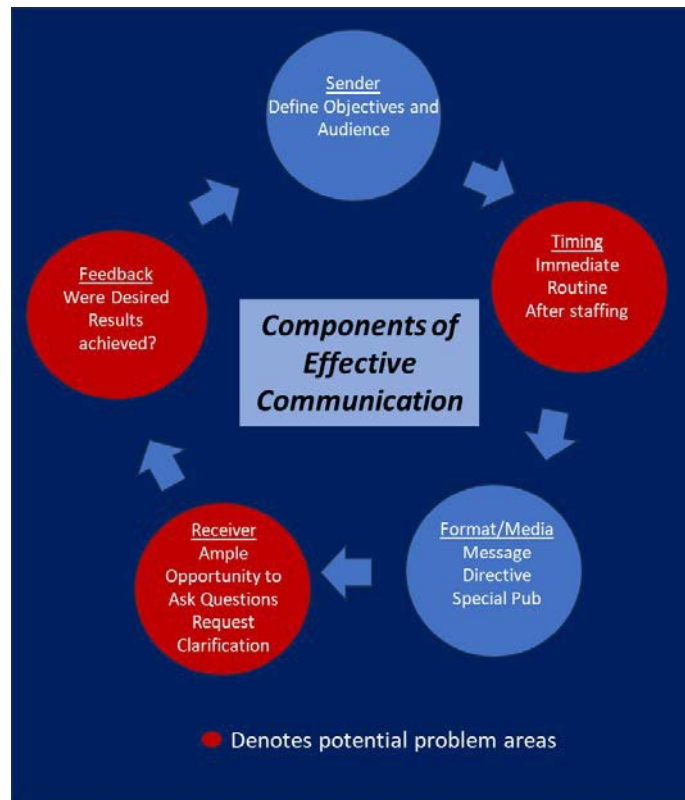
Senior leaders and commanders expressed a desire to learn about proposed changes to HCM processes and procedures with sufficient lead time to understand the rationale behind the changes and to be able to gauge the implications for their organizations. Given comments received during the interviews, increased emphasis on the timing, the intended audience, and feedback would improve vertical coordination and communication.

Considering these comments, we constructed an illustration of the components of effective communication, depicted in Figure 1, which also reflects the basic elements of the Headquarters S1 HCM communications process. These elements are as follows:

- The sender defines objectives and audience and includes the why and when.

- The sender determines when to transmit the information.
- The sender determines the appropriate format or media (e.g., message, directive, special publication).
- The sender should provide the receiver ample time to ask questions and request clarification.
- Finally, feedback is needed to ensure that the desired results are being achieved.

Figure 1. Components of Effective Communication



Our stakeholder discussions highlighted potential problem areas that warrant increased USSF S1 attention (shown in Figure 1 in red). Many commented about timing problems—specifically, being notified of changes far too late.⁷ In addition to the senior leaders and commanders, it seems appropriate to send advance notifications that include supporting rationale to key members of the HCM organization before dissemination to the USSF at large. This would necessitate developing a prenotification distribution list that includes the who and why. This early notification list should allow those receiving the information sufficient time to ask questions and request clarification. Finally, it seems reasonable to establish feedback mechanisms to ensure that the desired results are being achieved.

⁷ Several interviewees cited personnel policy changes, such as the discontinuation of skill proficiency testing for enlisted promotion, as an example.

Commanders Want Greater Involvement in Talent Management

We spoke to field commanders, select delta commanders, and, in some cases, their senior enlisted leaders about HCM in the USSF. Overall, the majority of commanders said that they want to be more involved in all aspects of the talent management and professional development of their guardians. To this end, they were interested in having more influence in the development of personnel management policy in the USSF. Some senior leaders commented that they hear about new personnel policy considerations only at commanders' conferences and would prefer more opportunities to influence professional development policies. They would also like to see more analysis of personnel policy options before new policy decisions are made. Commanders also want to be directly involved in selecting their guardians' next assignments and providing performance evaluations.

Several leaders commented that the new development talent boards for operations, intelligence, and cyber officers and for enlisted guardians were an improvement over the old process, especially in the way feedback was noted and provided to the affected guardian. There was concern, however, about the acquisition and engineer development boards because their members include representatives from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, who do not know the guardians as well. In contrast, development talent boards for space operations, intelligence, and cyber officers and enlisted members are filled exclusively by USSF personnel who are familiar with individuals assigned to these communities.

Senior leaders also noted concern that publishing board results late in the assignment cycle was having a negative effect on guardians who were being notified late of an upcoming permanent change of assignments. This late notification was potentially outweighing the talent management benefits of the newly fashioned development talent boards in which there was greater communication with the guardians on their desires and aspirations.

Some interviewees expressed concern about the way the deltas were currently organized in Space Operations Command. The mission delta commander who employs a particular guardian for the space domain mission does not have much influence over next assignments and evaluations because those personnel management tasks are completed by the assigned functional delta commander (i.e., intelligence or cyber delta).

Personnel Support for Interservice Transfers Remains Challenging

More than half of respondents said that the USSF underestimated the scope, complexity, and number of personnel transferring into the USSF from services other than the USAF. Among the challenges raised by interviewees was that the personnel data systems of the other military services did not interface with DAF systems. There was also a lack of policy in accounting for and translating experience from other services into the DAF. Problems arise in translating acquired military experience for guardians who come from the Army, Navy, or Marine Corps when the USAF does not have a complementary skill identifier in the personnel systems or a means of capturing those data. The USSF needs to determine how it will recognize and treat such military experience, including credentials, from other services. Without such policy, the USSF stands to lose the opportunity and ability to understand skill sets that new members bring from services other than the USAF, as well as potentially cause an inequity when all guardians are considered for advancement.

Commanders in the field said that they would like to know who is being transferred from other services to their units sooner, so that they can make initial assignments and establish a stronger relationship with the new guardians. Interviewees raised concerns about both the sufficiency and amount of available throughput for interservice transfers into the USSF training base. There seems to be a lack of training seats for guardians who transfer in from other services, as well as a need for additional training for the many individuals transferred in who do not have a space background. The USSF needs to recognize the benefit of introducing members of services other than the USAF to USSF missions and the important contributions they will make to the new culture of the USSF. The USSF needs to find ways to cultivate those contributions, regardless of whether they are related to personnel, logistics, or operations.

Force Development and Macro Organizational Design Continue to Evolve

Almost all interviewees in some way acknowledged that force development is still evolving and offered ideas about the direction it should take. Air Force Instruction 36-2670 (2023) states that force development will develop “foundational and occupational competencies in all Airmen through education, training, and experience opportunities to satisfy current and future Air Force mission requirements” (p. 7). A major issue for the USSF is to clearly differentiate the roles and responsibilities for its officers and enlisted members. An interviewee described the problem this way: “As long as we leave officer and enlisted roles undefined, we are going to continue to cause confusion.” Without defining these roles and responsibilities, it will be difficult to define the elements of force development for USSF officers and enlisted members.⁸ By extension, defining expectations for military personnel has implications for civilian force development.

The USSF needs to develop and communicate its plans for the scope of its force development efforts. An interviewee opined that “we’ve started doing [career development for] officers here, but [for] civilians we aren’t doing as much.” This individual suggested that more attention needed to be given to career development for officers, civilians, reservists,⁹ and enlisted personnel.

Force development encompasses both foundational and occupational competencies. One person suggested that there was a lack of training on the foundational competencies: “USAF and USSF spent a lot of intellectual capital in developing foundational competencies . . . yet, we don’t teach any of these competencies, maybe a little in professional military education, but in general we don’t teach these at depth.”

One interviewee raised a force design issue, asking, “How many people can I really take out of the line to do education and training? I love that we prefer education, but how many people can I really afford to send off? I don’t think we’ve done that analysis or thinking yet.”

As the USSF’s force development activities continue to mature, it seems important to develop and communicate the paths being planned for officers, civilians, and enlisted personnel. If the desired

⁸ A separate task included in this project is exploring ways to better differentiate officer and enlisted roles and responsibilities (see Yonekura et al., 2024).

⁹ Currently, reserve and National Guard personnel assigned to USSF units are DAF personnel but are not in the USSF. Congress is considering legislation that could address this issue (see Lehrfeld and Cohen, 2024).

timing and developmental expectations have been established, the information should be shared with the USSF members.

Resources and Staffing Are Insufficient

While nearly everyone we interviewed expressed an enthusiastic attitude toward being part of the USSF and recognized the challenges of being in the infancy of a new military service, more than three-quarters of those interviewed across the USSF HCM enterprise, including the USAF supporting organizations of AFPC and the FSSs, highlighted a lack of resources for HCM as a common concern. One respondent during an interview stated, “We need more resources in [Washington] D.C.; we can’t pretend we can run a service on 50 people. The resource issue flows down from there.” Another stated, “Manning, resources, and funding are not enough to do what we’ve been asked.”

One of the most significant resource concerns identified was how to appropriately support execution of USSF policies when they diverge from USAF policies. While there is always a desire for more resources, the delta commanders, FSS commanders, and leaders at AFPC shared that it is unrealistic to expect the USAF uniformed and civilian personnel to thoroughly understand and execute the HCM programs of two services simultaneously. They emphasized that what is being asked of the HCM professionals is based on the USAF manpower standard, which is designed to handle one set of policies and processes, not two. AFPC was not given additional resources to support the USSF, particularly with the increased workload in areas of boards, reports, and data analytics to support two military services.

Over half of those interviewed talked about how the lack of HCM resources led to necessary functions being performed as additional duties. All stressed that the lack of HCM personnel was having a significant impact. At the deltas, those we interviewed identified unit deployment managers, unit training managers, and administrative tasks as responsibilities performed as additional duties. These additional duties are being performed by operators and sometimes by senior enlisted personnel. The need to use guardians to perform additional duties is exacerbated by the lack of civilian personnel. An exception to this is in Space Systems Command, where deltas are able to obtain and pay for contractor HCM support with acquisition program funds.

Leaders expressed a longer-term concern about the impact on morale and retention of operators who are performing nonoperational additional duties. We also received feedback, particularly from the FSSs, that the absence of a mission support group–like function has dramatically increased the workload and challenges for the FSSs. Some FSSs highlighted a noticeable gap between the FSS and the delta, highlighting that it is often difficult to gain access to the delta commander in a timely manner for decisions that need to be made or guidance on challenging support issues.

Lack of resources and a lack of policy in many areas are a circular problem. Because resources are lacking, policy is late in addressing the needs; meanwhile, HCM professionals are spending time “figuring things out.” The lack of published policy and the lack of experienced staff available to execute policy once it is published continue to hinder USSF implementation of *The Guardian Ideal* and other initiatives. Leaders at all levels shared that they were “building the rocket as they go.” Several leaders also shared that they did much of the HCM administrative work themselves—using the HCM systems and work-arounds outside the system to get things done. Resource challenges affect and are

intertwined with technology challenges. Because of this interplay, additional time is needed to utilize, navigate, and work within or around underperforming systems. All increase demands on resources and time.

Additional Noteworthy Concerns

Our task was scoped to address five HCM military functions and to determine their optimum alignment and effectiveness. However, additional concerns beyond this scope surfaced that warrant the USSF S1's engagement.

Base Operating Support

Mission and capability changes affect installation support requirements, including contracted personnel. Base support tail factors are used to estimate the effects that changes in mission manpower will have on support activities. Base support factors are used to estimate changes in the base's support requirements according to the change in the base's total personnel population. The weapon system base support tail factor is 7.0 percent, and it includes manpower estimates for "common installation support requirements as well as those that indirectly support aircraft or other weapons system operations (e.g., vehicle maintenance and fuels management)" (Air Force Instruction 38-101, 2023, p. 173). The general base support tail factor is 5.4 percent and "is used to estimate common installation support for activities moving into or from an installation" (Air Force Instruction 38-101, 2023, p. 173).

Manpower deficits in organizations supporting the USSF could affect the ability of the USSF to accomplish its missions. An FSS commander indicated that changes to support needs were driven primarily by members who were previously in the Navy or Army and USSF mission changes. We believe it is important that the USSF S1 examine the base support problem and assist organizations in obtaining the base operations support resources that they need to support the USSF mission and leverage the Servicing MAJCOM Assessment and Review Team (SMART) to develop alternatives. The support tail for USSF changes alone would be 84 billets.

Civilian Personnel Management

Civilian personnel management was outside the scope of this study; however, the topic of civilian personnel was raised enough times during our interviews that we think it warrants mention. Those we interviewed expressed a recurring desire for a streamlined and consistent hiring process across the USSF. Like civilians in the USAF, civilians in the USSF are considered DAF personnel. There is also an effort by the USSF to manage as many DAF civilians as possible under the Department of Defense Civilian Acquisition Workforce Personnel Demonstration Project authority (also used in the USAF in certain major commands), which gives various talent management flexibilities to both supervisors and employees.

Some of the hiring challenges were reported to stem from specific practices within field commands and deltas, as well as the occasional interaction with AFMC regarding authorizations and offsets.

These comments applied to hiring of individuals in the HCM career fields as well as those across the entire USSF. We learned from USSF HCM leadership that strides have been made in streamlining the staffing and classification process. USSF S1 now has authority from the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (SAF/MR) to oversee the staffing and classification process. While the leadership acknowledges the need to resource the process correctly, having the correct process itself is a positive step.

Another challenge expressed by those we interviewed was a recognition of the need to replace experienced civilians who are retiring. There was a consistent desire for a means to develop and grow civilians, acknowledging that it should be a deliberate and thought-out process for the long-term benefit of the USSF mission rather than a hiring crisis when a talented civilian retires. Likewise, we heard multiple times the desire for civilians to provide continuity for USSF HCM programs, particularly at FSSs, where properly trained and developed civilians could execute USSF-specific programs in lieu of airmen being expected to understand and execute HCM policies and programs for two military services.

Los Angeles Air Force Base Size and Scope

We received significant feedback regarding the small size of Los Angeles Air Force Base and its location in California, which present unique challenges to Space Systems Command and subordinate elements. The small size and big-city proximity of the base have driven the headquarters staff of Space Systems Command to assume base functions as well as the more traditional functions of a field command. The small size affects overall manpower resourcing such that the air base mission does not require the personnel numbers of a much larger Space Force base, such as Peterson Space Force Base, yet the overall requirements are the same. To adequately manage resources, Space Systems Command tasked many individuals with both base and field command responsibilities. This personnel situation is further exacerbated by the subsequent low grades for civilian positions and the difficulty in attracting quality talent in a larger city with a higher cost of living like Los Angeles.

Recommendations

The USSF is still evolving and trying to determine what HCM policies and procedures are appropriate—a sentiment expressed by many interviewees. Recognizing the challenges inherent in establishing and building a new military service, we developed 25 implementable recommendations, summarized at the end of this section, to address gaps in the conduct of HCM functions and organized the recommendations into three categories: near term (achievable in one to six months), middle term (achievable in one year), and far term (achievable in two to three years).

Implement Robust Personnel Policy Development Efforts

The USSF can take numerous steps in the near term to make its policy development efforts more robust and transparent to the force. As the S1 continues to develop personnel policies unique to the USSF, we recommend making a concerted effort to include more commanders and senior enlisted

leaders during the early stages and formally publishing those policies once changes are made. Specifically, we recommend the following:

- Continue to partner with the SAF/MR to ensure that personnel policy documents are published in a timely manner.
- Establish a policy development tiger team with representation from across field commands and start with development of military personnel evaluation and assignment policy.
 - Determine whether there is a deliberate approach that includes the various mission commanders in the professional development and personnel management tasks of guardians who are assigned to multifunctional deltas.
 - Include guardian values and recently approved core competencies as part of all future policy development.

The field and USAF supporting organizations want more-frequent and more-effective strategic updates of personnel policies targeted at a variety of audiences, which is covered in the later section on communication.

To address the concern about whether new personnel policies are necessary and appropriate, we recommend the following:

- Conduct a more deliberate review of the recent changes to personnel policies, starting with stratification and assignment policies. With a longer implementation horizon for this recommendation to allow the new policy changes time to create their intended effect, ensure the establishment and collection of critical data points for appropriate analysis.
- Create an HCM cell at 45th Space Launch Delta aligned to the deputy S1 to develop, evaluate, and test other longer-term personnel policy advances for the USSF. This future-focused team operating in a laboratory environment should include both military and civilian guardians, with adequate representation of guardians who have served in other services.

Adjust Current S1 Staff Structure

Given the breadth of personnel policy development that the various S1 level 3s and ETMO are responsible for, publication of the S1 mission directive would help field commands better understand the roles and missions of the headquarters functions. With the uniqueness of the missions for each of the S1 level 3s, an S1 commander's action group is needed to synchronize, synthesize, and project policy changes, as well as coordinate policy review and development with the A1. The S1 level 3s are expected to perform at the level of their counterparts in the A1 and other services, but manning levels are significantly lower in the USSF. Additional resources should be added, with priority given to the Office of the Director of Military Policy and Management (S1P), ETMO, the Commander's Action Group, and the Office of the Director of Senior Leader Management (S1L). This would allow the S1 to both implement and interpret necessary personnel policy, as well as develop and document the USSF-specific policies.

Adopt myFSS for USSF Use

The interviewees did not offer any pushback to using myFSS or other talent management systems. Indeed, they seemed to embrace these HCM applications as the “wave of the future.” They expressed a desire for applications that are tailored to their needs. Thus, we recommend that the USSF take actions that will enable these applications to meet current and future USSF needs, including the following:

- Develop a USSF portal and new USSF-specific applications (e.g., evaluations; in-processing). Establishing a USSF portal would aid the distribution of information across the force. This would become the place for guardians to find information about HCM activities. Moreover, as USSF policies diverge from USAF policies and practices, it is vital that the associated applications are tailored to the USSF.
- Increase guardian involvement in myFSS development. The following actions are critical for shaping the various applications to meet USSF current and future needs:
 - Ensure that the deputy S1 reviews the current governance structure.
 - Across the board, increase level 3 involvement in development.
 - Add guardians to the USAF myFSS development team.
- Allocate funding for USSF-unique applications. Developing USSF-unique applications will require funding. We are recommending that the USSF define its requirements, prioritize those requirements, and pursue appropriate funding.

Improve Communication

HCM communication issues surfaced in various ways across all organizational levels. We recommend the following actions to address most of these issues:

- Establish routine strategic messaging on select personnel policy topics from the S1 to the delta commanders, and include the field commands.
- Establish routine technical communications from the S1 to the supporting USAF FSS commanders, and include the S1s at field commands, as well as AFMC.
- Create an online collaboration site for all personnelists who support guardians, and employ an enterprise social network–like forum for all guardians to improve consistency and transparency of understanding across the force.
- Similarly, HCM policy changes may affect all guardians; therefore, we recommend creating a social media site that would be accessible by all guardians.
- As the S1 level 3s focus on their distinct mission set, the S1 should create a commander’s action group to develop, integrate, synchronize, and synthesize the personnel policy communications across all personnel mission sets.
 - Realign the Office of the Director of Strategy, Employee Value Proposition, Engagement, Resilience and Wellbeing (which is currently responsible for employee

value proposition and thus should already be developing a strong connection with the force) to the deputy S1 and/or Commander's Action Group.

- Publish weekly strategic communications that include three to four personnel-related topics (to achieve consistency and simplicity) obtained from the S1 level 3s and ETMO.

Increase Commander Involvement in Human Capital Management

Commanders appreciate their role in developing guardians for the future and look for opportunities to contribute in a more meaningful way. Given the S1 responsibility for personnel policy development and procedural guidance, the S1 should establish a policy development tiger team with field command representation to draft all future military personnel policies, especially those pertaining to assignments, utilization, and evaluations. The S1 should review the promotion board, school, and command selection board schedules to ensure that personnel decisions are made and communicated to guardians before the winter holidays so that guardians and their families have ample time to prepare for the stresses of permanent changes of station. To capitalize on the positive effects of the changes to the space operations, intelligence, and cyber developmental talent boards, the S1 should work with the assistant secretary of the Air Force for acquisition, technology, and logistics to ensure comparable processes for acquisition and engineering officers.

Improve the Interservice Transition Experience for Guardians Transferring in from the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps

As the USSF continues to build its military end strength, more of its guardians are coming from across the U.S. Department of Defense. To ensure that the focus remains on building an inclusive service that reflects the strengths from all new members, USSF talent management must account for the military experience that guardians from services other than the USAF bring, while providing them the initial training and exposure to the USSF that they need.

- Establish a team at ETMO to review and update all interservice transfer personnel who came from services other than the USAF (already underway). Ensure that guardians know about this effort.
- The USSF S1 should work closely with SAF/MR to assist in fast-tracking policies to translate Army, Navy, and Marine Corps personnel records into a common USSF data model that captures all guardians' relevant military training, skills, and experience for the variety of experiences from services outside the DAF, as well as approve the necessary translation of common military experience.
- With no additional updates to the Air Force Integrated Personnel and Pay System occurring until delivery of the new DAF personnel system in 2024 or 2025, designate a "super coder" to

participate with the ETMO review team, and develop an interim work-around to transfer other service personnel data from the Army, Navy, or Marine Corps to the USSF.¹⁰

- Space Training and Readiness Command should review the current interservice transfer initial training package to ensure efficacy. A distance learning module could be deployed to help with the large backlog in the training base.

Prioritize Completion of USSF Macro Force Design and Expand Force Development Efforts

Standing up the USSF has resulted in several organizational changes. We recommend stabilizing the USSF organization structure. This will enable the USSF to determine the effects of sending guardians to professional military education and its capacity to do so.¹¹

The delineation of officer and enlisted roles and responsibilities has become increasingly blurred. We recommend clarifying officer versus enlisted roles and responsibilities. This, in turn, has implications for military versus civilian responsibilities.

Also, the USSF should develop a cadre of civilian personnelists with USSF-specific personnel management experience. As USSF and USAF policies continue to diverge, determining what is applicable to the USSF versus the USAF will likely become more difficult for airmen who are rotating between assignments at USSF and USAF bases. These positions would not be militarily essential; therefore, we recommend developing a cadre of civilian personnelists focusing on USSF HCM.

Currently, the guardian force comprises officers, civilians, and enlisted members. In addition, National Guard and reserve members from the DAF also support the USSF missions.¹² Civilians compose nearly one-third of the USSF workforce. Like the USAF, the USSF relies heavily on participation from the reserve and National Guard to accomplish its missions. Therefore, we recommend that the USSF develop and communicate plans to expand force development.

Increase Resourcing for Human Capital Management Functions

While the demand for resources almost always outpaces those available, resource shortfalls are becoming particularly evident as the USSF wraps up its fourth year as a military service. To mitigate some of the strain, we recommend action in the following four areas, recognizing that some are more doable in the near term, and some will require a longer time horizon:

¹⁰ A *super coder* is a guardian with significant coding aptitude and ability who has completed the training hosted by the Space Command and Control Program Office, commonly referred to as Kobayashi Maru.

¹¹ The USSF is exploring ways to leverage the full spectrum of military and commercial capabilities. This may have implications for how units are aligned to Space Operations Command, Space Systems Command, and Space Training and Readiness Command. Additionally, this could have implications for the number of people in these units. Force development is the career-long pursuit of education, training, experiences, and assignments that produce guardians who possess the requisite skills, knowledge, and motivation to lead and execute the full spectrum of USSF missions. Stabilizing USSF macro force design has implications for the numbers of people that USSF can make available for force development (e.g., in-residence professional military education, advanced education).

¹² As mentioned earlier, the USSF does not have a reserve or National Guard component. Reserve and National Guard members performing USSF missions are DAF personnel. Congress is considering legislation that could remedy this issue.

- Pursue end-of-year fallout dollars for system modifications to myFSS and supporting applications. Getting the technology systems to a point where they are conducive to meeting needs of guardians in a streamlined manner will free up valuable time and make routine HCM functions and processes more streamlined.
- Seek planning, programming, budgeting, and execution options to obtain additional resources. Every interviewee addressed the need for additional personnel to meet mission needs.
- Prioritize manning for the S1P, ETMO, the S1 Commander’s Action Group, and the S1L. Providing additional resources to these organizations will enable the shortfalls previously noted in this assessment to be addressed.
- Secure personnel funding for USAF-provided support activities. AFPC and FSSs provide essential support to the USSF. Failure to appropriately staff these two organizations could have a negative impact on critical day-to-day HCM support to guardians, which over time could lead to a decline in retention. In addition, more robust USAF-provided support activities would confer a significant benefit to the USSF by enabling personnel to become experts in USSF HCM policy and execution.

Table 1 contains a recap of the recommendations and the proposed time frame.

Conclusions

Everyone we spoke to reflected positively on the S1’s initiative to conduct this review and obtain feedback about how HCM is currently working in the USSF. *The Guardian Ideal* is viewed by some guardians less as a strategic, visioning document and more as a contract, setting expectations for career development and future assignments. Thus, the tenets of the overall strategy need to be much more effectively communicated to the force. USSF policymaking should also rely on stronger data analytics to support the changes the USSF is making to personnel policies that currently govern the USAF.

Improved efforts are needed on several fronts. Commanders want to be more involved in guardian talent management. Finding the right balance for commander involvement, guardian preferences, and mission requirements is challenging but imperative to long-term personnel retention. To make the most-effective personnel policy decisions for the long term, USSF macro organizational design must be stabilized, military and civilian roles and responsibilities finalized, and roles for officers and enlisted personnel established. Civilian personnel management raises both similar and unique challenges that need to be addressed within total force HCM across the USSF as well.

Table 1. Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation	Time Frame		
	Near Term (1-6 Months)	Middle Term (1 Year)	Far Term (2-3 Years)
Implement robust personnel policy efforts.			
Publish personnel policy documents.	X		
Establish a policy development tiger team.		X	
Conduct deliberate review and assess new stratification and assignment policies.			X
Create an HCM cell in a laboratory environment to develop and evaluate farther-term personnel advances.			X
Adjust the current S1 staff structure.			
Publish USSF and S1 mission directives.	X		
Establish a USSF S1 commander's action group to synchronize communications activities.	X		
Adopt myFSS for USSF use.			
Develop a USSF portal and new USSF-specific applications (e.g., evaluations, in-processing).	X		
Increase guardian involvement in myFSS development.	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the deputy S1 reviews the current governance structure. 	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Across the board, increase Level 3 involvement in development. 	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add guardians to the USAF myFSS development team. 	X		
Allocate funding for USSF-unique applications.		X	
Improve communication.			
Establish routine strategic messages from the USSF S1 to delta commanders (include S1s from field commands and FSS commanders).	X		
Establish routine technical messages from the USSF S1 to supporting FSS commanders (include S1s from field commands).	X		
Create an online collaboration site for all personnelists who support guardians.	X		
Create a social media site accessible by all guardians.		X	
Create a commander's action group personnel policy communication.		X	

Recommendation	Time Frame		
	Near Term (1-6 Months)	Middle Term (1 Year)	Far Term (2-3 Years)
Increase commander involvement in HCM.			
Establish a policy development tiger team with field command representation to draft military personnel policies (e.g., military personnel evaluation and assignments).	X		
Review the development team structure and schedules to ensure comparable processes for operations, cyber, and intelligence, with acquisitions and engineering, as well as timeliness of all activities	X		
Improve interservice transfer transition experience for the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps.			
Establish a team at ETMO to review and update, as necessary, all interservice transfer records (efforts are currently underway by ETMO).	X		
Obtain SAF/MR support for expedited exceptions to policy to document experience from services other than the USAF.	X		
Task a super coder to work with the review team and someone with access to all service records to develop a system work-around before the Air Force Integrated Personnel and Pay System becomes available in 2024 or 2025.	X		
Review and update force development initiatives to better support interservice transfers from the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps.		X	
Prioritize completion of USSF macro force design to ensure appropriate force development efforts.			
Stabilize the USSF organization structure.	X		
Determine effects of sending guardians to professional military education and capacity to do so.	X		
Clarify officer versus enlisted responsibilities.		X	
Determine civilian versus military requirements.		X	
Develop a cadre of civilian personnelists with USSF-specific personnel management experience.			X
Develop and communicate force development plans to civilians and reservists.			X
Increase resourcing for HCM functions.			
Pursue end-of-year fallout dollars for system modifications.	X		
Pursue planning, programming, budgeting, and execution options to obtain additional resources.	X		
Prioritize more resources to S1P, ETMO, the S1 Commander's Action Group, and S1L.		X	
Pursue funding for USAF-provided support activities (e.g., AFPC and USSF supporting FSSs).		X	

Research Approach

This appendix provides additional details on the conduct of the policy and doctrine review, stakeholder interviews, and qualitative analysis using Dedoose software.

Policy and Doctrine Review

In the initial stages of the project, we conducted a review of relevant HCM policies, doctrines, and plans. These included *Personnel: Doctrine for Space Forces* (Space Doctrine Publication 1-0, 2022), *Spacepower: Doctrine for Space Forces* (USSF, 2020), *The Guardian Ideal* (USSF, 2021), and *Programming Plan 21-01: Servicing Major Command for Airmen Assigned to the United States Space Force* (AFMC, 2021). The programming plan outlines AFMC's support to the USSF as the servicing major command in several areas (including HCM functions) and describes the roles and responsibilities performed by AFMC and its subordinate centers in support of airmen assigned to USSF organizations. This review allowed us to scope the breadth and depth of USSF HCM functions, identify areas of interest for stakeholder interviews, and generally improve our understanding of HCM policies, programs, and practices.

Stakeholder Participants

During May and June 2023, we conducted semistructured interviews with 26 subject-matter experts from across the HCM enterprise with the aim of gaining insight across organizational levels of the USSF enterprise and from key USAF stakeholders. Participants included officers tasked with executing and supervising HCM functions with ranks from captain to major general, key civilian personnel, and senior enlisted personnel. In addition, we interviewed representatives from AFPC and AFMC, organizations that have formal roles in supporting USSF HCM functions. Table A.1 summarizes the interviews conducted. Selection of interview participants was not intended to be fully representative of the HCM enterprise, but rather to gather insight across the relevant USSF S1 offices, the three field commands, and their relevant subordinate units. We identified the participants based on our knowledge of the structure and organization of the USSF HCM enterprise, as well as referrals from the project sponsor.

Throughout the interview process, we adhered to RAND's human subjects protection guidelines, including the need to maintain participant confidentiality. In soliciting interviews, the project team provided participants with information on the project's purpose, sponsor, and protections for participants prior to gaining their consent for an interview. We briefed participants that their responses were nonattributable and that they would not be identified by name or position in our report or in briefings to the sponsor. Additionally, we conducted standard data safeguarding

procedures in handling interview notes, including removing all names, ranks, and position identifiers that could harm confidentiality for those versions of the interview notes stored on the project’s Microsoft Teams site or used on Dedoose. Finally, in the writing of this report and associated briefings, we have adhered to the level of confidentiality briefed to participants.

Table A.1. Summary of Interview Participants

Organization	Organization Type				
	Policy and Oversight	Field Command	Delta	FSS	USAF Element
Chief Human Capital Office	6				
ETMO					
Space Training and Readiness Command					
Space Systems Command		6	7	4	
Space Operations Command					
AFPC					
AFMC					3
USAF Directorate of Manpower, Organization and Resources					

NOTE: The number of interviews by organizational type and level corresponds to the number of separate interviews conducted by the research team, not the number of individuals interviewed, which varied by interview. In accordance with RAND’s human subjects protection guidelines, this information is grouped to avoid identification by inference on the part of the reader while still providing an understanding of the breadth of insight gained by the research team.

Interview Protocol

In coordination with the project sponsor, we developed a series of questions addressing the following areas of interest:

- the effectiveness of HCM policies and practices
- the organizational levels at which HCM functions are performed (and their appropriateness)
- whether HCM functions were performed as additional duties
- organizational alignment
- the effectiveness of the USSF S1 structure
- resource alignment for HCM functions
- the implementation and capabilities of myFSS and talent management interfaces.

We used the same general approach for conducting the interviews for all stakeholders. All interviews were conducted remotely (mostly through Microsoft Teams, a few by conference line) and were semistructured, following the protocol below. This protocol allowed us to gain insight on the

same topics from stakeholders at various levels, while our final question gave us the ability to identify issues of concern specific to the individual or organization interviewed.

1. Are the relevant HCM policies and activities effective? Why or why not?
2. Are there gaps in these HCM policies?
3. Are HCM functions being performed at the appropriate organizational level (i.e., S1 staff, ETMO, Space Training and Readiness Command, field command, delta)?
4. Are HCM functions being performed as additional duties?
5. What HCM functions are administrative in nature, transactional, policy, training, commander program, etc.?
6. Does the size, mission, or location influence ideal organizational alignment?
7. As the USSF adapts legacy USAF processes, is the current S1 structure functioning efficiently/effectively? What adjustments should be made?
8. Are resources properly aligned for optimal effectiveness of HCM functions?
9. As the DAF migrates to myFSS, combining elements of myPers and the virtual Personnel Center, what issues are you encountering?
10. What functionality is adequate in the current talent management interfaces (myFSS, the virtual Personnel Center, myPers, etc.)? Where are they lacking necessary functionality?
11. With the migration to myFSS, what additional functionality/capabilities would you want included?
12. What additional topics would you like to discuss?

We made two slight modifications for interviews conducted with general officers, removing question 5 and combining questions 9 and 11. The purpose for these changes was to discuss HCM policies, practices, and programs at a higher level more appropriate for a general officer.

Thematic Analysis

We identified themes that emerged during the interview discussion construct using Dedoose (SocioCultural Research Consultants, LLC, 2023), a cloud-based qualitative analysis software program that facilitates team-based coding and subsequent data analysis. As part of our analyses, we also categorized interviews by unit type to gain a sense of whether trends in perspectives differed depending on the echelon or type of organization represented in each discussion.¹³

Interviews were documented for transcription purposes. Following each interview, a transcript was uploaded to the software program. Using Dedoose, the team categorized responses to each question with any number of themes (a process referred to as *coding*) and generated counts of the number of responses by theme and organizational level of the interviewee.

To ensure accurate and consistent coding, three project team members participated in robust training on coding practices conducted by two RAND colleagues with prior experience in Dedoose. Team members worked with each primary coder to practice coding in an iterative manner on multiple

¹³ The categories allowed us to gain insights at the following levels: USSF S1, ETMO, field command, delta, FSS, AFPC, and AFMC.

interview transcripts over the course of two weeks. During this process, the entire project team met to compare notes on coding best practices and develop consistency across primary coders.

In the initial phase of coding, we generated nine themes that aligned with each protocol question: HCM policies and activities, effectiveness and gaps, functions performed at the appropriate organizational level, HCM functions performed as additional duties, nature of HCM functions, factors influencing organizational alignment, S1 structure, resource alignment, and talent management systems and myFSS. We divided coding responsibility by question, giving each primary coder the same set of questions to code for all 26 interviews. For each theme, we generated several subthemes to provide additional granularity in categorizing responses. Throughout this process, we identified crosscutting themes and additional topics of concern discussed in the report.

We used four additional methods to ensure consistency and clarity in our coding. We frequently cross-checked one another's work during the initial phase of coding to compare coding results. Each primary coder could label an excerpt for discussion with the whole project team. We employed double coding, where each primary coder independently coded a duplicate set of three full transcripts, and the team compared results to identify differences in coding practices between coders and ensure that codes were being applied in the same manner. We also used the analytical tools in Dedoose to identify instances where codes were assigned considerably more or less frequently than the average across all interviews and, in those instances, reviewed the results to ensure consistent application of the codes.

The outputs from the Dedoose analysis were critical to identifying and developing the recommendations contained in this report. By sorting participant responses by code, we were able to identify the specific areas that became the crosscutting concerns and additional noteworthy concerns detailed in this report, as well as quantify the common themes identified at the beginning of this report. Looking through groups of excerpts assigned the same code, we were able to identify recommendations that interview participants would make to the sponsor and what commonly held problems existed that should be addressed by a recommendation in this report.

Abbreviations

A1	Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services
AFMC	Air Force Materiel Command
AFPC	Air Force Personnel Center
DAF	Department of the Air Force
ETMO	Enterprise Talent Management Office
FSS	force support squadron
HCM	human capital management
S1	chief human capital officer
S1L	Office of the Director of Senior Leader Management
S1P	Office of the Director of Military Policy and Management
SAF/MR	Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs
USAF	U.S. Air Force
USSF	U.S. Space Force

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Alignment of U.S. Space Force Military Human Capital Management Functions

A Qualitative Review

RAYMOND E. CONLEY, PATRICIA MULCAHY, GINA OLIVER, SAM WALLACE

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ISSUE

Last December, having recently celebrated its fourth anniversary, the U.S. Space Force (USSF) has a rare opportunity to revolutionize military human capital management (HCM). The service is placing considerable emphasis on pushing the boundaries of traditional approaches to HCM and adopting innovative approaches to talent management. Recognizing that an organization's structure creates a framework for effective and efficient mission execution, the USSF deputy chief human capital officer (deputy S1) asked RAND Project AIR FORCE to assess the alignment and effectiveness of HCM functions at all organizational levels.



APPROACH

The research team's assessment of USSF HCM functions was based on a review of policy and doctrine and subject-matter expert interviews with key stakeholders. The research team reviewed relevant HCM policies, doctrines, and plans to gain an understanding of the breadth and depth of HCM policies, programs, and practices. During May and June 2023, the team conducted semistructured interviews with 26 subject-matter experts from across the HCM enterprise, with the aim of gaining insight from stakeholders across all organizational levels. These stakeholders included the USSF chief human capital officer (S1), the Enterprise Talent Management Office, field commands, deltas, force support squadrons (FSSs), the Air Force Personnel Center, Air Force Materiel Command, and the Department of the Air Force headquarters organizations.



KEY FINDINGS

- USSF leaders acknowledge that HCM functions are evolving as the USSF determines what works best for the nation's newest military service.
- Senior leaders appreciated the importance of getting HCM right and have significant insights into what is working well in HCM, as well as what improvements are needed.
- Areas that need improvement include personnel policy; force development; completion of USSF macro force design; processes related to interservice transfers; functionality of the myFSS personnel platform for USSF use; and resourcing HCM functions.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Recognizing the challenges inherent in establishing and building a new military service, the research team developed 25 implementable recommendations divided into the following eight categories:

- Implement robust personnel policy development efforts.¹
- Adjust current S1 staff structure.
- Adopt myFSS for USSF use.
- Improve communication.
- Increase commander involvement in HCM.
- Improve the transition experience for guardians transferring to the USSF from the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps.
- Prioritize completion of USSF macro force design and expand force development efforts.
- Increase resourcing for HCM functions.

¹ As the newest military service, the USSF will likely make refinements to the alignment, structure, and composition of various units. These refinements will have implications for the numbers of people the USSF can make available for force development (e.g., professional military education, advanced education).



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