

# Strategy Research Project

## Civilian Defense Senior Leader Development Program . . . Are We There Yet?

by

Mr. Mark R. Crockett  
United States Air Force

Under the Direction of:  
Colonel Vanessa M. Gattis



United States Army War College  
Class of 2018

### DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT: A

Approved for Public Release  
Distribution is Unlimited

The views expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government. The U.S. Army War College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved--OMB No. 0704-0188		
The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 01-04-2018		2. REPORT TYPE STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Civilian Defense Senior Leader Development Program . . . Are We There Yet?			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S) Mr. Mark R. Crockett United States Air Force			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Colonel Vanessa M. Gattis			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College, 122 Forbes Avenue, Carlisle, PA 17013			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Approved for Public Release. Distribution is Unlimited. I understand this document will be included in a research database and available to the public. Author: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Word Count: 5,302					
14. ABSTRACT Developing effective talent management strategies for Department of Defense (DOD) civilian servants that identify, grow, and retain a premium talent pool is critical to the future of DOD. This paper focuses on growing civilian servant talent for senior General Schedule (GS) civilians, GS-14 and GS-15. Specifically, as a key to the future success of the DOD civilian Defense Senior Leader Development Program (DSLDP), this paper strongly recommends: 1) embracing career assignment processes that target the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) environment; 2) formalizing DSLDP outplacement assignment strategies; and, 3) aligning assignment strategies with a more robust senior leader mentorship program. This paper postulates that effort applied in any of these three areas will create a better prepared DOD talent pool of strategic leader civilian servants at the GS-14 and GS-15 level. Additionally, informed and sustained momentum across these areas is essential to enhancing the success of DOD's premier civilian senior leader development program and deliberately growing tomorrow's senior civilian leaders today.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Talent Management, Force Development, DSLDP, Change Management, Civilian Personnel, JIIM, Mentorship					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 27	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UU	b. ABSTRACT UU	c. THIS PAGE UU			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (w/ area code)

## Civilian Defense Senior Leader Development Program . . . Are We There Yet?

(5,302 words)

### Abstract

Developing effective talent management strategies for Department of Defense (DOD) civilian servants that identify, grow, and retain a premium talent pool is critical to the future of DOD. This paper focuses on growing civilian servant talent for senior General Schedule (GS) civilians, GS-14 and GS-15. Specifically, as a key to the future success of the DOD civilian Defense Senior Leader Development Program (DSLDP), this paper strongly recommends: 1) embracing career assignment processes that target the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) environment; 2) formalizing DSLDP outplacement assignment strategies; and, 3) aligning assignment strategies with a more robust senior leader mentorship program. This paper postulates that effort applied in any of these three areas will create a better prepared DOD talent pool of strategic leader civilian servants at the GS-14 and GS-15 level. Additionally, informed and sustained momentum across these areas is essential to enhancing the success of DOD's premier civilian senior leader development program and deliberately growing tomorrow's senior civilian leaders today.

## **Civilian Defense Senior Leader Development Program . . . Are We There Yet?**

. . . the ultimate goal and objective of a talent management initiative: produce a critical mass of highly skilled individuals and an environment that nurtures and support their development and maximum performance, respectively.

—William A. Guillory<sup>1</sup>

When developing effective talent management strategies for Department of Defense (DOD) civilian servants, identifying, growing, and retaining a premium talent pool is critical to the future of DOD. While talent pool identification and retention are important, this paper focuses on managing civilian servant talent growth for senior General Schedule (GS) civilians, GS-14 and GS-15. Specifically, as a key to the future success of DOD's premier civilian senior leader development program, the Defense Senior Leader Development Program (DSLDP), this paper strongly advocates:

1) embracing career assignment processes that target the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) environment; 2) formalizing senior leader program outplacement assignment strategies; and 3) aligning assignment strategies with a more robust senior leader mentorship program. This paper postulates that effort applied in any of these three areas will create a better prepared DOD talent pool of strategic leader civilian servants at the GS-14 and GS-15 level. Additionally, informed and sustained momentum across these areas is essential to enhancing the success of the DSLDP and deliberately growing tomorrow's leaders today.

Understanding the complexities underlying the topic of talent management, this paper provides insight on three opportunity areas of talent management growth strategy to help inform senior leaders, while allowing them to consider practical and positive senior leader development program enhancements. This paper seeks to frame the exploration of talent management growth strategy for senior DOD civilian servants by

providing background on talent management, outlining DSLDP's current state, and detailing a vision for DSLDP's enhanced future state. To inform talent management background, this paper will define talent management, illustrate linkage to strategic thinking, map the strategic landscape, identify the appropriate change agent, and scan the environment.

## Background

J.P. Medved defines talent management as, "an organization-wide, holistic strategy for hiring, training, and retaining top performing employees."<sup>2</sup> It is important to note the far-reaching effect of talent management, especially in large, complex organizations. For example, as espoused by the General Electric leadership, "At the end of the day, the company with the best team, the best people will win in the long run."<sup>3</sup> This statement is especially emphatic within the military profession where correctly harnessing human capital is paramount to winning a war, providing military support in operations other than war, or delivering timely humanitarian aid in peacetime.

There is a direct link between strategic thinking processes and devising optimum talent management strategies. It is imperative to understand this linkage when envisioning the desired future state. The U.S. Army War College embraces this concept in their approach to strategic thinking positing that "strategic thinking is the ability to make a creative and holistic synthesis of key factors affecting an organization and its environment in order to obtain sustainable competitive advantage and long-term success."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, understanding the complex competitive environment and obtaining and sustaining a competitive advantage in talent management is crucial to achieving long-term defense human capital goals. Since the DOD strategic planning process and associated development of senior leader vision and goals normally takes

years to realize, it is prudent to timely inform viable talent management pathways to the future in order to maximize effort.

When evaluating talent management strategy, one of the primary goals should be to optimally map talent management across the strategic landscape to achieve and sustain a competitive advantage. One method to do this is leveraging the U.S. Army War College Strategic Thinking Framework which provides a solid foundation for devising an efficacious talent management strategy. The framework addresses future strategy challenges, risks, anticipated future environment, and highlights the need to consider competitive advantage such as required in talent management.<sup>5</sup> The framework also identifies the need to align future factors to form a cogent strategy.<sup>6</sup> Assessing where facets of the framework fit into future strategic planning efforts can help synthesize and better inform successful talent management strategy.

To drive positive and lasting change, the primary change agent within DOD uniquely responsible for talent management must be identified to properly codify the change. C. Wright Mills in *The War for Talent* contends, "If it is to count in the corporate career, talent, no matter how defined, must be discovered by one's talented superiors. It is in the nature of the morality of corporate accomplishment that those at the top do not and cannot admire that which they do not and cannot understand."<sup>7</sup> Therefore, talent management is clearly a DOD senior leader responsibility that requires informed evaluation before delegating to lower levels of management; however, lower levels should be fully empowered by senior leaders as the change agents.

Further, informing talent management strategy involves scanning the environment to shape a deliberate approach and cogent strategy. Research must

address compelling factors such as talent supply and demand that drives strategy. One of the main factors compelling timely action in future planning is the current global talent shortage and the forecast for greater challenges to match talent to future demand.<sup>8</sup> In preparation for the upcoming shortages of talent, DOD senior leaders should help positively shape the impact on talent management strategies. Specifically, “The heart of the challenge lies not in how to prepare, but in the willingness to prepare.”<sup>9</sup> Leaders must be self-aware and visionary to drive the discovery and innovation necessary to meet the future challenges in talent management. After describing some background on talent management, this paper now outlines the DSLDP current state.

### Current State

Informing the DSLDP current state begins with identifying overarching DOD policy and guidance pertaining to the program. Additionally, the DSLDP current state must provide linkage to the DOD civilian leader development continuum which foundationally informs and shapes the DSLDP. Finally, the DSLDP current state must address specific DLSDP vision and goals.

Overarching guidance for civilian senior leader development is derived from DOD Instruction (DODI) 1430.02, Civilian Career Management, April 6, 2006, which replaced the previous version dated June 13, 1981. This lapse in providing updated civilian career management guidance is significant since the implementation period between revisions is 25 years. According to DODI 1430.02, this guidance applies to all civilians except those civilian career programs covered under DOD Directive 5000.52, Defense Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Workforce Education, Training, and Career Development Program, January 12, 2005.<sup>10</sup> However, a search for DOD Directive 5000.52 did not yield results, further indicating that DODI 1430.02 may be lapsing into

the realm of outdated instruction, lacking appropriate depth and pertinence for today's civilian personnel. This research suggests the need to conduct policy assessments to determine currency in today's talent management environment before moving forward to substantively inform future talent management strategy.

While DODI 1430.02 codifies and supports concepts synchronous with the DSLDP, the lack of what appears to be current guidance for civilian servant career management drove a broader information scan on DOD policy for the civilian workforce. This broader scan was necessary to further assess current guidance impacting the DSLDP current state. The subsequent scan of additional DOD policy documents yielded other examples of potentially outdated foundational DOD policy documents requiring an updated assessment as well.

For example, one of the most currently dated publications is the DOD Directive 1430.35, Defense Civilian Intelligence Personnel System (DCIPS), September 24, 2007.<sup>11</sup> The purpose of this document is to provide overarching guidance for civilian servants performing functions within the intelligence community. Specifically, "The DCIPS shall be consistent with the human resources strategies, policies, programs, and processes established by the Director of National Intelligence, and shall be the civilian personnel system for the Defense Intelligence Components and such other DoD positions, organizations, and components designated by the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence (USD(I)), with the concurrence of the Head of the Component affected."<sup>12</sup> Therefore, research revealed that one of the most current examples of DOD policy impacting civilian servants was codified more than ten years ago. This again

highlights the need for evaluating overarching policy relevance for DOD civilian servants in today's environment.

Additionally, further research revealed that one of the most foundational policy documents on DOD civilian personnel management, DOD Directive 1400.25, the DOD Civilian Personnel Management System, is dated November 25, 1996. This policy document replaced DOD Directive 1400.25, the DOD Civilian Personnel Manual System, January 24, 1978, illustrating a more than eighteen-year gap between revisions.<sup>13</sup> More importantly, in the past forty years, this overarching policy document for DOD civilian personnel has only been revised one time. Unfortunately, this finding is substantive, especially when considering the changes in systems, technology, organizations, leadership, and other supplementary factors that have occurred within the last 40 years.

Though not the goal of this paper, researching foundational documents that inform DOD civilian senior leader talent management strategy uncovered numerous examples of what appeared to be outdated policy and guidance documents. It further uncovered, in some cases, that policy revisions gaps are substantially lengthy. These discoveries are noteworthy since the policy documents significantly shape the civilian personnel environment. Therefore, it is recommended that additional research in the area of civilian personnel policy currency as a follow-on to this paper should occur in order to assess impact on DOD civilian personnel in today's strategic environment.

Regardless of the research results concerning the relevance of policy and guidance to today's talent management environment, DODI 1430.02, Civilian Career Management, continues to shape the landscape for the DSLDP's current state.

Specifically, according to the civilian career management policy for career planning and development, the following foundational tenets apply:

- 3.1. Ensure a steady flow of capable, fully qualified, and trained personnel to fill positions at all levels with requisite competence required for success in accomplishing the DoD mission.
- 3.2. Promote interest in long-term career opportunities and development, consistent with current policy for a flexible and adaptable workforce.
- 3.3. Retain competent civilian employees and reduce turnover by providing opportunities for advancement commensurate with their abilities.
- 3.4. Develop personnel with knowledge in joint matters and an enterprise-wide perspective.
- 3.5. Provide developmental assignments across Components and other Federal and non-Federal agencies for aspiring career leaders to develop requisite competencies.<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, DODI 1430.02, paragraph 5.3., stipulates the importance of coaching and mentoring as integral parts of the civilian career management process.<sup>15</sup>

The five tenets and the importance of coaching and mentoring are key components of informing the current state and developing the envisioned future state.

Outlining current DSLDP guidance by detailing the history behind DSLDP and policy guidance specific to the program is the next step in framing the current state.

Specifically, DODI 1430.16, Growing Civilian Leaders, dated November 19, 2009, provides additional clarity on background information and guidance for the DSLDP.<sup>16</sup>

Similar to other civilian personnel policy documents, DODI 1430.16 is somewhat dated since it was codified over eight years ago. However, DODI 1430.16 addresses the DSLDP's history, purpose, goals, eligibility criteria, and the nomination, selection, and utilization processes which foundationally inform the current state.

The DSLDP was established in 2008 and replaced the DOD Defense Leadership and Management Program (DLAMP).<sup>17</sup> The DSLDP’s purpose is to “provide a competency-based approach to the deliberate development of senior civilian leaders with the enterprise-wide perspective needed to lead organizations and programs and achieve results in the joint, interagency, and multi-national environments.”<sup>18</sup> Figure 1 highlights the DOD Civilian Leader Development Continuum which frames DOD’s leadership competency model and supports the Office of Personnel Management’s (OPM) five core leadership competencies.<sup>19</sup>



Figure 1. DOD Civilian Leader Development Continuum<sup>20</sup>

The goals of the DSLDP are aligned with the career lifecycle management of the Senior Executive Service corps and DSLDP graduates comprise a key feeder group for Senior Executive Service and equivalent positions across the DOD enterprise.<sup>21</sup> The

program is primarily designed for senior civilian servants currently leading highly complex organizations performing at the highest level.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, the DSLDP “promotes a hands-on approach to understanding, experiencing, and resolving issues and challenges facing today’s leaders across the national security arena”.<sup>23</sup> Learning opportunities include:

- (1) Senior-level professional military education at a different DOD Component or at the National Defense University;
- (2) Defense-focused leadership seminars, designed to strengthen enterprise-wide perspective and ensure application of critical leader competencies in the increasingly complex joint environment; and
- (3) Individual development, to fill identified competency gaps and further strengthen the enterprise perspective. This will include an experiential activity to gain enterprise-focused proficiency (e.g., a developmental assignment).<sup>24</sup>

The eligibility criteria affirm that the DSLDP is an open process, through DOD Component nominations routed through the first General Officer (GO) or Senior Executive Service (SES) in the nominee’s chain of command, to permanent, full-time DOD civilian employees who:

- (1) Are experienced leaders at General Schedule (GS) grades 14 or 15 and equivalent grades, as specified in the annual DOD-wide call for nominations. Equivalent grades include those under the National Security Personnel System and other authorized pay plans;
- (2) Have a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university, or have comparable experience and training; and
- (3) Possess a minimum of 1 year of significant experience in supervising or managing people in an official capacity.”<sup>25</sup>

The DSLDP nomination, selection, and utilization processes are important in shaping the program. Prospective nominees must proactively seek inclusion in the nomination process while discussing the process with their immediate supervisor. Each

year, the DOD components manage a competitive board process to identify best qualified candidates.<sup>26</sup> During the nomination submission process, the components include a plan for DSLDP graduate employment across the joint and national security arenas to ensure optimum return on investment.<sup>27</sup> Only nominees possessing the necessary experience, leadership competencies, and ability to prosper at an enterprise level leadership position will be nominated.<sup>28</sup> Component nominees then go through a rigorous DOD screening process to identify the best qualified candidates.<sup>29</sup> Most DSLDP cohort costs are centrally funded and managed for all selected candidates at the DOD level, but individual requirements are the responsibility of each candidate's component.<sup>30</sup> The DSLDP nomination, selection, and utilization processes form the foundation for identifying, selecting, and assigning the leaders of tomorrow.

The DSLDP current state is further codified in the Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service (DCPAS) DSLDP Overview, dated November 2016. The primary vision of the DSLDP is provided to form a topical framework that allows and supports a more detailed analysis. The Vision Statement states:

The Defense Senior Leader Development Program (DSLDP) is the Department of Defense (DOD) premier program to develop senior civilian leaders to excel in the 21st century joint, interagency, and multi-national environment. This challenging and rewarding program supports the government-wide effort to foster interagency cooperation and information sharing by providing opportunities to understand and experience, firsthand, the issues and challenges facing leaders across the DOD and the broader national security arena. Designed to support one of the Department's top transformational priorities, DSLDP is the senior-level component of the overall leader development strategy. The program provides learning opportunities to enable the deliberate development of a diverse cadre of senior leaders with the enterprise-wide perspective and competencies needed to lead organizations, people, and programs and achieve results in the joint, interagency, and multinational environment.<sup>31</sup>

The DSLDP vision statement supports the operational art and design construct as described in the U.S. Army War College strategic direction hierarchy.<sup>32</sup> As such, it is driven by the National Security Strategy, Quadrennial Defense Review, and the National Military Strategy, and provides a general roadmap for the program. This vision is applied at the third strategic level force production factor, “Develop the Force,” which supports the other two force production factors, “Employing the Force” and “Managing the Force” related to identifying and retaining the force.<sup>33</sup>

Correctly developing the force is one of the most significant aspects of the DSLDP at the strategic level. Through DSLDP, DOD has created a force development program open to all qualified candidates that identifies and grows senior leaders from a cadre of GS-14 and GS-15 civilian servants. Ultimately, the DSLDP is a program indicative of the effort by DOD senior leaders to grow the SES pool within DOD as part of its talent management strategy and effectively develop the senior DOD civilian personnel workforce into tomorrow’s leaders.

#### Future State

There are numerous challenges facing today’s senior leaders in the field of talent management. The following three enhancement opportunities are only a focused subset of broader potential solution sets that builds upon current talent management strategies for senior civilian servants. To effectively manage talent and grow the senior civilian servant leaders of tomorrow, there are three opportunities to enhance DOD’s talent management strategy for senior DOD civilian servants at the GS-14 and GS-15 level. The three enhancement opportunities include: 1) embracing career assignment processes that target the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) environment; 2) formalizing senior leader program outplacement assignment strategies;

and 3) aligning assignment strategies with a more robust senior leader mentorship program.

The first opportunity to enhance DOD's talent management strategy is to meet future DOD senior leadership demands by optimizing civilian talent growth opportunities in the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) environment. Current senior leader policy espouses the need for JIIM professionals in a multi-domain environment. Subsequently, aspiring senior leaders should seek JIIM assignments as part of their career development in accordance with the strategic direction hierarchy.<sup>34</sup>

However, based on my past experience in a joint position at the U.S. Special Operations Command from 2000-2002, I felt penalized for taking a JIIM assignment outside of my specific Service and job specialty. I was not met with a positive commentary for the outplacement. Specifically, if a civilian servant spends more than three years away from their core specialty and Service, they risk the perception, especially from within their own peer group, of having gained joint experience, but no longer maintaining recent experience within their core Service and specialty. Therefore, although a JIIM assignment is mainly seen as a positive career choice, the value of JIIM assignments across the respective Services can have mixed perceptions of relevance. This posit underscores the importance of assessing the opportunity to formally codify and integrate JIIM assignments into civilian career paths.

To meet future senior civilian servant demand, today's senior leaders should consider expanding the talent management pool, while increasing its joint diversity by instituting processes that actively manage career JIIM assignments. To ensure a tangible process change, senior leaders must anchor this change in the culture as

prescribed by Kotter in his eight errors and strategies for leading change.<sup>35</sup> The goal must focus on nurturing future talent capabilities in an increasingly complex global environment without actual or perceived penalty to career progression for time away from Service or specialty for an assignment in the JIIM environment. This can only be accomplished through intentional cultural change driven by senior leaders. Specifically, the espoused culture must sync with the enacted culture.<sup>36</sup> This strategic ideal can be accomplished by the savvy leader through embedded mechanisms such as attention, measurement, control, and using reward criteria for senior leader selection. Additionally, the use of formal career path vision statements as a reinforcing mechanism that makes JIIM assignments an integral part of civilian servant senior leader growth strategy would help drive change towards the culture.

An additional opportunity to enhance DOD's talent management strategy is to create outplacement opportunities within DOD senior leader development programs such as the DSLDP for GS-14 and GS-15 civilian servants. Under the current DSLDP selection process, GS-14s and GS-15s are put through a rigorous screening process. This process includes a records review, nomination package approved and signed by the first general officer (GO) in the chain of command, and a central selection board usually chaired by a two-star GO or Senior Executive Service (SES) civilian equivalent.

The central selection board process begins with each branch of Service stratifying civilian servants within their branch at a Service-specific board. Civilian servants are then stratified at a DOD central selection board which selects DSLDP candidates for the Secretary of Defense's approval. For example, in 2017, 29 GS-14

and GS-15 civilian servants were selected for DSLDP from the available pool of 40,000 GS-14s and GS-15s across DOD.<sup>37</sup>

As evidenced by the 2017 program selection numbers, the DSLDP is an elite civilian senior leader development program. This assertion is further validated in the DSLDP guidance. DODI 1430.16, dated 19 November 2009 states that, “DSLDP graduates comprise a key feeder group for Senior Executive Service and equivalent positions across the DOD enterprise.”<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, the DSLDP Overview, dated November 2016 provides a conflicting position as it reads: “DSLDP is not a Senior Executive Service (SES) Candidate Development Program. Program elements are designed to enhance one’s readiness for top leadership positions. While successful completion of the program does not imply eligibility for or a guarantee for promotion, DSLDP graduates are highly competitive for more responsible and challenging positions.”<sup>39</sup> As previously noted, the DSLDP guidance is clearly outdated. The disconnect between the two major policy documents addressing the DSLDP also drives the need to broadly scan the environment and assess all necessary policy revisions as a precursor to refining the program.

Additionally, a discussion during the January 2017 DSLDP Orientation for the 2017 Cohort class yielded no codified outplacement assignment strategy for DSLDP candidates. Instead, most DSLDP candidates were instructed that they would return to their previous assignments upon completion of their assigned senior service school. Therefore, DSLDP candidates seeking to leverage their recently completed Senior Developmental Education (SDE), must evaluate other career outplacement opportunities through active engagement vice following a previously prescribed

leadership development path from corporate leadership which aligns with the needs of DOD. Additionally, DSLDP candidates are highly encouraged to look for and apply for career enhancing positions while attending SDE prior to completion of their in-residence SDE schools.

To emphasize, it is significant that there is no codified employee outplacement strategy for members of an elite group of DOD civilian servants targeted for senior leadership. This is nonsensical, especially since the investment cost alone is estimated at approximately \$100,000 per candidate.<sup>40</sup> Further, each employee receives a robust education in strategic thinking linked to an expectation to leverage their education in a corporate level leadership position upon graduation from SDE. However, the opportunity to leverage SDE knowledge and in-residence experience gained with a cadre of tomorrow's senior leaders, both U.S. and international, is not specifically designed into the outplacement process.

To optimize the DSLDP, DOD senior leaders should target development of a more strategic approach to the outplacement process while identifying key corporate level senior leader positions for those in the DSLDP. Enhancing the outplacement process and identifying key corporate level senior leader positions will be a challenging transformation from the current state to the envisioned future state. Since the Office of Personnel and Management (OPM) is a lead agent for DOD civilian servant policy (e.g., hiring and promotion procedures), DOD must effectively partner with OPM to institute positive and lasting change. Specifically, "OPM works in several broad categories to recruit, retain and honor a world-class workforce for the American people. And, OPM manages Federal job announcement postings at USAJOBS.gov, and sets policy on

government-wide hiring procedures.”<sup>41</sup> OPM also leads in other areas such as developing, testing and implementing new government-wide policies that relate to personnel issues.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, to effect overarching policy change within the DSLDP, it requires robust engagement with and from OPM to address future state options, especially those that involve complex civilian servant hiring and promotion processes.

Current OPM policy impacts the DSLDP post-SDE outplacement assignment process, especially when assessing the impact on the civilian servant hiring and promotion processes. Identifying senior leader positions and matching grades of each DSLDP cohort to assignments as part of a designed outplacement strategy is complex. Outplacement strategies must consider the necessity to flex targeted positions based on civilian service grades of each annual DSLDP cohort and the number of cohorts. Outplacement must also evaluate increasing opportunities for DSLDP senior civilian servants to participate in more JIIM assignments to align with senior leader direction.

For GS-14s in the DSLDP cohort who are exceptionally well-qualified to fill a target GS-15 position, OPM promotion policy still requires competitive promotion. Senior civilian servant promotions are officially vetted through a hiring board for each promotion action. However, one potential opportunity for policy change collaboration with OPM is that this process could be waived for DSLDP candidates who could therefore be selected for promotion under a separate promotion process. This idea must be further developed, but DSLDP candidates are already vetted through a rigorous screening process and approved for inclusion in the program by the Secretary of Defense. Additionally, since all GS-14 and GS-15 civilian servants are potential DSLDP candidates, all are allowed to pursue DSLDP and therefore could also be considered in

a competitive status. Again, partnering with OPM to help assess viable options in the future state is key to enhancing the DSLDP.

To optimally inform this phase of the envisioned future state, it is imperative that the parent organization for DOD's DSLDP, the Defense Human Resource Activity (DHRA), drive the optimum policy revisions to meet program goals. Specifically, DHRA's Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service (DCPAS) directorate should collaborate with OPM when seeking program modifications that impact the hiring and promotion processes. Strategically aligning senior leader outplacement assignments and potential promotions for DSLDP candidates will take time and effort to initiate and sustain. The effort will also require concerted collaboration with OPM. Further, DOD is heavily invested in the DLSDP and the rigorous selection process, so taking this next step is worth consideration.

The DSLDP and its processes have been in place for years, yet it appears DOD may have violated Kotter's eight-step process by declaring victory too early and not attempting to optimize gains which drive even more productive change to enhance the program.<sup>43</sup> To mitigate and maximize talent management gains, DOD must invest additional resources in order to develop a strategy that promotes meaningful outplacement assignments, embedding some candidates within JIIM organizations, and placing the remaining in challenging DOD opportunities so that DOD gets an appropriate return on its human resource investment.

The third opportunity to enhance DOD's talent management strategy is to create a more robust senior leader mentorship and coaching program for civilian servants in the DSLDP. The challenge, as identified in a 2012 U.S. Army War College faculty paper

on Mintzberg's Framework pertaining to a leader's role as resource allocator: "Leaders must choose . . . which employees to mentor and which to leave to others."<sup>44</sup> For candidates who become part of the DSLDP cohort upon program selection, senior leaders across DOD made a conscious decision to invest in each cohort and paired them with a volunteer senior leader mentor, identified as the cohort's executive advisor. DSLDP cohorts are also assigned as coaches as a part of the program.

The lack of a continuing mentorship and coaching relationship upon program completion limits the greater value obtained by extending these relationships. Specifically, upon completion of the DSLDP program, which equates to a two-year investment, the continued relationship between the DSLDP graduated cohort and their respective DSLDP mentor and coach is not guaranteed. Additionally, continuing the relationship is further complicated since the executive advisor is a short-term volunteer, normally a DOD senior leader professional, but not necessarily in the DSLDP cohort's organization or functional area. Matching the cohort to a mentor in their respective organization or functional career program would help mitigate this challenge

For example, a 2017 DSLDP cohort was assigned an executive advisor in Logistics, but has been serving in a Personnel functional career program for fifteen years. Therefore, unless both parties decide to continue the relationship, especially the executive advisor, the cohort member may be forced to seek a new mentor upon program completion. This situation is challenging, but can be somewhat mitigated by matching DSLDP cohort members with senior leader mentors within their career program functional instead of seeking senior leader mentor volunteers. The intent would be to consistently maximize senior leader mentorship opportunities with future senior

leaders. This could be accomplished by having both parties commit to a long-term mentorship relationship during the DSLDP and continue the relationship after the DSLDP cohort has graduated.

Additionally, formalizing the relationship into a more lasting arrangement codifies DOD's policy of embracing the mentorship of its employees. Further, formalizing the relationship into a long-term relationship helps codify the obligation for senior leaders of today to grow the senior leaders of tomorrow. For example, one approach to this relationship could be more of a "mentor for life" program to ensure tomorrow's leaders continue to have a senior leader mentor with whom to seek feedback at the higher level.

This approach allows the senior leaders of today to mentor the senior leaders of tomorrow in a more formal arrangement. Also, establishing a prescribed meeting framework for mentor and mentee sessions would help the relationship prosper by normalizing the frequency of interaction. This approach would also allow the increased ability by both mentor and mentee to regularly schedule sessions in order to help ensure a balanced scheduling approach. Seeking a long-term mentorship relationship has merit, but is a complex posit requiring additional evaluation to ascertain feasibility.

Also significant is the fact that the coach is a contracted employee who is a professional coach, but assigned only during the cohort's tenure in the DSLDP. Where executive advisors focus mainly on the DSLDP cohort member's career, DSLDP coaches rely on a more informal approach to be effective, and cohort members can lean on them in any area (i.e., life, career, family). This arrangement is highly desired and productive for a cohort member. Therefore, maintaining a relationship with a coach after

the program is completed continues to enhance the effectiveness of one of tomorrow's senior leaders.

One example of how the coach selection process impacted a cohort occurred in early 2018. After the entire 2017 DSLDP Cohort was originally assigned a coach, there was a contract issue in mid-program. As a result, after one year of establishing a relationship with a coach, each candidate had to establish a new relationship with a new coach. Incidents like this can undermine the DSLDP, as re-establishing and re-nurturing relationships can cause additional angst and churn on both sides. This example is highlighted to underscore the importance of ensuring all DSLDP processes are optimized since all have an impact on current and future cohort members. Additionally, the importance of having a coach in the senior leader development process cannot be overstated.

### Conclusion

DOD strategic leaders, as stewards of the military profession, must deliberately grow the next generation of civilian senior leaders. As stated in a web article on Google's success, trust is the foundation of organizational success.<sup>45</sup> Embracing more frequent and deliberate mentorship sessions can help grow trust between the senior leader mentor and the DSLDP mentee and optimize talent growth for tomorrow's civilian senior leaders by increasing frequency for a highly effective mechanism of communication.

Efforts applied in any of these three DSLDP enhancement areas will create a better DOD talent pool of GS-14 and GS-15 civilian servants. Gaining momentum across these areas are key to the DOD's premier civilian senior leader development program's success by: 1) embracing career assignment processes that target the joint,

interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) environment; 2) formalizing senior leader program outplacement assignment strategies; and, 3) aligning these assignment strategies with a more robust senior leader mentorship program.

Sustaining program excellence for the DSLDP can be a constant challenge to update policy and enhance processes that will help achieve program goals and positively shape the program. Exploring these three opportunities will likely lead to realizing greater DOD senior leader development program potentials. Momentum in these opportunities will help grow the civilian senior leader talent pool and will also create an environment that nurtures development and maximizes performance.<sup>46</sup>

Ultimately, these three opportunities will help current DOD senior leaders to maximize DOD's return on investment by consciously investing now in the civilian senior leaders of tomorrow.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> William A. Guillory, PhD, “The Age of Human Potential—Talent Management,” <http://www.innovint.com/downloads/talent-management-part-2.pdf> (accessed December 13, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> J.P. Medved, “What is Talent Management and How is it Different from HR?” *Capterra Talent Management Blog*, blog entry posted June 25, 2015, <https://blog.capterra.com/what-is-talent-management-and-how-is-it-different-from-hr/> (accessed October 11, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Aon Hewitt Corporate Paper, *Building the Right High Potential Pool: How Organizations Define, Assess, and Calibrate Their Critical Talent*, (Lincolnshire, IL: Aon Hewitt, January 2013), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Douglas Waters, *A Framework and Approach for Understanding Strategic Thinking and Developing Strategic Thinkers*, Faculty Paper (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, May 2017), 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Phillip Brown, Hugh Lauder and David Ashton, “The War for Talent,” *The Global Auction: The Broken Promises of Education, Jobs, and Incomes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), Ch 6, 1.

<sup>8</sup> “Global Talent Risk—Seven Responses,” *World Economic Forum*, (Switzerland: World Economic Forum, 2011), 35.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Department of Defense, *Civilian Career Management*, DOD Instruction 1430.02 (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2006), 2, <http://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/143002p.pdf> (accessed December 15, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> Department of Defense, *DOD Issuances*, (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2017), <http://www.esd.whs.mil/Directives/issuances/DODd/> (accessed December 15, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Department of Defense, *Defense Civilian Intelligence Personnel System*, DOD Directive 1400.35 (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2007), 2, <http://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodd/140035p.pdf> (accessed December 15, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Department of Defense, *DOD Civilian Personnel Management System*, DOD Directive 1400.25 (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 1996), 1, <http://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodd/140025p.pdf> (accessed December 15, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> Department of Defense, *Civilian Career Management*, 2.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>16</sup> Department of Defense, *Growing Civilian Leaders*, DOD Instruction 1430.16 (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2009), <http://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/143016p.pdf> (accessed December 15, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>20</sup> Department of Defense, Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service, *Defense Senior Leader Development Program (DSLDP) Overview*, (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2016), <https://www.cpmc.osd.mil/Content/Documents/LDP/DSLDPOverview.pdf>, 2 (accessed December 15, 2017).

<sup>21</sup> Department of Defense, *Growing Civilian Leaders*, 11.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service, *Defense Senior Leader Development*, 2.

<sup>32</sup> "Theater Strategy and Campaigning Course, Lesson Two," Strategic Direction instructor slides with notes, slide 4.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996).

<sup>36</sup> Stephen J. Gerras, Leonard Wong, and Charles D. Allen, *Organizational Culture: Applying a Hybrid Model to the U.S. Army*, Research Paper (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, November 2008).

<sup>37</sup> “Defense Senior Leader Development Program Orientation,” Washington, DC, January 25, 2017.

<sup>38</sup> Department of Defense, *Growing Civilian Leaders*, 11.

<sup>39</sup> Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service, *Defense Senior Leader Development*, 8.

<sup>40</sup> “Defense Senior Leader Development Program Orientation,” Washington, DC, January 25, 2017.

<sup>41</sup> Office of Personnel Management, “About Us,” <https://www.opm.gov/about-us/> (accessed October 17, 2017).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> John P. Kotter, *Leading Change*, 12.

<sup>44</sup> Craig Bullis, Andrew Hill, and Lou Yuengert, *The Roles of a Strategic Leader: Mintzberg’s Framework*, Faculty Paper (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, July 2012), 4.

<sup>45</sup> Lisa Jackson, “The Real Secret of Google’s Corporate Culture,” July 23, 2013, at: <https://www.corporateculturepros.com/the-real-secret-of-googles-corporate-culture/> (accessed January 19, 2018).

<sup>46</sup> Guillory, “The Age of Human Potential—Talent Management.”