AFRL
THE AIR FORCE RESEARCH LABORATORY
LEAD | DISCOVER | DEVELOP | DELIVER

HUMAN CAPITAL STRATEGY

2021-2030

WE ARE ONE AFRL

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OUR WORKFORCE IS OUR ADVANTAGE.

We are over 6,000 people strong, each tirelessly contributing to our collective mission in the Air Force Research Laboratory to lead, discover, develop, and deliver science, technology, and innovation for our Airmen and Guardians.

We do this in an environment of constant technological, societal, and geopolitical change, and, at the same time, we are facing increased competition for top talent. As outlined in the Department of the Air Force's Science and Technology 2030 Strategy, the pace of change and the complexity of national defense challenges will continue to increase, and our workforce is foundational to ensuring our technological advantage.

The AFRL 2021-2030 Human Capital Strategy addresses how we will proactively support our workforce as we meet these challenges head on. Through this Strategy, we will inject "future of work" innovation and leading practices, embrace Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, prepare a digital workforce, and integrate across our human capital lifecycle.

This Strategy offers a vision for our workforce: today, in 2030, and beyond. It is powered by data-informed insights and enables a means to prioritize, connect, and resource AFRL's human capital initiatives. The five strategic goals described in this document provide AFRL with enduring human capital direction. This Strategy is accompanied by a robust, annual Human Capital Action Plan that will flexibly take into account mission and enterprise priority changes and updates.

The AFRL 2021-2030 Human Capital Strategy is a commitment to our workforce. Amidst the changes and strategic initiatives ahead, we remain driven by our mission, united in purpose, and passionate about science, technology, and innovation.

Our people are and will continue to be our strategic advantage.

Maj. Gen. Heather Pringle
Commander

Mr. Timothy Sakulich
Executive Director

Dr. Timothy Bunning
Chief Technology Officer

Ms. Julia Parakkat
Chief Human Capital Strategist

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A NEW APPROACH TO HUMAN CAPITAL

AFRL is employing a new human capital **lifecycle systems model** to integrate AF K-12 STEM Outreach; Enterprise Internship Pipeline; Human Resources and Personnel Management; Learning and Development; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI); and Analytics and Strategic Foresight.

This approach uses **data to inform** AFRL on the priorities that must be addressed to support our people now and into the future through descriptive and predictive data analytics. It creates a more cohesive workforce experience and scales to support high performing teams and organizational performance.

This approach embraces and **institutionalizes innovation** in human capital practices and policies. By assessing trends and influences on the talent market and the future of work, AFRL can prepare for the future today by continuously scanning for, applying, and pioneering leading human capital practices for the maximum benefit of all our people.

A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO HUMAN CAPITAL

AFRL's approach to human capital creates a more cohesive workforce experience and scales to support high performing teams and organizational performance.

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WE ARE ONE AFRL

HUMAN CAPITAL VISION

World-class workforce with diverse talent delivering S&T advantages to our Airmen and Guardians

Defending our nation is our calling; delivering science, technology, and innovation is our passion. At AFRL, we aspire to be a world-class, diverse, and inclusive workforce, solving the USSF's and USAF's most challenging S&T problems and innovating to shape the future of national security. Our talent is our competitive advantage, and although the future will continuously present complex challenges, we will unite to tackle them as they arise. Together we will thrive, and together we will defend our nation.

WHO WE ARE

We are One AFRL team. Together, we lead, discover, develop, and deliver cutting-edge science and innovative technology to Warfighters. We are:

Warfighter Focused: Intentionally understanding, anticipating, and meeting AFRL customer needs.

United in Purpose: Individually using a One AFRL mindset when making decisions; collectively, powering one Lab supporting two Services.

Partners: Collaborating across AFRL, DoD, government, industry, academia, and the global S&T and operational ecosystem to develop leap-ahead capabilities.

Risk-Takers: Applying professional mastery to take risks and encourage new ideas, where both success and failure are rewarded when they lead to learning and mission impact.

Inclusive: Seeking, understanding, valuing, and being inclusive of diverse perspectives by creating an environment of psychological safety and treating each other with dignity, trust, and respect.

Adaptable: Continuously learning and rapidly adjusting to both anticipated and unforeseen circumstances with creativity. Ready for a digital future.

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A WORKFORCE FOR THE FUTURE

In AFRL's Future of Work analysis, conducted in support of the implementation of the Department of the Air Force's S&T 2030 Strategy, we learned:

- S&T talent will continue to be in short supply as competition for talent increases

- R&D will continue to be more globally connected and democratized

- Multi-disciplinary teams will be required to address complex problems

- Our ability to react to a changing adversary will also be measured by having an agile and flexible workforce that quickly adapts to changes

- The half-life of knowledge is shrinking, requiring a workforce that continuously learns

- Workforce expectations for innovative and integrated human capital practices and processes are increasing

It is clear; AFRL needs to be purposeful in how it enables its current workforce and attracts its future workforce amidst uncertainty. One thing is certain: AFRL is powered by its world-class talent who innovate on behalf of our Airmen and Guardians.

FUTURE OF WORK INSIGHTS

The S&T talent market is more competitive than in 2021.

Research is global, connected, and more democratized.

Multi-disciplinary approaches are used to solve complex problems.

Organizations quickly reconfigure and mobilize capabilities to adapt to a rapidly changing environment.

The half-life of knowledge is short, so learning must be continuous over the course of a worker's career.

Workforce expectations are changing due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other societal and technological influences.

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5 ENDURING STRATEGIC GOALS

This Human Capital Strategy features five enduring Strategic Goals, taking us from 2021-2030. Supporting each goal are Objectives to be accomplished within two-to-four years. Each Objective has supporting actions, captured in the annual Human Capital Action Plan, which will be accomplished within one-to-two years.

GOAL 1
STRATEGICALLY ACCESS, ATTRACT, ACQUIRE, AND RETAIN TOP TALENT
Innovate and redefine how AFRL accesses, attracts, acquires, and retains top talent, incorporating leading practices. Be an employer of choice.

GOAL 2
DEVELOP OUR CURRENT AND FUTURE WORKFORCE TO THRIVE AMIDST CHANGE
Create an environment that allows individuals and multi-disciplinary teams to continuously learn, upskill, and reskill to meet mission needs.

GOAL 3
ENHANCE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION
Create and nurture a diverse and inclusive environment, where opportunities are equitable.

GOAL 4
ACHIEVE ORGANIZATIONAL FLEXIBILITY
Enable agile and innovative workforce practices to meet rapidly changing mission needs.

GOAL 5
TRANSFORM THE HUMAN CAPITAL FUNCTION INTO A STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE
Institutionalize an integrated, strategic human capital function that supports enterprise directions using data-driven insights and foresight.

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TALENT

STRATEGICALLY ACCESS, ATTRACT, ACQUIRE, AND RETAIN TOP TALENT

Innovate and redefine how AFRL accesses, attracts, acquires, and retains top talent. Be an employer of choice.

The competition for talent is fierce. AFRL should strive to be an employer of choice, and the prospective workforce should understand the value of working at AFRL. Future generations may not stay at AFRL for their entire career, and that is okay. We will need multiple methods to access, attract, acquire, and retain talent. AFRL will need to build and maintain relationships with its current and future workforce beyond their employment tenure. We must be able to access the skills that we need and engage our current workforce both with the quality of our opportunities and the value of our mission.

OBJECTIVES

1.1 Improve AFRL employer brand.

1.2 Apply innovative, emerging, and proven commercial and government practices for efficiently accessing, attracting, acquiring, and retaining top talent.

1.3 Identify new sources of talent, as required, to support new AFRL mission areas and competencies (e.g., high priority technology areas, digital science and technology, and digital tools).

1.4 Improve the intern recruiting and work experience, from introduction to hands-on experience to offboarding.

1.5 Understand and address workforce needs and expectations to improve the workforce experience and retention of critical skills.

1.6 Identify enterprise-wide talent access, attraction, acquisition, and retention needs, and inform initiatives with data-driven insights.

AREAS TO MEASURE

Average time to fill vacant positions

Use of hiring and retention incentives and flexibilities

Turnover rate and reasons

Workforce experience index score

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DEVELOPMENT

DEVELOP OUR CURRENT AND FUTURE WORKFORCE TO THRIVE AMIDST CHANGE

Create an environment that allows individuals and multi-disciplinary teams to continuously learn, upskill, and reskill to meet mission needs.

New global threats will arise and shift, and new technologies will constantly redefine the baseline for innovation. To remain relevant and to thrive amongst these impending changes, we must equip our workforce to tackle the challenges of a rapidly changing and increasingly digital future. The AFRL workforce must continuously learn relevant skills that allow us to be a top science and technology capability for our Guardians and Airmen.

OBJECTIVES

2.1 Assess current and forecast future workforce learning needs and identify gaps with current state (e.g., technical, leadership, digital skills).

2.2 Develop the workforce for AFRL's digital transformation based on new tools, skills, and competency requirements.

2.3 Implement a holistic, research-based national Air Force K-12 STEM infrastructure for student engagement and development.

2.4 Establish expectations for and enable a culture of lifelong learning.

2.5 Define and implement an enterprise approach to talent development (e.g., experiential learning, formal learning, development planning) that complements and leverages programs at the directorate level.

2.6 Develop the current and next generation of leaders.

2.7 Inform workforce development needs and initiatives with data-driven insights.

AREAS TO MEASURE

Relevant formal education and alternative credential methods for digital, functional, and technical skills

Participation in professional development activities and continuous learning

Students (K12 through postdoc) engaged in outreach programs

AFRL Mentoring Program participation and feedback

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DEI

ENHANCE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Create and nurture a diverse and inclusive environment, where opportunities are equitable.

With constant challenges emerging globally, AFRL requires innovative and diverse thinking. AFRL must create a culture of inclusion and equity. Individuals need to be empowered to bring their perspectives forward, and opportunities for development and advancement should be equitable. Diversity, equity, and inclusion must become part of the foundation of AFRL's strategic decision-making process.

OBJECTIVES

3.1 Communicate DEI expectations for the workforce to include visible sponsorship and the ability for the workforce to provide ongoing feedback.

3.2 Ensure the workforce receives training and has the support necessary to understand and exhibit DEI behaviors to cultivate a supportive, welcoming, and inclusive work environment.

3.3 Develop and implement a data-driven approach to access, attract, and acquire diverse talent at AFRL.

3.4 Inform DEI areas of concern, strategies, and actions with data-driven insights.

AREAS TO MEASURE

Individual, team, and leadership diversity and inclusion statistics

Workforce perception of DEI climate and impact

Organizational climate assessments

Awards, promotions, and pay trends

Recruit, hire, and retain demographic trends

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FLEXIBILITY

ACHIEVE ORGANIZATIONAL FLEXIBILITY

Enable agile and innovative workforce practices to meet rapidly changing mission needs.

In order to deliver a transformational strategic capability, as directed by the Department of the Air Force's S&T 2030 Strategy, AFRL must have the right resources on the right team at the right time. That requires flexibility, the ability to deploy and move key talent and skills across projects and across the enterprise, and a mature understanding of the workforce. It means that in addition to organic AFRL talent, we must incorporate and leverage our partners, innovative staffing models, and other unique talent. We must assess and implement changes that enable flexibility and agility among our workforce, within our organization, and in how we conduct our work.

OBJECTIVES

4.1 Institutionalize a change management capability to accelerate the adoption and implementation of strategic enterprise initiatives.

4.2 Expand access to talent and enrich broadening and immersion opportunities for AFRL's workforce by leveraging partners (e.g., defense industrial base, academia, reserves, other DoD, international allies).

4.3 Identify, tailor, and apply innovative employment models, talent sharing models, and new definitions of retention.

4.4 Inform organizational flexibility needs and initiatives with data-driven insights.

AREAS TO MEASURE

Participation in and average time to fully staff cross-directorate project teams

Application of non-traditional talent models

Use and impact of flexible work options

Participation in talent sharing rotations

Participation in partner immersion opportunities

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ADVANTAGE

TRANSFORM THE HUMAN CAPITAL FUNCTION INTO A STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE

Institutionalize an integrated, strategic human capital function that supports enterprise directions using data-driven insights and foresight.

Our people must be at the center of every strategic decision. While the number of current human capital efforts are a clear statement on the collective view of their importance, we can have more impact working together. We must share the best while providing support at the enterprise-level. This new approach to human capital is foundational, collaborative, integrated, and data-driven.

OBJECTIVES

5.1 Communicate, implement, and evolve the AFRL Human Capital Strategy to remain aligned with mission changes, enterprise directions, priorities, and foresight-driven insights on the talent market.

5.2 Institutionalize the lifecycle systems approach to human capital.

5.3 Improve policies across the human capital lifecycle.

5.4 Support enterprise-wide talent planning (e.g., strategic workforce planning, hire-train-subcontract guidelines) to align to the Corporate Investment Strategy priorities and new mission or competency areas (e.g., digital science and technology, digital tools, cross-domain technologies).

5.5 Develop a data-driven, evidence-based approach (to include descriptive and predictive analytics) to inform human capital decision-making and drive systemic changes needed across the enterprise.

AREAS TO MEASURE

Human capital maturity model assessment

Annual human capital actions started and completed

Human capital data capability

Stakeholder satisfaction feedback

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AFRL IN 2030
OUR ENVISIONED FUTURE

	AFRL TODAY	AFRL IN 2030
STRATEGICALLY ACCESS, ATTRACT, ACQUIRE, AND RETAIN TOP TALENT	Candidates have to know to look for, or already have relationships with AFRL. Workforce experience factors are addressed episodically. Traditional lifelong career is standard.	AFRL is an in-demand place of employment - known for its cutting-edge work and sought after by top junior and experienced talent. Workforce experience is assessed and addressed continuously from recruiting to graduation as an AFRL alumni. Multiple employment models are used to include both lifelong careers and shorter durations of employment.
DEVELOP OUR CURRENT AND FUTURE WORKFORCE TO THRIVE AMIDST CHANGE	Many learning and development opportunities are available, but development expectations are limited. Career pathing options are rigid.	AFRL is known for investing in individual development. Individuals are driven to continuously learn and upskill. Technical and functional experts know they will be supported to be their best and can make a real impact at AFRL. The workforce is prepared for a digital future.
ENHANCE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION	DEI efforts are discussed through working groups and the DEI Council. Sensing sessions inform the majority of initiatives.	Every person at AFRL feels valued and included. DEI behaviors are exhibited by all. Opportunities are transparent and equitable. AFRL is a leader in harnessing the power of diverse thought.
ACHIEVE ORGANIZATIONAL FLEXIBILITY	Sharing talent comes with challenges, often addressed on a case-by-case basis. Opportunities to leverage talent through partners is ad hoc.	Individuals easily move from project to project to apply the right talent where and when needed. AFRL has easy access to innovative talent solutions and partners.
TRANSFORM THE HUMAN CAPITAL FUNCTION INTO A STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE	Multiple offices support various aspects of the human capital lifecycle. Human capital data has limited access and limited analytics.	The human capital approach is integrated across AFRL and infused with innovative best practices. Data informs AFRL's human capital decisions, priorities, and understanding of needs; data-driven insights inform leaders' actions to take care of their teams.

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To share your thoughts or for more
information, please reach out to

afrl.humancapital@us.af.mil

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OUR HUMAN CAPITAL VISION

World-class workforce with diverse talent delivering S&T advantages to our Airmen and Guardians

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5 STRATEGIC GOALS

STRATEGICALLY ACCESS, ATTRACT, ACQUIRE, AND RETAIN TOP TALENT

DEVELOP OUR CURRENT AND FUTURE WORKFORCE TO THRIVE AMIDST CHANGE

TRANSFORM THE HUMAN CAPITAL FUNCTION INTO A STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE

ENHANCE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

ACHIEVE ORGANIZATIONAL FLEXIBILITY

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AREAS TO MEASURE SUMMARY*

STRATEGICALLY ACCESS, ATTRACT, ACQUIRE, AND RETAIN TOP TALENT

| Average time to fill vacant positions | Use of hiring and retention incentives and flexibilities | Turnover rate and reasons | Workforce experience index score |

DEVELOP OUR CURRENT AND FUTURE WORKFORCE TO THRIVE AMIDST CHANGE

| Relevant formal education and alternative credential methods for digital, functional, and technical skills | Participation in professional development activities and continuous learning | Students (K12 through postdoc) engaged in outreach programs | AFRL Mentoring Program participation and feedback |

ENHANCE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

| Individual, team, and leadership diversity and inclusion statistics | Workforce perception of DEI climate and impact | Organizational climate scores | Awards, promotions, and pay trends | Recruit, hire, and retain demographic trends |

ACHIEVE ORGANIZATIONAL FLEXIBILITY

| Participation in and average time to fully staff cross-directorate project teams | Application of non-traditional talent models | Use and impact of flexible work options | Participation in talent sharing rotations | Participation in partner immersion opportunities |

TRANSFORM THE HUMAN CAPITAL FUNCTION INTO A STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE

| Human capital maturity model assessment | Annual human capital actions started and completed | Human capital data capability | Stakeholder satisfaction feedback |

* These areas of measurement are representative and not reflective of all areas being measured. Specific metrics are defined for each objective and will be tracked based on AFRL's current data capture and analysis capabilities. A matured data capability is part of the HC strategy and may result in new or revised metrics.

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