USAF Competency-based Learning

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A competency is an underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criterion-referenced effective and/or superior performance in a job or situation.

1. Motives: The things a person consistently thinks about or wants that cause action. Motives drive, direct and select behavior toward certain actions or goals and away from others.

2. Traits: Physical characteristics and consistent responses to situations or information:

3. Self-Concept: A person’s attitudes, values or self-image

4. Knowledge: Information a person has in specific content areas

5. Skill: The ability to perform a certain physical or mental task

Spencer and Spencer, Competence at Work: Models for Superior Performance, Wiley, 1993
The Competency Pyramid

Behaviors

Knowledge

Personal Characteristics

Skills

Aptitude

Traits

Motives

Self-Concept

Competency-Based Learning (CBL)

• CBL is an outcomes-based approach focused on competencies that ultimately results in a form of credentialing, such as certification or badging

• Air Force adopted CBL over a decade ago...
  - Strengths:
    - Created an Institutional Competency List
    - Authored a Manual for inculcation of CBL
  - Weaknesses:
    - Failed to validate competencies – the causal relationship between mastery and excellence
    - Failed to integrate competencies across range of learning
“It is imperative that we develop a holistic strategy for attracting, recruiting, developing, and retaining the right Total Force Airmen that meet the needs of the Air Force in a cost effective way. . . .”

USAF Human Capital Annex
The Journey

• **New institutional competency model** – common to all Airmen
  ▪ Validation – Criterion Sampling
  ▪ Coordination

• **Occupational competency models** – specific to career field/job

• **Evaluative mechanisms**

• **Credentialing (tracking) mechanism**
AF Learning Services Ecosystem
Summary

• Capturing what Airmen know and can do – competencies!
• Expanding opportunities for learning / development
• Driving ...
  • Human-capital decision-making
  • Increased support for lifelong learning
  • Granular understanding of force readiness
  • Recognition of learning achievements for transfer later