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**MARINE CORPS OPERATIONAL CONTRACTING
SUPPORT (OCS, 3044 MOS): AN ANALYSIS OF
THE MARINE ENLISTED OCS CAREER MODEL
AND CAREER PATH DEVELOPMENT**

Thompson, Bryan A.; Lopez, Cesar A.; Ledlie, Kyle R.

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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**MARINE CORPS OPERATIONAL CONTRACTING SUPPORT
(OCS, 3044 MOS): AN ANALYSIS OF THE MARINE
ENLISTED OCS CAREER MODEL AND CAREER PATH
DEVELOPMENT**

by

Kyle R. Ledlie, Cesar A. Lopez, and Bryan A. Thompson

September 2018

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**MARINE CORPS OPERATIONAL CONTRACTING SUPPORT (OCS, 3044
MOS): AN ANALYSIS OF THE MARINE ENLISTED OCS CAREER MODEL
AND CAREER PATH DEVELOPMENT**

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ABSTRACT

This project examines the current career model and career path development for the Marine Corps (MC) enlisted Operational Contracting Support (OCS) 3044 Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)—a low density yet critical capability and force multiplier for the agency. With increasing reliance on contracts to support the MC’s operational mission, it is imperative that OCS Marines are highly competent, confident, and efficient in their contracting duties. To ensure this is achieved, data collected via survey indicate that the MC Installation and Logistics, Logistics and Planning section (I&L LPC-4) must make improvements to the current 3044 career development model, which was the principle objective of this research. These improvements are outlined in the recommendations.

To support necessary improvements in the 3044 career development, this project completed a thorough benchmark of the current MC, Air Force (AF), and Army enlisted contracting career models, an analysis of the MC OCS mission, personnel readiness, and competency requirements to sustain the mission, and analysis of survey responses from current OCS Marines. After identifying the critical training gaps within the current MC career model and analyzing best practices from both the AF and Army, four recommendations are provided to improve the training, competency standards, and career progression of the enlisted OCS community.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AF	Air Force
APDPP	Acquisition Professional Developmental Planning Program
AT&L	Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics
CCM	Contracting Competency Model
CCO	Chief of the Contracting Office
CDC	Career Development Course
CFTP	Career Field Education Training Plan
CONUS	Continental United States
DAU	Defense Acquisition University
DAWIA	Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act
DoD	Department of Defense
DoDI	Department of Defense instruction
DON	Department of the Navy
ECP	Expeditionary Contracting Platoon
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulation
GCPC	Government-wide Commercial Purchase Card
HQMC	Headquarters Marine Corps
I&L	Installations and Logistics
IDP	Individual Development Plan
KO	Contracting Officer
LPC	Logistics Policy and Capabilities Branch
MARADMIN	Marine Administration Messages
SYSCOM	Marine Corps Systems Command
MARFOR	Marine Corps Forces
MARSOC	Marine Forces Special Operations Command
MCCA	Marine Contracting Course Advance
MCCB	Marine Contracting Course Basic
MCCI	Marine Contracting Course Intermediate
MCI	Marine Corps Installations

MCO	Marine Corps Order
MCRP	Marine Corps Reference Publication
MDAP	Major Defense Acquisition Program
MEF	Marine Expeditionary Force
MLG	Marine Logistics Group
MOS	Military Occupational Specialties
NPS	Naval Postgraduate School
OCOC	Operational Contracting Oversight Cell
OCONUS	Outside Continental United States
OCS	Operational Contract Support
OJT	On-the-Job Training
OPFOR	Operating Force
PMOS	Primary Military Occupational Specialty
PR	Purchase Request
RCO	Regional Contracting Office
SABRS	Standard Accounting, Budgeting, and Reporting System
SF	Standard form
SPS	Standard Procurement System
T&R	Training and readiness
T/O	Table of Organization
TIPS	Three Integrated Pillars of Success
USAASC	United States Army Acquisition Support Center
USMC	United States Marine Corps

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I. INTRODUCTION

Marine Corps Order (MCO) 4200.34 describes the mission of the Marine Operational Contract Support Force (OCS) as follows: “To support the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTAF), Supporting Establishment (SE), Special Operations Forces, and Joint and Supported Coalition Forces by planning and obtaining supplies and services from non-organized sources through associated contract support integration, contracting support and contractor management functions” (2016, p. 1–1). The Department of Defense (DoD), is by far the single largest contracting agency in the federal government (DiNapoli, 2017). In Fiscal Year (FY) 2015, the DoD obligated \$273.5 billion on contracted goods and services, including those supporting contingency operations (DiNapoli, 2017). In order to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse it is imperative the workforce managing these contracts are professional, ethical, and competent.

The Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA), first introduced in 1990 and enacted by Public Law 101–510, “as a means of improving and professionalizing the acquisition workforce” (Garcia, Keyner, Robillard, & VanMullekom, 1997). This Act required the DoD to establish uniform standards for various levels of “education, training and experience” (Garcia et al., 1997, p. 1), and to provide a means of certification for different levels of competence in the military and civilian acquisition workforce. These requirements laid the foundation for each branch to adjust their training requirements based on current and future missions.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan showed an increase in the ratio of contractors to military personnel. Dunigan et al. (2017) explain that: “as of July 2016, there were 42,694 contractors working in DoD contracts while the number of U.S. troops in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility was 13,400” (p. xi). Following the Gansler Commission Report in 2008, and the realization that billions of dollars were wasted due to lack of proper management, the DoD ordered the Secretary of the Army to revamp its acquisition structure, process, education, career path, and hierarchical leadership. The findings of the Gansler report had an effect on the acquisition workforce for all military branches.

Despite the increase in demand for contracting professionals, there has not been an increase in manpower and competency of their workforce (Dunigan et al., 2017); while in its bi-annual High-Risk Report, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) identified additional challenges facing the DoD today within three segments of contract management, with the top challenge being its acquisition workforce (DiNapoli, 2017).

For the past 20 years, the Marine Corps (MC) has been experimenting with different training and career paths for its contracting force. With trial and error, it is not yet clear whether this approach has been successful. After a conversation with Master Gunnery Sergeant Bryan Boyd, Occupational Field Sponsor for the 3044 Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) in the MC (personal communication 2018), he indicated that part of the high attrition rate of the 3044 Marines is due to the lack of standardization of the career path and few opportunities for advancement. When comparing the acquisition career paths of other branches with the Marine Corps', the MC is at a disadvantage. This disadvantage comes in the form of manpower capacity, professional development structure, and career opportunities (B. E. Boyd, personal communication, April 24, 2018). This research will explore areas of sustainment, identify areas of improvement, and formulate recommendations that will seek to enhance the current enlisted MC Operational Contract Support (OCS) career roadmap.

A. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research is to assess the current career path of the Marine Corps Operational Contracting force by identifying gaps in training, current trends, and areas for improvement. Additionally, this research will study the career paths for contracting personnel for the Air Force (AF) and the Army in order to identify good practices and lessons learned while taking into account the difference in missions from each branch's contracting force. After analysis, this research will make recommendations for corrective actions, and will formulate an initial plan for execution of these recommendations. The focus areas of interest are training and career path in order to enhance the ability of the MC OCS force to execute its mission efficiently.

B. SCOPE

The scope of this research is limited to the analysis of current policies and procedures of the career development of a typical OCS Specialist Marine, MOS 3044. This research utilized the current career development plans for similar MOS in the MC, the AF and the Army. Additionally, this research utilized Professor E. Cory Yoder's Three Integrated Pillars of Success (TIPS) Model, as identified in Phase Zero Contracting Operations (Yoder, Long, & Nix, 2012). The utilization of these the three pillars model (personnel, platforms, and protocol) allowed this research to focus directly on the gaps in the Marine OCS workforce, analyze the current career path, and to formulate actionable recommendations.

The personnel pillar allowed this research to assess not just the adequacy of the current manpower force in the MC OCS community, but also the quality and assignment of its current manpower capability while determining impact on current mission readiness. This analysis focused on the current assignment for entry level 3044, their career paths, opportunities for advancement, and development. The protocol pillar provided a picture of the current policies and procedures establishing the selection, promotion, and assignment of current 3044, and their employment as part of the MAGTF. The protocol pillar also includes recommendations for appropriate career progression, enlisted career roadmap, and advancement opportunities. Lastly, the platform pillar focused on systems, training requirements, current infrastructure, and the expected proficiency and certification requirement at specific ranks. This analysis provided data to formulate a recommendation of how 3044 Marines can be trained and guided more effectively and how career certifications should be allocated.

C. METHODOLOGY

The research used a qualitative research strategy to meet the objective of the study. Initially, we conducted a thorough literature review of pertinent documents to include acquisition workforce studies, GAO reports, current policies and procedures, and the recently created Marine Corps Order on Operational Contracting Support MCO 4200.34

(2016). This MCO was used to clarify the current official description of the MC mission, the 3044 career path, and the expected progression of its workforce.

Interviews and literature analyses were conducted with senior AF and Army representatives in order to learn about their current methodologies, training strategies, and the way they employ their contracting active duty personnel. Questions included; “What are the biggest challenges currently facing your OCS community? And, how is your agency planning to adequately resolve these challenges? These interviews provided information on the current basis of their doctrine and the future of their contracting workforce. The findings of these interviews and literature analysis were used as a benchmark from which to compare the MC model and extrapolate data that will aid in the creation of a career development model recommendation for the MC OCS community.

The research also relied on the data analysis of a survey that included multiple choice responses and short answers. The survey aimed to answer the research objective by recruiting a diverse population in terms of rank and experience. The target participants consisted of active duty and retired Marines that currently serve or formerly served in a contracting capacity. For example, the survey began by asking for the participant’s level of experience in contracting. The survey followed with questions enticing the participants to assess their perspectives on the state of the Marine OCS community. The survey sought to use the participants level of experience and background to accumulate a range of responses that, despite the number of years the participant has been in the MC, were very similar. These responses allowed the research to focus on the most obvious gaps and on ways to remediate them.

The survey was disseminated through the Installation and Logistics (I&L) section in Headquarters Marine Corps via the NPS Lime Survey tool. In order to maximize recruitment of participants, the researchers selected every 3044 Marine for recruitment and sent an email with the link, a description of the study being conducted, and points of contact for the student investigator and principal investigator. The survey was available for 15 days and was voluntary, anonymous, and estimated approximately 20 minutes to complete.

The survey contained seven multiple-choice questions. Three of these multiple-choice questions asked the participants to explain their answers, and four short answer questions encouraged a longer response for the participants to freely express their thoughts and opinions on good practices and what changes are needed in the 3044 community. An in-depth analysis of the survey responses along with literature review, interviews, and the benchmarking of the MC model with the AF and Army's training methodologies allowed the research team to form a comprehensive TIPS models analysis. Conclusions and recommendations for the future training and employment of enlisted Marines in the OCS community were introduced based on this analysis. The survey responses allowed the research more focus while the TIPS models allowed the research to construct a more attainable model by taking into considerations the three pillars and assessing which of the pillars needed adjustment.

D. ABOUT THE AUTHORS

While the authors of this project did conduct extensive research to assist in meeting the research objectives, they also drew upon their first-hand experiences in their current positions to assist in meeting these objectives. In 2015, all three authors were selected to become 3006 OCS Officers and were transferred to three Regional Contracting Offices (RCO)—Marine Forces Reserve New Orleans, Louisiana; Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina; and Marine Corps Logistics Base, Albany, Georgia—to begin their graduate level contract management degrees via the Naval Postgraduate School Distance Learning program while actively leading and learning from both 3044 OJT and seasoned OCS enlisted Marines. The RCOs are the primary locations where OJT Marines come to begin their training, which has provided the authors of this project unique perspectives and insight into the challenges facing new OJT Marines and the community as a whole. All three authors have assisted multiple OJT Marines through all of their initial training and level I DAWIA certification requirements. Each experience was different and offered a myriad of challenges along the way, a process this research hopes to improve for future 3044 Marines.

E. CHAPTER REVIEW

This chapter provided an overview of the objectives, methodologies, and scope of this research. The next chapter will introduce the current MC OCS career development path.

II. BACKGROUND

All three authors of this Joint Applied Project have served three years in a contracting office. Though not their primary military occupational specialty (MOS), they were selected to become 3006, OCS Officers. However, they will only serve for three years before going back to their primary MOS. Because of their different backgrounds, they each had a different perspective on how they view the 3044 community. This research will include their observations from the outside in, as well as their impressions about the Marines they worked with, how their careers are developing and how they see the 3044 community in the future.

This chapter provides background information instrumental to understanding the gaps in the current training and shortfalls in the career path of enlisted 3044 OCS Marines. This chapter will provide an overview of the structure and mission, education and training, to include the current selection process of 3044 Marines, and will finish by introducing the current career development and career roadmap of the 3044.

A. STRUCTURE AND MISSION

Marine Corps Order (MCO) 4200.34 describes the mission of the Expeditionary Contracting Force as follows: “to support the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF), Supporting Establishment (SE), Special Operations Forces, and Joint and Supported Coalition Forces by planning and obtaining supplies and services from non-organic sources through associated contract support integration, contracting support and contractor management functions” (2016, p. xi). The MC is an expeditionary force equipped to deploy and conduct operations from austere environments; therefore, the Marine OCS force trains for these conditions. It is this expeditionary mindset that allows the MC to have the flexibility and lethality it needs to accomplish its mission ahead of a follow-on occupational force. Additionally, this expeditionary mindset is what gives the MC a unique requirement for its contracting workforce.

The importance of ensuring the acquisition workforce is fully trained and capable to provide contractual support to the warfighter is clearly defined in the Guidance for the

Employment of Forces (GEF). The GEF “is a written guidance from the Secretary of Defense to the Chairman for the preparation and review of contingency plans for specific missions” (Sweeney, 2013). Patrick Sweeney continues by adding that: “this guidance includes the relative priority of the plans, specific force levels, and supporting resource levels projected to be available for the period of time for which such plans are to be effective” (2013). The first line of the GEF states that as more forces are deployed worldwide to support the foreign policy of the United States, the requirement for contracting will increase along with it (Sweeney, 2013). Given the planning for contingency of operations; the affirmation of the Secretary of Defense that “more contracting will be needed”; and the Title 10 mission of the Marine Corps to be a “force in readiness,” emphasis needs to be increased on our deploying contracting Marines.

B. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

All contracting workforce members (military and civilian) must abide by rules set forth by the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) in order to be legally binding contracting officers. Additionally, Marines are expected to be able to accomplish their mission in a contingency environment with little resources. It is this quality that sets apart the OCS enlisted Marine from other branches: the competency and unwavering ethical behavior is expected from the beginning and they should be ready to fight tonight. However, aside from the training they receive from the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) and their initial school provided by the AF, 3044 Marines do not receive any special formalized training that would prepare for the amount of responsibility they will face once deployed.

1. Entering the 3044 MOS

The Enlisted OCS Marines have an MOS Designator of 3044 (NAVMAC 2100.1C). This MOS is not a primary occupation, which means that Marines have to apply to transfer or lateral move into this MOS after their first enlistment. The MOS Manual (2017) states the requirements to enter the MOS as follows:

a. *Minimum requirements*

- Marines must be a Tier I or Tier II reenlistment category and submit letter of recommendation from their current Officer in Charge and their Staff Non-Commissioned Officer to the endorsing official.
- Must be in full duty status and able to obtain a final Secret security clearance based upon a minimum of a national agency check with law and credit.
- Must possess a general technical score of 110 or higher on the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery Test.
- Must not have any felony convictions by courts-martial or civilian court, Marines must also have no non-judicial punishment in the current grade and have never received a non-judicial punishment for dereliction in the performance of their duties, larceny, misappropriation of government funds or property, or financial irresponsibility.
- He or she must have a First Class Physical Fitness and Combat Fitness Test scores. He or she must have at least a 110 General Technical test score, must be a Sergeant or Sergeant select (no higher ranking allowed), and must have letters of recommendations from his or her immediate supervisors and/or superiors.
- Must have a minimum of 36 months of obligated service upon completion of OJT and assignment to MOS 3044.
- Must be able to use Marine Corps standard office software suite, and basic office machines and systems.
- Must have excellent written and oral communication skills (NAVMC 2100. 1C, 2017, p. 3.335).

b. *Application Submittal*

Once the application is completed by the 3044 candidate, the Officer-in-Charge or Procurement Chief, E-7 or above, from the local Regional Contracting Office (RCO) will review the package for completeness, conduct an interview of the applicant, and submit a letter to the members of the board with his or her opinions and recommendations.

Once the board receives the package, it is thoroughly reviewed, discussed, and voted on. If the applicant meets the requirements stated above, and the board feels like he

or she has the potential to succeed in this MOS, the applicant gets offered the new MOS of 3044 OCS enlisted Marine.

2. On the Job Training and Required Schools

The current on-the-job training (OJT) road map assigns the new 3044 Marines to a RCO for 24 months in order to learn the new MOS by shadowing more senior 3044 Marines; attend DAWIA required DAU classes; and work on their 24 college business credit hours. However, these mandatory requirements are complements of the other Marine general requirements that include physical fitness tests, rifle ranges, sexual assault and prevention classes, and other annual training requirements. Figure 1 shows the results of an internal study which found that despite the required 24 months of OJT time required, Marines only spend 5.9 months during this period doing actual contracting training.

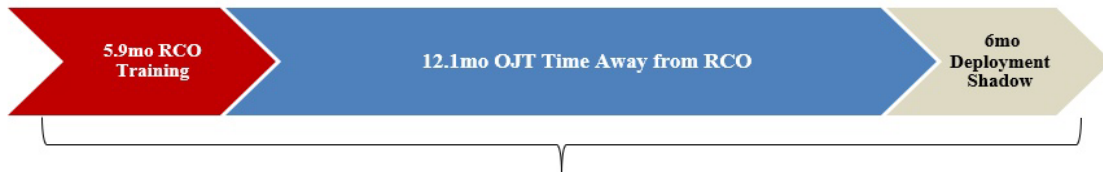


Figure 1. Total OJT Period of 24 Months. Source: S.D. Oltman, personal communication (April 24, 2018).

The 12.1 months the OJT Marine spends away from the RCO are attributed to check-in period, attending the Air Force Contracting Apprentice Course (AFCAC), attending required DAU courses (CON 090 and CON 170), rifle range, Sergeant's course, gas chamber training, swim qualification training, as well as federal holidays, weekends, and their allowed 30-day vacation time in a year period.

The internal study goes on to describe the objective of the OJT period as the time to develop a deployable 3044 OCS Marine, through comprehensive training and mentorship, equipped with contracting skills and leadership and ethical abilities required

to support the mission of the Marine Corps Air Ground Task Force. Figure 2 represents the purpose of the 24 months of this OJT period with the end state being a competent 3044 OCS Marine.

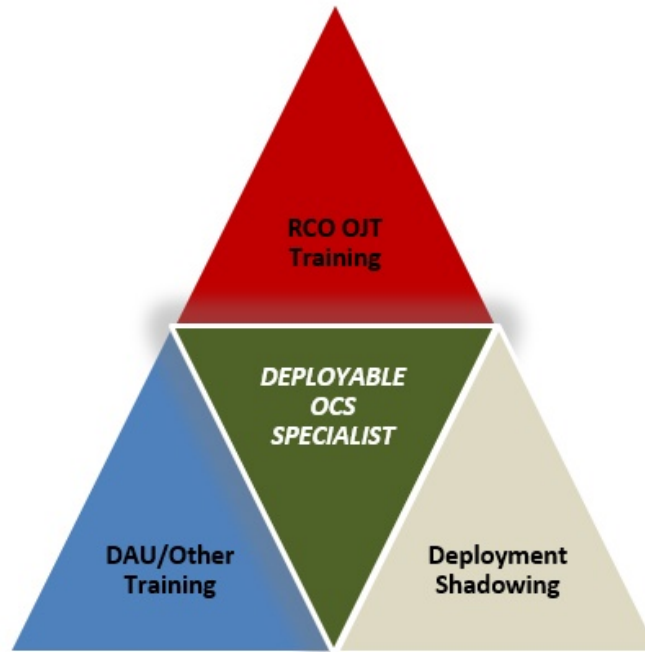


Figure 2. End State Objective of OJT period. Source: S.D. Oltman, personal communication (April 24, 2018).

C. CURRENT MANPOWER ALIGNMENT

The current enlisted MC OCS personnel end-strength is at 132 Enlisted and 33 Officers (S. D. Oltman, personal communication, April 24, 2018). The enlisted ranks vary from the rank of Sergeant (E-5) to Master Gunnery Sergeant (E-9). Figure 3 shows the current number allowed per rank versus the actual number of 3044 Marines on hand. The deficiency on OJT 3044 (Sergeants), is due to the competitive nature of the lateral move process as well as the high promotion rate to E-6 (Staff Sergeant).

Pay Grade	Authorized	Assigned	Percent Manning
E5–Sergeant	48	38	79%
E6–Staff Sergeant	40	42	105%
E7–Gunnery Sergeant	25	28	112%
E8–Master Sergeant	16	13	81%
E9–Master Gunnery Sergeant	3	4	133%
TOTAL	132	121	94.7%

Figure 3. Current Enlisted Manpower Breakdown per Marine Enlisted Rank
Adapted from S.D. Oltman, personal communication (April 24, 2018).

D. CAREER ROADMAP

In Fiscal Year 2015, the Marine Corps established the Air Force Contracting Apprenticeship Course (AFCAC) as the formal school to train OCS Marines. AFCAC is a 60 day course that introduces Marines to the basics of contracting as well as the structure of the AF contracting leadership and commands. Historically, Marines have graduated in the top 5% of the schools, which can be attributed to higher rank, maturity, and proficiency required of Marines to enter the MOS (D. M. Brooks, personal communication, February 8, 2018). Figure 4 shows the desired career road map of a 3044 Marines to include the expected schooling, Level accreditation and certification, Professional Military Education (PME), and recommended billet assignments. Following AFCAC training, Marines have DoD mandated classes in accordance to DoD regulations. Figure 3 illustrates the expected training and assignment of a typical 3044 Marine where a Procurement Chief is the title of the “senior enlisted contracting Marine at an RCO and may or may not hold a contracting officer warrant” (MCO 4200.34, 2016, p. 3.2). An OCS advisor is focused on planning, advisory, policy, and regulations instead of execution. More tours in operational billets (MARSOC/MLG/OCS) should carry more weight than continuous service in SE billets once the Marine reaches the rank of Staff Sergeant or above.

Grade Years in Service	Training/Execution			Advisory/Supervisory	
	Sgt 4 - 7	SSgt 7 - 10	GySgt 12 - 15	MSgt 18 - 22	MGySgt 22 +
Formal Schools & Training	MRACC Grade PME	JOECS Grade PME	MCPD Grade PME	JOPEC SEJPME Grade PME	Grade PME
Contracting Classes	CON 090, CON 100, CON 121, CON 124, CON 127, CON 170, CLC 025, CLC 033, CLC 057, CLC 058	CON 234, ACQ 101, CON 200, CON 216, CON 270, CON 280, CON 290, CLC 051, CLC 056, HBS 428		ACQ 202, CON 360, CON 334	
Primary MOS Tours	OJT at a Support Establishment	Marine Logistics Group/Support Establishment		OCS Advisor/ Support Establishment	HQMC/ Marine Logistics Group
DAWIA Training	Min: Level I Accredited	Min: Level II Accredited Preferred: Level I Certified	Min: Level II Accredited Preferred: Level II Certified	Recommended DAWIA Level III Trained Preferred-Level III Certified	
College Education	Mandatory 24 Business Related College Hours		Recommended Bachelors Degree		Recommended Masters Degree
Recommended Acquisition Billets	<u>Contracting Specialist</u> • Support Establishment (OJT) • Support Establishment	<u>Contracting Specialist/ Contracting Officer/Procurement Chief</u> • MARSOC • MLG • Support Establishment		<u>Contracting Specialist/Contracting Officer/OCS Advisor/Procurement Chief</u> • MEF OCS advisor • MARFOR OCS Advisor • MARSOC Procurement Chief • MLG /SE Procurement Chief • HQMC OccField/OCS Chief	
Additional Opportunities	Not Released for SDA	<u>SSgt are released for SDA</u>	Not Released for SDA		

Figure 4. Current Career Path for a 3044 OCS Specialist.
Source: S.D. Oltman, personal communication (April 24, 2018).

E. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter conceptualized the process of a Marine entering the acquisition workforce, its competitive selection, and rigorous training pipeline before OCS Marines are deployed in support of a contingency operation. This chapter also described the potential gaps in education and issues with the quick turnaround requirement from OJT to a fully trained OCS Marine able to fully support contingency operations and expeditionary missions.

Next, we will look at the AF's contracting training requirements and career development plan.

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III. AIR FORCE CONTRACTING

The AF contracting mission, as defined by the Headquarters of the AF Acquisition, Washington, DC, is to “Develop and execute innovative business strategies and cost effective contracting solutions to enable the global Air Force mission...with the vision of creating agile contracting and enabling affordable war-winning capability on time” (<http://ww3.safaq.hq.af.mil/Contracting>, 2018). As of April 2018, the manpower end-strength of the enlisted contracting community was 1,536 personnel across all pay grades to support approximately 320,000 AF personnel (L. S. Conger, personal communication, February 5, 2018). The Air Force’s Career Field Education and Training Plan (CFETP, 2016) identifies the contracting career field as:

Dynamic and demanding. It requires a high level of training, education, and experience. Besides AF technical and OJT requirements, federal law mandates professional certification. (p. 18)

Table 1. April 2018 Enlisted Air Force Manning.

Pay Grade	Authorization	Assigned	Percent Manning
E3 - Airman First Class	145	208	143%
E4 - Senior Airman	197	338	172%
E5- Staff Sergeant	450	388	86%
E6- Technical Sergeant	357	317	89%
E7- Master Sergeant	248	220	89%
E8- Senior Master Sergeant	64	49	77%
E9- Chief Master Sergeant	17	16	94%
TOTAL	1478	1536	104%

Source: L.S. Conger, personal communication (February 5, 2018).

Like all DoD contracting personnel, contracting Airmen must meet all DAWIA certification level standards before becoming a warranted contracting officer (CFETP 2016, p. 17). To effectively implement the DoD career development requirements the AF established the Acquisition Professional Development Program (APDP) and incorporated that into their career model. The CFETP adds:

Air Force Contracting has determined that positions on unit manning documents should be coded to require levels of certification commensurate with the required grade of that position. APDP certification is designed to be a balanced and progressive program of training, experience, and education. It is not intended for a quick attainment without having practical on-the-job experiences to accompany certification. Personnel will only receive priority and approval to complete APDP certification based on their assigned duty position. (p. 17)

Often regarded as the “gold standard” for developing a highly competent enlisted contracting workforce, the AF contracting career model is a very deliberate, structured road map that is well defined in their Career Field Education Training Plan (CFETP).

The AF has defined the CFETP as a “comprehensive education and training document that identifies life-cycle education/training requirements, training support resources, and minimum core task requirements for this specialty. The CFETP provides AF contracting personnel a clear career path to success and will instill rigor in all aspects of career field training” (p. 4). To facilitate uniform training standard and timely career progression for its enlisted contracting personnel, the AF has identified six skill level-descriptions by pay grade that serve as the career roadmap (also in Figures 4 and 5):

1. Contracting Input or Helper
2. Contracting Apprentice
3. Contracting Journeyman
4. Contracting Craftsman Level
5. Contracting Superintendent
6. Chief Enlisted Manager

To distinguish between the skills required for each position, the AF has broken the skill levels required between 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9. A more comprehensive summarization of this is found in the Career Path Milestone, Figure 5.

UPGRADE TO 3-Skill Level			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Contracting Apprentice Course 			
UPGRADE TO 5-Skill Level			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete mandatory Career Development Courses (CDCs) within 12 months (maximum possible extension of 2 months) • Minimum 12 months upgrade training (9 months if retrainee possessed 5 skill level in prior AFSC), not to exceed 24 months • Complete all core task qualification training • Meet mandatory requirements for 6C0X1 specialty description in AFECD and this CFETP • Recommended by supervisor • Approved by commander 			
UPGRADE TO 7-Skill Level			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum rank of SSgt • APDP Level I Certification • Minimum 12 months upgrade training (minimum of six months if previously a 7-level in other AFSC), not to exceed 24 months • Complete all core task qualification training • Completion of 7-skill level contracting Career Development Course (CDC) • Meet mandatory requirements listed in specialty description in AFECD and this CFETP • Recommended by supervisor • Approved by commander 			
UPGRADE TO 9-Skill Level			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum rank of SMSgt • Recommended by supervisor • Approved by commander • Complete mandatory requirements listed in AFECD 			
CONTRACTING SEW-ON TIME			
RANK	EARLIEST	AVERAGE	HIGH YEAR OF TENURE
SrA	22 Months	36 Months	8 Years
SSgt	3 Years	4 Years	15 Years
TSgt	5 Years	11 Years	20 Years
MSgt	8 Years	16 Years	24 Years
SMSgt	11 Years	19 Years	26 Years
CMSgt	14 Years	24 Years	30 Years

Figure 5. AF Contracting Career Path Milestones.
Source: Career Field Education and Training Plan

A. CONTRACTING INPUT OR HELPER

The Contract Input or Helper is the first and very basic skill level for enlisted AF contracting personnel who have graduated boot camp and are awaiting assignment to the AFCAC at Lackland AF base in San Antonio, Texas. According to the CFETP this is considered 'skill level 1' and usually consists of E1 thru E3 (Airman Basic, Airman, and Airman First Class). Unlike the Army and MC, AF contracting is an entry level MOS out of boot camp not strictly reserved for lateral movers requesting another MOS.

B. CONTRACTING APPRENTICE LEVEL 3

All Contracting Apprentice must first graduate the initial basic AF contracting course, AFCAC, consisting of 40 academic days of school at Lackland AF Base. Upon successful graduation, the Contracting Apprentices are considered 'skill level 3' trained and are typically assigned to a contracting squadron to begin their 18-month on-the-job training (OJT) requirements.

Apprentice must be able to: purchase commodities, services and construction, normally within the simplified acquisition threshold using commercial or simplified acquisition procedures. Administer purchase/delivery orders agreements, maintenance agreements, and other contractual instruments within the simplified acquisition threshold. (CFETP, 2016, p. 11)

C. CONTRACTING JOURNEYMAN LEVEL 5

Achieving the level 5 skill level associated with the Contracting Journeyman typically occurs after the apprentice completes their OJT period at their first tour at a contracting squadron, completion of the mandatory Journeyman Career Development Course (which encompasses four self-paced volumes on basic fundamentals, pre-award procedures, evaluation and award, and post award and contingency contracting), and completion of all APDP level I certification requirements. Upon successful completion of these requirements the Airman receives 24 business credits required for level I accreditation from the AF community college. Typically, the pay grades associated with Contracting Journeyman are E3-E5 (Airman First Class, Senior Airman, and Staff Sergeant).

In addition to meeting all Apprentice duties and responsibilities, Journeyman must also: Analyze facts and principles and draw conclusions in accordance with sound business practices. Obtain data on marketing trends, supply sources, and trade information. Prepare memoranda, determinations and findings, and justifications and approvals. Assess contractor compliance with bonding, insurance, and tax requirements, as applicable. Determine appropriate actions when discrepancies are noted. (CFETP, 2016, p. 12)

D. CONTRACTING CRAFTSMAN LEVEL 7

Achieving the level 7 skill level associated with the Contracting Craftsman typically occurs during the Airman's second tour of duty upon completion of the Craftsman CDC (Advanced Contracting Principles and the Contracting Superintendent), and all APDP level II certification requirements. Craftsmen have a maximum of 12 months to complete these requirements. All first term Airmen must reenlist to advance to APDP Level II. During the Craftsman stage of an Airman's career, they are often transitioning from a tactical to operational leadership positions. Typically, the pay grades associated with Craftsman are E5-E7 with a minimum grade of E5. (Staff Sergeant, Technical Sergeant, and Master Sergeant).

In addition to meeting all Journeyman duties and responsibilities, Craftsman must also: supervise purchase of commodities, services and construction through simplified acquisition procedures, negotiation, sealed bidding and administration of contracts and contractual instruments. Prepare, use, and evaluate automated contracting system products. Function as a contracting officer when appointed. Inspect and evaluate contracting activities. (CFETP, 2016, p. 13)

E. CONTRACTING SUPERINTENDENT/CHIEF ENLISTED MANAGER SKILL LEVEL 9

Level 9 Superintendent and Chief Enlisted Manager is the highest skill level that enlisted contracting Airmen can obtain. There is no specific timeline associated with achieving this skill level and is dependent on previous performance, promotion opportunities, and current manning of E8 and E9 within the community. According to the Contracting Enlisted Career Path Chart it typically takes 19 years for promotion to E8 and 21 years to E9. At this skill level the Airman transitions from more of an operational to strategic oversight position.

This specialty requires complete knowledge of pricing techniques, market trends, supply sources, U.S. and foreign commercial practices, and marketing factors contributing to prices of items, equipment, materials, or services. This specialty also requires knowledge of basic office computer applications, audit procedures, policies, laws, and directives governing purchasing, and contingency contracting policies and procedures (CFETP, 2016, p. 28).

Figure 6 graphically depicts the career path of a typical contracting Airman.

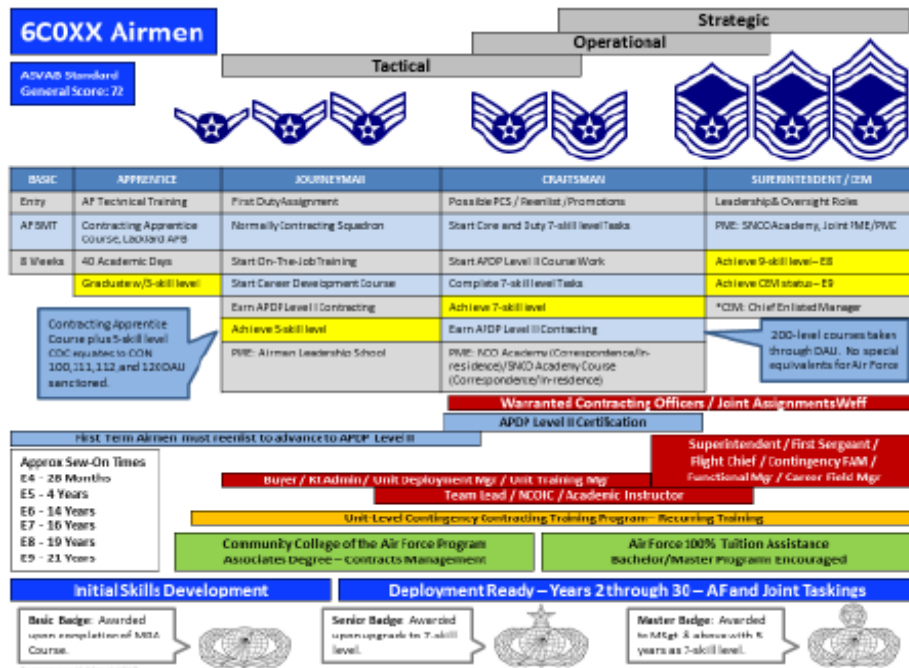


Figure 6. AF Contracting Enlisted Career Path Chart.
Source: Career Field Education and Training Plan

F. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter summarized the AF's contracting career path and career development process by using their current doctrine, and communications with contracting leadership at the AFCAC in Lackland Air Force Base. The AF's mission requires its acquisition contracting force to be more robust in size and knowledge than the MC. The MC's unique mission can benefit from certain aspects of the AF's career path with appropriate tailoring. The next chapter will look at the Army's contracting career development process.

IV. ARMY CONTRACTING MISSION

The Army contracting mission, as defined by the U.S. Army Contracting Command (ACC), is “Delivering readiness through contracting solutions in support of the Army and unified land operations anywhere, anytime” (U.S. Army, 2017). Additionally, the ACC’s vision for this career field “is to be recognized by our supported commands and stakeholders as a strategic partner and mission enabler by maintaining the highest standards in service, reliability and operational excellence” (U.S. Army, 2017). The mission and vision statements are reflections of how critical 51Cs are to the Army. Another indicator of the importance that the Army has placed in this career field, is the amount of education and career development these soldiers receive.

A. STRUCTURE

According to the Army’s Branch Acquisition, Technology and Logistics (AT&L) 51C Career Progression Plan (U.S. Army, 2017), the Army categorizes the 51C MOS as a subset of the three acquisition Career Management Fields (CMF). Although the 51C is the only MOS currently listed within the CMF, Army AT&L considers the MOS as the centerpiece of the entire career field (The Army Human Resource Command, 2016). Unlike other MOSs within the CFM, the 51C is unique in the fact that soldiers with the 51C are generally kept within homogeneous units and formations. This homogeneous makeup is a direct result given the preponderance of the 51Cs being assigned to the ACC, which is a subordinate command to the Army Materiel Command. Below the ACC, several subordinate units have been established to satisfy the mission requirements expected at each echelon. These units consist of Contract Support Brigades (CSB), Contracting Battalions (CBN), and Contracting Teams (CT). Consisting of a five-member teams, the CT is the lowest unit echelon the Army has established. Additionally, the CT is designed to deploy as a functioning RCO that will support forward deployed units. The CT, functioning as the RCO, has additional responsibilities that may extend to fulfill operational needs of a Geographic Combatant Commands (GCC); serving as the Lead Service for Contracting for that GCC.

B. TRAINING

To facilitate uniform training standards and timely career progression for its enlisted contracting personnel, the Army has defined the 51C Career Progression Plan as the clearest path to success for its soldiers. Additionally, 51C soldiers are expected to meet all DAWIA certification level standards before becoming a warranted contracting officer. To effectively implement the 51C career development requirements, the Army has distinguished between and established associated DAWIA level certifications to what it believes is the appropriate rank. Unlike the AF's entry level option for enlisted personnel, the Army's 51C career field begins at the rank of staff sergeant (E-6) (Army's Branch Acquisition, AL&T 51C Career Progression Plan, and page 2). Figure 7 provides a comprehensive snapshot of the 51C career progression.

C. STAFF SERGEANT

The Army directs Staff Sergeants to achieve DAWIA Level 1 certification within two years, which requires that the staff sergeant earn a baccalaureate degree and attain a minimum of 24 semester hours in business courses (Army's Branch Acquisition, AT&L 51C Career Progression Plan, 2018, p.3). Additionally, Staff Sergeants are directed to read and understand a broad range of publications that discuss Army doctrinal fundamentals related to the CMF, such as ATP 4-92 "Contracting Support to Unified Land Operations." This course, along with others, serve to immerse the soldier in a broader understanding of the roles that the 51C fulfills (Army's Branch Acquisition, AL&T 51C Career Progression Plan, 2018, p. 3).

D. SERGEANT FIRST CLASS

The Army directs that Sergeants First Class (SFC) are responsible for accomplishing all tasks assigned to sergeants. Furthermore, SFCs must reach DAWIA Level 2 certification within a limited time frame, while broadening their field of view with regard to Army doctrinal publications and the overall function of the United States Army. These publications are intended to educate the soldiers on operational level tactics and helps to create a well-rounded AT&L NCOs to support and sustain operations abroad (Army's Branch Acquisition, AT&L 51C Career Progression Plan, 2018, p. 4).

E. MASTER SERGEANT/FIRST SERGEANT

The Army continues to direct its Master Sergeants and First Sergeants to broadening their field of view with regard to strategic publications. According to the Army's Branch Acquisition, AT&L 51C Career Progression Plan "the majority of positions within CMF 51 for Master Sergeants are at the battalion and brigade staff level. This illustrates a strategic mindset" (acc.army.mil, 2018). Additionally, Master Sergeants are directed to study and master a wide assortment of material relating to being a professional soldier as well as their acquisition career field. As with the previous ranks, Master Sergeants are required to achieve DAWIA level 3 certification in contracting, within the limited time provided. Unlike the junior ranks, Master Sergeants are expected to have a baccalaureate degree at this point and should be pursuing an appropriate graduate degree in a business-related field of study (Army's Branch Acquisition, AT&L 51C Career Progression Plan, p. 6).

F. SERGEANT MAJOR/COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR

Command Sergeants Major (CSM) are expected to have attained a graduate degree in a related business field. Additionally, a wide range of professional readings and college courses are encouraged in order to continue broadening a CSMs organizational skills. CSMs are also expected to have attained DAWIA level 3 certification in contracting. Encompassing the previous work that is expected of lower ranks, CSMs are expected to have become subject matter experts across CMF 51, which plays a pivotal role in the Army Acquisition Corps. CSMs are able to become members of the Army Acquisition Corps, which is are designated as critical acquisition positions (Army's Branch Acquisition, AT&L 51C Career Progression Plan, 2018, p. 7). Similar to the AF and MC, the Army also has a Development Model for the OCS enlisted. Figure 7 illustrates this model.

Army Acquisition Corps Professional Development Model Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology (AL&T) Contracting Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) (MOS 51C)				
Years	7—9	10—15	16—19	20—30
Rank Skill Level	SSG - SFC Skill level 30/40	SFC Skill level 40	MSG Skill level 50	At SGM, Becomes MOS 51Z
Professional Military Education	Basic NCO Course	Advanced NCO Course	Army Sergeants Major Academy	
Functional/Additional Training	Support Operations Course → Battle Staff Course → Airborne Course → Air Assault Course → Ranger School →			
Operating Force	AL&T Contracting NCO/Team Leader	AL&T Contracting NCO Team Leader	AL&T Contracting Plans/Ops Sergeant	Senior Enlisted Contracting Adviser
Generating Force	N/A	Instructor/Writer Professional Dev NCO (HRC)	Chief, Personnel Proponent NCO	Command Sergeant Major, AAC Senior Enlisted Adviser, DCMA
Self Development	Technical Certification Associate's Degree Bachelor's Degree Correspondence Studies DAU and ALMC Courses Military Reading List (Reimer Library)		Technical Certification Bachelor's Degree Master's Degree Correspondence Studies DAU and ALMC Courses Military Reading List (Reimer Library)	Technical Certification Bachelor's Degree Master's Degree DAU and ALMC Courses SBLM Training Acquisition Sr Leader Trng
Links	https://www.us.army.mil/suite/login/welcom.html (Army Knowledge Online) https://www.asc.army.mil/career/programs/nco/default.cfm (Army Acquisition Support Center)			
Promotion Eligibility	Determined by Centralized Promotion Board Guidance			

Figure 7. Army Acquisition Professional Development Model, AL&T
Source: Contracting NCO MOS 51C

G. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter briefly explained the contracting career progression of the Army. This chapter showed the expectation and responsibilities each rank has in the contracting community and how their development is guided by their internal acquisition Career Management Fields (CMF). Next chapter will present the data from the survey.

V. SURVEY DATA

This chapter will present the data from the survey. This chapter starts with a description of the survey design and focus areas, as well as a description of the results from each question. The survey solicited input from junior and senior enlisted Marines currently serving or having previously served in a contracting capacity. This chapter will also explain the reason and goals of each question while providing raw answers that will be analyzed in Chapter V. The questions were designed taking into account the diversity in terms of longevity and experience of the participants and their perceptions of the selection, training, employment, and retention of 3044 OCS Marines.

A. SURVEY DESIGN AND FOCUS AREAS

The goal of the survey was to identify, from current 3044 Marines at different levels of experience, their perceptions on their current and future career developments. The survey sought to use those perceptions in the analysis phase of the research by ensuring that current policy is being followed and by benchmarking this career process with that of the other two armed services. To achieve this diversity in participants, the target of this survey consisted of junior and senior enlisted Marines who are either serving or have served in a contracting capacity.

B. SURVEY RESULTS

The survey was provided to a total of 87 participants. These 87 personnel encompassed the entire workforce from E-6 to E-9 in the 3044 MOS community. The researchers received 20 responses or a 23 percent response rate. Below are these questions, their purpose, and the breakdown of responses:

1. Question 1

“Please describe your experience level in the contracting field to include the number of years in the DoD, years in the field, certification level, highest warrant obtained, and what units/commands you have served under.”

Of the 21 participants, 43% had less than six years of experience in the contracting field, 24% had over ten years, and 33% fell somewhere in between. 99% of participants were serving on an active duty status. This question served to establish the participant’s level of exposure and experience in the field, as shown in Figure 8. The survey was designed to receive feedback from senior enlisted as well as junior enlisted in order to compare their ideas and assess the perspectives of the current state of their own career development.

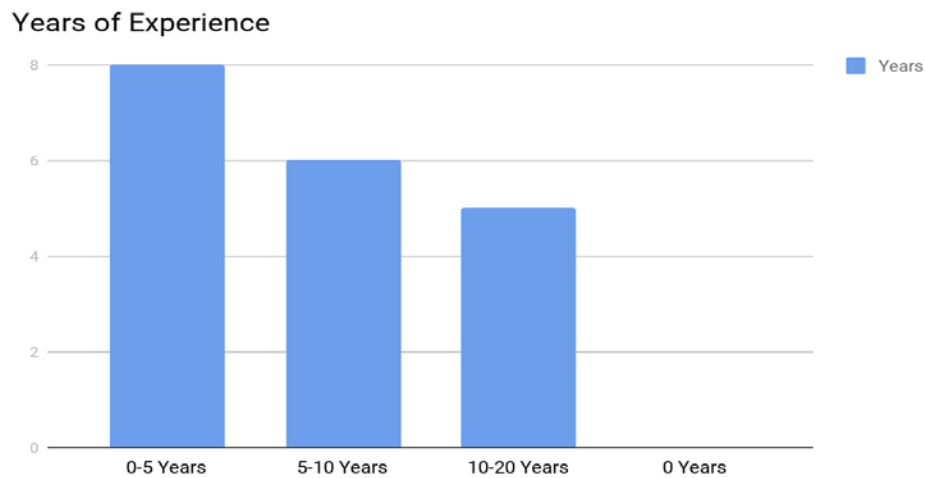


Figure 8. Experience Breakdown

2. Question 2

“Select the length of time your current command allows for new personnel entering the acquisition workforce to perform “on-the-job” training before they are given more independence to start and complete a contract? Please describe if you think this length is appropriate.”

The responses varied dramatically, as depicted in Figure 9. Of note, 47% of participants currently serve in billets that do not have OJT Marines, therefore their answers were skipped or marked as “NONE.” Fourteen percent (14%) of participants responded that OJT Marines in their command spend 6 months or less before OJT Marines are assigned contract workloads. 39% responded that 12–24 months is the internal SOP for OJT Marines to remain in an OJT status.

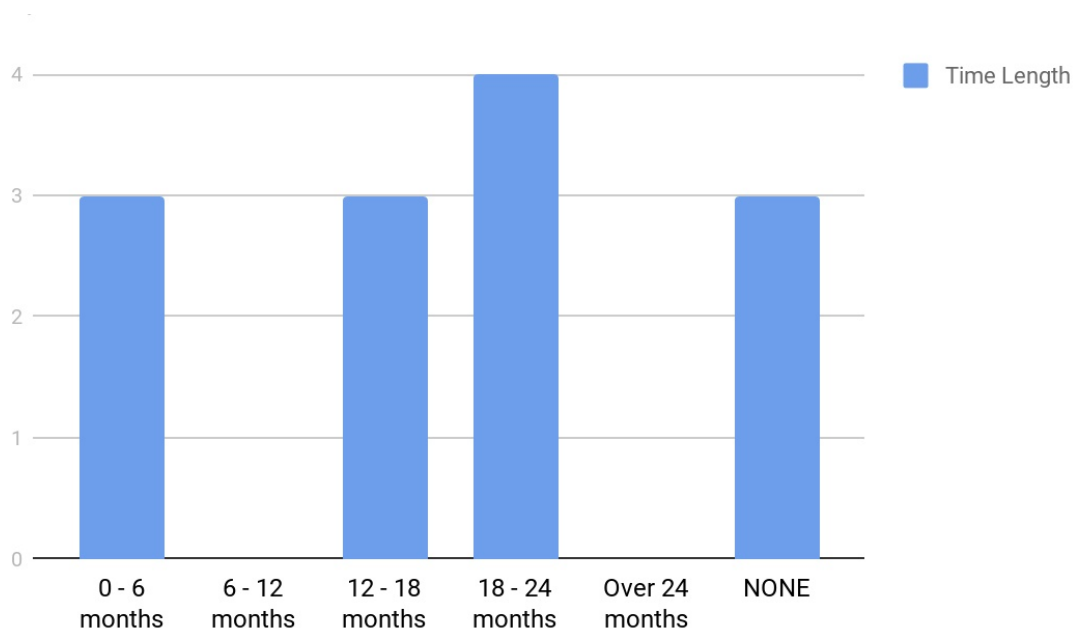


Figure 9. Actual OJT Timeline

The purpose of this question is to examine the appropriateness of the current policy to determine the length of time an entry level Marine should be allotted for on-the-job training and how responsive the community is to this policy.

3. Question 3 & 4

“What competencies are new personnel expected to be able to perform after their “on-the-job” training period, and after completion of this “on-the-job” training, what role are these new personnel expected to perform in the contracting community of your organization?”

These questions gave the participants a variety of competencies and roles that could be expected from a seasoned 3044 Marine and asked them to pick the ones they thought were more important. Results were focused on the entry level Marine ability to manage, perform, and execute contract for services and supplies.

Figure 10 reveals the percentage of participants that chose that competency as important. 75% of participants categorized four main competencies as being “crucial” for an entry level 3044: Commercial procedures, simplified acquisition procedures, and

knowing how to put contract for services and supplies using automated contracting systems. Additionally, 60% responded by saying that an OJT Marines should be ready to be a contract specialist in an expeditionary environment upon completion of their OJT period. The purpose of these questions was to determine whether there is a current competency standard and expectation to determine that an OJT Marine has received the knowledge he or she needs in order to be a successful OCS specialist. Additionally, this question sought to determine the most common billet Marines are expected to fulfill following their OJT period.

Competencies	Responses		Roles	Responses	
	QTY	%		QTY	%
Contract Functions for Services and Supplies	15	75%	Contract Officer in an Expeditionary Environment	11	55%
Contract Functions for Construction	2	10%	Contract Specialist in an Expeditionary Environment	12	60%
Simplified Acquisition Procedures	15	75%	Contract Specialist in a Garrison Environment	5	25%
Commercial Procedures	15	75%	Contract Officer in a Garrison Environment	1	5%
Seal Bidding Procedures	1	5%			
Automated Contracting Systems	15	75%			
Contracting Officer Functions	8	40%			
			TABLE LEGEND		
Issue and Administer Purchase Orders	15	75%	HIGHEST PERCENTAGE		
Issue and Administer Task Orders	14	70%	LOWEST PERCENTAGE		
Issue and Administer BPA calls	6	30%			
Issue and Administer Maintenance agreements	4	20%			
Issue and Administer Indefinite Delivery type	7	35%			
Issue and Administer UAC ratifications	7	35%			

Figure 10. Critical Competencies

4. Question 5

“After their first tour in the acquisition workforce, what is the typical next step for enlisted personnel and the typical career progression beyond that?”

This question required a short answer and sought to show whether the typical trajectory of a 3044 Marine follows the path outlined previously on Figures 1 and 3. This question also sought for billets that are not typical, but plausible for a 3044 Marine. 75% of participants outlined that being a warranted contracting officer able to deploy was the most important next step for any 3044 on their second tour. One participant even recommended that 3044s not in a deployable unit should be considered less capable than the ones that are in a deployable unit.

5. Question 6

“Do you find it difficult to first gain the required Operational Contract Support knowledge and then retain that knowledge/experience within your branch’s acquisition workforce?”

This question sought the participant’s opinions on exactly how the knowledge is learned throughout the OJT process is effectively retained. 60% of participants responded that the knowledge is not easily retained, while the other 40% attributed the ability to retain certain knowledge to the repetitive nature of their jobs. One participant added: “If the Marine Corps could establish a formal 3044 MOS school, then that school would be the center of excellence and all the knowledge, from lessons learned to new standard procedures would initiate, be maintained, and shared from there to the entire community.” Figure 11 shows all possible answers and the participants responses.

Ease of Knowledge Retention?	Reason
NO	Most Marines get enough hands on experience to retain the knowledge
NO	Learning in an RCO with low stress environment allows for more focus and better retention
YES	Certain aspects are difficult if not practiced. For example Cost Reimbursement contracts.
NO	N/A
YES	Often, 3044 Marines are told to execute a task without proper guidance, therefore, the potential gain in knowledge is lost.
NO	The Marine 3044 is able to retain the knowledge because of their experience doing those tasks.
YES	A lot of the knowledge learned through DAU is not tailored to Marines and their mission and there isn't a Marine Contracting School. Therefore, the knowledge gained is not easily retained.
YES	There is not a clear set of skills identified to train to, nor the capacity to develop them
YES	If the knowledge is practiced, retention becomes easy, however, contracting is a perishable skill. If it's not practice it can easily fade away

Figure 11. Knowledge Retention

6. Question 7

“Using the DOTMLPF-P analysis, how do you evaluate each functional area in your organization as it pertains to operational contract support?”

This question sought to identify areas of the most risk by using the first step in the Functional Solution Analysis (FSA). The FSA determines and recommends the approach needed to fill a capability gap (DODI 5000.02). These gaps are also known, in the military, as critical vulnerabilities. These critical vulnerabilities appear to influence the MC contracting force’s ability to efficiently execute its mission. Participants were provided with the DOTMLPF-P function as a metric and were asked to provide a rating from Very Deficient to Not Deficient. Table 3 provides a visual representation of the responses.

Function	# of Responses				
	Very Deficient	Somewhat Deficient	Neutral	Almost No Deficiencies	No Deficiencies
Doctrine	1	5	3	2	2
Organization	2	3	3	3	1
Training	2	4	3	3	0
Materiel	3	3	4	3	0
Leadership and Education	1	2	6	2	1
Personnel	2	3	4	2	2
Facilities	2	2	6	3	0
Policy	1	3	0	4	0

Figure 12. Functional Solutions Analysis

Figure 12 shows the results from the responses. Green denotes the highest amount of support. 58% of participants concluded that the single most significant deficiency is the current Doctrine by marking it as either ‘Very Deficient’ or ‘Somewhat Deficient’; followed by 48% that believe that the Organization and Training functions are either ‘Very Deficient’ or ‘Somewhat Deficient.’ Figure 11 provides a snapshot of the responses. The cells highlighted in green emphasize the responses with most votes per function. This question sought to identify the critical vulnerabilities from the perspective of the 3044 Marines currently serving.

7. Question 8

“Please rate the effectiveness of the below incentives to support retention of enlisted personnel in the contracting community of your organization.”

This question sought the perspective of the 3044 Marines to assess what incentive would have more positive effect on retention. Responses are listed on Table 4.

Incentive	# of Responses				
	Not Effective	Little Effectiveness	Neutral	Somewhat Effective	Very Effective
DOD Funded Graduate Program	2	3	0	3	3
PME Equivalencies for assignment and DAU Course Work	3	3	2	2	1
Systems and Major Acquisition Billet Opportunities	3	1	1	2	3
Special Duty Pay to Incentivize Retention	4	0	0	5	2

Figure 13. Incentives Effectiveness

83% of participants concluded that there are no incentives that would produce an effective outcome for the 3044 community. While 42% suggested that a Special Duty Pay may have some effect, the comments followed in the next question painted a different picture.

8. Question 9

“Aside from retaining personnel, how would these incentives benefit the community and individuals in the community of your organization?”

This question sought to expand on the previous question and assess whether the incentives mentioned before would have a different impact aside from retention. Though the incentive participants were found to potentially have an effective outcome, their comments noted that this may be a temporary outcome, and that, as one participants put it, “in our line of business, offering a Marine more money to stay a Marine, may not recruit the best individuals.”

9. Question 10

“How would the acquisition workforce benefit from having a standardized test that will assess the knowledge of acquisition personnel at different ranks/levels in order to create a better standard from which to better promote and assign to more fitting billets?”

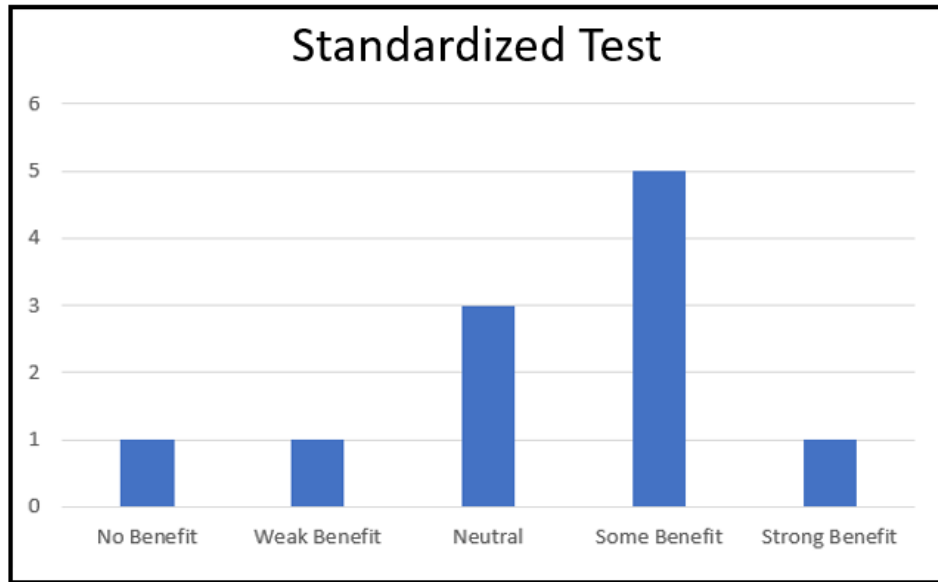


Figure 14. To Test or Not to Test

Figure 14 shows the participant’s responses. 83% of participants responded that a standardized test would be beneficial to the 3044 community. One participants commented that: “this is the single biggest recommendation that has the potential to benefit the community as whole.” While 17% did not think that a test would capture the capability of the Marine: “I think this test would only prove that some have a greater ability to regurgitate information than others.” This question served to assess the opinions of participants regarding a knowledge test to assess the competency of the workforce.

10. Question 11

“Please provide any additional comments that you think would benefit the enlisted Operational Contract Support community.”

This question sought to gather ideas that the survey did not cover in order to enhance the current career model and career path development. This data will use to develop recommendation for further analysis and research. Responses included:

- Standardize training schedule for all OJT Marines
- The need for OCS education to 3044 Marines
- Lift the restriction on rank to achieve a higher contracting level
- A permanent officer corps should be the first step towards lasting change
- Expand the manpower and doctrine
- Establish a formal Marine OCS training center
- Improve the organization structure.
- Allow 3044 Marines to work on major acquisitions

C. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented all the questions of the survey and summarized the responses. By specifically seeking a variety of experience levels, this survey allowed to highlight the areas where the majority of the community agreed needed improvement or not. Chapter VI will discuss and analyze the data in areas they represent the majority of the questions.

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VI. DISCUSSIONS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter will begin to analyze the micro level issues of the MC contracting force. This chapter will use the Army and AF career models described in previous chapters to compare them with the MC's. This chapter will also use data from the literature reviewed and the survey data to analyze the responses with the current perceived issues and fulfill the research objectives.

A. **TIME ALLOCATED FOR ON-THE-JOB TRAINING TO PROPERLY PREPARE A 3044 OPERATIONAL CONTRACT SUPPORT SPECIALIST MARINES**

The current MCO 4200.34 establishes that the OJT period for an entry level Marine is 24 months. This OJT period will allow the Marine ample to time receive the training they need to attain Level I accreditation to include the 24 college business credit hours. Responses to this question also introduced internal and unofficial SOPs for OJT training. MCO 4200.34 does allow a certain level of flexibility for each agency to mold the OJT process to the capabilities and limitation of the unit. One comment attributed the reduced OJT period to be dependent on each individual OJT. Some are more capable than others, some are able to learn the process faster than others. While other participants attributed their responses to “operational tempo.”

The MC relies on other armed services to provide acquisition training to its enlisted workforce. Because of the disparity on mission objectives, often the Marines do not learn the basic of contingency contracting until they arrive to their first unit (B. E. Boyd, personal communication, April 24, 2018). This has created a knowledge gap that is felt throughout the Marine acquisition workforce in the form of continuous deployments and overwork for more experienced individuals. An analysis of the survey responses, paints a very clear picture: In order to better prepare its Marines, the MC OCS community needs its own training center; with classes tailored to specific Marine mission objectives, budget constraints, and combat capabilities. Additionally, as the contracting Marines advance in rank and experience, the Marine Corps will benefit from establishing follow on schools

where more senior enlisted Marines can advance their careers with further level certification while also sharing experiences, best practices, and lessons learned.

B. DEVELOPING THE RIGHT MIX OF COMPETENCIES AND ROLES FOR ENTRY LEVEL 3044 MARINES

The survey data as well as the current mission of the MC OCS force require a minimum level of competency. The responses from question 3 on the survey pointed out these competencies needed based on their own deployment experiences. The responses outlined in Table 2 also selected the competencies that, although learned via DAU courses, are not as critical. These competencies include: seal bidding procedures and construction contract functions. Additionally, participants were able to add competencies not listed. A few of the competencies added include:

“Make Blanket Purchase Agreement calls”

“Small business contract actions”

“Have the ability to brief senior leadership on contracting matters”

Additionally, the roles outlined in Table 1 closely resemble the current career path based on the responses to the survey. Becoming a warranted contracting officer with the ability to deploy in support of contingency operations received the most responses. This shows that this particular MOS needs to be ready to support the MC mission as soon as able. This is the expectation. Other proposed responses included the ability to lead a team of contracting professionals through a contingency operation, which further emphasizes that the ability to support the MC mission is the core function of 3044 Marines.

3044 Marines are expected to move to an operational unit and deploy in support of MC operations. Following that, less than a handful get the opportunity to attend a Special Duty Assignment (Recruiter, Drill Instructor or Combat Instructor), however, the vast majority of 3044 Marines will transfer to another operational unit while working to achieve Level II certification in order to be assigned to a garrison contracting officer billet.

The purpose of this question was to confirm that the current career path is followed. Of course, there are situations where certain individual would deviate from the designated

path due to career timing, operational requirements or needs of the MC at the time. It also showed the potential issues and lack of other opportunities exist within the 3044 community to explore more complex billets and opportunities.

C. ADEQUACY OF CURRENT CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Our research concludes that the MC current OCS career development plan does not completely prepare its Marines to support contingency and garrison contracting missions. The current OCS development plan relies on an AF curriculum and DAU classes to teach the 3044 Marines to plan, prepare, execute, and administer contracts in a garrison environment in the continental United States with vetted and local vendors and with an abundance of resources available to them. Though DAU does offer contingency contracting classes (CON 234 and CON 334), survey participants overwhelmingly support the establishing of a Marine-owned and Marine-led training center in order to learn, exchange experiences, and provide a more efficient environment to learning contingency from more experienced 3044 Marines.

Along with the new approach to the career development plan, this research concludes that new and improved doctrine should be introduced with an exact curriculum that every 3044 enlisted Marine and 3006 Officer must adopt and follow. MCO 4200.34 started this process, the doctrine now needs to be polished and adapted to the current, highly-mobile force and its uncertain future.

D. OFFICER CORPS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE 3044 COMMUNITY

The enlisted career development path of a 3044 OCS Marine changes every three to four years because of the constant turnover of officers. Officers do not spend their careers in a contracting capacity, instead they split their time from their primary MOS and additional contracting MOS. This time spent away from the acquisition workforce often keeps these officers from staying current with trends and the state of the 3044 community. The lack of a full-time OCS officer corps further detracts the development of the enlisted personnel due to its lack of consistency and tactical patience. Survey responders used short answer questions to express their frustration with the constant change in the 3044 community. One response is outlined below:

Permanent Officer Corps: The current process of officers rotating in and out every 3–4 years causing confusion and pain, prevents stability in operations. Officers come back and based on their limited knowledge want to recreate the contracting field in what they think it should look like. So, the enlisted suffer through this continuous cycle of “good idea fairy” wanting to change everything and in most cases recreating what was [a] failed experiment in the past. These same officers, with about as much experience as a Sergeant in this MOS, are making decisions that adversely impact the entire MOS for years after they leave. This has resulted in confusion with regards to doctrine, policy, and procedures.

E. EXPOSURE

The 3044 OCS Specialist is not well-known function in the Marine Corps. Contracting Marines are poorly employed on deployments and underutilized in garrison (B. E. Boyd, personal communication, April 24, 2018). The current exposure of 3044 Marines is limited to very simple below-Simplified Acquisition Threshold (SAT) purchases and General Services Agency (GSA) purchases. Both of which can be repetitive and bore the often highly capable 3044 Marines (D. M. Brooks, personal communication, February 8, 2018). More exposure into larger buys and million-dollar contracts will further develop Marines in the 3044 MOS and allow them visibility of the “bigger” Marine Corps, with bigger challenges, and new opportunities. Additionally, working in conjunction with Naval Facilities (NAVFAC) could expose Marines to construction contracts, an aspect of contracting they currently do not get any experience on.

Further into the exposure, one participant commented:

Establish formal Marine OCS training for officers and enlisted and for Command and Staff in order to better utilize the [OCS] capability.

This type of exposure would benefit the community by creating a source of knowledge for the often alien topic of OCS for commanders (Yoder et al., 2010). Ensuring commanders have a basic knowledge of the OCS process will allow them to better utilize their 3044 Marines while deployed and in garrison. This relationship needs to start early to maximize the contracting capability. As Yoder, Long and Nix add:

Contracting in expeditionary operations is not new. What is new is the scope and magnitude of the roles that contracting and contractors play in today’s military operations. Lack of planning and sound contract integration at the

strategic level leads to inefficiencies ineffectiveness, and in many cases, outright fraud.

Commanders cannot ignore this rapidly evolving trend. The exposure of the 3044 Marines and the OCS process needs to become a critical part of the logistics as a warfighting function.

F. MANPOWER

As stated in the introduction, the DoD has expanded its requirements for contractor support, but has not yet developed a capable workforce, especially, in its Active Duty ranks. As one respondent puts it:

Every time logistics capabilities and capacities are cut by the Marine Corps, it is expected that OCS picks up the slack to support via commercial capabilities. However, the 3044 MOS has not been expanded in order to meet these new logistics requirements. The MOS is always robbing one MLG to support another MLG. According to the Total Force Data Warehouse Information, the 3044 MOS is the 3rd most deployed logistical MOS in the Marine Corps. The 3044 Op Temp is close to those of the ground combat MOSs.

The MC has historically always been the smallest military branch. The MC prides itself on doing more with less. However, this highly demanded MOS would benefit from an expansion of force in order to relieve the overworked 3044 Marine. The exact size and capability of this 3044 force is outside the scope of this research.

G. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented an overall analysis of the responses from the survey as well as the comparison with the AF and Army. The survey showed that 3044 Marines do not seek financial incentives. Neither are they concerned with the quality of their leadership but rather want a standardized way to be trained and to train others. They want the Marine Corps to recognize the importance of their contribution to the MAGTAF mission while also ensuring they have the right number of 3044 Marines to fully support that mission. And lastly they want a stable officer corps that will maintain a level of continuity to ensure that their career development stay on the right path.

The analysis of the survey showed that many of these issues are not new. However, in order to narrow the scope and maintain the research objective, the following chapter will provide a summary, conclusions, and recommendation of the findings.

VII. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. SUMMARY

The objective of this research was to assess the current 3044 career path and development while benchmarking it against the AF and Army current contracting career path and development. This objective was accomplished by analyzing current training gaps, current trends, and areas of improvement. This research has analyzed current MC, AF, and Army good practices and lessons learned, and have created a set of recommendations that will guide the 3044 career field in the path to becoming a more competent force.

After a thorough analysis of the current MC 3044 OCS enlisted career model, the AF career model, the Army career model, and the survey responses from the 3044 community, this chapter will detail the top four recommendations resulting from this research. The intent of these recommendations is to meet the overall objectives of this project which are to identify gaps, analyze current trends, and find areas of improvement for the 3044 MOS career path and development. The recommendations herein also have additional considerations, namely funding and manpower, that were outside the scope of this research and are recommended as topics for further research at the conclusion of this chapter.

B. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research completed to advance our objective yielded four recommendations regarding the training and career progression of 3044 OCS Marines, which have been formalized in the chapter.

Table 2. The Top Four Recommendations Resulting from this Research

1. Create a University Accredited Entry-Level Marine Contracting Course (MCCB-1) for Enlisted 3044 Marines
2. Create a follow-on Level I (MCCB-2) certification course
3. Create Marine Contracting Development Courses (MCDCs) similar to the AF CDCs
4. Create an Advanced Contracting Chief’s Course (similar to other MC MOSs)

1. Create a Basic Marine Contracting Course (MCCB-1) for the NEW Enlisted 3044 MOS

One of the primary research objectives of this work was to identify critical training gaps and areas of improvement for the enlisted MC OCS community. The first recommendation addresses a best practice for standardizing entry-level training for new 3044 lateral movers. Currently, all new 3044 lateral movers are required to first attend and successfully graduate the AF entry-level AFCAC before officially receiving the contracting MOS. Although the Marines typically perform in the top 5 percentiles among graduates at this course (D. M. Brooks, personal communication, February 8, 2018), they receive zero DAU course credit, zero college credits, and no Marine specific contracting training. Consequently, once returning to their commands to complete their two-year OJT period, they must start DAU training from the very beginning while simultaneously trying to balance their normal OJT Marine duties and completing off-duty education requirements. It is a significant workload that can be reduced by establishing an accredited MCCB-1 for the 3044 MOS. Recommend that HQ MC Contracting I&L establish this course and offer it once annually for all prior fiscal year 3044 lateral movers. There are multiple benefits associated with establishing a MCCB-1:

- Uniform standard and curriculum for all entry-level OCS Marines
- Three of six DAWIA CON level I certification requirements complete upon graduation (see recommended course curriculum)

- Majority of the 24 college business credits required for DAWIA certification completed

Currently, many OJT Marines do earn some college business credits after completing DAU level I courses; however, the number of credits is highly dependent on what university they are enrolled. To make this process more efficient, it is recommended that Headquarters MC Contracting I&L establish an agreement with a college/university to ensure that all students are receiving the same quantity of business credits upon graduation from MCCB-1. This will allow the OJT Marines to return to their parent commands to concentrate on learning the MOS and not having to attend off-duty education as well. Additionally, it is recommended the Headquarters MC Contracting I&L establish an agreement with DAU to provide qualified instructors, per 10 U.S. Code § 1724, (<http://icatalog.dau.mil/onlinecatalog/CareerLvl.aspx>) to teach the CON level course material and/or establish a contract with a private accredited company to teach the courses.

Table 3. Recommended MCCB-1 Curriculum

COURSE NUMBER	COURSE TITLE	COURSE LENGTH
CON 090	Federal Acquisition Regulations Fundamentals	20 Days / 4 weeks
CON 100	Shaping Smart Business Arrangements	5 Days / 1 week
CON 121	Contract Planning	5 Days / 1 week
N/A	OCS Intro/PD2 Practical Application/Capstone Exercise	10 Days / 2 weeks
	TOTAL	40 Days / 8 weeks

2. Create a Follow-On Level I Marine Corps Contracting Course (MCCB-2)

Similarly, the second recommendation is for Headquarters MC Contracting I&L to create a follow-on level I certification course (MCCB-2) for OJT Marines that addresses both the training and career progression research objectives. One of the major challenges associated with effectively integrating new 3044 OJT Marines into the MOS is how to ensure they are being properly trained and certified within the mandatory two-year period and when these various training requirements should take place. The objective is to make the process as efficient and effective as possible while not overloading the OJT Marines

with all of the educational requirements at one time. Currently, there is no uniform structure on how this is accomplished. Once the OJT Marine completes AFCAC they typically begin requesting a resident class seat at DAU for CON 90. The time frame it takes OJT Marines to complete CON 90 varies widely on current availability and their leadership. Some Marines, for example, may attend CON 90 shortly after completing the Apprentice course, while others may wait six months. This is also true for the other resident level CON courses as well. One way to eliminate this training variance is by creating the MCCB level courses (MCCB-1 and MCCB-2). It is recommended that a second Marine Contracting Course Basic (MCCB-2) course is created for OJT Marines to attend approximately 18 months after completing MCCB-1. The primary focus of MCCB-2 will be to complete the remaining CON level courses required for level I certification, while also incorporating a contingency course and final CDC exam. The prerequisites for MCCB-2 will be MCCB-1 and the four continuous learning web courses required for level I certification (Table 4).

Table 4. Recommended MCCB-2 Curriculum

COURSE NUMBER	COURSE TITLE	COURSE LENGTH
MCCB-1	Marine Contracting Course Entry Level	40days / 8 weeks
CLC 033	Contract Format and Structure for DoD eBusiness Environment	N/A
CLC 057	Performance Based Payment and Value of Cash Flow	N/A
CLC 058	Introduction to Contract pricing	N/A
CLC 059	Fundamentals of Small Business for the Acquisition Workforce	N/A
CON 124	Contract Execution	3 Days
CON 127	Contract Management	2 Days
CON 170	Cost and Price Analysis	10 Days
CON 234	Contingency Contracting	5 Days
N/A	Capstone and CDC Test	5 Days
	TOTAL	25 Days

PREREQUISITES

Benefits:

- All graduating students will be DAWIA level I complete
- Provides uniform training for all new 3044 Marines with their peers and provides them opportunity to develop a positive professional network

- Students will leave with most, if not all 24 business credit hours completed
- 3. Create Marine Career Development Courses (MCDCs) Similar to the AF CDCs**

Another important objective of this research was to identify ways to standardize the training required for the 3044 Marines. Currently, outside of the AF Contracting Apprentice course and the DAWIA education requirements, 3044s have no other examinations or development courses to ensure they are meeting minimum competency requirements at various stages of their career progression. As discussed previously, the AF has developed self-paced CDCs that all Apprentice and Journeyman must successfully pass before moving to the next skill level. The CDCs provide a review, practice exercises/problems, and a final examination that test the competency of the Airmen and ensures that they have met a minimum standard before moving to the next skill level. It is recommended that a senior MC contracting working group develop a similar CDC program for the Marines to assess their competency as they progress through each DAWIA certification level. Developing a CDC program will also provide a good opportunity to test the 3044s on Marine specific operational contracting skills as well. It is recommended that two MCDC modules are created, Level I and Level II, that Marines will be required to pass before officially becoming certified at each level. Upon graduation from MCCB-1, for example, Marines would be provided MCDC Level I Module, which they would be responsible to work through prior to their arrival at MCCB-2. Similarly, the final exam at MCCB-2 will be the MCDC Level I exam. There are multiple benefits associated with the creation of the MCDCs:

- Establishes a minimum and uniform competency standard required of all 3044 Marines throughout their career progression
- Establishes another platform to incorporate and reinforce specific Marine OCS business practices

4. CREATE AN ADVANCED CONTRACTING CHIEF COURSE

The final recommendation to improve the current 3044 career model is for Headquarter MC Contracting I&L to create an Advanced Contracting Chief Course (ACCC). Each MC regional and MLG operational contracting office have senior Procurement Chief billets that serve as the senior enlisted contracting advisors and manage the day-to-day operations for their offices. The transition from a Contracting Specialist to a Procurement Chief the Marine is moving away from the tactical duties of writing contracts to more operational/strategic duties of managing workload, creating and enforcing policy, problem solver, and mentor/teacher. Typically, these billets are reserved for E-8 Master Sergeants or senior E-7 Gunnery Sergeants. It is a very critical billet that has significant impact on the overall success of these offices and the community as a whole, while also playing a huge role in the development of the 3044 Marines. However, unlike most Marine Corps MOS', the 3044 does not have an advanced senior enlisted level course to properly prepare senior 3044 enlisted Marines for this transition. Similar 'logistical' concentrated MOSs like the Financial Management Resource Analyst 3451, the Supply Chain and Operations Specialist 3043, and the Warehouse Clerk 3051, for example, all have advanced level courses for their senior enlisted community members (MOS Manual, 2017). The ACCC would be a required course for all career contracting Marines (senior E-6 Staff Sergeants and E-7 Gunnery Sergeants) to be considered for the rank of E-8 Master Sergeant and the Procurement Chief billet. The main focus of this course would be to concentrate on the 'contract management' functions that are inherent to the Procurement Chief billet: personnel career management, workload management, mandatory reporting processes, purchase request vetting/procedures, appropriations law, and networking, to name a few. Additionally, like most career level courses, ACCC will provide another great platform for senior enlisted collaboration and networking while they progress to another phase of their careers.

C. FURTHER RESEARCH

At the conclusion of this thesis and in answering its primary objective, some topics were introduced that fell outside the scope of the research. These topics have the potential

to improve the Marine OCS force's mission and long-term growth. Furthermore, these topics offer other perspectives and analysis which could be utilized to develop a Marine OCS structure that could prove to be more efficient in achieving its mission. The topics are below.

1. Manpower Capacity,

Does the Marine Corps currently have the appropriate manpower capacity to support MAGTAF operations worldwide? If not, what does that number and assignments look like.

2. Permanent Officer Corps

Through the research, the authors found literature regarding this subject, however, further research is needed to determine the feasibility of creating a permanent MOS 3006, OCS Officer; and whether this MOS should be either a Warrant Officer, a Commissioned Officer, or both.

3. Funding and Logistics

This research's recommendations aimed to establish a primary and follow on schools for 3044 Marines at different levels of their careers. However, further research needs to be conducted to discuss the logistical and funding plan to establish these schools.

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