

Army Warrant Officer Broadening Assignments

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During my Warrant Officer Senior Service Education (WOSSE), our Small Group Leader asked, “What makes a warrant officer?” It is a question that drives discussion but has a deep meaning. The question isn’t about the purpose of a warrant officer or what we bring to the table. However, the essence of the question is how one becomes a warrant officer and continues being one, as opposed to an enlisted service member or a branch-qualified officer with an area of concentration (AOC). To find the answer, one would have to look at the definition of a U.S. Army Warrant Officer. As each nation does not utilize warrant officers differently, there are even slight differences between the DoD services. The warrant officer classification system (2025) defines a warrant officer as:

An officer appointed by warrant by the Secretary of the Army based upon a sound level of technical and tactical competence. The warrant officer is the highly specialized expert and trainer who, by gaining progressive levels of expertise and leadership, operates, maintains, administers, and manages the Army’s equipment, support activities or technical systems for an entire career.

While many individuals could draw different conclusions from the statement above, progressive expertise for an entire career alludes to the core of making a warrant officer. Making a proficient warrant officer requires progressive assignments that allow individuals to hone their technical expertise for the entire time they are in military service. Assignment varies for each servicemember but is controlled by regulation and policy and is not arbitrarily given to warrant officers.

Warrant Officer Assignments

Army policy for Warrant Officer assignment requires that Warrant Officers be assigned to positions in their grade. Still, it may be one grade lower or higher and must be classified with the officer’s primary military occupational specialty (MOS). The warrant officer MOS system is a structuring of codes authorized for the occupational classification of warrant officer positions (Department of the Army, 2025b). Additionally, the warrant officer standards of grade (SG) tables provide the authorized duty title abbreviations, standards of grade (SG) for tables of distribution and allowances (TDA), tables of organization and equipment (TOE) and modified TOE (MTOE) for each warrant officer occupational specialty (Department of the Army, 2025c). While these documents reference the available positions for specific WO MOS, they do not provide a clear pathway for individuals to plan for future assignments. Other products offer this type of information quickly so that anyone can view and decide on their career, as seen in Figure 1.



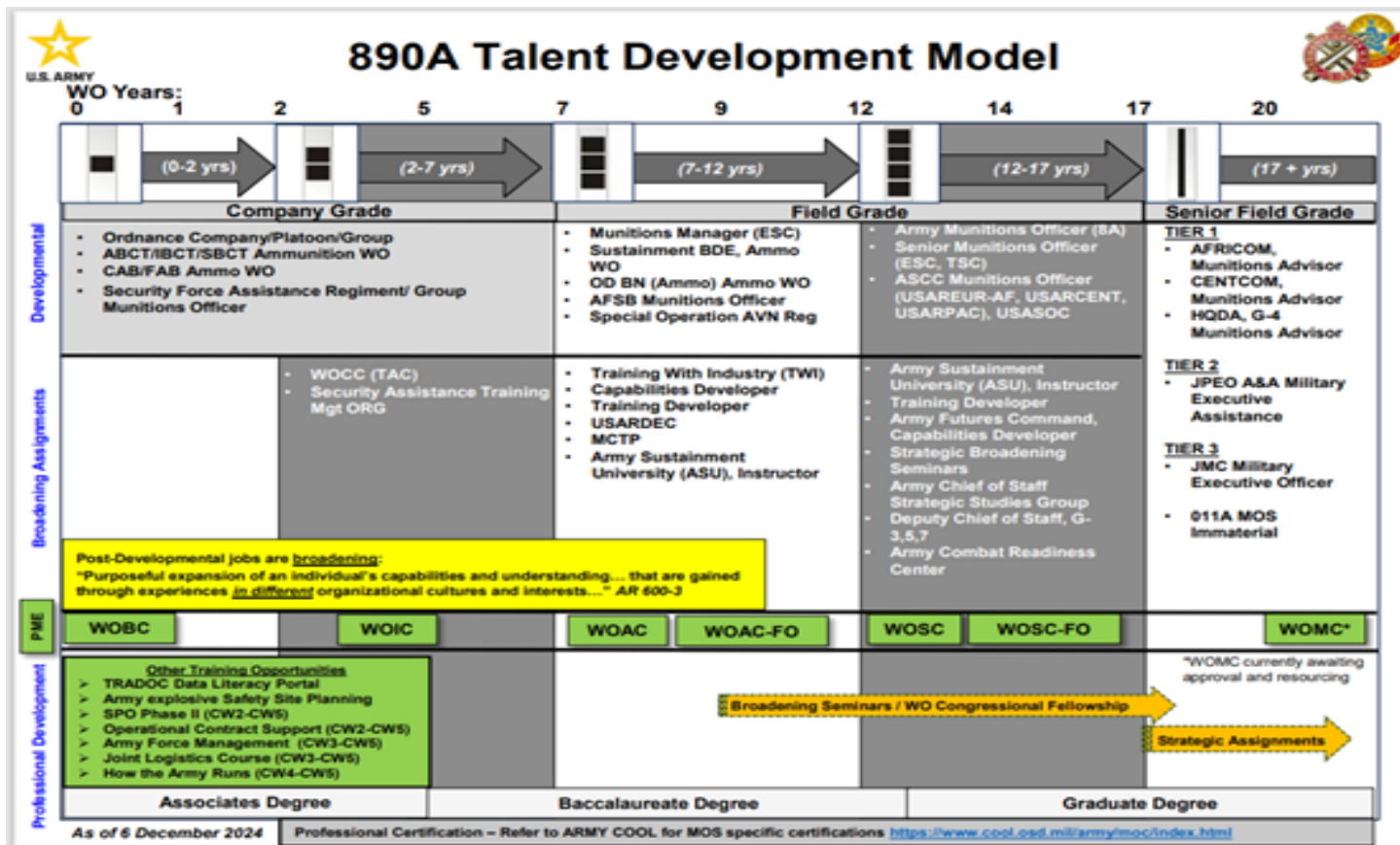


Figure 1. MOS 890A Talent Development Model (Ammunition Warrant Officer)

The Professional Development Model (PDM) provides a standardized framework, career information, and professional development for warrant officers. This model, created for each Branch by the branch proponent (Army Career Tracker, 2025), displays key operational, developmental, institutional, and broadening assignments and PME and civilian education goals. It serves as a roadmap for warrant officers, helping them understand the various career paths and the skills and experiences they need to develop to progress in their careers. Similarly, the U.S. Army G1 Publications page Smart book offers career charts (Talent Development Model) by functional area (FA) and Branch and lists by military occupational specialty. A complete listing of available Warrant Officer Positions can be found on the Force Management System (FMSWeb) and Army Career Tracker websites. At the same time, all officer positions are developmental. Generally, with exceptions, Warrant Officers can consider TOE assignments as developmental and TDA assignments as broadening positions (Department of the Army, 2025a).

Developmental and Broadening Positions

First, warrant officers must understand that broadening positions provide the opportunity to develop knowledge, skills, and behaviors critical for future career objectives within a branch and the Army. This is a subject that I struggled with, serving in a broadening assignment myself. I had the opportunity to serve under not just one but two formal regimental warrant officers now working in the commercial sector. My former view was that I should conduct the mission in the Operational Army. The advice was that broadening assignments must be done, but the gains are only realized after moving on and returning to the operational Army. Warrant Officers should view broadening as a focused growth offered through opportunities, both internal and external assignments in the Army. These assignments enhance key warfighting skills and provide a more extensive view of the level of responsibility, a deep understanding

of the center of excellence interoperability, and branch-related generating force actions that contribute to warrant officer development. They create innovative and adaptive leaders outside of the operational force who will, in turn, return, which is a key developmental step in warrant officers.

These assignments enhance key warfighting skills, a more extensive view of the level of responsibility, a deep understanding of the center of excellence interoperability, and branch-related generating force actions that contribute to warrant officer development. That creates innovative and adaptive leaders outside of the operational force who will, in turn, return, which is a key developmental step in warrant officers. While the Warrant Officer cohort does not have pre-defined key developmental assignments, if we did, specific broadening assignments would be for senior warrant officers. The broadening process varies according to demand within specific branches and may include a nominative process. All available broadening opportunities have different scopes, responsibilities, and developmental outcomes, but most broadening assignments fall within the five major categories.

Tactical, Functional, or Institutional

Tactical broadening is an assignment directly related to a warrant officer's MOS or Branch but develops a more comprehensive range of Army-specific skills. The Smartbook for DA Pam 600-3 Officer Professional Development and Career Management (2024) includes assignments such as Observer/Controller (National Training Center or within First Army), Security Force Assistance Brigade, the 75th Ranger Regiment, the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, or other special mission units (SMU). These are different from functional and institutional broadening assignments, which give a deeper understanding of the Army's operations. Functional broadening is closely related to the WO's Branch, such as Ordnance and conducting a Training with Industry (TWI) opportunity with a missile defense contractor. Institutional broadening may be inside or outside the Warrant Officer branch but with force-generating billets. The Smartbook examples include the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), Human Resources Command (HRC), Army Software Factory (ASWF), Artificial Intelligence Integration Center, Army Commands (ACOMs), or regionally or functionally aligned headquarters. At the same time, these broadening assignments are the most common and should be pseudo-key development milestones for senior warrant officer positions. Others are not familiar with the Warrant Officer cohort.

Scholastic and Civilian Enterprise

Academic type of broad assignments provide an experience within a community of scholars, at an institute of higher learning, or in civilian industry. This opportunity offers the warrant officer a new perspective that cannot be obtained from military training or education. An example of this type available for warrant officers is the Army Congressional Fellowship open to Chief Warrant Officers 3 and 4. The Broadening Opportunity Programs (BOP) FY25 (2024) catalog highlights that the Army Congressional Fellowship Program is a 44-month program that includes the pursuit of a Master of Professional Studies (MPS) Degree in Legislative Affairs at George Washington University, service as a Fellow for a Member of Congress, and with a follow-on utilization tour on the Army Staff (ARSTAF) in a congressional-related duty position.

Joint or Multinational

Joint qualification is one of the programs that are not authorized for warrant officers. The assignments are joint duty assignment list (JDAL) billets. Some operational assignments may not be a JDAL billet

for a warrant officer but offer joint opportunities to the Warrant Officer Cohort. These developmental assignments immerse warrant officers in a joint environment requiring a skill set that expands from Army operations to joint understanding within the joint force. This type of developmental assignment also includes working with partner nations. One of the most unique Army assignments is with the only Active-Duty Support Group. The 10th Support Group is a logistical support unit in Okinawa, Japan, and the senior U.S. Army unit on the island. It is often known as the most joint, non-joint assignment in the Army. A developmental assignment with significant interaction with all of the other branches of the military is not officially considered a joint duty assignment on the Joint Duty Assignment List. These assignments are still within the military, but other opportunities remove the warrant officer from the Department of Defense.

Interagency or intergovernmental

These Interagency or intergovernmental assignments are generally at U.S. Government agencies outside of the DoD with governmental agencies. One example is the White House Fellowship, open to all Warrant Officers. Broadening Opportunity Programs (BOP) FY25 (2024) catalog states that the White House Fellowship aims to bring the best and brightest talent in the nation to Washington, DC, to participate in the process of government in the Executive Branch. The program extends beyond the career progression goals of the Army and is more than a broadened assignment, but greater insight to impact service to the nation.

Cross-component

Lastly, the cross-component assignments for active-duty WO in reserve and national guard units and vice-versa are career-enhancing, broadening opportunities that expand knowledge of the Army's capabilities in reserve components. A chance to develop an understanding of COMPO 2 and 3 for active-duty personnel. Which is often overlooked but instrumental in combat operations because some branches have the majority of their capabilities in the other components

Broadening Assignments Benefits

Broadening assignments have been instrumental in developing my skill set and will significantly benefit the organizations and commanders I serve. Now, looking back at the last four years with two key developmental broadening assignments—Functional and institutional- I am well versed in not only the Ordnance Branch but also the Army at large. This insight includes basic and applied research for defense and the underlying funding for defense research and development (R&D) in the functional assignment. Additionally includes course and curriculum design, Program of Instruction (POI) development, and conducting Critical Task Site Selection Board (CTSSB) within my duty title as a training developer in the institutional assignment.

However, the deeper understanding goes into System Training Plan (STRAP), doctrine and policy development, force design updates (FDU), and organizational transformation at the center of excellence level, to name just a few. While anyone can read about all the processes in the How The Army Runs (HTAR) publication, it is a much richer level of understanding to accomplish and genuinely see the institutional Army at work. One of the most significant drawbacks of nominative broadening assignments is that if you are selected and attend any Broadening Opportunity Program, including the Training With Industry (TWI) Program. You must wait 10 years from the program's end date before applying for another Broadening Opportunity Program (U.S. Army Human Resources Command, 2024). This

means that you must be judicious in selecting your broadening assignment instead of a developmental assignment, as you may only get one chance to do a Broadening opportunity.

Conclusion

Warrant Officers master their craft but becoming a truly proficient Warrant Officer goes beyond being a technical expert in systems. The title of expert requires a continuous journey of diverse experiences that shape adaptive leaders capable of impacting the Army beyond specialized roles. Warrant Officers must embrace broadening opportunities presented through varied assignments—Tactical, Functional, Institutional, or even intergovernmental—not as detours but as essential pathways to develop a wide range of technical understanding of system development, enabling them to serve the nation at the highest level. As a warrant officer, you must commit to personal growth beyond your comfort zone in the operational Army. Actively seek those broadening assignments that challenge your perspective and expand your viewpoint. By embracing these challenges, you will enhance your career potential and contribute to an innovative Army prepared to address future complexities.

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