



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE NEGOTIATION & DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROGRAM CONFLICT COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK



CONFLICT COMPETENCE

Conflict Competence is the ability to develop and use cognitive, attitudinal, emotional, and behavioral skills that enhance beneficial outcomes of disagreement and/or dissent while reducing the likelihood of escalation or harm.

DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT COMPETENCE



Conflict Intelligence



Composed Presence



Communication for Influence



Growth Mindset

LEVELS OF PROFICIENCY

Foundational	Sustained application in individual interactions. Expected of all employees.
Intermediate	Foundational proficiency plus sustained application in a variety of situations and within teams and small groups. Expected of an employee who is a supervisor of a team or group of teams.
Advanced	Foundational and Intermediate proficiency plus sustained application in complex situations across large multicultural groups and the organization. Expected of an employee who leads an office/department/organization.
Expert	Foundational, Intermediate and Advanced proficiency plus sustained application in highly complex situations organization and enterprise-wide. Expected of an employee who has enterprise-wide responsibilities and who needs to consistently model behaviors for others.

Definitions for each Dimension of Conflict Competence as well as Illustrative Behaviors for each Level of Proficiency are in the pages that follow.



Conflict Intelligence

Recognizes and acknowledges when there is disagreement and/or dissent and understands the sources and dynamics driving it. Uses context appropriate negotiation, problem-solving, and conflict management skills and processes to strengthen unit cohesion and mission effectiveness by effectively managing difficult situations, disagreement, and dissent.

Foundational

- Acknowledges when disagreement and/or dissent arises.
- Recognizes when conflict is productive and when it is destructive.
- Recognizes potential causes of conflict.
- Understands the difference between positions, interests, and requirements.
- Knows a basic process for resolving disagreements with others.

Intermediate

- Anticipates issues of disagreement and/or dissent.
- Knows and uses different approaches for addressing interpersonal and team workplace conflicts.
- Resolves issues by meeting with team members and takes action to address employee grievances.
- Brings difficult or critical issues into the open at the earliest appropriate moment to prevent escalation.
- Manages conflict sensitively and fairly while avoiding taking sides.

Advanced

- Identifies interrelated issues and concerns to address multiple facets of a difficult issue or conflict.
- Addresses controversial issues based on an understanding of the context and stakeholders to maximize the chances of a favorable outcome.
- Uses conflict management tools, skills, and processes to proactively collaborate with organizational stakeholders to address disagreement, complaints and/or dissent that could affect organizational effectiveness.
- Confronts opposition strategically and observes the conflict with an assessment of the risks and potential damage to the organization.

Expert

- Conducts strategic analyses of the sources and dynamics of disagreement and/or dissent that could affect mission effectiveness.
- Facilitates effectively across the organization with internal and external stakeholders to advance mission effectiveness using negotiation, problem-solving, and conflict management skills and processes.
- Manages conflicts arising at the strategic level due to competing objectives, limited resources, or differing perspectives.
- Understands domestic and international negotiating styles and demonstrates the necessary skills to manage conflict in diverse environments.
- Sets organization policies and expectations for managing conflict and working towards mutually beneficial outcomes.



Communication for Influence

Communicates in a context appropriate manner to achieve a desired outcome. Listens actively and asks strategic questions to create opportunities for stakeholders to share their concerns, requirements, and desired outcomes. Understands how an appreciation of the perspectives, feelings, and motivations of others can foster better communication and reduce misunderstandings. Navigates multiple perspectives to build a common understanding to achieve outcomes one cannot accomplish alone.

Foundational

- Listens attentively and patiently to others to demonstrate they have been heard.
- Asks questions to clarify information.
- Articulates own viewpoint to others clearly and courteously.
- Checks own understanding of others' communication by restating what was heard and asking if understanding is accurate.
- Communicates with sensitivity to others' needs, concerns and interests.

Intermediate

- Provides accurate information to address employee concerns and reduce conflict within the workplace.
- Builds rapport by asking open-ended questions, encouraging others' inputs, and accurately reflecting ideas, concerns or feelings expressed by others.
- Actively listens and responds respectfully to all team members involved in disagreements and demonstrates understanding of opportunities, challenges, and desired outcomes.
- Considers cultural and identity differences of intended recipients of communications to increase likelihood of communication being effectively received.
- Promotes mutual understanding and problem solving among team members to prevent escalation of issues.

Advanced

- Obtains buy-in from teams by communicating complex issues clearly and credibly and by listening to all ideas.
- Expresses one's perspective tactfully and influences others towards beneficial outcomes when addressing organization-level controversial issues.
- Facilitates communication among groups within the organization to promote mutual understanding and achievement of shared goals.
- Mentors others on approaches to improve communication during conflict within and among their teams.

Expert

- Asks strategic questions to elicit understanding when interacting with internal and external stakeholders.
- Communicates effectively among multiple parties with differing needs, cultural norms, and personalities to develop mutual understanding.
- Mentors others to respond effectively and respectfully to situations in which cultural miscommunication and/or barriers arise.
- Engages appropriate stakeholders to build consensus while leveraging enterprise-level problems as a driving force for change.



Growth Mindset

Demonstrates an authentic desire to include, understand, and learn from others with different viewpoints. Possesses the ability to adjust to changes in, learn from, and move beyond conflict conditions and environments. Engages conflicts as opportunities for growth and learning, recognizing that they can lead to improved understanding, stronger relationships, and better decision-making in the future.

Foundational

- Acknowledges the possibility that one's own perspective is not the only valid perspective.
- Assumes responsibility for own actions and the consequences for one's actions and decisions.
- Invites constructive criticism.
- Learns and moves on from challenges, mistakes, and setbacks.

Intermediate

- Expresses genuine curiosity to hear other ideas, perspectives, and experiences.
- Coaches and mentors others on the application of growth mindset principles.

Advanced

- Engages team in after action learning to identify areas for improvement and build on areas of strength.
- Helps others regain motivation and commitment to long-term goals after major difficulties and setbacks.

Expert

- Applies a growth mindset to understand complex systems and their interconnections.
- Inspires and leads the organization by fostering a culture that values growth, collaboration, and development.