



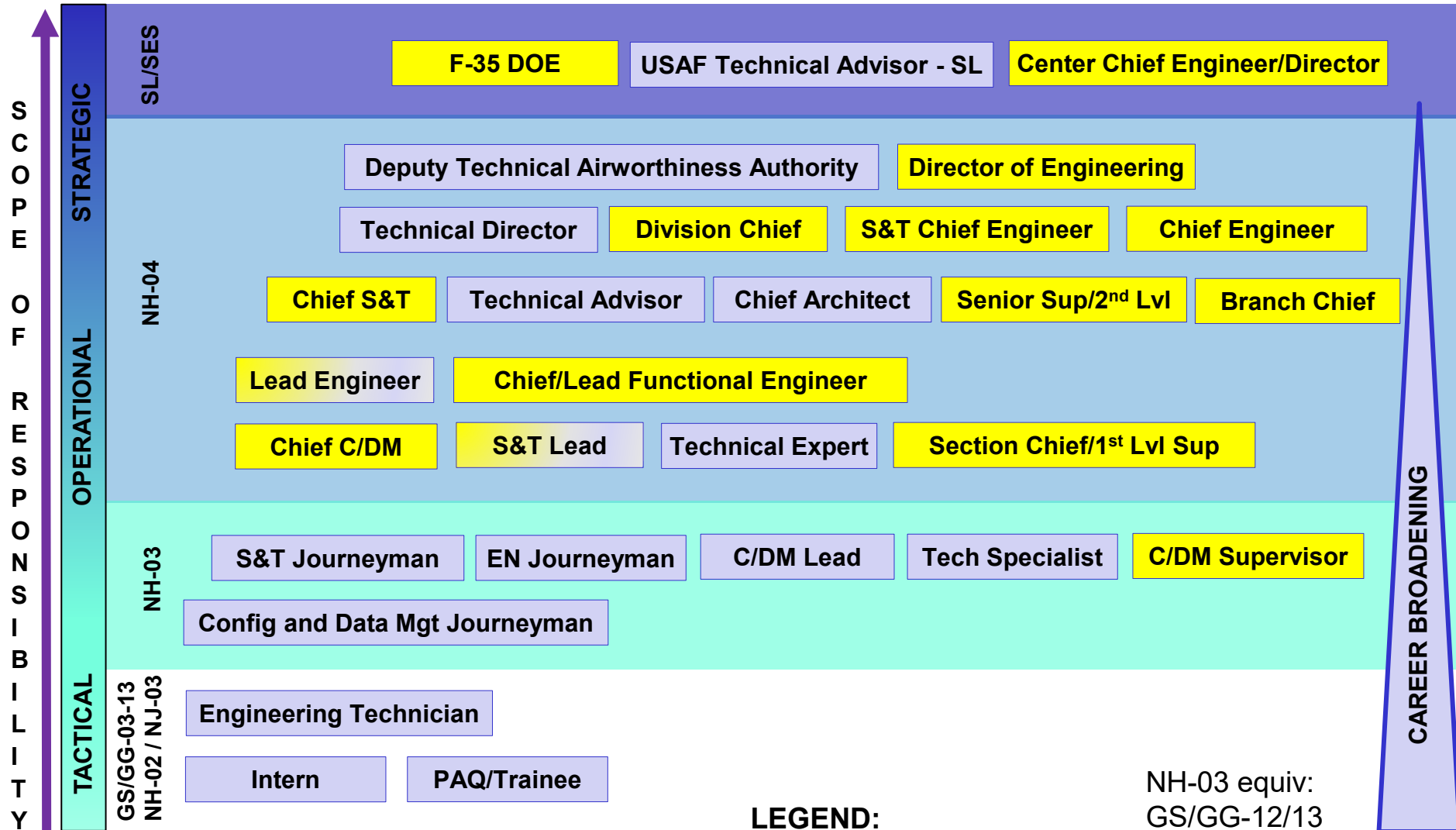
AIR FORCE LIFE CYCLE MANAGEMENT CENTER

ENGINEERING (EN) Career Path Guide



U.S. AIR FORCE

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LEGEND:

This is a sample career path guide only and represents concepts about career progression

Non-Supervisory/Technical
Leader Track

Supervisory/Enterprise
Leader Track

NH-03 equiv:
GS/GG-12/13
NH-04 equiv:
GS/GG-14/15

Jun 2025



Career Path Definitions



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- **GS/GG-03 – GS/GG-13**

- **Intern** – there are several different intern programs:
 - Co-Op Interns are College Students (GS-03 to GS-05) who are enrolled in an ABET Accredited Engineering program.
 - The Pathways Internship Program is designed to provide students enrolled in a wide variety of educational institutions, from high school to graduate level, with opportunities to work in agencies and explore Federal careers while still in school.
 - Air Force Premier College Intern Program (PCIP). College students enrolled in a full-time baccalaureate program may work a 12-week paid internship during the summer. PCIP interns may be non-competitively converted to a permanent appointment as a PALACE Acquire (PAQ).
- **PAQ/Trainee** – U.S. Air Force PALACE Acquire (PAQ) Internship Program is a full-time development program for recent graduates that consists of a 2-3 year rotational in-person experience. Trainees are any employee below the full performance level of their position.
- **Engineering Technician** – technicians who work hand-in-hand with Engineers and other technical specialists in a variety of unique situations, aligned with professional engineering fields (such as aerospace, electrical, or mechanical) with a distinct set of knowledge and skill requirements. The work involves functions such as research, development, design, evaluation, construction, inspection, production, application, standardization, testing, or operation of engineering facilities, structures, systems, processes, equipment, devices, or materials.
- **C/DM Journeyman** – specialists in Configuration and Data Management usually located in a program office. Typical assignments may be to positions requiring extensive expertise in a narrow functional specialty to broad knowledge of several functional specialties. This type of position builds technical depth and applies skills to increasingly challenging issues through a variety of assignments.
- **C/DM Lead** – a subject matter expert in Configuration and Data Management usually located in the home office or a program office. C/DM Leads have demonstrated expertise in one or more of the C/DM disciplines (C/DM planning, guidance, and contractual language; Configuration Item Identification; Parts Nomenclature processing; Configuration baseline establishment, control, and tracking; Configuration verification and audits; Data Management and Data Rights; Deficiency Reporting, Investigation, and Resolution; and Security Focused Configuration Management of Information Systems.) C/DM Leads in the home office usually consult for several program offices and/or coordinate the efforts of others in the branch to develop and deploy training, processes or guidance.



Career Path Definitions



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- **NH-03**

- **S&T Journeyman** – specialists in particular skill areas (Computer Science, Operations Research & Analysis, etc.) usually located in a program office. They may work in the home office supporting several program office tasks. Typical assignments may be to positions requiring extensive expertise in a narrow functional specialty to broad knowledge of several functional specialties. This type of position builds technical depth and applies skills to increasingly challenging issues through a variety of assignments.
- **EN Journeyman** – specialists in particular skill areas (radar, flight performance, training systems, support equipment, structures, environmental compliance, facilities, system safety, etc.) usually located in a program office. They may work in the home office supporting several program office tasks or in a program office supporting one or more skill areas. Typical assignments may be to positions requiring extensive expertise in a narrow functional specialty to broad knowledge of several functional specialties, perhaps including non-technical areas. This type of position builds technical depth and applies skills to increasingly challenging issues through a variety of assignments.
- **C/DM Supervisor** – first level supervisor over Configuration and Data Management personnel in a program office
- **Technical Specialist** - a specialist assigned to one of the home office technical branches who has demonstrated expertise in one or more of the branch functional disciplines. Usually works in the home office consulting for several program offices and/or coordinating the technical efforts of others in the branch to develop and deploy technical processes or other guidance to affect a common technical philosophy for all programs.

- **NH-04** (several definitions derived from AFMCI 62-202, *Criteria for Critical Engineering Positions*)

- **Chief C/DM** – the senior Configuration and Data Manager at the Directorate level (2-Letter level)/OSF. The Director of Configuration and Data Management directly supports the Director of Engineering (DOE) and is responsible to ensure sound configuration and data management technical processes are being implemented. In addition, the Director of Configuration and Data Management provides technical advice to their DOE and ensures Configuration and Data Management Supervisors within their organization are executing their roles and responsibilities appropriately. A Director of Configuration and Data Management is typically a direct report to the DOE.



Career Path Definitions



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- **NH-04**

- **S&T Lead** – serves as an expert authority and consultant for specialized technical disciplines such as Computer Science or Operations Research & Analysis. Provides authoritative advice and assistance in the resolution of complex critical problems to assure that all critical factors have been properly included. S&T Leads may be first-level supervisors or non-supervisors whose grade level is based on technical merit.
- **Technical Expert** – a recognized expert assigned to one of the home office technical branches or in a program office. Serves the branch chief as an expert authority and consultant for specialized technical disciplines that are the area of expertise of the Branch. Consults with various program offices in these disciplines. Provides authoritative advice and assistance in the resolution of complex critical problems to assure that all critical factors have been properly included. Technical experts are non-supervisory NH-04s whose grade level is based on technical merit.
- **Section Chief or First Level Supervisor** – leads small team and provides entry level supervisory responsibility in addition to technical engineering expertise. Provides expert advice and assistance in the resolution of complex technical problems.
- **Lead Engineer** – the senior engineer at the Branch or Integrated Product Team (IPT) level (4-Letter level). A LE directly supports one of the following: Chief Engineer (CE), Deputy Program Manager (DPM), or Branch Chief. A LE's responsibilities include implementing sound systems engineering technical processes on assigned systems, subsystems, or commodities; providing technical advice to their CE, DPM, or Branch Chief, and ensuring engineers within their organization are executing their roles and responsibilities appropriately. The use of the Lead Engineer duty title is limited to those individuals on positions with significant system, sub-system, or commodity responsibility and/or authority, as determined by the Chief Engineer or Organization Senior Functional (OSF). A Lead Engineer typically reports directly to a CE, a DPM, or a Branch Chief. Lead Engineers may be first-level supervisors or non-supervisors whose grade level is based on technical merit. For example, FMS Branch Lead Engineer.



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- **Chief/Lead Functional Engineer** – the lead representative of a major competency area (Chief) or branch (Lead) located in a program office. Provides supervision and/or technical guidance of the personnel assigned in that competency area of responsibility. Assures that the support is adequate and timely as provided from the home office competency manager in support of the program office. The immediate supervisor is normally the CE or Branch Chief. The position is usually supervisory depending on the scope of responsibilities, number and grade of personnel assigned and the significance of the program(s). For example, Chief Avionics Engineer, Lead Flight Systems Engineer.
- **Chief S&T** – the lead representative of a specialized technical discipline such as Computer Science or Operations Research & Analysis typically located in a program office. Provides supervision and/or technical guidance of the personnel assigned in the technical area of responsibility. The position is usually supervisory depending on the scope of responsibilities, number and grade of personnel assigned and the significance of the program(s).
- **Technical Advisor** - a nationally recognized expert in a particular skill area assigned to one of the home office technical divisions or branches. Often works independently in his or her area of expertise and frequently leads teams to resolve major issues. A Technical Advisor is a non-supervisory NH-04 whose grade is based on technical merit.
- **Chief Architect** – provides leadership to define the core technologies necessary to meet Directorate needs including development tools and methodologies, package solutions, systems architecture, security techniques, and emerging technologies. Designs technology architecture to align with enterprise standards, processes, procedures, and targets. Makes technology choices and supervises the quality and implementation of designs.
- **Senior Supervisor/2nd Level** – leads a large team with second level supervisory responsibility or higher. May include program office Branch Chiefs that are second level supervisors or higher. Program office Branch Chiefs support the ML/PM and have multiple Lead Engineers assigned.



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- **Branch Chief** – typically in the home office responsible for planning and directing the work efforts of all the branch's assigned technical and administrative personnel. This includes the support of the program offices and development of branch related technical processes. Also provides career management for all members in the branch's competency area.
- **Technical Director** – in the home office, exercises overall direction of the technical aspects of the functional home office division in supporting the various program offices and in developing technical processes for weapon systems acquisition. In a PEO, serves as the principal engineering advisor to the Director of Engineering. Directs the day-to-day technical activities of the program office and acts for the DOE in his or her absence. Makes engineering recommendations/decisions pertinent to successful development, acquisition, operations, and sustainment of directorate systems, subsystems, components, and support equipment.
- **Division Chief** – provides overall management and leadership of the functional home office division in technical expertise and advice to the various program offices and in the development of technical processes for acquisition of all types of weapon systems. Provides career management to the various employees in the home office and program offices within the functional area.
- **S&T Chief Engineer** – the senior Technical Engineering Authority at the Division level (3-Letter level) in a non-aircraft program. This position provides systems engineering, program management, and engineering technical counsel to the Program Manager (PM) or Division Chief (if not a PM). It defines the scope and rigor of system engineering and program management related technical processes, policies, training, and tools; and ensures implementation of best practices and compliance with higher headquarters policies through technical engineering management. It tailors and applies OSS&E and mission assurance principles to programs as appropriate. In addition, the S&T CE ensures the Lead Scientists and Engineers within their organization are executing their roles and responsibilities appropriately. A S&T CE is typically a direct report to the PM or Division Chief (if not a PM).

Note: Exceptions to typical NH-04 position categorizations will be approved on a case-by-case basis by ENR or CSF



Career Path Definitions



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- **NH-04**

- **Chief Engineer** – the senior engineer at the Division level (3-Letter level) or, the senior engineer of an ACAT 1 program, regardless of its organizational level. The CE directly supports the Program Manager (PM) or Division Chief (if not a PM) and is responsible to implement sound systems engineering technical processes on assigned systems and on behalf of the PM, is responsible to ensure Operational Safety, Suitability, and Effectiveness of assigned systems. In addition, the CE provides technical advice to their PM or Division Chief and ensures Lead Engineers within their organization are executing their roles and responsibilities appropriately. A CE is typically a direct report to the PM or Division Chief (if not a PM).
- **Deputy TAA** – this position supports the USAF Technical Airworthiness Authority in making determinations that air systems are safe and approved for flight operations. This non-supervisory GS-15/NH-04 position oversees the daily activities of the Directorate's airworthiness program and chairs airworthiness boards, represents the TAA in meetings with outside stakeholders, and provides the TAA guidance and advice on airworthiness policy and implementation.
- **Director of Engineering** – a Director of Engineering (DOE) is the senior engineer at the Directorate level (2-Letter level). The DOE directly supports the Program Executive Officer (PEO) or Director (if not a PEO) and is responsible to ensure sound systems engineering technical processes are being implemented and OSS&E is being addressed on systems assigned to their Directorate. In addition, the DOE provides technical advice to their PEO or Director and ensures Chief Engineers within their organization are executing their roles and responsibilities appropriately. A DOE is typically a direct report to the PEO or Director (if not a PEO).
- **USAF Technical Advisor – SL** – an internationally recognized expert in a particular skill area assigned to the Engineering Directorate. Often works independently in his or her area of expertise and frequently leads teams to resolve major issues within AFLCMC. May also provide leadership or support to command or Air Force level teams on major issues. A directorate level Technical Advisor is a non-supervisory SL whose level is based on technical merit.
- **Center CE/Director** – as Director, Engineering and Technical Management, serves as the senior engineering authority and provides overall supervision and leadership for all EN activities in the Air Force Life Cycle Management Center (AFLCMC). This SES position is the leader of AFLCM/EN-EZ.