



# **Marine Corps Total Fitness**

## **Strategic Plan**

October 2023

## BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT

*"And we will take care of our people never sparing support for the health, safety, and welfare of Service Members and their families, as well as our civilian employees."*

- 2022 National Defense Strategy

The Marine Corps provides a multitude of total fitness capabilities, resources, and services to our Marines, Service Members, and families. The Marine Corps requires an integrated framework that incorporates modern approaches to physical, mental, spiritual, and social fitness. **Our program delivery, resource management, and infrastructure development require better integration with current best practices and operational requirements.**

This strategy outlines a detailed **Marine Corps Total Fitness (MCTF) framework that integrates our capabilities** in a manner that prioritizes prevention, leverages and connects existing resources, and develops and delivers capabilities in support of the different domains of total fitness. Science-based and evidence-led practices will inform these efforts to enhance Marine warfighting capability, maximize talent retention, and support modern force design requirements in a rapidly changing 21st century operating environment.

# INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

Warfighter readiness, lethality, and resilience are the top priorities of the Marine Corps. Family and community wellbeing are inseparable components of mission success. We will shift focus from injury and illness to health, wellness, prevention, and performance. The MCTF framework is grounded in the acknowledgement that our people are more important than hardware, and optimal performance is having and maintaining attributes found in the four domains of fitness: physical; mental; spiritual, and social. We will integrate, leverage, and connect our existing capabilities and resources to better enable total fitness across the Marine Corps, which directly contributes to overall readiness.

## LINES OF EFFORT (LOE)

Our three LOEs are described in the body of this strategic plan, and each include various levels and phases of assessment. The MCTF LOEs are:

- (1) Integrated Capabilities
- (2) Policies and Practices
- (3) Training and Education

A dynamic and overarching service-level communication plan will be developed and deployed to educate the Total Force on these changes and how they impact our Marines, Service Members, and families. This communication plan will align all current and future MCTF related communication efforts.

## STAKEHOLDERS

The success of an integrated MCTF framework depends on the coordination and action of a wide variety of stakeholders. This effort will follow a top-down process that is informed through feedback from all levels of the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) and supporting establishment (SE). Particularly important is feedback from small unit leaders – the most critical link in the successful execution of this framework. Deputy Commandant, Manpower and Reserve Affairs (DC, M&RA) and Commanding General, Training and Education Command (CG, TECOM) will lead this effort with support from a variety of DCs / Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) entities, and key stakeholders such as the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps (SMMC).

*“Our ability to innovate is a hallmark of the Corps. It demands rigorous intellectual work, coordination among a plethora of organizations and individuals, and a certain ruthlessness to abandon familiar ideas, capabilities, and platforms which no longer provide relative advantage.”*

- Force Design 2030

## LOE 1: INTEGRATED CAPABILITIES

### INTEGRATED MARINE CORPS TOTAL FITNESS FRAMEWORK

The evolving challenges of the current and future operating environment requires Marines and Service Members to possess high level performance attributes in four domains of fitness (see Figure 1 below). Guided by the premise that our people are our most important asset, the Marine Corps will utilize an integrated capability-based framework to support the total fitness needs of Marines and their families. The integrated, capability-based framework (LOE 1) is the foundational structure of the MCTF strategy. Policy and Practices (LOE 2) and Training and Education (LOE 3) will serve as the hardware that holds the framework together.



*Figure 1 - Marine Corps Total Fitness Attributes Model*

The integrated MCTF framework improves readiness, lethality, and resilience. It also supports family well-being, facilitates personal development, and builds community cohesiveness. The MCTF framework will provide a blueprint for integrated program delivery, resource management, and infrastructure development. It maximizes the utilization of existing resources, creates pathways for improved collaboration, and eliminates gaps in critical services for our Marines, Service Members, and their families. The MCTF framework connects and synchronizes capabilities with policies, practices, training, and education. This integrated capability-based framework creates a single unified system supporting the health, wellness, and performance needs of the Marine Corps at all levels, commands, locations, or circumstances.

Each capability within the integrated framework is in one of three categories: Organic, Direct Support, and General Support. Organic capabilities are assigned to, and form an essential part of, a Marine unit, such as a unit Chaplain, Force Fitness Instructor, and Corpsmen. Direct Support capabilities are executed in direct alignment with the unit's mission requirements and commander's oversight. Examples of Direct Support include Deployment Readiness Coordinators, Athletic Trainers, and Sexual Assault Response Coordinators. General Support capabilities are personnel and resources under the authority, direction, and control of a higher headquarters, supporting agency or service on an installation or region that provides customer-based services to individuals or commands. Examples of General Support include Child Development Centers, Single Marine Programs, fitness and performance centers, and medical treatment facilities. A complete list of Organic, Direct Support, and General Support capabilities will be identified within policy and Marine Corps Training Publications.

The services provided in each of these three categories will be further delineated as "Core" and "Discretionary." Core capabilities will be standardized across installations and commands. These are the most important services and resources enabling Marines, Service Members, and their families to thrive, and will be accessible and fully funded by the Service regardless of a Marine's duty station. The allocation of core capabilities is ratio-based. Discretionary capabilities are tailored to the unit's demographic, location, and mission, as resources permit.

### **MCTF CORE CAPABILITIES**

- Physical Readiness, Development, and Maintenance
- Nutrition, Sleep Science, Recovery, and Performance Education / Support
- Applied Mental Skills, Cognitive Performance, Mental Health Services
- Religious Ministry and Chaplain support
- Professional and Personal Development (e.g., tuition assistance, voluntary education)
- Social Fitness / Community Connectedness
- Medical Services
- Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Resources
- Marine and Family Readiness Services (e.g., transition support, financial management, community counselors, and family advocacy)
- Child and Youth Services (e.g., child care centers)

Some of our MCTF capabilities are currently integrated, however, there is room for continued improvement as we work to integrate program delivery. The MCTF framework links our capabilities across categories so service providers develop and manage resources with a clear understanding of alignment to all other resources within the framework. All non-core capabilities are discretionary, and available for the commander to access as required in support of their units.

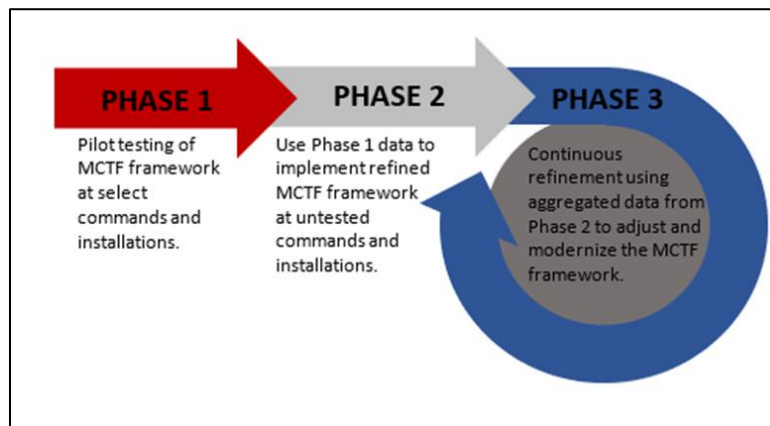
The foundation of the integrated, capabilities-based framework is anchored in prevention and healthy lifestyle programs that are accessible, sustainable, and have proven positive effects on physical, mental, spiritual, and social fitness. These prevention-based programs are prioritized and serve as the foundation for all policy, program development and delivery, resource management, and infrastructure development. We expect the return on investment of our integrated framework to far exceed any initial investment required to set-up and refine it. We will continue to be bold in our leadership, and with this foundational concept in place, primary components will create the structure of the integrated MCTF framework.

## **PRIMARY COMPONENTS OF MCTF FRAMEWORK**

- **Organic, Direct, and General Support categories are the foundation of program development and delivery, resource management, and infrastructure development in support of the MCTF framework.** Policy will align personnel, programs, and facilities to categories and identify capability classification. Every Marine, Service Member, and family will have access to standardized core capabilities regardless of duty assignment and location.
- **Critical pathways will be established to support top-down guidance, and bottom-up refinement.** This includes battle rhythm events to discuss issues, provide solutions, and share best practices from the O-6 level up to the General Officer ranks. The critical pathways will also inform resource allocation decisions at O-6 and major subordinate commands and at the Service level.
- The Marine Corps will optimize existing facilities and, where necessary and feasible, create new **MCTF performance centers and capabilities** using a ratio that takes into account population, specific mission requirements, and location. The MCTF Performance Centers will offer hybrid services from a variety of Organic, Direct Support, and General Support categories in the domains of fitness. Each center will also position mobile service capabilities to units in remote locations or that have work schedules that do not align with normal operating hours. In addition, the MCTF Performance Centers will serve as base stations for satellite operations and the provision of virtual capabilities.
- **The development of a concept of employment at echelon is key to the successful execution of the MCTF framework.** This strategy serves as the concept of employment for HQMC and will be further defined within policy and respective Marine Corps Publications. Concepts of employment are necessary and required at O-6 and major subordinate commands. Small unit leaders and MCTF professionals will collaborate and coordinate within the framework to ensure the capabilities within Organic, Direct Support, and General Support categories are accessible at the appropriate level to Marines, Service Members, and families. This prevents stove-piped and independently executed resources and services.

## LOE 1 NEXT STEPS

- Examine how current organizational structure and alignment facilitate an integrated network of MCTF support. This includes clearly identifying where MCTF capabilities fall within the Organic, Direct Support, and General Support framework.
- Evaluate current staffing practices and strategies in all areas that support the physical, mental, spiritual, and social domains of fitness. This includes coordination with the Navy Manpower in support of Marine Corps manning shortfalls.
- Clearly identify MCTF capabilities as core or discretionary. Identify core capability resource requirements through a ratio-based methodology.
- Develop a clear critical path by which communication, funding, policy, program development and delivery, resource management, and infrastructure development can be functionally efficient and economically sustainable.
- Analyze existing facilities and equipment to develop opportunities for modernization, reconfiguration, and improvement, as well as to determine requirements for MCTF performance centers.
- Plan and conduct a pilot program at select Marine Corps organizations and installations. Figure 2 depicts planned implementation phases.



*Figure 2 - Implementation Phases*

“We will generate a comprehensive, yet succinct and understandable hierarchy of orders and directive that define roles and responsibilities within the enterprise....”

- 38<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps CPG

## **LOE 2: POLICIES AND PRACTICES**

### **POLICY ALIGNMENT**

Development of a MCTF policy requires a thorough understanding of existing policies and methods of integration. Aligning policy with this strategy and providing detailed guidance and requirements for commanders and MCTF capability providers is a priority. Existing policies and programs supporting MCTF will be reviewed to ensure alignment and necessary adjustment to support the MCTF framework. We will incorporate the physical, mental, spiritual, and social domains of fitness, and MCTF methods of integration into policy, training and education, and concepts of employment. The MCTF framework guides all training and education initiatives. Concurrent with policy development, we will identify measures of performance (MOP) and measures of effectiveness (MOE), data collection tools, and assign the office(s) of primary responsibility for continuous evaluation.

### **PRACTICES ALIGNMENT**

In order to enhance the physical, mental, spiritual, and social fitness of our Marines, Service Members, and families, we must leverage promising and current best practices to support total fitness. Our programs' design and delivery must align with research based and evidence led practice. We will develop a lessons learned process to enable dissemination of effective practices, and also identify and resolve negative trends. To properly identify and create effective practices within MCTF, we must cross promote and integrate the services and programs among fitness domains.

As previously mentioned, the development of a concept of employment at echelon is key to the successful execution of the MCTF framework. A concept of employment will be required at O-6 and major subordinate command levels across the total force. Commanding Generals and commanders will have the flexibility to require a concept of employment at lower echelons. The requirements for the concept of employment will be further outlined within MCTF policy and respective Marine Corps Publications. Lastly, the concept of employment will prioritize prevention, leverage and connect existing resources, and develop and deliver capabilities in support of the MCTF framework.

### **LOE 2 NEXT STEPS**

- Develop MCTF Marine Corps Order.
- Review existing policies to identify gaps and redundancies and ensure alignment with the MCTF policy.
- Identify and develop measures of performance and effectiveness for the physical, mental, spiritual, and social fitness domains.
- Develop a lessons learned mechanism to identify and share promising and best practices.
- Develop a O-6 and MSC level command concept of employment template, inspection mechanism and functional area checklist. Draft requirements and



models that enable O-6 and MSC level command to implement concepts of employment.

"Today and into the future, the most important warfighting advantage we have is the mental and physical endurance of our Marines, and their ability to make better decisions under pressure than our adversaries."

- Training and Education 2030

### **LOE 3: TRAINING & EDUCATION**

Advances in health, wellness and performance have outpaced the evolution of educational and instructional materials provided to Marines and families. Various organizations internal and external to the Marine Corps have identified gaps in training and education and taken the initiative to develop materials, classes, courses, and capabilities to address identified shortfalls, such as education in Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR), command financial readiness, sleep science and hygiene, expansion of the Sports Medicine Injury Prevention (SMIP) program, and implementation of the Force Fitness Instructor (FFI) course. Furthermore, the successful implementation of the MCTF framework requires us to deliver the right education and training at the right time.

To do this we will continue to build and update training and education materials to ensure we have a progressive career learning continuum for Marines, as well as enduring programs and resources for family members. Most importantly, we will leverage advances in adult learning and talent management (e.g., pedagogical skill development, facilitation skills, system teaching / coaching) while enhancing training and education in physical, mental, spiritual, and social domains of fitness. All of these efforts will contribute to the sustained transformation of civilians to Marines, enhance force and family readiness, mature the force, and improve the operational proficiency of Marines and the resilience of families.

The Institutional Planning Team will first design a gap analysis tool that is representative of the career / life-long learning continuum across the four domains of fitness. Stakeholders from across the Marine Corps will populate the tool and collectively determine gaps, redundancies, areas requiring standardization and collaboration, and ways to increase return on the investment in developing Marines, leaders, and family members. The FFI Program, Marine Corps Martial Arts Program, and Marine Corps Instructor of Water Survival program may be the first to receive new and revised training requirements. Regardless, research, beta testing, and pilots will be used to determine the efficacy and practicality of any new and refined training and education objectives and materials.

This also includes the exploration and implementation of proven and emerging science and technology (e.g., artificial intelligence and machine learning) to sustain modernization and the review and enhancement of occupational and general fitness

standards and testing. In addition, all MCTF training and education curricula will be evaluated routinely through a formalized review process involving the Inspector General of the Marine Corps (IGMC) by a variety of program subject matter experts from across the Marine Corps to ensure the design, timing, and terminal learning objectives are on point. Finally, by leveraging not only the fitness domain subject matter experts found within our Corps, but also external subject matter experts and those who have tested and implemented similar efforts, we maintain the advantage. We will remain adaptive, inherently flexible as we learn, develop, and grow our understanding of the MCTF framework. By incorporating the MCTF framework into associated training and education components in Marine Corps formal learning centers and doctrine, we ensure continuity and consistency. All training and education equips individual Marines with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to optimize success, and enable the maturation of the force. We must harness and develop the unique skills and strengths of our Marines within the four domains of fitness, so that they remain ready when the Nation is least ready.

### **LOE 3 NEXT STEPS**

- Conduct a gap analysis to identify shortfalls in MCTF training and education across the Marine Corps.
- Ensure training and education learning objectives build resilience and support self-directed access to programs and services.
- Validate and design new and / or improved training and education requirements and standards throughout the life cycle of a Marine, across and with all MCTF stakeholders.
- Draft Marine Corps Tactical Publication on MCTF, as well as Marine Corps Reference Publications for each fitness domain.
- Develop and establish outcomes for new or improved requirements through research, pilot programs, and partnerships with sister Services and external agencies.
- Validate and implement requirements within the training and education continuum, define fitness domain outcomes and codify in Marine Corps training publications.

## CONCLUSION

This MCTF framework is a guide to how we will integrate our capabilities in a manner that prioritizes prevention, leverages and connects existing resources, and cohesively delivers seamless capabilities in support of total fitness. The first step is to physically co-locate the resources wherever possible, and at a minimum ensure they are connected through processes and communications. Integrating physical, mental, spiritual, and social fitness into everything we do prepares us to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow, building a more ready and resilient force.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Eric M. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Eric" and last name "Smith" clearly legible.

ERIC M. SMITH  
General, U.S. Marine Corps  
Commandant of the Marine Corps