

Reimagining Headquarters Initiative Focuses on a Modern, Competitive Civil Air Patrol

What happens if Civil Air Patrol takes on more than it can effectively manage? Finding the answer to that question is the basis for the Reimagining Headquarters initiative now underway.

The impetus was the Board of Governors' charge to National Headquarters managers to ensure "CAP is a competitive, modern organization with the agility and innovation to continue meeting the marketplace needs of our customers and stakeholders."

Chief Operating Officer John Desmarais and Maj. Gen. Edward Phelka, national commander/CEO, recently met with national staff, both employees and volunteers. They discussed the initiative and their intention to make sure the organization is moving in the right direction to achieve the strategic objectives the board set.

"We want to make sure we have the right programs that are properly resourced to set us up for success in the future," Phelka said. "John and I will work together to make sure that our programs get the resources they need to succeed."

"Right now, the demand created by our programs and their operational needs — and the risks associated with our current capacity — are basically unsustainable," he continued. "We want to have the best possible experience for both members in the field and employees."

"We recognize that the experience people have impacts everything. It's job satisfaction. It's satisfaction as a volunteer — do I want to continue to renew my membership?"

A change management team has been assembled to develop solutions allowing CAP to invest resources in a strong core set of programs and activities that make a clear difference to the nation, communities, members, and other stakeholders. The goal is to keep CAP competitive in the marketplace for those looking for an organization where they want to spend their time as a volunteer or provide financial support as a donor. What sets CAP apart from other service organizations and makes it attractive to both potential members and donors?

Change starts with some modifications to the organizational structure, in which all directorates reported to the COO. The new structure realigns parts of the organization under four new positions — three chiefs and one senior director.

The concept is that combining several directorates under one new leader will foster a culture of collaboration, creativity, and continuous improvement, encouraging innovative ideas, solutions, and practices that can address the complex and evolving issues facing CAP.

Several seasoned professionals are taking on new or additional responsibilities.

Kristina Jones is the new chief growth officer. She continues to manage CAP's philanthropic efforts and the CAP Foundation and takes on added responsibility for overseeing Marketing and Strategic Communications directorate. Jones joined CAP's national staff in April 2018 after working as a fundraising and organizational development consultant and strategist.

Michael Nunemaker is the new chief strategy officer. Aerospace Education, Cadet Programs, Operations, and Safety (including Health Services and the Chaplain Corps) are included. After more than 14 years with the Federal Aviation Administration, Nunemaker came to CAP as chief of safety in February 2021.

Mike Valdez serves as the chief mission resources officer, with a broad logistics portfolio including aircraft management, transportation, supply, mail, communications, and small Unmanned Aircraft Systems equipment. Valdez is a U.S. Air Force veteran of 22 years and joined CAP as director of logistics and mission resources in September 2022.

Jared Peregoy is the new senior director of learning, which encompasses education and training, knowledge management, history, and innovation. He has years of experience as an instructional designer and a graduate degree in management information systems. Peregoy came to National Headquarters in February 2018 and most recently served as deputy chief learning officer.

"The new chiefs will focus on achieving priorities," Desmarais said. He described their role as being accountable for coordinating resource needs between the programs and the people who do the work to support them.

"When a project needs support that involves others, the chiefs are there to work 'across the lanes,'" Desmarais said.

For volunteer members across the organization, these changes translate to improved efficiencies and cost savings. That means membership dues and donations can have a greater impact on what CAP can accomplish. It also means priority programs will have the staffing and financial resources needed to be more efficient and effective.

A fundamental theme of the Reimagining Headquarters initiative is to have the right people in the right place with sufficient resources not only to tackle not only existing work but also to dive into innovative programs, expanding the capacity to serve.

As priorities shift, new programs will arise. Those new missions become part of CAP's requirements, creating a constant need to make sure the necessary resources are in place.

"Really, this is about expanding our capability to do the best possible work for CAP and the missions that we have," Phelka said. "Our members and employees do this because we strongly believe that we have meaningful missions.

"We want to be able to accomplish those missions in an efficient and effective way so that we can continue to serve communities, save lives, and shape futures."

Frequently Asked Questions about the Reimagining Headquarters Initiative:

What are we trying to solve? Our capacity to not only manage day-to-day requirements but to devote the necessary resources to effectively achieve CAP's strategic objectives. In our current state, the demand created by our programs, their operational needs, and associated risks are exceeding our current capacity.

What is the guiding vision for this change? From the Board of Governors, "CAP is a competitive, modern organization with the agility and innovation to continue meeting the marketplace needs of our customers and stakeholders."

What benefits do we want to see in any solutions?

- We want to invest our resources in a strong core set of programs and activities that make a clear difference to our nation, communities, members, and other stakeholders, keeping us competitive in the marketplace.
- We want to grow our capacity and agility to explore new opportunities and, when warranted, to integrate new programs or program elements that enhance our value.
- We want to create the capacity for CAP's strategic advancement and for innovation to support that.
- We want to experience increased sustainability and resilience: by aligning our strategy, culture, and values with our opportunities, we can adapt to changing needs, opportunities, and challenges.
- We want to share even more of our potential and successes so we can better compete for more funding, partnerships, and support from various stakeholders.
- We want to ensure employees have career paths and opportunities for growth.
- We want to ensure members and employees experience a reduced burden so they can do their job.
- We want to foster a culture of collaboration, creativity, and continuous improvement so we can encourage new ideas, solutions, and practices that can address the complex and evolving issues we face.

What are the risks if we do not make changes?

- Decreased competitiveness and innovation: we risk losing our competitive edge and may fail to adapt to changing market conditions, customer needs, and technological advancements.
- Increased risk and uncertainty: we risk losing the ability to anticipate, prevent, and respond to potential threats and challenges. This may expose us to higher levels of risk and uncertainty, such as legal, financial, operational, and reputational risks.
- Lowered morale and motivation: we may struggle to communicate our full strategic and competitive potential, purpose, values and culture to employees, members, stakeholders, and partners. This may result in lower levels of engagement, revenue, commitment and satisfaction among stakeholders.

