NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – Learning how to write meaningful Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) is key to being accepted into the Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) Leadership Program. Martin Ahmad, deputy commander, Fleet Readiness Centers (FRC) hosted a workshop Aug. 9 at Patuxent River to provide guidance and tips.

“Your ECQs tell a story,” said Ahmad, who is dual-hatted as director, Industrial Operations for NAVAIR Logistics and Industrial Operations. “It’s not what job you have that gets you into NLDP. It’s your experiences that you’ve had with the work that you did. It’s a demonstration of leadership skill and shows you have the ability to succeed at any organization as you go in your career.

ECQs define the competencies needed to build a federal corporate culture that drives for results, serves customers, and builds successful teams and coalitions within and outside the organization. They are designed to assess executive experience and potential, not technical expertise. The five ECQs that prospective applicants should address include: Leading Change, Leading People, Results Driven, Business Acumen, and Building Coalitions. Each ECQ has sub-elements.

“It’s not about applying for your next job; it’s about showing you are developing the skills and
characteristics of a person who could potentially be a good leader for NAVAIR,” Ahmad said. “As NAVAIR identifies its next crop of leaders, it’s not about a job or technical expertise, it’s about demonstrating those characteristics at whatever level you are. ECQs are about leadership.”

Experience gained away from work can be used in your write-up, Ahmad said. He said one of the best ECQs he read last year while reviewing NLDP applications was about a person’s experience from an outside activity.

“It was someone who was involved in fund-raising for a day care center,” he said. “They put in place a process that over many years raised a lot of funds.”

Ahmad recommended using the CCAR method (Challenge, Context, Action and Result) of writing ECQs.

Challenge is where you describe a specific problem or goal. Context describes the individuals and groups you worked with and/or the environment in which you worked, to address a particular challenge. Action allows you to discuss the specific actions you took to address a challenge. Finally, Result is where you provide specific outcomes that had some impact on the organization. Those accomplishments demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of your leadership skills.

“Every ECQ is a short story, so make it easy to read,” he said. “Use simple words to help your reader understand the story.”

Ahmad is a graduate of the Senior Executive Management Development Program (SEMDP), a predecessor course to NLDP.

“The best training I ever had was SEMDP,” he said. “The classes we took gave you so much insight in to you as an individual and where you were as a leader. Another you get out of it is a much better awareness of the environment, and everyone’s environment is different. If you are focused on this one task, then you have an environment that is different than that from outside of your program office.

“When you go through NLDP, you will gain a very good perspective on the entire Navy acquisition and sustainment environment within the Department of Defense context,” he said. “Once you get that training, you’ll be surprised about how it becomes part of your everyday thought process.”

Ahmad’s sentiments were echoed by panel members John Seaton, Industrial Analysis Branch Head; Amy Cannello, COMFRC director of Requirements and Capabilities, and Adrienne Somerville, COMFRC director of National Business Operations. Seaton is a NLDP graduate; Cannello is expecting to graduate NLDP in December 2018, and Somerville graduated SEMDP.

“There are five week-long learning opportunities and they provide visibility to different areas of the Navy,” Seaton said. “You can usually find some link to what you are doing and better understand why and how what you do relates to something else.”

Cannello said writing ECQs is time well-spent.

“You will use it during interviews,” Cannello said. “You will pull from these ECQs in your Interim
COMFRC, 6.0 leaders provide tips for prospective NLDP applicants

Performance Management System (IPMS) objectives, it forces you to think about outcomes.

“You will establish relationships across NAVAIR and you will find people who can help you,” she said. “You will create relationships you will use for the rest of your career.”

Somerville said mentoring is key to success in NLDP.

“Leadership opportunities allow you to step into a role that is unique for you, to think a little differently and to grow,” she said. “You learn how to think better and how you can contribute organizationally.”

NAVAIR is accepting NLDP applications for the 2019 Cohort now through August 24, 2018. To apply, visit the Developmental Program Tool (DPT) at https://myteam.navair.navy.mil/corpapps/dpt/default.aspx.

For more information about ECQs, see https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/senior-executive-service/executive-core-qualifications/.