



# Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service

## DEFENSE SENIOR LEADER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (DSLDP) OVERVIEW

May 2025

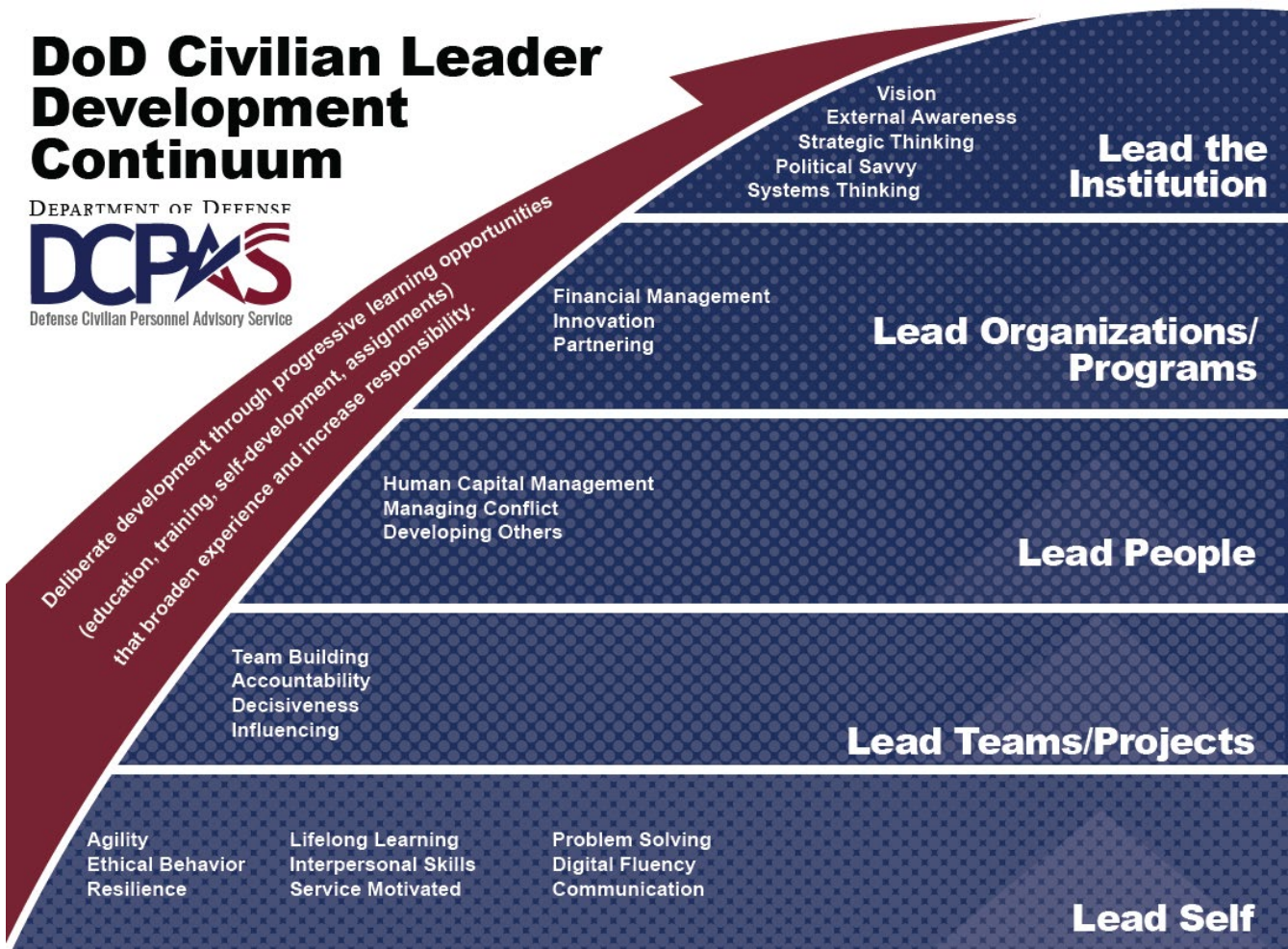
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## 1.0 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Defense Senior Leader Development Program (DSLDP) is the Department of Defense (DoD) enterprise program to develop senior civilian leaders to excel in the 21<sup>st</sup> century joint, interagency, and multi-national environment. This challenging and rewarding program supports the government-wide effort to foster interagency cooperation and information sharing by providing opportunities to understand and experience, first-hand, the issues and challenges facing leaders across the DoD and the broader national security arena. The program provides learning opportunities to enable the deliberate development of senior leaders with the enterprise-wide perspective and competencies needed to lead organizations, people, and programs and achieve results in the joint, interagency, and multinational environment.

DSLDP is a key component of the Department's strategy for growing civilian leaders as outlined in the DoD instruction 1430.16 "Growing Civilian Leaders" and fully incorporates and institutionalizes the DoD Civilian Leader Development Framework and Continuum (CLDF&C). DSLDP provides a competency-based approach to the deliberate development of senior civilian leaders. While DSLDP addresses all civilian leader competencies on the CLDF&C, it emphasizes those competencies at the "Lead Organizations and Programs" and "Lead the Institution" levels of the continuum.



## 2.0 REFERENCES

- A. DoDI 1430.16 Growing Civilian Leaders, August 23, 2022
- B. DoD Civilian Leader Competency Model
- C. DoD Civilian Leader Development Continuum

## 3.0 WHO SHOULD BE NOMINATED FOR DSLDP

DSLDP is designed to prepare high performing civilian leaders, in grades GS14/15 or equivalent, who possess the potential, aspiration and motivation to serve as senior executives, with a competency-based approach for the deliberate development of experience and capability for enterprise-wide success.

Nominees should be individuals who are already leading high performing organizations and programs, or who have the capability to do so, and are identified through their respective Component talent management processes.

## 4.0 PROGRAM ELEMENTS

DSLDP is enterprise leadership in action and is designed to increase the participants' capabilities to support DoD strategic priorities. The program integrates the world-class academic experience of senior-level Joint Professional Military Education, defense-unique leadership seminars focused on the critical issues facing the Department today, and substantive opportunities for individual development. The program features hands-on involvement of current defense and other public sector executives and appointees, along with noted experts from top ranking universities and the private sector. Participants work together and learn from each other as they tackle real-life challenges as a joint cohort. They also benefit by working closely in a one-on-one relationship with a current DoD senior executive, as well as executive coaches, throughout their DSLDP experience. This holistic approach will empower participants to think strategically, envision what is on the horizon, and formulate proactive, competitive solutions that produce results for DoD and the nation.

Specific Program Elements include:

- 4.1 Joint Professional Military Education (JPME): Successful nominees will compete to attend an in-residence senior-level JPME at the Army War College, College of Naval Warfare, Air War College, National War College, or Eisenhower School. These rigorous 10-month Master's Degree programs prepare individuals to assume broader responsibility, expand their knowledge of the national security mission, and strengthen their understanding of complex policy and operational challenges that senior DoD officials face. Although personal preferences and Component recommendations will be considered for these senior-level schools, the DoD selection board will make the final selection. Generally, the board will place participants in a school outside their Component to broaden their experience. Participants are expected to travel to the JPME School to which they are slated.
  - 4.1.1 A three-month online prerequisite Defense Strategy Foundation Course is required prior to attending JPME.

- 4.1.2 Participants who attend JPME are required to sign a Continuing Service Agreement with the Component and serve in the Federal government for a minimum of three times the length of the JPME program after completing the program. (Other Component or organizational policies may apply.)
  - 4.1.3 Some JPME schools may require the participant to obtain a Top Secret (TS) and/or Secret Compartmental Information (SCI) clearance.
- 4.2 **Defense-Focused Leadership Seminars:** A series of seminars (ranging from three to nine days each) will blend real-world learning and powerful, challenging experiential development opportunities. The seminars will provide core knowledge for the enterprise-wide perspective and the opportunity to apply leadership skills in increasingly complex joint and national security environments. These seminars are designed to foster expansion of thought to guide cognition and performance at the executive level. The seminars focus on the interpersonal aspects of leadership and how these skills change at the executive level, solving complex problems in ambiguous environments, creativity and innovation, self-knowledge, and how one operates and negotiates as a leader in a variety of contexts. Each seminar builds on the next to increase perspective and knowledge integration through a series of unique experiential learning activities, participant and facilitator-led discussions from expert, renowned thought leaders and subject matter experts. Participants will attend all seminars as a cohort, thus facilitating a team approach to learning and the development of long-lasting professional relationships. The seminar location will be determined.
  - 4.2.1 Participants are required to complete specific assignments prior to and during each seminar. These assignments will enhance the learning experience as well as aid with the transfer and application of knowledge. Some of the work will include readings, videos, team presentations, and application of knowledge and tools from seminars directly on the job.
- 4.3 **Individual Development:** The goal of individual development is for the participant to demonstrate targeted proficiencies in the critical leadership competencies, to include the enterprise-wide perspective. Feedback from both senior advisors and 360-degree assessments will pinpoint where additional development is warranted to further hone existing competency talents and address identified competency needs. The Senior Leader Strategic Workbook (SLSW) is a journal used to capture specific activities, general reflections, update the Leadership Philosophy and to take notes during Coaching and Executive Advisor sessions. Every participant will select an enterprise-spanning experiential assignment to experience new strategic challenges in new environments and further strengthen their enterprise perspective. The SLSW should be utilized beginning with the orientation session throughout the program and ending with graduation.
- 4.4 **Eligibility for Graduation:** Participants must attend DSLDP Orientation, attend all seminars and associated requirements, complete the Senior Leader Strategic Workbook (SLSW), the Defense Strategy Foundation Course, a Master's Degree at their designated war college (JPME), a four-month (or longer) Experiential Assignment outside the nominees current assignment, mentoring sessions with their assigned SES Executive Advisor, and six (6) coaching sessions with their assigned executive coach. Additionally, participants are required to meet regularly with their Accountability Partners and participate in a cohort Legacy Project.

Upon completion of all program requirements, cohort members will participate in a final structured interview to discern their ability in meeting or exceeding the targeted proficiencies of the critical leadership competencies. Participants will be expected to demonstrate higher order cognition in reasoning and approaches necessary to make the leap to thinking and operating at an executive level. When the participant successfully completes the structured interview and other assessment(s), they will attend a formal graduation ceremony.

## **5.0 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR ATTENDANCE AT DSLDP**

To be eligible to be nominated for admission to DSLDP, an individual must:

- 5.1 Be a permanent, full-time civilian employee of the DoD.
- 5.2 Occupy, on a permanent basis, a position at GS 15 or equivalent, or GS 14 or equivalent with tremendous advancement potential (i.e. demonstrated work at the next higher level).
- 5.3 Possess a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university, as required for admission to JPME.
- 5.4 Have no prior in-residence Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) experience at a Senior Service (War) College; and
- 5.5 Possess a minimum of 1 year managerial or supervisory experience acquired within the last 5 years.

Generally, the ideal DSLDP candidate:

- Is a high performing leader with outstanding potential to serve in more responsible leadership positions across the enterprise;
- Is ready and able to contribute at a rigorous senior-level JPME school (war college);
- Has a broad and varied history of continually progressive experience leading to increased responsibility and broad perspectives with an exceptional performance record
  - In multiple organizations, commands, or Defense agencies;
  - At various organizational levels (operating, staff, headquarters);
  - In a range of related occupational areas; and
  - At multiple geographic locations.
- Has leadership and managerial experience that has demonstrated the competence, confidence, and motivation to be a bold and innovative leader in the public sector;
- Is supported by supervisory and Component recommendations that clearly articulate the candidate's demonstration of qualifications and readiness for DSLDP;
- Demonstrates a commitment to life-long learning;
  - Has succeeded in rigorous programs of formal education, training, and self-development;
  - Has one or more degrees in fields related to his/her occupational specialty; and

- Has successfully completed Component-sponsored leadership programs and other developmental activities toward attaining career goals.
- Has the passion to serve, lead, inspire, and produce results for the DoD;
- Is motivated to succeed and is willing to challenge himself/herself to do so; and
- Submits a complete nomination package that includes compelling examples of accomplishments that demonstrate proficiency in the civilian leader competencies.

## 6.0 APPLICATION AND NOMINATION PROCESS

The nomination process is designed to be rigorous. This extensive process is intended to ensure that only ideal candidates are admitted into the program. DSLDP nominations involve two primary phases: the Component process and the DoD process. Each is described below:

6.1 The Component process: Each Component will establish its selection process and procedures, and apply the criteria as stated in the nomination and selection process, to nominate a slate of candidates for consideration in the DoD process. The use of a detailed checklist is encouraged. Components are to actively market and promote the annual DSLDP solicitation to a wide array of subordinate organizations and activities in order for nominations as a whole to be representative of the Department's demographics. Further, Component nominees should have been identified by leadership based on their observed accomplishments and potential. Components will submit their nominations in rank order and provide the methodology describing how those nominations were prioritized, as well as a detailed statement describing the return on investment (ROI) for each candidate.

6.2 The DoD process:

- Component nomination packages are normally required to be received by the DSLDP Staff by September 1 of each year.
- Packages will be verified for eligibility, required information and completeness.
- Packages will then be submitted to an executive level DoD Selection board, chaired by the Director, Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service (DCPAS) or delegated representative and a Senior Executive Service member or Flag/General Officer from each Component.
- Packages are reviewed by the board, and each nominee will be expected to accomplish a selection interview. The interviews will generally be conducted during the months of October and November of each year.
- Interview results and package scores are assigned based on specific rubrics and the nominee pool is ratified from this process.
- The Director, DCPAS will produce a final ratification for selection of participants for each Cohort. Selectees will be notified by their respective Component and the DSLDP Staff.
- Non-selectees will be notified by the nominee's Component.

## 7.0 NOMINATION AND SELECTION

As stated in section 6.0, the DSLDP nomination and selection process is designed to be rigorous. This will ensure that the most qualified individuals enter the program.

The selection criteria include:

- Proficiency in each of the ECQs and related competencies, as would be expected of a senior leader and outlined below;
- Demonstrated career progression;
- Demonstrated exceptional performance record;
- Educational history that demonstrates the ability or potential to complete the academic requirements of the program, to include a baccalaureate degree from an accredited school, as required for admission to JPME;
- Depth and breadth of experience in one or more of the broad functional areas in which DoD employs managers and leaders, to include at least 1 year of experience supervising or managing people;
- Supervisory recommendation addressing the employee's leadership competencies and potential for broad enterprise leadership responsibilities; and
- Agreement to be functionally, organizationally and geographically mobile, as noted by career progression plans in the nominee's Statement of Interest.

## 8.0 APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Nomination Package: Individuals must be nominated and vetted through their Component. All nominee packages submitted to the DSLDP Program Staff must contain the following information. The application should be submitted in the following order.

1. DSLDP Application (form)
  - I. Nominee Information Sheet
  - II. Supplemental Nominee Information Sheet
  - III. Statement of Interest (500 words or less)
  - IV. DSLDP Supervisor Assessment
  - V. Component Representative/Agency Training Coordinator Attestation confirming a complete package, funding, and continuing service agreement
2. Resume (six page limit – see Appendices below for example)
3. Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ) Statements (One page per ECQ – see Appendices below for example)
4. Performance Rating (most recent)
5. Academic Transcript (for each degree)
6. Biography (see Appendices below for example)
7. Letter(s) of Recommendation - 1 required, up to 2 additional optional

The DSLDP Application Forms can be found at the following web link:

<https://www.dcpas.osd.mil/learning/civilianleaderdevelopmentbroadeningother>

***Applications and supporting documents that do not clearly articulate eligibility, or are incomplete, will not be considered.***

JPME application requirements: Upon selection, final nominees selected for DSLDP will be slated for a specific JPME institution. Upon ratification, each individual selected for DSLDP will also be notified of the JPME institution they have been slated to attend. Separate JPME applications will be required for each JPME institution.

*Note: Those with prior in-residence JPME experience at Senior Service (War) College (Army War College, College of Naval Warfare, Air Force War College, National War College, or Eisenhower School) will be disqualified.*

## 9.0 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 9.1 DSLDP is not a Senior Executive Service (SES) Candidate Development Program. Program elements are designed to enhance one's readiness for top leadership positions. While successful completion of the program does not imply eligibility for or guarantee promotion, DSLDP graduates are highly competitive for more responsible and challenging positions.
- 9.2 All elements of the program will be accomplished in approximately 28 months.
- 9.3 To remain in the program, participants must demonstrate progress toward completion of program elements and targeted competency proficiencies.
- 9.4 Travel and per diem associated with approved DSLDP activities are paid for by the participant's organization.
- 9.5 Participants will benefit from the sound advice, honest discussion and feedback of Executive Advisors (EA) at the executive (SES or General/Flag Officer) level assigned by the DSLDP Staff. In addition, participants will be assigned an Executive Coach.
- 9.6 Beyond EAs and Executive Coaches arranged by DSLDP, participants are encouraged and expected to independently seek out and work with other executive-level mentors.

## 10.0 APPENDICIES

### BIOGRAPHY SAMPLE

**Name** Title  
**Component/Organization**

*<Insert a One Paragraph Narrative beginning here>*

**CAREER CHRONOLOGY:**

- 
- 
- 

**COLLEGE:**

- 
- 
- 

**SIGNIFICANT TRAINING:**

- 
- 
- 

**CERTIFICATIONS:**

- 
- 
- 

**AWARDS AND HONORS:**

- 
- 
- 

**PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS AND ASSOCIATIONS:**

- 
- 
-



**RESUME TEMPLATE (maximum of 6 pages)**

Please be sure to include all of the following items:

**Contact Information:**

Name

Home: Address, Phone, Fax, and E-mail (optional)

Work: Address, Phone, Fax, and E-mail (required)

**Education:**

School(s) (name and location)

Degree earned, graduation date

Major field of study for each undergraduate and graduate degree

Non-degree studies:

School, location, major field of study, undergraduate/graduate credit hours earned

**Experience/Work History:**

Dates, title, grade, agency/company, location, responsibilities/achievements. Focus on results. Be sure to highlight position(s) involving formal supervisory experience. Also, include grade/rank for each position.

**Defense/Government Sponsored Training** (to include leadership training):

School and course title, date (include sponsoring institution, e.g., Defense Systems

Management College, Information Resources Management College/NDU, OPM FEI or

Management Development Centers)

**Skills/Accomplishments:**

Skills, e.g., computer, languages; publications; certifications; licensure; clearances

**Activities and Honors:**

Community service, awards, professional memberships, hobbies

## Executive Core Qualifications

### Guidance for Nominees

When preparing ECQ write-ups, please cite specific and current examples of accomplishments and reflect a level of proficiency in each as would be expected of high performing senior civilian leaders in DoD.

The Challenge-Context-Action-Result (CCAR) Model **must** be used in preparing ECQ descriptions. The CCAR model involves these components:

**Challenge:** Describe a specific problem or goal.

**Context:** Place the example in its context, i.e., describe the individuals and groups you worked with, and/or the environment in which you worked, to tackle a particular challenge. Explain the complexity of the situation.

**Action:** Discuss the specific actions you took to address the challenge.

**Result:** Give specific examples of the results of your actions to demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of your leadership skills.

While each ECQ narrative should be written in paragraph format, the CCAR approach must be evident in those narratives. **Write-ups are limited to five pages total for all ECQ's.** (Foundational Competencies are cross-cutting; they should be addressed over the complete ECQ narrative).

Also, please adhere to the following:

- Use Times New Roman, size 12
- Be clear and concise
- Write in first person
- Write with the audience in mind: i.e., your supervisor, organization leadership, Component, DSLDP Program Manager, and an executive-level Selection Board
- Spell out all acronyms the first time used
- For achievements and results, focus on recent examples
- Avoid repeating the same accomplishment for different write-ups
- Describe recent education and training that enhanced your skills in each element
- Avoid personal beliefs or philosophies
- If possible, quantify accomplishments/results
- Use the CCAR model while developing the write-ups, but do not annotate specific statements with the four headings (Challenge, Context, Action, and Result)

Write-ups are to cover the 5 core ECQ's, as well as the fundamental competency grouping. It is not necessary to address each sub-competency directly as long as the narrative shows proficiency of the competencies.