



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT  
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Heads and Acting Heads of Departments and Agencies

**FROM:** Charles Ezell, Acting Director, U.S. Office of Personnel Management

**DATE:** May 29, 2025

**RE:** Hiring and Talent Development for the Senior Executive Service

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The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is providing policy, guidance, and timelines to agencies on Senior Executive Service (SES) hiring and development.

The SES was intended to serve as “a corps of top management leaders” that provides “strong executive leadership” and “takes into account the national interest, the achievement of presidential and congressional goals, and simultaneously maintains the soundest management techniques.” S. Rep. 95-969, 67, 1978 U.S.C.C.A.N. 2723, 2789.

The Constitution vests all executive power in the President. *See* U.S. Const., Art. II, § 1. The President, in turn, must rely on subordinate officials like those in the SES to govern. Therefore, SES officials must be recruited, selected, and trained so that they are equipped to respond to “the needs, policies, and goals of the Nation” and implement the agenda that the American people elected the President to deliver. 5 U.S.C. § 3131. Thus, it is crucial that SES officials, who “have enormous influence over the functioning of the Federal Government, and thus the well-being of hundreds of millions of Americans,”<sup>1</sup> are knowledgeable regarding Administration priorities and prepared to execute them efficiently and effectively.

Too often, the broken, insular SES hiring process resulted in the hiring of executives who “engage in unauthorized disclosure of Executive Branch deliberations, violate the constitutional rights of Americans, refuse to implement policy priorities, or perform their duties inefficiently or negligently.”<sup>2</sup> President Trump has directed a sweeping reform of these “broken, insular, and outdated” Federal hiring practices.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, on February 25, 2025, based on President Trump’s memorandum *SES*

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<sup>1</sup> Presidential Trump, Memorandum for the Heads of Departments and Agencies, [Restoring Accountability for Career Senior Executives](#) (“SES Accountability”) (Jan. 20, 2025).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Executive Order (EO) 14710, [Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service](#) (Jan. 20, 2025).

*Accountability*, OPM overhauled SES performance plans in order to prioritize: fidelity to the Constitution, ability to carry out Administration priorities, and ability to drive a high-performance, high-accountability culture that drives results across the government.<sup>4</sup>

To implement the President’s directives and ensure “that the Executive Branch will work together in service of the Nation,”<sup>5</sup> OPM is introducing new, enhanced Executive Core Qualifications that will improve SES hiring and provide the basis for continued development of the SES. OPM is reforming the SES application process to streamline the previous paperwork-heavy, consultant-driven process. OPM is creating SES training programs to ensure that current and aspiring SES are equipped to deliver on key administration priorities.<sup>6</sup> And OPM is strengthening agency Executive Resources Board oversight of the SES to ensure long-term planning and management of the SES by politically-accountable officials.

Together, these changes in hiring, training, development and oversight will drive a cultural shift in the SES—ensuring that it comprises only “the highest caliber of civil servants committed to achieving the freedom, prosperity, and democratic rule that our Constitution promotes.”<sup>7</sup>

## **I. New Executive Core Qualifications**

Federal executives must be selected based on their merit, competence, and dedication to our Nation’s Founding ideals—without regard to race, sex, color, religion, or national origin.

By statute, OPM prescribes Executive Core Qualifications for the appointment of career SES members. 5 U.S.C. § 3393(c)(2). The previous qualifications included unlawful “diversity, equity and inclusion” (DEI) criteria for hiring Federal executives. Those qualifications were inconsistent with the President’s direction that “Federal employment practices . . . shall not under any circumstances consider DEI or DEIA factors, goals, policies, mandates, or requirements.”<sup>8</sup>

To eliminate DEI factors and to align SES hiring with the new SES Performance Plan, OPM is providing new Executive Core Qualifications as follows:

### **Commitment to the Rule of Law and the Principles of the American Founding:**

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<sup>4</sup> OPM, [\*New Senior Executive Service Performance Appraisal System and Performance Plan, and Guidance on Next Steps for Agencies to Implement Restoring Accountability for Career Senior Executives\*](#) (Feb. 25, 2025).

<sup>5</sup> *SES Accountability*.

<sup>6</sup> This guidance applies to all executive [agencies](#), including so-called “independent regulatory agencies” and Inspectors General.

<sup>7</sup> *Restoring Merit*, § 1.

<sup>8</sup> Executive Order 14151, [\*Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferring\*](#) (Jan. 20, 2025).

Demonstrated knowledge of the American system of government, commitment to uphold the Constitution and the rule of law, and commitment to serve the American people.

**Driving Efficiency:** Demonstrated ability to strategically and efficiently manage resources, budget effectively, cut wasteful spending, and pursue efficiency through process and technological upgrades.

**Merit and Competence:** Demonstrated knowledge, ability, and technical competence to effectively and reliably produce work that is of exceptional quality.

**Leading People:** Demonstrated ability to lead and inspire a group toward meeting the organization's vision, mission, and goals, and to drive a high-performance, high-accountability culture. This includes, when necessary, the ability to lead people through change and to hold individuals accountable.

**Achieving Results:** Demonstrated ability to achieve both individual and organizational results, and to align results to stated goals from superiors.<sup>9</sup>

## II. Improved SES Application Method

At present, the SES hiring process requires lengthy, time-consuming essays. This cumbersome hiring process has hurt the government's ability to hire high-caliber SES officials who share American values and possess exceptional skills.

Going forward, agencies shall immediately discontinue the use of 10-page narrative essays in the hiring process.<sup>10</sup> Instead, they shall adopt a resume-only initial application method, with resumes capped at 2 pages. This will align Federal SES hiring with private industry and the Merit Hiring Plan. It will also help agencies achieve a robust applicant pool of top executive talent and reduce the burden and delay associated with applying to the SES. In addition, politically-accountable agency leadership, or designees, should be involved "throughout the full hiring process" for SES officials.<sup>11</sup> This should include, at a minimum, interviewing prospective SES to confirm organizational fit, commitment to American ideals, technical acumen, and alignment with the new Executive Core Qualifications.

By statute, OPM must establish Qualifications Review Boards to certify that SES hires are of the highest quality. 5 U.S.C. § 3393(c). Beginning in FY 2026, OPM will transition from the

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<sup>9</sup> The new Executive Core Qualifications are included in Appendix 1. They will become effective following OPM's validation of this revised model.

<sup>10</sup> This guidance prohibits both Executive Core Qualifications and Technical Qualifications narratives. Agencies may assess whether candidates possess those required qualifications through assessments, interviews, and resume reviews.

<sup>11</sup> *Restoring Merit*, §2(b)(vii).

lengthy narrative essays to a Structured Interview assessment method, based on the new Executive Core Qualifications, for all Qualifications Review Board submissions. In addition, to speed up career SES hiring and reduce delays, OPM is also changing the deadline for Qualifications Review Board submissions, as set forth in Appendix 2.

In alignment with the Merit Hiring Plan, agencies must use validated executive assessments at one or more stages of the SES hiring process. In addition, they are strongly encouraged to use validated supervisory and executive assessments to identify highly-qualified internal SES candidates. Assessments provide an objective measure of an individual's capabilities, potential, and readiness for executive leadership roles. This will ensure that executives are hired based on merit and individual excellence, not race or sex. Agencies are encouraged to use OPM's USA Hire Executive Assessment and/or Assessment Center in designing and implementing executive assessments.

### **III. Enhanced SES Candidate Training and Development**

Federal agencies, in partnership with OPM, must build and maintain a corps of talented SES leadership "to drive the unusually expansive and transformative agenda the American people elected President Trump to accomplish."<sup>12</sup> To further these efforts, OPM is required to "establish programs for the systematic development of candidates for the Senior Executive Service and for the continuing development of senior executives, or require agencies to establish such programs which meet criteria prescribed by the Office." 5 U.S.C. § 3396(a). Previous SES training programs failed to deliver results for the American people in alignment with administration priorities.<sup>13</sup>

To build a pipeline of high performing GS-14s, 15s, and equivalents who have the potential for Federal executive leadership, OPM shall provide a fee-based aspiring executive development program, *Leadership for an Efficient and Accountable Government*.<sup>14</sup> This 80-hour intensive program is grounded in the Constitution, laws, and Founding ideals of our government, and will provide training on President Trump's Executive Orders. It is designed to equip aspiring leaders with the skills, knowledge, technical expertise, and strategic mindset necessary to excel in senior leadership roles. OPM shall deploy this aspiring SES development program by September 1, 2025.

OPM is also responsible under 5 U.S.C. § 3396(a) for the continued development of SES. OPM shall update its current fee-based Federal executive courses to align with the new Executive Core Qualifications and President Trump's Executive Orders. This includes offering the updated quarterly *OPM's Senior Executive Orientation Briefing* and bi-monthly *SES Leading EDGE* programs. Additionally, OPM will build a new SES curriculum and program, *Senior Executive*

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<sup>12</sup> OPM, [\*Temporary Transition Schedule C and Schedule C Authorities and Noncareer Senior Executive Service Appointing Authorities\*](#) (January 20, 2025).

<sup>13</sup> See President Trump, Executive Order 14207, [\*Eliminating the Federal Executive Institute\*](#) (Feb. 10, 2025).

<sup>14</sup> Appendix 4 provides an outline of the program.

*Development Program*, an 80-hour video-based program that provides training regarding President Trump's Executive Orders and other matters necessary to ensure that SES officials uphold the Constitution and the rule of law and effectively serve the American people.

Agencies that operate SES candidate development programs must ensure alignment with Administration policies and the new Executive Core Qualifications. No later than September 30, 2025, agencies with OPM-certified SES candidate development programs are directed to the OPM guidance located at Appendix 5 and to update their current policies to include and implement the requirements set therein.<sup>15</sup> No later than October 31, 2025, all such agencies must submit updated policies for review and approval by OPM. Agencies shall not begin any new program cohorts until their new policy is approved by OPM.

#### **IV. Strengthened Executive Resources Boards**

Agencies must establish Executive Resources Boards to oversee SES staffing, planning, and development at the agency. 5 U.S.C. § 3393(b). *SES Accountability* requires that each agency head assign non-career SES members to chair and serve on the ERB as a majority alongside career SES members. These requirements ensure that effective implementation of the President's policies is at the forefront of agency executive management decisions.

In the past, agencies did not effectively use their Executive Resources Boards to engage in strategic planning and oversight of their SES corps. Going forward, agencies should use their Executive Resources Boards to provide strategic oversight on how executives are hired, managed, and assessed. To implement these changes, agencies are directed to the guidance at Appendix 6 and instructed to update their current policies to include and implement the requirements set therein. In addition, a sample Executive Resources Board charter is included as Appendix 7.

#### **V. Implementation Timeline and Required Reporting**

The following changes to SES hiring and oversight will take effect by October 1, 2025:

- Transition to the updated Executive Core Qualifications;
- Implementation of resume-only at point of application (effective immediately);
- Implementation of the use of executive assessments in agency qualifications and selection processes;
- 80 calendar-day deadline for submission of agency cases to OPM's QRB;
- Replacement of the 10-page narrative assessment with structured interviews; and
- Formalization of Executive Resources Board improvements.

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<sup>15</sup> Templates will be provided separately. In addition, OPM will pursue and complete rulemaking to revise 5 C.F.R. § 412.301 and 302. While that rulemaking is pending completion, agencies shall begin taking actions to modify their policies and practices.

Agencies must report to OPM at [SESPolicy@opm.gov](mailto:SESPolicy@opm.gov) by **October 31, 2025**, that they have implemented these changes. OPM will provide additional support to agencies through executive resources community forums and other tools to facilitate a seamless transition.

For questions and support, please reach out to the below points of contact:

SES Hiring Improvement: [SESPolicy@opm.gov](mailto:SESPolicy@opm.gov)

ECQs and QRB: [QRB@opm.gov](mailto:QRB@opm.gov)

SES CDP: [SESDevelopment@opm.gov](mailto:SESDevelopment@opm.gov)

Aspiring and Ongoing SES Development Programs: [leadersolutions@opm.gov](mailto:leadersolutions@opm.gov)

cc: Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCOs), Deputy CHCOs, Human Resources Directors, and Chiefs of Staff

#### Appendices:

1. Updated Executive Core Qualifications
2. New Qualifications Review Board Submission Timelines
3. Model SES Recruitment Plan and Timeline
4. Leadership for an Efficient and Accountable Government
5. SES Candidate Development Program Guidance
6. Executive Resources Board Guidance
7. Sample Executive Resources Board Charter

**Appendix 1: Updated Executive Core Qualifications**

Meta ECQ	Sub-Competencies
<p><b>Commitment to the Rule of Law and the Principles of the American Founding:</b> This core qualification requires a demonstrated knowledge of the American system of government, commitment to uphold Constitution and the rule of law, and commitment to serve the American people.</p>	<p><b>Knowledge of the American System of Government:</b> Demonstrates understanding and appreciation of the American system of government, including the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, separation of powers, federalism, and the historical development of the American Nation.</p>
	<p><b>Commitment to the Rule of Law:</b> Upholds the principles of the American Founding, including equality under the law and democratic self-government. Ensures the law is applied fairly and consistently.</p>
	<p><b>Civic-Mindedness:</b> Stays up-to-date on important developments in American government and aligns organizational objectives and practices with presidential and public interests. Demonstrates a commitment to serve the American people.</p>
<p><b>Driving Efficiency:</b> This core qualification involves the demonstrated ability to strategically and efficiently manage resources, budget effectively, cut wasteful spending, and pursue efficiency through process and technological upgrades.</p>	<p><b>Fiscal Responsibility:</b> Strategically manages, allocates and monitors financial resources. Aligns priorities and initiatives to justify budget proposals. Monitors expenditures, cuts unnecessary costs, and uses cost-benefit analysis to set priorities.</p>
	<p><b>Managing Resources:</b> Manages resources efficiently and effectively based on current and projected organizational goals, skills, budget considerations, and staffing needs.</p>
	<p><b>Leveraging Technology:</b> Explores emerging technology and potential applications. Incorporates technology to enhance efficiency and achieve results. Ensures access to and security of technology systems.</p>
<p><b>Merit and Competence:</b> This core qualification involves the demonstrated knowledge, ability and technical competence to effectively and reliably produce work that is of exceptional quality.</p>	<p><b>Technical Skill:</b> Possesses the requisite technical knowledge and subject matter expertise to consistently produce timely, high-quality work. Is considered a strong contributor in his or her domain.</p>
	<p><b>Problem Solving:</b> Engages in critical and data-driven thinking when diagnosing root causes and evaluating options. Identifies and promptly addresses the most pressing, high-priority</p>

Meta ECQ	Sub-Competencies
	problems.
	<b>Agility and Resilience:</b> Anticipates and adapts to change, new ideas, new information, and new conditions. Is committed to continuous improvement. Deals effectively with pressure and remains optimistic and persistent, even under adversity.
<b>Leading People:</b> This core qualification involves the demonstrated ability to lead and inspire a group toward meeting the organization's vision, mission, and goals, and to drive a high-performance, high-accountability culture. This includes, when necessary, the ability to lead people through change and to hold individuals accountable.	<b>Accountability:</b> Ensures that employees are appropriately recruited, selected, appraised, trained, and retained. Takes swift action to address performance- or conduct-based deficiencies in employees supervised. Holds self and others accountable for measurable high-quality, timely, and cost-effective results.
	<b>Developing Others:</b> Recognizes and rewards outstanding achievement in others. Develops the ability of others to perform and contribute to the organization by providing opportunities to learn through formal and informal methods. Cultivates a dynamic environment in which employees are not afraid to make mistakes.
	<b>Executive Judgement:</b> Makes well-reasoned, timely, and effective decisions and considers short- and long-term implications. Communicates effectively with stakeholders across all organizational levels, sharing and guarding information where appropriate.
<b>Achieving Results:</b> This core qualification involves the demonstrated ability to achieve both individual and organizational results, and to align results to stated goals from superiors.	<b>Operational Mindset:</b> Effectively translates strategies into actionable steps and processes. Partners effectively with stakeholders to drive adoption and addresses blockers to ensure successful implementation.
	<b>Innovation:</b> Applies creativity to improving products and processes, challenges convention, takes measured risks, and considers ways to simplify and remove unnecessary requirements.
	<b>Strategic Thinking:</b> Formulates objectives and priorities and implements plans consistent with the long-term interests of the organization by evaluating conditions, resources, capabilities, constraints, and organizational goals and values.



## **Appendix 2: New Qualifications Review Board Submission Timelines**

Currently, the [OPM SES Desk Guide](#) directs agencies to submit QRB cases within 90 business days of the closing of an agency's SES vacancy announcement or SES CDP. However, for over 60% of QRB cases submitted, agencies requested an extension (in some cases, multiple extensions) to the 90-day deadline. This practice does not serve to ensure executive hiring is completed in a timely and efficient manner.

Agencies must eliminate these prolonged timeframes. Thus, OPM is implementing an 80 calendar-day deadline for submission of agency cases to the QRB. Agencies will be required to submit QRB cases within 80 days from the closing date of the vacancy announcement. QRB cases that are not approved on first submission must be resubmitted no later than 30 days from the date the case is returned to the agency. OPM will determine, on a case-by-case basis, an appropriate adjustment for agencies to accommodate circumstances involving a QRB moratorium. Extension of the 80-day submission timeline and other exceptions will be rare and must be requested prior to the 80-day timeframe. In addition, agency requests for extension or exception should only be submitted for extenuating circumstances as certified by the ERB Chair. Appendix 3, "*Model SES Recruitment Plan and Timeline*," provides leading practices that enable agencies to successfully improve hiring timelines.

The SES Desk Guide will be revised to reflect these new timelines.

### **Appendix 3: Model SES Recruitment Plan and Timeline**

The strategies identified below support timely and efficient practices that enable agency leaders to most effectively recruit qualified executives of the highest caliber. It is recommended that agencies distinguish between the hiring official (i.e., direct supervisor of the subject position(s) being recruited) who may serve on identification panels, and the selecting official (i.e. head of the agency, component or headquarters office (as delegated)) who serves as the approval authority for candidate selection(s).

<b>Pre-Recruitment Announcement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HR Advisor partners with hiring manager to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Update Position Description (PD) to reflect current role, responsibilities, breadth and scope, and location of position. Should also include proposed Technical Qualifications (no more than 2)</li> <li>○ Update Position Designation Record (PDR) to reflect required position sensitivity and clearance level</li> <li>○ Update organization chart(s)</li> <li>○ Establish/update recruitment outreach plan (i.e. industry partners, academia, etc.) to ensure maximum exposure of vacancy announcement</li> <li>○ (If part of assessment strategy) Identify validated executive assessments that will aid in post-recruitment decisions (e.g., top tier applicants to interview)</li> <li>○ Determine interview questions (should be based on ECQs/ technical qualifications)</li> <li>○ Determine if Permanent Change of Station (PCS) and/or relocation incentives will be authorized</li> <li>○ Determine if a recruitment incentive will be authorized for hard to fill positions</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Identify and obtain approval of panel members (rating and interview)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Notify identified members of their role as a panel member for the subject recruitment action</li> <li>○ Coordinate, set, and reserve future panel meeting dates</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop and draft vacancy announcement and outreach communication</li> </ul>
<b>Recruitment (Vacancy Posting period)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post vacancy announcement for 14 – 30 days (14 days for higher tiered/level positions)</li> <li>• Implement validated executive assessments at a point in the recruitment process to facilitate decision making, including but not limited to during the application process</li> <li>• Following posting:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Distribute outreach communication to constituents, special interest groups, and professional organizations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Promote opportunity at speaking engagements (key leaders)</li> <li>○ Send the selecting official's email to the rating and ranking/interview panel members sharing his or her vision of the ideal candidate(s)</li> <li>● Periodically check vacancy announcement status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide courtesy status of application pool before closing date</li> <li>○ Determine if an extension of the announcement is required based on application data (i.e. low applicant number)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Actively prepare for eligibility determination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prepare standardized materials for panels</li> <li>○ Begin review (if time permits) of applications received prior to closing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Post Recruitment Announcement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Complete eligibility determination and distribute review materials to rating and ranking panel (days 1-15 of announcement closing)</li> <li>● Hold rating and ranking panel preliminary review (days 15-20)</li> <li>● Conduct rating and ranking panel (days 20-25 of announcement closing)</li> <li>● Conduct interview panels (days 26-40 of announcement closing)</li> <li>● Identify and approve selection (includes ERB and selecting official coordination steps) (days 41-60 of announcement closing)</li> <li>● Coordinate initial pay and incentives (if applicable) and issue tentative job offer and receive response (days 61-65)</li> <li>● Prepare candidate for QRB submission (days 66-80)*</li> </ul> <p>* Recommend initiating security vetting and onboarding preparation simultaneously with QRB submission.</p>

#### **Appendix 4: Leadership for an Efficient and Accountable Government**

##### **Leadership for an Efficient and Accountable Government**

This program is targeted toward preparing aspiring senior leaders for increased responsibility, efficiency, and strategic impact. Participants will leave with a practical toolkit of leadership strategies, crisis management skills, and process improvement methodologies that will allow them to thrive in senior roles.

The program is structured in two phases: 1) 80 hours of instruction conducted virtually, and 2) the final two days held in-person in Washington, DC. The curriculum is tailored to enhance leadership acumen, operational efficiency, strategic thinking, and accountability while reinforcing the principles of good governance, adherence to rule of law, and driving efficiency in government operations.

The virtually delivered elements of the course cover:

- President Trump's Executive Orders
- The Constitution and the Founding
- Federal Leadership Foundations
- Strategic Decision Making and Problem Solving
- Crisis Leadership and Resiliency
- Driving Efficiency in Government
- Budgeting and Fiscal Responsibility
- Accountability, Ethics, and Executive Decision Making
- Executive Communication and Stakeholder Engagement
- Leading High Performing Teams
- Federal HR Laws and Policies
- Performance Management, Including Holding Employees Accountable

## **Appendix 5: SES Candidate Development Program Policy**

Federal agencies, in partnership with the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), are responsible for building a pipeline of well-prepared executive leaders (i.e. the Senior Executive Service (SES)) to ensure appropriate Federal executive succession planning. This requires identifying and selecting individuals with demonstrated executive ability and preparing them to drive change and ensure accountability.

Under 5 U.S.C. § 3396(a) and (b), OPM is required to establish programs for the systematic development of candidates for the SES and/or assist agencies in the establishment of such programs which meet OPM prescribed criteria.

SES Candidate Development Programs (CDP) are designed to strengthen ECQ competencies for selected high-performing aspiring executives through a demanding learning and developmental experience. The CDP provides candidates with governmentwide leadership challenges, opportunities to interact with senior employees outside their department and/or agency, interagency training experiences, executive-level development assignments, mentoring, and coaching. This experience boosts participants' executive competencies and expands their understanding of governmentwide programs and issues beyond their individual agency and profession, broadening participants' understanding of missions, programs, core values, and management challenges.

Agency ERBs are responsible for oversight of agency programs and ensuring such programs are effective and valuable in supporting succession planning and candidate development.

### **I. SES CDP Certification Requirements**

Agencies must obtain OPM approval of their proposed SES CDP prior to the start of a program and whenever there are substantial changes to the program. To receive OPM certification, agency policies must include and implement the following requirements:

- Class/Cohort length of up to, but not to exceed, nine months;
- Using one validated executive assessment at program application and at least one validated executive assessment during the program;
- Setting developmental assignments to 120 consecutive days;
- 100 hours of training which include covering strategic planning, financial management, human capital management, human resource management, government efficiency, management and supervision, and accountability;
- A minimum of ten (10) hours of mentoring and a minimum of ten (10) hours of coaching;
- Usage and completion of the OPM-standardized Executive Development Plan;
- Ensuring at least 20% of agency program participants are from outside of the agency; and
- Maintaining a placement rate of at least 40% of program graduates receiving QRB certification.

**Note:** An agency must obtain OPM approval of a single overarching SES CDP policy which establishes enterprise-wide program requirements for the entire agency. An approved agency SES CDP policy will serve as the umbrella Program policy which all agency subcomponents must follow when administering SES CDP cohorts to meet their specific succession planning needs.

## **II. ERB Responsibilities**

Agency ERBs should provide maximum oversight of its SES CDP to ensure a pipeline of ready-now high-performing candidates for appointment to the SES. Oversight may include:

- Controlling selection of candidates for programs to develop new executive talent;
- Establishing and overseeing a mentoring program for executive development candidates;
- Approving Executive Development Plans for each candidate (required);
- Monitoring performance of candidates during the program;
- Approving OPM Qualifications Review Board (QRB) submission for all individuals who successfully complete SES CDPs;
- Assuring certified graduates receive full consideration for agency vacancies leading to appointment to the SES; and
- Evaluating the program and developmental activities and recommending alternative approaches.

## **III. Program Evaluation**

As noted above, SES CDP program evaluation is a requirement for recertification. OPM has developed templates to assist agencies with evaluation of SES CDPs. While the individual evaluation forms are not required for recertification, agencies must complete and maintain evaluations following each class/cohort and utilize the data to identify and implement program enhancements. This information will feed the evaluation due at recertification noted below.

## **IV. Recertification**

Agencies must seek re-certification on a triennial basis. To recertify, an agency must submit the current policy and include a completed program evaluation template. OPM reserves the right to request each class/cohort template which agencies must maintain as part of their records.

## **Appendix 6: Executive Resources Board Guidance**

### **I. Overview**

Each agency is required by [5 U.S.C. § 3393\(b\)](#) to establish one or more Executive Resources Boards (ERB) to conduct the merit staffing process for career entry into the Senior Executive Service (SES). An ERB is the driving force for ensuring and improving the quality of leadership within its agency, and subsequently, the Federal Government. ERB members must be chosen from the key senior officials of the agency and include a majority of senior noncareer members (i.e. PAS, PA, NCSES and SES equivalent).

Typically, ERBs provide advice, counsel, and recommendations for consideration by the agency head relating to the management of executive human resources, including executive personnel policy, utilization, and development.

Ideally, ERBs should maintain strategic oversight and management of the agency's executive resources portfolio, and function as an extended arm of the agency head in policy setting, succession planning, utilization of executive resources, executive development, and evaluation of executive personnel programs.

The ERB, while established for the SES, may also be used to oversee agency personnel matters for other senior positions and systems, such as Senior Professionals (SP) known as senior-level (SL) and scientific and professional (ST).

### **II. ERB Composition and Structure**

Cabinet agencies and agencies managing over seventy-five (75) SES allocations are required, at a minimum, to establish a permanent agency-level ERB and must:

- Appoint a noncareer official serving at least at the Assistant Secretary or equivalent level as the ERB Chair (ideally the Deputy Secretary);
- Appoint another noncareer official serving at least at the Assistant Secretary or equivalent level as the alternate Chair;
- Ensure that senior noncareer officials constitute a majority on the ERB;
- Include permanent and rotating roles;
  - Identify key agency-level positions as permanent ERB member roles, and
  - Identify office or sub-component head positions as rotating ERB member roles; and
- Appoint the agency's Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO) or Deputy CHCO to serve as the Executive Secretary.

Agency-level ERBs may consider establishing component-level ERBs to manage their associated executive resources. However, there should not be more than one ERB per component.

For agencies managing less than seventy-five (75) SES allocations, only an agency-level ERB should be established.

### **III. ERB Roles**

ERBs must oversee and establish policy for managing the executive resources of the agency in line with statute and in line with delegations from the agency head.

#### **A. ERB Chair**

The ERB Chair must ensure the SES corps is optimally positioned to effectively implement the President's policies and agenda. The ERB Chair is responsible for:

- Oversight of ERB procedures and presiding over the ERB;
- Designating the ERB Secretary and alternate ERB Secretary;
- Validating actions that require the full ERB review;
- Providing recommendations to the agency head on executive appointments and policy improvements/adjustments;
- Assigning action items not requiring full ERB review to the appropriate office or approving such actions (the ERB Chairperson should notify board members regarding these actions during the next scheduled meeting);
- Leading ERB meetings (a minimum of one formal meeting per month);
- Approving ERB minutes and directives for distribution to all members;
- Ensuring adherence to procedures; and
- Ensuring timely ERB recommendations/decisions based on factual data.

#### **B. ERB Members**

Individual ERB members act as advisors to the Chair. Board members' responsibilities should include:

- Reviewing and preparing to discuss agenda items before ERB meetings;
- Obtaining any additional information needed to fully participate in the meetings; and
- Identifying, approving, and designating senior agency executives (or appropriate senior agency personnel) to serve on rating and ranking and interview panels for agency SES recruitments.

#### **C. ERB Secretary**

The ERB Secretary should be a non-voting member whose responsibilities include:

- Developing, publishing, and distributing the ERB agenda and meeting schedule to designated ERB members;
- Documenting attendance and recording the minutes of each ERB meeting;



- Distributing final minutes to each member within a reasonable time from approval by the ERB Chair;
- Maintaining a file of applicable regulations, policies, and correspondence pertaining to ERB functions; and
- Establish a formal written ERB policy and charter approved by the ERB Chair (a sample charter is attached as Appendix 7).

ERBs may consider including ex officio (non-voting) members. Experts or consultants should not serve as ERB members due to their prohibition from performing the operational work of the agency.

#### **IV. ERB Responsibilities**

The amount of time and investment required of an ERB member depends on the needs of the agency. However, assigning the full range of executive resources management responsibilities to the ERB has several advantages:

- It ensures the needs and perspectives of all parts of the agency are considered; and
- It ensures the various executive personnel functions are integrated and the SES system is used to further the President's policies and agenda, and agency mission.

##### **A. Mandatory Responsibilities**

The mandatory responsibilities of the ERB are:

- As required by 5 U.S.C. § 3393(b), conduct the merit staffing process for career appointments in the SES, including reviewing the executive core qualifications of candidates for career appointment and making written recommendations thereon to the appointing authority;
- Serve as the approving body for selections to key component-level positions;
- Oversee executive position management and allocation decisions (for larger agencies, this may be delegated to component heads);
- Engage in overall planning and management of executive development programs for SES incumbents, candidates, and managers;
- Approve the individual development plan of each candidate participating in an SES CDP pursuant to 5 CFR § 412.104(d); and
- Identify and nominate to OPM no fewer than 25% of the agency's top executives to serve on QRB panels on an annual basis (required for agencies with more than (10) SES members).

##### **B. Discretionary Responsibilities**

Agency heads, through the agency-level ERB, may delegate certain functions and authorities, or the entire spectrum of executive resources oversight to component-level ERBs. These functions may include overseeing:

- Executive compensation management, including retention strategies;
- Management of the assignment or reassignment, development, and broadening of current executives; and
- Executive performance management (in coordination with the agency-level PRB).

## **V. ERB Meetings**

The ERB Chair may schedule meetings on a regular basis (e.g., every week, every two weeks, every month) or on an “as required” basis. However, the agency-level ERB must meet at least once each month. ERB meetings should be guided by the priority of the agenda items requiring action.

Component-level ERBs (as approved by the agency-level ERB) must be chaired by the head or deputy head of the component or subagency. Component-level ERBs may have functional responsibilities similar to those of the agency-level ERB with respect to all but the top executive positions in the component. Such ERBs, however, normally focus on specific topics and have less scope for setting policy on executive personnel management. If there are ERBs in components or subagencies, as well as an overall agency-level ERB, the working relationship between them should be clearly defined as set by the agency-level ERB.

## **VI. ERB Charter**

The ERB composition and membership should be specified in the charter. A sample charter may be found in Appendix 6 this guidance.

## **VII. Recruitment, Selection, and Staffing**

ERBs are required by 5 U.S.C. § 3393(b) to conduct the merit staffing process for career appointments to the SES. This includes the review of the executive core qualifications of candidates for career appointments and making recommendations to the appointing authority ([5 CFR 317.501\(c\)\(5\)](#)).

Agencies take a broad spectrum of approaches in meeting this requirement. Some agency ERBs are involved in all parts of the recruitment and selection process (i.e., rating and ranking, interview, and selection panels), while other ERBs delegate some or all parts. There are also ERBs that delegate most parts yet maintain responsibility for approving all agency and component selections.

At a minimum, the agency-level ERB must:

- Approve identified senior agency executives to serve on rating and ranking and interview panels;
  - Executives from across components should be considered to serve on intra-component panels, and the ERB should maintain a pool of executives to be readily available;
- Identify key component-level positions for which it will approval all selections (e.g., Chief Financial Officer, Chief Information Officer, Chief Procurement Officer, Executive Director);
- Approve the Best Qualified list for headquarter-level positions; and
- Monitor the recruitment program.

At a minimum, the component-level ERB must:

- Recommend how positions are to be filled (e.g., career, noncareer, limited appointment, reassignment, appointment from executive development pool);
- Approve the Best Qualified list (this is required);
- Monitor the recruitment program; and;
- Interview the top candidates.

To ensure efficient, effective, and timely merit hiring, ERBs must direct the streamlining of SES recruitment to include the adoption of the resume-only method at application (up to a 2-page resume) and in particular, the use of validated executive assessments at one or more stages of the merit hiring process. Executive assessments such as work simulations, reasoning assessments, accomplishment records, and/or situational judgment tests effectively and efficiently identify high-performing and high-potential individuals who possess the ECQs and underlying competencies required for senior executives.

Agencies may use assessment results in the following ways in accordance with applicable law, rule, and regulation:

- to rate and rank candidates and create quality categories for selection to an SES position or SES candidate development program;
- for consideration by executive resources staff and/or the ERB in verifying candidate qualifications and making selection recommendations to the appointing authority; and
- for consideration by the appointing authority in verifying and certifying the proposed appointee meets the qualification requirements of the position.

The above strategies align with private industry practices and help achieve a robust applicant pool of top executive talent. The ERB should also oversee the examination of other methods that appropriately measure candidates' demonstration of the ECQs and underlying competencies and promote timely selection of a best qualified candidate. A model SES recruitment plan and timeline is located at Appendix 3 of this guidance.

## **VIII. Allocation and Position Management**

Under the advice and consent of the agency head, the ERB determines and recommends the number of executive allocations and positions needed, short and long range, and helps forecast executive staffing requirements. This involves:

- Determining impact of anticipated attrition, program dynamics, legislative changes, and budget on the existing executive position structure;
- Proposing how allocated numbers and categories of executive positions and appointing authorities should be used;
- Advising on what biennial and interim allocations should be requested from OPM; and
- Recommending the restructuring of an executive position, its placement in or removal from the SES, and the use of a particular appointing authority.

#### **IX. Succession Management and SES Candidate Development Program(s)**

ERBs may recommend its agency establish an SES Candidate Development Program (SES CDP) as part of their succession management strategy. SES CDPs are OPM-approved developmental programs designed to polish ready high-performing candidates with strong executive potential to qualify them for and authorize their initial career appointment to the SES. Typically, ERBs provide oversight of SES CDPs as an important source of candidates for future SES vacancies and may be involved in:

- Overseeing and controlling selection of candidates for programs to develop new executive talent;
- Establishing and overseeing a mentoring program for executive development candidates;
- Approving Executive Development Plans (EDPs) for each candidate (required);
  - EDPs serve as a continuing roadmap for short and long-term training and developmental activities and are intended to enhance an executive's leadership skills, attributes, and performance.
- Evaluating performance of candidates during the program;
- Assuring individuals who successfully complete SES CDPs are certified for SES entrance;
- Assuring certified graduates receive full consideration for appointment to the SES; and
- Evaluating the program and developmental activities and recommending alternative approaches.

## **Appendix 7: Sample Executive Resources Board Charter**

### **Executive Resources Board (ERB) of [AGENCY]**

#### **I. Authority**

Agencies are required by 5 U.S.C. § 3393(b) to establish one or more Executive Resources Boards (ERBs). ERBs exercise general oversight of executive resources management and function as an advisory body to the agency head in executive position management and staffing, executive development, evaluation of executive human capital programs, and pay policy. ERBs established for the Senior Executive Service (SES) may also be used to oversee other agency personnel programs for positions above GS-15, such as the senior-level (SL) and scientific and professional (ST) pay system.

#### **II. Purpose**

The purpose of the ERB is to ensure effective and efficient use of executives at the top levels of the Department to ensure the success of presidential policy and agenda initiatives and public programs and assist the agency head in making decisions that directly impact agency mission and program results.

#### **III. Coverage**

The [Agency Name] maintains one permanent agency-level ERB and oversees executive action across the agency. The [Agency Name] considers and approves the establishment of component-level ERB and maintains oversight of these ERB. Delegation of certain component-level ERB functions is determined by the agency-level ERB.

#### **IV. Membership**

<b>ERB Title</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Membership</b>
Chair	Deputy Secretary (or equivalent)	Permanent
Member	Assistant/Under Secretary for Administration (or equivalent)	Permanent
Member	Assistant/Under Secretary for Administration (or equivalent)	Permanent
Member	Deputy General Counsel	Permanent
Member	Component Head	Rotating
Member	Component Head	Rotating

Member	Component Head	Rotating
Executive Secretary (non-voting)	Chief Human Capital Officer or Agency-Level Human Resources Director	Permanent

## **V. ERB Functions and Responsibilities**

The [Agency Name] ERB is responsible for all career SES/SL/ST actions in the areas of position management, merit staffing, compensation, executive development, performance management and executive resources planning and evaluation. The ERB is responsible for the merit staffing process for all career SES/SL/ST appointments in the agency, to include approval of key component-level position selections where a component-level ERB is established. In brief, the ERB considers the following proposals for SES positions and members and for SL/ST positions and employees:

- Allocations
- Position establishment
- Recruitment plans
- Selections (key agency-wide positions)
- Reassignments
- Reorganizations affecting SES members and SL/ST employees
- Awards and Bonuses
- Pay adjustments

## **VI. Member Responsibilities**

Each member will be responsible for the following:

- Completing the ERB briefing by the Executive Secretary before serving;
- Reviewing the cases prior to each ERB meeting;
  - In the event of electronic review, or if unable to make a meeting, submitting vote by proxy to [insert e-mailbox] prior to the scheduled meeting;
- Identifying potential issues or questions that may directly impact the ERB decision;
- Recommending refinements of ERB packages to ensure maximum consideration;
- Respecting the opinions and views of peer members during deliberations; and
- Maintaining the confidentiality of cases presented for review.

## **VII. Operating Procedures**

1. A majority of the ERB will constitute a quorum for meetings. The affirmative vote of a majority of ERB members present at such time as a quorum is present shall be an act of the ERB.

2. Office/component submits “cases” to be reviewed and voted on at each meeting. Cases are discussed in the order of the prepared agenda.
3. A senior official from the requesting organization (Head of Component/Secretarial Office) can appear before the ERB to support the action.
4. Presentations last approximately five minutes and allow the Board an opportunity to ask additional questions to inform their deliberations.
5. The Executive Secretary serves as an advisor to Board members during the meeting, providing background information and answering general human resources policy questions.
6. Following the presentation of each case, the Board deliberates and a decision sheet indicating the result of their vote is provided to the Chair for signature.
7. The Executive Secretary notifies the submitting office/component of the ERB decision.

#### **VIII. Schedule**

The ERB meets on a regular schedule. This allows organizations to better plan their workload and make timely executive personnel decisions. Advance scheduling also provides for ERB members’ availability and allows them to work more efficiently and productively. ERB meetings are “principals only,” and are held in the [identify location].

#### **IX. Termination of Service**

The service of each member will end upon the period noted above or as determined by the Deputy Secretary. The Deputy Secretary maintains discretion to terminate the service of a member, at any time, based upon the business needs and the appropriate functioning of the ERB.