



Vanguard Senior Executive Leadership Program -- FY 2027

Program Description: The Vanguard Senior Executive Leadership Program (Vanguard) is the War Department (DoW) enterprise executive leadership program designed specifically for seasoned SES members. Within the context of overcoming evolving challenges to national security, the weeklong in-residence program provides Vanguard participants from the DoW and interagency partners the unique opportunity to explore leadership attributes that build strategic partnerships and enable collaboration across DoW and interagency boundaries. The 5-day/4-night program offers SES members the unique opportunity to form strategic partnerships with top-level executives and to build upon their leadership capability to mitigate increasingly varied threats to national security. The unprecedented challenges facing the Department demand its SES members to lead across an increasingly complex Defense enterprise and interagency environment that is dynamic, integrated, and joint.

Background: The Vanguard program was established in 2011 in accordance with 5 United States Code (USC) 3396, 4103, and 4121, and DoD Directive 1403.03, “The Career Lifecycle Management of the Senior Executive Service Leaders within the Department of Defense.” 5 USC 3396, 4103, and 4121 require Federal agencies to provide continuous development and collaborative learning opportunities for SES members. DoD Directive 1403.03 stipulates SES members must have the background, ability, and skill to lead effectively within and across organizational and functional boundaries, as well as the broad national security spectrum. The strategic objectives of Vanguard also support the DoW Strategic Workforce Plan and the requirements in 10 USC 115b to assess critical leadership skills and competencies as well as provide executive training and development opportunities to address competency gaps and improve proficiency levels.

Target Audience: Career SES members and equivalents:

- Tier 2 and Tier 3 DoW SES members with at least five years of executive experience who occupy positions that demonstrably concentrate on the DoW enterprise and/or interagency environments;
- Non-DoW federal agency SES members in similar capacities; and
- Executives in Defense Intelligence Senior Executive Service, Defense Intelligence Senior Level and Senior Professional (SL/ST) positions.

Allocations: Each session is offered to 30 participants, including approximately 25 from DoW and five from non-DoW Federal agencies.

DoW Component allocations for each session are based on the percentage of executives who meet the target audience criteria, which include: Army (5); Navy/Marine Corps (8); Air Force/Space Force (3); and the Office of the Secretary of War, Defense Agencies & Activities, and Joint Staff (inc. the Intelligence Community and DoW Office of the Inspector General) (9).

Non-DoW federal agencies selected to participate are invited to nominate one executive per session. Non-DoW participants will be selected to increase the breadth of functional experience and interagency perspective of the cohort.



Dates and Location: Vanguard will be offered in FY 2027, from November 16-20, 2026 at the William F. Bolger Center in Potomac, Maryland. **As the training schedule extends beyond the normal duty day, Vanguard is an in-residence course for all participants, to include those residing within the National Capital Region.**

Funding, Meals, Lodging, and Travel: The Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service (DCPAS) funds the Vanguard program instruction and materials for all participants.

- **DoW Components:** DCPAS funds lodging and meals during the program for DoW participants. Sponsoring agencies/components are responsible for participant travel and applicable per diem to and from the training site.
- **Non-DoW Federal Agencies:** Non-DoW federal agencies are responsible for travel to and from the training site, per diem while in a travel status, as well as lodging, meals, and incidentals for the duration of the program.

Course Content: Vanguard is a facilitated, competency-based executive development program that consists of customized national security strategy and leadership content, public and private industry speakers, and experiential learning activities.

DoW Leadership Competencies Addressed: Vanguard develops an enterprise-wide perspective, while fostering proficiency in competencies needed to successfully lead in a joint and interagency environment, to include:

- Vision
- External Awareness
- Strategic Thinking
- Political Savvy
- Influencing
- Partnering

Course Pre-Work: The program includes pre-work with various readings that are essential to the course content. Additionally, a 360° leadership assessment is administered to all participants. Each participant will also have a virtual session with an executive coach to debrief the assessment prior to the program start.

Course Contact: For more information regarding the Vanguard program, please contact the Vanguard program team at dodhra.mc-alex.dcpas-hrspas.mbx.vanguard@mail.mil.