



**PUBLIC SERVICE** RECOGNITION WEEK

# What it Takes to Join the SES

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- Joined OPM in 2019 as Federal Executive Institute Dean of Faculty - also served as supervisory faculty and senior Faculty Member for OPM's Center for Leadership Development.
- Before OPM, served 30+ years in private and public higher education: presidents of both private and public universities; senior vice president at a research university; senior faculty member for doctoral and masters in the business and education.
- Has served as a senior leadership consultant for business and education; chaired national, state, and local boards of directors; established multiple public-private partnerships with state and local governments.
- Received Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree from the University of Kansas, Educational Specialist (Ed.S.) degree from Pittsburg State University, and both Master of Science (MS) and Bachelor of Science (BS) degrees from Western Illinois University. Also a graduate of Harvard University's Institute for Educational Management (IEM).



# Learning Objectives

- Become familiar with the Senior Executive Service (SES) hiring process
- Understand the Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) and how they apply to SES hiring
- Gain strategies for writing strong ECQ narratives and resumes
- Be able to draft a personal action plan in order to prepare for becoming a member of the SES

# About the Senior Executive Service (SES)

- Established by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978
- Members serve in key positions below top Presidential appointees
- Members are selected for their leadership qualifications



# Topics

Senior Executive Service (SES) Selection Process

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Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs)

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ECQ Narrative and Resume

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Plan of Action

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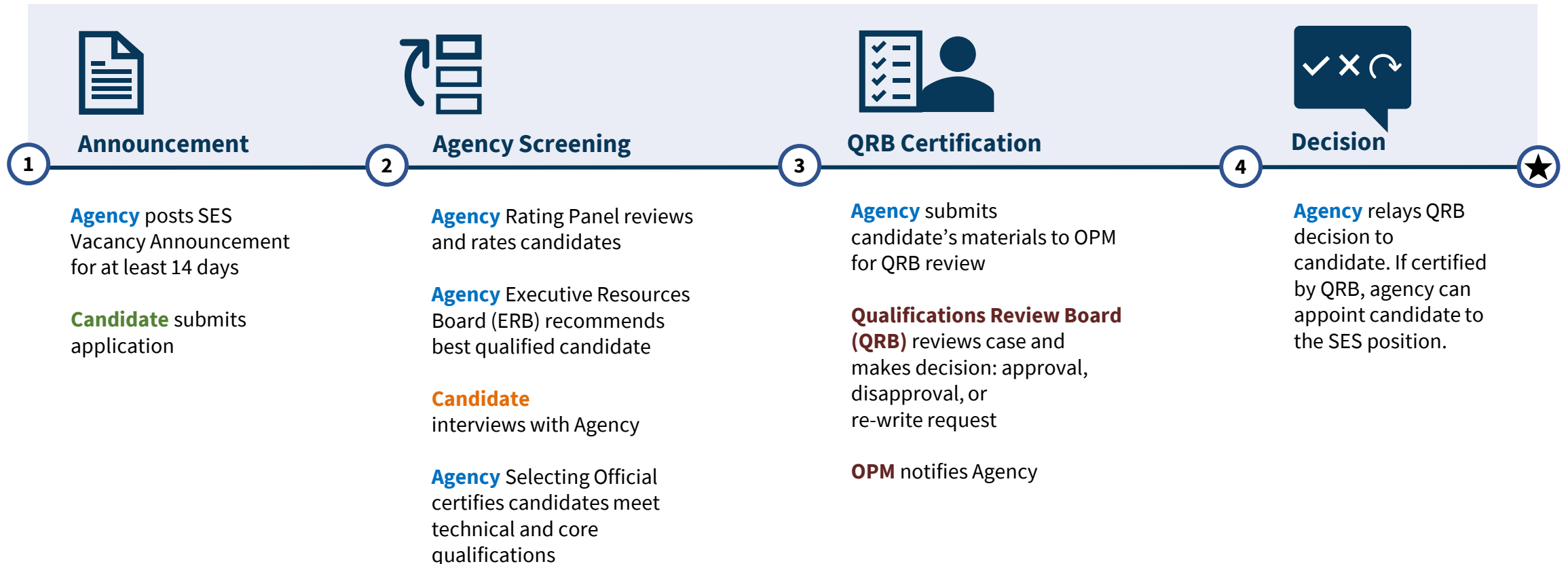
# Senior Executive Service (SES) Selection Process

Understanding the Hiring Process

# Types of SES Appointments

- Career
  - Selected by agency merit staffing process
  - Approved by OPM's Qualifications Review Board (QRB)
- Noncareer
- Limited Term
- Limited Emergency

# Career Hiring Process



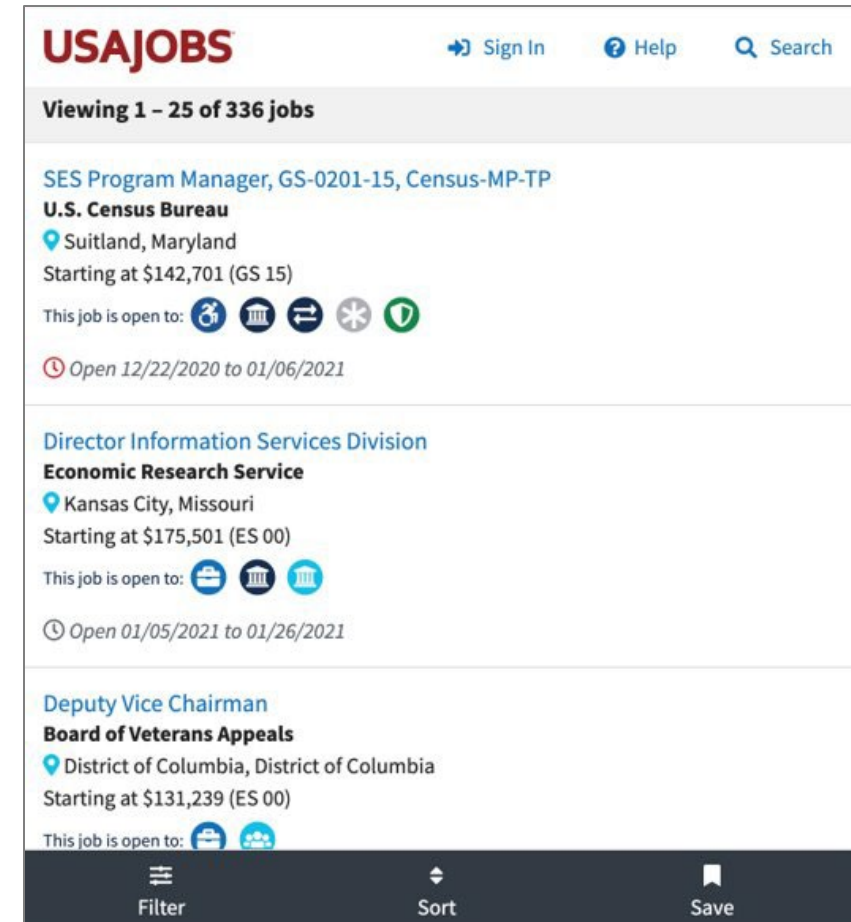


# Vacancy Announcement



Announcements must be posted for at least 14 days and should include:

- Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs)
- Technical Qualifications (TQs)
- Area of consideration: Government-wide or all sources
- Salary range
- Native American preference



The screenshot shows the USAJOBS website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the USAJOBS logo, a 'Sign In' button, a 'Help' button, and a search icon. Below the navigation bar, a grey bar indicates 'Viewing 1 - 25 of 336 jobs'. The main content area displays three job listings. The first listing is for a 'SES Program Manager, GS-0201-15, Census-MP-TP' at the 'U.S. Census Bureau' in 'Suitland, Maryland', with a starting salary of \$142,701 (GS 15). The second listing is for a 'Director Information Services Division Economic Research Service' in 'Kansas City, Missouri', with a starting salary of \$175,501 (ES 00). The third listing is for a 'Deputy Vice Chairman Board of Veterans Appeals' in the 'District of Columbia, District of Columbia', with a starting salary of \$131,239 (ES 00). At the bottom of the screenshot, there is a dark navigation bar with 'Filter', 'Sort', and 'Save' options.

# Agency Screening



- Agency HR specialist performs preliminary review and eligibility determination
  - Rating and ranking of eligible applicants
- Executive Resources Board (ERB) evaluates and recommends best qualified candidates to selecting official
- Selecting official makes selection and obtains approval
  - Work with your agency to review and verify materials to be submitted to QRB

# Qualifications Review Board (QRB)



## Certification

QRB performs an independent peer review and certification of executive qualifications

- Assesses the overall scope, quality, and depth of a candidate's executive qualifications within the context of the ECQs
- Determines whether the candidate has demonstrated executive level expertise

## Members

QRB composed of three SES members

- None will be from your agency
- At least two must be career appointees
- Serve for three-month appointments
- Names of members and their organizations are not released

# QRB Case Dispositions



## Approval

- Candidate is certified
- May be appointed to the SES

## Re-Write

- 1 or 2 ECQs lack evidence
- Candidate is asked to rewrite with the Agency

## Disapproval

- 3+ ECQs lack evidence
- It is possible to resubmit to a new QRB

# Executive Core Qualifications

Understanding the Requirements

# Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs)

Leadership skills needed to succeed in the SES and reinforce the concept of an “SES corporate culture.”



# Six Fundamental Competencies

These should be apparent within the ECQ narratives.

Interpersonal Skills

Oral Communication

Integrity/Honesty

Written Communication

Continual Learning

Public Service Motivation

# ECQ 1: Leading Change

Ability to bring about strategic change, both within and outside the organization, to meet organizational goals.

## INHERENT

- Establish an organizational vision
- Implement vision in a continuously changing environment

## COMPETENCIES



\*Most challenging to demonstrate



# ECQ 1: Leading Change Narrative

## Consider how you might answer these questions:

- What was my organizational vision?
- How did I translate my vision into action? What initiative did I take?
- Did I strategically initiate and implement transformational change?
- How did I deal with unexpected organizational changes/obstacles (to internal/external pressures)?
- Did my vision achieve measurable results that impacted the organization?

# ECQ 2: Leading People

Ability to lead people toward meeting the organization's vision, mission, and goals.

## INHERENT

Provide an inclusive workplace that:

- Fosters the development of others
- Facilitates cooperation and teamwork
- Supports constructive resolution of conflicts

## COMPETENCIES

Conflict Management

Developing Others\*

Leveraging Diversity\*

Team Building\*

\*Most challenging to demonstrate

# ECQ 2: Leading People Narrative

## Consider how you might answer these questions:

- What is the largest staff size I have led? What challenges did leading a large staff present?
- Was I leading versus managing?
- How did I contribute to the professional development of my employees (individually or as a team)?
- How did I deal with conflicts that arose within my team?
- How did I leverage diversity amongst my team (age, cultural, race, skill levels, perspectives)?

# ECQ 3: Results Driven

Ability to meet organizational goals and customer expectations.

## INHERENT

Make decisions that produce high-quality results by applying technical knowledge, analyzing problems, and calculating risks.

## COMPETENCIES

Accountability

Customer Service

Decisiveness

Entrepreneurship

Problem Solving

Technical Credibility

# ECQ 3: Results Driven Narrative

## **Consider how you might answer these questions:**

- How did the priorities and objectives I set lead to high-quality/quantity results?
- How did I address the needs of customers and stakeholders (internal and external)?
- How did my decisions and actions impact results?
- Did I identify problems and implement solutions that resulted in improving services?

# ECQ 4: Business Acumen

Ability to manage human, financial, and information resources strategically.

## COMPETENCIES

Financial Management\*

Human Capital Management\*

Technology Management

\*Most challenging to demonstrate

# ECQ 4: Business Acumen Narrative

## Consider how you might answer these questions:

- What is my experience in creating and administering budgets and resources?
- How did I procure and utilize resources? What obstacles did I face in doing this?
- What was the size of budget and resources I managed? How much money saved?
- What is my experience with a multi-sector workforce? Percentage of backlog eliminated/reduced? Length of processing time reduced?
- How did I utilize technology to create or improve programs?

# ECQ 5: Building Coalitions

Ability to build coalitions internally and with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, nonprofit and private sector organizations, foreign governments, or international organizations to achieve common goals.

## COMPETENCIES

Partnering

Political Savvy

Influencing/Negotiating



# ECQ 5: Building Coalitions Narrative

## **Consider how you might answer these questions:**

- What groups/networks (internal and external) did I partner with to achieve a goal?
- How did I bring groups together? What challenges did I face doing that?
- What did I do to build coalitions?

# ECQ Narrative and Resume

Strategies to Successfully Demonstrate Your Experience

# ECQ Narrative Guidance



- Clearly demonstrate the majority of competencies in **each** ECQ
- Recommend no more than 2 examples per ECQ
  - Avoid using the same example for more than one ECQ
- Recommend using the Challenge-Context-Action-Result (CCAR) Model

# Challenge-Context-Action-Result (CCAR) Model

## Challenge

Describe a specific problem or goal

## Context

Describe who you worked with and/or the environment you worked in to address the challenge.

Note: Don't let the context overshadow your actions and results.

## Action

Discuss specific actions *you* took to address the challenge

## Result

Provide details about the measures/outcomes that had an impact on the organization

# Resume Guidance



Describe your experience, responsibility, and accomplishments in a succinct, clear, and organized manner

- Keep the ECQs in mind
- Show a logical progression of jobs/assignments and include the grade and salary for each job
- Try to use examples that are less than 10 years old
- Include experience in public or private sectors, including volunteer experience

# Resume Guidance (continued)



Focus on **demonstrated executive leadership**; not managerial or technical experience

- Quantify achievements (numbers, percentages, and timelines) and use measurable results whenever possible
- Don't cut and paste the position description into your resume

# Writing and Formatting Tips



- Use 1-inch margins and 12pt font
- Adhere to the page limits and number the pages
- Organize in a clear and easy to follow manner
- Limit introductory summaries to 1 paragraph (counts towards page limit)
- Write in the first person (use “I”)
- Use action-oriented verbs, transitions, and active voice
- Use plain language
- Spell out and limit the use of acronyms
- Proofread

**If selected to move forward to the QRB, accept feedback from the agency’s Executive Resources Specialists.**

# Writing and Formatting Errors



- Describing experience in terms of “we”
- Using bureaucratic words or expressions
- Making disparaging remarks about or name-dropping former managers or colleagues
- Revealing political affiliation or activities
- Describing your personal beliefs, philosophies, or commitment to a social or political cause
- Making vague statements that leave open-ended questions
- Adding ECQ definitions
- Misspellings, grammatical errors, and typos
- Referring the reader to other parts of the ECQ narrative or resume
- Overusing **bold fonts** and underlining



# Plan of Action

Taking a Proactive Approach to Your SES Application

# Plan of Action: How to Get There

1. Conduct a personal assessment
2. Practice writing ECQ narratives
3. Review USAJOBS for SES vacancies
4. Obtain a mentor
5. Take a proactive approach to development

# 1. Conduct a Personal Assessment

- Evaluate your reasons for wanting to be an SES
- Review your experience against the ECQs
  - Do you meet them?
  - Where are there gaps?
  - Where could you be stronger?

## 2. Practice Writing ECQ Narratives

- Start writing ECQ narratives now
- Continuously review and edit
  - It takes time and effort (average 30–40 hours) to create a good package and QRB members can tell when you didn't put in the time
  - Give equal amount of time and energy to each ECQ, and consider spending extra time on ones you're weaker in

### 3. Review USAJOBS for SES Vacancies

- Constantly review USAJOBS for SES vacancies
  - Save searches to receive email notifications for vacancies that meet your criteria
- Apply for jobs within and outside of your agency

## 4. Obtain a Mentor

- Ask if current SES members in your office have served on a QRB board
- Ask your agency's executive resources office
- Investigate if your agency has a mentoring program
- Use your networks

# 5a. Take a Proactive Approach to Development

- In your current role:
  - Take the lead in work groups and projects
  - Take on projects and task forces that require problem solving and application of the leadership competencies
  - Seek out rotation opportunities and details
- Consider volunteer positions outside of work

# 5b. Take a Proactive Approach to Development

## Research Candidate Development Programs

- Programs are announced on USAJOBS as *Candidate Development Program*
  - Create a saved search to be notified when they are open for applications
- At the end of the program, you go through the QRB process
  - Candidates certified by the QRB can be appointed to SES vacancies without further competition



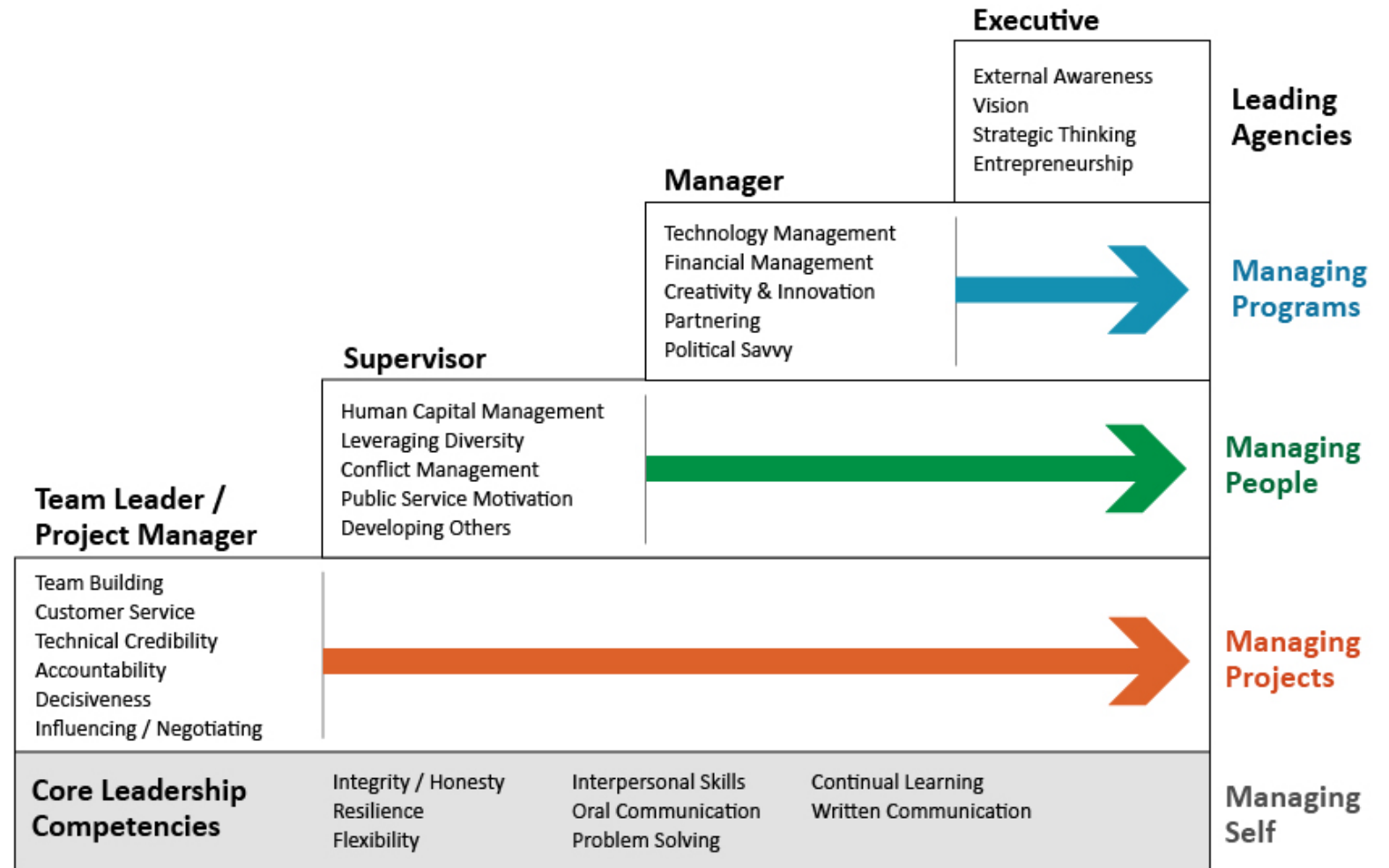
## 5c. Take a Proactive Approach to Development

### **Research leadership development training at OPM's Center for Leadership Development:**

- Leadership for a Democratic Society
- Leadership Competencies: Applying the ECQs
- Leadership Assessment Program

# Leadership Journey

Focus your learning for organizational success



# Additional Reading on Becoming an SES

- [OPM's Senior Executive Service \(SES\) web pages](#)
  - [SES Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Guide to Senior Executive Service \(SES\) Qualifications \(PDF\)](#)
- [Senior Executive Service \(SES\) Candidate Development Programs](#)
- [Center for Leadership Development Courses and Programs](#)

**Questions?**

# Further Questions

Current federal employees should contact their human resources office and Chief Learning Officer for questions regarding agency policies, operations, and trainings related to the SES.

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## **Center for Leadership Development**

*Developing visionary leaders to transform government*

[leadership.opm.gov](https://leadership.opm.gov) | [CLDConnect@opm.gov](mailto:CLDConnect@opm.gov) | 888-676-8001

# OPM's LEAD Certificate Program



**Take charge of your professional development with the right leadership education for your career.**

- OPM's Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) Certificate Program trains tomorrow's leaders today through a combination of five core and elective courses.
- Clear progression across four essential leadership roles supports agency succession planning and helps fulfill Individual Development Plans (IDPs).
- LEAD can also be delivered in a cohort-based format for groups within agencies.

[opm.gov/LEAD](https://opm.gov/LEAD)

[LEAD@opm.gov](mailto:LEAD@opm.gov)

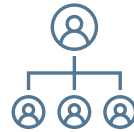
## Aspiring Leader



**Who:** Emerging and aspiring leaders in non-supervisory and non-managerial roles.

**What:** Gain fundamental skills to grow your confidence as a high-performing, rising leader.

## Team Lead



**Who:** Those aspiring to be a team lead or are currently leading teams/projects and have not had team lead training.

**What:** Learn and refine practical skills for building, managing, and participating in teams and projects.

## Supervisor



**Who:** Supervisors in their first year (meets new supervisor training requirement) or supervisors needing refresher training.

**What:** Build skills that emphasize exercising influence and authority, knowing when to lead vs. manage, and fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce.

## Manager



**Who:** Second-level leaders and/or supervisor of supervisors or accountable for success of specific line or staff functions

**What:** Acquire strategies to align operations with priorities, mobilize employees, and create innovative solutions to complex challenges.

# OPM's Center for Leadership Development



## Enhance your leadership potential .....

Take career-spanning [leadership development and skill-building courses](#) or customize them for your agency.



## Improve internal processes .....

Transform programs and people with project-based learning in [human-centered design](#) and [process improvement](#).



## Improve HR capabilities .....

Build a solid foundation of expertise through specialized courses for [federal HR professionals](#).



## Streamline hiring and development .....

Choose from a pool of qualified candidates for two-year [federal fellowship appointments](#) at the GS-9 level.



## Create learning ecosystems .....

Discover next generation [e-learning solutions](#) with course design and learning management system support.

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**PUBLIC SERVICE** RECOGNITION WEEK

# **Thank you for your participation and service to our nation!**

Webinar slides and recordings will be distributed  
within two weeks.



# Appendix

The following describes the graphic on slide 41 in lieu of embedded alternative text.

The graphic depicts leadership competencies in progression from Managing Self as the bottom level to Leading Agencies as the top level:

- Managing Self competencies: Integrity/Honesty, Resilience, Flexibility, Interpersonal Skills, Oral Communication, Problem Solving, Continual Learning, Written Communication,
- Team Leader/Project Manager competencies for managing projects: Team building, customer service, technical credibility, accountability, decisiveness, influencing/negotiating
- Supervisor competencies for managing people: human capital management, leveraging diversity, conflict management, public service motivation, developing others.
- Manager competencies for managing programs: technology management, financial management, creativity and innovation, partnering, political savvy.
- Executive competencies for leading agencies: external awareness, vision, strategic thinking, entrepreneurship.