



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240

January 20, 2023

## **PERSONNEL BULLETIN NO. 23-04**

**SUBJECT:** Senior Executive Service Merit Staffing Policy

**Purpose.** This Personnel Bulletin (PB) establishes, defines and implements a Department-wide merit staffing policy guidance document for Senior Executive Service (SES) positions. This policy document establishes a systematic means of selection based on merit in accordance with 5 CFR 317.501(a), as well as Title 5, United States Code, Section 2301, Merit Systems Principles and Section 2302, Prohibited Personnel Practices.

It is the policy of the Department of the Interior (DOI) to provide a fair and systematic approach for the identification, evaluation, and selection of highly qualified employees on the basis of merit after fair and open competition. Management has the right to fill or not fill a specific SES vacancy and to determine the most appropriate method for filling a vacancy. The merit staffing policy does not guarantee appointment to the SES. Management has the right to make selections from properly ranked and certified candidates or may choose to make selections from a variety of other appropriate sources.

Identification, qualification, evaluation, and selection will be made on the basis of merit principles, without regard to race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), national origin, age (as defined by the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, as amended), disability, genetic information (including family medical history), marital status, political affiliation, sexual orientation, labor organization affiliation or non-affiliation, status as a parent, or any other non-merit-based factor and shall be based solely on job-related criteria in accordance with legitimate position requirements.

**Applicability.** This policy applies to all career SES positions and the Servicing Human Resources Offices (SHRO) servicing these positions within the DOI. This PB contains policies and procedures for filling SES positions under the merit staffing program, in accordance with 5 CFR Part 317, Employment in the Senior Executive Service. Bureaus should refrain from implementing more restrictive policy, except as needed to address unique bureau programs or other specific needs.

**Policy.** This policy is effective as of the date of this PB and will remain in effect until superseded.

**Responsibilities.** The efficacy of the hiring process is a shared responsibility among executive resources professionals, selecting officials/hiring managers, Assistant Secretaries and Bureau Directors, the Executive Resources Division, Office of Human Capital, and the Executive

Resources Board. Each stakeholder is responsible for accomplishing their tasks timely, accurately, and collaboratively.

***Executive Resources Board.*** The Chairperson of the Executive Resources Board (ERB) is the Secretary of the Interior's delegated appointing authority for SES matters. The ERB receives requests from Department of the Interior (DOI) bureaus and offices, considers the case presented, and determines whether it is appropriate to authorize an SES allocation for establishing, recruiting, appointing or reassigning an individual into a SES position; which executives will comprise any rating panel whose role is to rate and rank all competitive candidates; which executive will comprise any interview panel whose role it is to evaluate best qualified competitive candidates and non-competitive candidates; and review and approve selections, salary recommendations, and recruitment/relocation incentives.

***Assistant Secretaries and Bureau Directors.*** Requests to establish and fill SES vacancies originate with the Bureau Director or equivalent official. In all cases, concurrence from a Bureau's or Office's appropriate Assistant Secretary or equivalent official must be obtained prior to the ERB accepting the request for review.

***Servicing Human Resources Offices, Executive Resources Coordinators.*** The SHRO/Executive Resources Coordinators will prepare and deliver complete requests to establish and recruit SES positions and requests to appoint selectees to SES positions; advertise vacancies that are approved by the ERB; collect and review applications submitted by candidates and determine whether they meet the minimum qualifications published in the vacancy announcement; convene rating panels and provide them with guidance to ensure that all competitive candidates are rated and ranked on the same basis and the best qualified individuals are identified; develop referral certificates with the best qualified and qualified non-competitive candidates; provide guidance to interview panels and selecting officials on interview procedures, maintaining appropriate records, and making selections; make tentative and final job offers to selectees; initiate personnel security reviews for all tentative selections; initiate clearance checks with the Office of Inspector General and the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Civil Rights; and maintain complete merit staffing records for two years after a competitive vacancy is filled.

***Executive Resources Division, Office of Human Capital.*** The Executive Resources Division will establish detailed or ad hoc guidance to support this merit staffing policy; ensure proposed ERB actions comply with law, regulation, and policy; determine the appropriate classification of position descriptions submitted by bureaus and offices; initiate ethic clearances with the Departmental Ethics Office for external selections, as appropriate; schedule ERB meetings; assemble pertinent information for ERB members to promote equitable decisions; and disseminate any ERB decisions to the appropriate bureau or office.

***Selecting Officials.*** Selecting officials are responsible for ensuring requests for hiring actions are only initiated when all preliminary approvals are met, including leadership, budget, reprogramming and program concurrence approvals; actively engaging with servicing human resources offices through the entire recruitment process; providing fair and equitable consideration to the qualifications of each candidate referred for a vacancy; and ensuring

selections are based on merit without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, physical or mental disability, sex (including gender identity and pregnancy), age, sexual orientation, genetic information, reprisal for engaging in the EEO complaint process or opposing protected activity, parental status, marital status, political affiliation, or other non-merit factors.

**SES Merit Staffing Requirements.** In accordance 5 CFR 317.501(c), the DOI is to provide the following merit staffing requirements, at a minimum:

- Provide that competition be fair and open, that all candidates compete and be rated and ranked on the same basis, and that selection be based solely on qualifications and not on political or other non-job-related factors. If a candidate is a current SES career appointee or an SES reinstatement eligible, an agency may consider the candidate either competitively or noncompetitively.
- Provide that the ERB consider the executive and technical qualifications of each candidate, other than those found ineligible because they do not meet the requirements of the vacancy announcement. Preliminary qualifications screening, rating, and ranking of candidates may be delegated by the ERB.
- Provide that the rating procedures sufficiently differentiate among eligible candidates on the basis of the knowledges, skills, abilities, and other job-related factors in the qualifications
- standard for the position so as to enable the relative ranking of the candidates. For this purpose, eligible candidates may be grouped into broad categories, such as highly qualified, well qualified, and qualified. Numerical rating and ranking are not required.
- Provide that the record be adequately documented to show the basis of qualifications, rating, and ranking determinations.
- Provide that the ERB make written recommendations to the appointing authority on the eligible candidates and identify the best qualified candidates
- Provide that the appointing authority select from among the candidates identified as best qualified by the ERB and certify the candidate's executive and technical qualifications.
- Provide that the appointing authority or the ERB certify in writing that appropriate merit staffing procedures were followed.

A copy of the Department's SES Merit Staffing Policy will be available on the [Department's Electronic Library of the Interior Policies \(ELIPS\)](#).

Questions regarding the contents of the SES Merit Staffing Policy or the accompanying SES Merit Staffing Handbook can be directed to the Departmental Office of Human Capital, Executive Resources Division at [executiveresources@ios.doi.gov](mailto:executiveresources@ios.doi.gov) or to the respective Executive Resources Coordinator within the bureau SHRO.

Attachment

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