

Department of the Interior
Office of Human Capital
Executive Resources Division



Senior Executive Service
Merit Staffing Policy

January 2023 edition



Policy

The purpose of the Senior Executive Service (SES) Merit Staffing policy is:

- To recruit and appoint highly competent executives to fill specific Department needs;
- To provide for fair and open competition; and
- To rate and rank all competitive candidates on the same basis.

References

This policy supplements, and should be read in conjunction with, the following references:

- [5 U.S.C. 3391 through 3395](#) – Appointment, Reassignment, Transfer and Development in the Senior Executive Service
- [5 CFR 317 Subpart E](#) – SES Career Appointments
- [5 CFR 330.104](#) – Requirements for Vacancy Announcements
- [5 CFR 300, Subpart D](#) – Use of Commercial Recruiting Firms and Nonprofit Employment Services
- [5 USC 2108\(3\)](#) – Veteran’s Preference
- [5 CFR 359.602 and 5 CFR 359.603](#) – Priority Consideration
- [5 CFR 572](#) – Travel and Transportation Expense; New Appointees and Interviews
- [5 CFR 317, Subpart I](#) – Reassignments, Transfers and Details
- Department of the Interior Diversity Recruitment Plan Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)
- Department of the Interior SES Pay Policy
- Department of the Interior Actions Requiring Approval by the Executive Resources Board and Appropriate Supporting Documentation SOP

Coverage

All staffing and recruitment actions (competitive and non-competitive) for career SES within the Department of the Interior are covered under this merit staffing policy.

Definitions

Area of Consideration: The organizational and/or geographic boundaries within which a search is made for eligible candidates for a specific merit promotion and placement action. AOC may be defined geographically, organizationally, by recruitment source or appointment status. All areas of consideration must be set to promote fair and open competition and to maintain a diverse workforce.

Best Qualified Candidates: Applicants determined by the rating and ranking process to possess the job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities required or desired in applicants for a particular position to a greater degree than other qualified applicants being considered, and who are subsequently referred to the selecting official.

Crediting Plan: A plan developed through the process of job analysis used to rate and rank qualified applicants for a position.



Detail: A temporary assignment of an employee to a different position for a specified period, with the employee returning to his or her regular duties at the end of the assignment. While on detail the employee continues to hold their official position from which detailed and keeps the same status and pay.

Diversity Recruitment Plan (DRP): A strategy intended to broaden applicant pools for SES positions, targeting underrepresented groups such as minorities, women, LGBTQ+, persons with disabilities, veterans, and individuals from underserved communities. The DRP must identify with specificity a documented process that will be followed to attract and recruit diverse qualified candidates from underrepresented groups and/or underserved communities.

Executive Resources Board: A panel of top agency executives and political appointees responsible for conducting the merit staffing process for career appointment to SES positions on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior.

Executive Resources Division: The Executive Resources Division oversees and manages executive resources tools and practices and develops and executes policies that will help the Department leadership attract and retain a highly effective SES workforce.

Interview Panel: Interview panels are used to further screen all applicants referred to the selecting official to determine those who will be recommended for an interview by the selecting official. Interview panels must consist of SES members, career or non-career. Every effort should be made to ensure that the panel is made up of diverse individuals.

Merit System Principles: Statutory Federal employment principles contained in 5 USC Section 2301, Merit Systems Principles. These principles were established to ensure appointments and promotions are based on open and fair competition; and that employment practices are based on job-related competencies.

Minimum Qualifications: Qualifications an applicant must possess to be minimally qualified for appointment to the Senior Executive Service.

Noncompetitive Candidate: Individuals who can be placed in a vacant SES position without competition, through reassignment, reinstatement, transfer, or placement of a certified Senior Executive Service Candidates Development Program (SESCDP) graduate.

Prohibited Personnel Practices: Employment-related activities that are banned in the federal workforce because they violate the merit system through some form of employment discrimination, retaliation, improper hiring practices, or failure to adhere to laws, rules, or regulations that directly concern the merit system principles.

Qualification Standards: Applicants who do not meet the minimum qualification requirements for the position are deemed “not qualified” and receive no further consideration.

Qualifications Review Board (QRB): Office of Personnel Management-administered independent boards consisting of SES members who assess the executive core qualifications of SES candidates.



Rating Panel: Rating panels are established to rate and rank candidates. Rating panels for SES positions must consist of SES members, career or non-career. Rating panels can consist of SES members from other Federal agencies. Rating panels can also include individuals from outside the Federal if they are in a position that is equivalent to the SES.

Reassignment: A change of an SES member from one position to another, in the same grade, and in the same agency.

Referral Certificate: A document provided to the selecting official containing the names of best qualified candidates.

Reinstatement: The reemployment of a former SES member.

Selecting Official: The hiring manager for the vacant position.

Transfer: A change of an SES member, without a break in service of one full workday, from a position in one agency to a position in another agency.

Unclassified Duties: A set of duties and responsibilities that have not been officially classified, A short statement of duties and responsibilities must accompany the request for detail of an employee if a job description is not available.

USAJOBS: The official job site of the United States Federal government. This website is the centralized site for most Federal agencies to post vacancy announcements and for applicants to view the status of their applications on-line.

Vacancy Announcement: Describes all requirements of the position and instructs the applicant on how to apply to the position, including necessary applicant documentation. Vacancy announcements must be posted on the USAJOBS website.

Responsibilities

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;
- 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.

Rating Panels. Rating Panel members will rate and rank candidates and produce documented recommendations for best qualified candidates.

Interview Panels. Assist the selecting official by interviewing the best qualified candidates and presenting the top finalists to the selecting official.

Servicing Human Resources Offices. The servicing human resources office 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 panel 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.
- 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 (ERD) 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Office of Personnel Management (OPM) 90-Workday Deadline for Competitive Selections

Agency requests for certification of a competitively selected SES candidate by a Qualifications Review Board (QRB) must be submitted to OPM within 90 working or business days from the closing date of the vacancy announcement. Servicing human resources offices and selecting officials must proactively plan for the OPM 90-workday deadline. When determining the 90-workday deadline date, do not count weekends, Federal holidays, days when the Federal government is closed for other reasons (inclement weather or other emergencies), and days where a QRB moratorium is in effect. If the servicing human resources office becomes aware of the possibility of not meeting the 90-workday deadline, they must inform the ERD of the need for an extension and provide a business justification to support the request. The ERD will submit the request to OPM. Requests for extension must be made **BEFORE** the 90-workday deadline has expired. Cases that exceed the 90-workday deadline without an approved extension cannot be submitted to OPM and will require a new merit staffing process.

Request to Recruit

Bureaus/Offices considering recruiting for a vacant or upcoming vacant SES position must request approval from the ERB. In conjunction with their servicing human resources office, the selecting official must submit a Request to Recruit Form.

NOTE: If the Bureau/Office is requesting to establish a new SES position along with a request to recruit, they must submit a separate request to establish the position and a justification memorandum in addition to the Request to Recruit Form.

Area of Consideration – The area of consideration for all competitive Department of the Interior SES positions will be all sources, including qualified individuals within the civil service and outside the civil service. a Bureau/Office wishes to limit the area of consideration to Federal government only, they must provide a specific justification along with the Request to Recruit form.

Length of Announcement – The Department of the Interior advertises all SES competitive announcements for 30 calendar days. If the selecting official wants to advertise the position for a shorter period, they must identify the proposed length of time for the announcement and submit a justification for their request along with the Request to Recruit form. Per [5 CFR 317.501\(b\)\(2\)](#), the



minimum open period for SES vacancy announcements is 14 calendar days, including the date of publication. If a vacancy is re-announced, a shorter period may be utilized but must be at least 14 days.

Rating Panels – In accordance with [5 CFR 317, subpart E](#), the ERB may delegate preliminary screening, rating, and ranking of candidates for SES career appointments to approved SES rating panels. Rating panels will consist of three primary panel members. Selecting officials must identify three primary panel members and three alternate panel members on the Request to Recruit form. All panel members must be at the SES level. When identifying panel members, selecting officials are encouraged to promote and advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility as well as consider the experience and background of potential panel members to ensure diversity of thought and perspective. At least one panel member should be from outside the vacant position's Assistant Secretary/Office portfolio. SES or SES equivalent individuals from outside the Department of Interior may be considered as panel members, as appropriate. If outside individuals are being considered to serve on the rating panel, the selecting official should include a full biography on any such individuals with the Request to Recruit form. The selecting official for the position sought to be filled cannot be a part of the rating panel. Presidential Appointees (PAS) may participate as panel members on rating panels. However, because of their limited availability, the practice of including a PAS on a Rating Panel is discouraged. Senior Level (SL), Scientific and Professional (ST) members, General Schedule (GS) and contractor employees cannot serve on SES rating panels.

Interview Panels – Three primary and three alternate panel members must be provided on the Request to Recruit form. All panel members must be at the SES level. Senior Level (SL), Scientific and Professional (ST) members, General Schedule (GS) and contractor employees cannot serve on SES interview panels. When identifying panel members, selecting officials are encouraged to promote and advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility as well as consider the experience and background of potential panel members, including whether their participation would provide representation outside the Bureau/Office for the vacant position. The interview panel should not include the same members from the rating panel. The selecting official can participate on the interview panel or has the flexibility to convene a separate interview panel to conduct interviews. All written comments or notes taken by panel members during the interview(s) must be returned to the servicing human resources office to retain in the merit staffing file.

Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP) Certification – Before submitting a Request to Recruit form, the selecting official must consider current SESCO graduates that have not yet been placed. Servicing Human Resources Offices and the Executive Resources Division can provide the selecting official a current list of unplaced graduates, as well as resumes for any such unplaced graduates. The selecting official must certify that there are no viable SES graduates to consider when signing the Request to Recruit Form.

Request to Recruit Form Validity – Approved Request to Recruit forms are valid for a period of one year from the date of approval. If no selection has been made within one year, the Bureau/Office must submit a new Request to Recruit Form to the ERB for consideration.

Diversity Recruitment Plan

When a servicing human resources office submits a request to recruit for a SES position, they must submit a Diversity Recruitment Plan (DRP). The DRP is a well thought out strategy intended to



broaden applicant pools for SES and SL positions, targeting underrepresented groups such as minorities, women, LGBTQ+, persons with disabilities, veterans, and individuals from underserved communities. The DRP must identify with specificity a documented process that will be followed to attract and recruit diverse qualified candidates from underrepresented groups and/or underserved communities. Refer to the *DRP Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)* for information regarding preparation of a DRP.

Vacancy Announcements

All SES vacancy announcements must comply with the requirements for publishing vacancy announcements as prescribed in [5 CFR 330.104](#). The Department of the Interior will only use the traditional recruitment method for SES vacancy announcements. Under the traditional recruitment method, applicants submit a resume, a separate narrative (no more than 10 pages) addressing Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs), and, if applicable, a narrative addressing any mandatory technical qualifications (TQs). SES vacancy announcements must assess candidates on the ECQs and TQs. There are 5 ECQs: (1) Leading Change; (2) Leading People; (3) Results Driven; (4) Business Acumen; and (5) Building Coalitions. It is recommended that 2 TQs are used when advertising, but the maximum number of TQs is 4 per position.

Use of Recruitment Firms – In accordance with [5 CFR 300, Subpart D](#), the services of a nonprofit employment service and/or commercial recruitment firm (i.e. headhunter) may be used to assist in recruiting for vacancies when (1) the Agency head or designee determines that such use is likely to provide qualified candidates who would not otherwise be available or when qualified candidates might be in short supply; (2) the Agency has provided vacancy notices to appropriate State Employment Service and OPM offices; and (3) the Agency continues its own recruiting efforts. A commercial recruiting firm is a profit-making entity which, by contract, supplies individual candidates for consideration for specific Federal vacancies in accordance with the requirements set by the Federal agency (see [5 CFR 300.401](#)). A nonprofit employment service is one legally established as a nonprofit under State law and, by contract, supplies individual candidates for consideration for specific Federal vacancies in accordance with the requirements set forth by the Federal agency. A nonprofit employment service sponsored by a partisan political organization **may not** be used. In their search for candidates, the nonprofit employment service and/or commercial recruitment firm must adhere to the requirements outlined in this policy, the approved qualification standards for the advertised position, and the regulations provided in [5 CFR 300, Subpart D](#). All candidates must apply through the USAJOBS announcement. All candidates must be given equal consideration, regardless of whether they applied directly to the Agency or were identified by a nonprofit employment service and/or commercial recruitment firm and must complete the full SES merit staffing process before appointment.

Marketing Materials – Bureaus and Offices are encouraged to provide as much information as possible in the vacancy announcement to educate applicants on the Bureau/Office’s mission and the position. In the “Learn more about this agency” section of USAJOBS, Bureaus/Offices may provide appropriate marketing statements, links to official websites, and official promotional videos.

Vacancy Announcement Requirements – At a minimum, vacancy announcements must include the following:



1. Name of the issuing agency;
2. Announcement number;
3. Position title, series, pay plan;
4. Duty location;
5. Number of vacancies;
6. Opening and closing dates and any other information concerning how receipt of application will be documented and considered;
7. Selection Method (Traditional ECQs);
8. Brief description of duties;
9. Area of consideration;
10. SES pay ranges;
11. ECQ and technical qualification requirements;
12. Basis of rating;
13. What to file;
14. Equal employment opportunity and reasonable accommodation statements;
15. Contact person or contact point;
16. Instructions on how to apply; and
17. Other required information (see 5 C.F.R. 330.104)

Vacancy Announcement Extensions – In collaboration with selecting officials, servicing human resources offices may extend the closing date of vacancy announcements, as appropriate, without consulting with the Executive Resources Division. However, it is recommended that a vacancy announcement is not open for more than 60 calendar days. Extension of the original closing date must be entered into USAJOBS.

Veteran's Preference – Veterans' preference does not apply to SES positions per [5 USC 2108\(3\)](#).

Indian Preference – Indian preference does apply to SES positions. Most SES positions in the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Indian Education, and Bureau of Trust Funds Administration are Indian preference positions. To apply Indian preference appropriately when recruiting for an Indian preference position, consult with Department of the Interior guidance and policy. Vacancy announcements where Indian preference is applicable should contain the statement: "Preference will be given to American Indians." See [BIA Indian Preference Policy](#)

Evaluating Applications

Competitive Applicants

Before a vacancy announcement closes, it is recommended that servicing human resources offices, in collaboration with the selecting official, determine whether there is a sufficient pool of applicants for consideration for the advertised position. If there is a sufficient pool of applicants for consideration, once the vacancy announcement closes, the servicing human resources office is responsible for determining applicant eligibility and whether applicants meet the minimum qualifications published in the vacancy announcement. If there are fewer than 3 competitive applicants who are eligible and meet the minimum qualifications for the advertised position, the servicing human resources office is not required to convene a Rating Panel to rate and rank those applicants; rather, those applicants can be referred directly to the selecting official.



Non-competitive Applicants

Eligible non-competitive applicants who meet the minimum qualifications for a vacant SES position should be directly referred to the selecting official. Non-competitive applicants include candidates who are current SES career appointees, who are SES reinstatement eligible, or who have completed a SESCO and have been certified by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

Rating Panels

Rating panels can be conducted virtually or in person. Rating panel members should be provided the application materials for competitive applicants in advance to allow sufficient time for the panel members to independently review the applications. While the time needed for panel members to complete their independent review of candidate applications will vary depending on the number of applications received, the servicing human resources office should consider the 90-workday OPM deadline for competitive selections and the numerous other phases of the SES recruitment/approval process prior to setting review deadlines.

In addition to providing rating panel members with application materials, the servicing human resources office should also provide panel members guidance and instructions on the rating panel process. The guidance and instructions should include information and expectations regarding merit system principles, confidentiality of the rating processes, evaluating candidates, and scoring candidates.

Rating panel members should be provided the following materials:

- Rating panel guidelines;
- Application packages of qualified candidates;
- USAJOBS vacancy announcement;
- Position description;
- Crediting plan and rating schedule addressing ECQs and TQs;
- Qualification/scoring assessment tool, either individual scoring sheets for each candidate or a spreadsheet for panel members to record their scores.

The rating panel must use the predetermined rating criteria provided in the crediting plan by the servicing human resources office to evaluate competitive candidates (a crediting plan template can be found at Appendix A). All application packages must be evaluated using the same criteria. Each rating panel member will independently provide a score between 1 (one) and 5 (five) for each ECQ and TQ of each candidate. Scores must be whole numbers only. Once the panel members have completed their review and have assigned scores for all competitive candidates, they will provide their scores to the servicing human resources office. The servicing human resources office will compile the scores from all the panel members and review the scores among panel members for gaps in scores of more than 2 points. For example, if on ECQ 1 – Leading Change, the scores from the panel members are 1, 2 and 5, the servicing human resources office will highlight this score gap.



Once all scores are compiled and the score gaps have been identified, the servicing human resources office will convene a meeting of the rating panel members to discuss the score gaps and identify a “best qualified” score cutoff. The purpose of this discussion is to note the gaps in scores and provide the rating panel members an opportunity to justify their scores. Rating panel members may change their score as a result of this discussion, but it is not required. Once all score gaps have been discussed, the servicing human resources office will provide a list of scores from highest to lowest to the rating panel members. The rating panel members will determine the “best qualified” cutoff score. This is typically determined by the first natural break in the scores. If the rating panel determines that the first natural break does not provide sufficient candidates for the selecting officials, they can move down to the second natural break in scores. Once the rating panel members come to a consensus on where the “best qualified” cutoff will be, the panel must provide a short, written justification on how they determined the cutoff. All panel members must sign (or concur via email) the written justification.

NOTE: In the event a rating panel member’s relative or an individual with whom they have a close personal or supervisory relationship (current or former 1st or 2nd level supervisor) appears on the candidate list provided by the servicing human resources office, that rating panel member must recuse themselves from serving on the panel. In such instance, an alternate panel member must be selected from the list of alternate panel members identified on the Request to Recruit form to score all the candidates.

Referral Certificates

Once the rating panel determines the “best qualified” competitive candidates, the servicing human resources office will prepare referral certificates. Separate referral certificates are issued for competitive and non-competitive candidates. The referral certificates expire 45 days from the date of issuance. Extensions of referral certificates can be considered on a case-by-case basis and must be requested prior to the expiration date. Further, the selecting official should be provided guidance with the referral certificates, including information on the 90 workday OPM deadline for competitive selections, how to document interviews and reference checks, and what information is required to be provided when a selection is made.

Interviews

Selecting officials must coordinate interviews with the ERB-approved interview panel. Not all candidates are required to be interviewed but it is highly encouraged. If the selecting official chooses not to interview all candidates, it is recommended that a memorandum for record is prepared to document why the selecting official chose not to interview specific candidates. Unsuccessful efforts to contact candidates, declination of interviews, not reporting for interviews, etc., must be documented by the selecting official on the Recommending Official’s Action Form and maintained with the merit promotion case file. Selecting officials must ensure that interviews are completed expeditiously and consistently.

More than one round of interviews is permissible; for example, the interview panel can conduct the first round of interviews to identify the best candidates to provide to the selecting official, who can then conduct a second round of interviews. Once the selecting official makes a final selection, it is strongly recommended that the Bureau Director or equivalent official interview the final candidate finalizing the selection.



All written comments or notes taken during the interview(s) must be returned to the servicing human resources office to retain in the merit staffing file.

Reference Checks

Reference checks are highly recommended. Conducting reference checks are a best practice for selection of successful candidates. Reference checks should be conducted prior to final selection and documented on the Recommending Official's Action Form.

Selection

Once the selectee has been identified, the selecting official must indicate their selection on the referral certificate. If two certificates were issued (competitive and non-competitive), the selecting official should complete both certificates, indicating selection or non-selection. The selecting official must return the signed certificate(s), the Recommending Official's Action Form and a pay recommendation (as well as recommendations for any incentives) to the servicing human resources office. The servicing human resources office will extend a tentative offer to the candidate prior to and contingent upon additional approvals, including, but not limited to, personnel security, ERB approval and QRB approval, as appropriate. Selection packages are due to the ERD by close of business Monday of the week prior to the ERB. The ERD will review the package for completeness and adherence to law, regulation and DOI/ERB policy. If package submissions do not meet necessary requirements, ERD will work with the submitting office on the appropriate revisions. Please refer to the *Actions Requiring Approval by the Executive Resources Board and Appropriate Supporting Documentation SOP* for information on what documents need to be submitted for a selection package.

Once the ERB makes a decision regarding the selection, the ERD will inform the servicing human resources office of the decision. If the approved selection is non-competitive, and all other approvals have been completed (for example, personnel security clearance), the servicing human resources office can proceed with making the final job offer. If the approved selection is competitive, the ERD will submit the selectee's ECQs to the OPM QRB.

Revising ECQs

Servicing human resources offices are responsible for ensuring that the competitive selectee's ECQs are ready for submission to the OPM QRB. Once a tentative offer is made, the servicing human resources office can engage the selectee regarding the review and revision of their ECQs. Servicing human resources offices are free to use a qualified outside contractor to complete the review and revisions or they can complete the review and revisions in-house. Once the revisions are complete, the servicing human resources office will submit the revised ECQs to the ERD. The ERD will review the ECQs to ensure they are sufficient for submission to the OPM QRB. If the ERD determines the ECQs are not sufficient, the ERD will return the ECQs with their recommendations to the servicing human resources office to re-engage with the contractor or engage the selectee directly, as appropriate.

Qualifications Review Board (QRB)



In accordance with [5 CFR 317.502\(a\)](#), the ECQs of a proposed career appointee must be approved by an OPM QRB before an individual's initial SES career appointment. For all initial career SES appointments, an ECQ package must be submitted to OPM for QRB approval within 90 work or business days from the closing date of the position's vacancy announcement. Failure to meet this timeline requires the organization to initiate a new vacancy announcement and repeat the competitive selection process. All DOI QRB packages are coordinated through ERD for submission to OPM. Final employment offers to the selectee cannot be made until QRB approval is received.

In the event that OPM returns the QRB case as a rewrite (one or two ECQs are disapproved), ERD will provide OPM's feedback to the servicing human resources office to re-engage with the contractor or engage the selectee, as appropriate. There is a 14-workday deadline to resubmit rewrite cases back to OPM.

In the event that OPM returns the QRB case as a disapproval (three or more ECQs are disapproved), the ERD will provide OPM's feedback to the servicing human resources office to re-engage with the contractor or engage the selectee, as appropriate. There is a 60-workday deadline to resubmit rewrite cases back to OPM.

Merit Staffing Review

If the selectee is a current, or within the last 5 years has been, a political Schedule A, Schedule C, or Non-Career SES employee in the executive branch, the selection will require a Merit Staffing Review (MSR) by OPM. OPM will review those proposed appointments to ensure they comply with merit systems principles and applicable civil service laws. This process takes place before the QRB. Once the MSR is submitted to OPM, the review takes approximately 15 workdays to complete. If OPM approves the MSR, the package is forwarded to the QRB for review.

Inquiries and Appeals

In accordance with [5 CFR 317.501\(e\)](#), candidates are entitled to information about the nature of the procedures used in recruiting and selecting candidates for positions. Candidates are also entitled, upon request, to know if they were found qualified for the position and if they were referred for appointment consideration. Candidates may have access to qualifications assessments about themselves, except for information that would identify a confidential source.

During the recruitment process, the servicing human resources office must ensure candidates are notified of their status in the following instances: receipt of application, assessed for qualifications, referred for appointment consideration (or not), and selected for the position (or not). The servicing human resources office is responsible for answering candidate inquiries about the merit staffing competition.

Non-selection from a list of properly ranked and certified applicants is not grieveable through the Department's Administrative Grievance Procedures. There is no right of appeal by the candidate to OPM on staffing actions taken by the ERB, OPM's QRB or the appointing authorities. Other avenues afforded by law or regulation (e.g., the Office of the Special Counsel or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) may be appropriate (e.g., prohibited personnel practice allegation).

Priority Consideration



Certain individuals are entitled to priority consideration for a vacant competitive SES position, and they are:

- Career executives who have completed their probationary period, or were not required to serve a probationary period, and who have been identified for reduction in force under the provisions of [5 CFR 359.602](#), are entitled to be offered any vacant SES position in DOI for which they meet the qualifications requirements. If there is more than one vacancy, DOI has the option of which position to offer the career executive.
- Career executives referred by OPM under the provisions of [5 CFR 359.603](#).

Disposition of Materials and Retention of Documentation

In accordance with [5 CFR 317.501\(d\)](#), an agency must keep sufficient records as prescribed by OPM to allow reconstruction of the merit staffing process for a period of two years after an initial career appointment. If no appointment occurs, the records must be kept for two years from the closing date of the vacancy announcement. Required documentation to reconstruct the merit staffing file is located at Appendix B.

Other Staffing Actions

SES Non-Competitive Appointments

An individual who is a current or former career SES or a certified graduate of an OPM-certified SESCO program may be non-competitively placed into an SES position for which they are qualified, subject to ERB approval, without regard to the merit staffing procedures outlined above.

SES Details

A detail is the temporary assignment of an SES member to another position (within or outside of the SES) or the temporary assignment of a non-SES employee to an SES position, with the expectation that the employee will return to his/her regular position at the end of the period. For purposes of pay and benefits, the employee continues to be the incumbent of the position from which he or she is detailed. Details may be within the employing agency or negotiated between agencies. In either event, the provisions of [5 CFR 317.903](#)

Details to SES Positions

Details of current career SES to another SES position can be made for 120 days. Details within DOI may be extended in 120-day increments. Detail extensions do not need to be approved by the ERB. A current career SES cannot be detailed to unclassified duties for more than 240 days.

Details of Non-SES Employees to SES Positions (and vice versa)

Details of non-SES employee to an SES position can be made for 120 days and may be extended for an additional 120 days, for a maximum of 240 days. Detail extensions do not need to be approved by the ERB.



Details of SES employees to non-SES positions below the SES level are generally considered to be an inappropriate use of executive talent.

SES Reassignments

A career SES employee may be reassigned to another SES position for which they are qualified subject to the conditions set forth in [5 CFR 317.901](#) and DOI SES Reassignment guidance. Reassignment is subject to ERB approval.

SES Limited Term/Limited Emergency Positions

A limited term SES appointment is a nonrenewable appointment for a term of 3 years or less to a Senior Executive Service position the duties of which will expire at the end of such term. A limited emergency SES appointment is a nonrenewable appointment, not to exceed 18 months, to a Senior Executive Service position established to meet a bona fide, unanticipated, urgent need. Limited appointments are made only to SES General positions. To use these appointment authorities, DOI must have a limited appointment authority from OPM or use an authority from its limited appointment pool (three percent of the agency SES allocation (no more than 8 positions)). By regulation, the pool may only be used to make a limited appointment of an individual who has a career or career-conditional appointment (or an appointment of equivalent tenure) in a permanent civil service position outside the SES (see [5 CFR 317.601\(c\)\(1\)](#)). When filling a limited term SES or limited emergency SES position, there is no requirement to hold a competition or announce the position. QRB review of the appointee's qualifications is not required. However, all limited term SES or limited emergency SES appointments must be approved by the ERB. A limited term or limited emergency appointee may not be appointed to, or continue to hold, a position under such an appointment if, within the preceding 48 months, the individual has served more than 36 months, in the aggregate, under any combination of limited term and limited emergency appointments (see [5 CFR 317.602\(c\)](#)).



APPENDIX A – SAMPLE SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE CREDITING PLAN

[ADD SES POSITION TITLE]

CANDIDATE: _____

RATING OFFICIAL: _____

DATE: _____

EXECUTIVE CORE QUALIFICATIONS: For each of the Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ) & Technical Qualifications (TQ) on the following pages, use the scale shown below to assign a score of 1 to 5 by putting an “X” in the appropriate column. Provide brief, supporting narrative comments in the space provided; enter a total score for each qualification; and provide a total score for all qualifications on the front page.

MINIMALLY INDICTIVE Score Range 1 – 2	GENERALLY INDICATIVE Score Range 3 – 4	HIGHLY INDICATIVE Score Range 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experience at either the field or headquarters levels managing people, financial resources and information resources for an organization of limited scope with demonstrated knowledge of the full range of [add program areas].• Demonstrates experience identifying key issues and implementing actions in a variety of [add program areas] functional areas.• Experience demonstrating values	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experience at both the field and headquarters levels managing people, financial resources and information resources of a broad scope [add program areas] activities and functions with demonstrated knowledge of the full range of [add program areas] programs.• Demonstrated experience identifying key issues and implementing actions and programs in major [add program areas] functional areas.• Experience demonstrating expertise in cooperation,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extensive experience at both the field and headquarters levels independently managing people, and financial/information resources of a broad scope with demonstrated comprehensive knowledge of the full range of the organization’s [add program areas] and programs.• Demonstrated experience identifying key issues and implementing actions and programs in virtually all [add program areas] areas.



MINIMALLY INDICTIVE Score Range 1 – 2	GENERALLY INDICATIVE Score Range 3 – 4	HIGHLY INDICATIVE Score Range 5
<p>of cooperation, communications, or consultation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experience serving as a manager/supervisor or participation in formal training or other professional development activities in leadership or management.	<p>communications, or consultation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experience serving as a manager/supervisor and participation in formal training or other professional development activities in leadership or management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experience demonstrating leadership in cooperation, communications, or consultation.• Significant experience serving as a manager/supervisor and participation in formal training or other professional development activities in leadership or management.

EXECUTIVE CORE QUALIFICATIONS

1. LEADING CHANGE: This core qualification involves the ability to bring about strategic change, both within and outside the organization, to meet organizational goals. Inherent to this ECQ is the ability to establish an organizational vision and to implement it in a continuously changing environment.

Comments:

Score: _____



2. LEADING PEOPLE: This core qualification involves the ability to lead people toward meeting the organization’s vision, mission, and goals. Inherent to this ECQ is the ability to provide an inclusive workplace that fosters the development of others, facilitates cooperation and teamwork, and supports constructive resolution of conflicts.

Comments:

Score: _____

3. RESULTS DRIVEN This core qualification involves the ability to meet organizational goals and customer expectations. Inherent to this ECQ is the ability to make decisions that produce high-quality results by applying technical knowledge, analyzing problems, and calculating risks.

Comments:

Score: _____

4. BUSINESS ACUMEN: This core qualification involves the ability to manage human, financial, and information resources strategically.

Comments:

Score: _____



5. BUILDING COALITIONS: This core qualification involves the 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.

Comments:

Score: _____

TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS

6. ADD TECHNICAL QUALIFICATION

Comments:

Score: _____

7. ADD TECHNICAL QUALIFICATION

Comments:

Score: _____



8. ADD TECHNICAL QUALIFICATION

Comments:

Score: _____

Final Score: _____



Appendix B – Senior Executive Service Competitive Staffing Record Retention Requirements

Are the following items retained in the merit staffing file?	Yes	No	NA
Vacancy announcement (including amendments, revisions and extensions)			
OPM Control Number for the vacancy announcement on USAJOBS			
List of recruitment sources used			
Approved request to recruit			
Position description			
Crediting plan			
Rating plan			
Name and organizational title of rating panel members			
Originals of all application packages and other materials received by the agency in response to the vacancy announcement			
All records pertaining to the rating panel, including individual scoring sheets, summary sheets, best qualified list, notes, etc.			
Record of rating panel written recommendation(s) to the selecting official (signed and dated)			
Selection certificates			
Selecting Official's Action Summary form			
Name and organizational title of interviewer(s)			
Record of which, if any, candidates were interviewed			
Any documents related to the interview(s), including notes, scoring sheets, etc.			
Notes from reference checks			
ERB selection package			
QRB package and QRB certification			
The appointment action (signed and dated)			
Record of the four touch points of communication with candidates			
Record of any inquiries or complaints about the staffing process and agency findings and response			

The items listed above represent the documents required to reconstruct the executive merit staffing process and must be retained for 2 years (5 CFR 317.501(d)) after the date of appointment a candidate is selected as a result of the merit staffing process. If no appointment is made as a result of the recruitment effort, the records are retained for 2 years from the closing date of the announcement.