



Senior Executive Service

The Senior Executive Service (SES)

The SES is a corps of men and women who administer public programs at the top levels of Federal Government. Positions are primarily managerial and supervisory. The SES is a grade-less system in which salary is linked to individual performance. Basic annual salaries range from \$111,676 to \$154,600; however, an agency with a certified SES performance appraisal system can set basic pay at rates up to \$168,000. Members of the SES are not eligible for locality pay. Some positions include additional recruitment incentives, which are described below. The SES web page contains additional information and resources on the SES (<http://www.opm.gov/ses/sesguide.html>).

How SES Jobs Are Filled

Each Federal agency determines the qualifications required for its SES positions, and whether to consider only current Federal civil service appointees or all qualified candidates.

There are two methods of entry into the SES:

- Apply directly to a Federal agency for a specific SES position
- Apply for a Federal Agency's SES Candidate Development Program (SESCDP). Qualifications Review Board (QRB) certified graduates of an SESC DP advertised to "all qualified Civil Service appointees" or "all qualified persons" are eligible for (but not guaranteed) career appointment to an SES position without further competition.

Qualifications Requirements

An applicant must meet two types of qualifications for any SES position:

- The Executive Core Qualifications, which apply to every SES position; and
- Specific, professional/technical qualifications (if any) for the position being advertised.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has identified five Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) common to all SES positions <http://www.opm.gov/ses/qualify.asp#qualify>. The ECQs are:

- Leading Change
- Leading People
- Results Driven
- Business Acumen
- Building Coalitions

The ECQs are mandatory qualification standards for every SES position. Agencies may also identify specific, professional/technical qualifications for the position being filled. The qualification standards for an advertised SES position are listed in the agency's vacancy announcement.



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Applicants need to obtain a copy of the agency's vacancy announcement to respond to these requirements.

Examination Process

A Federal agency:

- reviews, rates, and ranks applicants based on the executive qualifications and the professional/technical qualifications (if any) listed in the vacancy announcement;
- makes a final selection from among the best-qualified applicants, and
- submits a case to OPM for Qualifications Review Board (QRB) consideration of the selectee's Executive Core Qualifications.

OPM convenes Qualifications Review Boards to determine whether agency selectees have the executive qualifications required for the SES. An agency may not appoint the selectee unless a QRB approves.

Recruitment Area

Agencies decide how to fill a vacant SES position. If they choose to advertise the position (as opposed to noncompetitive alternatives), they also determine the recruitment area. There are two choices: "all qualified civil service appointees" or "all qualified persons".

Recruitment Incentives

Exceptional difficulty in recruiting highly qualified applicants for SES positions may result in:

- payment of recruitment or relocation bonuses up to 25% of base pay (up to 100%, if approved by OPM); or
- waiver of the dual compensation restrictions that apply to civil service retirees; or
- designation of the position for critical pay authority whereby total annual salary may be established up to the Executive Schedule Level I rate (currently \$183,500 per annum). Recruitment incentives are noted in the "Application Information" column.

How to Apply

In OPM's USAJOBS system, check the specific job entry for a full text vacancy announcement. If the announcement is not available through the system, call the agency contact for a copy of the vacancy announcement. Ask for additional information about specific application procedures and detailed qualifications requirements.

Send your application directly to the address shown on the vacancy announcement.

Be alert to announcement closing dates and apply promptly to meet them. Agencies may issue announcements for as little as 2 weeks.



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Candidate Development Programs

Some, but not all, Federal agencies have SES Candidate Development Programs to identify and develop potential executive talent. QRB certified graduates of OPM-approved SESCOs advertised to "all qualified civil service appointees" or "all qualified persons" are eligible for a career appointment to the SES without further competition. However, graduates are not guaranteed a SES position.

Other Opportunities

From time to time, other vacancies will be listed on USAJOBS that are not in the SES, but are in a comparable pay range. Contact the organization listed to determine the specific qualification requirements and application procedures.

Electronic Information

Vacancy announcement information is available through USAJOBS:

Internet: World Wide Web (<http://www.usajobs.gov>)

Automated Telephone System 703-724-1850

Present SES Rates of Basic Pay (Effective January 2008):

Agencies with a Certified SES Performance Appraisal System	114468	172200
Agencies without a Certified SES Performance Appraisal System	114468	158500

Note that, by regulation, rates of basic pay above the rate for Level III of the Executive Schedule (i.e., \$158,500) but less than or equal to the rate for Executive Level II (i.e., \$172,200) generally are reserved for those newly appointed senior executives who possess superior leadership or other competencies, as determined by the agency as part of its strategic human capital plan.



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