2018

PRESIDENTIAL RANK AWARDS PROGRAM

FY 2018 AWARD GUIDANCE AND TEMPLATES
FOR EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

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THE PRESIDENTIAL RANK AWARDS PROGRAM EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Presidential Rank Award (PRA) was established by statute (5 USC 4507 and 4507a), and is one of the highest awards bestowed to the Career Senior Executive Service (SES) and Senior Professional (i.e., Senior-Level (SL) and Scientific-Professional (ST)), by the President of the United States (POTUS). The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is required to request nominations and administer the program; the agency heads are required to nominate senior executives and senior professionals for their respective agencies. Two categories of rank awards are available: *Distinguished* rank to leaders who achieve sustained extraordinary accomplishments; and *Meritorious* rank to leaders for sustained accomplishments.

All agencies, including the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE), may nominate up to nine percent of their respective career SES and Senior Professional populations and may consider a broad range of factors in exercising discretion to nominate executives for this award, such as: budgetary limits; policy considerations; Congressional concerns; and any public affairs or suitability implications. Only one percent of SES and Senior Professionals, respectively, may earn the honor of Distinguished Rank and only five percent of SES and Senior Professionals may receive the respective honor of Meritorious Rank. The maximum number of award recipients in each category is determined by the percentages set forth in the statute; however, the final number of award recipients in each category has tended to be fewer than the maxima in recent years.

NOMINATION PROCESS: The processes for nominating and evaluating nominees are stringent. Agencies determine individual employees' eligibility for such a nomination based on a minimum of three years of serving in a career SES, SL, or ST appointment. Based on the agencies' assessments of their candidates, they nominate their top individuals who have made significant and lasting contributions to their agency and the Federal Government. In addition to delivering meaningful results, nominees must demonstrate the highest level of leadership competencies, including leading change and leading people, or, for the SL/ST, based on their stature in their professional field. Extraordinary leaders tackle some of the most difficult organizational challenges as well as develop a strong and diverse workforce for the 21st century.

The agency submits the nominations by completing 1) the one-page Nomination Template, 2) the one-page Biographical/Career Summary Template, and 3) the three-page nomination statement. The nominations are provided to OPM, in hard copy. The full nomination package is used throughout the remainder of the evaluation process. Specifically, the agencies address the following criteria in each nomination:

- ***SES Nominees:*** 1. Program Results 2. Executive Leadership
- ***SL/ST Nominees:*** 1. Program Results 2. Stature in Professional Field

Agencies are provided suggestions within this PRA Guidance regarding creating the nomination statements. The following Guidance highlights the fact that members of the review boards will not know the intricacies of each nominee's program responsibilities and may not be versed on agencies' missions. Nomination statements must be clear, organized, and well-written to make it easier for your nominee's achievements to receive the consideration they deserve.

REVIEW PROCESS: OPM convenes Review Boards to evaluate and rate the nomination packages. The review boards are made up of private citizens who are former and current leaders in the private sector, and/or former leaders within the public sector.

Each review board has three members who independently evaluate and rate the accomplishments described in the nomination statement. The nominee's score is the sum of each board member's ratings. Distinguished nominees who do not score high enough to be recommended for approval are referred to another review board and are considered for the Meritorious Rank, if eligible. There is no appeal of review board determinations.

OPM EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS: Once the review boards have completed all of the ratings, OPM compiles the scoring into an aggregate format to ensure statutory limits are not exceeded and to determine the number of nominees that will be moved forward to the on-site evaluation and analysis process.

The nominees then proceed through an extensive on-site evaluation and analysis process, conducted by OPM's National Background Investigation Bureau (NBIB) and paid for by the nominating agency. On-site evaluations may include interviews with appropriate persons knowledgeable about the finalists' performance and professional accomplishments.

In addition to the on-site evaluations, and as described in greater detail within this Guidance, nominees will be asked to provide releases for further records checks, self-disclosures, and/or self-certifications as part of the evaluation process. For example, the review may consist of the finalists' Federal Tax Transcripts, criminal history records, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) records, and Office of Inspector General (OIG) records or equivalent offices' records. An Agency Head may also decide to provide, and/or OPM may request, additional information related to a finding of misconduct attributed to the nominee by a third party, such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), or an administrative judge from another entity, for consideration during the analysis.

WHITE HOUSE APPROVAL AND AGENCY CERTIFICATION: Once all related information has been obtained and the analysis is complete, OPM provides a list of nominees to the White House for review. Additionally, OPM provides the Agency Head the final list of his/her nominees for certification, also known as "Eyes Only." An Agency Head may withdraw a nominee at this time, or any time during the PRA process, prior to POTUS' decision.

After OPM obtains feedback from both the agency and White House, OPM provides the final list of recommended nominees to POTUS for consideration of the PRA. The final decision is made by POTUS by the end of the Fiscal Year and OPM immediately communicates the decision to the agencies along with guidance regarding agencies' recognition of their recipients.

FISCAL YEAR 2018 PROGRAM TIMELINE

The following are projected milestones and are subject to change.

March 30, 2018	• Nominations due to OPM
April, May, June	• OPM verifies nominees' eligibility • Presidential Rank Awards Review Boards conducted • Agencies notified of finalists • Background inquiries conducted on finalists
July	• OPM reviews and determines recommendations
August	• White House review • Agency Head or designee reviews, certifies and signs off on agencies' finalists ("Eyes Only" certification) • OPM Director forwards recommendations to the President
September	• President makes final decision • OPM notification to agencies
October	• Agency Heads notify recipients and process award payments

THE PRESIDENTIAL RANK AWARDS HISTORY

The Presidential Rank Award was established by statute in 1978, and the statute requires the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to request nominations and administer the program for Presidential Rank Awards. The statute also requires agency heads to nominate senior executives and senior professionals across the Federal Government for Presidential Rank Awards. Two categories of rank awards are available: *Distinguished* rank to leaders who achieve sustained extraordinary accomplishments, and *Meritorious* rank to leaders for sustained accomplishments.

Beginning in 1980, Distinguished Executive and Meritorious Executive Presidential Rank Awards have been conferred to career members of the SES. Subsequently, in 2003, the ranks of Distinguished Senior Professional and Meritorious Senior Professional were also established and made available to confer to other senior career employees (i.e., Senior-Level and Scientific-Professional (SL/ST)) in a manner similar to that for career members of the SES.

Only one percent of SES and one percent of senior career employees may earn the respective Distinguished Rank Awards. Only five percent of SES and five percent of senior career employees may receive the respective Meritorious Rank Awards. The percentage of SES and senior career employees respectively who may receive each award is based on the Governmentwide number of career appointees in OPM-allocated respective SES and SL/ST positions as of September 30th of the previous fiscal year.

All agencies, including the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE), may nominate up to 9 percent of their respective career SES and SL/ST populations. Inspectors General should nominate executives separately from the parent agency through CIGIE, as provided by section 14 of the Inspector General Reform Act of 2008.

STATUTORY BASIS FOR PRESIDENTIAL RANK AWARDS PROGRAM

OPM's statutory basis for administering the Presidential Rank Awards Program is found in:

- *Title 5, Sec. 4507. Awarding of ranks in the Senior Executive Service; and*
- *Title 5, Sec. 4507a. Awarding of ranks to other senior career employees*

NOMINATION DEADLINE and AWARD YEARS

Nomination deadline varies each fiscal year. FY2018 Nominees must meet the eligibility requirements by the nomination deadline on Friday, March 30, 2018.

An individual who has received either rank award (i.e., Distinguished or Meritorious) may be nominated for the other rank in succeeding years; however, an individual may not receive the same rank award more than once in any five-year period.

Year Award Received	Year Eligible to Receive the Same Award
2011	2016
2012	2017
2013	2018

NOMINATING SENIOR EXECUTIVES (SES) FOR A PRESIDENTIAL RANK AWARD

SES Eligibility Requirements

Nominees must meet the following eligibility criteria by the nomination deadline:

- Hold a career appointment in the SES;
- Be an employee of the nominating agency; and
- Have at least three years of career or career-type Federal civilian service at the SES level; service does not have to be continuous. Qualifying service may include appointments in the SES, Senior Foreign Service, FBI/DEA SES, Defense Intelligence SES, and other SES-equivalent systems. Service under other than career-type appointments (e.g., noncareer, limited, indefinite) or in Senior Level or Scientific-Professional or equivalent positions is not qualifying.

Presidential Rank Awards recognize extraordinary achievements by career executives in Federal service. These awards provide an excellent opportunity to recognize the top individuals who have made significant and lasting contributions to their agency and the Federal Government. In addition to delivering meaningful results, nominees must demonstrate the highest level of leadership competencies including leading change and leading people. Extraordinary executive leaders model these critical abilities by taking on some of the most difficult organizational challenges as well as developing a strong and diverse workforce for the 21st century. Nominees should regularly exhibit the ability to develop a strong team, collaborate across the Agency and Government, and create an environment of high engagement and dedication to mission above self. In keeping with the President's Executive Order (EO 13714), a PRA nomination could, for example, highlight the individuals' success in leading inter-agency initiatives and collaborating on Governmentwide efforts.

Strong performance ratings are important but not sufficient to demonstrate that the executive is deserving of a PRA. Not all executive positions are of equal difficulty or require extraordinary effort to

succeed, therefore, agencies are encouraged to draw on all segments of their executive workforce to identify this select group.

Agencies may consider a broad range of factors in exercising discretion to nominate executives for this award, including: budgetary limits; policy considerations; or any suitability implications. When considering potential nominees, agencies should exercise due diligence in reviewing both the background of nominees (including any issues relating to personal and professional conduct) as well as the programs and organizational components for which the nominees have any responsibility in order to determine the appropriateness of the nominees for receiving Presidential recognition.

An agency may nominate a reemployed annuitant who meets all eligibility requirements. Also, an Executive Schedule employee who was appointed by the President with Senate Confirmation (PAS), without a break in service from a career SES appointment, and who chose to remain eligible for rank awards under 5 U.S.C. § 3392(c), may be nominated although 5 U.S.C. § 4509 otherwise precludes a PAS Executive Schedule employee from receiving the award. A part-time or intermittent executive may be nominated but the agency must be prepared to pay the full award. It should not be prorated.

Agencies are responsible for verifying and certifying that any professional credentials held by the nominee and required by the nominee's position are valid and current (a certification block is included on the nomination form). Verification of credentials will not be addressed as part of the background check conducted by OPM.

A nominee who meets the eligibility requirements but leaves the SES before being selected as a recipient may still receive the honor, and the award amount must be based on the last rate of basic pay received as a career member of the SES. The same applies to a nominee who dies after OPM has received the nomination.

A nominee who transfers to another agency during the PRA process remains eligible for the award. The nominating agency and gaining agency will be contacted during the evaluation process. If the individual is selected for the award, the nominating agency is responsible for paying costs associated with the award (i.e., evaluation process and award).

SES Nomination Criteria

The law provides the rank of Distinguished Executive is awarded for "sustained extraordinary accomplishment," and the rank of Meritorious Executive for "sustained accomplishment." Presidential Rank Awards are reserved for career senior executives who have a record of achievement that is recognized throughout the agency and/or is acknowledged on a national or international level. In reaching the pinnacle of achievement, rank award recipients are also required to have demonstrated strong leadership abilities, inspired their employees, and earned the respect of those they serve. Nomination criteria should focus more clearly on achievement of results and the effectiveness of the means by which those results are achieved. The nomination criteria are as follows:

> **1. Program Results:** The executive has an exceptional record of achieving major program goals and exceeding customer expectations by marshaling internal and external resources to attain high-quality outcomes that are technically sound and cost-effective, and that yield rewards commensurate with the level of risk.
>
> **2. Executive Leadership:** The executive possesses a sound strategic overview of the public sector environment and has shown creativity, adaptability, and resilience in aligning program efforts with the organization's vision, mission, and goals, and in partnering with stakeholders

inside and outside the organization. The executive has also demonstrated the ability to lead people effectively by fostering employee development, cooperation and teamwork, and making optimal use of human, financial and information resources.

SES Nomination Limits

All agencies, including CIGIE, may nominate up to a total of 9 percent of their career SES populations for collective Distinguished and Meritorious awards, but are not subject to any prescribed ratio of Distinguished to Meritorious nominations. Agencies should keep in mind, however, the statute permits only one percent of the Governmentwide career SES population to receive the Distinguished Rank award, and five percent to receive the Meritorious Rank award. Agencies with fewer than 12 SES members may nominate one SES member.

NOMINATING SENIOR CAREER EMPLOYEES (SL/ST) FOR A PRESIDENTIAL RANK AWARD

Senior Career Employees (SL/ST) Eligibility Requirements

Nominees must meet the following eligibility requirements by the nomination deadline:

- Hold a career OPM-allocated Senior-Level (SL) or Scientific-Professional (ST) position;
- Be an employee of the nominating agency on the nomination deadline; and
- Have at least three years of career or career-type Federal civilian service above GS-15. Service does not have to be continuous. Qualifying service does not include appointments that are time-limited or to positions that are excepted from the competitive service because of their confidential or policy-making character.

Presidential Rank Awards recognize extraordinary achievements by career executives in Federal service. These awards provide an excellent opportunity to recognize the top individuals who have made significant and lasting contributions to their agency and the Federal Government.

Agencies may consider a broad range of factors in exercising discretion to nominate SLs and STs for this award, including: budgetary limits; policy considerations; or any suitability implications. When considering potential nominees, agencies should exercise due diligence in reviewing both the background of nominees (including any issues relating to personal and professional conduct) as well as the programs and organizational components for which the nominees have any responsibility in order to determine the appropriateness of the nominees for receiving Presidential recognition.

Agencies may nominate a reemployed annuitant who holds a career appointment to an OPM-allocated SL or ST position and meets all eligibility requirements. Agencies may also nominate a part-time or intermittent employee, but in keeping with the prestige of the award, the agency must be prepared to pay the full award. It should not be prorated.

Agencies are responsible for verifying and certifying that any professional credentials held by the nominee and required by the nominee's position are valid and current (a certification block is included on the nomination form). Verification of credentials will not be addressed as part of the background check conducted by OPM.

A nominee who meets the eligibility requirements, but leaves the SL or ST position before being selected as a recipient, is eligible to receive the award, and the award amount must be based on the last rate of basic pay received as a career SL or ST. The same applies to a nominee who dies after OPM has received the nomination.

A nominee who transfers to another agency during the PRA process remains eligible for the award. The nominating agency and gaining agency will be contacted during the evaluation process. If the individual is selected for the award, the nominating agency is responsible for paying costs associated with the award (i.e., evaluation process and award).

Senior Career Employee (SL/ST) Nomination Criteria

The law provides that the rank of Distinguished Senior Professional is awarded for "sustained extraordinary accomplishment," and the rank of Meritorious Senior Professional for "sustained accomplishment." Presidential Rank Awards are reserved for senior career employees who have a sustained record of professional, technical, and/or scientific achievement that is recognized throughout the agency and is acknowledged on a national or international level. In reaching the pinnacle of achievement, rank award recipients will also have inspired their colleagues and earned their stakeholders' respect. The nomination criteria for Senior Career Employees are as follows:

1. **Program Results:** The senior professional has an exceptional record of achieving major program goals and exceeding customer expectations by marshaling internal and external resources as necessary to attain high-quality outcomes that are technically or scientifically sound and cost-effective, and that yield rewards commensurate with the level of risk.

2. **Stature in Professional Field:** The senior professional is consistently recognized nationally or internationally as a leader or authority in a field or discipline. He or she has influenced others in or beyond the field or discipline; is regularly sought as an advisor and consultant on scientific, technical, or professional programs and problems of fundamental interest and extraordinary difficulty which extend well beyond his or her field or discipline; and has received major honors or awards or published works that have had a major impact in the field or discipline.

Senior Career Employees Nomination Limits

All agencies, including CIGIE, may nominate up to a total of 9 percent of their career SL/ST populations for collective Distinguished and Meritorious awards, but are not subject to any prescribed ratio of Distinguished to Meritorious nominations. Agencies should keep in mind, however, the statute only permits one percent of the Governmentwide career SL/ST population to receive the Distinguished Rank award, and five percent to receive the Meritorious Rank award. Agencies with fewer than 12 senior career employees may nominate one senior professional.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS AND NOMINATION CRITERIA FOR AGENCIES EXEMPT FROM THE SES

Several agencies have senior career executives who meet the SES definition at 5 U.S.C. 3132(a)(2), but their positions are placed in the Senior-Level (SL) system because the agency is exempt from SES coverage. These agencies receive Senior-Level (SL) space allocations from OPM for these appointees. These agencies include, but are not limited to:

- Export-Import Bank of the United States
- Federal Election Commission
- Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council
- National Security Council
- Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation
- U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council

These agencies should use the nomination criteria established for members of the Senior Executive Service when nominating their career senior executives for rank awards but indicate on the template the Agency is applying the SES nomination criteria for the nominees. Similarly, these agencies should use the nomination criteria established for senior career employees when nominating employees in the Senior-Level system who do not meet the statutory SES definition.

PREPARING NOMINATION PACKAGES

Agencies should send OPM a cover letter signed by the agency head and an alphabetical list of nominees for each award category (SES and Senior Career Employee) – with the required number of nomination folders, as specified below – for each nominee. Agencies should include the last four digits of the social security number for each nominee on the alphabetical lists, and include in the cover letter the name, telephone number, and email address of the agency's Presidential Rank Awards Program Coordinator.

Agencies should prepare nomination folders to accompany the cover letter and alphabetical list of nominees per the following guidelines.

Nomination Folders

Agencies should send each nomination in standard letter-size folders, with tabs (second or third cut are preferable). Agencies should provide eight (8) identical folders for each Distinguished nominee and five (5) identical folders for each Meritorious nominee, secured together using elastic bands. Agencies should specify whether nominations are for the SES rank award or the Senior Professional rank award. Each folder must include the following:

1. **Label on the Folder Tab**
   NAME OF NOMINEE (First, Middle Initial, Last)
   AGENCY NAME
   DISTINGUISHED SES or SP 2018 - or - MERITORIOUS SES or SP 2018

2. **Presidential Rank Awards Program Nomination Template.** Agencies must complete the appropriate attached nomination template for each nominee. All boxes must be checked that apply to the nominee's current employment status. Agencies are required to verify on the template any professional credentials applicable to the nominee's position. Agencies must also ensure the nominee's immediate supervisor and the agency head each provide their signature in the appropriate signature blocks on the nomination template. If the agency head prefers signing only the cover letter, the agency should indicate that the agency head exercised that option (e.g., "/s/ cover ltr").

3. **Biographical and Career Summary Template.** For each nominee, agencies must summarize in bullet format the nominee's accomplishments, as an SES member or SL/ST employee, which serve as the basis for nomination for a Rank Award. Agencies must also briefly list each nominee's career highlights, and other biographical information, including significant honors, awards, etc. ***Agencies may use no more than one page of text, and information may be presented using only a font no smaller than an 11-point and at least 0.8 inch margins.***

4. **Justification Statement.** Agencies must concisely describe each nominee's career achievements for each of the Presidential Rank Award criteria, as described above, in the same order as the order in which the criteria are listed. ***Agencies may use no more than three pages of text, and information may be presented using only a font no smaller than an 11-point and at least 0.8 inch margins.***

Agencies should not include SF-50 or equivalent personnel forms in the nominee's folders. Additionally, agencies should not staple or paper-clip any of the pages in the folder. **OPM will return folders that do not meet the specified format.**

Suggestions

Since Review Board members are former and current leaders across the private and public sectors, they will not know the intricacies of each nominee's program responsibilities and may not be versed in agencies' missions. Statements must be clear, organized, and well-written to make it easier for your nominee's achievements to receive the consideration they deserve. We have found that it helps if agencies take the following actions:

- Organize the justification statements in the same order as the PRA criteria, and number the pages of the justification statement (i.e., 1, 2 and 3);
- Ensure examples are specific and supported. Provide information on results achieved (e.g., actions taken, impact on stakeholders, staffing levels, budget amounts, cost-savings – specifying the source of such information, organization size, results, etc.). Include information about customer and employee feedback, as appropriate; and
- Use commonly-understood terms. Avoid acronyms, abbreviations, and jargon-laden terms.

THE REVIEW PROCESS – EVALUATING AGENCY NOMINATIONS

OPM Review

OPM verifies that each nominee meets the eligibility requirements. OPM also reviews each nomination package for completeness. A complete package must include:

- A cover letter with a list of nominees signed by the agency head.
- A Presidential Rank Awards Program Authorization For Release of Information
- A Presidential Rank Awards Program Self-Certification – Code of Conduct
- An Express Billing form **with supporting billing documentation**
- **Eight (8)** identical folders for each Distinguished nomination (if eligible for Meritorious Rank [1]) and **five (5)** identical folders for each Meritorious nomination and should only contain:
    - A PRA nomination template.
    - A one-page Biographical and Career Summary.
    - A justification statement that is three pages in length or less addressing the award criteria.

Information contained in the Executive and Schedule C System (ESCS) database is used to verify eligibility and record scores from the Review Board deliberations.

How Review Boards Work

OPM administers the Presidential Rank Award Review Boards, which are composed of panels of former and current leaders across the private and public sectors. The Review Boards meet in Washington, DC, and each Review Board has three members who individually evaluate and rate the accomplishments described in the justification statement. Each review board member makes an independent judgment on the nominations presented. The nominee's score is the sum of each review board member's ratings. Distinguished nominees who do not score high enough to be recommended for approval are referred to another board and considered for the Meritorious Rank, if eligible (see NOMINATION DEADLINE and AWARD YEARS). There is no appeal of review board determinations.

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[1] If an agency identifies a nominee for the Distinguished Rank and the nominee is not eligible for a Meritorious Rank, based on having received the award within the previous five years, then the agency need only to submit five identical folders.

Once the review boards have completed all of the ratings, OPM compiles the scoring into an aggregate format to avoid exceeding the statutory limits and to determine the number of nominees that will be moved forward to the On-site Evaluation process.

On-site Evaluations and Analysis Process

Distinguished and Meritorious finalists recommended by the Review Boards for approval are generally subject to on-site evaluations conducted by OPM's National Background Investigations Bureau (NBIB) in coordination with the PRA Program Coordinators at each agency. On-site evaluations may include interviews with appropriate persons knowledgeable about the finalists' performance and professional accomplishments. A review of the finalists' Federal Tax Transcript, criminal history records, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) records, and Office of Inspector General (OIG) records or equivalent offices' records may also be completed as part of the on-site evaluation. Agencies will bear the cost of On-site Evaluations. For FY2018, the cost will be $1,015 per finalist. (See COST AND BILLING)

The Evaluation Process

In addition to the on-site evaluations, and as described in further detail below, PRA nominees may be asked to provide releases for further records checks, self-disclosures, and/or self-certifications as part of the evaluation process.

- **Release of Information** – As part of the evaluation process, interviews with persons knowledgeable of the nominee's performance and professional accomplishments are conducted. As noted above, a check of criminal history records may be conducted as well. This release authorizes any investigator, special agent, or other duly accredited representative of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management to obtain any information relating to the nominee's activities from individuals, employers, criminal justice agencies, or other sources of information. This information may include, but is not limited to, the nominee's achievement, performance, attendance, disciplinary and employment history, and criminal history record information.

- **Code of Conduct** – The nominee certifies that s/he, in the last 5 years, has not been arrested, charged, or convicted of any violation of law (excluding traffic fines of $300 or less). If the nominee is unable to certify, s/he will be given an opportunity to describe the circumstances of any arrest, charge, or conviction. The nominee also certifies s/he has not engaged in any conduct, personal or professional, that would bring discredit to the Agency, Department or Presidential Administration.

- **Federal Tax Disclosure and IRS Transcripts (Form 4506-T)** – Finalists may be required to report any tax issues experienced during the reporting periods. Tax issues may include but are not limited to failure to timely file tax return, failure to timely pay tax, failure to timely pay taxes after issuance of notice, Federal tax lien, levy, etc. Failure to complete these forms will result in an immediate withdrawal of the finalist for further consideration of the award. IRS transcripts (Form 4506-T) will be used to validate tax filing status.

- **Records pertaining to Equal Employment Opportunity claims or proceedings** – Includes records checks of Equal Employment Opportunity claims or proceedings or other administrative proceedings where it may bear on the character or conduct of a PRA finalist. Finalists may be requested to provide complete information about any allegation of a violation of a civil rights statute (listed and described at https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/index.cfm). It is important to note that the mere filing of an EEO complaint involving an individual, or even an administrative finding of discrimination, for example, does not mean that the agency must agree that the

individual engaged in misconduct and thus does not automatically disqualify the individual from being nominated, although agencies should consider the circumstances and the resulting impact of a nomination of the individual in such a situation. Additionally, agencies may not disqualify an individual from nomination because s/he filed an EEO complaint or engaged in any other EEO activity protected by law.

- **Office of the Inspector General or equivalent offices** – search of any records concerning the nominee held by an agency Inspector General with respect to alleged incidents of fraud, waste, abuse, embezzlement or mismanagement of any kind within the parent agency.

- **Criminal History Records Check** – nominee provides consent and authorization to search by name and date of birth the files of the National Crime Information Center and local authorities for criminal history records.

We note that third party proceedings that might implicate a potential nominee, such as an EEOC proceeding against the agency or an Inspector General investigation of agency actions, do not necessarily provide the potential nominee with an adequate opportunity to vindicate him or herself. Even when the individual is the subject of an adverse finding, such a finding does not automatically disqualify the individual from being nominated. Moreover, agencies may legitimately disagree with the decisions of administrative judges or the findings of Inspector Generals or the like. Accordingly, an agency may decide to provide and/or OPM may request additional information related to a finding of misconduct related to the potential nominee by a third party, such as an administrative judge at the EEOC or other adjudicative entity, that should be considered during the evaluation process.

Agency Head Final Review and Certification ("Eyes Only" Process)

The Eyes Only Certification is where the agency heads or their designees are asked to review their final list and determine if each individual is still in good standing and deserving of the award. The signature of the agency head or designee indicates support of their nominees moving forward and if selected for this award, would not cause embarrassment to the agency or the Administration/President.

The Eyes Only Certification occurs after the PRA panels have rated the nomination packages, the score has been determined, and the on-site evaluation and analysis processes have been completed. If an agency head would like to provide clarifying information regarding any potential adverse action for OPM's consideration, it should be done any time during the PRA process, prior to the Eyes Only Certification. The Eyes Only Certification is the agency's final recommendation to move the finalist forward for POTUS' decision.

Withdrawing a Nomination

An agency head may withdraw a nomination at any time before the President makes a decision on the awards.

- To withdraw a nomination before the agency head's final certification, an agency must send OPM a letter signed by the agency head or his/her designee, informing OPM of the agency head's decision to withdraw the nomination. Agencies should state the nominee's name and the award for which s/he was nominated. No additional information or reason is required.
- To withdraw a nomination at the time of the agency head's final certification, agencies must draw a line through the nominee's name on the list, and have the agency head initial the

withdrawal and sign the list. Agencies may not disqualify an individual from nomination because s/he filed an EEO complaint or engaged in any other EEO activity protected by law. Subsequently, agencies must return the list to OPM along with a cover letter requesting withdrawal of the nomination.

- The withdrawal of a nomination following the agency head's final certification should rarely occur but may be necessary in extraordinary circumstances. To withdraw a nomination, agencies are further requested to call the OPM Presidential Rank Awards Program Manager at (202) 606-2246, and immediately follow the telephone call with a letter signed by the agency head or designee asking that the nomination be withdrawn. Agencies should state the nominee's name and the award for which the nominee was recommended.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PRESIDENT

After agency heads certify finalists, the OPM Director sends the names of the reconfirmed, recommended finalists to the President to make final decisions before the end of September. Nominees cannot be added or removed from the list once the President has made a final decision.

OPM will notify the agency head and other appropriate agency contacts as soon as the White House informs us of the President's decision. Following notification by OPM, agencies will be authorized to inform award recipients of their selection and to distribute rank award checks. No internal ceremonies or public announcements will be authorized until further notification by OPM. Public announcement of the award winners is reserved for the President, and OPM will advise agencies if publicity is authorized.

PROCESSING AND PAYING THE AWARDS

Each agency pays for its executives' rank awards, and should consider and plan for awards as part of executive compensation each year. The amount of the award should be based on the last rate of basic pay received as a career member of the SES or SL/ST. Each agency should anticipate the need to pay winners, and budget accordingly.

An individual who transfers to another agency during the PRA process remains eligible for the award. The nominating agency and gaining agency will be contacted during the evaluation process. If the individual is selected for the award, the nominating agency is responsible for paying costs associated with the award (i.e., evaluation process and award).

OPM will issue guidance on Presidential Rank Awards and Aggregate Compensation in the SES, which provides information about payment of the awards. The memo will advise each agency to take the precaution of having rank award checks drawn and ready for the SES appointees and senior career employees on the list provided by OPM to each agency head for final certification by the agency head prior to forwarding to the President; this will allow agencies to pay awards with same fiscal year funds.

To accurately capture award payments, agencies must use the appropriate Nature of Action Codes (NOAC) for Rank Awards as described in the Guide to Processing Personnel Actions, available online at http://www.opm.gov/feddata/gppa/Gppa29.pdf.

Distinguished Rank Award recipients receive 35 percent of their rate of basic pay; Meritorious Rank Award recipients receive 20 percent of their rate of basic pay. The award is paid as a lump-sum payment, and the payment is subject to the applicable annual aggregate limitation on pay under 5 U.S.C. § 5307. Specifically, section 5307(d) permits agencies with certified performance appraisal systems for

members of the SES and SL/ST employees to apply a higher annual aggregate limitation on pay for those employees. The higher aggregate limitation on pay is equivalent to the total annual compensation payable to the Vice President under 3 U.S.C. § 104. Agencies without certified performance appraisal systems for their SES members or senior professionals must apply an annual aggregate limitation on pay equivalent to the rate for level I of the Executive Schedule. Any portion of a rank award that would cause aggregate compensation in a calendar year to exceed the applicable aggregate limitation on pay is rolled over for payment at the beginning of the following calendar year.

The lump-sum award payment that is paid in the following calendar year is in addition to basic pay. The lump-sum payment is not subject to retirement, health benefits, or life insurance deductions. It is not included in the "high three" average pay computation for retirement benefits or in basic pay for Thrift Savings Plan computation. However, the payment is subject to income tax withholding and also FICA tax withholding if the executive is in the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) or subject to Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) Offset.

RECOGNIZING AWARD RECIPIENTS

Each award recipient receives a framed certificate signed by the President. The Distinguished certificate features a gold emblem; the Meritorious certificate features a silver emblem. Each winner receives a Rank Award pin – gold for the Distinguished winners and silver for the Meritorious winners.

Upon notification by OPM, agencies should immediately inform award recipients of their selection; however, agencies shall not make any public announcement until authorized by OPM. Additionally, if public recognition is approved, and upon OPM receipt of the appropriate releases of information by the recipients, OPM may release the nomination information to external agencies such as the Senior Executives Association (SEA).

EVALUATION COST AND BILLING

When submitting nominations, each agency is required to obligate funds sufficient to cover the total potential evaluation costs for their nominees and provide an Interagency Agreement (IAA) in the form of the 7600 A/B or Express Billing Form (see below). The IAA is an agreement between the Requesting Agency (agency submitting PRA nominations) and Servicing Agency (OPM/NBIB) specifying the work to be performed, amount obligated, and invoicing details.

Forms 7600 A/B: The 7600 forms represent a formal IAA document designated by the U.S. Department of Treasury. Total obligations exceeding $3,000 require Forms 7600 A/B.

Express Billing Form (EBF): The EBF may be submitted as an IAA in lieu of the 7600 A/B for obligations of $3,000 or less. The EBF will be considered an obligation and authorization for services. All required fields must be completed as the information is required to record the transactions in OPM's financial system. The Supplemental form must be completed, signed and submitted with the EBF.

The IAA must also include the following attachments:

- List of Nominees
- Any additional forms required by the Requesting Agency, if applicable

The IAA submitted with the nomination packet must be completed in its entirety, except for the Servicing Agency signatures. The PRA Program Coordinator will distribute **ALL OBLIGATING** documents and the list of nominees to OPM/NBIB and the financial POC for the requesting agency, at the close of the nomination period. OPM/NBIB will provide an executed copy of the IAA to the Requesting Agency after review. Please do not hold these documents until the end of the process, as this does not allow sufficient time to execute the documents and have the funding obligated in the accounting system of OPM and the Requesting Agency.

Payment is due when the evaluations are complete. At that time, OPM/NBIB will be notified of the final number and name of nominees for the Requesting Agency and at that point will initiate an IPAC. OPM/NBIB will invoice the Requesting Agency only for costs associated with the number of nominees that undergo on-site evaluations. If the Requesting Agency withdraws a nominee after their evaluation has begun, the Requesting Agency will be assessed a pro-rated fee commensurate with the work completed for that nominee prior to the withdrawal. If the total amount due is less than the amount obligated, notification will be sent to the Requesting Agency regarding de-obligating funds.

Instructions for completing the 7600 A/B

7600A

- Header: Enter Requesting Agency (RA) IAA number in the GT&C number field. (Amendment/Mod # should be left blank.)
- Block 1: Enter RA Name and address. Include highest level department/agency and division.
- Block 9: Enter the total for the agreement ($1,015 x number of nominees)
- Block 10a: Enter RA Authority, including Title and Citation if other than Economy Act
- Block 23: Enter RA Official, contact information, and obtain signature

7600B

- Header: Enter RA IAA number in the GT&C number field. (Amendment/Order/Mod # should be left blank.)
- Block 24: Enter RA Name and address. Include highest level department/agency and division.
- Block 28:
  - Enter the RA **Agency Location Code (ALC)**
  - Enter the RA **Treasury Account Symbol (TAS)** **in the component format**
    - AID = Agency Identifier - 3 characters, including leading zeroes
    - BPOA/EPOA = Beginning/Ending Period of Availability - (4 characters each) **or** A = Availability Type - (1 character)
    - MAIN = Fund Account - 4 characters, including leading zeroes
    - SUB = Sub-Fund Account - 3 characters, defaults to “000” if not otherwise designated
  - Enter the RA Object Class Code (optional)
  - Enter the RA **Business Partner Number (BPN) or DUNS NUMBER**
  - Enter any additional accounting information required to appear on the invoice. If the full accounting information is not visible in the space provided, enter “see block 35”.
  - Enter the RA Funding Expiration Date (the last date an obligation can occur) or leave blank for No-Year funds

- Enter the RA Funding Cancellation Date (5 year following the expiration date) or leave blank for No-Year funds
- Enter total number of nominees under "Quantity". The form will automatically calculate the total amount obligated.

- Block 30: Enter the total amount obligated from block 28
- Block 32: Select the Servicing Agency Initiated IPAC payment method
- Block 35: If full accounting information was not visible in the space provided for block 28, enter the full information here
- Block 37: Enter RA Official, contact information, and obtain signature
- Block 28: Enter RA Official, contact information, and obtain signature
- Blocks 39-40: Enter RA Official, contact information, and obtain signature (optional)

For all questions related to the PRA program, please contact the OPM Program Coordinator; for question related to funding, the associated documents and billing contact NBIB Business office at (202) 606-1042.

Presidential Rank Awards Program

NOMINATION TEMPLATE – SES APPOINTEE

(Revised Jan 2018)

SECTION I - Nominee Information *(Please type information)* Year of Nomination **FY 2018**

Name (Agency must enter name in ESCS exactly how name should appear on award certificate) **Position Title**

Agency and Post of Duty Address *(include division)*

Current Residence (*City, State, & Zip Code only*)

Current Employment Status (*Check all that apply*)

Full-time Part-Time Intermittent Re-employed Annuitant PAS with SES Benefits retained (5 U.S.C. 3392)

Date of Entry into the SES

Type of Award for Which Candidate is Being Nominated for (*mark one box only*)

Distinguished Executive Meritorious Executive

List any previous Presidential Rank Award(s) Received by Nominee *(continue on a blank sheet of paper if more space is needed)*

Year Received	Distinguished	Meritorious	Year Received	Distinguished	Meritorious

Executive Level Positions Nominee has held *(continue on a blank sheet of paper if more space is needed)*

From/To *(month & year)*	Position Title	Agency

Does the nominee hold any professional credentials required by the nominee's position?

(Circle one) Yes No If yes, please provide the following information:

Type of license or certification: _____ State: _____

License/certification number: _____ Expiration date: _____

SECTION II - Agency Information

Name and Title of Agency Presidential Rank Awards Program Coordinator	Telephone Number *(include area code)* and Email Address
Name and Title of Immediate Supervisor	Signature of Immediate Supervisor
Name and Title of Nominating Agency Official	Signature of Nominating Agency Official

As the nominating agency official, I certify the information contained in the nominee's justification is accurate and true.

Presidential Rank Awards Program

NOMINATION TEMPLATE – SENIOR CAREER EMPLOYEE (Revised Jan 2018)

SECTION I - Nominee Information *(Please type information)* Year of Nomination **FY 2018**

Name (Agency must enter name in ESCS exactly how name should appear on award certificate) **Position Title**

Agency and Post of Duty Address (include division)

Current Residence (*City, State, & Zip Code only*)

Current Employment Status (*Check all that apply*)

_Full-time Part-Time Intermittent _Re-employed Annuitant Other_____

Date of Entry into SL/ST Position	Type of Award for Which Candidate is Being Nominated for (*mark one box only*)
	☐ Distinguished Senior Professional ☐ Meritorious Senior Professional

List any previous Presidential Rank Award(s) Received by Nominee *(continue on a blank sheet of paper if more space is needed)*

Year Received	Distinguished	Meritorious	Year Received	Distinguished	Meritorious

Senior Level and/or Scientific/Professional Positions Nominee has held *(continue on a blank sheet of paper if more space is needed)*

From/To (*month & year*)	Position Title	Agency

Does the nominee hold any professional credentials required by the nominee's position?

(Circle one) Yes No If yes, please provide the following information:

Type of license or certification: _____ State: _____

License/certification number: _____ Expiration date: _____

SECTION II - Agency Information

Name and Title of Agency Presidential Rank Awards Program Coordinator	Telephone Number *(include area code)* and Email Address
Name and Title of Immediate Supervisor	Signature of Immediate Supervisor
Name and Title of Nominating Agency Official	Signature of Nominating Agency Official

As the nominating agency official, I certify the information contained in the nominee's justification is accurate and true.

Presidential Rank Awards Program

BIOGRAPHICAL AND CAREER SUMMARY TEMPLATE

Instructions: Summarize in bullet format the nominee's accomplishments, which serves as the basis for nomination for a Rank Award. Briefly list each nominee's career highlights, and other biographical information, including significant honors, awards, etc. **No more than one page of text.**

Nominee's Name: