



## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

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## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

### **Purpose**

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This toolkit provides guidance for hosting sessions to mentor employees to advance to the Senior Executive Service (SES) with the intent to strengthen and increase interest and application to the Federal Government's Senior Executive Service (SES). OPM offers directives to Federal agencies, leveraging the authority granted under 5 U.S.C. chapter 41, E.O. 11348, and 5 CFR 410.203. These directives are designed to equip organizations with the necessary guidance and resources to address skills gaps and cultivate leadership in the federal government.

The toolkit is a leadership education and recruitment tool for agencies to use to encourage mid-level and senior level employees with leadership potential to pursue a career path in the SES.

Across the nation, federal employees and agencies will value this toolkit as a resource in preparing the federal workforce for leadership roles. Institutionalizing these types of sessions at the agency level as a strategic workforce strategy should be an ongoing process for federal agencies. This is a training tool for building leadership in the federal government.

The toolkit provides the following:

- Background information
- Roles of responsibilities
- Planning checklist
- Sample SES mentor recruitment messages, agendas, announcements, and resources for Phase I or II sessions



## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

### **Fact Sheet**

The goal of this toolkit is to promote the advancement of federal employees to the SES through mentoring, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing.

#### **Objectives:**

- Motivate federal employees to enter the SES
- Expand the toolkit as a Governmentwide training tool
- Increase leadership capacity and build a pipeline of potential leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workforce

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Q. Why did OPM develop the toolkit?**

A. Building workforce leaders of the 21st Century is critical to the future of the federal government. Leadership development, succession planning, and knowledge transfer using mentoring as a tool is critical to workforce development.

OPM provides guidance to federal agencies under the authority of 5 U.S.C. chapter 41, E.O. 11348, and 5 CFR 410.203, to ensure organizations have the guidance and tools necessary to close skills gaps and develop leaders for government. A leadership cadre comprised of men and women with vision, commitment to the mission, experience, and understanding the complex systems that define our Country's laws, regulations, and mode of operation is essential.

#### **Q. What are the components of an event following this toolkit?**

A. Each session is a full day that includes a local SES keynote speaker, OPM Executive Core Qualification (ECQ) presentation, flash mentoring with SES mentors, and networking. The session targets Federal employees at the GS 11-15 grade levels. Session objectives:

- Provide an overview of the SES hiring process and the role of the Qualification Review Board
- Provide further insight into the ECQs and how they relate to the SES
- Promote and encourage interagency collaborations and networking

#### **Q. How can an agency measure the success of a session?**

A. Each session should end with participants completing an onsite survey.



## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

# Planning Documents





## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

### **Roles**

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#### **Agency**

- Contact OPM about hosting an ECQ presentation
- Identify project manager for the event
- Determine support team
- Reserve venue
- Recruit/confirm SES mentors
- Recruit/confirm SES keynote speaker
- Identify session moderator
- Locate Human Resource personnel or Train-the-Trainer for ECQ presentation
- Contact OPM about hosting an ECQ presentation



## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

### **Planning Checklist**

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#### **Preparation**

- ☐ Conduct weekly planning meetings
- ☐ Secure venue; setup schematic of round tables to sit 6-8 people (or two 6-foot tables to form a pod)
- ☐ Review security clearance for building entrance
- ☐ Identify and confirm SES keynote speaker(s)
- ☐ Identify and confirm SES flash mentors (not GS-15s or SL/STs), including political appointees (ideal mentor/mentee ratio: 1-6)
- ☐ Obtain mentor's title, agency, years in the SES, and words of wisdom (100 characters)
- ☐ Conduct orientation session for SES mentors (one week prior to session)
- ☐ Identify moderator(s) for the day
- ☐ Print agenda and onsite surveys; agenda should include: mentor's title, agency, years in the SES, and words of wisdom
- ☐ Obtain drawing tickets and identify items for giveaway (e.g., leadership books, portfolio, ink pen, etc.)
- ☐ Recruit mentees using electronic registration

#### **On Site**

- ☐ Set up tables/room schematic one day in advance (if possible)
- ☐ Registration table for participants and mentors to sign-in (provide participants with pre-numbered table assignments, distribute randomly)
- ☐ Extra laptop for presentation (load presentations in advance of session)
- ☐ Equipment check: Portable microphone and/or lavalier microphones



## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

### **Session End**

- ☐ Provide each participant a bookmark for returning a completed survey
- ☐ Mentor thank you letters/certificates (provided onsite)
- ☐ Photograph of SES mentors (identify and secure a photographer)
- ☐ After Action Review of event
  - ☐ What worked well
  - ☐ What needs improvement
  - ☐ Best practices and lessons learned

### **Materials**

- ☐ Name tags for team members hosting the event (e.g., host sponsor, agency point of contact)
- ☐ Pre-printed tent cards for mentors
- ☐ Tent cards for participants (assign table numbers at registration sign-in)
- ☐ Markers or ink pens
- ☐ Thank you letters/certificates for mentors and keynote speaker
- ☐ Letter holder folders for mentor and keynote speaker thank you letters
- ☐ Table décor; such as tablecloths, centerpieces, table numbers (optional)
- ☐ Tickets or business cards for giveaway drawing (optional)
- ☐ Leadership books for giveaway items (optional)
- ☐ Bookmarks for survey completion (optional)



## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

### **Phase I Documents**







## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

### **Recruitment Message for SES Flash Mentors**

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The XXXXX invites you to participate in an upcoming XXXXX session as a Senior Executive Service (SES) flash mentor.

**Title:** Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service

**Where:** XXXXX

**When:** XXXXX. Please arrive 30 minutes prior for check-in.

**Goal:** To inspire Federal employees towards Senior Executive Service career paths.

**Agenda:** Keynote Address, Roundtable Discussions – Groups will participate in two to three 30-minute discussions (or rounds) where mentors and participants (one or two mentors with 6-8 participants) engage in interactive dialogue.

If you are able to join us, please confirm your attendance to XXXXX (email address) and include the following by XXXXX (date):

- **Name, Title, Agency, Years in the SES, Words of Wisdom (limit to 100 characters)**

We will also host a brief informational conference call on XXXXX and we will forward a calendar request. We thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this event and contributing to the professional development of Federal employees who are interested in the SES.



## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

### **Confirmation Message for Senior Executive Service (SES) Flash Mentors**

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Dear XXXXX:

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the upcoming mentoring session, "XXXXX." This email is to confirm your participation as a mentor for this event.

The event will occur on XXXXX at the XXXXX. We ask that you arrive 30 minutes early. We will provide an agenda, and questions for you to consider when sharing your personal career experience and for your mentoring table discussions.

In preparation for this event, we request the following by XXXXX:

- **Name, Title, Agency, Years in the SES, Words of Wisdom (limit to 100 characters)**

Also, we will host a brief orientation prior to the event on XXXXX (date) at XXXXX (time). We will provide the teleconference number for the orientation soon. Again, we appreciate you taking the time to participate in this event and contributing to the professional development of federal employees who are interested in the SES.

During the flash mentoring sessions, we will ask you to rotate clockwise to at least 3 or 4 tables. Below are potential questions for roundtable mentoring sessions:

- What was your career path towards the SES?
- Who were the key leaders or mentors that played a role on your SES journey?
- What obstacles or challenges did you encounter along the way, and how did you overcome them?
- What should a new SES member expect in level of pay and work requirements?
- How do I inspire other employees to move towards the SES?
- What is the value or reward in being a member of the SES?

Please let XXXXX know if you need any assistance. XXXXX can be reached via email at XXXXX or by telephone at XXXXX.



## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

### **Agenda**

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9:30am\*: Welcome and Opening Remarks (**Moderator**)

9:50am-10:30am: A Mentor's Journey (**SES Keynote Speaker - provide three takeaway points**)

10:30am-12:00pm: Overview of the Executive Core Qualifications: Preparing for the Senior Executive Service (**Human Resources Expert or local Train-the-Trainer**)

12:00pm-1:15pm: *Lunch*

1:30pm: Introduction of SES Mentors (**Moderator**)

1:45pm-3:30pm: Flash Mentoring Rounds; Mentors move clockwise to new tables (**Moderator monitors time for each round and signals when mentors should move to the next table**)

3:30pm-4:00pm: Closing Remarks (**Moderator**)

4:00pm: Networking

\*May adjust start time to 9:00am

### **Announcement**

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**TITLE:** XXXXX

**Time:** XXXXX

**Date:** XXXXX

**Target Audience:** GS-11 to GS-15 (or equivalent)

**Objectives:**

- Motivate federal employees towards attaining opportunities in the SES
- Provide SES qualifications training and flash/situational mentoring with successful/inspiring SES members
- Facilitate interagency collaboration and networking
- Promote career growth and development

**Featured speakers** will include successful and inspiring local federal executives, who will share their personal career experiences in becoming members of the SES and offer mentoring to those in attendance.

**Activities:** Presentations, Table Discussions, Mentoring, Networking

**REGISTRATION LINK:** XXXXX



## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

### **SES Roundtable Questions for Flash Mentoring Sessions**

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- Who were the key leaders or mentors that played a role in your SES journey?
- What obstacles or challenges did you encounter along the way, and how did you overcome them?
- How do I keep myself inspired towards attaining an SES career?
- How do I inspire others to move towards the SES?
- What should a new SES member expect in level of pay and work requirements?

**While sharing your personal career experiences, you may wish to consider the following questions:**

- What was your career path to becoming an executive?
- What is the value or reward in being a member of the SES?



## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

### **Sample Senior Executives' Words of Wisdom**

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As members of the Senior Executive Service, we have gleaned sound advice from our own mentors and leaders that positively serve us in our careers.

Below are a few of these “words of wisdom” that we’d like to leave with you...

- **“Walk humbly!”**
- **“Be thankful for the important role that you have.”**
- **“Invest in people.”**
- **“Find yourself! Believe in yourself! Reach for the sky!”**
- **“Remember that to whom is given, much is required.”**
- **“Learn something new each day and endeavor to come back better, more skilled and more encouraged the next day.”**
- **“Nice Matters!”**



## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

### **Resources**

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#### **OPM Policy Guides**

- OPM Executive Development Best Practices Guide
- OPM Training and Development - Leadership Development
- OPM Proficiency Levels for Leadership Competencies
- Guide to Senior Executive Service Qualifications
- Senior Executive Service
- Executive Core Qualifications

#### **OPM Websites**

- <http://www.opm.gov>
- <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/senior-executive-service/executive-core-qualifications/>
- <https://www.opm.gov/services-for-agencies/assessment-evaluation/leadership-assessments?url=Overview>
  - Leadership Competency Assessment



## Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit

### Onsite Survey\*

Please indicate the primary reason(s) you participated in this session:

- ☐ To increase my leadership capacity (i.e., experience, ability)
- ☐ To increase my knowledge of the Senior Executive Service (SES)
- ☐ To participate in a flash mentoring session
- ☐ To network with SES members
- ☐ All of the above
- ☐ Other, please explain \_\_\_\_\_

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This event increased my interest in the Senior Executive Service (SES).					
The keynote speech was helpful.					
The SES presentation was useful.					
I would recommend this event to others.					

What aspects did you enjoy most about the session? \_\_\_\_\_

4. How do you plan to use the information shared today?

5. What improvements would you suggest for our next session?



## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

### **Phase II Documents**







## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

### **Continue Advancing to the Senior Executive Service**

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#### **Synopsis**

A half-day session of mentoring roundtable sessions with local SES leaders on the five ECQs, information-sharing, and reflection activities (e.g. mind mapping). Participants will identify next steps, set goals, and begin harnessing their professional network.

#### **Objectives**

- Increase awareness about their career, career path, and trajectory
- Identify competencies, experiences, and exposure needed to develop, establish, and/or hone
- Understand the power of mindset
- Begin to manifest a desired future
- Leverage and expand their professional network



## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

### **Recruitment Message for SES Flash Mentors**

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Good Morning, XXXXX:

The XXXXXXXXXXXX is hosting another *Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service* session. This session is Phase II and will focus on the Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ) and the qualifications necessary to pursue a Senior Executive Service (SES) position. We invite you to participate as a mentor who would address 6-8 mentees on one specific ECQ during the flash/group mentoring roundtable sessions.

The target audience is previous session Phase I mentees (GS-11 through GS-15) who now wish to gain additional knowledge on the qualification requirements and competencies necessary for an SES career.

Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Session Phase II will cover all five ECQs: 1) Leading Change, 2) Leading People, 3) Results Driven, 4) Business Acumen, and 5) Building Coalitions. Each mentor will focus on one specific ECQ during the roundtable discussions.

The session (9:00am–12:00pm) includes a keynote speaker, short video on ECQs, and an exercise on career planning. We welcome your participation as a mentor for the Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Session Phase II. Please identify which ECQ(s) you will discuss as the topic during the flash/group mentoring roundtable sessions. An orientation for mentors on (Date: XXXXX) will provide additional information on the agenda and expectations for the session.



## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

### **Agenda**

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8:30am: Welcome and Opening Remarks

8:45am: A Mentor's Journey (SES Keynote - focus on ECQ development)

9:15am: Mind Mapping Activity (Human Resources, Executive Resource Staff, or local Train-the-Trainer)

10:30am-12:00pm: Flash Mentoring (ECQ rounds); mentors or mentees can move to new tables between rounds

### **Announcement**

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You are invited to *Keep Advancing to the Senior Executive Service* (SES)

Date: XXXXX

Time: XXXXX

Audience: Prior *Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service* attendees and those focused on obtaining a SES position

Location: XXXXX

Before attending the session:

- Please watch the recorded video on SES and the ECQ's: <http://youtu.be/yV4liC82YZ4>
- [Review attached ECQ Narrative Checklist and Experience Framework](#)
- To register, please RSVP at XXXXX
- Priority will be given to previous *Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service* session attendee
- A detailed agenda will be sent to confirmed registrants



## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

### **SES Roundtable Questions for Flash Mentoring Sessions**

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#### **Leading Change**

- How do you deal with unexpected organization changes/obstacles (to internal or external pressure)?
- Talk about results you achieved which were significant and impacted your organization or agency.
- What steps have you taken as an executive to transcend vision into action?
- What challenges have you encountered with change?

#### **Leading People**

- What are the challenges in leading a large staff?
- How did you overcome challenges to achieve agency mission goals?
- Describe actions you have taken to leverage diversity in your organization?
- Talk about steps you have taken to motivate staff suffering from low morale.

#### **Results Driven**

- Give examples of strategies necessary to set priorities and objectives that lead to high quality and quantifiable results.
- Describe problems and solutions implemented to improve products.
- Talk about your interactions with internal and external stakeholders to identify opportunities that build the organization.

#### **Business Acumen**

- Discuss the level of experience necessary to create and administer budgets and resources in an organization.
- Describe challenges you encountered with budgets and the resolutions selected.
- Talk about your organization's use of technology to create or improve programs.
- Share information on the depth and scope of knowledge necessary to work with a multi-sector workforce and achieve measurable productivity.

#### **Building Coalitions**

- How did you build coalitions with internal/external groups to achieve a goal?
- Describe strategies important in building alliances.
- Talk about challenges in bringing groups together and meeting stakeholder's expectations.
- Share some significant outcomes as a result of your actions to build coalitions.



## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

### **Tips for a Successful Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Session In-Person or Virtual Sessions**

- Planning is the key to success
  - Recruit and confirm SES Mentors at least one month in advance
  - The number of SES Mentors will determine mentor-mentee ratio or number of attendees
  - Contact OPM's SES Performance Management group for ECQ/QRB presentation
    - [SESDevelopment@opm.gov](mailto:SESDevelopment@opm.gov)
    - SESPM Office
      - [SESPolicy@opm.gov](mailto:SESPolicy@opm.gov)
  - Market the event at least one month in advance of the event date
    - Eventbrite has registration and communication features
- Determine the setting for the Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service session (in-person or virtual)
  - In-person session
    - Location
    - Room capacity
    - Date/Time
  - Host a virtual session
    - Select the web platform
      - Adobe Connect, MS Teams, WebEx, or Zoom
      - Web Platform capacity
      - Date/Time
    - Identify technical support team
    - Provide a separate phone line for individuals who may encounter fire wall restrictions with web platform; consider a live operator assisted phone line to unmute phone lines for questions during the event



## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

- Use Polls during the event to capture immediate feedback from audience.
- Use an online survey platform such as Survey Monkey for overall assessment of the session
  - Post the web survey link during the session to allow participants to complete the survey (e.g., note section on screen and provide verbal reminders during the event)



## ***Executive Horizons: Advancing to the Senior Executive Service Toolkit***

**Questions?**

**[HRDLeadership@opm.gov](mailto:HRDLeadership@opm.gov)**



U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

Federal Mentoring Resources  
Cultivating the Future of Government