

# Framework for the Continuing Development of Federal Senior Executives

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## Introduction

Federal senior executives are expected to possess the leadership capabilities to lead in a continuously changing political climate with evolving performance expectations, and must continually broaden their perspectives and strive for continual professional executive development. Executives must specifically strengthen and reinforce their Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs), skills, and knowledge to make informed decisions and devise new innovative solutions to the complex challenges they continuously encounter. To help executives continually learn, adapt to dynamic conditions, and achieve excellence in performance, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is issuing this *Framework for the Continuing Development of Federal Senior Executives* – providing agencies a clear, comprehensive, and flexible structure and guidance for ongoing executive development. Agencies that promote and prioritize continued development of senior executives optimize executive engagement and performance, and research indicates training and development positively influences employee engagement and performance at all levels of the workforce.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the established value proposition, Federal agencies are legally required to establish programs for the continuing development of their senior executives (5 CFR 412.401(a)). Initially, these programs must include preparation, implementation, and regular updating of an Executive Development Plan (EDP) for each senior executive. Ideally, all senior executives should annually engage in developmental activities, and should further pursue developmental assignments at least once every 3-5 years to broaden their perspective, including the following types of development<sup>2</sup>:

- Details, sabbaticals, Intergovernmental Personnel Act assignments outside the Federal Government or significant participation in interagency projects, or
- Rotations to new executive positions

Through continual learning and development, senior executives may broaden their leadership and technical skills, experience, and perspectives, while promoting increased collaboration across the Federal Government. The continual learning and development of executives ultimately prepares them for new and varied positions, including those of higher authority and responsibility, and this preparation is critical for the Federal Government to succeed in its workforce planning and talent and succession management.

## Project Overview

In collaboration with the governmentwide Chief Learning Officers Council, OPM established an interagency working group to develop this comprehensive framework for the continued development of Federal senior executives. This framework extends the information and guidance provided in OPM's

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *The Keys to Unlocking Engagement, An Analysis of the Conditions that Drive Employee Engagement* 2016.

<sup>2</sup> November 7, 2008 memorandum to Chief Human Capital Officers, "[Guidelines for Broadening the Senior Executive Service](#)"

*Supervisory and Managerial Frameworks and Guidance*<sup>3</sup> and focuses on the capstone level of the Federal leadership journey. OPM’s suite of frameworks are intended to assist senior leaders with effective agency talent management and succession planning efforts, and to assist agency instructional designers and training managers to chart leadership development. This executive development framework incorporates mandatory training, recommended key leadership behaviors, developmental objectives, and developmental opportunities at each specific stage of an executive’s lifecycle of learning. Executives are also encouraged to review the framework to assess their current state of development and create a plan to strengthen specific competencies. The most effective executive development is deliberate and targeted to meet specific developmental goals.

Each career stage of the SES lifecycle is characterized by key leadership behaviors that define the characteristics necessary to achieve and sustain executive excellence. Furthermore, the developmental objectives provide executives direction and focus to enhance the desired behaviors. The recommended developmental opportunities identified in the framework for each career stage provide the specific experiences that enable executives to build their leadership capability.

The framework, coupled with organizational and individual executive needs, should be used during the executive development phase of each agency’s talent management process. It is critical to involve executives in identifying their developmental objectives and experiences, and to recognize that development should be individualized. No “one-size fits all” solution exists for individual development. Each executive and his/her supervisor should work together to outline developmental goals and select appropriate development to meet the requirements and learning needs of the specific executive.

Agencies are encouraged to use multiple strategies to recognize executives for their continued development and to hold executives accountable for the results of continued development (e.g., through performance management as part of the competency element in executives’ performance standards, and conducting regular talent management reviews by agency Executive Resources Boards).

## **Mandatory Training Requirements**

OPM published final regulations on Supervisory, Management, and Executive Development, [5 CFR part 412](#), on December 10, 2009 outlining mandatory leadership training requirements. These regulations discuss systematic training and development of supervisors, managers, and executives, and require new executives to receive training when they make critical career transitions, for instance, from manager to executive. This training should be consistent with assessment of the needs of both the agency and the executive. In addition to the above regulatory requirements, agencies are further required<sup>4</sup> to:

- Increase the number of executives rotating starting October 2016;
- Have supervisors of executives work with their subordinate executives to update the EDPs for each executive, required by 5 CFR part 412.401;
- Include at least one developmental activity annually for each executive;
- Ensure each executive completes at least one leadership assessment involving employee feedback (for example, 360 degree-type reviews) every three years to inform each executive's developmental needs; and

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<sup>3</sup> Available on OPM’s Training and Development webpage at <https://www.opm.gov/WIKI/training/Supervisory-Leadership-Development.ashx> and <https://www.opm.gov/wiki/uploads/docs/Wiki/OPM/training/Complete%20508-%20Frameworks,%20Fact%20Sheet,%20learning%20objectives,%20and%20additional%20resources.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> December 15, 2015 Executive Order -- [Strengthening the Senior Executive Service](#)

- Establish a formal Executive Onboarding Program informed by [OPM's Enhanced Executive Onboarding Model and Framework](#).

Agencies have the flexibility to implement these learning and development requirements, in consideration of mission requirements, funding availability, and other agency-specific requirements.



<b>Mandatory Training</b>	<p><b>For Supervisors, Managers, and SES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ethics</li> <li>-No FEAR Act</li> <li>-USERRA and Veteran's Employment</li> <li>-Drug-Free Workplace</li> <li>-Employing Individuals with Disabilities</li> <li>-Telework Policy***</li> </ul>	<p><b>Performance Management Required by 5 CFR Part 412</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Conducting performance appraisals</li> <li>-Handling unacceptable performance</li> <li>-Mentoring employees</li> <li>-Improving employee performance and productivity</li> </ul>	<p><b>For SES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Prepare, implement, and regularly update an EDP as specified by 5 CFR 412.401</li> <li>-Leadership assessment involving employee feedback every 3 years*</li> <li>-Participate in least one developmental activity annually *</li> <li>-Ethics awareness</li> <li>-Climate preparedness and resilience**</li> </ul>
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\*Executive Order -- Strengthening the SES

\*\*Executive Order 13693-- Planning for Federal Sustainability in the Next Decade

\*\*\* The Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 requires managers and supervisors of teleworkers to participate in telework training.

\*Executive Order—Strengthening the SES: executive development requirements

\*\*Executive Order -- Planning for Federal Sustainability in the Next Decade

## Executive Development– Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### **Q1. Is there a requirement on the specific number of development hours for executives?**

**A1.** No, OPM does not require a specific number of hours for executive development, including for new executives. Supervisors of executives are required to work with their subordinate executives to update EDPs for each executive required by 5 CFR part 412.401. Executives are required to engage in at least one developmental activity annually and at least one leadership assessment involving employee feedback (for example, 360 degree-type reviews) every three years to inform each executive's developmental needs. Agencies with 20 or more SES members are also required to increase the number of executives rotating internally and externally. To meet these requirements, OPM recommends the assessment of the developmental needs of agencies' executives, and the delivery of appropriate training and other developmental solutions to meet requirements and individual needs.

### **Q2. Are new executives required to complete executive development plans (EDPs)?**

**A2.** Yes, new executives are required to complete executive development plans. Each SES member is required to prepare, implement, and regularly update an EDP as specified in 5 CFR 412.401. OPM has developed a sample template which can be found at <http://www.opm.gov/ses/references/EDPTemplate.pdf>. Pursuant to 5 CFR 412.401(a)(4), EDPs must be reviewed and revised appropriately by the agency's ERB or similar body designated by the agency to oversee executive development, using input from the SES's performance evaluation. For more information on EDPs, see OPM's [Executive Learning and Development](#) webpage on [OPM's Federal Training and Development Wiki](#).

### **Q3. Are new executives required to have a mentor and/or executive coach?**

**A3.** No, new executives are not required to have a mentor and/or executive coach, but OPM strongly encourages new executives to obtain a mentor and/or executive coach. Agencies may develop a mentoring and coaching component in their executive development programs. OPM also encourages agencies to take advantage of the SES Situational Mentoring Program and the Federal Coaching Network, which are available to agencies at no cost. The SES Situational Mentoring Program is a governmentwide program that provides Federal executives, particularly those who are new to the SES or transitioning to different roles, with timely advice and support from experienced executive mentors. The Federal Coaching Network includes a database of Federal internal coaches that are available governmentwide to help individuals reach peak performance. Coaching is one of the most effective executive development activities, and is particularly useful during transitional periods. For more information on these two programs and your agency's point of contact, please email [SESDevelopment@opm.gov](mailto:SESDevelopment@opm.gov).

### **Q4. Can agencies require a continued service agreement for executive development programs?**

**A4.** Agencies have the discretion on whether to require a continued service agreement (CSA) for executive development, except agencies may not require a CSA for the Federally-mandated portions of the program. For more information on CSAs, see the [OPM Fact Sheet on Continuing Service Agreements](#) on [OPM's Training and Development Policy Webpage](#).

### **Q5. Executives are required to participate in at least one developmental activity each year. How should agencies define “developmental activity?”**

**A5.** A developmental activity is any learning intervention or work experience that provides exposure to different leadership experiences and perspectives to promote personal and professional growth and development. As outlined in [OPM's Executive Development Best Practices Guide](#), individuals may learn and develop in a variety of ways. Learning and development can occur on the job and be experiential in nature or it could occur in the form of

meaningful relationships, coaching and feedback, or formal training. OPM's Executive Development Best Practices guide outlines a broad set of developmental activities that agencies and senior executives can consider.

**Q6: How are rotations defined? Do reassignments count? What about details?**

**A6:** A rotation is defined as, “a development process, involving movement to another position or an assignment that broadens the executive’s knowledge, skill and experience in order to improve talent development, mission delivery and collaboration.” Rotations should be a minimum of 120 consecutive calendar days, including to different departments, agencies, subcomponents, functional areas, sectors, or non-Federal partners. Agencies are encouraged to take advantage of existing authorities, such as the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) and Sabbatical authorities, to facilitate mobility. OPM released guidance on January 29, 2016 that clarifies the requirement to increase executive rotations (please see <https://www.chcoc.gov/content/executive-order-guidance-%E2%80%93-strengthening-senior-executive-service-implementing-executive>).

**Q7. How long must an executive have been appointed in the Senior Executive Service before they are eligible for a sabbatical?**

**A7.** Section 3396(c)(2) of title 5 stipulates conditions in which career senior executives may participate in sabbaticals:

- Career appointees must complete seven years of service in SES positions or equivalent civil service positions (i.e., grade level above GS-15 or equivalent), and at least two of the seven years specifically must be in the SES;
- The appointee cannot be eligible for voluntary (optional) retirement at the time the sabbatical begins; and
- A sabbatical may not be granted to the same individual more than once in a 10-year period.

Agency heads may grant sabbaticals for up to 11 months to career appointees for full-time study or uncompensated work experience (5 U.S.C. 3396(c)). The sabbatical must contribute to the executive’s development and effectiveness. Sabbaticals can broaden professional skills and provide an opportunity for personal growth.

**Q8: How often are senior executives required to rotate?**

**A8:** No specific requirement exists for the frequency of senior executive rotations. When selecting an executive for a rotation, an agency should consider the following: agency priorities; needs identified in existing agency succession and hiring plans; recommendations from the agency’s annual talent review; the Federal Government’s interest in cultivating generalist executives with broad and diverse experiences who can lead in a variety of organizations; and individual SES needs included in each executive’s EDP.

**Q9. If an individual is new to the Federal Government and was an executive in another organization, can he/she opt out of all or some of the new executive training?**

**A9.** Individuals new to the Federal Government who previously served as executives in another organization must still receive required executive training within their first year of appointment. Agencies may decide if these individuals should complete the entire new executive training program or only the parts of the program required by 5 CFR part 412.

**Q10. What type of training delivery format may agencies use for executive development?**

**A10.** Agencies may decide which delivery methods best meet their organizational and their individual executive needs. The following provide some possible delivery methods:

- Instructor-led (e.g., degree programs, courses, seminars, workshops, case presentations and discussions, distance learning, passive computer-based instruction)
- Experiential activities (e.g., on-the-job training, action learning, service learning, team projects, simulations and games, scenario planning)
- Developmental relationships (e.g., coaching, mentoring, networking, supervisor support, peer-to-peer learning partners, shadowing)
- Assessments and feedback (e.g., self-assessments, assessment tools, developmental assessment centers; multisource and 360-degree feedback)
- Self-development (e.g., individual development plans, self-guided learning activities)

Agencies should decide which delivery option is best to achieve the goals of the training. Please see [OPM's Effective Learning Interventions for Developing Executive Core Qualifications \(ECOs\)](#) for information on the most effective ways to develop each of the 22 core leadership competencies and six fundamental competencies within the ECOs. The report includes a Leadership Development Matrix, which serves as a quick reference guide and summary of the report.

**Q11. What topics can be included in both new and refresher training?**

**A11.** The regulations (5 CFR 412.202) mention specific topics around performance management, including dealing with unacceptable performance, mentoring employees, improving employee performance and productivity, and conducting employee performance appraisals, but it is recommended to go beyond the requirements outlined in 5 CFR part 412 when developing executive development programs. Review [OPM's Executive Development Best Practices Guide](#) which is a compilation of best practices used by the public and private sector to support the continual learning of executives.

**Q12. Are the requirements specified within 5 CFR part 412 the only ones that need to be followed when developing executive development curriculums?**

**A12.** No, agencies should also include training mandated by Executive Order, Federal statute, or regulation such as ethics awareness (5 CFR 2638.703 and 704). Agencies may include additional requirements for executive development. Specifically, executives are required to engage in:

- at least one developmental activity annually; and
- at least one leadership assessment involving employee feedback (for example, 360 degree-type reviews) every three years to inform each executive's developmental needs.

OPM recommends agencies go beyond the requirements listed in the regulations. Agencies should assess their executive development needs, and include these needs in their programs.

**Q13. How often should an agency update its executive development programs?**

**A13.** Agencies should update their executive development program(s) as needed. One way to identify areas for improvement/updating is to annually assess whether the programs are meeting the agency's needs.

**Q14. Are there reporting requirements for this training?**

**A14.** [5 CFR 410.601\(b\)](#) requires agencies to electronically submit reports of all training activities to OPM's data warehouse—Enterprise Human Resources Integration (EHRI)—on a monthly basis. Also, agencies must report on SES rotations to OPM on an annual basis beginning September 2017.

**Q15. How should agencies evaluate executive development programs?**

**A15.** [OPM's Training Evaluation Field Guide](#) provides helpful information regarding evaluating training courses and training programs. Agencies should consider the type of evaluation tool utilized (e.g., interviews, surveys, and focus groups) and go beyond assessing the participants' reactions to measuring the intermediate and long-term outcomes. For further assistance review the [OPM's Training Evaluation Field Guide Supplement](#) and Logic Model Template for Executive Development Program (see Appendix A).

**Q16. How should agencies fund executive development program(s)?**

**A16.** Agencies should use their training budget(s) to fund their executive development program(s). Agencies are encouraged to work together to share best practices and strategies for implementation. For example, to facilitate rotations, agencies could partner to exchange talent, which would minimize costs. Agencies are also encouraged to take advantage of existing resources, such as OPM's Situational Mentoring Program and Federal Coaching Network, which are available at no cost and can help agencies meet some of their professional development requirements.

**Q17. Whom should I contact if I have additional questions?**

**A17.** Please contact OPM at [SESDevelopment@opm.gov](mailto:SESDevelopment@opm.gov). You may also check the [OPM Training and Development Wiki](#) for agency best practices and additional information related to executive development.



## References

[The Federal Workforce Flexibility Act of 2004 \(P.L. 108-411\)](#)

[Executive Order—Strengthening the SES, December 15, 2015](#)

[5 U.S.C. 3396](#)

[5 CFR 410.601\(b\)](#)

[5 CFR 412](#)

[5 CFR 412.201](#)

[5 CFR 412.202](#)

[5 CFR 412.401](#)

[5 U.S.C. 7103\(a\)\(10-11\)](#)

[OPM Fact Sheet on Continuing Service Agreements](#)

[OPM’s Effective Learning Interventions for Developing Executive Core Qualifications \(ECQs\)](#)

[OPM’s Executive Best Practices Guide](#)

[OPM’s Federal Training and Development Wiki](#)

[OPM’s The Keys to Unlocking Engagement, An Analysis of the Conditions that Drive Employee Engagement](#)

[OPM’s Senior Executive Service Survey Results for Fiscal Year 2011](#)

[OPM’s Training and Development Policy Webpage](#)

[OPM’s Training Evaluation Field Guide](#)

[OPM’s Training Evaluation Field Guide Supplement](#)

## **Appendix A**

## Logic Model Template for Executive Development Program

<b>Program Office Goal:</b>	Develop and implement an effective executive development program and evaluation methodology that aligns with the organizational strategy.
<b>Business Objective:</b>	Enhance individual and organizational performance to meet future organizational requirements.
<b>Assumptions:</b>	Agency's Executive Resources Board (ERB) and supervisors are aware of their executives' strengths and weaknesses; executives perceive senior leaders as supportive of their development; diversity plays no role in the way motivation and ambition is expressed.

What Resources do you need to run the program? (Inputs)	What you will do with the resources? (Activities)	What changes/impacts will occur because of program activities? (OUTCOMES)			What will show you're getting there? You should have baseline data for each evaluation method used.	
		Short- term	Intermediate 3 months out	Long-term 1 year	Outputs	Evaluation Methodology
<p><b>Organizational Factors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agency's Executive Resources Board (ERB)</li> <li>Agency's Strategic Plan</li> <li>Strategic Learning Plan</li> <li>Employee Viewpoint Survey results</li> <li>Agency's training needs assessment</li> </ul> <p><b>Risk Factors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Laws/Regulations</li> <li>Political environment</li> <li>Organizational culture</li> <li>Assumptions (facts or conditions you assume to be true)</li> </ul> <p><b>Protective Factors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program budget</li> <li>Facilities</li> <li>Staff resources</li> <li>Office supplies</li> <li>Technology</li> </ul> <p><b>Critical Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instructional Design</li> <li>Project Management</li> <li>Program Management</li> <li>Measurement and Evaluation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Planning Phase</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a business case</li> <li>Identify an executive champion</li> <li>Develop necessary partnerships inside and outside the agency</li> <li>Develop an evaluation plan (formative and summative)</li> <li>Design and develop a curriculum</li> <li>Develop a marketing strategy</li> </ul> <p><b>Implementation Phase</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a Dashboard to track program progress                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Financial (procurement)</li> <li>-ROI</li> <li>-Learning and Innovation</li> <li>-Customer Satisfaction</li> <li>-Internal processes</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Evaluation Phase</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess quality of the program process and results</li> <li>Make improvements where necessary</li> <li>Report to Stakeholders</li> </ul>	<p><b>Setting the Tone</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive is aware of the agency mission and vision</li> <li>Executive has a clear picture of his/her functions and responsibilities</li> <li>Executive understands the organization and organizational issues within the cultural context</li> </ul> <p><b>Making My Mark</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive has an appreciation of his/her own culture and community and the cultures and communities of others</li> <li>Executive is exposed to the latest concepts and techniques in their respective areas of specialization.</li> </ul> <p><b>Leaving My Legacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive knows his/her strengths and limits as a leader</li> <li>Executive has confidence in taking risks</li> </ul> <p><b>Organization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified executives with the required potential to prepare them for future critical positions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Setting the Tone</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive is thoughtful in his/her approach to work</li> <li>Executive demonstrates technical knowledge of their field and fields relevant to their work</li> <li>Executive effectively analyzes problems and takes appropriate action in the best interest of the organization</li> </ul> <p><b>Making My Mark</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive collaborates across cultural boundaries</li> <li>Executive builds relationships across the organization</li> <li>Executive engages in collaborative projects</li> </ul> <p><b>Leaving My Legacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive demonstrates effective work-life integration</li> <li>Executive gains the support of influential people to help meet the agency mission</li> <li>Executive continuously evaluates him/herself</li> </ul> <p><b>Organization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased number of "ready now" executives to fill critical leadership positions</li> <li>Increased executive commitment and accountability for development</li> </ul>	<p><b>Setting the Tone</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive is a responsible leader</li> <li>Executive effectively manages change and responds to resistance</li> </ul> <p><b>Making My Mark</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive has a broadened outlook in regards to role, position and responsibilities inside and outside the organization</li> <li>Executive has advanced in his/her leadership responsibilities</li> </ul> <p><b>Leaving My Legacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive has an enhanced ability to respond to rapid shifts in the organizational climate</li> <li>Executive models effective leadership and is actively engaged in development of others</li> </ul> <p><b>Organization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased retention of executives who develop and use talent effectively</li> <li>Broad and deep internal leadership pipeline</li> <li>Improved organizational performance</li> <li>Competency gaps closed for mission critical positions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Specific to Curriculum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goals &amp; objectives</li> <li>Courses &amp; developmental opportunities offered</li> <li>Curriculum design</li> <li>Instructor training</li> <li># of training hours</li> </ul> <p><b>Specific to Implementation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of executives</li> <li># of courses delivered</li> <li># of developmental activities completed</li> <li># of executives rotating</li> </ul> <p><b>Specific to Quality Assessment of the Program</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% executive satisfaction</li> <li>% executive's leader satisfaction</li> <li>Degree of process efficiency and effectiveness</li> <li># and frequency of improvements</li> <li>Stakeholder report</li> </ul> <p><b>Specific to Marketing Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of fliers &amp; brochures</li> <li># of Webcasts/Podcasts</li> <li># of web posts</li> <li># of hits/responses to promotional messages posted to a Listserv</li> <li># of posters (signage in general)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How well is the process operating – the relationship between inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes</li> <li>What resources have actually been allocated or mobilized?</li> <li>Which activities are actually taking place?</li> <li>Who is conducting the activities?</li> <li>Who is being reached through the activities?</li> <li>Which areas need improvement?</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what degree have objectives/outcomes been achieved</li> <li>Potential gaps in planning and assumptions</li> </ul> <p><b>Data Collection Tools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with senior leaders/executive (3, 6, and 12 months after the program)</li> <li>Track developmental activities in the daily operational context (how did the supervisor/manager follow up or offer feedback to the executive?)</li> <li>Track \$ spent on training</li> <li>Track # of monetary &amp; non-monetary rewards/recognition</li> <li>On-the-job observations of effectiveness and progress</li> <li>Monitor employee engagement scores</li> <li>Track customer satisfaction scores</li> <li>Monitor quality of work products</li> <li>Track employee retention rates</li> </ul>

