



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Washington, DC 20415

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Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments, Independent Agencies, Inspectors General, and the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency

From: Robert H. Shriver, III
Acting Director

Subject: Update of the Senior Executive Service Executive Core
Qualifications

I am pleased to announce the release of an updated Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ) model. This is the first major update in over 15 years, and it positions the federal government to recruit, assess, and develop top level leaders for today and the future.

The Senior Executive Service (SES) was established over 45 years ago under the Civil Service Reform Act to create a dedicated corps of high-level executives who would provide strong leadership across agencies. A robust articulation of the qualifications and characteristics required of these leaders is foundational to building and sustaining the cadre, guiding aspiring leaders, providing a framework for selection of leaders, and supporting performance management of existing leaders. In 2006, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) defined these key executive qualifications as ECQs comprised of five meta-leadership competencies, each supplemented by sub-competencies, associated with executive-level positions.

Since 2006, workplaces have seen significant changes – including immense technological advances – that have altered the qualifications required for leaders. As a result of this need to modernize, OPM conducted a thorough evaluation of the existing ECQs over the last year. With the goal of reassessing the qualities and attributes needed for federal executives to lead effectively and successfully, today and in the future, the review sought to identify and assess:

1. which ECQs/competencies are still relevant and effective (and should therefore remain the same);
2. which ECQs/competencies should be revised (upgraded, replaced, or removed) given the ever-changing environment; and

3. which new ECQs or competencies might emerge or require adoption to match the rapidly changing nature of work and leadership, such as data and artificial intelligence (AI) literacy.

The year-long evaluation included a comprehensive literature review, including examining over 55 existing competency models from a variety of organizations, including government, international, nonprofit, and academic institutions. OPM also convened panels with members of the SES from over 45 agencies; surveyed the SES, receiving more than 2,600 responses; and held focus groups with 15 stakeholder groups and individuals, including federal C-Suite Councils and external government partners.

Given the rapid technological change since 2006, the ability to demonstrate proficiency in competencies related to artificial intelligence and data was assessed, in particular, to ensure all relevant skills needed among new executives were identified. The literature review, survey results, and feedback from focus groups provided considerable evidence regarding the importance of both areas.

Updated Executive Core Qualifications

Executive leadership competencies are critical in driving organizational success and cultivating a culture of excellence. As a result of the information reviewed and identified through the evaluation, OPM has updated the ECQs, including both meta-leadership and sub-competencies, to reflect the qualities and attributes needed for career Federal executives to lead effectively and successfully, today and in the future.

A summary of the key changes is provided below and included at attachment 1.

Renamed Meta ECQs	Renamed Sub-Competencies	New Sub-Competencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving Results (formerly Results Driven) • Achieving Organizational Success (formerly Business Acumen) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity and Innovation to Innovation • Flexibility to Agility • Conflict Management to Managing Conflict • Leveraging Diversity to Fostering Diversity • Team Building to Building Teams • Financial Management to Fiscal Responsibility • Human Capital Management to Managing Resources • Technology Management to Leveraging Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems Thinking • Interpersonal Skills • Building Workplace Culture • Data Literacy • Strategic Communication

These changes result in an updated ECQ model as follows:

Leading Change	Leading People	Driving Results	Achieving Organizational Success	Building Coalitions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation • Agility • Resilience • Strategic Thinking • Vision • Systems Thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing Conflict • Fostering Diversity • Developing Others • Building Teams • Interpersonal Skills • Building Workforce Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability • Customer Service • Decisiveness • Problem Solving • Data Literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiscal Responsibility • Managing Human Resources • Leveraging Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnering • Political Savvy • Influencing/ Negotiating • External Awareness • Strategic Communication

Implementation of the updated ECQ model

Each meta-ECQ and sub-competency also includes a detailed definition to provide additional guidance. Following validation of the revised model, these detailed definitions will be released to agencies. The full updated ECQ model will become effective July 1, 2025.

Once effective, acclimation to the new ECQs will require considerable change management within and across agencies. A phased operational implementation of the new ECQs will begin with agency recruitment and hiring (including OPM's administration of the QRB process), to be followed by the implementation of the new ECQs in the SES Basic System performance appraisal system at the beginning of Fiscal Year 2026, and updates to SES development during Fiscal Year 2026. Hiring actions initiated after July 1, 2025, must be based on the new ECQs. Accordingly, effective October 1, 2025, SES performance management systems and plans must be updated to reflect the new ECQs.

OPM's Executive Services and Workforce Development Center will provide office hour sessions, training materials, updated policy documents and templates, monthly updates, and full operational support to our agency executive resources partners to ensure critical and timely information is transmitted and successful agency implementation.

If you or your staff have questions or require assistance, please contact: Nicole Wright, Deputy Associate Director, Executive Services and Workforce Development, at Nicole.Wright@opm.gov or Danielle Opalka, Manager, Policy and Special Programs, at Danielle.Opalka@opm.gov.

cc: Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCOs), Deputy CHCOs, and Human Resources Directors

Attachment (see below)

Executive Core Qualifications Modifications

Leading Change		Leading People		From Results Driven to Driving Results		From Business Acumen to Achieving Organizational Success		Building Coalitions	
From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity and Innovation • External Awareness • Flexibility • Resilience • Strategic Thinking • Vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation • Agility • Resilience • Strategic Thinking • Vision • Systems Thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict Management • Leveraging Diversity • Developing Others • Team Building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing Conflict • Fostering Diversity • Developing Others • Building Teams • Interpersonal Skills • Building Workforce Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability • Customer Service • Decisiveness • Entrepreneurship • Problem Solving • Technical Credibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability • Customer Service • Decisiveness • Problem Solving • Data Literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Management • Human Capital Management • Technology Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiscal Responsibility • Managing Human Resources • Leveraging Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnering • Political Savvy • Influencing/ Negotiating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnering • Political Savvy • Influencing/ Negotiating • External Awareness • Strategic Communication