



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Friday, November 7, 2008

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief Human Capital Officers

FROM: Michael W. Hager, Acting Director

Subject: Guidelines for Broadening the Senior Executive Service (SES)

As many leaders retire, the Federal Government faces a challenge – and opportunity – to improve the effectiveness of the leadership corps across Government. A recent U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) survey of Senior Executives highlighted concerns about the lack of development and career mobility among individuals in many agencies, in contrast to the broad careers envisioned by the creation of the

SES. Recent history has also proven the disadvantages for national security and disaster preparedness when leaders lack a Governmentwide perspective or are not experienced in working across agency lines to respond to national threats or issues.

Under OPM's authority to provide for the continuing development of Senior Executives or to require agencies to establish such programs which meet criteria prescribed by OPM (5 USC 3396), this memorandum encourages agencies to develop policies and take appropriate actions to ensure continuing development of Senior Executives, including meeting the guidelines listed below.

The purpose of this memorandum is to encourage agencies to:

- Promote continual learning in the context of agency missions
- Promote broader perspectives supporting a results-oriented, sustainable, high-performance culture across Government
- Increase collaboration within large departments and across departments and agencies
- Maximize leadership expertise

We ask agencies, through their policies and associated actions or programs, to ensure Senior Executives understand the roles, responsibilities, and cultures of other organizations and disciplines; exchange ideas and practices; build mutual trust and familiarity, especially among those with differing perspectives; minimize obstacles to coordination; and enhance strategic thinking in an interagency environment. Inter-office, interagency, and inter-governmental assignments, fellowships, and exchanges, to include those with appropriate non-governmental organizations, will provide Senior Executives with a wealth of information about the capabilities, missions, procedures and requirements of their counterparts across the government.

SES members are encouraged to participate in developmental opportunities and rotational assignments to gain a broad Governmentwide perspective. For the long term, we hope to build a results-oriented, sustainable, high-performance culture across Government by broadening perspective through the establishment of enterprise-wide, cross-agency competencies, with Senior Executives serving as leaders and role models.

Ideally, all SES members, at least once every 3-5 years, should pursue developmental opportunities to broaden their perspective, including:

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

Policy considerations

In developing these programs, agencies should keep in mind developmental opportunities take many forms, including those outlined in the September 12, 2006 memorandum to Chief Human Capital Officers (“Guidelines for Managerial Development”). Developmental opportunities may also include:

- A detail or assignment to another major component within a large department (e.g., DOD, DHS, USDA)
- A detail or assignment to another agency or department
- Cross-agency projects which involve substantive participation where the SES member gains practical knowledge and understanding of other organizations
- Assignment to certain “liaison” positions which provide the individual significant inter-agency experience

In line with the National Strategy for the Development of Security Professionals, agencies should place particular emphasis on rotations for SES members who are designated as National Security Professionals under Executive Order 13434, May 17, 2007.

Agencies may use current authorities to support development, including the information technology exchange authority, and the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) that allows for exchange of personnel between the Federal Government and state, local, and Indian Tribal Governments, as well as non-profit organizations, institutions of higher education, and Federally funded research and development centers.

In addition, agencies may apply for temporary allocations for developmental purposes which allow a space to the “losing” agency when an SES member participates in a developmental detail (see the attached April 10, 2007 memo for Chief Human Capital Officers).

It should also be noted that mandating interagency rotations without exceptions is likely to be difficult and impractical, especially for small agencies and very specialized positions. As a practical matter, it would be prudent to promote or to provide incentives for mobility and rotational assignments rather than to require them unilaterally. There are alternatives, such as interagency projects, that can also cultivate broad perspectives. Two current initiatives take this middle ground approach (Defense and ODNI Joint Duty programs), allowing some exceptions and/or restricting the requirement to certain categories of positions.

Agencies should consider using their Executive Resources Boards (ERB's) or similar corporate entity to manage this initiative and provide direction and oversight, including: 1) reviewing the development of each SES member annually, 2) determining opportunities that will broaden the individual's perspective, and 3) establishing metrics for assessing the implementation of the agency policy. It is also a good idea for all SES members to have Executive Development Plans (EDP's) that address developmental assignments and/or rotations, as well as other development. These EDP's should be updated on a periodic basis (OPM has developed a sample EDP—it is available on OPM's website at http://www.opm.gov/ses/executive_development/index.asp).

The original concept of the Senior Executive Service (SES) was a cadre of mobile, interchangeable leaders. Agency policies may establish mobility agreements or contracts for each new SES to sign at the time of entry into the SES for ongoing development and mobility (OPM is developing a template for agencies to use for such agreements). Additionally, agencies may want to emphasize the importance of multiple agency experiences in hiring into senior level executive positions.

If you have questions about this memorandum, please contact Nancy Randa, Deputy Associate Director, Center for Learning, Executive Resources, and Policy Analysis at 202-606-0142, Nancy.Randa@opm.gov, or your agency Human Capital Officer.

[Attachment](#)

cc: Human Resource Directors