



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Wednesday, April 17, 2002

MEMORANDUM FOR: Heads Of Executive Departments And Agencies

FROM: Kay Coles James, Director

Subject: Hiring Executive Talent

President Bush brought us to Washington to build a Government that is citizen-centered, results-oriented, and market-based. Career Senior Executives will be crucial to our success in delivering for the President and the American people. We must demand excellence from our current executives, and we must quickly recruit outstanding leaders for Senior Executive Service (SES) vacancies. In November, I challenged you to use the SES performance management system to drive executive accountability. Today, I am laying out a plan for streamlining the SES staffing process.

Since becoming OPM Director, I have received many complaints that filling SES jobs takes too long and is too complicated. We are committed to meeting the legal requirement that the SES selection process reach out to an extensive pool of candidates, assess candidates' executive qualifications, and ensure selections are based on merit. I am also committed to building a more diverse SES corps.

Our commitment to merit and diversity precludes instant hires. However, I believe we can do much better than the 6-month average it now takes to fill an SES vacancy. My staff has developed a model which lays out a plan for filling SES positions within 30 workdays after the vacancy announcement closes. A copy of this model plan is attached. I plan to use this model to fill SES vacancies at OPM and urge you to apply it in your agency.

I have asked my Deputy, Dan Blair, to meet with the Chairs of agency Executive Resources Boards (ERBs) to share this model and discuss your agency's SES staffing needs. Dan is charged with the responsibility of achieving one of my most critical goals at OPM, the streamlining of the Government's recruitment and hiring process. He has my full support and will be available to assist your staff on this and other related issues as we move forward.

In addition, our Center for Leadership and Executive Resource Policy is developing a variety of tools your Human Resources Office can use to streamline your internal process. In June, we will begin training agency HR Specialists on tools and techniques for speeding-up the SES merit staffing process - without sacrificing quality.

We are also looking at ways we can streamline the Qualifications Review Board (QRB) process. Required by law and administered by OPM, the QRBs provide a final independent assessment of new candidates' executive qualifications. Although most QRB cases are approved within 2 weeks

of their submission to OPM, we want to explore ways to trim this time further and reduce the paper-work burden on candidates and agencies.

OPM is committed to helping agencies find executive talent. However, this effort will also take commitment from you, your management team, and your Human Resources Office. We encourage you to:

- Insist that the SES leadership/managerial competencies be the foundation of your recruitment process - not narrow technical, professional, or agency-specific qualities;
- Ensure that your Executive Resources Board quickly acts on its statutory responsibility for evaluating SES candidates; and
- Give your Human Resources Office the resources it needs for staff development and program delivery.

This effort to improve the SES hiring process is the first step of a larger initiative aimed at overhauling all the systems the Government uses to attract, evaluate, and appoint talent. "Strategic Management of Human Capital" is the first initiative in the President's Management Agenda, and your agency's success in recruiting and retaining talented employees will be central to its success on the Executive Branch Management Scorecard.

As the President put it, "we must have a Government that thinks differently, so we need to recruit talented and imaginative people to public service." OPM looks forward to working with you to help your agency recruit these talented and imaginative employees.

**Streamlining the SES Merit Staffing Process
30 Day Model**

ACTION	Time Frame in work days
Announcement closes; preliminary qualifications determinations made; Executive Resources Board (ERB) convened	3 days
ERB evaluates applicants; identifies those who are Best Qualified (BQ)	5 days
List/certificate of BQ prepared; BQ referred for consideration of Selecting Official	3 days
Selecting Official interviews, selects and secures approval of Appointing Authority	7 days
Case prepared for OPM review and presentation to Qualifications Review Board (QRB)	7 days
Total Agency time:	25 days
OPM reviews case; QRB takes action	5 days
Total time from close of announcement to selection:	30 days