



A New Day for the Civil Service

Senior Executive Service

Executive Core Qualifications

Preparing for the SES

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT



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Topics

- **The Senior Executive Service (SES)**
- **Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) and leadership competencies**
- **CCAR – Challenge, Context, Action, Result**
- **Do's and Don'ts**
- **Plan of Action**

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Objectives

- **To provide a quick overview of the SES**
- **To provide further insight into the ECQs and how they apply to the SES**
- **To provide tools for writing strong ECQ narratives**

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About the Senior Executive Service

- The SES was established by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (CSRA).
- Placed top management positions classified above GS15, with greater scope and complexity, into a distinct personnel system, which provides agency authority and flexibility.
- SES members are the major link between Presidential appointees and the rest of the Federal work force.
- Members of the SES are selected for their leadership qualifications and serve in the key positions just below the top Presidential appointees.

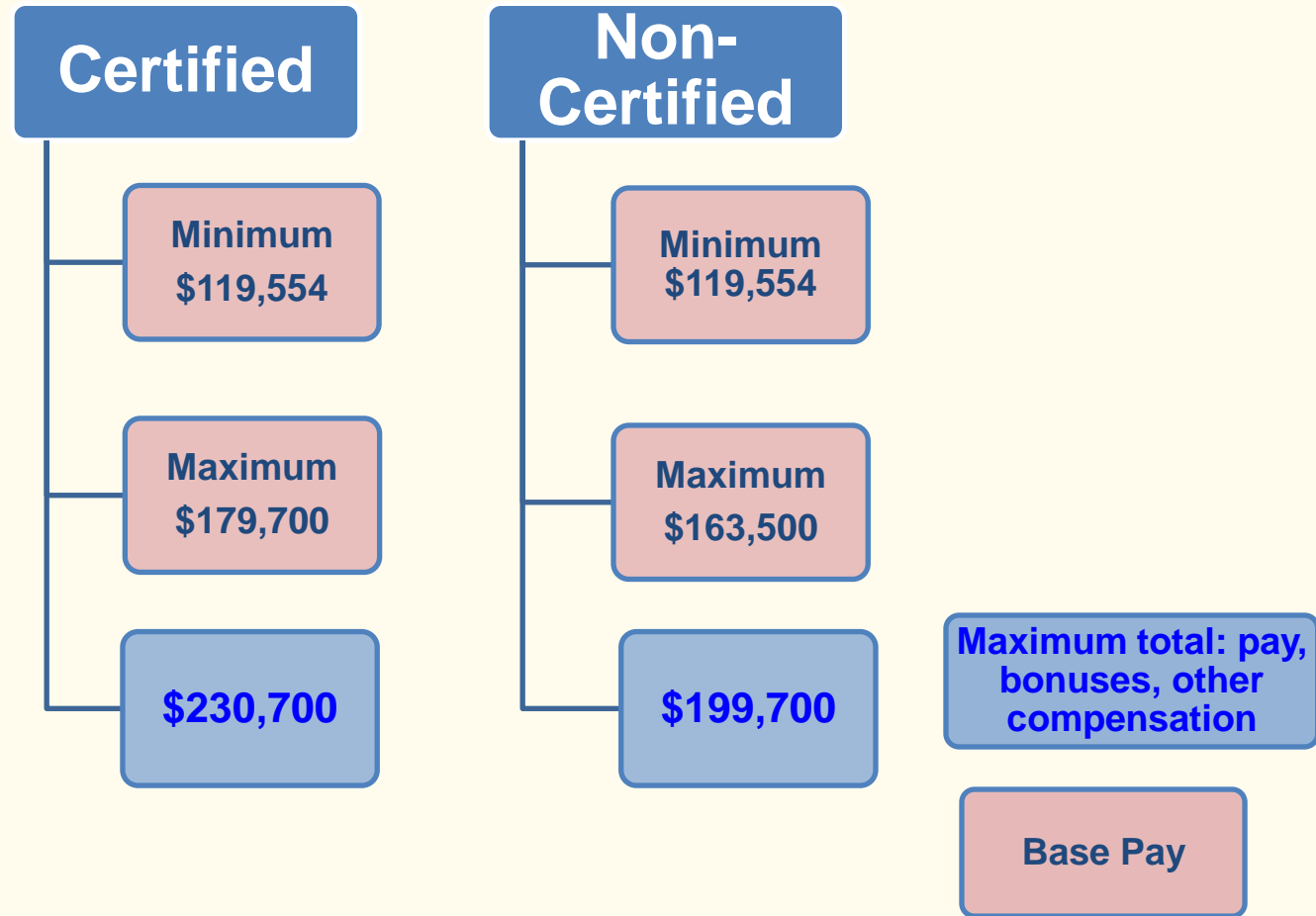
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SES Responsibilities and Expectations

- The SES demands leadership, professional integrity, a broad perspective, and a commitment to the highest ideals of public service.
- SES members expected to possess executive skills not typically required of GS employees, e.g. vision, strategic thinking, external awareness, entrepreneurship.
- SES members are charged with leading the continuing transformation of government.
- SES members frequently report to or interact with non-career leadership.
- SES members supervise GS or other SES; SES positions usually consist of at least 25% supervisory responsibility.

Compensation

SES Performance Management System



Excludes military retired pay

Benefits

**8 Hours annual leave per pay period
(720 hour max limit)**

Performance Awards and Bonuses

Presidential Rank Awards

**Recruitment, Relocation, and Retention Bonuses
(up to 25% of basic pay)**

**Student Loan Repayment
(varies by Agency)**

Home Leave (outside of CONUS) and Last Move Home



Other Provisions

Not eligible for premium pay (e.g. overtime pay (including travel), Sunday premium pay, holiday premium pay, night pay, standby duty pay, and hazardous duty pay)

Not eligible for credit hours

Not eligible for compensatory time off



The SES Hiring and Selection Process

The Merit Staffing Process

90 working days from closing date of vacancy announcement to complete

Vacancy
Announcement
posted for a
minimum of 14
days

Preliminary
review and
eligibility
determination of
applications by
HR specialist

Rating and
ranking of
eligible
applications.
ERB/SME panel
evaluates and
recommends
best qualified to
selecting official

Hiring official
makes selection
and obtains
Secretarial
approval

Agency submits
selectee
package to
OPM for QRB
certification



The ECQs and Leadership Competencies

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ECQs

What are they?

- The ECQs describe the leadership skills needed to succeed in the SES and reinforce the concept of an “SES corporate culture”.

How are they used?

- The ECQs are designed to assess executive experience and potential not technical expertise. They measure whether an individual has the broad executive skills needed to succeed in a variety of SES positions.

How were they determined?

- Through extensive research of the attributes of successful executives in both the private and public sectors.
- A collaboration, reflecting the best thinking of many senior executives, thought leaders, and associations, as well as human resources professionals.

Executive Core Qualification & Competencies





Leading Change

Involves the ability to bring about strategic change, both within and outside the organization, to meet organizational goals.

- Inherent is the ability to:
 - establish an organizational vision
 - implement it in a continuously changing environment.



Competencies

Creativity and Innovation

- New insights, encourages new ideas and innovations

External Awareness

- Up to date on local, national and international policies and trends

Flexibility

- Open to change and adapts to changing conditions or unexpected obstacles

Resilience

- Deals effectively with pressure

Strategic Thinking

- Formulates objectives and priorities and implements plans

Vision

- Acts as catalyst for organizational change and translates vision into action

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What should the focus be?

Questions
to ask
yourself
when
describing
your
experience

- What was my organizational vision?
- How did I transcend my vision into action? What initiative did I take?
- Did I strategically initiate and implement transformational change?
- How did I deal with unexpected organizational changes/obstacles (to internal/external pressures)?
- Did my vision achieve measurable results that impacted the organization?

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Examples of Leading Change

- Develops new insights into situations
- Deals effectively with pressure and leadership resistance
- Takes a long-term view and builds a shared vision with others
- Understands and keeps up-to-date on local, national, and international policies and trends that affect the organization and shape stakeholders' views

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Leading People

Involves the ability to lead people toward meeting the organization's vision, mission, and goals

- Inherent is the ability to provide an inclusive workplace that:
 - fosters the development of others
 - facilitates cooperation and teamwork
 - and supports constructive resolution of conflicts.



Competencies

Team Building

- Inspires and fosters team commitment. Facilitates cooperation and motivates to accomplish goals

Conflict Management

- Anticipates and takes steps to prevent counter-productive confrontations

Developing Others

- Develops the ability of others to perform and contribute to the organization

Leveraging Diversity

- Fosters an inclusive workplace where diversity and differences are valued

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What should the focus be?

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- What is the largest staff size I have led? What challenges did leading a large staff present?
- Was I leading versus managing?
- How did I lead my team through a challenge? How did I motivate them to achieve set goals?
- How did I contribute to the professional development of my employees (individually or as a team)?
- How did I deal with conflicts that arose within my team?
- How did I leverage diversity amongst my team? (age, cultural, race, skill levels, perspectives)

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Examples of Leading People

- Encourages creative tension and differences of opinions
- Fosters an inclusive workplace
- Develops the ability of others to perform and contribute to the organization
- Inspires and fosters team commitment, spirit, pride, and trust



Results Driven

Involves the ability to meet organizational goals and customer expectations

- Inherent is the ability to:
 - make decisions that produce high-quality results by applying
 - technical knowledge, analyzing problems, and calculating risks.



Competencies

Accountability

- Holds self and others accountable for measurable high-quality, timely and cost-effective results

Customer Service

- Anticipates and meets the needs of both internal and external customers

Decisiveness

- Makes well-informed, effective, timely decisions with limited data

Entrepreneurship

- Positions the organization for success by identifying new opportunities

Problem Solving

- Identifies and analyzes problems

Technical Credibility

- Appropriately applies principles, procedures, regulations related to specialized expertise

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What should the focus be?

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- How did the priorities and objectives I set lead to high quality/quantity results?
- How did I address the needs of customers and stakeholders (internal and external)?
- How did my decisions and actions impact results?
- Did I identify problems and implement solutions that resulted in improving services?

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Examples of Results Driven

- Positions the organization for future success by identifying new opportunities; builds the organization by developing or improving products or services
- Makes well-informed, effective, and timely decisions, even when data is limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences; perceives the impact and implications of decisions
- Understands and appropriately applies principles, procedures, requirements, regulations, and policies related to specialized expertise



Business Acumen

Involves the ability to manage human, financial, and information resources strategically

- Inherent is the ability to:
 - make decisions that produce high-quality results by applying
 - technical knowledge, analyzing problems, and calculating risks.



Competencies

Financial Management

- Prepares, justifies, and administers program budget. Oversees procurement and contracting

Human Capital Management

- Recruits, builds, and manages multi-sector workforce and manages a variety of work situations

Technology Management

- Makes effective use of technology to achieve results



What should the focus be?

Questions
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experience

- What is my experience in creating and administering budgets and resources?
- How did I procure and utilize resources? What obstacles did I face in doing this?
- What was the size of budget and resources I managed? How much money saved?
- What is my experience with a multi-sector workforce? Percentage of backlog eliminated/reduced? Length of processing time reduced?
- How did I utilize technology to create or improve programs?

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Examples of Business Acumen

- Understands the organization's financial processes.
- Prepares, justifies, and administers the program budget.
- Oversees procurement and contracting to achieve desired results.
- Builds and manages workforce base on organizational goals, budget considerations, and staffing needs.
- Effectively manages employee performance.
- Manages a multi-sector workforce and a variety of work situations.
- Keeps up-to-date on technology developments and makes effective use of technology to achieve results.



Building Coalitions

Involves the ability to build coalitions internally and with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, nonprofit and private sector organizations, foreign governments, or international organizations to achieve common goals

- Inherent is the ability to:
 - make decisions that produce high-quality results by applying
 - technical knowledge, analyzing problems, and calculating risks.



Competencies

Partnering

- Develops networks and builds alliances

Political Savvy

- Perceives organizational and political realities and acts accordingly

Influencing/Negotiating

- Persuades others and builds consensus through give and take. Gains cooperation from others to accomplish goals

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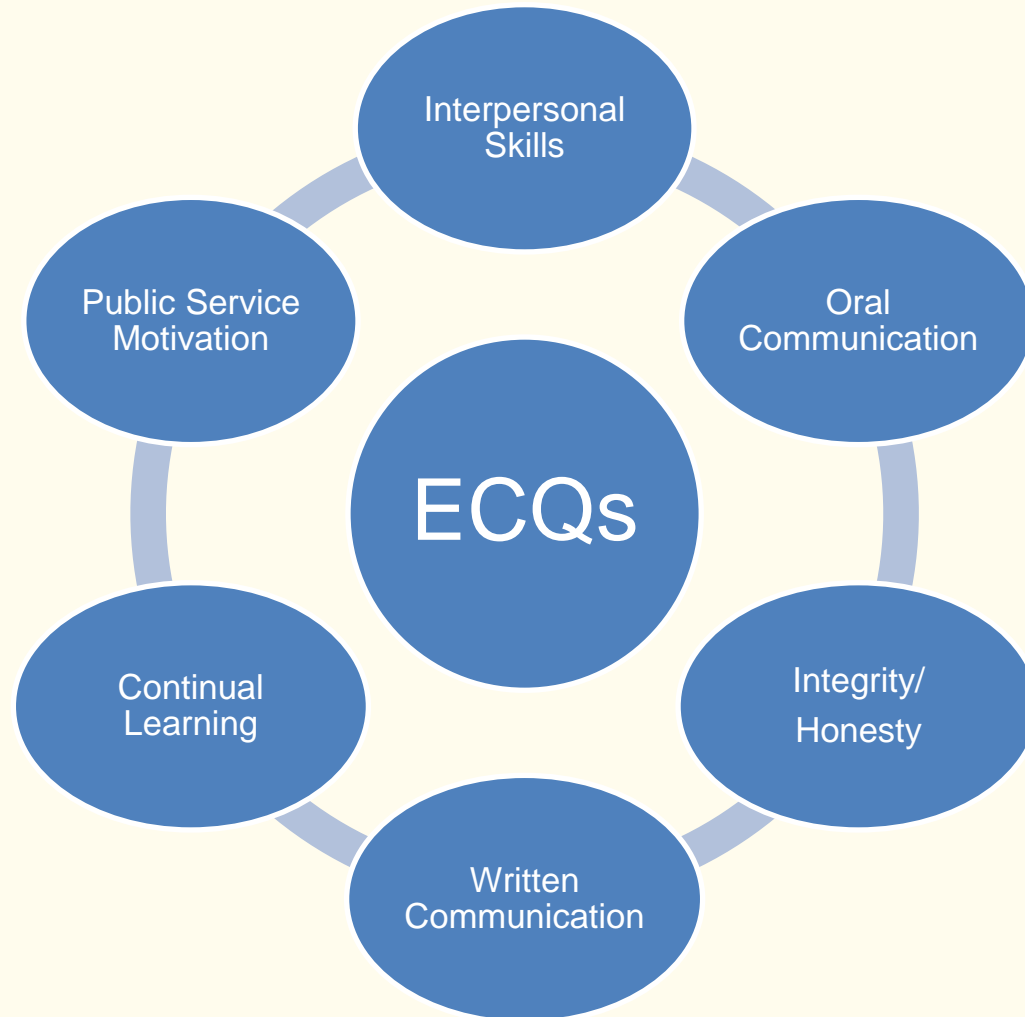
- What groups/networks (internal and external) did I partner with to achieve a goal?
- How did I bring groups together? What challenges did I face doing that?
- What did I do to build coalitions?

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Examples of Building Coalitions

- Develops networks and builds alliances; collaborates across boundaries to build strategic relationships and achieve common goals.
- Identifies internal and external policies that impact the work of the organization.
- Persuades others; builds consensus through give and take; gains cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals.

Fundamental Competencies



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Challenge-Context-Action-Result (CCAR) Model

- Results-oriented approach
- Requires focus on the leadership skills needed to manage programs, process, and people.
- Provides a more complete picture of:
 - Applicant's leadership competencies
 - Specific role played in an organization's success.
- Focus on the candidate's accomplishments, not the organization's.
- No more than **2 examples** per ECQ.

CCAR Model

Challenge

describe a specific problem or goal



Context

describe individuals and groups you worked with and/or environment in which you worked to address a challenge



Action

discuss specific actions you took to address the challenge



Result

measures/outcomes that had some impact on the organization. This demonstrates the quality and effectiveness of leadership skills



(CCAR) Model

Quick Example

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Challenge

Energy Information Administration (EIA) lacked a formal, corporate, and strategic approach to managing and operating its web assets. My vision was to completely revamp the way EIA approached its web management activities by developing an integrated approach. Program officials strongly resisted my initial efforts to consolidate web management as they feared that giving up the existing approach would cause them to lose control of their resources.

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Context

The agency had taken a completely decentralized approach to web operations, with each program office independently managing its own substantial web holdings. As such, the agency hosted a myriad of websites and applications that had disjointed navigation models and produced a high amount of redundancy and duplication.

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Action

To overcome resistance, I met with them individually and in groups, and strongly championed the integrated approach. I demonstrated how the current approach was highly duplicative and inefficient, and was hampering progress in advancing its missions and meeting customer needs. To garner broader support, I created and led a study group in examining critical issues and also led them in a series of exercises to gain and understanding of the major shortcomings of the existing website.

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Result

As a result of these efforts, the corporate approach to web management became prominently **featured in EIA's Strategic Plan**, making it one of the agency's top priorities over the next five years. **Progress in implementing** the new plan has already made the EIA web a much more dynamic and responsive tool that is now widely used by customers and stakeholders.



The ECQs and the Resume

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The Resume

- Keep the ECQs in mind as you write your resume
- Ensure accomplishments are relevant to, and focused on, demonstrated executive leadership, and show possession of the ECQs
- Give specific measurable examples accomplishments
- Ensure your experiences match the competencies
- Include awards that relate specifically to a competency

The Resume

Scope/Breadth of Impact (outcome/results)

The number and position of people affected; the size of the problem addressed; track record of successful performance in a variety of agencies/departments/areas

Complexity

Taking more things, people, data, concepts or completeness into account (i.e., size of staff, size of budget, size of organization)



Helpful Hints

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General Concepts

- Write-up is focused on demonstrated executive leadership; not managerial or technical
- Examples are less than 10 years old
- Follow CCAR model; include the why, how, and what
- Provide examples that are relevant to leadership
- Majority of competencies should be addressed
- Examples organized well (clear and easy to follow)

Reviewing and Writing Tips

DO

- Strictly adhere to 1 inch margins, 12pt font and 10 page narrative limit. (Number pages)
- Limit introductory summaries to 1 paragraphs (it counts towards 10 page narrative limit)
- Quantify achievements (numbers, percentages, and timelines)
- Use measurable results (whenever possible)
- Use action oriented verbs (active vs passive voice)
- Use transitions

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Reviewing and Writing Tips

DO

- Use experience in public or private sectors, and as volunteer
- Describe experience and accomplishments in a clear and organized manner. Tell the story and be succinct –use CCAR.
- Use personal “I” instead of the third person
- Write in Layman’s terms
- Proofread
- Spell out and limit the use of acronyms
- Accept feedback/critique from Executive Resources Specialists

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Reviewing and Writing Tips

AVOID

- Using the same example for more than one ECQ
- Vague statements that leave open-ended questions
- Statements that describe personal beliefs, philosophies, or commitment to a social or political cause
- Grammatical errors and typos
- Referring to other parts of the ECQ narrative
- Overuse of bolding and underlining

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Reviewing and Writing Tips

AVOID

- Making disparaging remarks about former managers
- Revealing information about political affiliation or activities
- Using bureaucratic words and expressions
- Including ECQ definitions

Plan of Action: How to Get There

Personal Assessment

- Evaluate your reasons for wanting to be an SES.
- Review your experience against ECQs – do you meet them?
- Start writing ECQs **NOW** and continuously review and edit. It takes 30-40 hours to do well.
- Obtain an SES mentor.

Plan of Action: How to Get There

Proactive Approach

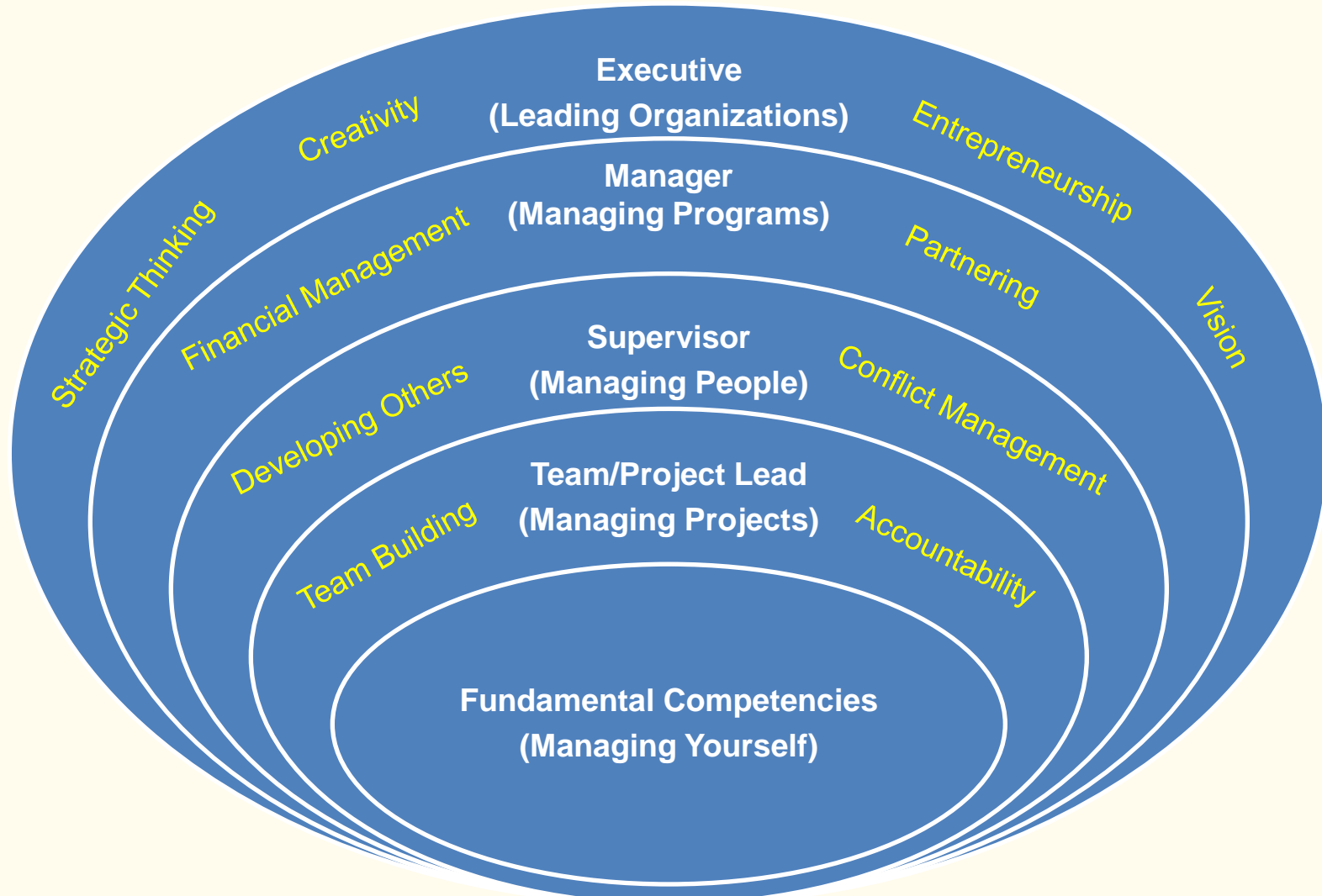
- Identify and perform jobs that require problem solving
- Rotations – line to staff, operations to policy, headquarters to field offices.
- Identify and take on projects and task forces that require application of the leadership competencies.
- Internal and/or external details.

Plan of Action: How to Get There (SES CDP)

Proactive Approach

- SES Candidate Development Programs (SESCDP): training program designed to develop employees to qualify for the SES
- typically 18-24 months
- open to civil service employees or the public
- address ECQs

The Leadership Journey



Questions



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Resources

Guide to SES Qualifications

www.opm.gov/ses/references/GuidetoSESQuals_2012.pdf

OPM Website

www.opm.gov/ses

<http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/senior-executive-service/faqs/>

Handouts Provided

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Contact

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**Senior Executive Resources Services
Senior Executive Resources and Performance Management**