



CIGIE Professional Development Committee (PDC) Tool Kit

CHARTING YOUR STEPS TO BECOMING A
SES OR SL MEMBER

MARCH 2022

“Every accomplishment starts with the decision to try.”

- AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Purpose

*PDC is a CIGIE committee whose mission is to facilitate community wide learning and development. One of its goals is to improve current and future leaders' awareness of leadership tools and opportunities to build skills and improve leadership performance. The CIGIE Professional Development Committee (PDC) **Lead and Learn (L&L) SES and SL webinar two-part series** and this companion tool kit, are resources to help you learn about SES and SL positions and assist you if you so choose to seek a SES or SL position.*

*If you were not able to attend the **Part One "Becoming an SES or SL"** webinar, you can view the recorded version using this link <https://youtu.be/JfEnKW9YpMY>. All PDC programming videos links are located on the CIGIE PDC website.*

Starting your journey

Have you thought about advancing your career and becoming a SES or SL member? This tool kit is here to assist you in learning about and preparing for SES and SL positions.

- *What are the differences between the two positions?*
- *What are ECQs?*
- *What skillsets do you need?*
- *How to gain skillsets needed for SES and SL positions.*



Listed in the toolkit are resources to assist you in your journey to become a SES or SL. The information is not all-inclusive but just a sample of the information available free to you.

Difference between a SES and SL

*Senior Executive Service (**SES**) positions: include positions classified above GS-15 that include duties involving one or more of the functional criteria (executive or managerial) identified in law.*

*Senior level (**SL**) positions: include positions that are not SES positions and are classified above GS-15 based on other factors. In an agency that is not covered by the SES, a SL may perform duties that involve one or more of the SES functional criteria.*

In general, the SES position requires leadership experience, and the SL requires more technical expertise.

[Senior Executive Service FAQ - What's the difference between SES, ST, and SL positions? \(opm.gov\)](#)

Steps to becoming a SES or SL

- 1) *First, do your homework and learn about the SES and SL positions*
- 2) *Create a career plan to build your technical and leadership skills*
- 3) *Write your ECQs to champion your accomplishments, tell your story*
- 4) *Network and seek guidance via a mentor or coach*

Step 1: Do your homework

Take time to understand the SES and SL process. The SES or SL positions are not for everyone. The process can be time consuming and requires several skillsets. Listed below are resources that provide definitions of SES and SL positions, criteria, frequently asked questions, and how to apply. There are also several books written on the subject.

- ❖ **OPM Desk Guide:** [OPM Senior Executive Service Desk Guide](#)
- ❖ **OPM Overview of Senior Executive Service:** [Executive Development](#)
- ❖ **SES and SL Frequently Asked Questions:** [SES FAQs](#)
- ❖ **USAJobs:** <https://www.usajobs.gov/Help/working-in-government/unique-hiring-paths/senior-executive-service/>

Step 2: Create a career plan

To achieve a SES or SL position you must establish a career that includes technical proficiency, great performance reviews and leadership skills. Set personal growth goals and look for opportunities in and outside of your agency, be strategic and create goals.

- ❖ Take trainings in your field to improve your technical expertise each year
- ❖ Gain broad base experience (technical and leadership)
 - Volunteer to lead a new project or head a committee
 - Attend trainings outside of your position
 - Seek opportunities and detail positions within and outside of your agency, including volunteer organizations.
- ❖ Attend leadership trainings and apply for leadership programs.



Finding My Place

1-2 years

Key Leadership Behaviors

- Set vision and build towards the future
- Align the organization for strategy implementation
- Enhance evidence-based decision making capacity
- Create and sustain a culture of inclusiveness and civility

Developmental Objectives

- Strategically implement vision by balancing short- and long-term goals and needs
- Identify and lead through personal cognitive bias
- Assess agency culture and impact of activities
- Identify and leverage influential networks
- Understand performance expectations

Making My Mark

3-6 years

Key Leadership Behaviors

- Broaden scope, complexity, and perspective
- Foster alignments across the organization
- Gain commitment for performance
- Refine strong executive persona
- Deal effectively with increased ambiguity

Developmental Objectives

- Demonstrate a partnership approach to leadership
- Enhance individual and organizational capability
- Navigate ambiguous political environment

Leaving My Legacy

7+ years

Key Leadership Behaviors

- Leverage change initiatives for innovation
- Solidify a customer service culture that exceeds commitments
- Ensure continuity and knowledge transfer
- Prepare the next generation of leaders

Developmental Objectives

- Design and promote change with agility
- Create a customer-centric culture
- Develop sustainable "high performing" leaders

Leadership and Training Programs

SES and some SL positions require leadership. One way to obtain leadership experience is to attend a leadership program. Below are some leadership and training programs that vary in size, content and price. The CIGIE PDC has a Fellows program that is offered to OIG staff (GS 13-15) and is free. The Fellows program is a great way to obtain technical and leadership experience. OPM also has a competitive Senior Service Program.

- ❖ OPM Senior Executive Service Program - [Executive Development](#)
- ❖ List of Federal Government Leadership Programs (FedLDP) - [Federal Leadership Development Programs](#)
- ❖ CIGIE Fellows Program (**FREE**) - [CIGIE Fellows Program | Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency; Ignet](#)
- ❖ CIGIE Leadership Mission and Support Academy - [Training Programs | Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency; IGnet](#)
- ❖ Harvard Kennedy School Leadership Program - [Senior Managers in Government | Harvard Kennedy School](#)

Leadership and Training Programs cont.

- ❖ Free OPM training for federal employees - [Courses for Federal Employees - Training and Development Policy Wiki](#)
- ❖ Navy Leadership Programs - [Leadership Development Programs \(navy.mil\)](#)
- ❖ African American Federal Executive Association Fellows Program - [AAFEA | African American Federal Executive Association](#)
- ❖ Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program - [Overview Become A PMF | PMF |](#)
- ❖ Homeland Security Executive Program - [Executive Opportunities | Homeland Security \(dhs.gov\)](#)

Step 3 Writing your ECQs

Championing Yourself



Having technical skills and having leadership skills are two different skillsets. Having great technical skills do not always equate to great leadership skills. Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) are the leadership skills, designated by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), required for a SES position. They are sometimes used during the hiring of a SL however, not all agencies utilize ECQs to hire SES or SL. Also, not all agencies require separate answers to ECQ instead you may be asked to address the ECQs skills in your resume.

The OPM ECQs have served as the foundation for selection and OPM leadership development for federal executives across government positions for over 14 years. Prior to applying for a SES, review the ECQs and honestly evaluate your current skillsets. Determine what areas you need improvement and develop a plan to address the skillset that are lacking.

Writing your ECQs cont.

Listed the below are the five OPM ECQs. For each ECQ, you should be able to write a story that describes your leadership achievements and the outcome/results of your achievements.

- ❖ **Leading Change**—This executive core qualification involves the ability to bring about strategic change, both within and outside the organization, to meet organizational goals. Inherent in this ECQ is the ability to establish an organizational vision and to implement it in a continuously changing environment.
- ❖ **Leading People**—This core qualification involves the ability to lead people toward meeting the organization’s vision, mission, and goals. Inherent in this ECQ is the ability to provide an inclusive workplace that fosters the development of others, facilitates cooperation and teamwork, and supports constructive resolution of conflicts in OPM leadership development.
- ❖ **Results Driven**— Results Driven -This core qualification involves the ability to meet organizational goals and customer expectations. Inherent in this ECQ is the ability to make decisions that produce high-quality results by applying technical knowledge, analyzing problems, and calculating risks.
- ❖ **Business Acumen**—This core qualification involves the ability to manage human, financial, and information resources strategically.
- ❖ **Building Coalitions**—This core qualification 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.

Writing your ECQs cont.



Below are free resources to help you write your ECQs. There are also books and consultants that will assist you for a fee. Remember for each ECQ , you should organize your skills into a story that best describes and promotes your leadership achievements and the positive outcomes that resulted from your achievements.

- ❖ [GUIDE \(opm.gov\)](#)
- ❖ [USDA | DM | OHRM | VU | Tips for Writing Executive Core Qualifications \(ECQs\)](#)
- ❖ [Executive Core Qualifications \(opm.gov\)](#)
- ❖ [Executive Core Qualifications \(opm.gov\)ecq_template_for_applicants_july_2020_2.pdf \(nasa.gov\)](#)

Writing your ECQs cont. 🏆

- ❖ [Sample SES CDP Resume Demonstrating Executive Core Qualifications \(ECQ\) | US EPA](#)
- ❖ [Sample ECQ resume 0.docx \(live.com\)](#)
- ❖ [How To List Leadership Skills on Your Resume in 5 Steps | Indeed.com](#)
- ❖ [60+ Effective Leadership Skills: List & Examples \(resumegenius.com\)](#)



Step 4: Coaching, Mentoring, and Networking

You do not have to chart your path alone. Having an outside party to assist you in your career is always a plus. Networking has always been a bonus when trying to determine career choices, as it gives you different perspectives. Seek out those that are in positions you think you may be interested in. Networking can be done within your agency, at trainings and professional events. The CIGIE PDC has a young professional group, [Leading, Inspiring and Fostering Talent \(LIFT\)](#) that conducts networking events throughout the year.

*Also, in recent years coaching and mentoring have gained popularity within the OIG community with some OIGs offering their own programs, In addition, the PDC offers **free** coaching and mentoring programs. There are also professional coaches that you can seek out for a fee. Lastly, there is no right or wrong way to seek out professional guidance. Seek guidance and relationships that are comfortable for you.*

CIGIE Professional Development Committee Coaching, Mentoring and Networking Opportunities

[CIGIE Leaders as Coaches Presentation](#)

❖ [CIGIE Mentoring Workgroup Presentation](#)


❖ [CIGIE Leading, Inspiring, and Fostering Talent \(LIFT\) Network Presentation](#)

❖ [Professional Development Website | Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency; Iagnet](#)



The End

We hope you find this kit helpful. As stated by the Lead and Learn panelists, becoming a member of the SES or SL is not an easy or comfortable journey. You are not guaranteed a position even if you follow all the suggested steps. However, we hope this tool kit provides you some insight as to how to begin the journey and what resources you will need if you so choose to decide to take the leap. Good Luck!



**Great things
never came
from comfort
zones.**

**Please note the CIGIE does not endorse or promote any private companies, institutions or their products.*