

# Guide to Senior Executive Service Qualifications and the Qualifications Review Board



## Table of Contents

|                                                                                        |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Background .....                                                                       | 3  |
| Executive Core Qualifications and Competencies .....                                   | 3  |
| Merit Hiring .....                                                                     | 4  |
| Application .....                                                                      | 5  |
| Merit Staffing Process .....                                                           | 5  |
| Qualifications Review Board .....                                                      | 6  |
| QRB Certification Based on Announcement of a Specific Vacancy .....                    | 7  |
| QRB Certification Based on Completion of a Candidate Development Program .....         | 7  |
| QRB Administration .....                                                               | 8  |
| QRB Assessment (Structured Interview).....                                             | 8  |
| Structured Interview Logistics .....                                                   | 8  |
| Structured Interview QRB (SIQRB) Process .....                                         | 9  |
| Pre-Interview.....                                                                     | 9  |
| During the Interview .....                                                             | 9  |
| Post Interview .....                                                                   | 9  |
| Interview Agenda .....                                                                 | 9  |
| Case Disposition.....                                                                  | 10 |
| Case Documentation .....                                                               | 10 |
| Candidate Preparation .....                                                            | 11 |
| Executive Core Qualifications and Competency Definitions.....                          | 12 |
| ECQ 1: Commitment to the Rule of Law and the Principles of the American Founding ..... | 12 |
| ECQ 2: Driving Efficiency .....                                                        | 13 |
| ECQ 3: Merit and Competence .....                                                      | 13 |
| ECQ 4: Leading People.....                                                             | 14 |
| ECQ 5: Achieving Results .....                                                         | 15 |
| Sample Resume (No more than 2 Pages) .....                                             | 16 |
| Preparing for the QRB Interview .....                                                  | 18 |
| Recommendations .....                                                                  | 18 |
| Common Pitfalls .....                                                                  | 19 |
| Frequently Asked Questions .....                                                       | 20 |

# Background

The U. S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is responsible for administering the Senior Executive Service (SES) Qualifications Review Boards (QRB) which consist of a body of current executives that certifies the executive qualifications of candidates selected by agencies for initial appointment to the SES. The body of panel members assess the overall scope, breadth, and depth of a candidate's experience and determines whether the candidate has demonstrated executive level expertise within the context of the OPM established Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs).

## Executive Core Qualifications and Competencies

Federal executives must be selected based on merit and competence. By statute (5 U.S.C. 3393(2)), OPM prescribes ECQs which serve as the criteria by which candidates for SES appointment are rated. ECQs describe the leadership skills needed to succeed in the SES and reinforce the concept of an "SES corporate culture." This concept holds that the Government needs executives who can provide strategic leadership and whose commitment to public policy transcends their commitment to a specific agency mission or an individual profession.

Executives with a "corporate" view of Government share values that are grounded in the fundamental Government ideals of the Constitution: they embrace the dynamics of American Democracy, an approach to governance that provides a continuing vehicle for change within the Federal Government. The ECQs are as follows:

### **Commitment to the Rule of Law and the Principles of the American Founding**

Demonstrated knowledge of the American system of government, commitment to uphold the Constitution and the rule of law, and commitment to serve the American people.

### **Driving Efficiency**

Demonstrated ability to strategically and efficiently manage resources, budget effectively, cut wasteful spending, and pursue efficiency through process and technological upgrades.

### **Merit and Competence**

Demonstrated knowledge, ability, and technical competence to effectively and reliably produce work that is of exceptional quality.

### **Leading People**

Demonstrated ability to lead and inspire a group toward meeting the organization's vision,

mission, and goals, and to drive a high-performance, high-accountability culture. This includes, when necessary, the ability to lead people through change and to hold individuals accountable.

### **Achieving Results**

Demonstrated ability to achieve both individual and organizational results, and to align results to stated goals from superiors.

The ECQs are supported by executive leadership competencies which are the professional attributes that are critical to successful performance in the SES. These leadership competencies are critical in driving organizational success and cultivating a culture of excellence. They reflect the qualities and attributes needed for career Federal executives to lead effectively and successfully, today and in the future. They are based on extensive research of Government and private sector executives and input from agency Senior Executives and human resources managers. There are 15 competencies, all specific to the ECQs. Experience and training that strengthen and demonstrate the competencies will enhance a candidate's overall qualifications for the SES. The underlying ECQ competencies and definitions can be found in Appendix A of this guide.

## **Merit Hiring**

Initial career appointments to the SES must be based on merit competition. 5 U.S.C. 3393(b) requires agencies to establish an Executive Resources Board to conduct the merit staffing process. Within this framework, an agency has considerable flexibility in structuring the SES merit staffing process to meet its unique needs.

Generally, this process includes advertising the position, preliminary review of applications by human resources to determine applicant eligibility, rating and ranking of applicants by a panel with in-depth knowledge of the job's requirements, evaluation of each candidate's qualifications by an Executive Resources Board and making recommendations to the appointing authority (agency internal processes may vary).

After the agency merit staffing process is completed and the appointing authority has selected the candidate, he or she believes is best qualified for the position, the agency forwards the candidate's application to OPM for consideration by a QRB.

# Application

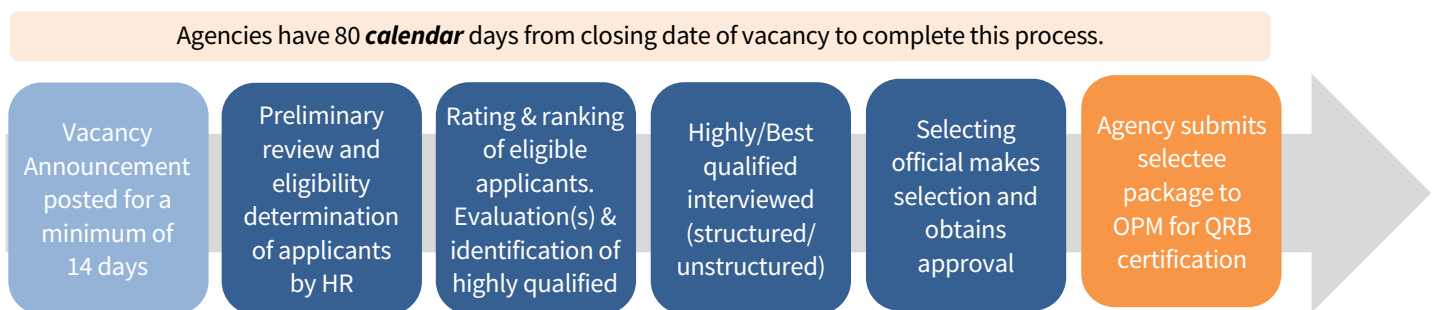
When hiring through a competitive vacancy announcement, agencies must use the Resume-based method.

**Resume-based:** The vacancy announcement directs applicants to submit only a two-page resume (one page that is two-sided OR two pages that are one-sided each). Applicants show possession of the ECQs and any technical qualifications via the resume. A sample two-page resume is located at Appendix 2.

## Merit Staffing Process

1. Agency advertises the position through the Governmentwide automated employment information system for a minimum of 14 days. The area of consideration is:
  - a. All groups of qualified individuals within the Civil Service (i.e., only current Federal Civil Service employees may apply); or
  - b. All groups of qualified individuals (i.e., anyone may apply to include the public).
2. Candidates submit their applications to the agency.
3. Agency Human Resources (HR) conducts eligibility determination
4. Agency rating panel reviews and ranks candidates.
5. Agency panel conducts interviews (structured and/or unstructured).
6. Agency Executive Resources Board recommends the best qualified candidates to the appointing authority.
7. Appointing authority makes a selection and certifies that the candidate meets both the technical and executive qualifications (ECQs) for the position.
8. Agency submits candidate's application package to an OPM-administered Qualifications Review Board (QRB) for certification of executive qualifications.

The graphic below provides a baseline visual of the merit hiring process.



Following QRB certification, the agency may appoint the candidate to the SES position.

# Qualifications Review Board

OPM convenes weekly QRBs to conduct a review of agency cases for initial career appointment to the SES. The Board (a panel) consists of three (3) executives; at least two members which are career appointees. Board members review each case and decide if the candidate's experience meets the ECQs requirements for certification. The QRB does not rate, rank, or compare the candidate's qualifications against those of other candidates. Rather, Board members judge the overall scope, quality, and depth of a candidate's executive qualifications within the context of the five ECQs.

The below chart highlights the various responsibilities associated with the QRB.

| QRB Panel                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | OPM Administrator                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Agency                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Service commitment</li><li>• Quarterly (one quarter)</li><li>• Bi-weekly interview cadence</li><li>• Two hours</li><li>• Discuss and come to decision immediately after each interview</li><li>• Provide feedback on candidate after (detailed feedback for disapproval)</li><li>• Complete, sign, and submit interview decision sheet</li><li>• Recommend improvements to assessment process</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Board Member Orientation</li><li>• Interview coordination</li><li>• Scheduling</li><li>• Communications</li><li>• Facilitate interviews</li><li>• Provide QRB decision to agency within 48 hours</li><li>• Provide panel member feedback to agency (for a disapproval)</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Obtain and submit candidate confidentiality statement with QRB case</li><li>• Prepare candidate for interview</li><li>• Work closely with OPM QRB administrator to schedule candidate</li><li>• Relay interview logistics to candidate</li><li>• Provide panel member feedback to candidate (for a disapproval)</li></ul> |

## **QRB Certification Based on Announcement of a Specific Vacancy**

### **Criterion A – Demonstrated executive experience**

The candidate's overall record (professional and volunteer work experience, education and training, accomplishments, and awards) must demonstrate executive experience within the five ECQs. Applications should demonstrate knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform and succeed in the SES.

### **Criterion C – Possession of special or unique qualities which indicate a likelihood of executive success.**

This criterion case applies to candidates whose professional and technical backgrounds suit them particularly well for the SES position despite a lack of demonstrated experience in one or two of the ECQs. However, such candidates must also demonstrate high potential for quickly acquiring full competence in all the five ECQs. For example, an attorney may have outstanding legal skills and in-depth knowledge of the specialized field for which the SES position is responsible, but he or she may not have managed human, financial, material, and information resources. In this instance, an agency may propose such a candidate for consideration under Criterion C.

**NOTE:** Criterion C cases are very rare and appropriate only when exceptional candidates with demonstrated experience are not available.

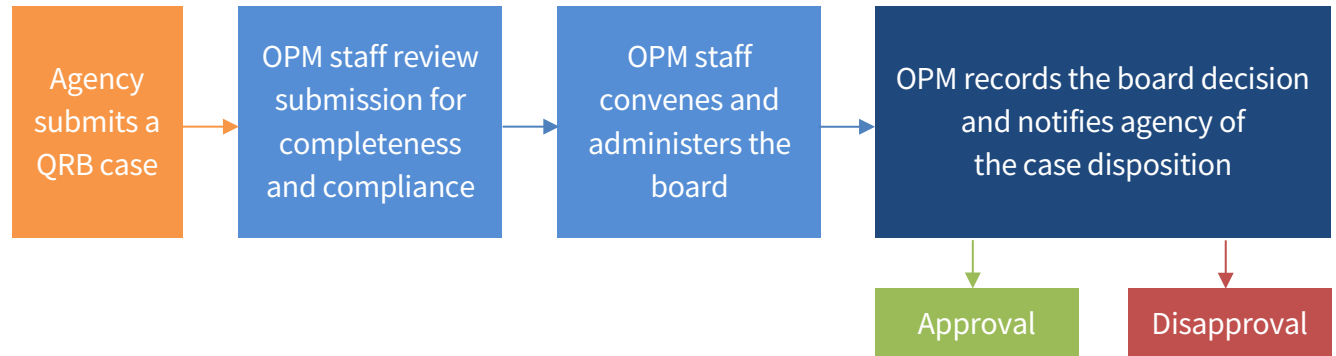
## **QRB Certification Based on Completion of a Candidate Development Program**

### **Criterion B — Successful participation in an OPM-approved Candidate Development Program (CDP).**

Candidates who compete Governmentwide for participation in a CDP and successfully complete the program are eligible for non-competitive appointment to the SES following QRB certification. CDP graduates are not guaranteed placement in the SES. The agency's Executive Resources Board chair must certify that the candidate has successfully completed all CDP requirements and activities. The QRB reviews each candidate's training and developmental experience, in addition to prior experience, to assure they provide sufficient basis for certification of executive qualifications.

# QRB Administration

The below graphic provides a visual of the OPM process following agency selection and candidate preparation.



## QRB Assessment (Structured Interview)

The structured interview is the standardized assessment that uses a predetermined set of questions to provide a consistent framework for evaluating candidates. This method allows for a more accurate assessment of a candidate's demonstrated experience, expertise, skills, and competencies.

## Structured Interview Logistics

The structured interview takes place virtually. OPM will coordinate with agencies on setting up a candidate's interview. Candidates are required to be visible during the interview. The identity of all QRB panel members is anonymous and masked during the interview. The QRB facilitator identity is also anonymous and masked.

Interviews last forty-five (45) minutes. During the interview, panel members will ask five (5) predetermined questions to ascertain the candidate's demonstration of the ECQs and competencies. Following the interview, the panel will conduct initial deliberations (up to fifteen (15) minutes) while the candidate is placed in the virtual "lobby". If it is determined the panel requires additional information or clarification, candidates will be provided twenty (20) additional minutes to respond to supplemental questions (also predetermined) by the panel members.

An OPM administrator facilitates the interview. The Administrator does not provide opinion, input, or recommendations that may influence the panel's decision, though they may interject, as appropriate, to move to the next question due to time constraints. For example, the

candidate must provide responses to the five questions within the allotted 45-minute time frame. The OPM Administrator may interject to ensure the time for responses are managed to allow for all five questions to be answered.

## Structured Interview QRB (SIQRB) Process

### Pre-Interview

- Agency submits the candidate “case” (i.e. vacancy announcement, candidate’s resume, and signed Confidentiality Agreement) to OPM
- QRB administrator conducts a quality check of the case and, if in compliance, schedules the interview and communicates interview details to the agency
- QRB administrator forwards the candidate case to the panel members as read-ahead in preparation for the interview.
  - Panel members review for initial evidence of ECQ competencies (to validate in the interview)

### During the Interview

- The candidate is asked five (5) predetermined questions based on the ECQs.

### Post Interview

- Panel members deliberate to determine if:
  - An immediate decision can be rendered, and candidate is dismissed; or
  - A follow-up is required to obtain additional information or clarification
- Panel members render decision
- QRB administrator records the final decision and notifies the agency

### Interview Agenda

The total interview time may be up to **90 minutes** as follows:

- 10 minutes for instructions and introductions
- 45 minutes for questions and answers
  - Five (5) standardized ECQ-base questions
  - QRB administrator will issue a “time-check” at the halfway point
- 15 minutes panel deliberation (candidate remains in a hold status)
- 5 minutes for panel return and next steps:
  - Candidate is either dismissed or notified of panel “follow-up” with supplemental questions
- 20 minutes (if required) for the panel follow-up
  - Candidate dismissed
- 5 minutes for final panel deliberation and decision

# Case Disposition

The QRB Administrator will record the consensus rating/decision from the panel and provide the decision to the agency. Decisions include the following:

- **Approval** - Case is approved based on demonstrated leadership experience and accomplishments.
- **Disapproval** - Case is disapproved due to lack of executive leadership evidence.
  - First-time - Agencies are given 30 calendar days to resubmit for rescheduling of a second interview. Resubmission is considered a new case and will be forward to a different board.
  - Second-time - A new case on the same individual for the same position may not be submitted until the candidate has acquired additional qualifying experience. A new merit staffing competition to credit the additional experience is required, and the closing date of the new announcement must be at least 12 months later than the closing date of the original announcement.

# Case Documentation

**Criterion “A” Case** (Demonstrated executive experience) - Key documents provided for a Criterion A case:

- Resume
- Vacancy Announcement
- Confidentiality Statement (signed by candidate)

**Criterion B Case** (Graduate of an OPM approved SES Candidate Development Program (CDP)) - Key documents provided for a Criterion B case:

- CDP Announcement
- Resume
- Mentor Evaluation
- SES Development Plan (signed by Supervisor and candidate)
- Confidentiality Statement (signed by candidate)

**Criterion C Case** (Special/Unique Qualities Forecasting Executive Success) - Key documents provided for a Criterion C case:

- Resume
- Vacancy Announcement
- A written description of the candidate's unique and special qualities that make him or her a superior choice for the SES position at issue and for the SES.
- A written ECQ-based reference by someone familiar with the candidate's executive qualifications.
- An Executive Development Plan (EDP) that outlines how the agency intends to strengthen the candidate's executive qualifications in the areas in which the candidate had minimal or no demonstrated executive experience. This EDP should include information on developmental assignments and/or formal training focused on the specific ECQs that need to be enhanced.
- Confidentiality Statement (signed by candidate)

## Candidate Preparation

Candidates may prepare and utilize an outline or notes of experiences demonstrating competencies making up the five ECQs. Candidates are allowed to look at/through notes during the interview, however reading from a scrip is highly discouraged. An outline is intended to be an occasional reference during the interview and should not distract from formulating responses. Candidates should be prepared to verbally demonstrate and discuss their executive level experience related to the ECQs and the supporting competencies. This should be done in a clear, concise and organized manner.

Tips for candidate preparation are located in [Appendix 3](#).

# Appendix 1

## Executive Core Qualifications and Competency Definitions

### **ECQ 1: Commitment to the Rule of Law and the Principles of the American Founding**

This core qualification requires a demonstrated knowledge of the American system of government commitment to uphold Constitution and the rule of law, and commitment to serve the American people.

#### Sub-Competencies

| Name                                           | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Knowledge of the American System of Government | Demonstrates understanding and appreciation of the American system of government, including the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, separation of powers, federalism, and the historical development of the American Nation. |
| Commitment to the Rule of Law                  | Upholds the principles of the American Founding, including equality under the law and democratic self-government. Ensures the law is applied fairly and consistently.                                                      |
| Civic-Mindedness                               | Stays up-to-date on important developments in American government and aligns organizational objectives and practices with presidential and public interests. Demonstrates a commitment to serve the American people.       |

## ECQ 2: Driving Efficiency

This core qualification involves the demonstrated ability to strategically and effectively, cut wasteful spending, and pursue efficiency through process and technological upgrades.

### Sub-Competencies

| Name                  | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Fiscal Responsibility | Strategically manages, allocates and monitors financial resources. Aligns priorities and initiatives to justify budget proposals. Monitors expenditures, cuts unnecessary costs, and uses cost-benefit analysis to set priorities. |
| Managing Resources    | Manages resources efficiently and effectively based on current and projected organizations goals, skills, budget considerations, and staffing needs.                                                                               |
| Leveraging Technology | Explores emerging technology and potential applications. Incorporates technology to enhance efficiency and achieve results. Ensures access to and security of technology systems.                                                  |

## ECQ 3: Merit and Competence

This core qualification involves the demonstrated knowledge, ability and technical competence to effectively and reliably produce work that is of exceptional quality.

### Sub-Competencies

| Name                   | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Technical Skill        | Possesses the requisite technical knowledge and subject matter expertise to consistently produce timely, high-quality work. Is considered a strong contributor in his or her domain.                                    |
| Problem Solving        | Engages in critical and data-driven thinking when diagnosing root causes and evaluating options. Identifies and promptly addresses the most pressing, high-priority problems.                                           |
| Agility and Resilience | Anticipates and adapts to change, new ideas, new information, and new conditions. Is committed to continuous improvements. Deals effectively with pressure and remains optimistic and persistent, even under adversity. |

## ECQ 4: Leading People

This core qualification involves the demonstrated ability to lead and inspire a group toward meeting the organization's vision, mission, and goals, and to drive a high-performance, high-accountability culture. This includes, when necessary, the ability to lead people through change and to hold individuals accountable.

### Sub-Competencies

| Name                | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Accountability      | Ensures that employees are appropriately recruited, selected, appraised, trained, and retained. Takes swift action to address performance – or conduct-based deficiencies in employees supervised. Holds self and others accountable for measurable high-quality, timely, and cost-effective results. |
| Developing Others   | Recognizes and rewards outstanding achievement in others. Develops the ability of others to perform and contribute to the organization by providing opportunities to learn through formal and informal methods. Cultivates a dynamic environment in which employees are not afraid to make mistakes.  |
| Executive Judgement | Makes well-reasoned, timely, and effective decisions and considers short-and long-term implications. Communicates effectively with stakeholders across all organizational levels, sharing and guarding information where appropriate.                                                                 |

## ECQ 5: Achieving Results

This core qualification involves the demonstrated ability to achieve both individual and organizational results, and to align results to stated goals from superiors.

### Sub-Competencies

| Name                | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Operational Mindset | Effectively translates strategies into actionable steps and processes. Partners effectively with stakeholders to drive adoption and addresses blockers to ensure successful implementation.                                |
| Innovation          | Applies creativity to improving products and processes, challenges convention, takes measured risks, and considers ways to simplify and remove unnecessary requirements.                                                   |
| Strategic Thinking  | Formulates objectives and priorities and implements plans consistent with the long-term interests of the organization by evaluating conditions, resources, capabilities, constraints, and organizational goals and values. |

# Appendix 2

## Sample Resume (No more than 2 Pages using no less than 11pt font and 0.8 margins)

[Name] | [City, State, ZIP] | [Phone Number] | [Email Address]

---

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strategic and results-driven professional with over 15 years of progressive leadership experience across [Job Series], with a strong record of success in leading enterprise-level transformations, managing multi-million-dollar budgets, and inspiring high-performing teams. Known for combining vision with deep operational expertise, building public-private partnerships, and delivering measurable outcomes.

---

### EXECUTIVE CORE QUALIFICATIONS (ECQs)

#### Commitment to the Rule of Law and the Principles of the American Founding

- In support of Executive Order 13924, implemented practices to ensure the following of fair and transparent processes in administrative enforcement and adjudication actions.

#### Driving Efficiency

- Managed annual budgets exceeding \$[Amount], ensuring fiscal discipline while funding growth initiatives.
- Negotiated multimillion-dollar vendor contracts, achieving 20% cost reductions while enhancing service quality.
- Spearheaded a digital transformation initiative at [Agency Name], modernizing legacy systems and improving service delivery by 45%.
- Leveraged data analytics and financial modeling to support executive decision-making and risk mitigation.

#### Merit and Competence

- Established public-private partnerships resulting in \$[Amount] in funding for major infrastructure projects.
- Led interagency task forces and cross-sector collaborations that advanced national-level initiatives.
- Built stakeholder trust through transparent communication, conflict resolution, and shared goal alignment.

#### Leading People

- Directed a workforce of over [Number] employees, fostering a culture of performance, innovation, and accountability.
- Created a leadership development program that increased internal promotions by 60% and reduced leadership turnover by 25%.
- Mentored and coached over 20 mid-level managers, many of whom advanced to senior executive roles.

#### Achieving Results

- Delivered \$[Amount] in cost savings through operational improvements and procurement

consolidation.

- Increased program success rates from 70% to 95% through strategic KPIs, performance management, and continuous improvement.
- Developed and implemented a 5-year strategic plan resulting in a 30% improvement in cross-functional alignment and customer satisfaction.
- Drove organizational transformation post-realignment, integrating two organizational cultures with minimal attrition and maximum synergy.

---

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Chief Operating Officer, [Company Name] – City, State | Dates

- Oversaw day-to-day operations of a [\$X million] organization with [X] departments and [X] employees.
- Implemented enterprise-wide cost control strategies, reducing overhead by 18%.
- Partnered with the CEO on strategic initiatives, including market expansion and product innovation.

Deputy Director, Strategic Initiatives, [Agency Name or Company] – City, State | Dates

- Led agency-wide reform efforts, improving program delivery and stakeholder engagement.
- Managed a [\$X million] portfolio with 10+ concurrent programs aligned with mission-critical goals.
- Advised executive leadership and policymakers on regulatory impact and risk assessments.

Director of Operations, [Company Name] – City, State | Dates

- Reorganized operational structure, increasing efficiency and cutting redundancies.
- Deployed new technologies and process automation, reducing processing time by 35%.
- Championed hiring initiatives, achieving measurable improvements in employee engagement and efficiency.

---

## EDUCATION

Master of Business Administration (MBA), [University Name] – [City, State] | [Year]

Bachelor of Science in [Field], [University Name] – [City, State] | [Year]

---

## CERTIFICATIONS & AFFILIATIONS

- Certified Project Management Professional (PMP)
- Executive Leadership Certificate – [Institution Name]
- Member, [Relevant Professional Association]

---

## AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- [Name of Leadership or Excellence Award]
- Recognized in [Publication or Organization] for [Achievement]

# Appendix 3

## Preparing for the QRB Interview

Candidates should be prepared to verbally demonstrate and discuss their executive level experience related to the ECQs and the supporting competencies. This should be done in a clear, concise and organized manner. Demonstration of the ECQs and the competencies may be accomplished by describing one to two examples of relevant experience. The number of examples is not as important as assuring that your experience matches the ECQ criteria. Keep in mind that the QRB is looking for specific challenges, actions and results. A method used to facilitate this is the **Challenge-Context-Action-Result (CCAR) Model**. Candidate's may use the following approach to describe their accomplishments.

| Method           | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Challenge</b> | Describe a specific problem or goal that YOU needed to overcome or accomplish.                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Context</b>   | Describe the situation, environment, external drives that created the challenge or problem. Give the back story: was it low moral?, a shrinking budget?, Congressional directive?. Was time of the essence? What would the impact if the problem/challenge was not overcome? |
| <b>Action</b>    | Discuss the specific actions YOU took to address the challenge. This should be described in a linear fashion. (ex. First I did this, then I did that, etc...)                                                                                                                |
| <b>Result</b>    | Give specific examples of measures/outcomes that had an impact on the effort/program/organization. The results described should align with the challenge highlighted.                                                                                                        |

### Recommendations

- Emphasize the degree of initiative shown; It is not enough just to be a good manager; candidates should also demonstrate the “perspective and approach of an executive.”
- It is not sufficient to simply carry out a decision or strategy determined by a higher-level official; demonstrate taking initiative to identify issues and problems and taking ownership to resolve them.

- Strive to show evidence of innovation. Focus more on the “strategic” than the “tactical,” and include their own visions and contributions as leaders.
- In conveying specific examples, contrast the "before" and "after" to fully illustrate the impact of any organizational transformation that took place.
- Quantify your accomplishments using metrics where possible.

## **Common Pitfalls**

- Reading from a script
- Late Arrival
- Poor Presentation
  - Appearance
  - Lack of preparation
  - Unclear demonstration through description
  - Losing Focus (constant referral to notes)
  - Rambling
  - Lacking Enthusiasm/Body Language
  - Speaking negatively about current or previous role(s)
- Background Distractions
- Excessive descriptions of challenges and context versus specific leadership actions and results.
- Actions and results described are limited in impact and not at an executive level.
- Leadership actions taken are not aligned with the described challenges.
- Too many actions described in terms of “we” instead of “I”; difficult to differentiate group’s actions from candidates’ individual actions.
- Mention of the competencies as “buzzwords”, with no substantive information to show a demonstration of the competencies.
- Using too many examples for each ECQ; using one or two examples per ECQ is recommended unless the panel specifically asks for additional examples in the follow-up portion of the interview.
- Describing experiences over 10 years old, using too many old experiences is not recommended.

# Appendix 4

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **How is the QRB set up?**

The QRB is comprised of 3-member panels. Panel members are members of the Senior Executive Service (SES).

### **How is the Candidate Assessed?**

The QRB panel assesses the candidate's demonstrated breadth, depth, and scope of experience and executive qualifications within the context of the ECQs and associated competencies.

### **What Should Responses Cover?**

Responses should cover the candidate's experience which highlight a demonstration of the ECQs and sub-competencies. Successful candidates typically focus on describing challenges faced and the specific leadership actions taken to overcome such challenges, leading to impacting results achieved. This is known as the Challenge-Context-Action-Result (CCAR) model.

While it is not expected that candidates will demonstrate all the competencies, a majority of competencies in each ECQ must be discussed in the candidate's response to the interview question. Referencing this many competencies may be challenging; thus, candidates are urged to prepare an outline for each ECQ response that covers most of the competencies. Candidates are allowed to reference the outlines during the interview.

In describing their experience, it is recommended that candidates focus on being clear and concise in their responses, and refrain from excessive descriptions that take away from the substance of describing leadership actions.

### **What should the candidate expect?**

The QRB interview will take place virtually. The candidate and QRB panel members will be visible, however the identities of the panel members will be masked.

Following the interview, the candidate will be placed in the virtual lobby (up to 15 mins) while panel members deliberate and render a decision. In the event the panel requires a follow-up with the candidate (before rendering a decision) to obtain additional information or clarification, the candidate will return to the interview room for an additional 20 mins to answer follow-up questions. The candidate will then be dismissed.

**How Will the Candidate Get Results?**

Candidates will receive notification of the QRB decision through the agency's executive resources point of contact.

**What Can the Candidate Do If They Are Disapproved?**

If a candidate is disapproved, they are provided one final opportunity to reinterview within 30 calendar days (with a new panel). The candidate must work with the submitting agency to determine what, if any, additional preparation should be taken prior to the second interview.

**How should a Candidate Prepare?**

It is strongly encouraged that candidates do the following before appearing in front of the QRB Panel:

- Review their submitted resume.
- Prepare a response outline for each ECQ using the CCAR method. The response should address a majority of the competencies for each ECQ. The responses should be easy for the candidate to reference during the interview, so they can respond in a clear and concise manner.
- Whenever possible, ensure that the results in the ECQ examples are quantified (numbers, percentages, and timelines), whenever possible, and demonstrate a broad impact.



## **U.S. Office of Personnel Management**

Workforce Policy and Innovation  
1900 E Street NW, Washington DC 20415

[OPM.gov](https://www.opm.gov)