The Senior Executive Service
and
The Executive Core Qualifications
Preparing for the SES

Topics

- **The Senior Executive Service (SES)**

- **The Qualifications Review Board (QRB) and its functions**

- **Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) and leadership competencies**

- **CCAR – Challenge, Context, Action, Result**

- **Do's and Don'ts**

- **Plan of Action**

Objectives

- **To give an overview of the SES hiring process and the role of the QRB**

- **To provide further insight into the ECQs and how they apply to the SES**

- **To provide tools for writing strong ECQ narratives**

Abbreviations and Definitions

ERB
- Executive Resources Board: Agency level committee charged with advising the agency head on the SES hiring.

QRB
- Qualifications Review Board: Interagency SES panel managed and administered by OPM – Reviews and approves SES applicants for entry into the SES.

ECQ
- Executive Core Qualifications: Criteria used to assess candidate's executive level experience.

TQ
- Technical Qualifications: Job specific qualifications.

The Senior Executive Service (SES)

- Established by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (CSRA).

- Places top management positions with greater scope and complexity, into a distinct personnel system, which provides agency authority and flexibility.

- Members are selected for their _leadership_ qualifications and serve in the key positions just below the top Presidential appointees, and are the major link between Presidential appointees and the rest of the Federal work force..

- Key Goals include:

  - Improving the executive management of the Government

  - Selecting and developing a cadre of highly competent senior executives with leadership and managerial expertise

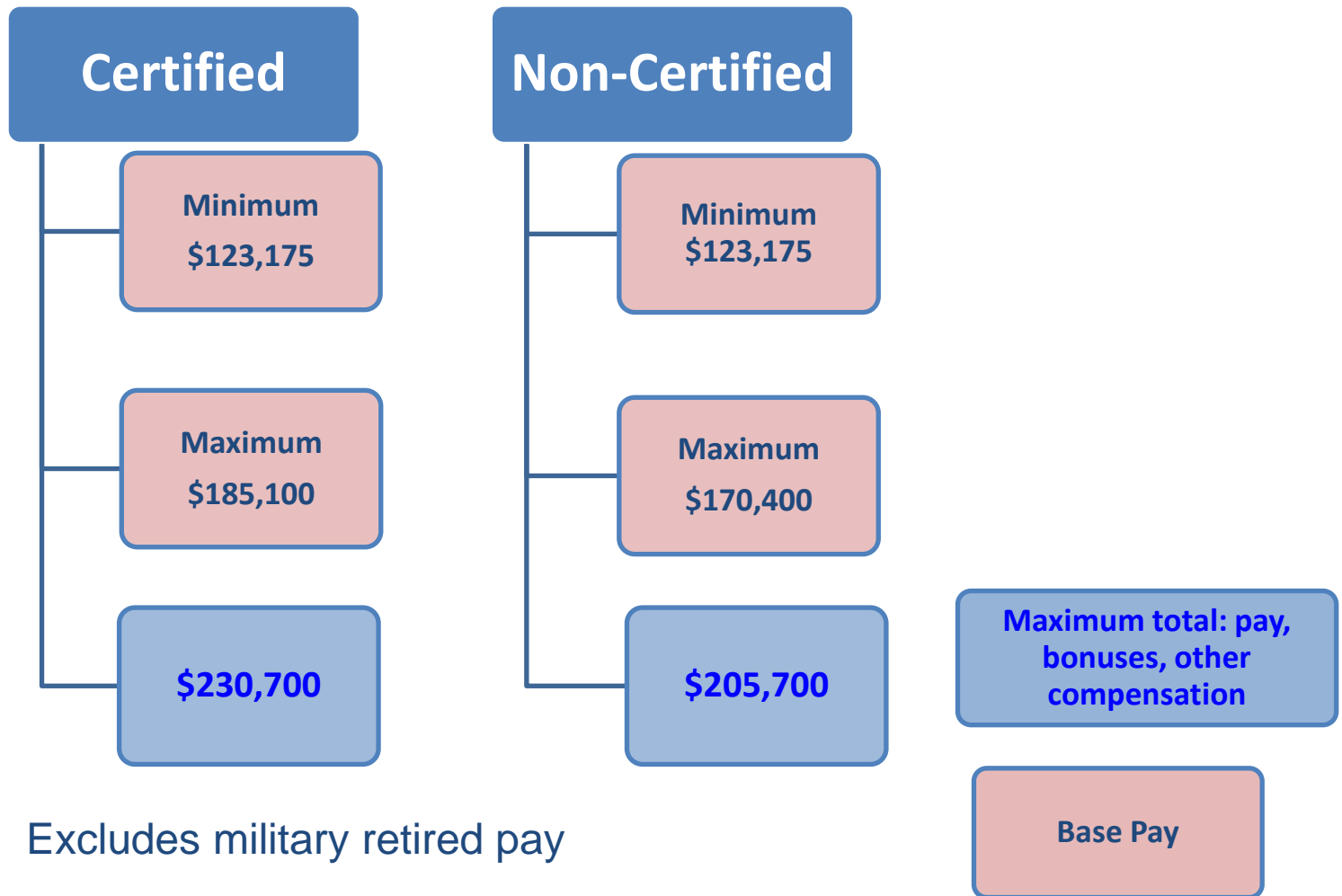 - Hold executives accountable for individual and organizational performance

Types of SES Appointments

- Career (Competitive) - Made without time limitations and provide certain job protections and benefits not conferred by the other types of SES appointments.

- Non-Career (Non-Competitive) - Made without time limitation, but the appointee serves at the pleasure of the appointing authority. The agency must have a non-career appointment authority from OPM

- Limited Term (Competitive or Non-Competitive) - Can only be made to a position for which the duties will expire at the end of a specified period or under other special circumstances for a period not to exceed 3 years.

- Limited Emergency (Non-Competitive) - Can only be made to meet a bona fide, unanticipated, urgent need for a period not to exceed 18 months.

Compensation

SES Performance Management System

Certified	Non-Certified

Minimum
$123,175

Minimum
$123,175

Maximum
$185,100

Maximum
$170,400

$230,700

$205,700

Maximum total: pay, bonuses, other compensation

Base Pay

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

SES Hiring Methods

Traditional

88.2%

- Requires a resume, separate narratives addressing ECQs (10 page limit), and TQs.

Resume-Based

11.7%

- Requires only a resume (5 page limit which must contain ECQs) and TQs.

Accomplishment Record

0.1%

- Requires a resume (5 page limit), separate narratives addressing selected competencies underlying ECQs (5 page limit), and TQs.

Vacancy Announcements

All Announcements should include:

- ECQs

- TQ

- Area of consideration: Government-wide or all sources

- Salary Range

- Native American preference but no Veterans preference

NOTE: No Grade requirement. Education requirement only for specific professional series: medical, legal, engineering, etc.)

The Merit Staffing Process

90 working days from closing date of vacancy announcement to complete

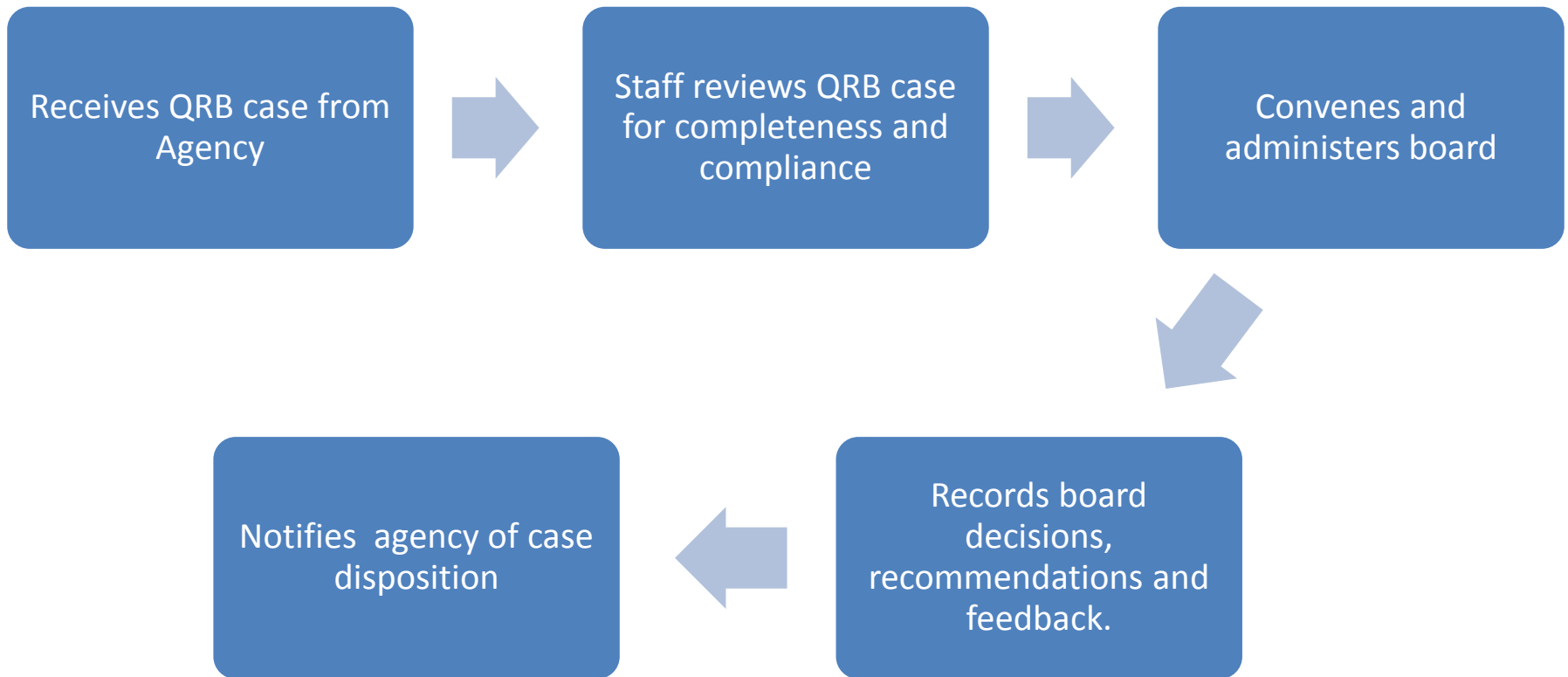| Vacancy Announcement posted for a minimum of 14 days | Preliminary review and eligibility determination of applications by HR specialist | Rating and ranking of eligible applications. ERB/SME panel evaluates and recommends best qualified to selecting official | Hiring official makes selection and obtains Secretarial approval | Agency submits selectee package to OPM for QRB certification |

OPM Case Processing

```
Receives QRB case from
Agency
```
→
```
Staff reviews QRB case
for completeness and
compliance
```
→
```
Convenes and
administers board
```
↓
```
Notifies  agency of case
disposition
```
←
```
Records board
decisions,
recommendations and
feedback.
```

The QRB and its Functions

What is it?

- An independent peer review, and certification, of the executive qualifications of potential SES candidates proposed for initial career appointment to the SES.

- An assessment of candidate's experience and executive qualifications within the context of the Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) to ensure that all selectees have a broad perspective of Federal government.

  - An objective review that assures the government is hiring executives with the leadership qualifications and expertise, in addition to the technical skills, needed in today's environment, especially the ability to lead in times of change.

The Role

- Assess the overall scope, quality, and depth of a candidate's executive qualifications within the context of the ECQs.

- Determine whether the candidate has demonstrated executive level expertise and possesses the executive qualifications needed for entry and success in the SES.

- Certify the executive qualifications of all new career SES appointees and Candidate Development Program graduates.

<u>NOTE</u>

- Does not rate, rank, or compare one candidate's qualifications against those of other candidates.

- Does not consider or see TQs

- QRB certification does not expire.

The Process

- Composed of three SES members, each from a different agency, at least two must be career appointees.
- Independently review cases and makes final determination about a selectee's ECQs through consensus or majority vote.
- Serve three month appointments.
- Convenes weekly (Live and virtually).
- Names of members and their organizations not subject to release.

QRB Members' Perspectives

- Come from all agencies with varieties of experiences and length of   service as SES

- Want to ensure future SES are qualified and capable; the only way to determine that is through the resume and narrative

- QRB approval is not automatic; Just because you are acting in the role, you still need to prepare a quality narrative

- Board Members can't know your technical world and jargon

- ECQ narratives are the candidates' entrance exam so put your best foot forward

Submission Criterion
(Determined By Agency)

Criterion A **87%**	• demonstrated executive experience
Criterion B **10%**	• successful completion of an OPM approved SES Candidate Development Program (CDP). Certified candidates may be appointed to the SES without further competition **(must still meet TQs)**
Criterion C **3%**	• possession of special or unique qualifications that indicate a likelihood of executive success (e.g. Attorneys, Engineers)

Case Disposition

Approve
- Case approved as Criterion A, B, or C based on demonstrated leadership experience and accomplishments.

Disapprove
- Case disapproved due to lack of executive leadership evidence in three or more of the ECQ areas.

Re-Write
- Case subject to approval pending significant revision (due to lack of sufficient evidence) of two or less ECQ areas.

Disposition Impact on Candidate

Approve	• Appointed to SES
Disapprove	• One reconsideration within 60 days. If disapproved on second attempt, must obtain added experience/wait one year.
Re-Write	• Reconsideration within 14 days – no penalty to candidate.

Disapproved Cases

First Time

- Make revisions to this case and resubmit.

- Use an alternative action (e.g. resubmitting as a Criterion C).

- Resubmit the case to another QRB, as is.

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 in those areas where deficiencies were noted by the QRB.

- 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.

The ECQs

and

Leadership Competencies

ECQs

What are they?

...SES and reinforce the concept of an "SES corporate culture".

How are they used?

...ial not technical expertise. They measure whether an individual has the broad executive skills needed to succeed in a variety of SES positions. The ECQs are not focused on technical expertise.

How were they determined?

- A collaboration, reflecting the best thinking of many senior executives, thought leaders, and associations, as well as human resources professionals conducting research of the attributes of successful executives in both the private and public sectors (1992 Leadership Effectiveness Survey and 2005 ECQs Update Study).

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

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?

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

What should the focus be?

Questions to ask yourself when describing your experience

- 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)

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

What should the focus be?

Questions to ask yourself when describing your experience

- 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?

Business Acumen

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

- Inherent is the ability to:

  - Manage human, financial, and information resources strategically

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 to ask yourself when describing your 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?

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:

  - Develop networks through partnering and collaboration.

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
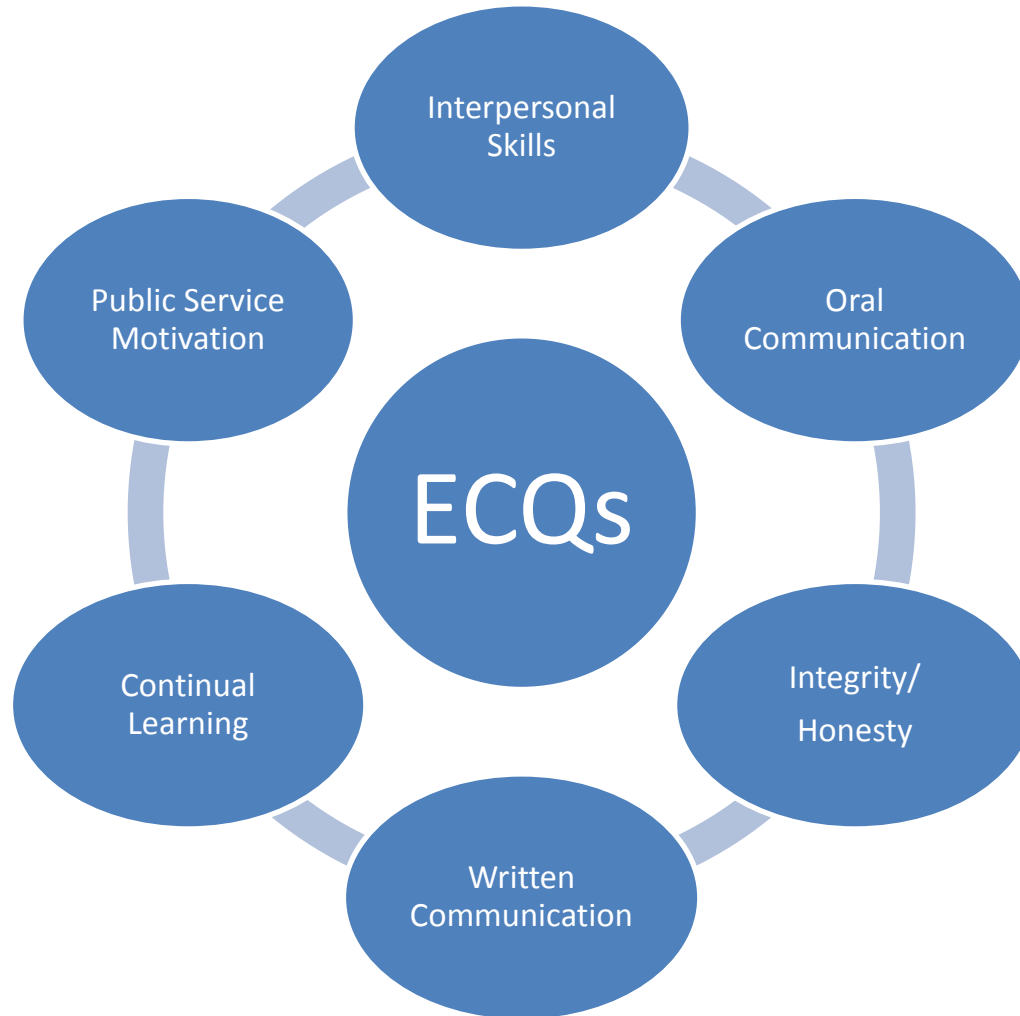
What should the focus be?

Questions to ask yourself when describing your experience

- 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?

Fundamental Competencies

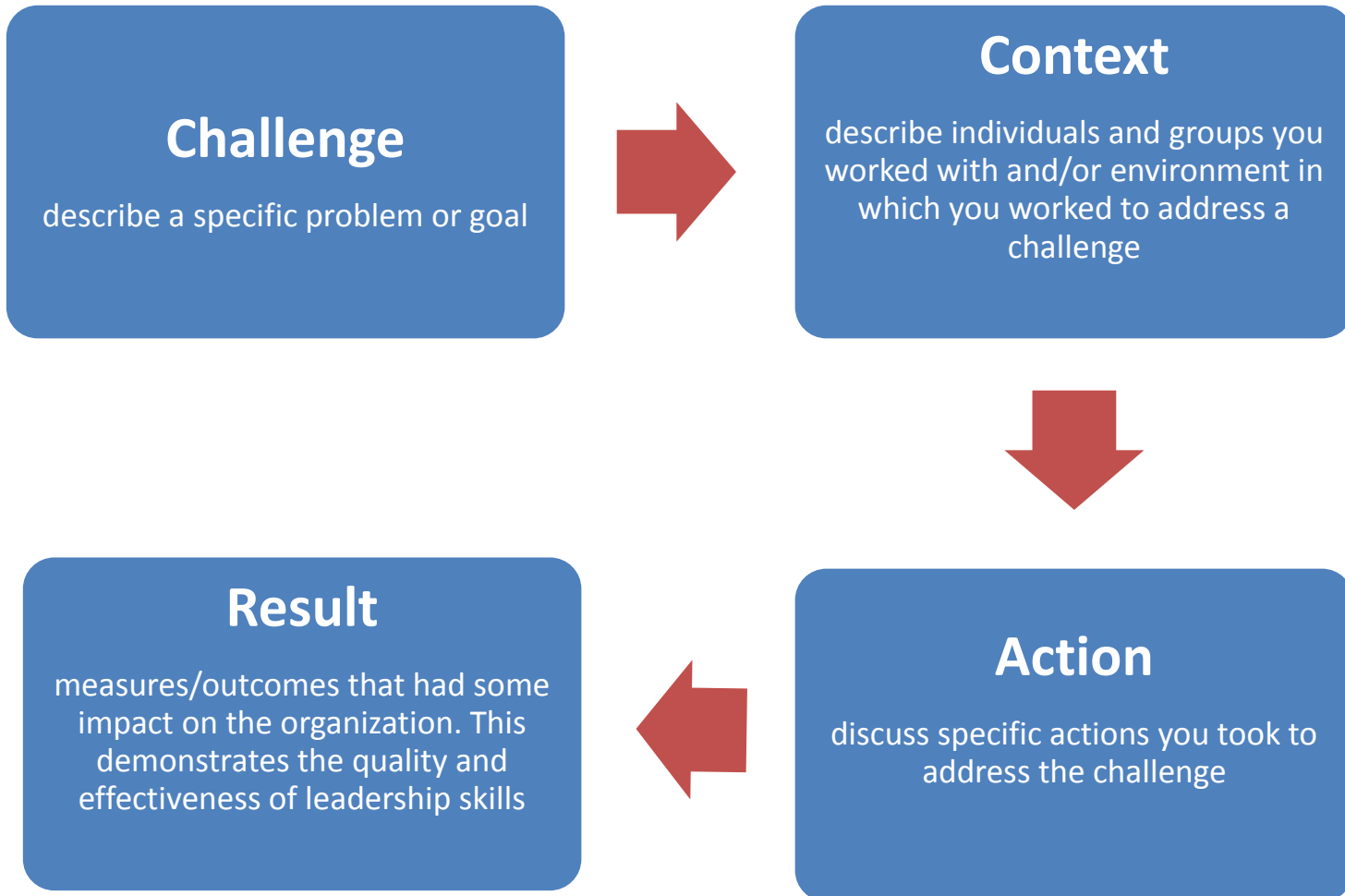# Challenge-Context-Action-Result (CCAR) Model

- 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

Result

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

Action

discuss specific actions you took to address the challenge

(CCAR) Model

Quick Example

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.

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.

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.

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

The Resume

- Keep the ECQs in mind as you write your resume

- Should show breadth and scope of experience, responsibility, and accomplishments, and a logical progression of jobs/assignments (Information used to enhance and support ECQ narrative)

- Ensure accomplishments are relevant to, and focused on, demonstrated executive leadership, and show possession of the ECQs and match competencies

- Do not cut and paste position description into your resume

- Include grade and salary – keys to understanding your level of preparation

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

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

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

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

- Gramartical erors and tipos (speling, sintacks, punktuation)

- Referring to other parts of the ECQ narrative

- Overuse of bolding and underlining

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.

- Constantly review USAJobs for SES vacancies. Apply for jobs within and outside of your agency.

- 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.
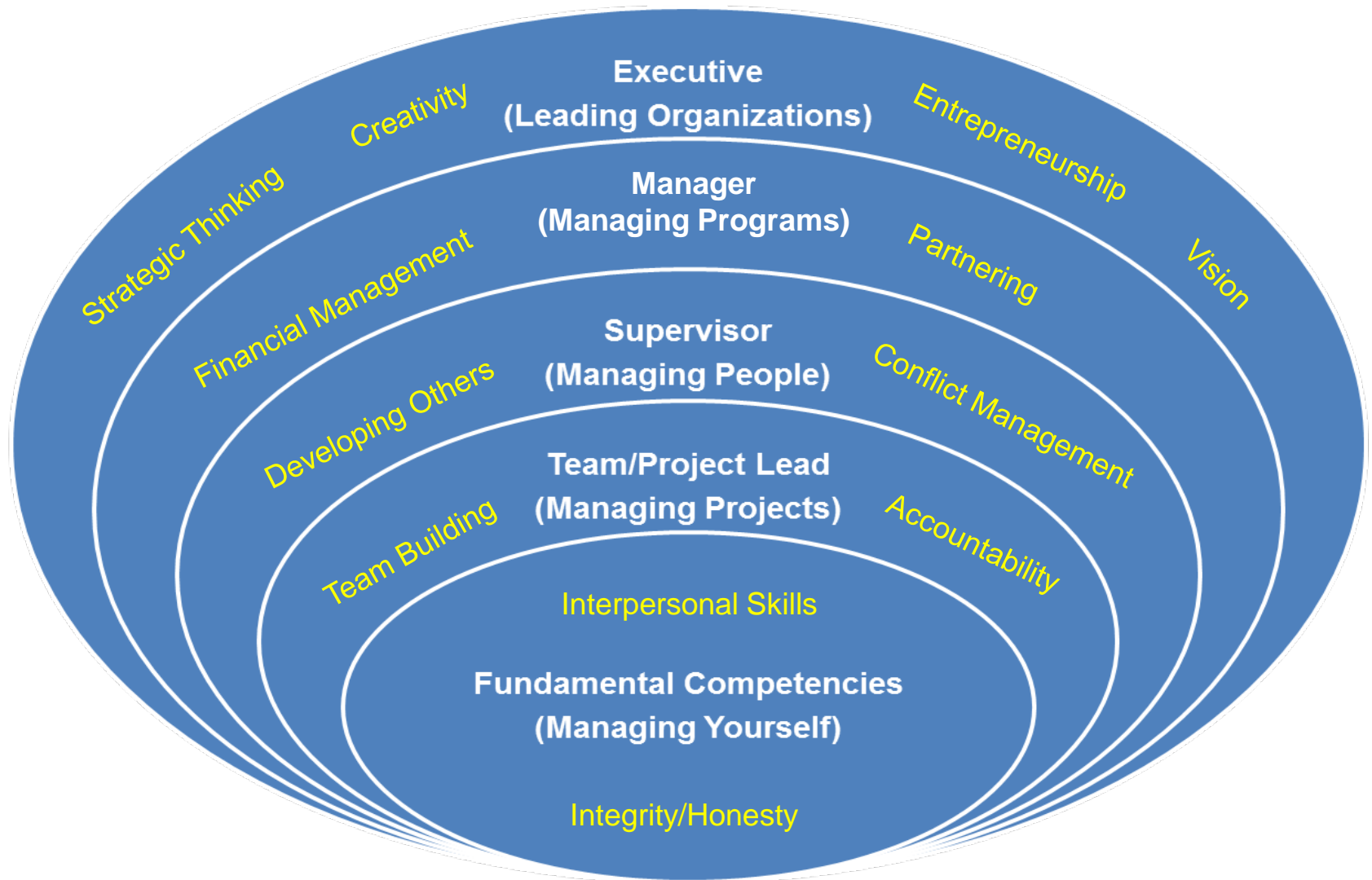
- Internal and/or external details.

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

Executive
(Leading Organizations)

Manager
(Managing Programs)

Supervisor
(Managing People)

Team/Project Lead
(Managing Projects)

Fundamental Competencies
(Managing Yourself)

Creativity

Entrepreneurship

Strategic Thinking

Financial Management

Partnering

Vision

Developing Others

Conflict Management

Team Building

Accountability

Interpersonal Skills

Integrity/Honesty

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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Questions