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## The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

December 15, 2015

# Executive Order -- Strengthening the Senior Executive Service

## EXECUTIVE ORDER

### STRENGTHENING THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, in order to strengthen the recruitment, hiring, and development of the Federal Government's senior executives; I hereby order as follows:

Section 1. Policy. It is in the national interest to facilitate career executive continuity between administrations; to increase senior leadership attention to, and involvement in, executive recruitment; to reduce unnecessary burdens on applicants for executive positions; and to efficiently document demonstrated executive experience. Furthermore, it is imperative to periodically explore and promote new selection methods that effectively and efficiently identify the most capable and talented candidates for executive leadership positions to enhance the breadth and diversity of experiences among our Federal executives; to better support, recognize, and reward our executives, especially our top performers; and to strengthen executive accountability, all while maintaining a system that is focused on the public interest and free from improper political influence. An important aspect of strengthening our Senior Executive Service (SES) members is valuing the work they do every day, rewarding excellence, professionalism, and outstanding achievement through special act awards, Presidential Rank Awards, and other non-monetary and honorary awards. Consistent with the requirements of Executive Order 13583 of August 18, 2011 (Establishing a Coordinated Government-Wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce), and with merit-based principles, this order continues to support executive departments and agencies (agencies) to develop and implement a comprehensive, integrated, and strategic focus on diversity and inclusion as a key component of the recruitment, hiring, retention, and development of their SES cadre. Pursuing these goals will significantly improve the Federal Government's ability to serve the American people. Unless otherwise noted, this order applies to career members of the SES.

Section 2 of this order establishes, under the President's Management Council (PMC), a Subcommittee to advise the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the PMC, and the President on senior executive matters, help monitor execution of an important set of executive reforms contained in section 3 of this order, and help keep the Federal Government's executive management practices current and effective. In order to identify and maximize the use of best practices, requirements in sections 3(b)(i)-(iv) of this order will be implemented in three phases, with Phase I consisting of seven agencies, which will execute those reforms in fiscal year (FY) 2016; Phase II consisting of seven agencies, which will execute those reforms in FY 2017; and Phase III consisting of all other agencies, which will execute those reforms in FY 2018.

Sec. 2. Establishment of PMC Subcommittee to Strengthen the Senior Executive Service. There is established the PMC Subcommittee to Strengthen the Senior Executive Service (Subcommittee) to inform and support Government-wide priorities for improved management of senior executives identified by the Deputy Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in consultation with the Director of OPM. The Subcommittee shall consist of five members of the PMC: the Deputy Director for Management of OMB, the Director of OPM, and three other members of the PMC. The Subcommittee will be advised by at least two career members of the SES to be determined by the members of the Subcommittee, and shall collaborate with the Chief Human Capital Officers Council. Expressions of interest to serve on the Subcommittee will be solicited, and final selections will be made by the Deputy Director for Management of OMB in consultation with the Director of OPM. The Subcommittee will advise OPM, members of the PMC, and the President on ways to strengthen and improve the SES workforce, as outlined in this order. In addition, it will identify any Government-wide obstacles it perceives to executive management, assist OPM in facilitating career executive continuity between administrations, and facilitate communication among the SES cadre.

Sec. 3. Requirements. Under the direction, or, in the case of sections 3(a)(i) and 3(b)(ii) of this order, the guidance, of the Director of OPM, and in consultation with OMB and the PMC Subcommittee, agencies shall undertake the following actions:

(a) Actions for Immediate Government-wide Implementation.

(i) Starting in FY 2017, agencies should limit their aggregate spending on agency performance awards for SES and Senior Level (SL) and Senior Scientific or Professional (ST) employees to 7.5 percent of aggregate SES and SL/ST salaries respectively. OMB and OPM shall undertake a review of, and revise as appropriate, their current guidance regarding aggregate spending on such awards. In addition, agencies should allocate awards in a manner that provides meaningfully greater rewards to top performers. Within 120 days of the date of this order, OPM shall issue, as appropriate, additional guidance regarding the distribution of such awards.

(ii) The heads of agencies with SES positions that supervise General Schedule (GS) employees shall implement policies, as permitted by and consistent with applicable law and regulation, for initial pay setting and pay adjustments, as appropriate, for career SES appointees to result in compensation exceeding the rates of pay, including locality pay, of their subordinate GS employees. Similar policies shall be implemented by heads of agencies for Senior Professional (i.e., SL or ST) employees that supervise GS employees. Such policies and practices support, recognize, and reward agency executives, especially top performers, in a manner commensurate with their roles, responsibilities, and contributions, and may increase the competitiveness of SES positions with comparable positions outside of Government.

(iii) Within 90 days of the date of this order, OPM shall evaluate the current Qualifications Review Board (QRB) process and issue guidance to agencies about materials that would be acceptable for QRB consideration and that will serve as an alternative or replacement to the current lengthy essay requirement for QRB submission, which may deter qualified applicants for SES positions or put an additional burden on human resources staff. The guidance shall also advise agencies about ways to streamline their initial application requirements for SES positions, including evaluation of options, such as allowing individuals to apply by only submitting a resume-based application and any additional materials necessary to determine relevant qualifications, consistent with the new QRB submission requirements.

(iv) Within 120 days of OPM issuing the guidance described in section 3(a)(iii) of this order, the heads of agencies with SES positions shall examine the agency's career SES hiring process and make changes to the process to make it more efficient, effective, and less burdensome for all participants. Agencies shall simplify the initial application requirements for SES positions consistent with the guidance issued in section 3(a)(iii) of this order, and should only request critically necessary technical qualifications, with the goal of minimizing requirements that may deter qualified applicants from applying. Agencies shall also monitor time to hire of SES positions, and identify appropriate process improvements or other changes that can help reduce time to hire while ensuring high quality of hires.

(v) By May 31, 2016, the heads of agencies with 20 or more SES positions shall develop and submit to OPM a 2-year plan to increase the number of SES members who are rotating to improve talent development, mission delivery and collaboration. While agency specific targets will not be required, this order establishes a Government-wide goal of 15 percent of SES members rotating for a minimum of 120 days (including to different departments, agencies, subcomponents, functional areas, sectors, and non-federal partners) during FY 2017, and thereafter, in order to ensure the mobility of the corps while also maintaining stability of operations. Within 45 days of the date of this order, OPM shall issue guidance for implementation of section 3(a)(v) of this order. OPM shall evaluate the percentages set forth in this subsection on an ongoing basis and make adjustments as necessary and appropriate. These plans shall take into consideration the policy priorities of the agency, agency needs and rules in the context of administration transitions, needs identified in agency hiring plans and succession plans, the development opportunities listed in individuals' Executive Development Plans (EDP), and the Federal Government's interest in cultivating generalist executives with broad and diverse experiences who can lead a variety of organizations. These plans shall build on existing succession management processes and those established in section 3(b)(i) of this order to ensure high potential and top performers have an opportunity to cycle through rotations. These plans shall also incorporate, as appropriate, flexibilities agencies have such as the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (implemented in 5 CFR part 334) to encourage SES members to pursue temporary assignments to State and local governments, colleges and universities, tribal governments, and other eligible organizations, and to better understand the impact of the Federal Government's work on those it serves. Finally, these plans shall include an assessment of the degree to which these rotation assignments achieve the desired goals for the individual and agency.

(b) Actions for Phased Implementation. Under the direction, or, in the case of section 3(b)(ii) of this order, the guidance, of the Director of OPM, in consultation with OMB and the PMC Subcommittee, the reforms listed in sections 3(b)(i)-(iv) of this order shall be implemented by agencies on the following schedule: the Secretaries of Defense, Energy, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Veterans Affairs; the Administrator of General Services; and the Director of OPM shall implement these reforms by September 30, 2016; the Secretaries of Agriculture, Education, Labor, and Transportation, and the Administrators of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Small Business Administration shall implement these reforms by September 30, 2017; the Secretaries of State, the Treasury, the Interior, Commerce, and Homeland Security, the Attorney General, and the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, as well as the Directors of OMB and the National Science Foundation, shall implement these reforms by September 30, 2018. By October 1 of each year, OPM shall issue additional guidance after each phase of implementation that reflects lessons learned and any adjustments to these reforms based on the agencies that have implemented them. By the respective date specified above, the heads of agencies shall:

(i) Establish an annual talent management and succession planning process to assess the development needs of all SES members, and SL and ST employees as appropriate, to inform readiness decisions about hiring, career development, and executive reassignments and rotations. These assessments shall include input from each executive, as well as the executive's supervisor, and shall be used to recommend development activities and inform the organization's succession planning, decisions about duty assignments, and agency hiring plans;

(ii) Proactively recruit individuals for vacant SES positions and regularly review those recruitment efforts at the Deputy Secretary (or direct designee) level on at least a quarterly basis, consistent with existing rules and regulations. Establish a mechanism to track, and raise for appropriate senior-level attention, information about each position that agencies are seeking to fill, including, at a minimum, source of the recruitment, number, quality and diversity (as available) of applicants, source of applicants (subcomponent, agency or non-government), and timeliness of the hiring process. Use the talent management and succession planning process described in section 3(b)(i) of this order and agency hiring plans to inform these recruitment efforts; and develop a tailored outreach strategy for proactive recruitment for key strategic positions;

(iii) Requisite executives of executives in their agency to work with their subordinate supervisors to update EDPs for each executive required by 5 CFR part 412.401, to include at least one developmental activity annually and at least one leadership assessment involving employee feedback (for example, 360 degree-type reviews) every 3 years to inform each executive's developmental needs. In addition, non-career SES and equivalent appointees should also have one leadership assessment during their first 2 years, and additional assessments every 3 years thereafter; and

(iv) Establish a formal Executive Onboarding Program informed by OPM's Enhanced Executive Onboarding Model and Government-Wide Executive Onboarding Framework, which shall provide critical support and guidance to executives through their first year of service in new positions, consistent with guidance to be issued by OPM no later than 60 days after the date of this order. Onboarding shall be provided for career and non-career SES, SL and ST employees, and SES-equivalent positions.

Sec. 4. Additional Implementation Considerations. (a) Actions for Agencies with SES-Equivalent Positions. Certain agencies have independent authorities enabling them to establish positions that are equivalent to SES or Senior Professional positions, or an executive personnel system that includes such positions. Whether the positions or employment systems are established in title 5 (for example, FBI/DEA SES) or in other titles of the United States Code (for example, Senior Foreign Service, Defense Intelligence SES, Senior National Intelligence Service), the agency head shall determine the extent to which the agency implements policies and processes to support objectives identified in sections 3(a) and 3(b) of this order for such positions consistent with the agency's authorities and purposes for which the law provides them, with such consultation with the Director of OPM, OMB, and the PMC Subcommittee as the agency may require.

(b) Agency Status and Reporting. Within 45 days of the date of this order, OPM will issue guidance, concurring with guidance in section 3(a)(v) of this order, that defines regular reporting on the status of each agency's implementation of the provisions in this order.

Sec. 5. General Provisions. (a) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

- (i) the authority granted by law to an executive department or agency, or the head thereof; or
- (ii) the functions of the Director of OMB relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

BARACK OBAMA



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