

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT



Guide To Senior Executive Service Qualifications

June 2010

A New Day for the Civil Service

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, Government executives face special challenges. They must be visionary leaders with a strong commitment to public service. They must be able to apply “people skills” to motivate their employees, build partnerships, and communicate with their customers. Finally, they need solid management skills in order to produce optimum results with limited resources.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) helps make sure the Government selects strong leaders by developing the core qualifications used to test new career appointees to the Senior Executive Service (SES) and by administering peer review boards which evaluate whether candidates possess these essential leadership qualifications.

The Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) were developed in 1997 after extensive research on the attributes of successful executives in both the private and public sectors. They were revalidated and reissued with a few modifications in 2006. In their current form, they represent the best thinking of organizational psychologists, human resources professionals both at OPM and other agencies, and Senior Executives themselves.

The ECQs are:

- Leading Change
- Leading People
- Results Driven
- Business Acumen
- Building Coalitions

In 2008, OPM piloted two new methods for selecting members of the SES, the Accomplishment Record and Resume-based methods. Both of these methods continue to be based on the ECQs. However, the Accomplishment Record method differs from the traditional approach to selecting SES members in that applicants are not asked to address the five broad ECQs but rather on a select few of the 28 executive competencies underlying them. The Resume-based option is even simpler, with the applicant showing possession of the ECQs in a standard resume format.

In order to keep this *Guide* up to date, with these developments, we are reissuing it with descriptions of the new methods and sample write-ups. In this way we hope to make it even more useful to Senior Executive Service candidates as they strive to assess and describe their executive qualifications, in preparation for review by selection officials.

In addition to helping applicants, the *Guide* will be useful to individuals charged with reviewing executive qualifications, including agency personnel and executive development specialists and members of agency Executive Resources Boards.

All current vacancies for career SES positions and SES candidate development programs at departments and agencies across the Federal Government’s appear on OPM’s official job website located at <http://www.usajobs.gov/seniorexecutives.asp>.

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EXECUTIVE QUALIFICATIONS

The law requires that the executive qualifications of each new career appointee to the Senior Executive Service (SES) be certified by an independent Qualifications Review Board based on criteria established by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) describe the leadership skills needed to succeed in the SES; they also 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 and administration 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.

OPM has identified five executive core qualifications. The ECQs were designed to assess executive experience and potential--not technical expertise. They measure whether an individual has the broad executive skills needed to succeed in a variety of SES positions--not whether they are the most superior candidate for a particular position. (The latter determination is made by the employing agency.)

Successful performance in the SES requires competence in each ECQ. The ECQs are interdependent; successful executives bring all five to bear when providing service to the Nation.

Executive Core Qualifications:

1. Leading Change

This core qualification involves the ability to bring about strategic change, both within and outside the organization, to meet organizational goals. Inherent to this ECQ is the ability to establish an organizational vision and to implement it in a continuously changing environment.

2. Leading People

This core qualification involves the ability to lead people toward meeting the organization’s vision, mission, and goals. Inherent to 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.

3. Results Driven

This core qualification involves the ability to meet organizational goals and customer expectations. Inherent to this ECQ is the ability to make decisions that produce high-quality results by applying technical knowledge, analyzing problems, and calculating risks.

4. Business Acumen

This core qualification involves the ability to manage human, financial, and information resources strategically.

5. 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.

COMPETENCIES

Competencies, shown in Appendix A, are the personal and professional attributes that are critical to successful performance in the SES. They are based on extensive research of Government and private sector executives and input from agency Senior Executives and human resources managers. There are 28 competencies. Twenty-two of the competencies are the specific competencies for the Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs). The remaining six are the fundamental competencies and are the attributes that serve as the foundation for each of the ECQs. Experience and training that strengthen and demonstrate the competencies will enhance a candidate's overall qualifications for the SES.

MERIT COMPETITION

Initial career appointments to the Senior Executive Service (SES) must be based on merit competition. The law (5 U.S.C. 3393) 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 choosing a selection method, advertising the position, preliminary review of applications by a personnel specialist, 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.

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 the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for consideration by a Qualifications Review Board.

Merit Staffing Selection Methods

When hiring through a competitive vacancy announcement, agencies choose one of the following selection methods:

- **Resume-based:** The vacancy announcement directs applicants to submit only a resume. Applicants show possession of the ECQs and any technical qualifications via the resume.
- **Accomplishment Record:** The vacancy announcement directs applicants to submit a resume and narratives addressing selected competencies underlying the ECQs and any technical qualifications.
- **Traditional:** The vacancy announcement directs applicants to submit a resume and narratives addressing the ECQs and any technical qualifications.

SES Merit Staffing Process

1. Agency advertises the position through the Government wide automated employment information system for a minimum of 14 days. The area of consideration is:
 - All groups of qualified individuals within the Civil Service (only current Federal Civil Service employees may apply); or
 - All groups of qualified individuals (anyone may apply).
2. Candidates submit their applications to the agency.
3. Agency rating panel reviews and ranks candidates.
4. Agency panel conducts structured interviews (optional).
5. Agency Executive Resources Board recommends the best qualified candidates to the selecting official.

6. Selecting official makes a choice and certifies that the candidate meets both the technical and executive qualifications (ECQs) for the position.
7. Agency submits candidate's application package to an OPM-administered Qualifications Review Board (QRB) for certification of executive qualifications.
8. Following QRB certification, agency appoints the candidate to the SES position.

QUALIFICATIONS REVIEW BOARD CERTIFICATION

The Office of Personnel Management convenes weekly Qualifications Review Boards (QRBs) to provide an independent peer review of applications for initial career appointment to the Senior Executive Service. The Board consists of three executives; at least two members must be career appointees. Board members review each application and decide if the candidate's experience meets the Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) requirements. 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.

QRB Certification Based on Announcement of a Specific Vacancy:

Criterion A--Demonstrated executive experience.

Candidates must demonstrate executive experience in all five ECQs. Their applications should reflect an overall record of the knowledges, skills, and abilities necessary to succeed in the SES. This record may include professional and volunteer experience, education, training, and awards, in addition to Federal experience. (See Writing Executive Qualifications Statements, page 8.)

Criterion C--Possession of special or unique qualities which indicate a likelihood of executive success.

The candidate must possess special or unique qualifications which support the ability to perform the duties of the position and the potential to quickly acquire full competence in the ECQs (e.g., an individual who is exceptionally familiar with an agency's programs through high-level staff experience, or who has had a significant impact on the highest policy levels of the agency). Criterion C cases are very rare and appropriate only when exceptional candidates with demonstrated experience are not available.

QRB members review several documents for each candidate:

- an evaluation of the candidate's background as related to the ECQs;
- at least one written reference by someone familiar with the candidate's managerial qualifications; and
- an Individual Development Plan (IDP) that includes developmental assignments and/or formal training, focused on the specific ECQs that need to be enhanced.

The IDP must show the training and development the candidate will receive following appointment.

QRB Certification Based on Completion of a Candidate Development Program:

Criterion B--Successful participation in an Office of Personnel Management-approved Candidate Development Program (CDP).

Candidates who compete Government wide for participation in a CDP and successfully complete the program are eligible for non-competitive appointment to the Senior Executive Service (SES). Prior to the revision of the regulations in December 2009, CDP openings could be announced within a single agency rather than Government wide; these graduates must compete for SES positions. Either way, 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 activities. OPM staff and an "ad hoc" Qualifications Review Board (QRB) review each candidate's training and developmental experience to assure that it provides the basis for certification of executive qualifications. QRB members assume that if the candidate has completed all CDP requirements, then he or she possesses the executive qualifications for initial career appointment to the SES.

WRITING EXECUTIVE QUALIFICATIONS STATEMENTS

The key to a well-written qualifications statement is to give readers--executive resources staff, rating and selecting officials, and Qualifications Review Board (QRB) members--specific information about your achievements. Be sure to include professional and volunteer experience, education, training, and awards that demonstrate your skills in a particular Executive Core Qualification (ECQ). A well-prepared ECQ statement reflects the ECQ-specific competencies (e.g., "Leading Change" reflects creativity and innovation, external awareness, etc.) Because the fundamental competencies are cross-cutting, they should be addressed over the complete ECQ narrative. It is not necessary to address them directly as long as the narrative, in its totality, shows mastery of these fundamental competencies overall.

Begin your ECQ statement with a brief summary of your executive experience. Then use the following approach to describe your accomplishments.

Challenge-Context-Action-Result Model

An ECQ statement may include one or more 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. (Please see the examples on pages 9 - 21.)

Challenge. Describe a specific problem or goal.

Context. Talk about the individuals and groups you worked with, and/or the environment in which you worked, to tackle a particular challenge (e.g., clients, co-workers, members of Congress, shrinking budget, low morale).

Action. Discuss the specific actions you took to address a challenge.

Result. Give specific examples of the results of your actions. These accomplishments demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of your leadership skills.

Other Suggestions

- Adhere to page limitations stated in the vacancy announcement.
- Use clear, concise statements written in the first person.
- Spell out all acronyms.
- Describe recent education and training that enhanced your skills in a particular ECQ.
- Include non-Federal experience (e.g., private sector, volunteer and professional organizations) if it demonstrates executive qualifications.
- Include special assignments (e.g., details, task forces, committees) if they are relevant to an ECQ.
- Avoid statements that describe your personal beliefs or philosophies; focus on specific challenges and results.
- Include awards that relate specifically to an ECQ.
- Quantify your accomplishments.
- Address the fundamental competencies over the course of the complete ECQ statement.

EXAMPLES OF QUALIFICATIONS STATEMENTS

The following examples illustrate good qualifications statements for Senior Executive Service candidates being certified under *Criterion A*, demonstrated executive experience. They include examples of private sector and volunteer work in addition to State and Federal Government experience.

The examples feature the Challenge-Context-Action-Result (CCAR) model. One of these four words appears after select sentences in the examples to show how the model works. Candidates should keep the CCAR model in mind as they write their qualifications statements but they should not annotate these statements with “Challenge,” “Context,” “Action,” or “Result.”

In short, good qualifications statements:

- Use the Challenge-Context-Action-Result model;
- Include specific examples of experience; and
- Focus on results.

These examples, from actual Qualifications Review Board cases, have been modified to protect the privacy of the SES candidates.

ECQ 1 Leading Change

This core qualification involves the ability to bring about strategic change, both within and outside the organization, to meet organizational goals. Inherent to this ECQ is the ability to establish an organizational vision and to implement it in a continuously changing environment.

Competencies

Creativity & Innovation
 External Awareness
 Flexibility
 Resilience
 Strategic Thinking
 Vision

Example: Leading Change

Unlike traditional career paths, where one position leads naturally to the other, I have followed a course in which a combination of factors has led me to envision and launch novel and non-traditional enterprises. The most important illustration of this core competency is my work as a pioneer in the field of technology transfer.

Technology transfer--the successful commercialization of inventions and innovations that arise from the not-for-profit sector--was virtually unknown 15 years ago. Indeed, the notion of promoting collaborations between scientists in Federal laboratories or academia and their industrial counterparts was an anathema. Common wisdom dictated that technology transfer was doomed to

fail, even if legislation was enacted to encourage such interaction. (*Context*) A handful saw it differently. I was among them.

I shared this vision with the top administrators of two research campuses. I met weekly with these officials and successfully argued that a Center for Technology and Development (CTD) should be created and given responsibility for all patenting and licensing activities. (*Challenge*) My vision for the CTD, including its mission, policies, and administrative structure, was adopted on both campuses. I proposed, lobbied for, and succeeded in including the phrase “transfer of knowledge and technology” as part of the new mission statement for the campuses, making technology transfer a sanctioned university activity. (*Action*)

My ability to communicate my expectations of the CTD as an economic engine for the State allowed me to garner the support of the local business community. (*Context*) The community rallied and provided the CTD with counsel on legal, technical, market, and economic development issues *pro bono*. Their backing was key in obtaining support from the State Legislature. Within 6 months, I had established the CTD as an important member of the technology transfer community and assembled strong networks with national and international biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies, venture firms, investors, and service providers. These networks have proven vital to this day. (*Result*)

Later in my career, I moved from the academic world to the Federal Government as head of the Office of Technology (OT). This office was created to implement the requirements of the Federal Technology Transfer Act. The OT is charged with the successful and appropriate commercialization of technology developed in Federal Laboratories. (*Challenge*) With an annual operating budget of \$5 million, patent prosecution expenditures of over \$7.5 million and a royalty revenue stream of \$30 million, the OT is, arguably, the largest and most influential not-for-profit technology transfer operation in the world.

When I was recruited to head the Office of Technology (OT) it was fighting for survival, plagued with tremendous unrest as to the direction and future of technology transfer. There was widespread discontent with the performance of the OT, giving rise to numerous investigations and the need to address 75 Corrective Actions. The OT was viewed with suspicion and concern by insiders and outsiders. It was clear something had to change. (*Context*)

In my first staff meeting, I set forth my vision for the OT. I embarked on a process of evaluation and strategic planning for every unit, gathering advice from staff at all levels within the organization. Working together, we wrote a new mission statement, established policies and procedures, reorganized the Office, appointed key personnel, reassigned some staff members, and opened an important dialogue with our customers to assess their needs and requirements. (*Action*)

Under my leadership the OT’s performance has improved dramatically. Productivity has increased by 40 percent and is at an all-time high. In the last fiscal year, we have signed a record number of license agreements, reached a record level of royalty income, patented important new technologies, and systematically reviewed our portfolio to eliminate obsolete cases. From a management perspective, the OT has accomplished a remarkable turnaround. We have attracted and hired competent and energetic staff, and they are working as a cohesive group. The OT has successfully

completed all but two of the 75 Corrective Actions. Most pre-existing EEO and personnel grievances have been resolved, and employee morale has improved significantly. In short, the OT is a well-run, proactive and productive organization. *(Result)*

Example: Leading Change

As Chief, Office of Security, I led the reinvention of my agency's personnel security process. *(Challenge)* In the year before my appointment, a high-profile hiring initiative had resulted in about 400 selections. However, at the end of the fiscal year the agency had not made any appointments because of a backlog in security investigations. By the time the security clearances were processed, the best candidates had found other jobs. *(Context)* I was asked to serve as Security Chief because I had a reputation as a manager who could achieve results quickly.

The agency's priorities included strengthening border enforcement and improving immigration services. These priorities had national ramifications because they related to policies backed by the White House and Congress. We requested and received additional resources to hire Border Officers and support staff to implement the immigration strategies. The White House and Congress expected the agency to demonstrate results in border enforcement and naturalization within the fiscal year. *(Context)* The recruitment, security clearance, and training of staff had to be accomplished expeditiously without sacrificing quality in the security process. Due to the Government shutdown and furloughs in the first quarter, the agency had only 6 months to hire and appoint 4,000 employees. *(Context)*

At that time, personnel security investigations averaged 8 months. I led a comprehensive review of the process and identified four major systemic problems: severe delays in screening applicants for entry on duty; less than state-of-the-art software; lack of resources in field security offices; and no written guidance on procedures for security clearance decisions. *(Action)* All aspects of the process had to be revamped.

To address the system delays, I delegated entry on duty and suitability adjudication authority to the Field Officers, and provided adjudication training to ensure that employment decisions would be consistent throughout the agency. *(Action)* I worked with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to automate case files transmissions, which eliminated an average of 3 months from the process. *(Action)* Further, the new agreement with OPM gave us on-line access to investigative information as it was reported, and made it possible to grant waivers to permit entry on duty in as little as 2 weeks. Automated linkages are now in place in all four of our Field Centers. *(Result)*

I then negotiated and entered into an agreement with the Director of the U.S. Office of Federal Investigations, which agreed to provide fingerprint results within 8 calendar days of their receipt. *(Action)* Previously, the process had taken as long as 3 months. In addition, I directed the development, issuance, and implementation of Standard Operations Guidance for entry on duty decisions. *(Action)* This was the first written guidance to be published in 20 years.

None of this would have been possible without my leadership, which earned the full cooperation and support of my staff. *(Context)* I encouraged them to share my vision of a streamlined personnel security process. All of my employees joined the effort and we formed a truly effective team.

Working together, we implemented new security investigations methods and gained the respect and trust of employees within our agency and throughout the Federal investigations community.
(*Result*)

As a result of my efforts, 4,003 permanent and part-time employees were hired. Processing time for entry on duty security decisions was reduced from 195 to 20 days, on average. This streamlined process made it possible to screen 14,000 prospective candidates for law officer positions nationwide. (*Result*) I received the agency's Meritorious Service Award for these achievements.

ECQ 2 Leading People

This core qualification involves the ability to lead people toward meeting the organization's vision, mission, and goals. Inherent to 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.

Competencies

Conflict Management
Leveraging Diversity
Developing Others
Team Building

Example: Leading People

While serving as Legal Counsel to the Chairman of the Federal Labor Relations Authority, I was assigned collateral duties to serve as the Acting Director of the Offices of Case Production and Case Intake. The staffs of these departments were seriously demoralized by a recent reorganization that eliminated the existing structure of separate legal staffs and consolidated them into one production unit. (*Challenge*) The reorganization also implemented a new GS-13 journeyman pay level that replaced the existing GS-14 level. Morale deteriorated even further when the Chairman resigned unexpectedly in July 2008 prior to Senate confirmation of a replacement. With only one sitting Member and no quorum, the Authority was unable to issue decisions. (*Context*) The drafting of case decisions for Members' votes was the primary mission of attorneys within the Office of Case Production. With no confirmed Authority leadership and no ability to perform the Offices' primary mission, it was imperative that I establish achievable interim goals until permanent Presidential leadership was confirmed.

The Case Production staff was comprised of attorneys that ranged from GS-11 to GS-14 and from 30 years of experience to those hired within the prior 2 months. (*Context*) Draft decision quality had suffered as a result of the low morale of the more senior attorneys and a lack of basic training for junior and recently-hired attorneys. (*Challenge*) I determined that a reexamination of draft quality and labor-relations community outreach were both achievable goals that would generate significant long-term benefits. I also recognized that the lack of quorum and inability to issue Authority decisions, while not optimal circumstances, afforded a unique opportunity that permitted the organization to focus on quality improvements and internal training without any impact on production goals.

To attack this dual deficiency, I encouraged senior attorneys to utilize their extensive subject matter expertise and assume a mentoring and coaching role for junior attorneys. I adjusted performance goals for the senior attorneys to focus on the effectiveness of these developmental coaching efforts. *(Action)* This process effectively utilized the attorneys' substantial skills base and provided essential training to more junior and recently-hired attorneys.

I also initiated development of a training module that demonstrated to both internal employees and the Labor-Relations Community that the Authority was still "in business". I engaged employees of both the Case Production and Case Intake staffs in the development of a training module on Authority Case Law Developments. *(Action)* This training module was publicized and offered to Union and Federal agency representatives throughout the Washington, DC area over a 5 month period and provided 16 half-day training units. Several nationally-recognized employment organizations published verbatim excerpts to their targeted audiences. *(Result)*

Since the implementation of these training modules, the Authority has noted a significant improvement in the quality of submissions and arguments presented in filings made by both Union and Agency representatives. Internally, case productivity has markedly improved and staff attorneys have demonstrated a broader case knowledge and skills base. *(Result)*

Example: Leading People

Throughout my career, I have recognized the value of motivating and rewarding employees. In my current position as the agency's Director of Information Resources, I lead a very competent staff of 17 senior technical professionals and 90 contractors. These employees design and manage the agency's local area network and telecommunication systems.

Our office was recently tasked with leading a project to upgrade a critical agency-wide network. *(Challenge)* The project required knowledge and expertise beyond that held by a majority of my staff. *(Context)* I worked with employees to identify their individual training needs and talked with new employees about the possibility of using this project as a developmental opportunity. *(Action)* I saw the project as a unique opportunity to encourage cooperation among staff members and to place our office on the cutting edge of information technology. *(Context)*

Approximately three-quarters of the staff was trained in the complex technical concepts necessary to upgrade the network. Through my leadership, we were able to develop and implement a new system that will carry the agency's network into the 21st century. The upgrade was completed 3 months ahead of schedule. *(Result)* Throughout the project, productivity and morale were high despite increased workloads.

As a result of my employee performance appraisals, 90 percent of my staff received cash awards for their work on this critical project. In addition, I received the agency's Meritorious Service Award for Management Excellence for my ability to set the office's expected performance level.

Before joining the Federal Government, I was chief of the Information and Technology Office at a large private sector law firm. I led a 25-member staff of managers and senior technicians who were responsible for developing and managing the firm's information technology systems. I rebuilt the

staff by filling vacant positions, motivating unproductive staff, reducing high absenteeism, and improving morale. As part of the rebuilding, I actively pursued a diverse workforce by hiring females and minorities to fill 60 percent of the office's vacant positions, including four key management and three staff positions.

When I joined the law firm, most of the staff had not had annual performance reviews for two years. (*Challenge*) Morale and productivity were very low, and there had been a high turnover of staff in recent months. (*Context*) I immediately set out to change this situation.

I met individually with employees to talk about performance expectations and to design tailored work plans for the following fiscal year. In addition, I used these sessions to learn about employees' interest in training and developmental assignments, and offered my assistance as a mentor. (*Action*) I served as a mentor for two new employees, and they showed great potential for moving into mid-management positions.

After 9 months under the new work plans, I saw a significant improvement in morale as well as cooperation among staff members who previously had not worked well with their colleagues. (*Result*)

As the office's senior manager, I served as the primary buffer between my staff and our customers—the firm's attorneys. In one case, I was able to diffuse an explosive situation that developed when one of my employees felt he was being unfairly pressured to design a new software program within a very short deadline. (*Challenge*)

The two employees had engaged in several shouting matches within ear shot of several attorneys and members of my staff. The entire firm was on edge, and the relationship between the attorneys and my staff had deteriorated as a result of this two-man battle. (*Context*)

I urged the men to meet with me and talk about the project and the attorney's expectations. (*Action*) After two long sessions, the attorney agreed to stop monitoring my employee's progress and to extend the deadline date. (*Result*) The tension in the office dropped significantly after this situation was resolved. In addition, my employee produced an excellent new software program for his client. (*Result*)

ECQ 3 Results Driven

This core qualification involves the ability to meet organizational goals and customer expectations. Inherent to this ECQ is the ability to make decisions that produce high-quality results by applying technical knowledge, analyzing problems, and calculating risks.

Competencies

- Accountability
- Customer Service
- Decisiveness
- Entrepreneurship
- Problem Solving

Technical Credibility

Example: Results Driven

During my 10-year residence in Springfield, IL, I did volunteer work for the Citizens Budget Committee, and was later appointed to the city's Zoning Commission. I acquired a broad-based knowledge of city planning regulations and policies and an understanding of how local politicians vote on particular issues. Because of my successful track record in those positions, the Mayor asked me to lead a citizens group in planning and implementing a City Improvement Program. *(Challenge)*

I recruited approximately 50 volunteers and educated them in the areas of public and municipal finance and capital improvement planning. *(Action)* The team was committed to serving their customers--fellow residents--and to meeting the Mayor's high expectations for improving the quality of life in Springfield. *(Context)* I led the volunteers in a local election campaign to increase the city sales tax from 4 to 5 cents. I marketed the idea by talking to citizens groups and local politicians, describing the benefits of an attractive city and better access to recreational facilities. *(Action)* These meetings were covered by local TV and radio stations, which helped to spread our message.

In the local election, citizens voted to increase the sales tax to 5 cents. The additional \$1.5 million raised annually through the tax increase was used to establish additional parks, athletic fields, walking and bike trails, and other recreational facilities. *(Result)*

I have a proven track record of getting results in the Federal sector as well, through careful planning that includes anticipating problems. After becoming Budget Director, I was immediately faced with implementing a congressional mandate to cut the agency budget by \$25 million before the start of the next fiscal year. *(Challenge)* To reach this goal, I knew we would have to make major reductions to funding, facilities, programs, and staff, particularly scientists and engineers. The cuts would be made at a time when agency managers were putting more of a demand on technical support from these specialists. *(Context)*

I organized task groups of functional and program staff from the field and headquarters and assigned specific priorities to each group. *(Action)* Over the next 4 months, these employees developed various options to accommodate the reductions, taking into consideration the interests of our scientists and engineers, managers who rely on these professionals, congressional demands, and the agency head's interest in complying quickly with Congress. *(Context)* Under my leadership, the task groups prepared several different plans for making the budget cuts.

At the same time, I directed by staff to develop computerized spreadsheets that allowed managers to immediately see the impact of their funding decisions. *(Action)* Later, we used this system and related processes to continually adjust the reduction targets as cost savings information was refined, allowing almost instantaneous mid-course corrections to the list of reduction targets.

Well before the start of the new Fiscal Year, we presented several alternatives to the agency head, who selected one of the options with few modifications. He praised the entire team for its hard

work and innovation in designing a plan that would enable us to absorb the heavy reductions with minimal impact on the agency's mission. *(Result)*

Example: Results Driven

During my career, I have consistently used a results-driven approach in handling all aspects of my responsibilities. I effectively leveraged my experience and leadership, human capital resources, technology, and program management tools to achieve these results. While Vice President and Controller of a global corporation, I was asked to lead an initiative to improve the profitability of one of our lines of business in Canada that included a multitude of clients and services. *(Challenge)* The business line was worth in excess of \$50 Million, and I was accountable for improving its bottom line while increasing profit margins. The initiative began in September 2008. The business unit leader of this particular line of business was new to his role, as was his direct supervisor. I was under tremendous pressure from the highest levels of the organization to show improvement. In fact, I was required to make weekly reports on our progress. *(Context)*

In order to address the initiative, I formed a cross functional team consisting of me, the business unit leader, operations, sales, and business development. There were numerous and overlapping timelines and project items. Each item had both a team member assigned to it and an allotted amount of time for completion. I kept all project timelines very tight in order to mitigate complacency and keep overall momentum at an acceptable pace. I delegated specific duties to team members and held each one accountable for efficient time management and effectiveness. I held weekly and monthly meetings, as well as any necessary impromptu meetings or phone calls to maintain accountability. *(Action)*

The primary trial the team faced was the lack of guidance from senior management. *(Challenge)* There are times when it makes sense to wait for highly specific guidance and direction, and there are times when people in positions of leadership are required to make decisions based upon experience and judgment. This was such a time, so I decided to establish and communicate our intended strategy to senior management and to keep team momentum moving forward. *(Action)* At the very least, I was determined to fight complacency by offering viable solutions to upper management. I had been tasked to improve the profitability of a line of business, and felt that inactivity would only serve to further undermine profitability. In the end, my proactive attitude paid huge dividends.

We created a database of profit and loss results by client compared to budget. We then segmented clients into four primary categories: Retain (good profit), Divest (low volume, not strategic), Low Price (Renegotiate), and Low Price (Strategic). In addition, we established a profit margin threshold for all business services. The segmentation was a result of establishing criteria on which specific services we would offer and which clients we would retain. While remaining highly sensitive to our client relationships, I directed the formulation of a transition strategy for those businesses we would exit and for those businesses with which we could not renegotiate a better profit position. In the process of evaluating the business line, we commonly received requests for low margin accounts to be strategic. We accepted the notion of strategic accounts but set a time limit for holding lower margin business that failed to meet the established target. *(Action)*

Within approximately 3 months, the business line the CEO tasked me to improve migrated from a 30% loss to a break-even disposition. Further, the business is now on a trajectory to earn a 15% profit as a percentage of revenue. The primary drivers of the improvement depended on exiting unprofitable services and clients. Consequently, headcount was reduced and process improvements implemented to improve productivity and leverage common activities across similar clients. *(Result)*

ECQ 4 Business Acumen

This core qualification involves the ability to manage human, financial, and information resources strategically.

Competencies

Financial Management

Human Capital Management

Technology Management

Example: Business Acumen

As Director of Policy for the New Jersey Department of Transportation, I manage a \$1.2 million budget and play a leadership role in setting manpower levels for all Department offices. These decisions are based on the Department's 10-year Mission and Values statement, which follows the New Jersey Secretary of Transportation's goals.

As chair of the seven-member Executive Committee, I determine expenditures for the Department's divisions and programs--an annual budget of \$3 billion. We set priorities by monitoring expenditures relative to forecasts for each program and the prior year's expenditures.

For example, several years ago during a particularly bad winter we made a decision to spend additional money on snow removal and to reduce funding for lower priority maintenance such as spring/summer grass cutting along the highways. *(Challenge)* Before making this decision, I met with Committee members to review upcoming expenditures and how this budgeting shift would impact various office budgets. *(Action)* In previous years, the Department had been severely criticized for not responding quickly and appropriately to hazardous road conditions. *(Context)*

As a result of our decision, we had the fewest weather-related traffic accidents in 12 years, and the Department received very high marks from New Jersey citizens. *(Result)*

I have designed budget strategies to support Departmental priorities. These strategies include coordinating with other executive agencies and outside stakeholders, and targeting State legislators as patrons. When key interest groups oppose the Department's legislation, I negotiate with them to achieve consensus, where possible.

For example, the Department was interested in clarifying the law with respect to payment when utilities must be moved from a Transportation Department right-of-way. *(Challenge)* Two major utility companies were opposed to the proposal. *(Context)*

I selected a General Assembly committee Chair to introduce a study resolution requiring the Department, the utility companies, and other stakeholders to collaborate, develop a proposal, and report back to the General Assembly the next session. *(Action)* The Department negotiated with all of the interest groups and designed an acceptable approach. *(Context)* The same legislator introduced the resulting legislation the following year and it was passed by the General Assembly. Companies must now pay for moving their utilities from rights-of-way; this savings is reflected in the Department's budget. *(Result)*

As a member of the Department's Steering Committee, which is composed of Department heads from the internal audits and finance offices, and a team from the information systems office, I led the development of a new information management system. *(Challenge)* The Fiscal Management System was designed to ensure that financial and manpower reports would be accessible to all senior managers and that the information would be used in the Department's strategic planning process; this was not the case with the older system. *(Context)* The new system has been in place for two years and has been praised by managers throughout the Department. *(Result)*

Example: Business Acumen

I have gained extensive experience in managing financial, human, and information resources while working at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Arlington, VA.

Currently, as the Medical Center's Budget Director, I am responsible for managing a \$150 million budget. This role has included making some tough financial decisions. For example, several years ago I led the development of a controversial plan to close a Veterans Affairs (VA) nursing home that had been in the neighborhood for 40 years. *(Challenge)* The nursing home had been losing money for several years. In addition, the Medical Center's 5-year budget did not include funding for much needed repair work at the aging facility. *(Context)*

I spent 6 months negotiating with union representatives, VA patients and their families. *(Action)* These emotionally charged sessions were held weekly; input from all of the stakeholders appeared in the final plan. The plan to close the nursing home was accepted by VA headquarters after intense negotiations with union officials, congressional offices, patients, and the affiliated university. *(Result)* In addition to saving the Department approximately \$4 million annually, we found new Federal positions for all displaced employees and received minimal complaints from VA patients and their families. *(Result)*

Recently, I envisioned and implemented changes to our Medical Center's Funds Management Program. *(Challenge)* Under my leadership, our Financial Officer automated the program, creating spreadsheets that use macros to automatically extract payroll data from the system. *(Action)* This information is distributed over our network to Service Chiefs for use in managing their salaries and expenses budgets.

This decentralized budget program, which is updated every week, has been very popular with our Service Chiefs. *(Context)* They cite it as an invaluable tool in achieving their goals. Last year, this automation tool saved the Medical Center \$3 million. *(Result)*

Earlier in my career, I was the Medical Center's Senior Supply Officer. I led 15 District Supply Officers in designing several innovative contracts with community hospitals. *(Context)* For example, we contracted with a local hospital to acquire their stand-alone Women's Outpatient Clinic. *(Challenge)* The contract included \$230,000 to purchase the clinic and an annual recurring cost of \$300,000.

After weeks of negotiating with hospital employees and their union representatives, I developed a plan to staff the Clinic with community hospital employees. *(Action)* This action minimized hardships on the hospital employees and saved time by avoiding the longer process of announcing the Clinic vacancies. *(Result)*

The result has been a 45 percent increase in the number of female VA patients treated in the area. In follow-up surveys, patients and their families report that they are very pleased with the care and facilities at the Clinic. *(Result)*

ECQ 5 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.

Competencies

Partnering
Political Savvy
Influencing/Negotiating

Example: Building Coalitions

While I was Director of my state's Environmental Protection Agency, the state's economy was in decline and revenues were significantly below budget projections. The Governor made uniform cuts in agencies' budgets and I was looking at the need to lay off 5% of my agency's staff of 1000. *(Challenge)* In addition, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency was pressuring the state to increase staffing in two program areas or face possible sanctions. *(Context)* Since state general revenues and Federal grants would no longer support the full range of the state's environmental programs, I developed two options for consideration by the Governor and General Assembly. *(Action)* The first would be to turn the state's Clean Air Act permitting program and Public Drinking Water Program over to the Federal Government for administration, reduce staff to meet state budget cuts, and reassign air quality and public drinking water staff to other programs. The second, and preferred, alternative was to request authority from the General Assembly to substantially raise the fees charged by the agency for the regulatory actions (such as permits and authorizations) it administered. I proposed that user fees fund half the costs of the regulatory programs within the agency. These fees would allow me to hire needed staff to meet permitting timelines established by state law, and fully meet new Federal program requirements.

After persuading the Governor to raise fees, I sat down with senior staff and put together a plan to sell the idea to business groups, environmental organizations, the General Assembly and ultimately

the public. *(Action)* Given the state budget timelines, I only had about 3 months to obtain General Assembly support. The plan started with a press release and my meeting with the editorial boards of the six largest newspapers to explain the user fee proposal. I then met with business, municipal, and environmental organizations on the proposal and the consequences of failure. *(Action)* All major newspapers endorsed the plan to use fees to fund environmental programs and the major business, municipal, and environmental organizations also became supporters. *(Result)* The most difficult group to persuade was the General Assembly. I spoke at several long hearings on the fee proposal and met individually with key members of both the House and Senate to discuss details items such as fee caps, fee structure, exceptions, and phase in schedule. *(Action)* Finally, with business and environmental organizations' support, the General Assembly authorized the fee increases with a phase-in over 3 years. With fees increased, I was able to halve staff layoffs, hire nearly 400 people over the next 3 years to fill critical needs, and fully implement state and Federal environmental laws. *(Result)*

Example: Building Coalitions

Throughout my career as a private sector attorney, I have represented the interests of a wide variety of organizations, including Fortune 500 companies, small businesses, homeless groups, and local government. This work requires a broad array of verbal and written skills in advocacy, negotiation, and mediation.

An example of this representational skill is my work on behalf of a local homeless clinic. *(Challenge)* I became aware of a pattern and practice by the city government of purposefully frustrating the orders of the local court system to avoid providing a wide variety of social services for the poor and homeless. *(Context)* While the government's failures were obvious in individual cases, little attention was paid to the fact that, when viewed broadly, this malfeasance occurred in virtually every local program designed to aid poor people. I decided that the only way in which this wide scale problem could be brought to light was by preparing a detailed report describing the city's misconduct in approximately 15 cases.

Working with three associates from my firm, we compiled information on the cases filed against the city by various plaintiffs (e.g., homeless individuals, public interest groups). *(Action)* In addition, we gathered facts from the plaintiffs' attorneys, talked to other legal service providers to identify relevant documents for the cases, and recruited a dozen local lawyers to write chapters for the final report. *(Action)*

Over the 10 months we spent writing the report, we were continuously required to represent the clinic to many diverse groups throughout the city (e.g., lobby groups for the homeless and poor, workers at other homeless clinics) whose cooperation was needed to complete the report. We were often required to make presentations to management officials of those groups, to gain their support. *(Action)*

In drafting and editing the report, we were constantly required to work with these groups to be sure that the report was accurate and reflected everyone's interests. During the writing phase, there were serious conflicts among the groups as to what the report should be addressing; we were frequently required to mediate these disputes without sacrificing the report's quality. *(Context)*

After publishing the 450-page report, we received hundreds of phone calls and letters praising our efforts. The report was covered on local radio and television stations, and the demand for copies prompted a second printing (500 copies) of the document. As a result of our findings, the Mayor established an oversight office to assure that the homeless would receive appropriate social services. *(Result)* Based on information from employees at various clinics and many homeless individuals, we know that the city's needy population is receiving these services. *(Result)*

In addition to my regular attorney duties, I head the firm's *pro bono* committee. *(Challenge)* Committee members spend a considerable amount of their time representing individuals who cannot afford to pay for legal services. Despite the negative attitude toward *pro bono* work held by some of the firm's attorney, I have encouraged six co-workers to join the committee. I did this by "marketing" committee participation as a way to serve the public and to gain valuable experience working on cases that will have a substantial impact on the community. *(Context/Action)*

Approximately 75 percent of the firm's attorneys are now involved in *pro bono* work, and we have argued four *pro bono* cases in the last three terms of the Supreme Court. *(Result)* In addition, the firm has gained a reputation as a public service-minded company. *(Result)*

WRITING ACCOMPLISHMENT RECORD NARRATIVES

Similar to qualifications statements, the key to a well-written accomplishment record narrative is to give readers specific information about your achievements. Be sure to include any professional and volunteer experience, education, training, and awards that demonstrate your possession of a particular competency.

Follow the instructions in the vacancy announcement carefully when preparing your Accomplishment Record narrative. Typically, the following approach should work well when describing your accomplishments.

Challenge-Context-Action-Result Model with Verification

An accomplishment record narrative may include one or more examples of relevant experience. An agency may limit the number of accomplishments addressed for each competency. Applicants should review the vacancy announcement for any applicable limits. Keep in mind that the QRB is looking for specific challenges, actions, and results. (Please see the examples on pages 23 - 26.)

Challenge. Describe a specific problem or goal.

Context. Talk about the individuals and groups you worked with, and/or the environment in which you worked, to tackle a particular challenge (e.g., clients, co-workers, members of Congress, shrinking budget, low morale).

Action. Discuss the specific actions you took to address a challenge.

Result. Give specific examples of the results of your actions. These accomplishments demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of your leadership skills.

Verification. Following the instructions in the vacancy announcement, provide the name, telephone number, and email address of an individual who can verify the information in your narrative. Be sure to indicate whether this person was your supervisor, co-worker, friend, instructor, chairman of committee, etc. If you do not want your current employer contacted, do not list your employer as a verifying person. Instead, provide the name of another person who can verify your accomplishment. You should not use a spouse or close relative (father, mother, etc.) or a person who is presently a direct subordinate as a verifier. The verifier should be reachable within a reasonable period.

Other Suggestions

- Ensure your experience matches the competency.
- Avoid the error of choosing meritorious accomplishments that do not clearly reflect the intended competency. Accomplishments that are not closely representative of the appropriate competency tend to receive less credit than accomplishments that better represent the competency of interest.
- Spell out all acronyms.
- Include awards that relate specifically to a competency.
- Quantify your accomplishments.

EXAMPLES OF ACCOMPLISHMENT RECORD NARRATIVES

The following examples illustrate good accomplishment record narratives for Senior Executive Service candidates being certified under *Criterion A*, demonstrated executive experience. The examples feature the Challenge-Context-Action-Result model with verification. Candidates should keep the CCAR model in mind as they write their narratives but it is not necessary or even advisable to annotate these statements with “Challenge,” “Context,” “Action,” or “Result.” However, for purposes of illustration, one of these four words appears after select sentences in the examples below to show how the model works.

These examples, from actual Qualifications Review Board cases, have been modified to protect the privacy of the SES candidates.

ECQ 1 Leading Change

Example Competency: Resilience - Deals effectively with pressure; remains optimistic and persistent, even under adversity. Recovers quickly from setbacks.

As a corporate officer for the past 6 years, I am held accountable for all aspects of my business area. I must produce results -- delivering against a business plan and ensuring continued growth of the business. I also must consistently exceed client expectations. In 2006, as a Division Manager at the Brown Corporation, my division was executing a major contract in support of a U.S. Army customer. It was a period of expansive growth for the division and I had placed program management of this contract in our Army Financial Management Program area. Brown Corporation held the contract for several years and grown comfortable in supporting this client. As part of my management oversight process, I had regularly received reports from the Program Manager that work was progressing satisfactorily. Then one day, through another source, I began to hear rumors that there was some client dissatisfaction. (*Challenge*) Unexpectedly, a few days later, I was requested to meet immediately with our senior SES Army client. Despite that program execution of this contract was organizationally two levels under me, it clearly had become my problem and my responsibility as the accountable corporate officer. I adjusted my schedule to ensure that I met with him in the most responsive fashion possible. In the 24 hours before the meeting, I undertook a series of steps – first and foremost to inform my bosses that a major issue was brewing – bad news in business certainly doesn’t get better with time. (*Context*) Fortunately, because of my relationship with my boss and his confidence in me, he knew I accepted full responsibility for the problem, but more importantly he knew I would fix it to the best of my ability.

To prepare for the meeting, I began a full range of probing discussions with every member of the team as well as a very direct discussion with the Program Manager. It became clear that issues had been known at the staff level but not communicated to senior leadership. During the meeting the next day with the Army executive, it appeared even worse – they were considering terminating our contract and not exercising the option for the next year. Based on our discussion, it was clear that his dissatisfaction was justified. I responded that we, the company and I, accepted responsibility for the mistakes but were absolutely committed to regain their confidence. I replaced the Program Manager immediately, met with the team multiple times to discuss what we needed to do to meet

the client's expectations, and provided weekly reports to the client on our progress. I also began more direct engagement with the Army executive. *(Action)* While this consumed a fair amount of time over the ensuing 3 months, the fact that I reacted quickly, was decisive on changes needed, and proactively managed it resulted in restoring the client's confidence. Brown Corporation was awarded the option year contract. *(Result)*

Verifier: George Brown, CEO of Brown Corporation, phone: (111) 555-2345, email: george.brown@browncorp.com.

ECQ 2 Leading People

Example Competency: Team Building - Inspires and fosters team commitment, spirit, pride, and trust. Facilitates cooperation and motivates team members to accomplish group goals.

Throughout my 30 year career, I have been consistently been in positions that required either being part of a team or leading a team.

I am the Director of a 500 person unit that was in a dire state of chaos before my arrival. There had been a series of Acting Directors, who had managed to create an atmosphere of distrust towards management and serious morale issues. I saw the challenges before me. *(Challenge)* Relationships with the bargaining unit representatives had deteriorated to an all time low and we were being picketed, and we also had the distinction of having the highest number of EEO complaints of any division in the entire country. *(Context)*

To confront the challenges I drew up a comprehensive list of strategic actions to bring about organizational change. As I tried to implement change, I saw that communication was a huge factor in preventing everyone from being successful, along with a lack of trust and teamwork. I fostered team commitment within my management team by conducting staff meetings three times a week with the focus of imparting a sense of team, ownership and pride, and increasing their understanding of our organizational priorities, goals and direction. As a direct result of my efforts to rebuild the confidence of the management team and respect and trust of subordinate employees, the union representatives have withdrawn every demand to bargain they filed since my arrival and have acknowledged there is no need for picketing and EEO complaints. *(Action)* Each of two recent national review teams independently reported there was a marked improvement in the demeanor and professionalism of employees and managers. *(Result)*

Verifier: Gary French, supervisor and project director at Smythe-Jones, phone: (111) 555-1234, email: gary.french@smythe-jones.com.

ECQ 3 Results Driven

Example Competency: Accountability - Holds self and others accountable for measurable high-quality, timely, and cost-effective results. Determines objectives, sets priorities, and delegates work. Accepts responsibility for mistakes. Complies with established control systems and rules.

During my career, I have gained extensive experience in successfully leading results driven organizations. My position as Regional Director for Williams Enterprises exemplifies my commitment to accountability for results. Upon assuming leadership of the Midwestern Region, I conducted a review of our structure and staffing. I had serious doubts about our capacity to provide adequate internal oversight and support given the financial, logistical, and policy challenges facing us. My review also revealed that there was no consistency on how things were accomplished throughout my offices in Michigan and Ohio. *(Challenge)* During this time, Williams Enterprises was in its formative years and regional growth was critical to its success. *(Context)*

Beginning in June 2008 and continuing through 2009, I instituted fundamental changes to the structure of the office. I consolidated all the administrative support staff which had been spread out among different groups into one entity, the Mission Support Group. I also clarified the roles and responsibilities for the Group. Many of the duties that had been previously handled as collateral duties by employees throughout the office were placed with Group personnel to ensure consistency and allow for greater oversight and accountability through specific chains of command. To ensure consistency in procedures, I had a series of in-depth internal standard operating procedures (SOPs) created and issued to all personnel covering a variety of key areas such as procurement, travel, and property. *(Action)* These SOPs helped to ensure that our personnel understood their obligations in handling funds and property. They also helped to close loopholes and address issues left silent by national policies. For example, repairs to company vehicles are funded nationally through the use of the employee's assigned fleet card. Any employee could charge purchases up to \$2,500.00 on the card just by presenting it to a merchant, and there was no process in place to ensure that the purchases were first reviewed or justified. My SOP on procurement set clear rules and internal controls to ensure that expenses were appropriately reviewed and that all charges were in the best interests of the company. These actions helped employees understand their responsibilities and took confusion out of the procurement process. It also helped ensure the accountability of corporate funds during a time of significant budget restraints. Six months after implementation of the SOPs for fleet card use, my region reduced vehicle expenses by over \$500,000. The SOPs continue to be a key management tool today. I received the "Regional Director of the Year" award for my efforts and the SOPs have been adopted by other regional offices. *(Result)*

Verifier: John Williams, supervisor at Williams Enterprises, phone: (111) 555-3456, email: john.williams@williamsenterprises.com.

ECQ 4 Business Acumen

Example Competency: Financial Management - Understands the organization's financial processes. Prepares, justifies, and administers the program budget. Oversees procurement and contracting to achieve desired results. Monitors expenditures and uses cost-benefit thinking to set priorities.

During the last 5 years in my Division Chief position at Smith Systems, I have successfully managed the firm's largest budget. During 2006, one of the operating divisions was underperforming and I was asked to contribute by increasing profit from my division. *(Challenge)* This occurred during a time of increased scrutiny from the Board of Directors. The Board was considering placing the underperforming divisions up for sale. *(Context)* My first action was to

complete a detailed analysis of labor costs against our contracts. Through the use of some short-term personnel substitutions, I was able to generate increased margins without compromising the quality of our client services. I next turned to other costs, keeping in mind the need to continually balance investments in people and business growth. I did not want to mortgage our future business for near-term profit and I wanted to ensure we were continuing to develop our staff. I conducted tradeoff analyses of spending on new business and focused expenditures on the most lucrative near-term targets. I reduced a range of overhead costs through consolidation of functions. From these activities, I generated a new operating budget for our overhead costs and executed it as planned. *(Action)* Because of that I was able to generate an additional 2% profit before taxes from an approximate 8% planned to 10% executed. This contributed significantly to the firm meeting its profit goals for the year. I was recognized for my contribution and received an unprecedented 5% increase in division funding the next year. *(Result)*

Verifier: Susan Anderson, CEO at Smith Systems, phone: (111) 555-4567, email: susan.anderson@smithsystems.com.

ECQ 5 Building Coalitions

Example Competency: Partnering - Develops networks and builds alliances, collaborates across boundaries to build strategic relationships and achieve common goals.

In my more than 15 years with Jackson Technologies, I have had positions both as a line manager and as a senior staff member. It is in these later positions I have had to most effectively exercise partnering and negotiating skills to gain cooperation and successfully complete assignments.

From 2005 to 2008, I held a newly created senior position entitled Site Coordinator. During this time, the headquarters offices of Jackson Technologies were organized by operating function – information technology, finance, and facilities. Within each of these offices were lower tier offices for the regional sites. Thus, a Site Manager reported to three different headquarters program offices. *(Challenge)* I recognized this was causing multiple avenues of communication, conflicting guidance and direction, duplication of efforts, and inefficiencies. *(Context)* I recommended that an Office of Site Coordination be established to provide a one stop shop for each site to deal with headquarters programs and coordinate headquarters activities for that site. Not surprisingly, my recommendation was met with initial resistance by those who did not see the benefit and were perhaps averse to change. By demonstrating the benefits the new office would provide, I convinced them it was a good idea and received their buy-in. My recommendation to create the new office was accepted and I was selected as the Atlanta Site Coordinator. By establishing relationships with the Atlanta Site Manager and the headquarters programs Office Directors and by demonstrating the benefits of cooperation, I succeeded in creating an integrated unit. *(Action)* I lead the unit in conducting an unprecedented multi-program year end review for the Atlanta site. The review was successful and used as a model by other Site Coordinators. Additionally, the review led to the cooperative development of a budget for the Atlanta site which eliminated inefficiencies and included cost savings of over \$15 million. *(Result)*

Verifier: Linda Miller, Vice President at Jackson Technologies, phone: (111) 555-6789, email: Linda.miller@jacksontechnologies.com.

ADDRESSING EXECUTIVE QUALIFICATIONS IN A RESUME

Unlike other resumes you may have prepared, a well-written resume prepared in response to a Resume-based vacancy announcement for an SES position will show readers that you possess the ECQs and give information about your accomplishments.

Follow the instructions in the vacancy announcement carefully when preparing your resume. Applicants typically provide the following information:

- Full name, mailing and email addresses, day and evening telephone numbers
- Vacancy announcement number
- Educational information, including the name, city and state of colleges or universities attended, as well as the type of any degree received.
- Information about paid and nonpaid work experience related to the position including: job title, duties and accomplishments, employer's name and address, duration of employment, and salary
- Information about honors, awards, and special accomplishments

Other Suggestions

- Report only attendance and/or degrees from schools accredited by accrediting institutions recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Refer to the following U.S. Department of Education website: <http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/index.html>.
- Reflect on the ECQs and think about how your past experiences and education relate to each ECQ.
- Read the vacancy announcement carefully. Agencies often note that written statements addressing the ECQs will not be considered. If you previously prepared ECQ statements, do not insert or append the statements to your resume.
- Adhere to any page limitations that may be noted in the vacancy announcement.
- Spell out all acronyms.
- Quantify your accomplishments

RESUME EXAMPLE

The following example illustrates a good resume for a Senior Executive Service candidate being certified under *Criterion A*, demonstrated executive experience. Candidates should keep the ECQs in mind as they write their resumes but it is not necessary or even advisable to annotate the resume with “Leading Change,” “Leading People,” “Results Driven,” “Business Acumen,” or “Building Coalitions.” However, for purposes of illustration, these five phrases appear throughout the example to show possession of the ECQs.

This example, from an actual Qualifications Review Board case, has been modified to protect the privacy of the SES candidate.

Pat M. Olmstead

1616 Mockingbird Lane
Chicago, IL 60601
555-703-2468 (h)

Announcement: SES-2010-0003
olmstead@server.net
555-692-7154 (w)

PROFILE:

- Highly skilled in leading and executing complex and multi-disciplinary projects at all organizational levels
- Proven leader and manager of national programs, resources, and staff
- Over 28 years' experience as a telecommunications and information technology professional

EXPERIENCE:

Executive Assistant, GS-15

February 2009 – Current

Agency Headquarters, Washington, DC

Direct oversight of four major programs and nine operational divisions providing information technology services for the agency. Directly coordinate with Regional Directors and Office of the Secretary staff. Synchronize all efforts to achieve the agency requirement to enable global support of staff operating from a securely managed network with reduced cost of ownership.

Accomplishments:

- Created a secure data network which serves as the baseline for a global enterprise data network. This new network increased information security two-fold while providing unfettered access to critical user information. *Results Driven*
- Developed innovative policies for providing secure wireless email at the enterprise level. These policies are now being incorporated by other Federal Government agencies. *Leading Change*
- Integrated best business practices from commercial vendors and created an efficient automated process to re-image more than 5,000 computer systems to a common secure baseline. *Results Driven*
- Met weekly with Senior Leaders to assist them in achieving the necessary change management in their organizational processes. Encouraged discussion of differences to generate the best options for implementation. *Building Coalitions, Leading People*
- Created the initial templates for global enterprise that can deliver objective levels of service with measurable metrics. *Results Driven*
- Presented the methodology to execute a myriad of policy changes at several forums and conferences. *Building Coalitions*

Senior Program Manager, GS-15

May 2005 – January 2009

Agency Headquarters, Washington, DC

Led a 4,000 person communications organization responsible for providing communications and information management to staff worldwide.

Accomplishments:

- Negotiated multi-year funding, coordination, and implementation for fiber optic infrastructure valued in excess of \$20 million and supporting 10,000 users. *Building Coalitions*
- Led the transition from legacy microwave systems to a cutting edge fiber optic network with upgraded technological capabilities that increased the carrying capacity capability 90-fold. *Leading Change*
- Managed requirement analysis and implementation of a \$40 million annual contract for communications architecture. *Business Acumen*

Program Manager, GS-15

August 2002 – April 2005

Agency Headquarters, Washington, DC

Responsible for integrating and coordinating information technology requirements and emerging enterprise solutions nationwide. Executed an annual program budget greater than \$160 million.

Business Acumen

Accomplishments:

- Directed server consolidation and change management of an 1800 person organization resulting in a reduction of 3 large email servers and a reduction from 11 support contracts to 3, with a net savings of more than \$5 million. *Results Driven*
- Expanded information assurance and compliance. Reduced non-compliance from nearly 85% to less than 2% across the organization within 5 months. *Results Driven*
- Successfully negotiated for critical funding to provide enterprise technology. This funding enabled the construction of 4 consolidate server locations throughout the country. *Building Coalitions*
- Successfully integrated 7 incongruous unit level networks into 1 agencywide network. Led the migration of more than 8,000 email users from legacy exchange service to 1 email system. *Results Driven*

Director, Transition Office, GS-15

June 2000 – July 2002

Agency Headquarters, Washington, DC

Led the new Presidential Administration transition team, from confirmation of the Secretary to the vetting, selection, and submission of all political appointee nominations including those requiring Senate confirmation.

- Built and managed the workforce needed to staff the Transition Office. Ensured employees were appropriately appraised and rewarded. *Business Acumen*
- Inspired team commitment and motivation resulting in the processing of over 5500 applications for 140 political appointment positions. *Leading People, Results Driven*
- Established a comprehensive vetting and tracking process that enabled senior selection officials to effectively and fairly interview prospective candidates and make selection recommendations to the President for final approval by the Senate. Completed initial

recommendations to the Secretary and President for all primary positions within 4 months of commencing transition activities. *Results Driven*

- Directed the comprehensive preparation activities for the Secretary and Deputy Secretary for their Senate confirmation hearings, including overcoming repeated obstacles in a high pressure environment. *Leading Change*

Vice President, Government Sector

July 1997 – May 2000

Corporate Headquarters, Fairfax, VA

Annual salary: \$145,000

Responsible for developing a new Government Sector business unit. Established and implemented information technology programs in support of Federal Government contracts.

Accomplishments:

- Implemented metrics for defining efficiency, effectiveness and overall success of the business unit. *Results Driven*
- Developed program managers in order to leverage their full range of expertise and capabilities. Encouraged workforce diversity to create atmosphere conducive to high quality service. *Leading People*
- Ensured programs were awarded subsequent contracts. Exceeded corporate goal for contracts by \$10 million. *Results Driven*

Special Projects Officer, GS-14

August 1995 – June 1997

Agency Headquarters, Arlington, VA

Provided administrative and protocol support to the Director and Deputy Director of an agency engaged in global research and development of security protocols and emerging technologies. Maintained Top Secret security clearance.

Accomplishment:

- Successfully led an organizational change management initiative to maintain relevancy and core expertise. Collaborated across agencies to build strategic relationships resulting in an increase in customer requests for briefings by agency experts. *Leading Change, Building Coalitions*

EDUCATION:

Master of Business Administration, Georgetown University, Washington, DC

Bachelor of Science - Engineering, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Leadership for a Democratic Society, Federal Executive Institute, Charlottesville, Virginia

AWARDS:

Special Act Award 1997

Secretary's Award 2002

Special Service Award 2005

Appendix A: Competency Definitions

Fundamental Competencies

These competencies are the foundation for success in each of the Executive Core Qualifications.

Interpersonal Skills – Treats others with courtesy, sensitivity, and respect. Considers and responds appropriately to the needs and feelings of different people in different situations.

Oral Communication – Makes clear and convincing oral presentations. Listens effectively; clarifies information as needed.

Integrity/Honesty – Behaves in an honest, fair, and ethical manner. Shows consistency in words and actions. Models high standards of ethics.

Written Communication – Writes in a clear, concise, organized, and convincing manner for the intended audience.

Continual Learning – Assesses and recognizes own strengths and weaknesses; pursues self-development.

Public Service Motivation – Shows a commitment to serve the public. Ensures that actions meet public needs; aligns organizational objectives and practices with public interests.

Leading Change

Creativity and Innovation – Develops new insights into situations; questions conventional approaches; encourages new ideas and innovations; designs and implements new or cutting edge programs/processes.

External Awareness – Understands and keeps up-to-date on local, national, and international policies and trends that affect the organization and shape stakeholders' views; is aware of the organization's impact on the external environment.

Flexibility – Is open to change and new information; rapidly adapts to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles.

Resilience – Deals effectively with pressure; remains optimistic and persistent, even under adversity. Recovers quickly from setbacks.

Strategic Thinking – Formulates objectives and priorities, and implements plans consistent with long-term interests of the organization in a global environment. Capitalizes on opportunities and manages risks.

Vision – Takes a long-term view and builds a shared vision with others; acts as a catalyst for organizational change. Influences others to translate vision into action.

Leading People

Conflict Management – Encourages creative tension and differences of opinions. Anticipates and takes steps to prevent counter-productive confrontations. Manages and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a constructive manner.

Leveraging Diversity – Fosters an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued and leveraged to achieve the vision and mission of the organization.

Developing Others – Develops the ability of others to perform and contribute to the organization by providing ongoing feedback and by providing opportunities to learn through formal and informal methods.

Team Building – Inspires and fosters team commitment, spirit, pride, and trust. Facilitates cooperation and motivates team members to accomplish group goals.

Results Driven

Accountability – Holds self and others accountable for measurable high-quality, timely, and cost-effective results. Determines objectives, sets priorities, and delegates work. Accepts responsibility for mistakes. Complies with established control systems and rules.

Customer Service – Anticipates and meets the needs of both internal and external customers. Delivers high-quality products and services; is committed to continuous improvement.

Decisiveness – Makes well-informed, effective, and timely decisions, even when data are limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences; perceives the impact and implications of decisions.

Entrepreneurship – Positions the organization for future success by identifying new opportunities; builds the organization by developing or improving products or services. Takes calculated risks to accomplish organizational objectives.

Problem Solving – Identifies and analyzes problems; weighs relevance and accuracy of information; generates and evaluates alternative solutions; makes recommendations.

Technical Credibility – Understands and appropriately applies principles, procedures, requirements, regulations, and policies related to specialized expertise.

Business Acumen

Financial Management – Understands the organization's financial processes. Prepares, justifies, and administers the program budget. Oversees procurement and contracting to achieve desired results. Monitors expenditures and uses cost-benefit thinking to set priorities.

Human Capital Management – Builds and manages the workforce based on organizational goals, budget considerations, and staffing needs. Ensures that employees are appropriately recruited,

selected, appraised, and rewarded; takes action to address performance problems. Manages a multi-sector workforce and a variety of work situations.

Technology Management – Keeps up-to-date on technological developments. Makes effective use of technology to achieve results. Ensures access to and security of technology systems.

Building Coalitions

Partnering – Develops networks and builds alliances, collaborates across boundaries to build strategic relationships and achieve common goals.

Political Savvy – Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization. Perceives organizational and political reality and acts accordingly.

Influencing/Negotiating – Persuades others; builds consensus through give and take; gains cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals.

Appendix B: Tips for Writing Effective ECQ Statements and Accomplishment Record Narratives

Stay Focused

- Focus on leadership rather than managerial and technical abilities; all three are important, but leadership is more important.
- Follow the Challenge-Context-Action-Result model.
- Each ECQ or competency should contain specific, job-related experiences with specific accomplishments.
- Focus on what you have accomplished personally, but don't exaggerate.
- Show that you have the qualifications needed to succeed in the Senior Executive Service.
- Address the fundamental competencies over the course of the complete ECQ narrative.
- Never combine any of the ECQs or competencies.
- Never address an ECQ or competency by referring the reader to other parts of your application (e.g., resume).
- Avoid using an identical example for more than one ECQ or competency.
- Avoid a "laundry list" of activities without context, actions, or accomplishments.
- Focus on your vision for the organization not your personal vision.
- Focus on recent experience, education, and training. Some reviewers consider experience that's over 10 years old to be stale.
- Highlight awards or other forms of recognition that relate specifically to an ECQ or competency, e.g., "Human Resources Manager of the Year."
- Include non-Federal experiences (e.g., private sector, volunteer and professional organizations) if they support the ECQ or competency.
- Include relevant formal education or training that has enhanced your skills in a particular ECQ or competency.
- Don't forget to include examples of special assignments and details.
- Include special qualifications if relevant to the position sought: public speaking, publications, languages spoken, membership in related professional organizations or scientific societies, or expertise in a technical area (e.g., budget, information technology).
- Show measurable results, especially in terms of improved customer service, increased efficiency, productivity, or money saved.

Appendix C: English 101 Revisited and Other Tips

- Absolutely no typos or grammatical errors.
- Use personal “I” instead of third person.
- Write in short, complete sentences (subject, verb, proper tense agreement).
- Use common words and expressions instead of bureaucratic ones.
- Economize on words and expressions, but not to a cryptic extreme.
 - Good:* I briefed Congress.
 - Bad:* I conducted a briefing to key Congresspersons and their staffs. (10 words.)
- Avoid vague statements.
 - Good:* I produce two weekly radio shows, one monthly television program, and a bimonthly newsletter to 10,000 employees located in 12 regional offices.
 - Bad:* I manage various communication processes to field offices.
- Avoid acronyms, unless you spell them out several times in the application.

Format

- Follow the instructions in the announcement carefully; ignoring page limits or other formatting requirements may jeopardize your application.
- Material should be easy to read:
 - Use paragraphs or bullets to separate items.
 - Use headings and subheadings to indicate categories.
 - Use all capital letters, bold or italics to highlight important information.
 - Leave some white space; don’t type margin to margin.
 - Avoid using small size type.
- Don’t make reviewers hunt for experience (e.g., “see attachments”). Put all relevant information in the write-up.
- Application should be neat, clean, and typed.
- Make sure photocopies are legible.
- Don’t attach copies of training certificates, awards, or position descriptions.
- Number all pages.
- Don’t assume Spell-Check and Grammar-Check will catch all the errors; review every word.

Tone

- Be friendly and professional, not stilted, formal, or chatty.
- Avoid passive verbs; use active verbs with the personal “I.”
 - Good:* I established a new team structure that eliminated the need for six supervisors (only 13 words; concise, clear, good use of personal “I” with an active verb).
 - Bad:* The establishment of a new team structure was considered one of my best accomplishments in that it reduced the need for six supervisory positions (too long--24 words; stilted, awkward sentence structure, too passive).

References

- Make sure that individuals you reference can attest to your ability to perform the Senior Executive Service job and can speak to your specific competencies in the Executive Core Qualifications.

- Contact references and tell them about positions for which you have applied.
- Be sure reference information is current (e.g., telephone numbers, addresses).

More Tips

- Avoid statements that describe your personal beliefs, philosophies, or commitment to social or political causes unless they are necessary to describe the results you have achieved.
- Don't reveal information about your political affiliation or activities unless you are using experience as a political appointee to qualify.
- Don't identify your race, sex, national origin, color, religion, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, or any other non-merit factor.

And Finally...

- When you're finished, ask three people (preferably dispassionate and knowledgeable individuals) to review your application.