

## The Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) Senior Executive Service (SES) Candidate Development Program (CDP) is an Office of Personnel Management (OPM) approved program that leads to SES certification by an OPM Qualifications Review Board (QRB). Once certified, graduates of the program are eligible for non-competitive selection into the SES either at NRC or elsewhere in the Federal government. All training costs, including travel and per diem associated with the program, are paid by the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO). The NRC SESCDP has produced almost all of the agency's new SES members in recent years. Since 2001, the program's placement rate is 97 percent, which is one of the highest placement rates in government.

The NRC SESCDP consists of a senior advisor/mentor, an executive development plan, a monthly speaker series, 80 hours of interagency course work, 120 days of rotational assignments, quarterly Executive Leadership Seminars, and both individual and group action learning projects. The program ends with the preparation and submission of an OPM QRB certification package.

The most current SESCDP class began in June 2015, and is scheduled to complete the program in December 2016 (graduation is January 2017). This class, and the last class (March 2015) went through a selection process that included the OPM Assessment Center. The current class also went through structured interviews.

An Assessment Center is a standardized assessment process in which candidates participate in a variety of exercises or simulations. These exercises are designed to resemble real-world work situations and include the use of multiple exercises, evaluation of several skill dimensions or competencies, scoring by trained observers, and the use of a systematic strategy for integrating the performance information collected during the Assessment Center. Unlike traditional paper-and-pencil assessments that typically focus on knowledge, aptitudes, personality, preferences, interests, styles, or beliefs, the Assessment Center focuses on the demonstration and observation of actual behaviors.

Structured interviews are an assessment method designed to measure job-related competencies of applicants by systematically inquiring about their behavior in past experiences and/or their proposed behavior in hypothetical situations. Structured interviews use standardized questioning and scoring processes across all applicants, which provides consistency across raters and on what is being measured.

### **Specifics of the Program:**

**Length of Program:** This is an 18 month, part-time program. Participants normally continue to occupy their regular positions except while they are attending training or seminars, or while on rotational assignments.

**Orientation:** After candidates are notified of their selection, an initial mandatory orientation and assessment session is held and participants are provided with program requirements, policies, and expectations for the program. Orientation for the current class occurred in June 2015.

**Individual Needs Assessment:** Each participant completes a 360 assessment exercise prior to the orientation week, which is designed to determine those competencies which will be

developed or reinforced during the program. Results of this assessment are discussed individually with each participant during orientation.

**Senior Advisor (Mentor):** Through their experience, proven capabilities, and management perspective, SES senior advisors assist participants in further clarifying their developmental objectives and in identifying developmental assignments and activities.

**Executive Development Plan:** An Executive Development Plan (EDP) is prepared by each participant, together with the immediate supervisor and the senior advisor. The EDP is used to identify, track, and document completion of competency-based needs of the participants. It is approved by the NRC ERB, and is updated or revised, as needed, throughout the program.

**Rotational Assignment:** Significantly challenging rotational assignments totaling at least four (4) months of full-time service are required for all participants. One assignment must be at least 90 continuous days in a position other than, and substantially different from the candidate's position of record. These assignments are designed to help prepare participants for the nature and scope of positions they are likely to assume in the SES.

**Interagency Training:** The program requires at least 80 hours of formal interagency training throughout the duration of the program that addresses the executive core qualifications and their application to SES positions Government-wide. The training experience includes interaction with a wide mix of senior managers and executives outside the candidate's organization or agency to foster a broader perspective. The interagency training is conducted through OPM.

**NRC External and Internal Developmental Activities:** Candidates participate in specifically selected external and internal training events, and other NRC planned developmental activities and tailored management seminars which will be scheduled throughout the period of the SES CDP. These seminars and activities supplement the rotational assignment and the interagency training experience.

**Progress Review:** Progress in meeting EDP requirements is closely monitored by the SESCDP Program Manager, executive coach, senior advisor (mentor), and the ERB, and is evaluated periodically to assure timely completion of program activities.

**Candidate Certification:** After a candidate completes the program, the ERB determines if the candidate successfully completed all SESCDP requirements and demonstrated that he or she is prepared to serve as a member of the SES or if more development is needed. Once the ERB determines that a candidate has successfully completed the program, the candidate, in collaboration with the SESCDP Program Manager, prepares all required documentation required by OPM procedures. If the ERB determines that more development is needed, it provides the candidate with specific recommendations for additional training or development assignments necessary to successfully complete the SESCDP.