

Fact Sheet: OPM Acting to Restore Accountability and Excellence in the Senior Executive Service, and Remove DEI

Background:

- In his Presidential Memorandum [Restoring Accountability to Career Senior Executives](#), President Trump directed reforms to ensure that members of the Senior Executive Service (SES)—comprising the highest ranking career employees of the federal government—are held to high standards of quality and accountability. On February 25, 2025, OPM issued new [Performance Plans](#) for Senior Executives, pursuant to President Trump’s direction.

Rule:

- As part of those Performance Plans, OPM stated it would engage in rulemaking to remove the prohibition of forced distribution of performance rankings and remove diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) requirements. OPM is now following through by publishing a proposed rule in the Federal Register.

Key elements:

- Agencies will have the flexibility to set limits on the number of executives who can be rated at the highest levels (levels 4 and 5).
- This rule puts an end to the current “everyone gets a trophy” culture that has eroded performance distinctions.
- The rule eliminates language requiring executives to be evaluated based on whether they promoted DEI at their agency.
- SES ratings will now be based solely on performance and results — not political ideology.
- Pursuant to *Restoring Accountability for Career Senior Executives*, agencies will now be encouraged to appoint Performance Review Board (PRB) members committed to rigorous enforcement of the SES appraisal standards. PRBs will help ensure fair, merit-based evaluations across the federal government.

Context:

- Currently, over 96% of SES members are rated at the highest levels (levels 4 and 5), even though serious, documented performance failures have occurred through the SES. This rule will put an end to these inflated ratings.
- Senior executives are entrusted with leading critical government missions — from veterans’ health care to national security. Performance must meet the highest standards.

Impact:

- Forced distribution will ensure only top-performing executives receive top performance ratings.
- Rewarding real results will drive improvements across government agencies and better serve the American people.
- A fairer performance system will curb inflated bonuses and awards, ensuring better use of public funds and saving taxpayer dollars.
- By strengthening performance standards, OPM is upholding the integrity of the SES and promoting public trust in government services.