



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT  
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Heads and Acting Heads of Departments and Agencies

**FROM:** Charles Ezell, Acting Director, U.S. Office of Personnel Management

**DATE:** February 25, 2025

**RE:** New Senior Executive Service Performance Appraisal System and Performance Plan, and Guidance on Next Steps for Agencies to Implement *Restoring Accountability for Career Senior Executives*.

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Pursuant to the January 20, 2025, Presidential Memorandum entitled [\*Restoring Accountability for Career Senior Executives\*](#) (“*SES Accountability*”), the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (“OPM”) is providing a new Senior Executive Service (SES) Performance Appraisal System and accompanying SES Performance Plan that all agencies must adopt beginning with the Fiscal Year 2026 performance cycle.

This performance plan was developed in coordination with the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. It shall be used by all senior executives covered by subchapter II of chapter 43 of title 5, United States Code beginning in October 2025 (the first quarter of FY 2026).<sup>1</sup> All agencies with SES members must adopt the new system, plan, and fiscal year rating cycle with an implementation date of October 1, 2025. All senior executives shall be appraised using this system no later than September 30, 2026.

This new governmentwide SES Performance Appraisal System (see Attachment 1) and Performance Plan (see Attachment 2) will deliver enhanced accountability and help restore a “government of the people, by the people, for the people.” It will ensure that senior executives are responsive to the needs, policies, and goals of the Nation and otherwise is of the highest quality. In addition, this memorandum lays out additional next actions for agencies pursuant to *SES Accountability*.

Finally, some of the language in the current Basic SES Performance Plan has been immediately updated to comply with the January 20, 2025, Presidential Memorandum entitled

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<sup>1</sup> To the extent consistent with law, this SES Performance Appraisal System should also be applied to equivalent executive-level personnel systems such as the Defense Intelligence Senior Executive Service, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence Senior Intelligence Service, and the U.S. Foreign Service. Agencies not subject to the SES, but who utilize the SES Basic System, are also encouraged to adopt this system as they will no longer be able to use the current SES Basic system after September 30, 2025. OPM is updating the performance appraisal system covering senior-level (SL) and scientific and professional (ST) positions under 5 U.S.C. 5108(a) and 5 U.S.C. 3104(a) and will issue updated guidance separately.

[Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing](#) (“*Ending Government DEP*”). The updated language, included in Attachment 3, is effective immediately and must be communicated to each of your executives no later than **March 7, 2025**.

## I. Background

Congress designed the SES to “ensure that the executive management of the Government of the United States is responsive to the needs, policies, and goals of the Nation and otherwise is of the highest quality.”<sup>2</sup> Specifically, it created the SES to (*inter alia*):

1. “ensure that compensation, retention, and tenure are contingent on executive success which is measured on the basis of individual and organizational performance (including such factors as improvements in efficiency, productivity, quality of work or service, cost efficiency, and timeliness of performance and success in meeting equal employment opportunity goals)”;
2. “assure that senior executives are accountable and responsible for the effectiveness and productivity of employees under them”;
3. “recognize exceptional accomplishment”; and
4. “ensure accountability for honest, economical, and efficient Government.”<sup>3</sup>

Congress directed that the SES performance appraisal system must:

1. “permit the accurate evaluation of performance in any position on the basis of criteria which are related to the position and which specify the critical elements of the position”;
2. “provide for systematic appraisals of performance of senior executives”;
3. “encourage excellence in performance by senior executives”; and
4. “provide a basis for making eligibility determinations for retention in the Senior Executive Service and for Senior Executive Service performance awards.”<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, the current SES performance rating system is broken and falls far short of these standards. Governmentwide SES performance appraisal data consistently show the vast majority of ratings for senior executives are Level 4 or 5. Less than one percent of senior executives are rated at the lowest rating level. This indicates that senior executive ratings are systematically inflated, and poor performers are not being held accountable through a rigorous appraisal process. The current SES performance appraisal system does not meaningfully differentiate excellent from

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<sup>2</sup> 5 U.S.C. § 3131.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> 5 U.S.C. § 4312(a).

poor or mediocre performance across the SES. Nor does it provide for an accurate systematic appraisal of SES performance to serve as the “basis for making eligibility determinations for retention in the Senior Executive Service and for Senior Executive Service performance awards.”<sup>5</sup> These defects have existed for well over a decade.

In January 2015, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) published a study<sup>6</sup> on SES ratings and performance awards. It concluded that most of the federal agencies studied were not making meaningful distinctions in performance ratings for senior executives. In that report, about 85 percent of career executives received an “Outstanding” or “Exceeds Fully Successful” rating between fiscal years 2010 and 2013. Notably, in 2014, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Inspector General issued a report<sup>7</sup> on VA’s manipulation of wait-times in VA medical facilities, resulting in investigations at 93 sites of care. During that same time period, 80 percent of VA SES members received an “Outstanding” or “Exceeds Fully Successful” rating. This kind of disconnect between individual performance ratings and organizational performance is unacceptable.

Ten years later, the same over-inflation of performance ratings still exists. For the fiscal year 2023 performance cycle, 96 percent of executives received an “Outstanding” or “Exceeds Fully Successful” performance rating and less than a half of a percent of executives were rated below “Fully Successful.”

On January 20, 2025, President Trump issued *SES Accountability* to reinvigorate the SES performance appraisal system and “ensure[] that SES officials are properly accountable to the President and the American people.” “For instance, SES officials who engage in unauthorized disclosure of Executive Branch deliberations, violate the constitutional rights of Americans, refuse to implement policy priorities, or perform their duties inefficiently or negligently should be held accountable.” President Trump directed OPM, in coordination with OMB, to “issue SES Performance Plans that agencies must adopt.”

## **II. Improvements to the SES Performance Appraisal System**

OPM, in coordination with OMB, has now issued a new SES Performance Plan that is consistent with the President’s direction. The new SES performance plan will reinvigorate the SES performance appraisal system to ensure that it differentiates excellent from mediocre from poor performance; provides a meaningful basis to determine whether executives should be retained in the SES; and ties senior executive bonuses directly to performance.<sup>8</sup> It will help solve the

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<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> GAO, Results-Oriented Management: OPM Needs to Do More to Ensure Meaningful Distinctions Are Made in SES Ratings and Performance Awards, GAO-15-189 (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 22, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> [Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General Review of Alleged Patient Deaths, Patient Wait Times, and Scheduling Practices at the Phoenix VA Health Care System, Report #14-02603-267.](#)

<sup>8</sup> See 5 U.S.C. § 4312(a).

imbalance of ratings by removing the prohibition on the use of a forced distribution on ratings. OPM has initiated the rulemaking process to revise 5 CFR § 430.305(a)(5).

Establishing governmentwide limits on rating levels will promote a high-performance culture. Only truly exceptional performers will receive the highest ratings. And poor performers will receive ratings commensurate with their performance. In addition, the President may waive the requirement that no more than 30% of total ratings shall be Levels 4 and 5 by certifying that the performance of the agency's executives was outstanding during the relevant time period.

The new performance standards also ensure greater accountability for senior executives. A senior executive who receives a Level 1 annual summary rating must either be removed from the SES, or else transferred or reassigned. A senior executive who has been assigned two annual summary ratings at less than Level 3 within a three-year period must also be removed. In addition, only executives rated Level 4 or Level 5 should receive a performance award or performance-based pay adjustment exceeding 5% of their rate of basic pay.

In addition, the new performance standards “ensure[] that SES officials are properly accountable to the President and the American people” by implementing new critical elements and performance requirements. These new critical elements and performance requirements evaluate whether the senior executive faithfully administered the law and the President's policies; whether the senior executive upheld the principles of the Founding, including equality under law and democratic self-government; whether the senior executive demonstrated specific results that align with and advance the President's specific policy agenda; and how the senior executive and the senior executive's agency performed when evaluated against measurable outcomes from the President's Management Agenda, Agency Strategic Plan, Congressional Budget Justification/Annual Performance Plan, and other organizational planning documents.

Consistent with 5 U.S.C. § 4313 and the President's [\*Department of Government Efficiency Workforce Optimization Initiative\*](#), the new critical elements and performance requirements ask whether the senior executive promoted efficiency in government and saved time and money for the American taxpayer, including any improvements in efficiency, productivity, and quality of work or service. Finally, consistent with 5 U.S.C. §§ 3131, 4313, and *SES Accountability*, the new critical elements and performance requirements look to whether the senior executive demonstrated proficiency, quality and competence in job duties; whether senior executives rewarded outstanding work from subordinates and held poor performers accountable; and whether senior executives treated subordinates fairly and consistent with law.

Below is an overview of significant updates to the SES performance appraisal system:

1. **Updated Critical Elements and Performance Requirements**: OPM has aligned the SES Critical Elements and Performance Requirements to comply with *SES Accountability*. The revamped critical elements will evaluate senior executives on whether they faithfully administered the law and advanced the President's policy priorities; promoted government efficiency; demonstrated merit and competence; held others accountable and treated them fairly; and achieved organizational goals.

2. **Monitoring Performance**: At least quarterly, supervisors and executives must meet to discuss, and document, progress toward meeting the critical elements in the senior executive's performance plan.
3. **Distribution of Ratings**: For agencies with five or more executives, no more than 30% of total ratings shall be Levels 4 and 5, unless the President waives the provision by certifying that the performance of the agency's executives was outstanding during the relevant time period. OPM will revise and finalize the necessary rulemaking before issuing final guidance for implementation.
4. **Pay Adjustments and Performance Awards**: Only executives rated Level 4 or Level 5 should receive a performance award or performance-based pay adjustment exceeding 5% of their rate of basic pay. An executive rated Level 3 should only receive a performance award equal to 5% of their rate of basic pay.
5. **Performance Actions**: Agencies must: 1) remove from the SES or else transfer or reassign an executive who receives a Level 1 final summary rating; and 2) remove from the SES an executive who has been assigned two final summary ratings at less than Level 3 within a three-year period.

No later than **October 31, 2025**, all agencies must provide confirmation of their transition to the SES Performance Appraisal System and Performance Plan to OPM. For agencies not currently on a fiscal-year SES performance cycle, appropriate actions must be taken, in compliance with 5 CFR Part 430, Subparts C and D, to extend the current cycle and close out on September 30, 2025.

### **III. Further Agency Actions to Implement SES Accountability and Ending Government DEI**

In addition to the new SES performance plan, *SES Accountability* directed agencies to take additional actions. Specifically, the President directed agencies to “use all available authorities to reinvigorate the SES system and prioritize accountability”; consistent with law, “reassign agency SES members to ensure their knowledge, skills, abilities, and mission assignment are optimally aligned” to implement the President’s policy priorities; “terminate its existing Executive Resources Board [ERB] institute a new or interim ERB, and assign senior noncareer officials to chair and serve on the board as a majority alongside career members;” and “terminate its existing Performance Review Board [PRB] membership and re-constitute membership with individuals committed to full enforcement of SES performance evaluations that promote and assure an SES of the highest caliber;” and take appropriate actions, up to and including removal, to deal with SES officials “whose performance or continued occupancy of the position is inconsistent with either the principles reaffirmed in this Order or their duties to the Nation under section 3131 of title 5, United States Code.”

In light of these directives, agencies should:

1. submit plans to OPM to reassign SES members consistent with the requirements of 5 U.S.C. § 3395 to ensure their knowledge, skills, abilities, and mission assignments are

optimally aligned to advance the President's policy priorities;<sup>9</sup>

2. terminate their existing ERBs, institute a new or interim ERB, and assign senior noncareer officials to chair and serve on the board as a majority alongside career members;
3. terminate their existing PRB membership and re-constitute membership with individuals committed to full enforcement of SES performance standards in order to promote and assure an SES of the highest caliber;
4. immediately update SES performance plans to remove DEI language and communicate the change to senior executives, as set forth in Attachment 3; and
5. report to OPM on the agency's plan to transition to the new governmentwide SES Performance Appraisal System, Performance Plan and fiscal year rating cycle<sup>10</sup> no later than October 1, 2025.

**No later than March 27, 2025**, agencies must report to OPM on these actions, along with any other actions they have taken consistent with SES Accountability "to reinvigorate the SES system and prioritize accountability." Please send all requested reports to [performance-management@opm.gov](mailto:performance-management@opm.gov).

cc: Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCOs), Deputy CHCOs, Human Resources Directors, and Chiefs of Staff

Attachment 1: FY 2026 Governmentwide SES Performance Appraisal System

Attachment 2: FY 2026 Governmentwide SES Performance Plan

Attachment 3: Updated Language to SES Basic Performance Plan

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<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., OPM Guidance Memoranda [Guidance on Career Reserved SES Positions and Agency Reclassification Requests](#) (Feb. 24, 2025), [Maintaining the Integrity of the Career Senior Executive Service](#) (Feb. 5, 2025) and [Guidance Regarding Redesignating SES CIO Positions](#) (Feb. 4, 2025).

<sup>10</sup> OPM will reach out directly to agencies currently on a non-fiscal year performance review cycle regarding implementation of the new rating cycle.

## SES Performance Appraisal System

This Senior Executive Service (SES) Performance Appraisal System applies to all career, noncareer, limited term and limited emergency senior executives covered by subchapter II of chapter 43 of title 5, United States Code.<sup>1</sup> It is issued to fulfill the direction in President Trump’s Presidential Memorandum *Restoring Accountability for Career Senior Executives*, which requires that the Director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (“OPM”), in coordination with the Director of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (“OMB”), issue SES Performance Plans that agencies must adopt.

This SES Performance Appraisal System supersedes any conflicting provisions of Subpart C of Part 430 and Subpart D of Part 534 of Title V of the Code of Federal Regulations and the *OPM Senior Executive Service Desk Guide* (December 2020). This performance plan shall be used by all senior executives covered by subchapter II of chapter 43 of title 5, United States Code beginning in October 2025 (the first quarter of FY 2026). All executives shall be appraised using this system no later than September 30, 2026.

### I. Appraisal Period

**Executive Appraisal.** Executives must be appraised at least annually based on their performance against the five (5) critical elements and performance standards and requirements, which must be aligned with the agency’s organizational assessment that same period. An annual summary rating must be assigned for the relevant period of performance for each year no later than January 31st.

- **Minimum Period.** The minimum period of performance that must be completed before a performance rating can be given is 90 days.
- **Adjusting Appraisal Period.** The agency may end an appraisal period at any time after the minimum appraisal period is completed, but only if the agency determines there is an adequate basis on which to appraise and rate the performance of senior executive(s) and the shortened appraisal period promotes the effectiveness of the administration of the appraisal system.
- **Transition Period.** The agency may not appraise and rate any career executive within 120 days after the beginning of a new Presidential administration.

### II. Monitoring Performance

Throughout the appraisal period, a supervisor must monitor the executive’s performance in accomplishing elements and requirements and provide feedback. At least quarterly, supervisors and executives must meet to discuss, and document, progress toward meeting the critical elements in the executive’s performance plan.

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### III. Summary Performance Levels

The system includes five summary performance levels:

- Level 5 - Outstanding
- Level 4 - Great
- Level 3 - Satisfactory
- Level 2 - Needs improvement
- Level 1 - Unacceptable

A detailed description of the standard for each performance level is attached as Appendix 1.

### IV. Planning Performance: Critical Elements and Performance Requirements

Supervisors must develop performance plans in consultation with the executives and communicate the plans to them in writing, including through the use of automated systems, on or before the beginning of the appraisal period or upon initial appointment to a new executive position. Each plan must include the following critical elements and performance requirements.

Each executive shall be evaluated on a scale of 1-5 based on the following mandatory critical elements and performance requirements for the relevant time period:

1. **Faithful Administration of the Law and the President's Policies.** This is the most critical element for reviewing the job performance of someone who serves under the elected President. All senior executives must clearly and demonstrably execute congressionally-authorized tasks pursuant to the leadership and executive authority of the President. Faithful administration of one's role in the Executive Branch requires commitment to the principles of the Founding, including equality under the law and democratic self-government. Senior executives must demonstrate specific results that align with and advance the President's specific policy agenda.
2. **Government Efficiency.** Senior executives are expected to drive efficiency in government and save time and money for the American taxpayer. They should achieve demonstrable improvements in efficiency, productivity, and quality of work and government services, including significant reductions in costs and paperwork. They must use government resources in a cost-effective manner, budget effectively, and adhere to budgetary and fiscal constraints.
3. **Merit and Competence.** Senior executives must consistently demonstrate outstanding proficiency and competence in the performance of their job duties. Such qualities will be evidenced by specific, demonstrable achievements and results that provide concrete benefits to American citizens. Senior executives must consistently produce work that is of the highest quality; handle challenges; exceed targets; and complete assignments in a timely manner.



4. **Holding Others Accountable and Treating Them Fairly.** Senior executives are expected to recognize, support, and reward excellent work from the employees they supervise. They also must timely and efficiently deal with poor performers—including seeking to discipline or remove them from the federal service where appropriate. They must treat all employees fairly and consistent with their merit and competence. They must obey laws regarding whistleblower protection and equal employment opportunity.
5. **Achieving Organizational Goals.** The senior executive is expected to drive organizational success such that the agency achieves and exceeds goals and outcomes set forth in the President’s Management Agenda, Agency Strategic Plan, Congressional Budget Justification/Annual Performance Plan, and other organizational planning documents. The senior executive’s performance rating must be aligned with agency’s organizational assessment for the performance period. In addition, the agency should provide at least three measurable outcomes and specific performance requirements from organizational planning documents tailored to the senior executive’s role in the agency against which to measure the senior executive’s performance.

Each critical element must be assigned a weight, with the total weights adding to 100 points. Critical Element 1 must be assigned a weight of at least 25%. Each of the remaining required critical elements set forth above must be assigned a weight of at least 15%.

## V. Deriving the Summary Rating

**Critical Element Point Values.** Once the rating for each critical element is determined, the following point values will be assigned to the element ratings:

- Level 5 = 5 points
- Level 4 = 4 points
- Level 3 = 3 points
- Level 2 = 2 points
- Level 1 = 0 points

**Derivation Formula.** The derivation formula is calculated as follows:

- If any critical element is rated Level 1 (Unacceptable), the overall summary rating is Unacceptable.
- If no critical element is rated Level 1 (Unacceptable), continue to the next step.

For each critical element, multiply the element rating level point value by the weight assigned to that element. Add the results from the previous step for each of the five critical elements to come to a total score. Assign the initial summary rating using the ranges below:

- 475-500 = Level 5
- 400-474 = Level 4
- 300-399 = Level 3
- 200-299 = Level 2

- Any critical element rated Level 1 = Level 1

Critical Element	Rating Level	Weight	Score	Summary Level Range
	Initial Element Score		Initial Point Score	
1	4	25	4 x 25 = 100	475-500 = Level 5 400-474 = Level 4 300-399 = Level 3 200-299 = Level 2 Any CE rated Level 1 = Level 1
2	5	15	5 x 15 = 75	
3	3	15	3 x 15 = 45	
4	4	15	4 x 15 = 60	
5	4	30	4 x 30 = 120	
Total		100 points	400	

**Initial Summary Rating.** The rating official will develop an initial summary rating in writing and share the rating with the executive.

**Opportunity for Written Response and Higher-Level Review.** An executive may respond in writing to the initial summary rating. Upon an executive’s request, the agency must provide an opportunity for review of the initial rating before the rating is presented to the PRB. An official providing higher-level review, or an alternative review may not change the initial rating but may recommend a different rating to the performance review board (PRB). Copies of findings and recommendations by the higher-level official or the official performing an alternative review must be given to the executive, the rating official, and the PRB.

**Distribution of Ratings.** For agencies with five or more executives, no more than 30% of total ratings shall be Level 4 or Level 5, unless the President waives this provision by certifying that the performance of the agency’s executives was outstanding during the relevant time period.<sup>2</sup>

**Job Changes or Transfers.** When an executive who has completed the minimum appraisal period changes jobs or transfers to another agency, the supervisor must appraise the executive’s performance in writing before the executive leaves; the appraisal will be given to the executive and forwarded to the gaining agency.

**Transferred Ratings.** When developing an initial summary rating for an executive who transfers from another agency, a supervisor must consider any applicable ratings and appraisals of the executive’s performance received from the former agency.

**Extending the Appraisal Period.** If the agency cannot prepare an executive’s rating at the end of the appraisal period because the executive has not completed the minimum appraisal

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<sup>2</sup> This requirement will only become effective after OPM has completed rulemaking to revise 5 C.F.R. § 430.305(a)(5). Until that rulemaking is completed, agencies should treat the 30% cap on Levels 4 and 5 as general guidance for ensuring “performance evaluation results that make meaningful distinctions based on relative performance,” 5 C.F.R. § 430.405(b)(1)(iii), and not a hard-and-fast rule or requirement.

period or for other reasons, the agency must extend the executive's appraisal period. Once the appropriate conditions are met, the agency will then prepare the annual summary rating.

**Annual Summary Rating.** The annual summary rating must be assigned by the appointing authority (and may not be delegated to an official who does not have authority to make SES appointments) only after considering the recommendations of the PRB. The annual summary rating must be communicated to the executive in writing, normally within 3 months of the end of the appraisal period.

**Use of the Organizational Assessment in SES Performance Evaluations.** At least annually the agency must assess organizational performance against goals from the President's Management Agenda, Agency Strategic Plan, Congressional Budget Justification/Annual Performance Plan, and other organizational planning documents. The agency must ensure its assessment results are communicated by the oversight official to executives, rating officials, higher level review officials, PRB members, and appointing authorities at the conclusion of the appraisal period and before completion of the initial summary ratings so that they may be used in executive performance appraisals, ratings and recommendations.

**Pay Adjustments and Performance Awards.** No executive should receive a performance award or upward performance-based pay adjustment exceeding 5% of the executive's rate of basic pay unless the executive's performance was rated a Level 4 or Level 5. An executive whose performance was rated a Level 3 should receive a performance award equal to 5% of the executive's rate of basic pay. An executive whose performance was rated a Level 1 or 2 should not receive any performance award or upward performance-based pay adjustment. Pay adjustments and performance awards will be made within 5 months following the end of the applicable appraisal period.

## **VI. Performance Review Boards**

**PRB.** The agency shall establish one or more PRBs to make written recommendations on each executive's annual summary rating, performance-based pay adjustment, and performance award to the appointing authority.

**Membership.** Each PRB must have three or more members selected by the agency head or designee(s) in a manner that ensures consistency, stability, and objectivity in SES performance appraisal. PRB members must be committed to full enforcement of SES performance evaluations that promote and assure an SES of the highest caliber. PRB appointments must be published in the Federal Register before service begins.

**Review Ratings.** The PRB must review and evaluate the initial performance appraisal and summary rating, any executive's response, and any higher-level official's findings and recommendations on the initial summary rating or the results of an alternative review. The PRB may conduct any additional review needed to make written recommendations to the appointing authority on annual summary ratings, performance awards, and performance-based pay adjustments for each executive. PRB members may not be involved in deliberations involving their own appraisals, performance-based pay adjustments, and performance awards.

**Career Membership.** More than one-half of the PRB's members must be career appointees when considering a career appointee's appraisal or performance award. PRB members may not be involved in deliberations involving their own appraisals.

**Executive Response.** The PRB may not review an initial summary rating to which the executive has not been given the opportunity to respond in writing.

**Agency/Organizational Performance.** The PRB must be provided and take into account the agency's organizational assessment when making recommendations.

## **VII. Dealing with Poor Performance**

**Performance Actions.** The agency must: 1) remove from the SES, or else transfer or reassign within the SES, a senior executive who has been assigned a Level 1 final summary rating; and 2) remove from the Senior Executive Service an executive who has been assigned two final summary ratings at less than Level 3 (i.e., Level 2, Level 1, or a combination of Levels 2 and 1) within a 3-year period.

Non-probationary career appointees are removed under procedures in 5 CFR 359 subpart E. Probationary career appointees are removed under procedures in 5 CFR 359 subpart D. Nothing in this performance plan shall be interpreted to limit removal of probationary SES employees as permitted by current regulations. Guaranteed placement in a non-SES position will be provided under 5 CFR 359 subpart G when applicable.

**Appeal Rights.** Executive performance appraisals and ratings may not be appealed. The executive may file a complaint about any aspect of the rating process the executive believes to involve unlawful discrimination (EEOC) or a prohibited personnel practice (Office of Special Counsel). A career appointee being removed from the SES under 5 U.S.C. 3592(a)(2) shall, at least 15 days preceding the date of removal, be entitled, upon request, to an informal hearing before an official designated by the Merit Systems Protection Board.

## **VIII. Other System Requirements**

**Appraisal Results.** Performance appraisals will be used as a basis for adjusting pay, granting awards, retaining and removing executives, and making other personnel decisions. Performance appraisals also will be a factor in assessing an executive's continuing development needs.

**Oversight.** The agency head or the official designated by the agency head provides organizational assessments and evaluation guidelines and is responsible to oversee the system and to certify: 1) the appraisal process makes meaningful distinctions based on relative performance; 2) executive ratings take into account assessments of organizational performance; and 3) pay adjustments, awards and pay levels based on the results of the appraisal process accurately reflect individual performance and/or contribution to agency performance. The responsible official

designated to provide evaluation guidelines and oversee the appraisal system must do so for the entire executive agency.

## **IX. Training and Evaluation**

**Training.** The agency will provide information and training to agency leadership, supervisors, and executives on the requirements and operation of the agency's performance management and pay-for-performance systems.

**Communication of Results.** The agency will communicate annually the distribution of ratings from the previous appraisal period and the average pay increases and awards associated with each rating level. Agencies must protect the privacy of the ratings received by individual executives.

**Evaluation.** The agency will periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the performance management system(s) and implement improvements as needed.

## Appendix 1- Performance Standards for Critical Elements

The performance standard for each critical element is specified below.

- **Level 5:** The executive demonstrates exceptional performance, fostering a climate that sustains excellence and optimizes results in the executive's organization, agency, department or Governmentwide. This represents the highest level of executive performance.
- **Level 4:** The executive demonstrates a very high level of performance beyond that required for successful performance in the executive's position and scope of responsibilities. The executive consistently exceeds established performance expectations, timelines, or targets.
- **Level 3:** The executive demonstrates the high level of performance expected and the executive's actions and leadership contribute positively toward the achievement of strategic goals and meaningful results. The executive is an effective, solid, and dependable leader who delivers high-quality results.
- **Level 2:** The executive's performance is unsatisfactory and needs improvement. While the executive generally meets established performance expectations, timelines and targets, there are occasional lapses that impair operations and/or cause concern from management.
- **Level 1:** In repeated instances, the executive demonstrates performance deficiencies that detract from mission goals and objectives. The executive routinely does not meet established performance expectations/timelines/targets and fails to produce – or produces unacceptable – work products, services, or outcomes.

# SES Performance Management System

## Executive Performance Plan



<b>Part 1. Consultation.</b> <i>I have reviewed this plan and have been consulted on its development.</i>						
Executive's Name ( <i>Last, First, MI</i> ):				Appraisal Pd. -		
Executive's Signature:				Date:		
Title:				Organization:		
Rating Official's Name ( <i>Last, First, MI</i> ):				CA <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> LT/LE <input type="checkbox"/>		
Rating Official's Signature:				Date:		
<b>Part 2. Quarterly Progress Review</b>						
Executive's Signature:				Q1 Date:		
Rating Official's Signature:				Q1 Date:		
Reviewing Official's Signature ( <i>Optional</i> ):				Q1 Date:		
Executive's Signature:				Q2 Date:		
Rating Official's Signature:				Q2 Date:		
Reviewing Official's Signature ( <i>Optional</i> ):				Q2 Date:		
Executive's Signature:				Q3 Date:		
Rating Official's Signature:				Q3 Date:		
Reviewing Official's Signature ( <i>Optional</i> ):				Q3 Date:		
Executive's Signature:				Q4 Date:		
Rating Official's Signature:				Q4 Date:		
Reviewing Official's Signature ( <i>Optional</i> ):				Q4 Date:		
<b>Part 3. Summary Rating</b>						
<b>Initial Summary Rating</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Level 5 Outstanding	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 Great	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 Satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 Needs Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 Unacceptable
Rating Official's Name ( <i>Last, First, MI</i> ):						
Rating Official's Signature:				Date:		
Executive's Signature:				Date:		
Reviewing Official's Signature ( <i>Optional</i> ):				Date:		
<b>Higher Level Review (if applicable)</b>						
<input type="checkbox"/> I request a higher-level review. Executive's Initials:				Date:		
Higher Level Review Completed <input type="checkbox"/>				Date:		
Higher Level Reviewer Signature:						
<b>Performance Review Board Recommendation</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Level 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1
PRB Chair Signature:				Date:		
<b>Annual Summary Rating</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Level 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1
Appointing Authority Signature:					Date:	

**Part 4. Derivation Formula and Calculation of Annual Summary Rating**

Critical Element	Rating Level	Weight	Score	Summary Level Ranges
	Initial Element Score		Initial Point Score	
1. Faithful Administration of the Law and the President’s Policies				475-500 = Level 5 400-474 = Level 4 300-399 = Level 3 200-299 = Level 2 Any CE rated Level 1 = Level 1
2. Government Efficiency				
3. Merit and Competence				
4. Holding Others Accountable and Treating Them Fairly				
5. Achieving Organizational Goals				
Total		100 points		

**Part 5. Performance Standards and Critical Elements**

**Performance Standards for Critical Elements** (The performance standard for each critical element is specified below)

- **Level 5:** The executive demonstrates exceptional performance, fostering a climate that sustains excellence and optimizes results in the executive’s organization, agency, department or Governmentwide. This represents the highest level of executive performance.
- **Level 4:** The executive demonstrates a very high level of performance beyond that required for successful performance in the executive’s position and scope of responsibilities. The executive consistently exceeds established performance expectations, timelines, or targets.
- **Level 3:** The executive demonstrates the high level of performance expected and the executive’s actions and leadership contribute positively toward the achievement of strategic goals and meaningful results. The executive is an effective, solid, and dependable leader who delivers high-quality results.
- **Level 2:** The executive’s performance is unsatisfactory and needs improvement. While the executive generally meets established performance expectations, timelines and targets, there are occasional lapses that impair operations and/or cause concern from management.
- **Level 1:** In repeated instances, the executive demonstrates performance deficiencies that detract from mission goals and objectives. The executive routinely does not meet established performance expectations/timelines/targets and fails to produce – or produces unacceptable – work products, services, or outcomes.

<b>Element Rating Level Points</b>	<b>Level 5 = 5 points</b> <b>Level 4 = 4 points</b> <b>Level 3 = 3 points</b> <b>Level 2 = 2 points</b> <b>Level 1 = 0 points</b>
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Executive Name and ID:

Appraisal Period:

<b>Critical Element 1. Faithful Administration of the Law and the President’s Policies (Minimum weight 25 points)</b>					Weight
This is the most critical element for reviewing the job performance of someone who serves under the elected President. All senior executives must clearly and demonstrably execute congressionally-authorized tasks pursuant to the leadership and executive authority of the President. Faithful administration of one’s role in the Executive Branch requires commitment to the principles of the Founding, including equality under the law and democratic self-government. Senior executives must demonstrate specific results that align with and advance the President’s specific policy agenda.					
Agency-Specific Performance Requirements					
Rating Official Narrative: <i>(Optional)</i>					
<i>Critical Element Rating</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1

<b>Critical Element 2. Government Efficiency (Minimum weight 15 points)</b>					Weight
Senior executives are expected to drive efficiency in government and save time and money for the American taxpayer. They should achieve demonstrable improvements in efficiency, productivity, and quality of work and government services, including significant reductions in costs and paperwork. They must use government resources in a cost-effective manner, budget effectively, and adhere to budgetary and fiscal constraints.					
Agency-Specific Performance Requirements					
Rating Official Narrative: <i>(Optional)</i>					
<i>Critical Element Rating</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1

Executive Name and ID:

Appraisal Period:

<b>Critical Element 3. Merit and Competence (Minimum weight 15 points)</b>					Weight
Senior executives must consistently demonstrate outstanding proficiency and competence in the performance of their job duties. Such qualities will be evidenced by specific, demonstrable achievements and results that provide concrete benefits to American citizens. Senior executives must consistently produce work that is of the highest quality; handle challenges; exceed targets; and complete assignments in a timely manner.					
Agency-Specific Performance Requirements					
Rating Official Narrative: <i>(Optional)</i>					
<i>Critical Element Rating</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1

<b>Critical Element 4. Holding Others Accountable and Treating Them Fairly (Minimum weight 15 points)</b>					Weight
Senior executives are expected to recognize, support, and reward excellent work from the employees they supervise. They also must timely and efficiently deal with poor performers—including seeking to discipline or remove them from the federal service where appropriate. They must treat all employees fairly and consistent with their merit and competence. They must obey laws regarding whistleblower protection and equal employment opportunity.					
Agency-Specific Performance Requirements					
Rating Official Narrative: <i>(Optional)</i>					
<i>Critical Element Rating</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1

Executive Name and ID:

Appraisal Period:

Critical Element 5. Achieving Organizational Goals (Minimum weight 15 points)	Weight
<p>The senior executive is expected to drive organizational success such that the agency achieves and exceeds goals and outcomes set forth in the President’s Management Agenda, Agency Strategic Plan, Congressional Budget Justification/Annual Performance Plan, and other organizational planning documents. The senior executive’s performance rating must be aligned with agency’s organizational assessment for the performance period. In addition, the agency should provide at least three measurable outcomes and specific performance requirements from organizational planning documents tailored to the senior executive’s role in the agency against which to measure the senior executive’s performance.</p>	
Performance Requirement 1 (Mandatory):	Strategic Alignment:
Performance Requirement 2 (Mandatory):	Strategic Alignment:
Performance Requirement 3 (Mandatory):	Strategic Alignment:
Performance Requirement 4:	
Performance Requirement 5:	
Rating Official Narrative: <i>(Optional)</i>	
Critical Element Rating	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 5 <input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Level 1

Executive Name and ID:

Appraisal Period:

**Part 6: Summary Rating Narrative** *(Mandatory)*

**Part 7: Executive's Accomplishment Narrative** *(Optional)*

**Part 8: Agency Use**

## **SES Basic Performance Plan Updated Language**

Effective **immediately**, the language for the mandatory performance requirement under Critical Element 2, Leading People, and Critical Element 4, Business Acumen, has been revised. All SES performance plans must implement the revised language and communicate it to all executives no later than March 7, 2025.

### **Critical Element 2 – Leading People**

**Mandatory Performance Requirement:** Designs and implements strategies that maximize employee potential, connects the organization horizontally and vertically, and fosters high ethical standards in meeting the organization's vision, mission, and goals. Provides a workplace that fosters the development of others to their full potential; allows for full participation by all employees; facilitates collaboration, cooperation, and teamwork, and supports constructive resolution of conflicts. Ensures employee performance plans are aligned with the organization's mission and goals, that employees receive constructive feedback, and that employees are realistically appraised against clearly defined and communicated performance standards. Holds employees accountable for appropriate levels of performance and conduct. Seeks and considers employee input. Recruits, retains, and develops the talent needed to achieve a high-quality workforce that reflects the nation, with the skills needed to accomplish organizational performance objectives.

### **Critical Element 4 – Building Coalitions**

**Mandatory Performance Requirement:** Solicits and considers feedback from internal and external stakeholders or customers. Coordinates with appropriate parties to maximize input from the widest range of appropriate stakeholders to facilitate an open exchange of opinion and strengthen internal and external support. Explains, advocates, and expresses facts and ideas in a convincing manner and negotiates with individuals and groups internally and externally, as appropriate. Develops a professional network with other organizations and identifies the internal and external politics that affect the work of the organization.