GUIDE

TO

SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE

QUALIFICATIONS

INTRODUCTION

As we move into 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 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 (ECQ's) and the underlying competencies described in this publication were issued in September 1997. The new ECQ's are based on extensive research of the attributes of successful executives in both the private and public sectors; they are a collaboration, reflecting the best thinking of many senior executives and associations, as well as agency human resources professionals.

Replacing the ECQ's described in the August 1994 issue of *Guide to SES Qualifications*, the new ECQ's are:

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

Senior Executive Service candidates will find this publication useful as they 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.

Additional information about the SES is available in *The Senior Executive Service*, which summarizes how the SES operates, and *Federal Executives and Managers: Critical Resources in Review*, which provides an update on SES positions, incumbents, and activities.

Current vacancies at departments and agencies appear in the Governmentwide automated employment information system:

World Wide Web Site   http://www.usajobs.opm.gov

Electronic Bulletin Board System   (912) 757-3100
(computer)

By telephone   (912) 757-3000

Touch Screen Kiosks   Located at Office of Personnel Management
                                            offices and some Federal buildings

Internet to USAJOBS Bulletin Board System:

   Telnet   fjob.opm.gov

   FTP   ftp.fjob.opm.gov

We are very interested in your comments concerning the new *Guide to Senior Executive Service Qualifications*. Please see our Customer Survey on page 43.

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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 (ECQ's) 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 fundamental executive qualifications. The ECQ's 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 ECQ's are interdependent; successful executives bring all five to bear when providing service to the Nation.

Executive Core Qualifications:

1. Leading Change

The ability to develop and implement an organizational vision which integrates key national and program goals, priorities, values, and other factors. Inherent to it is the ability to balance change and continuity--to continually strive to improve customer service and program performance within the basic Government framework, to create a work environment that encourages creative thinking, and to maintain focus, intensity, and persistence, even under adversity.

2. Leading People

The ability to design and implement strategies which maximize employee potential and foster high ethical standards in meeting the organization's vision, mission, and goals.

3. Results Driven

The ability to stress accountability and continuous improvement, to make timely and effective decisions, and to produce results through strategic planning and the implementation and evaluation of programs and policies.

4. Business Acumen

The ability to acquire and administer human, financial, material, and information resources in a manner which instills public trust and accomplishes the organization's mission, and to use new technology to enhance decision making.

5. Building Coalitions/Communication

The ability to explain, advocate, and express facts and ideas in a convincing manner, and negotiate with individuals and groups internally and externally. It also involves the ability to develop an expansive professional network with other organizations, and to identify the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS AND LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

To write an effective Senior Executive Service (SES) application, candidates need to understand the relationship between Key Characteristics and Leadership Competencies.

Key Characteristics are the activities or behaviors associated with the Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ's). Candidates should use these as guideposts as they describe relevant experience. This experience may be reflected through professional and volunteer work, education and training, awards, and other accomplishments, in addition to Federal Government service. Candidates do not need to address all of the Key Characteristics under each ECQ. The goal is to show an overall record of the knowledges, skills, and abilities needed to succeed in the SES.

Leadership 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. A well-prepared ECQ statement reflects the underlying Leadership Competencies (e.g., "Leading Change" reflects creativity and innovation, continual learning, external awareness, etc.) Experience and training that strengthen these Leadership 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 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.

SES Merit Staffing Process

1.   Agency advertises the position through the Governmentwide automated employment information system for a minimum of 14 days. The area of consideration is:

   -       Qualified Federal Employees Only (only current Federal civil service employees may apply); or

   -       All Qualified Persons (anyone may apply).

2.   Candidates submit their applications to the agency.

3.   Agency rating panel reviews and ranks candidates.

4.   Agency Executive Resources Board recommends the best qualified candidates to the selecting official.

5.   Selecting official makes a choice and certifies that the candidate meets both the technical and executive qualifications (ECQ's) for the position.

6.   Agency submits candidate's application package to an OPM-administered Qualifications Review Board (QRB) for certification of executive qualifications.

7.   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 (QRB's) 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 (ECQ's) 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 ECQ's.

QRB Certification Based on Announcement of a Specific Vacancy:

Criterion A--Demonstrated executive experience.

Candidates must demonstrate executive experience in all five ECQ's. While they don't need to have in-depth experience in each Key Characteristic to demonstrate possession of an ECQ, 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 11.)

QRB members review each candidate's resume or Federal application form, executive qualifications statement, and other documents provided by the agency.

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 ECQ's (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 ECQ's;
• 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 ECQ's 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 Governmentwide for participation in a CDP and successfully complete the program are eligible for non-competitive appointment to the Senior Executive Service (SES). In some cases, CDP openings are announced within a single agency rather than Governmentwide; these graduates must compete for SES positions. Either way, CDP graduates are not <u>entitled</u> to 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).

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. Use the Key Characteristics as guideposts as you describe the challenges you have faced in your career. Keep in mind that the QRB is looking for specific challenges, actions and results. (Please see the examples on pages 13-37.)

Follow this model in writing your qualifications statements.

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

•   Use clear, concise statements (1-1 _ pages for each ECQ) 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.

- Don't forget to include special assignments (e.g., details, task forces, committees) if they are relevant to an Executive Core Qualification (ECQ).

- Avoid statements that describe your personal beliefs or philosophies; focus on specific challenges and results.

- Include awards that relate specifically to an ECQ.

- If possible, quantify/qualify your accomplishments.

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 encompasses the ability to develop and implement an organizational vision which integrates key national and program goals, priorities, values, and other factors. Inherent to it is the ability to balance change and continuity--to continually strive to improve customer service and program performance within the basic Government framework, to create a work environment that encourages creative thinking, and to maintain focus, intensity and persistence, even under adversity.

Key Characteristics:

a.   Exercising leadership and motivating managers to incorporate vision, strategic planning, and elements of quality management into the full range of the organization's activities; encouraging creative thinking and innovation; influencing others toward a spirit of service; designing and implementing new or cutting edge programs/processes.

b.   Identifying and integrating key issues affecting the organization, including political, economic, social, technological, and administrative factors.

c.   Understanding the roles and relationships of the components of the national policy making and implementation process, including the President, political appointees, Congress, the judiciary, State and local governments, and interest groups; formulating effective strategies to balance those interests consistent with the business of the organization.

d.   Being open to change and new information; managing ambiguity; adapting behavior and work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles; adjusting rapidly to new situations warranting attention and resolution.

e.   Displaying a high level of initiative, effort, and commitment to public service; being proactive and achievement-oriented; being self-motivated; pursuing self-development; seeking feedback from others and opportunities to master new knowledge.

f.   Dealing effectively with pressure; maintaining focus and intensity and remaining persistent, even under adversity; recovering quickly from setbacks.

Leadership Competencies	
Continual Learning	Resilience
Creativity & Innovation	Service Motivation
External Awareness	Strategic Thinking
Flexibility	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 have 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 manger 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 design and implement strategies which maximize employee potential and foster high ethical standards in meeting the organization's vision, mission, and goals.

Key Characteristics:

a.   Providing leadership in setting the workforce's expected performance levels commensurate with the organization's strategic objectives; inspiring, motivating, and guiding others toward goal accomplishment; empowering people by sharing power and authority.

b.   Promoting quality through effective use of the organization's performance management system (e.g., establishing performance standards, appraising staff accomplishments using the developed standards, and taking action to reward, counsel, or remove employees, as appropriate).

c.   Valuing cultural diversity and other differences; fostering an environment where people who are culturally diverse can work together cooperatively and effectively in achieving organizational goals.

d.   Assessing employees' unique developmental needs and providing developmental opportunities which maximize employees' capabilities and contribute to the achievement of organizational goals; developing leadership in others through coaching and mentoring.

e.   Fostering commitment, team spirit, pride, trust, and group identity; taking steps to prevent situations that could result in unpleasant confrontations.

f.   Resolving conflicts in a positive and constructive manner; this includes promoting labor/management partnerships and dealing effectively with employee relations matters, attending to morale and organizational climate issues, handling administrative, labor management, and Equal Employment Opportunity issues, and taking disciplinary actions when other means have not been successful.

Leadership Competencies

Conflict Management	Integrity/Honesty
Leveraging Diversity	Team Building

Example: Leading People

As a manager for the past 14 years, I have developed performance and training plans, counseled, appraised and hired employees, worked with unions, and taken disciplinary actions. I have gone from supervising five employees to managing 170 headquarters and field employees.

As head of the department's Office of Discrimination Resolution, I inherited a 4-year backlog of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaints and a 15-member staff. At the same time, the department issued a mandate requiring us to reduce the complaints backlog within 60 days and to eliminate it within 4 months. *(Challenge)* I had neither the funds nor the time to hire additional staff so I set out to make the maximum use of the human resources I had on board. *(Context)*

My first step was to review the complaints inventory to determine which complaints could be quickly moved through the system and which ones required in-depth review. I then reorganized the office by defining the structural needs of the EEO program and assessing the skill levels of my employees. I created five teams, using my own staff as well as field staff, and ensured that work was evenly distributed to each group. I worked closely with my employees to develop appropriate performance standards for their new assignments. In addition, we discussed the training that would be needed to enhance their performance. *(Action)*

I ensured that each employee understood the importance of his or her contribution to the project. Throughout the transition to teams, I kept an open-door policy and listened closely to employees' suggestions. As a result, the teams developed a remarkable "can do" attitude toward this overwhelming workload. The spirit and determination with which we worked together enabled us to meet the department's goal of eliminating the complaints backlog within 4 months. *(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 stresses accountability and continuous improvement. It includes the ability to make timely and effective decisions and produce results through strategic planning and the implementation and evaluation of programs and policies.

Key Characteristics:

a.   Understanding and appropriately applying procedures, requirements, regulations, and policies related to specialized expertise; understanding linkages between administrative competencies and mission needs; keeping current on issues, practices, and procedures in technical areas.

b.   Stressing results by formulating strategic program plans which assess policy/program feasibility and include realistic short- and long-term goals and objectives.

c.   Exercising good judgment in structuring and organizing work and setting priorities; balancing the interests of clients and readily readjusting priorities to respond to customer demands.

d.   Anticipating and identifying, diagnosing, and consulting on potential or actual problem areas relating to program implementation and goal achievement; selecting from alternative courses of corrective action, and taking action from developed contingency plans.

e.   Setting program standards; holding self and others accountable for achieving these standards; acting decisively to modify standards to promote customer service and/or the quality of programs and policies.

f.   Identifying opportunities to develop and market new products and services within or outside of the organization; taking risks to pursue a recognized benefit or advantage.

Leadership Competencies	
Accountability	Entrepreneurship
Customer Service	Problem Solving
Decisiveness	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 developed and maintained 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

As Director of the Office of Hazardous Waste Management, I have had extensive experience in program direction and evaluation. For example, I led the revamping of our agency's HazMat Program to deal with the mismanagement of hazardous waste materials at sites throughout the country. *(Challenge)* This program was established to ensure that all U.S. companies involved in hazardous waste management assumed responsibility for safely disposing of these dangerous materials.

When I took over as Director, it was clear that the current program was unacceptably slow in addressing cleanup problems at many of these facilities. *(Context)*

I took the lead in redefining the HazMat Program's goals. Working closely with my agency's 10 Regional Directors as well as dozens of State hazardous waste program managers, I developed an outline of national goals: initiate risk-based cleanups, emphasize results over process, address problems at the worst sites first, stabilize immediate threats, comply fully with Federal regulations, and strengthen partnerships with the States. *(Action)* Our strategy received broad support from the agency's top management and from external stakeholders, including State managers and the General Accounting Office. *(Context)*

To implement this plan, I initiated a series of corrective action reviews. *(Action)* Headquarters and regional staff spent two weeks in each region reviewing files and discussing policy issues with regional and State managers. To ensure cross-regional coordination and to provide valuable perspective, we swapped staff between regions to serve on review teams. These reviews gave us a detailed understanding of how well each region was handling its oversight of hazardous waste facilities in its jurisdiction.

Next, I developed a system for ranking these sites, to ensure that the regions and States were giving priority to problems at the worst-managed sites. In addition, we hosted several national meetings to encourage regional and State managers to exchange technical information on hazardous waste management. *(Action)* Also, we provided training and technical assistance in topics such as site assessment and collection of environmental statistics. *(Action)*

My actions to redesign the HazMat Program have significantly improved the conditions at our nation's hazardous waste management facilities. Both workers and local residents are pleased with the safer conditions at these sites. All of the 3,500 facilities have been assessed and prioritized, and the problems at 85 percent of the high priority sites have been corrected. *(Result)*

At the same time, I realized it was essential to ensure program accountability at all of the facilities. *(Challenge)* I developed indicators that stress the importance of stabilizing worst-managed facilities and limiting human exposure to hazardous waste at all sites. I asked Regional Directors to begin collecting information on their progress in dealing with these critical areas. *(Action)* All but one Regional Director reacted negatively to my request because of the cost implications. *(Context)* I convened a headquarters meeting of all Regional Directors to discuss their concerns; I convinced them of the need to measure results as we attacked these problems. *(Action)*

Regional Directors are now providing this valuable information for inclusion in our office's data base, and it is being used to set program objectives under the Government Performance and Results Act. *(Result)* In addition, I have championed a new relationship with the States which allows our agency to imitate many of the effective State-managed cleanup programs. *(Result)*

ECQ 4 BUSINESS ACUMEN

This core qualification involves the ability to acquire and administer human, financial, material, and information resources in a manner which instills public trust and accomplishes the organization's mission, and to use new technology to enhance decision making.

Key Characteristics:

a.   Assessing current and future staffing needs based on organizational goals and budget realities. Applying merit principles to develop, select, and manage a diverse workforce.

b.   Overseeing the allocation of financial resources; identifying cost-effective approaches; establishing and assuring the use of internal controls for financial systems.

c.   Managing the budgetary process, including preparing and justifying a budget and operating the budget under organizational and Congressional procedures; understanding the marketing expertise necessary to ensure appropriate funding levels.

d.   Overseeing procurement and contracting procedures and processes.

e.   Integrating and coordinating logistical operations.

f.   Ensuring the efficient and cost-effective development and utilization of management information systems and other technological resources that meet the organization's needs; understanding the impact of technological changes on the organization.

Leadership Competencies	
Financial Management	Technology Management
Human Resources 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 hazaroudous 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/COMMUNICATION

This core qualification involves the ability to explain, advocate and express facts and ideas in a convincing manner, and negotiate with individuals and groups internally and externally. It also involves the ability to develop an expansive professional network with other organizations, and to identify the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization.

Key Characteristics:

a.   Representing and speaking for the organizational unit and its work (e.g., presenting, explaining, selling, defining, and negotiating) to those within and outside the office (e.g., agency heads and other Government executives; corporate executives; Office of Management and Budget officials; Congressional members and staff; the media; clientele and professional groups); making clear and convincing oral presentations to individuals and groups; listening effectively and clarifying information; facilitating an open exchange of ideas.

b.   Establishing and maintaining working relationships with internal organizational units (e.g., other program areas and staff support functions); approaching each problem situation with a clear perception of organizational and political reality; using contacts to build and strengthen internal support bases; getting understanding and support from higher level management.

c.   Developing and enhancing alliances with external groups (e.g., other agencies or firms, State and local governments, Congress, and clientele groups); engaging in cross-functional activities; finding common ground with a widening range of stakeholders.

d.   Working in groups and teams; conducting briefings and other meetings; gaining cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals; facilitating "win-win" situations.

e.   Considering and responding appropriately to the needs, feelings, and capabilities of different people in different situations; being tactful and treating others with respect.

f.   Seeing that reports, memoranda, and other documents reflect the position and work of the organization in a clear, convincing, and organized manner.

Leadership Competencies

Influencing/Negotiating	Partnering
Interpersonal Skills	Political Savvy
Oral Communication	Written Communication

Example: Building Coalitions/Communication

As a senior manager at Amtrak, I represented the corporation at many community activities. On one occasion, I was chosen to represent the entire railroad industry on a special task force to revitalize the city's transportation industry. *(Challenge)*

To succeed in this critical assignment, I called on talented managers from different sectors of the transportation community. *(Context)* In addition to my own management team and other Amtrak managers, I networked with colleagues in the airline, waterway, and trucking industries. These managers interviewed hundreds of private and public sector transportation executives to gather information on "best practices" for efficient and profitable systems.

I met bi-weekly with many of the above managers to compare notes and to draft a plan that would address our city's transportation needs. *(Action)* The result was the creation of a new approach to analyzing transportation needs as well as a plan for making our city "number one" in the transportation business. On the day we published the report, I was interviewed by both print and television media concerning the report's impact on city transportation policies. Within 6 months, the plan was adopted nationally as a blueprint for transportation management in the 21st century. Our city is now on its way to becoming the most convenient, customer-friendly travel city in the country. *(Result)*

Currently, as a Federal manager with the National Railroad Agency, I speak for the Agency at rail labor conferences, management seminars, and supplier workshops. Most recently, I was the keynote speaker for the winter meeting of the National Association of Railroads.

I work regularly with State government managers through the Federal-State Participation Program. This program was established to facilitate communication between Federal and State transportation managers. Since no Federal funding is provided for this program, I must rely on the good will of State managers and a spirit of cooperation to keep them interested in Federal rail transportation issues. Almost daily, I talk with my State regulatory partners, and we meet quarterly to ensure that the Agency is being responsive to their needs. In addition, we provide technical training for all State safety personnel in my region; once certified, these officers can give training on behalf of the Agency.

My current relationship with my home State is especially rewarding. When I first joined the Agency, I inherited a dispute over sharing sensitive Federal transportation safety documents with State transportation officials. *(Challenge)* The problem arose from a lack of communication between the principle players on both sides. *(Context)* I worked to rectify the situation through daily contact with my State counterparts, and by negotiating with my agency to share portions of these documents. *(Action)* The State representatives were very pleased with the documents we provided, and the negative feelings on both sides have disappeared. *(Result)*

Example: Building Coalitions/Communication

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)*

APPENDIX A

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY DEFINITIONS

LEADING CHANGE

Continual Learning - Grasps the essence of new information; masters new technical and business knowledge; recognizes own strengths and weaknesses; pursues self-development; seeks feedback from others and opportunities to master new knowledge.

Creativity and Innovation - Develops new insights into situations and applies innovative solutions to make organizational improvements; creates a work environment that encourages creative thinking and innovation; designs and implements new or cutting-edge programs/processes.

    External Awareness - Identifies and keeps up to date on key national and international policies and economic, political, and social trends that affect the organization. Understands near-term and long-range plans and determines how best to be positioned to achieve a competitive business advantage in a global economy.

    Flexibility - Is open to change and new information; adapts behavior and work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles. Adjusts rapidly to new situations warranting attention and resolution.

Resilience - Deals effectively with pressure; maintains focus and intensity and remains optimistic and persistent, even under adversity. Recovers quickly from setbacks. Effectively balances personal life and work.

Service Motivation - Creates and sustains an organizational culture which encourages others to provide the quality of service essential to high performance. Enables others to acquire the tools and support they need to perform well. Shows a commitment to public service. Influences others toward a spirit of service and meaningful contributions to mission accomplishment.

Strategic Thinking - Formulates effective strategies consistent with the business and competitive strategy of the organization in a global economy. Examines policy issues and strategic planning with a long-term perspective. Determines objectives and sets priorities; anticipates potential threats or opportunities.

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

LEADING PEOPLE

Conflict Management - Identifies and takes steps to prevent potential situations that could result in unpleasant confrontations. Manages and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a positive and constructive manner to minimize negative impact.

Leveraging Diversity - Recruits, develops, and retains a diverse high quality workforce in an equitable manner. Leads and manages an inclusive workplace that maximizes the talents of each person to achieve sound business results. Respects, understands, values and seeks out individual differences to achieve the vision and mission of the organization. Develops and uses measures and rewards to hold self and others accountable for achieving results that embody the principles of diversity.

Integrity/Honesty - Instills mutual trust and confidence; creates a culture that fosters high standards of ethics; behaves in a fair and ethical manner toward others, and demonstrates a sense of corporate responsibility and commitment to public service.

Team Building - Inspires, motivates, and guides others toward goal accomplishments. Consistently develops and sustains cooperative working relationships. Encourages and facilitates cooperation within the organization and with customer groups; fosters commitment, team spirit, pride, trust. Develops leadership in others through coaching, mentoring, rewarding, and guiding employees.

RESULTS DRIVEN

Accountability - Assures that effective controls are developed and maintained to ensure the integrity of the organization. Holds self and others accountable for rules and responsibilities. Can be relied upon to ensure that projects within areas of specific responsibility are completed in a timely manner and within budget. Monitors and evaluates plans; focuses on results and measuring attainment of outcomes.

Customer Service - Balancing interests of a variety of clients; readily readjusts priorities to respond to pressing and changing client demands. Anticipates and meets the need of clients; achieves quality end-products; is committed to continuous improvement of services.

Decisiveness - Exercises good judgment by making sound and well-informed decisions; perceives the impact and implications of decisions; makes effective and timely decisions, even when data is limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences; is proactive and achievement oriented.

Entrepreneurship - Identifies opportunities to develop and market new products and services within or outside of the organization. Is willing to take risks; initiates actions that involve a deliberate risk to achieve a recognized benefit or advantage.

Problem Solving - Identifies and analyzes problems; distinguishes between relevant and irrelevant information to make logical decisions; provides solutions to individual and organizational problems.

Technical Credibility - Understands and appropriately applies procedures, requirements, regulations, and policies related to specialized expertise. Is able to make sound hiring and capital resource decisions and to address training and development needs. Understands linkages between administrative competencies and mission needs.

BUSINESS ACUMEN

Financial Management - Demonstrates broad understanding of principles of financial management and marketing expertise necessary to ensure appropriate funding levels. Prepares, justifies, and/or administers the budget for the program area; uses cost-benefit thinking to set priorities; monitors expenditures in support of programs and policies. Identifies cost-effective approaches. Manages procurement and contracting.

Human Resources Management - Assesses current and future staffing needs based on organizational goals and budget realities. Using merit principles, ensures staff are appropriately selected, developed, utilized, appraised, and rewarded; takes corrective action.

Technology Management - Uses efficient and cost-effective approaches to integrate technology into the workplace and improve program effectiveness. Develops strategies using new technology to enhance decision making. Understands the impact of technological changes on the organization.

BUILDING COALITIONS/COMMUNICATION

Influencing/Negotiating - Persuades others; builds consensus through give and take; gains cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals; facilitates "win-win" situations.

Interpersonal Skills- Considers and responds appropriately to the needs, feelings, and capabilities of different people in different situations; is tactful, compassionate and sensitive, and treats others with respect.

Oral Communication - Makes clear and convincing oral presentations to individuals or groups; listens effectively and clarifies information as needed; facilitates an open exchange of ideas and fosters an atmosphere of open communication.

Partnering - Develops networks and builds alliances, engages in cross-functional activities; collaborates across boundaries, and finds common ground with a widening range of stakeholders. Utilizes contacts to build and strengthen internal support bases.

Political Savvy - Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization. Approaches each problem situation with a clear perception of organizational and political reality; recognizes the impact of alternative courses of action.

Written Communication - Expresses facts and ideas in writing in a clear, convincing and organized manner.

APPENDIX B
TIPS FOR WRITING EFFECTIVE ECQ STATEMENTS

Stay Focused

- Focus on leadership rather than managerial and technical abilities; all three are important, but leadership is more important.
- Show your experience in all 5 Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ's).
- Follow the Challenge-Context-Action-Result model.
- Each ECQ should contain specific, job-related experiences with specific accomplishments.
- It's not necessary to have experience in every Key Characteristic--your overall record should show that you have the qualifications needed to succeed in the Senior Executive Service.
- Be sure your statement reflects the Leadership Competencies underlying each ECQ.
- Never combine any of the ECQ's.
- Never address an ECQ by referring the reader to other parts of your application (e.g., SF-171).
- Avoid using an identical example for more than one ECQ.
- Avoid a "laundry list" of activities without context, actions, or accomplishments.
- Avoid statements that simply parrot the Key Characteristics.
- 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, 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.
- Include relevant formal education or training that has enhanced your skills in a particular ECQ.
- Don't forget to include examples of special assignments and details.
- Include special qualifications: 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.
- 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.

English 101 Revisited

- 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 acronyms, unless you spell them out several times in the application.

Format

- Keep length 1 - 1 _ pages for each Executive Core Qualification (ECQ).
- 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 ECQ 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 you can show bottom line results.
- 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.

Please fill out this survey and send it to:

> US Office of Personnel Management
> Office of Executive Resources
> 1900 E St NW Room 6484
> Washington DC 2007-5658

If you are currently connected to the web, you can fill out this survey form on the web at
http://www.opm.gov/ses/customersurvey.html

CUSTOMER SURVEY

We want the *Guide to Senior Executive Service Qualifications* to be useful to candidates and to agency personnel who manage executive resources. Please help us meet this goal by completing our survey.

1.   What parts of the publication did you find particularly worthwhile?

_____
_____
_____
_____

2.   What other topics should be included in future editions of the *Guide*?

_____
_____
_____
_____

3.   Are there sections of the publication that could be improved?

_____
_____
_____
_____

4.   Overall, how would you rate this edition of the *Guide*? (5=Excellent; 1=Poor) _____

5.   Please rate the following sections of the publication, using the above scale:

        Key Characteristics and Leadership Competencies_____

        Merit Competition_____

        Qualifications Review Board Certification_____

        Writing Executive Qualifications Statements_____

        Examples of Qualifications Statements_____

        Tips for Writing Effective ECQ Statements (Appendix B)_____

6.   Any additional comments about the *Guide*?
_____
_____
_____
_____

7.   My current position:

SES Candidate (Federal employee)_____
SES Candidate (outside Federal Government)_____
Agency Executive Resources Office employee_____
Agency Executive Resources Board member_____
Other_____