CANDIDATE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM PARTICIPANT GUIDELINES

(Required by the Office of Personnel Management for Certification/Appointment to the Senior Executive Service)

I. INTRODUCTION

The NASA Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP) offers individuals a structured approach to preparing for recurring openings in the SES. Designed to meet NASA's projected needs and management values as well as Office of Personnel Management (OPM) merit principles and requirements, this program provides a series of intensive developmental experiences for people who are judged to have high potential for assuming executive responsibilities. These experiences, normally to be completed over a period of 12 - 24 months, include formal courses and seminars, developmental work assignments to include managing an organization for not less then six months (if no previous management experience), and individual mentoring from current SES members. While the SESCDP is expected to be an important source of candidates for SES positions, successful completion of the program does not guarantee selection for such a position.

II. PURPOSES

The SESCDP has several purposes:

1. Development of a cadre of highly qualified men and women representative of the diversity of the workforce to fill NASA SES positions, primarily at NASA field centers;

2. Development of each participant's competencies necessary for performance in SES positions;

3. Orientation of participants to the organization and operation of NASA at executive levels; and

4. Broadening each participant's understanding of the NASA programs, missions, values and management issues.

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The principal focus of the competency development is the five areas of Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) required by the OPM for appointment to the SES. They are:

1. Leading Change

2. Leading People

3. Results Driven

4. Business Acumen

5. Building Coalitions/Communication

The full text of ECQs may be downloaded from http://www.opm.gov/ses/handbook.html

Excerpt from OPM Documentation:

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

> This concept holds that the Government needs executives who can provide strategic leadership and whose commitment to public policy and administration transcends their commitment to a specific agency mission or an individual profession. Executives with a "corporate" view of Government share values that are grounded in the fundamental Government ideals of the Constitution: they embrace the dynamics of American Democracy, an approach to governance that provides a continuing vehicle for change within the Federal Government.

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

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

> The basic definition for each ECQ is supplemented by Key Characteristics, which are the activities or behaviors associated with the ECQ. 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 knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to succeed in the SES.

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Based on extensive research of government and private sector executives, the Leadership Competencies are the personal and professional attributes which underpin the ECQs. By demonstrating possession of an ECQ, a candidate also demonstrates possession of its underlying competencies. Candidates need not address these competencies in their qualifications write-ups. However, experience and training that strengthen these competencies will enhance a candidate's overall qualifications for the SES.

III. SES CANDIDATE DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION

A. Mentors

Each SESCDP candidate has a mentor, who is a current member of the NASA SES but not in the candidate's chain of command and is willing and able to provide continuing advice, guidance, and evaluation. The specific responsibilities of mentors regarding the Individual Development plan, final program reports, and the annual performance appraisal, are noted in the appropriate sections that follow. The mentor's role is also to provide the ongoing insights, encouragement, and support needed by an individual going through an intensive developmental experience involving significant changes and stresses.

B. Individual Development Plan (IDP)

The IDP includes sections IA and IB, II, and III, which will be utilized for planning to enhance the candidates' five Executive Core Qualifications. The candidates' experiences and accomplishments should be considered as well as the candidates' personal goals. With their mentors, the candidates will prepare a preliminary outline of sections IA and IB and II which contains development activities, such as work assignments, training, and education, which they believe they need to attain the competencies required for successful performance in the SES. At a minimum, the IDP must include the experiences described under Core Activities below. Following an assessment of executive core qualifications which is conducted at the first of two NASA Seminars described below, the candidate and mentor review and revise the preliminary IDP and obtain the concurrence of the appropriate senior management official. The IDP is then reviewed by the Agency SES Candidate Development Program Manager for completeness and compliance with OPM and NASA requirements and is submitted to the Chairperson, ERB for final approval.

The IDP serves as an important guide and measure of progress throughout the program, and if circumstances warrant the addition, deletion, or significant modification of planned activities, candidates are encouraged to discuss such changes with their mentors, management, and the Agency SES Candidate Development Program Manager.

C. Core Activities

The following core activities are the **MINIMUM** requirements necessary for successful completion of the SESCDP for certification by OPM. Additional NASA-specific requirements are also noted in:

1. **OPM Certification Requirement**: Developmental Work Assignment(s). Successful completion of either:

    a) One developmental work assignment at least 180 days in length; **OR**

    b) Two developmental work assignments each at least 90 days in length.

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Each candidate's experience and training will be reviewed to determine appropriate development necessary to meet the Standard for Selection into the SES. If you have primarily worked in a Center environment, you will be required to spend part of your development time at Headquarters. If you have worked primarily at NASA Headquarters you will be required to spend part of your development time at a Center or multiple Centers.

2. Interagency Executive-level Training: No less than 80 hours in a formal, approved interagency executive-level training experience. The NASA Workforce Management and Development Division informs SESCDP candidates of the approved courses (e.g. OPM Executive Development Seminar, FEI, Carnegie-Mellon Senior Executive Seminar, Harvard Senior Executive Fellows Program). NOTE: training completed prior to entry into the SESCDP program will not be counted toward this requirement.

3. Management of an organization for a MINIMUM of six months. (Requirement if candidate has not managed an organization with more than five people)

4. Individual mentoring from member of the NASA SES Corps. The mentor may not be in the candidate's chain of command.

D. NASA Seminars

a) A one-week program of orientation and assessment of candidates' executive competencies. The resulting information gained from the assessment is to be used to develop a series of intensive development experiences that will be included in the IDP;

b) A one-week mid-term seminar providing exposure to new concepts, skills and perspectives; and

c) The Congressional Operations program, The Human Element Program (THE), and either the Business Education Program (BEP) or Strategic Business Management (SBM), if not previously attended.

E. Participation in Special Assignments

Participation in assignments such as: Center-level organizational projects at another NASA location; Agency-level special assignments focused on organizational or institutional projects such as the NASA Strategic Plan, facilities planning, human capital planning, workforces planning or other similar efforts.

IV. DOCUMENTATION

In addition to preparing an IDP as discussed above, candidates and their mentors are required to submit interim reports for those on an extended program (more than two years) and final reports to the appropriate Center Director, Mission Directorate Associate Administrator, or Mission Support Organization, which will be forwarded to the ERB for approval. The Agency SES Candidate Development Program Manager will notify those for whom an interim report will be required.

These reports should briefly, but specifically, detail accomplishments toward established objectives and the demonstration of the ability to assume executive responsibilities. Interim reports should emphasize progress in completing planned activities and any experiences or insights that indicate the need for changes in the IDP. The Agency Manager for the SES Candidate Development Program reviews candidates' interim reports and forwards them to the ERB as appropriate. Final reports should emphasize the degree of readiness of the candidate for placement in the SES based on the completion of the program and the attainment of executive competencies. Final reports may be submitted any time after all planned activities have been completed. Final reports are

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submitted to the Agency Workforce Management and Development Division through the appropriate management chain. This Division will prepare the final packages for ERB and OPM approval.

V. FUNDING

SESCDP funding is shared by the home organization, the organization(s) hosting developmental assignments, and the NASA Workforce Management and Development Division. The home organization continues to pay salary and benefits. Host organizations pay travel and per diem expenses for trips related to the developmental assignments. The Workforce Management and Development Division pays travel and per diem expenses for core activities, including travel to/from NASA Seminars, interagency and other training events, and developmental work assignment(s).

Per diem authorizations are governed by Federal regulations and NASA policies for geographic areas and duration of travel status.

VI. LEAVE DURING WORK ASSIGNMENTS AT OTHER INSTALLATIONS

Official time and attendance records are maintained at the candidate's home installation, but leave should be requested of and approved by work assignment supervisors during those segments of the program. Per Diem is continued during periods of sick leave not exceeding 14 consecutive working days but is discontinued during periods of annual leave exceeding four hours.

VII. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

SESCDP candidates and their supervisors should review their annual performance plans and consider revising them to take into account their SESCDP obligations. Developmental work assignments are appropriately included in performance plans as non-critical elements.

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VIII. Agreed to Conditions

PART I: Training and Developmental Assignments

As a Condition of Participation in the Senior Executive Service (SES) Candidate Development Program, I agree to participate in developmental activities (e.g., training, work assignments, etc.) that require me to be away from my current duty station. Developmental work assignments may range in length from 90 to 365 days. While urgent personal considerations will be taken into account in formulating the Individual Development Plan, I recognize that it may be necessary, and I agree, to temporarily relocate to refine certain knowledge, skills and abilities or to broaden my background.

PART II: Selection into the Senior Executive Service

Candidates who successfully complete the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program will enter a pool which will be one of the sources for filling new SES vacancies. The success of this program to some extent rests on the geographic mobility of our OPM-certified candidates. Therefore, following successful completion of the program, I agree to accept initial appointment in the SES in an appropriate position, should one be offered, at any NASA location.

I have read the above statements and agree to the conditions outlined.

APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE_____ DATE_____