

Senior Executive Service Merit Staffing Checklist

The Senior Executive Service merit staffing process is one method of recruiting and selecting qualified candidates for career appointment to the SES. The merit staffing requirements contained in regulation (5 CFR 317) ensure that selections are in compliance with merit principles and are free of prohibited personnel practices. The requirements allow sufficient latitude for agencies to design a merit staffing process that meets specific recruitment needs when filling a variety of positions with varying qualification requirements. In this competitive job market, recruitment of the highest quality of candidates for top level Federal executive positions demands a process that is efficient and effective.

The following checklist facilitates review of an SES merit staffing process, assists an agency in determining whether the program is in compliance with the requirements contained in law and regulation, and aids in the identification of areas where the process can be streamlined and/or simplified. The checklist is structured so that a "NO" response indicates possible noncompliance with law or regulation. A "NO" response should be considered a "Red Flag" and prompt review of the process or reconsideration of the procedure. The "SES Merit Staffing Checklist" can be used to audit individual cases, as well as the merit staffing process.

A. VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT/RECRUITMENT

1. Was the vacancy announcement entered into the automated OPM SES vacancy announcement system.? If yes, USAJOBS control number was _____. () Yes () No
317.501(b)(2)
2. Does the closing date allow for a minimum open period of 14 calendar days including the date of publication in the automated OPM SES Vacancy Announcement System? 317.501(b)(2) () Yes () No
3. Does your published vacancy announcement conform in all respects with the information entered into the OPM SES vacancy announcement system, i.e., same area of consideration, application requirements, title, location, etc., and have you retained a copy of the published announcement for the merit staffing file? () Yes () No
4. Is the area of consideration either all groups of individuals within the civil service, or all qualified persons? 317.501(b) () Yes () No
 - a. If your area of consideration is All groups of individuals within the civil service:
 - (1) Are you considering applications from all individuals who hold a civil service appointment? (NOTE: a SES recruitment may not be restricted to individuals with competitive status.) 5USC 2101 () Yes () No () NA
 - (2) Are you disqualifying applications from members of the uniformed or military services? (NOTE: These individuals are not within the civil service.) () Yes () NO () NA
 - (3) Are you considering applications from individuals who are not within the civil service but are eligible for noncompetitive career appointment, e.g., candidates with career SES reinstatement eligibility, candidates who have a criterion B certification? 317.702;317.502(c);412.104 () Yes () No
 - b. If your area of consideration is All qualified persons, are you considering applications from everyone, including noncitizens? (NOTE: SES rules permit employment of noncitizens but an agency may be subject to other statutes that prevent them from employing or compensating noncitizens.) () Yes () No () NA

5. Did the vacancy announcement contain the following information (check all that apply): position title ___ qualification requirements ___
duty station(s) ___ selective factors ___
area of consideration ___ salary range ___
duties/responsibilities ___ evaluation method ___
how to apply ___ how to request additional information ___
EEO statement reasonable accommodations statement ___
6. If supplemental recruitment methods were used, (e.g., notices, paid advertising, targeted recruitment) is the documentation contained in the merit staffing file? () Yes () No
7. If you used a commercial recruiting firm(s):
a. Was it used in accordance with 5 CFR Part 300, Subpart D? () Yes () No
b. Were all applicants identified by the firm made subject to the same rating, ranking and certification procedures used for all other applicants? () Yes () No () NA

B. QUALIFICATIONS STANDARD

1. Are all of the qualification requirements in the announcement related to the duties and responsibilities contained in the position description? 317.402(c) () Yes () No
2. Have you identified whether each qualification requirement is mandatory or desirable and used only mandatory qualification requirements to disqualify or screen out applicants. () Yes () No
3. Were the qualification standards established prior to publication of the vacancy announcement? 317.401(b) () Yes () No
4. If the qualification standards established were revised within the past two years, were the former standards retained? 317.404 () Yes () No () NA
5. Are the SES Executive Core Qualification requirements identified in the vacancy announcement as mandatory? 317.501(c)(2) () Yes () No
6. Are the mandatory qualification requirements stated broadly enough that applicants who are not employees of the agency (or agency component) could meet them? 317.402(b) () Yes () No
7. Are the qualification requirements set at a high enough standard so that those who meet them can successfully perform in the position? 317.402(a) () Yes () No
8. If a minimum length of experience requirement is used, is it the same as, or less than, the minimum length of experience requirement authorized for similar positions under the general schedule? 317.402(d)(1)_ () Yes () No () NA
9. If a minimum education requirement is used:317.402(d)(2)
a. Is there a minimum education requirement authorized for similar positions under the general schedule? () Yes () No () NA
b. Is the minimum education requirement the same as, or less than, that authorized for similar positions in the general schedule? () Yes () No
(Note: if 9a and 9b are not true, you may not use this kind of standard.)

C. ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS (Reference: Merit System Principles)

1. Is each application clearly marked in a way that identifies the date that it was received in the agency? () Yes () No
2. If ineligible applications were returned, did you provide the applicant a notice explaining the reason for disqualification and announcement? () Yes () No
4. Were applications that did not contain all of the documentation required by the vacancy announcement eliminated from consideration? () Yes () No

D. RATING APPLICATIONS

1. If a preliminary eligibility/qualification determination was made before applications were rated and and ranked by the ERB (or ERB designated panel), does the application, automated log, manual log, or other file system identify for each applicant who is ineligible or not qualified: 317.501 (c)(1)
a. the determination that was made () Yes () No
b. the specific mandatory qualification requirement that was not met or other basis (e.g., outside the area of consideration, application received after closing date, suitability criterion) for disqualification? () Yes () No

2. Were the applications rated and ranked by the ERB (or an ERB designated panel) to determine which applicants were Best Qualified before any applications were sent to the appointing authority (or selecting official)? 317.501(c)(5) Yes No
3. Did the ERB or ERB Panel use a rating/ranking schedule or guide to make consistent judgements about the relative qualifications of applicants? 317.501(c)(4) Yes No
4. If there is no rating and ranking schedule, can you identify alternative procedures used to assure that all applicants are rated and ranked on the same basis? 317.501(c)(4) Yes No NA
5. Were rating and ranking factors based upon the knowledge, skills, abilities and other job-related factors identified in the qualifications standard for the position?
 Yes No6. Did the rating and ranking process result in a record (e.g., rating sheet) that show the basis for the determination made on each applicant and is the record retained in the merit staffing file? Yes No
7. Were the eligible candidates grouped into broad categories, one of which being Best Qualified? Yes No

E. REFERRAL & SELECTION

3. Did the ERB/ERB Panel use the rating sheet or make written recommendations to the appointing authority (selecting official) on the qualifications of the eligible candidates, which included a listing of the Best Qualified candidates? Yes No
4. Did the ERB prepare narrative statements to support the qualification determinations? Yes No
5. Did the selecting official/appointing authority select from among the candidates identified as Best Qualified? 317.501(c)(6) Yes No
6. Did the appointing authority certify in writing that the candidate selected meets the qualifications requirements of the position? 317.501(c)(6)
7. Was the merit staffing process used for this vacancy announcement in compliance with internal SES merit staffing plan, policies and procedures. Yes No
8. Did the Appointing Authority (or designee) certify in writing that appropriate merit staffing procedures were followed? 317.501(c)(7) Yes No
9. Do you consider this merit staffing action to be in full accord with law, rule, regulation and OPM guidance. Yes No

F. DOCUMENTATION/RECORD RETENTION

9. Does sufficient documentation exist to reconstruct the action? Yes No
10. Put a checkmark opposite items retained in the agency merit staffing files:
- Vacancy Announcement (including amendments and/or revisions)
 - OPM Control Number for the vacancy listing in the Federal
 - List of recruitment sources used
 - Position description of the position to be filled
 - Written selection criteria (rating schedule/guide)
 - Name, title and grade level of rating/ranking panel members
 - Position Qualifications Standard (previous standard if revised within the past two years)
 - Originals of all applications and other materials received by the agency in response to the vacancy announcement
 - References or qualification inquiries obtained on the candidates
 - Record of ERB panel deliberations
 - Record of ERB panel screening results (e.g., rating sheets, best-qualified lists, etc.)
 - Narrative documentation supporting ERB determination of Best Qualified candidates
 - Record of ERB recommendation to selecting official
 - Record of which, if any, candidates were interviewed
 - Record of selection approval by appointing authority
 - A copy of the appointment document (signed and dated)

- Appointing Authority certification that t appointee meets the qualifications requirements
- Appointing Authority or ERB certification that appropriate merit staffing procedures were followed.
- Copies of any inquiries or complaints about the staffing process and agency finding and response

List additional documents required by the agency that do not appear above:

The items listed above represent the minimum documents required to reconstruct the merit staffing process and should be retained for 2 years (317.501(d)) after the date of appointment of a candidate selected as a result of the merit staffing process. If no appointment is made as a result of the recruitment effort, the records are retained for 2 years from the closing date of the announcement.