



Addressing Executive Core Qualifications for SES Positions

John Kusano

Division Director,

USDA Human Capital Policy and Strategy Division

john.kusano@usda.gov

What are the Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ's)?

- Based on the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) leadership competencies.
- ECQ's identify the personal and professional attributes critical to successful performance in the SES.
- Designed to assess executive experience and potential (not technical expertise).

How are ECQ's used in the SES Selection Process?

- An Executive Resources Board reviews the applications based on the ECQ's and refers the best qualified candidates.
- Selecting Official make a selection based on both the ECQ's and the technical qualifications.
- OPM reviews the agency selectee using a Qualifications Review Board (QRB)

Executive Core Qualifications

- **Leading Change** – Establishing an organizational vision and implementing it in a continuously changing environment
 - **Creativity & Innovation**
 - **Vision**
 - **Strategic Thinking**
 - **Continuous Improvement**

Executive Core Qualifications

- **Leading People** – leading people and organizations toward meeting a vision, mission and goals.
 - **Conflict Management**
 - **Team Building**
 - **Developing Others**
 - **Leveraging Diversity**

Executive Core Qualifications

- **Results Driven** – meeting organizational goals, and customer expectations, and producing high quality products
 - **Accountability**
 - **Customer Service**
 - **Problem Solving**
 - **Entrepreneurship**

Executive Core Qualifications

- **Business Acumen** – Ability to manage human, financial, and information resources.
 - **Financial Management**
 - **Human Capital Management**
 - **Technology Management**

Executive Core Qualifications

- **Building Coalitions** – building coalitions with internal and external partners to achieve common goals
 - **Partnering**
 - **Political Savvy**
 - **Influencing/Negotiating**

Model for Addressing ECQ's

---Challenge-Context-Action-Results

- **Challenge** – Describe a specific problem or opportunity you worked on.
- **Context** – Discuss the environment in which you worked to tackle this challenge, e.g. the people, politics, budgets, information needs, partners, stakeholders.

Model for Addressing ECQ's

---Challenge-Context-Action-Results

- **Action** – Describe specific actions you took to address the challenge.
- **Results** – Give specific examples of the results and outcomes of your actions that demonstrate the effectiveness of your leadership skills.

Sample ECQ Statement

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. (**Context**) 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**)

Key Points in writing ECQ's

- Do not assume the reader understands your agency, your job, or your acronyms.
- Quantify, Quantify, Quantify. Describe the scope of your challenge and the impact of the results you achieved in measurable terms.
- Avoid discussing your philosophies/beliefs
- Focus your response, 1- 1.5 pages, 1-3 examples.

Key Points in writing ECQ's

- Focus on demonstrated leadership skills, ---rather than management or technical skills.
- Avoid “laundry lists” of activities.
- Show measurable results
 - Increased efficiency
 - Cost savings
 - Reduced process times
 - Improved customer service (survey results)
 - Awards for achieving specific results

Leadership Focus

"Leadership is about creating a way for people to contribute to making something extraordinary happen."

- **Challenge the process**
- **Communicate a compelling shared vision**
- **Motivate and mobilize others to act**
- **Enable others to work toward this shared vision**
- **Resolve problems and ensure real results**
- **Recognizing contributions and celebrating accomplishments**

Questions/Discussion

- What experiences with ECQ's can you share with the group?
- What are some tips on writing ECQ's?
- Provide some examples of leadership challenges that you have tackled.
- What were some of the measurable results.

For more information go to:

http://www.opm.gov/ses/references/SES_Quals_Guide_2006.pdf

"Guide to SES Qualifications"