



What is a Federal Career Senior Executive?

According to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), The Senior Executive Service (SES) is comprised of the men and women charged with leading the continuing transformation of government. Members of the SES serve in the key positions just below the top Presidential appointees. SES members are the major link between these appointees and the rest of the Federal work force. They operate and oversee nearly every government activity in approximately 75 Federal agencies.

Based on a 2011 survey of Senior Executives administered by OPM, nearly 1/3 of Senior Executives oversee more than 200 employees. On average Senior Executives oversee 50-200 employees, but the span of control is generally bigger at larger agencies.

Senior Executives also have budgetary responsibility. Only 20 percent of Senior Executives responding to the 2011 survey oversaw budgets under \$1 million (or didn't have budgetary responsibility). Most Senior Executives oversee budgets that range from \$1 million to over \$500 million (19 percent).

Senior Executives serve in nearly every agency. At some agencies, the highest level career federal employees may be designated Senior Level (SL) or Scientific & Professional (ST). They do much of the same work, although may have fewer supervisory duties, as Senior Executives. They are highly skilled in their fields and oversee programs and budgets within their respective agencies.

Who Are Senior Executives?

Senior Executives have been Nobel prize winners (David Wineland and John Mather in physics and Jerome Karle in Chemistry, to name a few), leaders in their fields (Francis Kelsey discovered the effects of thalidomide; Robert Cabana commanded the first space shuttle mission devoted to life sciences), and first in their field (JoAnne Simpson was the first woman to receive a PhD in meteorology). Valdas Adamkus, a Senior Executive for 16 years until his retirement from EPA in 1997, became President of Lithuania (1998-2003 and 2004-2009).

Here are a few recent examples of the high level of work performed by Senior Executives.

- A Senior Executive at Department of Navy was recognized for work that entailed managing a \$32 billion annual budget, equivalent to #77 on the Fortune 500 list.
- A Senior Executive at SSA was recognized for administering Social Security programs to 57 million people with monthly payments of \$13 billion.
- A Senior Executive at Department of Army was recognized for standing up and leading the Army Contracting Command, the first time in history that an SES member was put in charge of a military command, with personnel in 117 worldwide locations, awarding and managing \$97 billion of contractual accounts each year – 19% of all federal contract dollars.
- A Senior Executive at HHS was recognized for being the first non-physician to lead CDC's Washington operations; he was chosen to lead the Administration's Global Health Initiative, a \$63 billion, 80 country plan to save millions of lives from infectious diseases like malaria and tuberculosis.
- A Senior Executive at NASA was recognized for serving as the lead negotiator for the international agreements for the International Space Station, providing for partner contributions valued at \$8 billion. She received the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics International Cooperation medal, having been nominated by her counterparts from Canada, Europe, Japan and Russia.

- A Senior Executive at DHS was recognized for overseeing maintenance and support of the Coast Guard’s inventory of 200 aircraft, over 2,000 cutters and boats and 23,000 facilities, a total capital plant values at \$25 billion.
- A Senior Executive at Treasury was recognized for directing a retail internet site with sales of over \$17 billion and systems which affect the 55 million owners of saving bonds and marketable securities worth \$272 billion, as well as the 40,000 financial institutions selling and redeeming bonds.

Education Levels of Senior Executives

According to the Office of Personnel Management’s 2012 Senior Executive Service Report, over 93 percent of Senior Executives hold a college degree or higher, with the majority of those holding some form of advanced degree. A table from the Report is below.

Senior Executive Service (SES) Education

Statistics restricted to pay plan ES from Fiscal Year 2012 (FY2012) EDUCATION	COUNT	PERCENT
ADVANCED DEGREE	5,556	69.42
COLLEGE DEGREE	1,895	23.68
ASSOCIATES DEGREE	39	0.49
TECHNICAL TRAINING	2	0.02
SOME COLLEGE	224	2.80
HIGHSCHOOL DEGREE	277	3.46
NO HIGHSCHOOL DEGREE	6	0.07
UNKNOWN OR UNSPECIFIED	5	0.06
ALL	8,004	100.00

SES Job Duty Examples

Senior Executives are expected to be both technical experts and high-level managers capable of overseeing complex programs, a large staff, and budgets that cover entire agencies. The types of jobs that Senior Executives hold varies, but the following are just a few examples of actual jobs in the federal government held by Senior Executives.

Director, Office of Oil and Gas Global Security and Supply; Dept. of Energy

The Office of Oil and Gas Global Security and Supply provides oversight and guidance for international and regulatory oil and gas activities. The incumbent in this position reports to the Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for Oil and Natural Gas and serves as Office Director responsible for leading, implementing, and developing international and regulatory oil and gas activities. As Office Director, the incumbent provides oversight and guidance for two divisions, the Division of International Oil and Natural Gas Activities and the Division of Natural Gas Regulatory Activities. Serves as the lead and focal point for international activities related to the natural gas and petroleum. Coordinates activities with foreign governments and international organizations including development of agreements related to natural gas and oil and facilitates the unique government-to-government activities involving U.S. oil and gas interests in response to the Administration's policy and/or defined needs. Coordinates with multinational and international organizations on issues of regulation and finance in

natural gas and oil. Develops policy and regulations for importation and exportation of natural gas (consistent with legislative requirements in Section 3 of the Natural Gas Act of 1938). Interfaces with the State Department, DOE's Office of Policy and International Affairs, and foreign governments regarding U.S. natural gas and petroleum policy. Produces statistics and analyses on North American and international natural gas and petroleum trade. Assess the effect international trade legislation and treaties have on natural gas and petroleum imports/exports. Oversees the Division responsible for applications to import or export natural gas including Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), pursuant to the Natural Gas Act. Determines whether evidentiary hearings are appropriate; conducts and otherwise participates in any evidentiary hearings; issues procedural and other orders; and analyzes the records developed at evidentiary hearings. Supervises the Division Director, who division drafts decisions and orders on import and export applications for the Assistant Secretary's determination, and where delegated the authority, issues such decisions and orders. Plans and prepares budget allocations and proposals for international and regulatory activities, articulates rationale for budget priorities, and leads and negotiates the defense of the Administration's budget within program areas of responsibilities. Provides the Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) with proposed program strategy and budget.

Chief Procurement Law and Chief Trial Attorney; Dept. of Homeland Security; US Coast Guard

The Chief Procurement Law Counsel and Chief Trial Attorney provides expert procurement law advice and guidance concerning complex and precedent setting acquisition and procurement issues to senior USCG Acquisition management, principally the Assistant Commandant for Acquisition and Deputy Assistant Commandant, the Program Executive Officer (PEO) and Deputy PEO, and the Head of Contracting Activity.

The Counsel provides counsel and substantive legal advice, or oversees the provision of counsel and advice, on the full range of contract matters, for major systems acquisitions, innovatively financed energy contracts, and other procurements; including developing, planning, executing, or overseeing acquisition strategies, requirements, funding, solicitations, contract awards, contract clause interpretations, contract changes, contract performance, enforcement actions, cancellations, and terminations.

The Counsel serves as the USCG representative on matters before the Government Accountability Office, Civilian Board of Contract Appeals, U.S. Court of Federal Claims, U.S. District Courts, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. In addition, the Counsel provides legal advice and counsel in all aspects of procurement and acquisition to prevent litigation, and recommends the compromise or settlement of protests and claims in the best interests of the USCG.

The Counsel leads and supervises a staff of attorneys who provide procurement law advice and counsel, and who represent the USCG in procurement litigation.

Director, NASA Astrobiology Institute; National Aeronautics and Space Administration

The Director, NAI is responsible for coordinating and catalyzing a program of world-class research by member and partner institutions. The NAI represents a partnership between NASA, academic institutions, and other research organizations to promote, conduct, and lead interdisciplinary astrobiology research. The Director leads the development of innovative solutions to stimulate interdisciplinary cooperation, with the objective of developing new research collaborations and training a new generation of Astrobiologists.

The Director is both the senior scientific officer and the senior operating officer of the NAI. The incumbent plans, directs, and coordinates all scientific activities of the NAI including scientific strategic planning and research program integration. The incumbent is also responsible for all operational aspects of the NAI including administration of personnel, budget, and agency policy matters. The Director is the Technical Monitor for all Cooperative Agreements and is responsible for all fiscal and evaluative interactions with the NAI Teams. The incumbent plans and implements future research solicitations for NAI team membership, coordinates the review of solicitations, and advocates the resulting selections to NASA Headquarters. The Director identifies research opportunities through collaborative research activities with scientists, coordinates efforts involving multiple academic organizations, and communicates the research conducted by the NAI to other organizations. The incumbent develops, reviews, and approves international partnerships and represents the NAI internationally. The Director provides advice to and develops technology for NASA missions. The Director provides policy and public advocacy for the developing science of astrobiology. The incumbent leads the development of a virtual institute, including encouraging the improvement of networking and communication tools, and fosters experimentation for the discovery of innovative ways to encourage collaboration among individuals and institutions.

Executive Director for the Office of the Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy; Dept. of Transportation

The Office of the Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy (Office) is a complex organization comprised of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs, and the Resource Directorate. The Office has a broad range of functions and missions, including domestic and international transportation policy development and implementation, economic and legislative analysis, regulatory oversight and public engagement. The Office has six separate salary-paying appropriations accounts in excess of \$780 million to support its eleven SES members and over 110 employees in addition to accounts that support specific grant programs including

Essential Air Service, Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery, Small Community Air Service Development Program and Safe Skies for Africa. The Executive Director exercises policy oversight over the Office and provides administrative management of the Resource Directorate.