

GAO

Fact Sheet for the Chairman,
Subcommittee on Civil Service, Post
Office and General Services, Committee
on Governmental Affairs, U. S. Senate

December 1986

SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE

Agencies With a Senior Executive Service Rotation Program



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United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

General Government Division

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December 3, 1986

The Honorable Ted Stevens
Chairman, Subcommittee on Civil Service,
Post Office and General Services
Committee on Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This is in response to your request of October 1, 1985, for information on the extent to which executive branch agencies have either established or plan to establish rotation programs for members of the Senior Executive Service (SES). For purposes of our analysis, we considered a rotation program to be a program whereby the agency periodically reviews career SES positions to assess the need to rotate individuals according to some pre-established criteria.

We contacted 63 agencies who had at least one career SES member as of March 31, 1986. (See app. I.) We asked if they had implemented a formal SES rotation program in the past, currently had one in place, or planned to implement such a program in the future. For each agency reporting a formal rotation program, we obtained information on program operation, criteria, objectives, and rotation activity. We conducted our review from February 1986 to August 1986.

Four of the 63 agencies we contacted indicated past or current experience with a formal agencywide SES rotation program--the Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Departments of the Interior and Navy. DCAA, EPA, and Navy have ongoing rotation programs, while the Department of the Interior conducted a brief rotation program that ended in 1983.

The information we obtained on the four SES rotation programs is summarized below. The evaluation of the Navy rotation program you requested will be provided in a separate report.

Defense Contract Audit Agency

DCAA, an organization within the Department of Defense, performs all contract audits for the Department of Defense and for other government agencies upon request. DCAA included its SES members in an existing auditor rotation program in May 1982. The rotation program was developed to maintain professional independence and objectivity, prevent or preclude the appearance of a conflict of interest, and promote career development through exposure to a wide range of work environments and assignments. DCAA requires rotations for SES members every 5 to 7 years.

The program applies to 8 of DCAA's 12 SES career executives. Six of the eight are regional directors and the remaining two are the Assistant Director for Operations and the Assistant Director for Policy and Plans. The director, deputy director, general counsel, and assistant director of resources are not subject to rotation.

Because there are so few SES members, reassignments are determined in an informal manner. Discussions about rotation preferences take place between the SES member and top management. The agency director ultimately decides the SES rotations. Although participation in the rotation program is mandatory, exemptions or deferrals may be considered on a case-by-case basis for such factors as extreme personal, family, or financial hardship.

DCAA's Deputy Director of Personnel informed us that as of August 1986, one SES member had rotated from a regional office to a vacant position in another regional office under the program. No waivers have been requested.

Environmental Protection Agency

EPA started a rotation program for its SES members in May 1984. According to EPA, the program was developed to build broad-based executive skills, improve the utilization of SES members by better distributing their skills throughout the agency, and stimulate and challenge executives. This program is part of EPA's overall management development program, which is entitled "Framework for Achieving Managerial Excellence" (FAME). FAME provides a common set of criteria for recruiting, selecting, training/developing, evaluating, and rewarding EPA executives and managers.

EPA's rotation program applies to all of its SES career executives. Each year the EPA Executive Resources Board (ERB) conducts reassignment reviews of SES members who have been in their positions for 3 to 7 years. Geographic relocations are encouraged but not required. Moreover, an SES member can

reject a reassignment as can the management of the losing or gaining organization. Since 1985, the ERB reassignment reviews have followed the recommendations on each SES member by the deputy administrator and assistant or regional administrator to whom the SES member is responsible.

The EPA Director of SES and Executive Resources said that in order to facilitate rotation, EPA follows a practice of notifying SES members of all SES vacancies. Interested applicants provide a one-page biosketch and a one-page narrative on how their abilities and experience fit the position they would like to obtain. Using a computerized SES information bank and the results of an annual succession planning review, the Executive Resources Staff creates lists of viable candidates for each SES vacancy. The biosketch reports are made available to the ERB and the selecting official for their use in determining which applicant is best qualified to fill the vacant position.

As of July 1986, 36 SES members had rotated to new positions under the program, including 6 geographic relocations.

Department of the Interior

The Secretary of the Interior initiated a rotation program for SES members in December 1982. The program ended on September 30, 1983, when the Secretary left. The program was developed to promote executive mobility, professional development, cross-training of managers, and to counter the parochialism or entrenchment that the Secretary believed existed in the various Interior organizations.

The program applied to all SES career executives in the department. However, exemptions were given to positions requiring highly specialized scientific and engineering qualifications, positions involving Indian services that were filled through Indian preference, and attorney-advisor positions. Rotation target numbers were established for all major departmental organizations on the basis of their percentage of eligible career executives. In an earlier report on the program, (GAO/GGD-84-19, Nov. 4, 1983), we found that 22 (19.5 percent of 113 eligible SES members) were reassigned. Six of these reassignments involved geographic moves. Reassignments scheduled for nine other SES members were cancelled when the program ended in September 1983.

Department of the Navy

On August 8, 1985, the Secretary of the Navy announced a rotation program for all of Navy's career SES members. Under the program, SES members who have been in their positions for

5 years are rotated unless they receive an exemption. As of October 23, 1986, 27 SES members had been rotated.

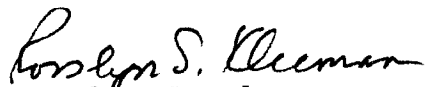
A permanent exemption from the rotation program may be granted to SES members with unique technical qualifications. Permanent exemption requests must be endorsed by the Department of the Navy Civilian Executive Resources Board and approved by the Secretary of the Navy. As of October 23, 1986, 23 permanent exemptions had been granted.

Agencies without rotation programs

The most common reason agency officials cited for not having a formal rotation program was that their agency had too few SES members to make such a program practical. Agencies with 1 to 31 SES members gave this reason. The second most frequently cited reason was that the SES members were too specialized or technically oriented to move to other positions. In addition, several agency representatives said that either a formal rotation program had never been discussed in their agency or that there had been no interest in a formal rotation program.

As arranged with your office, copies of this fact sheet will be sent to the Office of Personnel Management and other interested parties upon request. If further information is needed, please call me on 275-6204.

Sincerely yours,


Rosslyn S. Kleeman
Senior Associate Director

LIST OF AGENCIES CONTACTED BY GAO

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Number of career members as of 3/31/86</u>
Action	5
Administrative Conference of the United States	3
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	2
Arms Control and Disarmament Agency	18
Board for International Broadcasting	2
Commission on Civil Rights	6
Commission on Fine Arts	1
Commodity Futures Trading Commission	18
Consumer Product Safety Commission	9
Department of Agriculture	267
Department of Commerce	348
Department of Defense	1,285
Office of the Secretary of Defense	359 ^a
Department of the Air Force	185
Department of the Army	335
Department of the Navy	406
Department of Education	40
Department of Energy	383
Department of Health and Human Services	467
Department of Housing and Urban Development	81
Department of the Interior	218
Department of Justice	203
Department of Labor	132
Department of State	79
Department of Transportation	311
Department of the Treasury	467
Environmental Protection Agency	211
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	33
Executive Office of the President	15
Farm Credit Administration	13
Federal Communications Commission	30
Federal Emergency Management Agency	39
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	31
Federal Home Loan Bank Board	7
Federal Labor Relations Authority	19
Federal Maritime Commission	7

^aThis figure includes career SES members in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Defense Communications Agency, the Defense Contract Audit Agency, the Defense Investigative Service, the Defense Logistics Agency, the Defense Mapping Agency, the Defense Nuclear Agency, and the Office of the Inspector General.

Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service	4
Federal Trade Commission	19
General Services Administration	91
International Development Cooperation Agency	31
International Trade Commission	7
Interstate Commerce Commission	26
Merit Systems Protection Board	14
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	428
National Archives and Records Administration	8
National Capital Planning Commission	4
National Credit Union Administration	9
National Endowment for the Arts	2
National Endowment for the Humanities	3
National Labor Relations Board	55
National Mediation Board	1
National Science Foundation	95
National Transportation Safety Board	8
Nuclear Regulatory Commission	193
Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission	3
Office of the Federal Inspector of the Alaska Natural Gas Transportation System	1
Office of Management and Budget	62
Office of Personnel Management	41
Office of the Special Counsel, Merit Systems Protection Board	5
Railroad Retirement Board	9
Securities and Exchange Commission	44
Small Business Administration	31
U.S. Information Agency	28
Veterans Administration	128

Source: OPM data for period ending March 31, 1986.

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