Performance Work Statement (PWS): Validated Executive Assessment for SESCDP Cohorts

Department of the Interior – Office of Employee Development

PART 1 — GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 General

This is a **non-personal services** contract to design and deliver a validated executive assessment program for Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP) participants.

1.2 Background

The Department of the Interior (DOI), Office of Employee Development (OED), seeks to assess SESCDP cohort members' readiness for senior executive roles through a validated assessment aligned to Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) and associated competencies.

1.3 Scope

The contractor shall design and deliver a validated assessment program incorporating the following updated ECQs and associated competencies:

a. Commitment to the Rule of Law & Principles of the American Founding
b. Driving Efficiency
c. Merit & Competence
d. Leading People
e. Achieving Results

This requirement shall be designed for up to two cohorts.

1.4 Objectives

- Provide validated, comprehensive assessment of ECQ-aligned leadership competencies.
- Produce actionable feedback supporting Executive Development Plans (EDPs).
- Conduct SES (Senior Executive Service) level simulation activities evaluating leadership behaviors in realistic scenarios.

1.5 Period of Performance

Expected delivery is from early 2027 for up to two cohorts of approximately 24 participants each. The period of performance shall be finalized at time of award but shall not exceed one full calendar year. Potential session dates for one to two cohorts are: April 5-9, 2027; April 26-30, 2027; and May 10-14, 2027.

1.6 Place of Performance

In-person training shall take place at a location within a two-hour driving radius of Washington DC, but likely at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, WV.

1.7 Quality Control (QCP).

The contractor shall develop and maintain an effective quality control program to ensure services are performed in accordance with the PWS. The contractor shall develop and implement procedures to identify, prevent, and ensure non-recurrence of defective services. The contractor's quality control program is the means by which he assures himself that this work complies with the requirement of the contract.

1.8 Quality Assurance:

The government shall evaluate the contractor's performance under this contract in accordance with the Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan (QASP). This plan is primarily focused on what the Government must do to ensure that the contractor has performed in accordance with the performance standards. It defines how the performance standards will be applied, the frequency of surveillance, and the minimum acceptable defect rate(s).

1.9 Accessibility Capacity

The contractor shall provide accessible training materials, digital content, handouts, presentations, and supplemental resources such as:

- Training materials compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and accessible formats consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), including but not limited to:
    - Screen-reader–friendly documents
    - Captioned video content
    - Accessible PDFs
    - Alternative text for images and graphics
    - Materials compatible with assistive technologies
    - Large print or braille materials
    - Adjustments in presentation style or materials to meet needs of candidates
    - Accessible in-person training locations
- Reasonable accommodation to ensure full participation of individuals with disabilities in training sessions.

Ideally, the contractor would proactively design materials with accessibility in mind and respond promptly to accessibility accommodation requests. However, it can be difficult for vendors to meet such requests. It will be helpful to understand what the vendor can provide regarding accessibility.

1.10 Contractor Qualifications

The contractor must demonstrate current, extensive, and specialized expertise in all required areas. General or limited experience is not sufficient. Specifically, the contractor must have:

- Current, direct, and comprehensive experience in developing, validating, and implementing executive-level assessment programs that evaluate SES-level performance through behaviorally based, federally aligned methodologies.
- In-depth and up-to-date expertise with the OPM Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs), including the underlying competencies, behavioral indicators (pending release by OPM), and any forthcoming updates associated with the new ECQs that might be developed and released by OPM.
- Expert-level knowledge of federal leadership models and frameworks, with demonstrated experience applying these frameworks within high-stakes executive assessment environments.

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PART 2 — GOVERNMENT-FURNISHED ITEMS & SERVICES

2.1 Facilities

The government will provide classroom space for up to 24 participants. The space will include a screen, projector, and two flipcharts with markers. Additionally, the Government will provide other in-person space needed for the assessment activities (up to 12 breakout rooms with a table and two chairs), within their ability to find physical space that will meet the needs of assessment activities. The contractor is responsible for notifying the government of required space to complete the training and to work within available space provided by the government.

2.2 Materials

Government shall provide relevant policies/SOPs applicable to the execution of this requirement.

2.3 Post Assessment Action

The government will provide coaching and mentoring for each candidate after completing the assessment center activities.

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PART 3 — CONTRACTOR-FURNISHED ITEMS & RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 General

Contractor furnishes all supplies, equipment, software, and assessor labor not supplied by Government.

3.2 Assessment Space Equipment

Contractor provides laptops/software, printers and accessories (if required), scenario materials, observation/recording tools needed for simulations and debriefs, and any other equipment, material, and/or tools required for execution.

3.3 Validated Assessment Instruments

The Contractor shall be responsible any other equipment necessary to provide the assessment and debriefs. Tools must demonstrate reliability and validity for ECQ-aligned behavioral measurement.

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PART 4 — SPECIFIC TASKS

4.1 Provide In-Person, SES-Level Simulation Activities:

- The assessment activities will be part of the cohort's orientation week for the program. The first day or two will include our own programming, followed by the assessment center at the end of the week. We usually only hold class for half a day on Friday, so participants have time to travel home. The start date of the assessment center would depend on the number of days required for the assessment center program. For example, if two and a half days are required, assessment activities would take place on Wed-Fri morning of the scheduled week. The structure and number of days needed for the assessment program need to be able to be incorporated during the last three to four days of the orientation session.
- Day-in-the-Life SES Simulation, such as:
  - Email management exercises
  - Strategic decision-making or crisis-response workload
  - High stakes meeting with competing priorities
  - Cross-agency stakeholder sessions
- Multiple assessors observing how the candidate demonstrates ECQ-aligned leadership during challenge-based scenarios who confer and come to agreement on each candidate's performance across ECQs. The vendor shall provide the assessor-to-participant ratio to ensure reliable scoring for their assessment tools with the opportunity for each participant to be assessed by a minimum of 3 assessors over the duration of the assessment activities. Assessors should participate in a consensus meeting following simulations to finalize participant ratings across ECQs.
- Activities must be:
  - Measurable through observable behaviors
  - Directly observed by assessors
  - Designed to replicate the complexity of SES environments in the federal government and applicable to the DOI mission
- Determine the number and type of assessment activities needed to ensure observation across all ECQs. The vendor shall decide whether to assess all 24 participants simultaneously, in smaller groups, or a combination of both options based on what is best for the effectiveness of the activity.
- Provide any pre-work, if needed, for assessment activities.
- Provide all equipment, software, and materials for simulation activities.

4.2 Provide validated Assessment Instruments:

- Tools must accurately measure candidates against the updated ECQs and sub competencies through observable SES-level behavior indicators (prior to program implementation, pending release by OPM).
- Instruments should identify both strengths and developmental needs.
- Tools must be grounded in validated federal leadership assessment methodology. If prior federal experience is not available, the vendor can demonstrate prior general executive assessment validation with an explanation of how it will be applied in the federal environment.
- Assessments cannot be theoretical or solely self-report; they must demonstrate reliability and validity when used to evaluate SES competencies. The reliability and validity should be briefly described by the vendor in the proposal.
- Vendors can map assessment instruments directly to the forthcoming OPM behavioral indicators or should propose their own competency-to-behavior mappings aligned with the ECQs.

4.3 Provide Actional Feedback for Candidates in Individual Assessment Reports:

- Each candidate receives a formal assessment report summarizing results on strengths and recommendations for development against ECQs.
- Feedback must support the Executive Development Plan process by identifying growth areas candidates need to develop during the program for each candidate.
- The report format is at the discretion of the vendor but should be clear for each candidate to understand results and recommendations.
- An aggregate cohort-level analysis is not a requirement.

4.4 Provide Qualified Assessors

- Assign assessors with demonstrated experience in federal leadership assessment and validated assessment methodologies. See contractor qualifications.
- Provide a backup contingency plan if any assessors become unavailable.

4.5 Facilitate Assessment Activities and Debrief Sessions

- Conduct agreed upon in-person assessment activities for all participants, ensuring adherence to agreed schedules and formats.
- Conduct in-person assessment debriefs with individual participants.
- The in-person assessment activities and debrief sessions should fit within a consecutive three-day window that takes place during an in-person training week for the participants.

4.6 Ensure Compliance

- Adhere to DOI security protocols and confidentiality standards throughout all phases of the engagement. This includes protecting Personally Identifiable Information (PII); keeping results confidential by only sharing with assessment

team, candidate, and program managers; and any other concerns that might develop during the assessment process.

4.7 Deliverables

- Assessment physical space requirements, including number of classrooms and breakout rooms, plus any other requirements for room setup – Due as part of the offer for contract evaluation so the Government can ensure availability of required space, including breakout rooms for private observation or debriefs.
- Assessment schedule and logistics plan – Due via email to program managers after contract award.
- Customized assessment instruments aligned with updated ECQs – To be implemented on the scheduled days for the assessment.
- Individual participant reports – Due to individual participants when individual debrief is given after assessment is complete. The report must be provided to individuals as either an electronic report or paper report, but an electronic report must be available upon request.
- Post-assessment debriefs and recommendations – Due two weeks after the conclusion of the assessment either as a written report or as a debrief meeting with program managers.

Technical Exhibit 1 – Performance Requirements Summary (PRS)

Objective	Standard	Threshold	Surveillance
Deliver SES Simulations	All simulations delivered	95%	On-site observations and participant feedback
Validated Instruments	Reliability/validity shown	100%	Inspection
Individual Reports	Delivered at debrief	100%	Inspection
Accessibility	Section 508 compliance	No deviation	Review

Technical Exhibit 2 – Deliverables

Deliverable	Frequency	# Copies	Format	Submit To
Space Requirements for class	With Proposal	1	PDF/Word	COR
Schedule & Logistics Plan	After Award	1	PDF/Word	COR
Customized Instruments	Assessment Days	N/A	Tool Access	COR

Individual Reports	At Debrief	1	PDF/Word	Participant
Post-Assessment Report	2 Weeks After	1	PDF/Word	Program Managers

Technical Exhibit 3 – Estimated Workload Data

Item	Role	Hours/Units
1	Facilitators & Assessors	350
2	Executive Coaches	As needed