UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
TRAINING OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT

SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE
CANDIDATE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) will sponsor a Senior Executive Service (SES) Candidate Development Program (CDP) which will begin in June 2007. This program is designed to provide a series of developmental experiences for individuals with demonstrated potential to successfully complete the program requirements necessary to become members of the SES.

Training Opportunity Announcement Number: **USDA SES CDP 0307**

Opening Date: December 22, 2006

Closing Date: January 5, 2007

Who May Participate: All Federal Civil Service Employees; GS-14/15 or equivalent

(Candidates are expected to continue in their current positions with appropriate time off to allow for successful program participation. Participation will generally be on a part-time basis except for the full-time period devoted to completing developmental assignments)

Location: Most of the program will be conducted at American University in Washington, DC. However, some of the course requirements, such as the developmental assignments and mentoring, may be done at other locations.   .

Course Location: Washington, DC

Course Dates: June 2007 – February 2009

Course Tuition: $13,125 (Tuition includes all instructional services and course materials for attendance at American University.) <u>Note</u> - All course and travel fees, developmental assignments, and additional training expenses will be funded by participants' sponsoring agencies. Additionally, there will be a fee of $2,650 payable to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to cover costs for two phases of the assessment process.

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About the Program: The USDA SES CDP is designed to provide a broad range of developmental activities coupled with formal training to enhance individual executive competencies and to increase awareness and understanding of public policy, programs, and issues. Selection into the program is competitive. The application process progresses through five phases with each phase asking applicants to demonstrate selected competencies. Only the highest rated applicants from each phase will progress to the next phase.

Candidates who successfully complete the program and are certified by OPM will be eligible for noncompetitive appointment into SES positions for which they are otherwise qualified. However, successful program participation does not guarantee placement in any SES position.

Note: For this SES CDP class, USDA is partnering with **AMERICAN UNIVERSITY.** Participants will be required to attend eight (8) **GRADUATE LEVEL COURSES** of instruction over a **16-MONTH PERIOD**. Courses will be taught by faculty from American University. Those candidates who successfully pass all of the classes will receive 12 graduate level credits, which may be used toward a Master's degree in Public Administration. American University has indicated that the graduate level courses are rigorous.

Program Requirements: USDA's CDP integrates the following components:

- Orientation Module;
- 360-Degree Diagnostic Assessment with Coaching ;
- Individual Needs Assessment;
- Executive Action Plan (Individual Development Plan);
- SES Mentoring;
- Developmental Assignment (four continuous months in duration);
- Core Development Training at American University;
- 80 Hours of Interagency Classroom Training; and
- USDA SES-Led Forum Series.

Although the program will vary for each candidate, the fundamental tools, resources, activities, and learning events will be available to all candidates. Certain of these activities necessarily precede others, as one may be needed for prerequisite learning before being able to fully experience subsequent ones. Other activities require practical work opportunities between learning events so that application and reflection can occur before going on to another assignment.

Agency Requirement: USDA candidates must sign an in-service agreement of five years at the commencement of the CDP training, stating that they will remain employed by the Federal Government for at least three years from the completion date of the program.

Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs): The Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) are the criteria used by OPM to certify candidates for SES positions. OPM will certify candidates primarily on their demonstrated potential to master the ECQs. (Detailed information on each of the ECQs and the competencies can be found at http://www.opm.gov/ses/ecq.html.)

As reference, the ECQs and their associated 28 competencies are:

- **ECQ #1 – Leading Change –** This core qualification involves the ability to bring about strategic change, both within and outside the organization, to meet organizational goals. Inherent to this ECQ is the ability to establish an organizational vision and to implement it in a continuous changing environment. Competencies include: **Creativity and Innovation, External Awareness, Flexibility, Resilience, Strategic Thinking, and Vision.**

- **ECQ #2 – Leading People –** This core qualification involves the ability to lead people toward meeting the organization's vision, mission, and goals. Inherent to this ECQ is the ability to provide an inclusive workplace that fosters the development of others, facilitates cooperation and teamwork, and supports constructive resolution of conflicts. Competencies include: **Conflict Management, Leveraging Diversity, Developing Others, and Team Building.**

- **ECQ #3 – Results Driven –** This core qualification involves the ability to meet organizational goals and customer expectations. Inherent to this ECQ is the ability to make decisions that produce high-quality results by applying technical knowledge, analyzing problems, and calculating risks. Competencies include: **Accountability, Customer Service, Decisiveness, Entrepreneurship, Problem Solving, and Technical Credibility.**

- **ECQ #4 – Business Acumen –** This core qualification involves the ability to manage human, financial, and information resources strategically. Competencies include: **Financial Management, Human Capital Management, and Technology Management.**

- **ECQ #5 – Building Coalitions –** This core qualification involves the ability to build coalitions internally and with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, non-profit and private sector organizations, foreign governments, or international organizations to achieve common goals. Competencies include: **Partnering, Political Savvy, and Influencing/Negotiating.**

- **ECQ - Fundamental Competencies –** These competencies are the foundation for success in each of the ECQs. Competencies include: **Interpersonal Skills, Oral Communication, Integrity/Honesty, Written Communication, Continual Learning, and Public Service Motivation.**

Application Procedure: Interested applicants must submit all of the following items by no later than **January 5, 2007**. Incomplete application packages will not receive further consideration.

Via Email:
1. OF 612, "Optional Application for Federal Employment", or Resume; and
2. SES CDP Applicant Supplementary Statement (see below for description of this Statement).

Via Email or Fax:
3. Supervisory Assessment of Potential – completed by the applicant's supervisor and faxed or emailed to Janet Lynch or Samantha Schmucker at fax number 202-720-

1067. (which is available at http://www.usda.gov/da/employ/SESCDP/sescdp-program-infor.htm)

4. Certification from their employing agencies that funding for the course is available.

Formatting for OF 612 or Resume and Applicant Supplementary Statement: OF612s or resumes and Applicant Supplementary Statements should be submitted as standard Microsoft Word documents. The font size must be 12-point, and font type must be Times New Roman. Margins should be 1 inch on all four sides of paper. Please include on your OF 612 or resume the following: your Federal agency, sub-agency, and office names; agency address where you are currently working, your work email address and work phone number; your supervisor's work email and phone number; and your series, grade, and step. For both your OF 612 or resume and Applicant Supplementary Statement, please write your full name on all pages and number your pages (1 of x-number). Applicants must include their full names in the subject line of any e-mails. Any OF 612 and/or resume and supplemental narratives received by fax will not be accepted.

Extraneous information not requested in this announcement (for example, cover letters, position descriptions, manuscripts, list of publications, award and training certificates, or personal endorsements) should not be included. Unsolicited materials will be discarded.

SES CDP Applicant Supplementary Statements: Applicants will be evaluated based upon their narrative descriptions including any specific examples of experience, education, training and/or volunteer opportunities, and accomplishments that are applicable to each of the six items listed below. Written statements should reflect the level of capability in each of the five leadership competencies listed below (items 2 through 6), emphasizing the quality of accomplishments, and the results achieved.

While items 2 through 6 below require that applicants focus on a particular ECQ competency, to the extent possible, applicant responses should include examples and experience related to the other competencies associated with that ECQ. For example, item 2 below requests that applicants describe their experience applying the Influencing/Negotiating competency which is associated with ECQ #5 – Building Coalitions. To the extent possible, applicants should also address the Partnering and Political Savvy competencies which are associated with ECQ #5.
Narrative responses for each of the six items must be limited to 2 pages—the Applicant Supplementary Statement may not exceed 12 pages.

1. **Career Goals.** Applicants should describe short term (1-2 year) and long-term (3 years or more) career goals.

2. **Influencing/Negotiating.** Applicants should describe how they persuade others; build consensus through give and take; and gain cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals. To the extent possible, they should include examples and related experience for the other two competencies associated with **ECQ #5 – Building Coalitions.**

3. **Technical Credibility.** Applicants should describe how they understand and appropriately apply principles, procedures, requirements, regulations, and policies related to specialized expertise. To the extent possible, they should include examples and related experience for the other five competencies associated with **ECQ #3 – Results Driven.**

4. **Creativity and Innovation.** Applicants should describe how they develop new insights into situations; question conventional approaches; encourage new ideas and innovations; and design and implement new or cutting edge programs/processes. To the extent possible, they should include examples

and related experience for the other five competencies associated with **ECQ #1 – Leading Change.**

    5. **Developing Others.** Applicants should describe how they develop the ability of others to perform and contribute to the organization by providing ongoing feedback and by providing opportunities to learn through formal and informal methods. To the extent possible, they should include examples and related experience for the other three competencies associated with **ECQ #2 – Leading People.**

    6. **Technology Management.** Applicants should describe how they keep up-to-date on technological developments; make effective use of technology to achieve results; and ensure access to and security of technology systems. To the extent possible, they should include examples and related experience for the other two competencies associated with **ECQ #4 – Business Acumen.**

Candidate Selection Process: The candidate selection process will have four phases. For each phase in the process, those who have qualified will progress forward to the next phase. Candidates will be notified of their status following the completion of each phase of the selection process.

Phase I:	A USDA panel will conduct an ECQ review of the applications received. Applicants will be assigned scores with the top rated moving to Phase II.
Phase II:	A panel comprised of assessors from OPM's Center for Talent Services will conduct structured interviews of applicants. The top applicants will move forward to Phase III.
Phase III:	Assessors from OPM's Center for Talent Services will conduct a one-day assessment of applicants. To ensure fairness and consistency, all applicants will be asked the same questions and evaluated against the same set of criteria. Applicants will take part in simulations that will include writing activities, coaching, and an oral presentation. At the conclusion of the assessments, applicants will receive feedback. OPM's Center for Talent Services will provide a rank ordered applicant listing to the SES CDP Program Manager.
Phase IV:	Those who are selected to participate in the SES CDP will begin their developmental training in the third quarter of fiscal year 2007.

Applicant Notification: Applicants will be notified of the dispositions of their applications by e-mail. Therefore, it is important that applicants include valid e-mail addresses and provide updates, as necessary. Applicants who are selected for the program will be notified telephonically.

Contact Information: Questions about the SES CDP application process or program requirements may be referred to the following Leadership Development Office, OHCM staff:

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