

Shared Capabilities

The shared capabilities needed by national security professionals (NSPs) are driven by the national security threats and opportunities the country faces. Any given response will require different strategies, different specialized/subject-matter expertise, and different tactical approaches. What every response will share, however, is the need for integrated interagency engagement. Recognizing this, the Executive Steering Committee opted to focus on the shared capabilities NSPs need in order to succeed in an *interagency* environment.

It is important to note that the list does not include specialized competencies (e.g., specialized skills required for disaster response, state-building, counter-insurgency, etc). Nor is it linked to rank or GS level – the capabilities are applicable to anyone involved in interagency national security operations, although they were identified with the GS-12 to SES and equivalent grades in mind.

Strategic Thinking – NSPs must understand the country’s national security strategy and the various documents that convey it. They must also be able to: envision future states in collaboration with other agencies; think strategically; and engage in interagency strategic planning.

Critical and Creative Thinking – NSPs must be able to: analyze problems in concert with other agencies; seek out, evaluate, and synthesize information from multiple sources; assess and challenge assumptions; and offer alternative and creative solutions/courses of action.

Leading Interagency Teams - NSPs in leadership roles must be able to: create a shared vision and unity of purpose amongst all the players; win the confidence and trust of all the players; effectively utilize the knowledge, skills, and resources of each team member; develop/mentor staff from other agencies; ensure collaborative problem-solving; and manage internal conflicts.

Collaborating - NSPs must be able to: work with other agencies to accomplish goals; build and maintain networks/relationships that span agencies; and promote an environment that encourages collaboration, integration, and information/knowledge sharing.

Planning and Managing Interagency Operations – NSPs must be able to: develop interagency plans (strategic and operational); execute and monitor interagency operations (i.e., be adept at budget/financial management, project/program management, and performance management/evaluation³ in an interagency environment); maintain strong political and situation awareness; and navigate interagency decision-making processes (i.e., technical level, policy level, political level).

Maintaining Global and Cultural Acuity – NSPs must maintain: an integrated understanding of factors that influence national security (e.g., global/regional/country trends); knowledge of relevant foreign cultures and histories; and foreign language(s) proficiency. NSPs must also be familiar with the structures, processes, and cultures of the other agencies with whom they work.

Mediating and Negotiating – NSPs must be able to mediate disputes and/or negotiate with partners and stakeholders during operations.

Communicating – NSPs must be able to: clearly articulate information (written and verbal); read non-verbal cues; manage the expectations of diverse groups; listen actively; and tailor communications approaches to different circumstances and audiences.