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## ADS Chapter 422

# Personnel Operations: Senior Foreign Service

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 ADS 422 – Personnel Operations: Senior Foreign Service  
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## ADS 422 – Personnel Operations: Senior Foreign Service

### 422.1 OVERVIEW

Effective Date: 12/30/2011

This chapter provides the policies and essential procedures which govern the USAID Senior Foreign Service (SFS) including selection, appointment, assignment, compensation, career conversion, promotion, and separation.

### 422.2 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Effective Date: 04/25/2022

- a. The **Secretary of State** is responsible for the overall administration and direction of the Foreign Service and the coordination of certain activities of the various foreign affairs agencies using the Act (Sec. 201(a) of the Act).
- b. The **USAID Administrator, or designee**, is responsible for:
- 1) Making limited appointments to the Senior Foreign Service (SFS) under Sec. 303 of the Act;
  - 2) Recommending to the President persons to be appointed as career members of the SFS under Sec. 302 of the Act;
  - 3) Determining the amount of performance pay available each year and distributing such based on the recommendations of the Consolidated SFS Selection Board (C/Board); and
  - 4) Granting Limited Career Extensions (LCEs) in accordance with recommendations of the C/Board (see [ADS 440, Time-in-Class \(TIC\) Limitations and Limited Career Extensions \(LCEs\)](#)).
- c. The **Office of Human Capital and Talent Management (HCTM)** is responsible for:
- 1) The day-to-day management of the SFS, including maintenance of personnel files and records; and
  - 2) Supporting various boards impacting the SFS; managing and supporting the selection, assignment, and promotion process; and recommending decisions reserved for the Administrator.
- d. The **Consolidated SFS Selection Board (C/Board)** is responsible for:
- 1) Evaluating the performance, competence and potential of Senior Foreign Service employees;

- 2) Recommending Senior Foreign Service employees for promotion, Presidential and Agency Awards, Performance Awards, salary level adjustments, recertification determinations, separation considerations, withholding of scheduled salary step increases, and other personnel evaluation actions that are identified in this chapter; and
- 3) Reviewing the character, quality of work, industry, usefulness, and experience of Senior Foreign Service employees identified as eligible for Limited Career Extensions and informing the Senior Management Review Board of LCE recommendations as discussed in [ADS 440](#).

e. The **Senior Foreign Service Performance Standards Board (PSB)** is responsible for reviewing the files of all employees referred by the C/Board whose performance is ranked least competitive among their class and decide whether the employees meet the standards of their class, marginally meet the standards of their class, or must be selected out for relative performance (see [ADS 463.7, Precepts for Performance Standards Boards](#)).

f. The **Senior Management Review Board (SMRB)** is responsible for recommending SFS employees for Presidential Awards and adjudicating denial of FS and SFS Agency performance pay award cases referred by the Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Human Capital and Talent Management (SDAA/HCTM) and for advising the Administrator on Limited Career Extensions.

## **422.3 POLICY DIRECTIVES AND REQUIRED PROCEDURES**

### **422.3.1 Promotion and Appointment in the Senior Foreign Service**

Effective Date: 12/30/2011

It is the policy of the Agency to maintain a vigorous SFS characterized by strong policy formulation capabilities, outstanding executive leadership qualities and highly-developed, functional, foreign language and area expertise. Decisions on the numbers of individuals to be promoted into and retained in the Senior Foreign Service (SFS) must be designed to provide a regular and predictable flow of recruitment in the service and of talent upward through the ranks and into the Senior Foreign Service. Employees must be appointed to the SFS under career, career candidate, or non-career appointments.

#### **422.3.1.1 Promotion into the Senior Foreign Service**

Effective Date: 04/25/2022

The SFS must be comprised of not less than 95 percent career officers. Career employees are appointed through promotion of USAID career Foreign Service employees, reappointment or recall of former career employees, or career appointment following service as a career candidate.

All Foreign Service Officers at the **class** 01 level who wish to be considered for

promotion into the Senior Foreign Service must submit an application as per the annual Agency policy notice and instructions on Senior Foreign Service promotion consideration, and will be considered as follows:

- a. Only career employees who have had at least two years in class FS-01 and at least eight years of USAID Direct-Hire experience overseas as of March 31 of the year in which they wish to be first considered for SFS promotion are eligible to apply.
- b. Employees who have applied for promotion will be reviewed by Senior Threshold Boards until they are promoted, their Time-in-Class (TIC) expires (See [ADS 440.3.4](#)), or they withdraw from competition, whichever is earliest.
- c. Employees who withdraw from competition prior to the expiration of their cumulative TIC will revert to their previous status, but should not again apply or be considered for promotion into the SFS.
- d. Appointment into the Senior Foreign Service is made by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate.

Per [ADS 463.3.4](#), the CHCO, **or designee**, may waive the eight-year requirement for overseas service if each of the following conditions are met as of March 31 of the year in which the FS-01 is seeking promotion to SFS:

- 1) The employee has at least six years of USAID overseas assignment experience;
- 2) Submitted application for promotion by March 31 of the year seeking promotion;
- 3) Has bid on overseas assignment in the most recent bidding cycle;
- 4) Did not bid on a Washington assignment in the most recent bidding cycle; and
- 5) The Administrator or the Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO), **or designee**, had directed that the employee be assigned to a domestic position based on the needs of the service, thereby preventing the employee from serving overseas.

#### **422.3.1.2 Promotion Within the Senior Foreign Service**

Effective Date: 12/30/2011

It is Agency policy that employees must compete for promotions within the Senior Foreign Service on a class wide basis.

The evaluation files of all employees, including those serving on Presidential appointments under section 302(b) of the FSA, are reviewed annually by the Senior Foreign Service Consolidated Selection Board (C/Board), which recommends employees for promotion and ranks them in order of merit (see [ADS 463.3.4](#)). The Administrator determines the number of promotions to be awarded for each class based

on HCTM's recommendations. Employees serving on a 607(d)(2) temporary career extension will not be eligible for promotion (see [ADS 440.3.4](#)).

For further information on promotion within the SFS, see [ADS 463.3.5](#).

### **422.3.1.3 Career Candidate Appointments into the Senior Foreign Service**

Effective Date: 12/30/2011

It is Agency policy that an individual must be appointed to the Senior Foreign Service as a career candidate when the combination of educational background, professional work experience, and skills possessed by the applicant is not expected to be available in the immediate future in sufficient numbers in the SFS and only when such an appointment does not cause the number of members in the Senior Foreign Service serving under limited appointments to exceed five percent. This calculation excludes employees assigned to the Peace Corps and treats employees who have reemployment rights (e.g., career SES appointments) as career SFS employees.

#### **a. Eligibility**

To be eligible for appointment into the Senior Foreign Service, all candidates:

- 1) Must be citizens of the United States at the time of appointment;
- 2) Must have had a minimum of 15 years of professional work experience on date of application including at least five years of service in a position of responsibility in a Federal Government agency(ies) or private sector organization(s). The experience acquired must be approximately equivalent to that of USAID Foreign Service members in classes FS-3 through FS-1. The applicant must have been in a position comparable in responsibilities with that of a member in class FS-1 or higher for at least one year; and
- 3) Applicants from outside the Federal Government and federal employees who at the time of application lack the 15 years of professional experience or the five years of service in a position of responsibility should be considered if they are found to possess a combination of educational background, professional work experience and skills needed by USAID at the senior level in job categories normally not staffed by promotion of mid-level career officers.

#### **b. Certification of Need**

Before an application can be processed, the Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Human Capital and Talent Management (DAA/HCTM), must certify that there is a need for the applicant as an SFS career candidate and that the combination of educational background, professional work experience and skills possessed by the applicant is not expected to be available in the immediate future in sufficient numbers in the SFS including by promotion and/or special training of career personnel.

### **c. Application Procedure**

- 1) Applicants must submit to HCTM an application and a narrative statement (not exceeding four typewritten pages) describing their pertinent background and professional work experience. Applicants must also certify that they are willing and able to accept the obligation of worldwide service.
- 2) Agency File: HCTM must establish a file for each applicant composed of all available documentation of value in determining potential for service as an SFS career candidate. For applicants employed by a Federal Government agency, this must include the personnel (performance) file from the employing agency. HCTM must review the file to confirm that the applicant is a U.S. citizen, appears to have the requisite experience, and meets the other requirements for the Career Candidate Program. The file of an applicant who appears to meet these requirements should be forwarded to the Foreign Service Board of Examiners (BEX) with a statement to that effect and a request that the application be processed for consideration under the SFS Career Candidate Program.

### **d. Qualifications Evaluation Panel (QEP)**

- 1) On receipt of the applicant's file, the BEX (see FSA, sect. 211) must appoint a Qualifications Evaluation Panel (QEP) to determine whether the applicant meets eligibility requirements, to assess the applicant's skills against the criteria in E422.5.1c, para. 6, and to recommend whether the applicant should be examined for possible appointment as an SFS career candidate. The Panel must consist of three Deputy Examiners, at least two of whom are USAID SFS career officers. One of the USAID Deputy Examiners, who must be of at least equivalent rank to that of the position for which the applicant is applying, will serve as Panel Chairperson.
- 2) The other USAID Deputy Examiner will serve as drafter of the Panel's report, which is prepared after the drafter has studied the file in depth to determine whether the applicant qualifies for an SFS-level examination. The third examiner must be an SFS officer named by the BEX, who is an SFS career officer from another foreign affairs agency operating under the Act. The completed report must be signed by all three Panel members. If the Panel decides that the applicant is not eligible for examination, the BEX must inform HCTM of the reasons for the decision.

### **e. Qualifying Process**

#### **1) Examination**

- a. Applicants passing the initial evaluation review outlined above must be examined by a panel of SFS Deputy Examiners of the BEX. The panel must examine orally and on the basis of an essay written by the applicant prior to

the oral examination, on a specified topic related to Foreign Service work. The essay requirement can be waived by the BEX at the request of the DAA/HCTM. The purpose of the examination is to determine the applicant's ability to meet the objective of the Act, which provides for an SFS characterized by strong policy formulation capabilities, outstanding executive leadership qualities, and highly developed functional, foreign language and area expertise. The Examining Panel will question the applicant on matters relevant to their qualifications in light of this objective and the criteria in section **422.3.1.3**, para. 6.

- b.** The Oral Examining Panel must be chaired by an SFS career officer of USAID of a rank at least equivalent to that of the position for which the applicant is applying and should be composed of at least one additional Deputy Examiner who is an SFS career officer of USAID and at least one Deputy Examiner named by the BEX who is an SFS career officer from another foreign affairs agency operating under the Act. At least one of the Examining Panel members should represent the specialty of the applicant.
- c.** Following the oral examination, the Examining Panel must discuss the applicant's performance and decide by majority either to recommend or not recommend the applicant for further consideration. Determinations of duly constituted panels of Deputy Examiners are final unless modified by specific action of the BEX. Applicants should be informed of the results of the Examining Panel after the conclusion of the Panel's deliberations.
- d.** The USAID member of the Examining Panel who did not serve as Panel Chairperson must prepare a written report of the oral examination including the written essay if it was required. This report must be signed by all Panel members. It must focus on the professional qualifications and personal qualities demonstrated by the applicant in the examination and document the Panel's judgment on whether to recommend the applicant for further consideration.
- e.** HCTM informs unsuccessful applicants of an Examining Panel's decision that there will be no further consideration of their applications. However, such applicants may reapply under the program after one year has elapsed from the date of the failed examination, should a need for candidates exist at a later time.

## **2) Background Investigation**

Applicants recommended by the Examining Panel will be subject to a background investigation designed to determine suitability for appointment to the Senior Foreign Service.

## **3) Medical Examination**



Applicants recommended by the Examining Panel and their dependents are required to pass a physical examination based on medical standards established by the Department of State, Office of Medical Services. Applicants and dependents who do not meet the required medical standards should, however, be given further consideration if granted waivers of medical deficiencies in accordance with the Agency policies and essential procedures (see [ADS 414, Foreign Service \(FS\) Appointments](#)).

#### **4) Foreign Language Requirement**

Applicants who pass the oral examination will be required to take a subsequent examination at the Foreign Service Institute to measure their fluency in foreign languages and/or aptitude for learning them. An applicant may be appointed as an SFS career candidate without first having passed a foreign language examination but will not be commissioned as a career SFS officer unless language proficiency required for tenuring is achieved. Candidates in BS-08 are exempt from this language requirement. HCTM is responsible for so informing the applicant at the time of appointment as an SFS career candidate.

#### **5) Final Review Panel**

- a. After the results of the background investigation, medical examination and language examinations are received, the entire file of an applicant recommended by the Examining Panel will be reviewed and graded by a Final Review Board consisting of three or more Deputy Examiners of the BEX. The Final Review Panel will decide whether to recommend the applicant for appointment. The Final Review Panel must be chaired by a Deputy Examiner who is a USAID career SFS officer of at least equivalent rank to that for which the applicant is applying; the majority of Panel members must be USAID career SFS officers. At least one Panel member must be a career Foreign Service Officer of one of the other foreign affairs agencies operating under the Act.
- b. Following the Final Review Panel's decision, the applicant's file must be submitted to the BEX. The BEX will either certify the applicant for appointment or inform the applicant that the applicant has been found not qualified for appointment as an SFS career candidate.

### **f. Appointment**

#### **1) Criteria for Appointment as an SFS Career Candidate**

In considering applicants for the USAID Senior Foreign Service (SFS), examination and review panels should assess candidates in relation to the five areas of competency used to judge the performance of persons already in the

USAID Foreign Service (FS): substantive knowledge, leadership qualities, managerial skills, analytical skills and interpersonal skills. Evidence of effectiveness in each of these areas will be judged in the context of USAID's role as an Agency that designs and implements a wide range of economic development programs.

In addition to assessing candidates in these areas of general ability, the examiners should give particular attention to the following factors which are relevant to USAID's overseas development role:

- **Understanding.** Capacity to understand the political, social and economic context of U.S. activities overseas and its relation to USAID's objectives and activities.
- **Adaptability.** Ability to adjust in a foreign setting (especially a Less Developed Country (LDC) environment), including interest, understanding, and accommodation regarding host country organizations and processes, as well as the ability to function in the USAID/Washington setting.
- **Programmatic Expertise.** Capacity to deal with economic, social, and technical matters at the macro and micro levels, particularly in an LDC setting; ability to translate technical and developmental issues into USAID strategy and documentation leading to program/project approval.
- **Implementation.** Ability to translate program/project approvals into actions, including such implementation processes as contracting, procuring and managing fiscal, commodity and human resources; conducting continuous negotiations/dialogue with program/project partners; coordinating with related activities; and periodic program/project evaluations resulting in productive changes, reductions or terminations, as appropriate.
- **Relations.** Creating and maintaining successful relations with senior officials of the host country, other donor organizations and U.S. agencies as a means of advancing USAID objectives and programs.

## 2) Certification of Appointment

An applicant found to meet USAID's standards for appointment will be offered appointment as an SFS career candidate in accordance with the certification of need made by the DAA/HCTM. If due to changed circumstances there is at the time of certification for appointment no immediate requirement, the applicant's application will be retained for a period of up to two years for consideration, along with other applicants, should openings become available.

## 3) Class of Appointment

- a.** In determining the class at which an SFS applicant will be examined and appointed, consideration will be given to the needs of the Agency and to the applicant's skills, abilities, level of experience and prior income. In evaluating qualifications and in conducting examinations, panels must carefully assess applicants to determine whether their total qualifications compare favorably with SFS members at the proposed appointment level. Such qualifications, as evaluated by the examining panels and the BEX, will have an important bearing on USAID's decision to certify an applicant for appointment. However, HCTM must certify an applicant for appointment at or within a different SFS class when the applicant's qualifications clearly warrant such action. USAID normally should not appoint applicants at the Career Minister level since this class is typically reserved for Minister-Counselor promotees. The appointment of members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) to the Senior Foreign Service (SFS) should not be made to a class higher than Minister Counselor (MC).
- b.** In general, demonstrated competence in planning and in managing personnel and other resources is a key requirement for officers in the SFS. This is particularly true at the Minister-Counselor level and almost exclusively the case for Career Ministers. However, this should not be interpreted to limit entry into the SFS only to generalists. At the Counselor level there are senior positions for specialists in the technical and support areas, as well as in mission management. For the most part, these positions should have significant management and policy making dimensions, even in the technical and program support areas. However, at the Counselor level there is also a need for a modest number of highly specialized professionals who may have little or no executive experience or managerial responsibility. These officers must be exceptional specialists who, by virtue of their outstanding professional or technical competence, merit inclusion in the SFS.
- c.** In considering candidates for appointment at the level of Minister Counselor, an even greater emphasis is placed on persons who have excelled in the areas of policy formulation and executive level management. This does not preclude consideration of persons who have progressed through technical or other professional channels. In general, however, such candidates should have demonstrated a broad capacity for managing programs in their own professional discipline and preferably across functional lines as well. While they should not be entirely excluded from consideration, there is little room at the Minister-Counselor level for specialized officers without executive level management skills. Any person considered for appointment at the Minister-Counselor level, on the basis of essentially technical or professional skills, must be an acknowledged and established leader in their field.
- d.** At the Career Minister level, officers are expected to have the capacity for broad substantive and executive leadership. The Career Minister rank is

parallel with Executive Level IV. This is the same rank held by Assistant Administrators in USAID and Assistant Secretaries in the Department of State. Thus, officers appointed as Career Ministers must have the capacity to serve as an Assistant Administrator, or in other position of comparable rank in USAID, the Department of State or international organizations. Consequently, no officer will be considered for appointment as a Career Minister who does not have broad and proven ability to plan and manage large and complex programs.

#### **4) Terms of Appointment**

Offers of appointment must be made in writing by HCTM. SFS career candidates will be appointed for a period not to exceed five years. A career candidate who does not qualify during the trial period to become a career member of the SFS will be separated from the Career Candidate Program no later than the expiration date of the candidate's time-limited appointment. Separated candidates who at the time of their appointments as SFS career candidates were domestic employees of USAID or employees of other Federal Government agencies who were appointed with the consent of the head of that agency, will be entitled to reemployment rights in the agency from which they came in accordance with section 310 of the Act and 5 USC 3597.

##### **422.3.1.4 Non-career Appointments into the Senior Foreign Service**

Effective Date: 12/30/2011

It is Agency policy that non-career appointments must be used primarily to fill special needs overseas for skills categories not required on a long-term basis. Appointments are made by the Administrator and should not exceed five years. The number of members in the Senior Foreign Service serving under limited appointments should not exceed five percent.

SFS employees under non-career limited appointments will be eligible to apply for career candidate status if they qualify under the standards and criteria established for selection of SFS career candidates (see section **422.3.1.3, para. 6**).

##### **422.3.2 Evaluation and Tenuring of SFS Career Candidates**

Effective Date: 12/30/2011

It is the policy of the Agency that the decision to offer a senior career candidate a career appointment in the SFS will be based on the recommendation of the Foreign Service Tenure Board (the Board) that the candidate possesses the fitness and aptitude for the work of the SFS. The Board will not be constrained by any quotas in making its tenuring recommendations. Each certified senior candidate must be evaluated as to their individual fitness and aptitude for the work of the SFS. Senior candidates being reviewed should not be considered in competition with or be judged against other senior candidates under review (see [ADS 463.3.18](#)).

**422.3.3 Compensation Levels for the Senior Foreign Service**

Effective Date: 12/30/2011

Pay levels for the Senior Foreign Service will be based on the Executive Schedule and will be adjusted for relative performance.

The Senior Foreign Service is made up of three classes (Career Minister, Minister Counselor, and Counselor) which are divided into several pay rates equivalent to those established for the Senior Executive Service.

Senior Foreign Service Counselor (OC)	Senior Executive Service ES-1, ES-2, ES-3, ES-4
Minister Counselor (MC)	ES-4, ES-5
Career Minister (CM)	ES-6

**Pay Setting Process for SFS Employees**

**a. Entering from the Civil Service.** Civil Service (CS) employees granted limited appointments to the Counselor or Minister Counselor classes will receive the lowest Executive Schedule (ES) salary level for the class to which appointed that equals or exceeds the employee's scheduled rate of pay immediately before appointment. Exceptions for an advanced rate will be granted by the Administrator, or designee, if it is determined that the employee possesses needed qualifications not currently available in USAID and which warrant a higher ES level (this usually will apply to Senior Executive Service (SES) employees; CS employees in grades GS/GM-15 and below usually are not appointed to the SFS). SES employees converting to the SFS will not be appointed to a class higher than Minister Counselor.

**b. Entering from the Senior Executive Service.** A career SES employee who accepts a limited SFS appointment in a salary class for which the highest basic salary rate is less than the employee's existing SES basic salary rate will receive the following pay retention benefits (sec. 402(b) of the Act):

- 1) The employee will preserve the benefits of the existing payable rate (and the existing scheduled rate of pay, if different);
- 2) The employee's SES existing payable rate will be adjusted by 50 percent of each subsequent SES pay adjustment granted under 5 USC 5382; and
- 3) The employee will continue to receive the SES existing payable rate as adjusted until the new applicable basic salary rate in the appropriate SFS class equals or exceeds the SES payable rate.

**c. Appointments from Outside the Government.** The salary level for those appointed from outside the government to a limited appointment normally will be ES-1 for the Counselor and ES-4 for the Minister Counselor classes. The Administrator, or designee, may make exceptions for an advanced rate at the Counselor class based

on:

- 1) A determination that the individual possesses needed qualifications not currently available in USAID; and
- 2) The individual's documented annual earnings, e.g., by most recent federal income tax return.

**d. Promotion into the Senior Foreign Service.** USAID employees promoted to the rank of Counselor will receive the lowest ES salary level which exceeds the employee's scheduled rate of pay by not less than two step increases of the FS-01 salary class or six percent (whichever is greater), but not to exceed the ES-4 level. The salary level for employees promoted to the Minister Counselor class will be ES-4 unless the promotee was already at that level, in which case, the salary level will be ES-5. The salary level for employees promoted to the Career Minister class will be ES-6.

**e. Presidential Appointees.** An employee, who is appointed to any position in the Executive Branch by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate, or by the President alone, is considered to be on assignment under section 302(b) of the Act and retains career status as a member of USAID's Senior Foreign Service. The employee may elect to continue to receive the salary of the employee's salary class, to remain eligible for performance pay, and to receive the leave to which they are entitled as a member of the SFS. Alternatively, the employee may elect to receive the salary and leave (if any) of the position to which appointed by the President.

**422.3.3.1 Salary Level Adjustments**  
 Effective Date: 04/25/2022

The HCTM must periodically review the eligibility of Senior Foreign Service employees for salary adjustments. Based on C/Board and Performance Standards Board (PSB) recommendations, HCTM must determine the action necessary and will affect the indicated salary adjustments. Employees serving in positions to which appointed by the President or who are paid at an extraordinary rate or under other assignment modalities will be eligible for the FE salary levels, which would have been received if they had been continuously paid under the SFS salary schedule.

Adjustments in FE salary levels will be affected as follows:

CLASS	SALARY LEVEL	POSSIBLE ADJUSTMENTS
FE-CM	FE-6	None
FE-MC	FE-5	Decrease
	FE-4	Increase/Deferral
FE-OC	FE-4	Decrease
	FE-3	Increase/Deferral/ Decrease

FE-2	Increase/Deferral/ Decrease
FE-1	Increase/Deferral

### **a. Eligibility for an Increase**

- 1) If provided for in the above table and not otherwise affected by E422.5.3a, para. 3 and/or para. 4, an increase of one FE level will be granted if the employee has:
  - Served at least 24 months in USAID's SFS and was reviewed by two C/Boards since their last FE salary level adjustment. The waiting period will be extended by all time spent in leave without pay status which totals 80 or more hours in any one leave year;
  - As determined by the C/Board and/or Performance Standards Board (PSB), fully met the standards of performance of their class during the prior two years; and
  - Been ranked in the upper two-thirds of their class by the C/Board for the latest rating period being considered.

### **b. Effective Date of Increases**

Except as provided in E422.5.3a, para. 3 and/or para. 4, a salary level increase will be affected as of the first day of the pay period after the Board approves such increase, provided the employee has met the criteria and completion of the required waiting period.

### **c. Deferral of Eligibility for an Increase**

- 1) Employees not ranked in the upper two-thirds of their class will not receive increases for the reviewed cycles but will be reviewed again during subsequent evaluation cycles.
- 2) Employees whose performance is determined by a PSB to have only marginally met the standards of their class and who receive a letter to this effect from HCTM will have their salary level increase waiting period extended by at least two years for each such determination.
- 3) Additionally, the DAA/HCTM, will order deferral of an employee's eligibility for a salary level increase if the DAA/HCTM determines such increase is inconsistent with the national interest or efficiency of the Service. Such reasons must be based on:
  - Issues of loyalty, security, misconduct, suitability or malfeasance; or

- Indications that information available to the employee's rating officer or in the employee's evaluation file has been significantly inaccurate or incomplete.

The DAA/HCTM, must promptly inform the employee in writing of the decision to initiate, pursue, or monitor an inquiry, investigation, or proceeding for a deferral of their eligibility for a salary level increase if not inimical to the inquiry or investigation. If so notified, the employee will be given an opportunity to submit to the DAA/HCTM whatever documents and information the employee believes are pertinent to the case.

Upon completion of the review or resolution of the issue(s), the DAA/HCTM, will:

- Determine that there is no basis for denying the increase and request that action be taken to effect the increase as of the date it would have been effective if not deferred;
- Defer the employee's eligibility for an increase for as long as deemed appropriate but in no case less than one year beyond the individual's original eligibility date. Upon completion of the additional waiting period, the employee will then be eligible to receive an increase if the employee meets the requirements as stated in section **422.3.3.2**; or
- Reduce FE salary level as outlined in section **422.3.3.1, para. 4, letter b.**

#### **d. Reduction in FE Salary Level**

- 1) If a PSB determines that an employee did not meet the performance standards of their class and the employee receives a letter to this effect from HCTM, the employee's salary will be reduced one level, but not below the lowest level for the employee's class.
- 2) At conclusion of the investigation and/or review(s) outlined in E422.5.3b, para. 3, if the nature of the infraction is, in the judgment of the DAA/HCTM, grossly inconsistent with the national interest or efficiency of the Service, the Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Human Capital and Talent Management must order a reduction in the employee's salary level. Such reduction must be one or more levels, but not below the lowest level for the employee's class.

#### **e. Recertification**

Salary and **class** levels are also subject to adjustments through the recertification process (see [ADS 463.3.12](#)).

#### **422.3.3.2**

#### **Performance Pay**

Effective Date: 04/25/2022



Performance pay must include Agency and Presidential Awards and must take into account the criteria established by HCTM for performance awards under sections 5384 and 4507 of the United States Code. Employees eligible for performance pay awards will be reviewed as a group by the C/Board. The C/Board then recommends employees for awards and ranks them in order of merit. Employees will be compared and judged solely on merit with absolute fairness and justice. In particular, no employee will be advantaged or disadvantaged, directly or indirectly, for reasons of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, disability, or means of entry into the Service. Not more than 50 percent of the members of the Senior Foreign Service will receive performance pay in any fiscal year (in accordance with the provisions of Section 405 (b)(1) of the Foreign Service Act). Notwithstanding this provision, the Agency historically awards bonuses to 35 percent or fewer of the members of the Senior Foreign Service.

Non-career employees and employees who are appointed to any position in the Executive Branch by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate, or by the President alone, are not eligible to receive performance pay except for those SFS officers on Presidential appointments who elect to retain the salary and benefits of their SFS class (in accordance with Section 302(b) of the Foreign Service Act) and employees serving under non-career Senior Foreign Service appointments with reemployment rights under sec. 310 of the Act as career SES appointees.

#### **a. Agency Awards**

Agency awards are conferred by the Agency based on performance during the most recent rating period.

- 1) Individual awards should not exceed 20 percent of basic salary and are subject to the limits on the total number of awards established by law.
- 2) An employee must have been a member of the SFS on the last day of the rating period and have been evaluated on the Annual Evaluation Form, Ambassadorial letter, or as otherwise provided in [ADS 462](#), for a period of at least 90 days during the rating period (see [ADS 462, Employee Evaluation Program, Civil Service](#)).
- 3) C/Board Review and Recommendations
  - The Administrator, or designee, will determine the number and amounts of awards. The Board must be advised by memorandum in advance by the DAA/HCTM of the number and amounts of awards the Board will designate. A copy of the memorandum must be placed in a sealed envelope in the presence of the exclusive representative and opened in the presence of the exclusive representative after the Board has completed its work.

- The C/Board must review the files of eligible employees as a group.
- The Board must review each employee's performance and, based solely on the material in their PEF for the rating period for which the Board has been convened (except as provided for in E422.5.3c(5)), recommend awards within the number authorized. The Board will rank those recommended in order of merit. The full number of awards authorized will be paid in the order recommended. Not more than 50 percent of the members of the Senior Foreign Service will receive performance pay in any fiscal year (in accordance with the provisions of Section 405 (b)(1) of the Foreign Service Act). Notwithstanding this provision, the Agency historically awards bonuses to 35 percent or fewer of the members of the Senior Foreign Service.
- The Board must base its decisions only on material properly part of an employee's PEF. Board members will neither seek nor receive any information on employees other than that included in their PEF except as provided below.
- A Board member may provide information to the Board that is not in a PEF but is relevant to an employee's performance during the rating period under review only as provided for in [ADS 463, Foreign Service Promotion Eligibility Requirements and Performance Boards](#), Selection Board Operations and Materials (see [ADS 463.3.6](#)).
- For further information on the operations of the C/Board, see [ADS 463](#).

#### 4) Submission of Award List and Recommendations

- The Board must prepare a rank ordered list of awardees with award amounts, which reflect its determination on the apportionment of awards. The list should be annotated to indicate any awards recommended at amounts less than the maximum authorized. This list must be prepared and signed by the Board members and be made a part of the Board's final report. The Board is encouraged to submit recommendations concerning changes and/or improvements in policies and procedures for subsequent Boards.
- The DAA/HCTM must accept the report or return it for review if questions exist on use of procedures and/or precepts. Upon accepting the report, the DAA/HCTM must forward the award list to the Administrator. Except as provided in section **422.3.3a(d)(3)**, the Agency will, at the earliest feasible date thereafter, publish an alphabetical list of award recipients and pay the amounts in accordance with the Board's rank-ordered list.
- The DAA/HCTM will review the Board's rank-ordered lists of awardees and consult appropriate offices to determine if any employee named has been or

is the subject of an administrative action, investigation or proceeding involving loyalty, security or malfeasance. If an employee is the subject of a covered action but it is not completed at the time of the Director's review, the employee's name will be temporarily removed from the list. If the nature and/or status of the action permit, employees whose names are permanently or temporarily removed from the list will be so notified in writing by the DAA/HCTM.

When a name is temporarily removed from the list, the award and any corresponding award funds must be held until resolution of the covered action. If the action is decided in the employee's favor and the DAA/HCTM determines such is not inconsistent with the national interest or efficiency of the Service, any previously designated award will be honored and paid. If decided against the employee and/or the results are such that the DAA/HCTM determines granting the award is inconsistent with the national interest or efficiency of the Service, the Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Human Capital and Talent Management must void the employee's status. Performance award monies will be paid as soon as feasible after conclusion of a covered action.

## **b. Presidential Awards**

Presidential Awards include the Distinguished Service Award for sustained extraordinary accomplishment which carries a payment of up to \$20,000 and the Meritorious Service Award for sustained superior accomplishment which carries a payment of up to \$10,000.

- 1) Presidential Awards are conferred by the President based on recommendations of an Interagency Selection Board (IASB) reviewing SFS employees nominated by the foreign affairs agencies. Agency nominations for Presidential Awards are made by the C/Board and reviewed by the Senior Management Review Board (SMRB).
  - To facilitate the SMRB's work, the C/Board will nominate employees and prepare statements of justification supporting each nomination for consideration by the SMRB. The DAA/HCTM will advise the C/Board in advance of the authorized number of nominations for the Distinguished and Meritorious Service awards. The Board must review the records of all eligible employees together and without regard to its recommendations for Agency awards. Applying the criteria in [ADS 463mad, Section D, Selection Criteria](#), the Board must nominate and rank in order of merit up to, but not more than, the authorized number of nominees for each award. The list of nominees must be included in the Board's report to the DAA/HCTM and will be made available to the SMRB.
  - The SMRB will review the PEFs of employees nominated by the C/Board and

of any other eligible employees it judges worthy of consideration. The SMRB should bear in mind the criteria in ADS 463 and give due weight to the C/Board recommendations (see [ADS 463](#)).

- The SMRB must submit its report of nominations, with the justification statements, to the Administrator, who will review these recommendations
  - All nominations with the justification statements will be reviewed and approved by the Administrator in light of the interagency regulatory requirement that the Agency assure "... that the record and character of each nominee fully warrant recognition by the President should the nominee be selected for an award." On concluding this review, the Administrator must forward approved nominations, with justification statements, to the Interagency Selection Board for consideration in accordance with agreed interagency procedures.
- 2) Presidential Awards will be conferred on no more than six percent of the members of the SFS, calculated based on the total number of SFS as of the last day of the performance cycle. No more than one percent may receive the Distinguished Service Award.
  - 3) Officers having held a recently terminated Presidential appointment made under section 302(b) of the FSA need not have been rated for the last rating period, but must have been a member of the Senior Foreign Service on the last day of the rating period and have performance reports in their evaluation file covering three or more years in SFS classes (or their career equivalent) as of the end of the most recent rating period in order to be eligible for a Presidential Award.
  - 4) Any employee who receives a Distinguished or Meritorious Service award will not be entitled to receive that same award during the following four fiscal years, nor to receive any Presidential Award in the immediate subsequent year.

### **c. Payment of Performance Pay**

- 1) Awards, which are calculated as a percentage of annual salary, are determined using the basic salary rates in effect at the end of the subject rating period. The total amount of basic salary plus performance pay received in any fiscal year is subject to the limitation specified in sec. 405(b)(4) of the Act. However, any amount which is not payable due to such limitation will be paid in a lump sum at the beginning of the following fiscal year.
- 2) Employees may be nominated for both an Agency and a Presidential Award. However, an employee will not receive both awards for the same competition year. Agency awards will be paid in accordance with the C/Board's rank order and in the amounts indicated. Payment will be made without regard to possible subsequent conferral of Presidential Awards.

- 3) If an employee who is selected for a Presidential Award has been paid an Agency award already, the Agency award must be canceled and the employee will receive the Presidential Award instead. The amount of the Presidential Award will be reduced by the amount already paid as an Agency award. The employee's name must then be deleted from the Agency award list.

#### **422.3.4 Selection Board Precepts - SFS Salary Level Adjustments and Performance Pay**

Effective Date: 04/25/2022

The SFS Consolidated Selection Board (C/Board) will be guided by established criteria in making recommendations for SFS salary level adjustments and performance pay awards. In applying these criteria, the Board must recognize that not all employees will have had the opportunity to demonstrate achievement in all of the areas cited. Board members will not assess performance on the basis of the number of criteria met, but rather the demonstrated contributions and accomplishments achieved.

##### **a. Presidential Award Nominations**

In addition to the criteria listed in [ADS 463](#), Evaluation Considerations, employees must have demonstrated sustained superior or outstanding accomplishment as an SFS employee (or equivalent) for at least three rating periods (see [463.3.5](#)). Evidence of such sustained accomplishment will be found in:

- 1) Significant contributions to the national interest in the area of foreign affairs;
- 2) Managerial accomplishments in cooperative efforts with other foreign affairs agencies, federal agencies, government entities and/or the private sector; and
- 3) Achievements of Agency-wide importance in policy, technical, program and/or human resource terms.

Nominations for Presidential Awards will recognize the most capable, deserving and accomplished employees of the Service who warrant this singular honor due to exceptional contributions and because their integrity and worthiness of public trust are beyond question.

#### **422.3.5 Assignment of Senior Foreign Service Officers**

Effective Date: 12/30/2011

It is the Agency's policy that SFS employees must be available to serve in assignments throughout the world. Employees are obligated to serve abroad and should expect to serve abroad for substantial portions of their careers.

Senior Foreign Service employees will not be assigned to duty in the United States for any continuous period exceeding eight years unless the Administrator approves in

writing an extension due to special circumstances. USAID will assign career employees to duty in the United States at least once during each 15-year period.

SFS employees are assigned to positions through either of the following assignment mechanisms:

- 1) **Senior Management Group (SMG).** As chaired by the Administrator or Deputy Administrator, the SMG considers and recommends for the Administrator's approval appointments to all SMG positions overseas and in USAID/W (contact HCTM); or
- 2) **Assignment Board.** Assignments for employees not being considered for SMG positions are made in accordance with [ADS 436](#).

#### **422.3.6 Career Counseling** Effective Date: 12/30/2011

HCTM provides a career counseling service designed to ensure full consideration of Senior Management Group assignment preferences and Agency needs so that employees have timely information on assignment options and prospects, e.g., Agency issuances containing career related information. The career development system provides specialized assignment and training opportunities to broaden technical and managerial skills of USAID's executive corps.

HCTM also identifies junior and mid-level employees deemed to have potential for advancement to the executive ranks. As appropriate, HCTM tracks the assignment and training of those employees to monitor their capacity for assuming such responsibilities.

#### **422.3.7 Separation from the Senior Foreign Service** Effective Date: 12/30/2011

##### **a. Termination of Limited Appointments**

The Agency will be able to terminate at any time the appointment of any employee serving under a limited appointment (except as provided in Section 610 of the Foreign Service Act).

##### **b. Retirement for Expiration of Time in Class**

See [ADS 440, Time-in-Class Limitations \(TIC\) and Limited Career Extensions \(LCE\)](#).

##### **c. Retirement Based on Relative Performance**

Career employees are subject to retirement based on relative performance in accordance with Sec. 608 of the Act.

**d. Separation for Cause**

The Administrator may separate any Foreign Service employee for such cause as will promote the efficiency of the Service as provided in Sec. 610 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980 (see [ADS 450, Termination of Time-Limited Appointments-Foreign Service \(FS\)](#)).

**e. Voluntary Retirement**

Any participant who is at least 50 years of age and has 20 years of creditable service, including at least five years of service credit toward retirement under the system (excluding military service) may on their own application and with the consent of the Secretary be retired from the Service and receive retirement benefits in accordance with Sec. 806 of the FSA of 1980 (see Sec. 810 of the FSA of 1980).

**f. Mandatory Retirement at Age 65.****422.3.8 Actions Based on Merit Principles**

Effective Date: 12/30/2011

Actions effected under this chapter should be based on merit principles. In particular, no employee will be advantaged or disadvantaged, either directly or indirectly, for reasons of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, disability or other means of entry into the Service.

Except as prohibited by law, Agency discretionary provisions in this chapter may be waived by the DAA/HCTM, based on the needs of the Agency.

**422.4 MANDATORY REFERENCES****422.4.1 External Mandatory References**

Effective Date: 12/30/2011

- a. [22 USC 3965, Performance pay](#)
- b. [Executive Order 12293 \(2/23/81\), Salary Classes](#)
- c. [Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended](#)
- d. [Pub. L. 97-241 \(8/24/82\), Appropriations Bill](#)

**422.4.2 Internal Mandatory References**

Effective Date: 12/30/2011

- a. [ADS 414, Foreign Service \(FS\) Appointments](#)
- b. [ADS 436, Foreign Service Assignments and Tours of Duty](#)



- c. [ADS 440, Time-in-Class \(TIC\) Limitations and Limited Career Extensions \(LCEs\)](#)
- d. [ADS 450, Termination of Time-Limited Appointments – Foreign Service \(FS\)](#)
- e. [ADS 462, Employee Evaluation Program, Civil Service](#)
- f. [ADS 463, Foreign Service and Senior Foreign Service Promotion Eligibility Requirements and Procedures](#)

**422.5**            **ADDITIONAL HELP**  
Effective Date: 04/25/2022

There are no additional help documents for this chapter.

**422.6**            **DEFINITIONS**  
Effective Date: 12/30/2011

See the [ADS Glossary](#) for all ADS terms and definitions.

**Board of Examiners**

Board established to develop and supervise the administration of examinations to be given to candidates for appointment in the Foreign Service. The Board includes representatives of agencies utilizing the Foreign Service personnel system and representatives of other agencies which have responsibility for employment testing. **(Chapter 422)**

**Distinguished Service Award**

Presidential Award for sustained extraordinary accomplishment, which carries a payment of up to \$20,000. **(Chapter 422)**

**Foreign Service Tenure Board**

Board responsible for reviewing career records of Foreign Service career-candidate employees in order to determine whether or not to recommend tenure (career-status) to employees. **(Chapter 422)**

**Interagency Selection Board (IASB)**

Interagency board that makes recommendations to the President upon reviewing Senior Foreign Service employees nominated by the foreign affairs agencies for Presidential awards. **(Chapter 422)**

**Limited Career Extension (LCE)**

Appointment extensions, in accordance with Section 607(b) of the Foreign Service Act, to career Senior Foreign Service employees who have reached their maximum Time-in-Class. Members of the Service serving under such limited career extensions continue to be career members of the Service. **(Chapters 422, [440](#), and [463](#))**



**Meritorious Service Award**

Presidential award for sustained superior accomplishment which carries a payment of up to \$10,000. (**Chapter 422**)

**Performance Evaluation File (PEF)**

An evaluation file established for each Foreign Service Officer as part of the employee's Official Personnel File. (**Chapter 422**)

**Performance Standards Board**

Board responsible for reviewing the files of all employees referred by the C/Board whose performance is ranked least competitive among their class and decide whether the employees meet the standards of their class, marginally meet the standards of their class, or should be selected out for relative performance. (**Chapter 422**)

**Qualifications Evaluation Panel (QEP)**

Panel appointed by the Board of Examiners to determine whether an applicant meets the statutory and other eligibility requirements, to assess the applicant's skills for the certification of need issued by the prospective employing agency, and to recommend whether the applicant should be examined for possible appointment as a Senior Career Candidate for the SFS Career Candidate Program. (**Chapter 422**)

**Senior Foreign Service Career Candidate Program**

Appointment to the Senior Foreign Service for a limited period not to exceed five years as a career candidate. A career candidate who does not qualify during the trial period to become a career member of the Senior Foreign Service is separated from the Career Candidate Program no later than the expiration date of the candidate's time-limited appointment. (**Chapter 422**)

**Senior Foreign Service Classes**

The Senior Foreign Service consists of three ranks or classes Counselor, Minister Counselor, and the senior most level, Career Minister. (**Chapter 422**)

**Senior Foreign Service Consolidated Selection Board (C/BOARD)**

Board convened annually by the Director, Office of Human Capital and Talent Management and the Inspector General for Backstop 08 personnel to evaluate the performance, competence, and potential of Senior Foreign Service employees. The Board makes recommendations for promotions, Presidential and Agency Awards, salary level adjustments, recertification determinations, separation considerations, limited career extensions, and withholding of scheduled salary step increases. (**Chapter 422**)

**Senior Foreign Service Non-career Appointment**

Limited Senior Foreign Service appointment used primarily to fill special needs overseas for skill categories not required on a long-term basis. Appointments are made by the Administrator and are not to exceed five years. (**Chapter 422**)

**Senior Management Review Board**

Advisory panel to the Administrator which is responsible for recommending Senior Foreign Service employees for Presidential Awards, adjudicating denial of Foreign Service and Senior Foreign Service Agency performance pay award cases referred by the Director of Human Capital and Talent Management, and for advising the Deputy Administrator on Limited Career Extensions. (**Chapter 422**)

**Senior Threshold Board**

Board which reviews Foreign Service officers who have applied for promotion into the Senior Foreign Service. (**Chapter 422**)

**Time-In-Class**

Limitations on the maximum time which may be spent in the Foreign Service or in any one class of the Senior Foreign Service. (**Chapter 422** and [440](#))

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