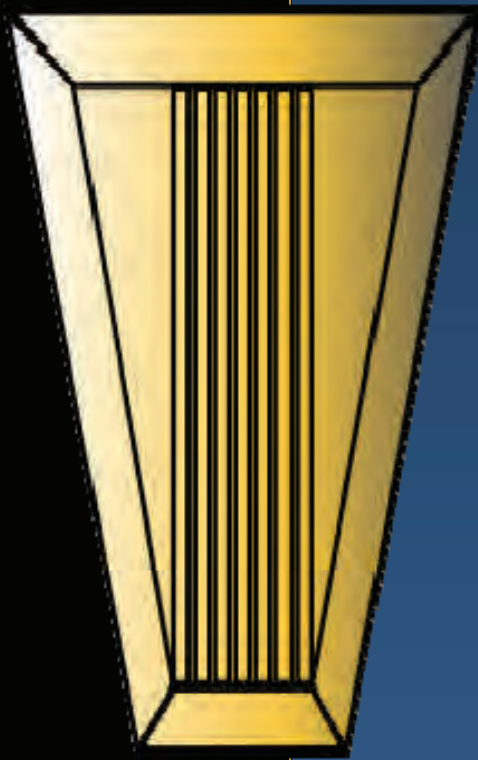


**Training
and
Development
for the
Senior
Executive
Service:
A Necessary
Investment**



A Report to the President and the Congress of the United States
by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

DECEMBER 2015

THE CHAIRMAN



U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD
1615 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20419-0001

The President
President of the Senate
Speaker of the House of Representatives

Dear Sirs:

In accordance with the requirements of 5 U.S.C. § 1204(a)(3), it is my honor to submit this U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) report, *Training and Development for the Senior Executive Service: A Necessary Investment*. In an era of fiscal austerity and limited resources, effective training and development is key to supporting executive performance and holding executives accountable for results.

The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (CSRA) states that the Senior Executive Service (SES) is to be managed so as to “provide for the initial and continuing systematic development of highly competent senior executives.” Confirming the wisdom of that vision, research has found that appropriately designed, delivered, and implemented training and development can improve performance. Accordingly, Federal agencies should view SES training and development as a necessary investment in individual and organizational performance rather than a discretionary expenditure or activity.

Unfortunately, our review of current practices indicates that the “systematic development” envisioned by the CSRA is more vision than reality. Practices for managing senior executive training vary widely across the Federal Government and, sometimes, even within a given agency. In a 2011 survey of the SES conducted by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 50 percent of career senior executives reported that they did not have an Executive Development Plan—a document that is required by regulation—and 30 percent reported that their developmental needs are not met. A more planned and coordinated approach is necessary.

To that end, this report discusses common barriers to SES training and development and offers strategies to mitigate them. The report also provides detailed information on training and development activities to help Federal agencies determine and implement a strategy that aligns with agency goals and resources and effectively meets executives’ developmental needs.

I believe this report is especially timely in light of heightened attention to the SES and recent initiatives intended to improve accountability and performance. I hope you will find it useful as you consider ways to improve agency performance and strengthen the Federal service.

Respectfully,

Susan Tsui Grundmann

Enclosure



**TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR THE
SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE:
A NECESSARY INVESTMENT**



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U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD

Susan Tsui Grundmann, *Chairman*

Mark A. Robbins, *Member*

OFFICE OF POLICY AND EVALUATION

Director

James M. Read

Deputy Director

James Tsugawa

Project Manager

Tanya L. Page

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The seventh merit system principle states, “Employees should be provided effective education and training in cases in which such education and training would result in better organizational and individual performance.”¹ This principle is particularly important for managing the Senior Executive Service (SES). Because the scope of senior executives’ duties and influence can have wide-ranging organizational impact, agencies should view expenditures on executive training and development as an investment in organizational performance. Yet, lack of time and funding have been persistent barriers to employee development. This perhaps may be most prevalent at the highest levels of government where the impact can be greatest. Therefore, it is critical to “provide for the initial and continuing systematic development of highly competent senior executives.”²

Conclusions

Federal Agency Practices. Training and development can improve individual and organizational performance when properly designed, delivered, and implemented.³ Thus, an investment in executive training and development can yield substantial returns in the form of higher performance. However, there appears to be no systematic way that senior executives are trained and developed. In some agencies, the training and development of career senior executives is managed centrally, in some it is managed locally, and in others it is a combination of the two. The number and types of training offered executives vary widely across agencies and perhaps between units within the same agency. Only half of career senior executives⁴ have completed an Executive Development Plan (EDP) to guide their developmental activities as stipulated by regulation.⁵

Leadership and Technical Competencies. As expected, leadership skills are necessary for the successful performance of senior executives. However, technical skills are also necessary in many instances. Survey data and an analysis of SES job announcements show that agencies often require applicants to possess both technical and leadership skills to be considered qualified. These findings highlight the divide between the original vision of the SES, under which leadership and fundamental competencies would be sufficient, and the current practice, under which technical skills are required to serve in most SES positions.

Unmet Developmental Needs. A sizeable portion (30 percent) of career senior executives indicated that their developmental needs are not met.⁶ The main

¹ 5 U.S.C. § 2301.

² 5 U.S.C. § 3131(12).

³ Salas, E., Tannenbaum, S.J., Kraiger, K, and Smith-Jentsch, K.A. (2012). The science of training and development in organizations: What matters in practice. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 13(2), 74-101.

⁴ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

⁵ 5 C.F.R. § 412.401.

⁶ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

reasons given are inability to take time away from the job and lack of funding. While executives are responsible for their own development, agencies also are responsible for providing the tools that enable success. One tool is appropriate training.

Impact of Leadership. Whether in the public or private sector, leadership has far-reaching consequences. Good leadership can have a positive impact on organizational reputation, productivity, profitability, and employee job satisfaction and motivation.

Leadership in the Federal Government. Career senior executives hold high-level positions within the Federal Government. Usually they serve through multiple administrations and provide continuity during Presidential transitions. Often their positions are directly below political appointees, making them the link between political appointees and the Federal workforce.

Heredity and Environment. Are leaders born or made? The answer appears to be that they are both. Genetics may influence those who assume leadership positions, but environment – training and development experiences, education, work experiences, and life experiences – likely also plays a major role.

Competency Trainability. Some competencies are more trainable than others. Therefore as a practical matter, organizations should provide training on those competencies that are more responsive to training and select individuals based on the competencies that are less responsive to training.

Recommendations

Policy Makers and Organizational Leaders

Examine the current roles, duties and responsibilities of the SES. Determine the desired roles, duties, and responsibilities. If they are different, identify the impact on recruitment, compensation, selection, training, and performance management. Then develop strategies to achieve the desired results, monitor the progress, evaluate the outcomes, and make adjustments as needed.

Organizational Leaders

- Support executive development. Top leadership support for training and development is essential. Individuals at the highest organizational levels can create a climate that encourages a continuous learning environment and contribute to transfer of training. When top leaders express through verbal and written communication, by example (*e.g.*, attending training activities, serving as the keynote speaker, or presenting at organization training events) and by providing resources (*e.g.*, funding, staff), they send a clear message about the importance of continuous growth and improvement.

- Hold all employees in leadership positions accountable for developing their direct reports. According to the Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) for developing others, supervisors are responsible for providing ongoing feedback and training and developmental opportunities through formal or informal methods.
- Embed leadership development programs in the organization (*e.g.*, performance management, rewards and recognition). This will help training and development activities “weather changes in administrations, organizational structures, and resources.”⁷

U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

Serve as clearinghouse to announce developmental assignments so the Executive Resources Board (ERB),⁸ supervisors of executives, and executives will be aware of the available developmental opportunities. USAJOBS may be modified to incorporate this information.

Executive Resources Boards and Supervisors of Senior Executives

- Ensure that EDPs are completed for all senior executives, including the executive’s training needs and professional interests, and align training and development activities with the organization’s missions, goals, and strategic plans. Involve the executive in the development of his or her EDP and selection of developmental activities.
- Review and apply, where appropriate, the strategies proposed by respondents to the Questionnaire for Agencies for the MSPB Study on Training and Development of Senior Executives to mitigate the barriers for training and developing senior executives.
- Determine the best approach for training and developing executives by weighing the advantages, disadvantages, costs, and measures of training effectiveness considering the organization’s resources, and its current and future needs.
- Evaluate effectiveness of training and development activities. Use the information to determine whether the training should be continued, how it can be improved, and the circumstances under which it can most effectively be used.

⁷ Turner, J. (Winter 2007-08). Developing executive leadership in the public sector. *The Public Manager*, 49-55. Accessed at: <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Developing+executive+leadership+in+the+public+sector%3a+government...-a0175444584>.

⁸ Each agency establishes an Executive Resources Board or similar designated body that conducts the merit staffing process for career senior executives and is responsible for overseeing executive development.

Supervisors of Senior Executives

- Engage in supportive behaviors such as communicating the importance of learning, providing feedback, supporting time away from the job to participate in training, and involving the executive in his or her own EDP and the selection of developmental activities.
- Provide opportunities for executives to reflect, receive feedback, and practice or otherwise use (*e.g.*, present material to colleagues, conduct after-action reviews) what they learned in training.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Federal Government is faced with complex, ongoing, and ever-changing challenges. Missions must be accomplished with fewer workers and financial resources while the demand for products and services, and the expectation of efficiency and effectiveness, continue to increase. If agencies are to accomplish their missions, they must have capable leaders who, among other qualities, can think creatively, work collaboratively, inspire employees, and maximize the use of available resources.

As leaders of Federal agencies and the Federal workforce, senior executives have important jobs. Their decisions, words, and actions can (and usually do) have far-reaching consequences for how well their agencies function. They play a pivotal role in promoting policies and practices that can encourage workforce engagement and morale and in fostering workplace conditions that enable employees to be at their best.

Good leadership is essential for accomplishing an organization's goals, fostering a positive workplace culture and employee engagement, and avoiding harm to the organization's reputation. Good leadership behaviors (*e.g.*, communicating key performance indicators, setting goals, monitoring performance, soliciting ideas from direct reports, and listening to needs and concerns of direct reports) are associated with positive results such as increased productivity, profitability, job satisfaction, motivation, and reduced employee turnover.⁹

To be successful, senior executives must possess a wide range of leadership skills to perform the multiplicity of duties inherent in carrying out an agency's mission. To help ensure leaders are prepared for their roles, they must be engaged in on-going training and development activities.

Training can be defined as the “acquisition of skills, concepts, or attitudes that result in improved performance in an on-the-job environment.”¹⁰ Development can be defined as “the expansion of an individual's capacity to function effectively

⁹ Bloom, N. and Van Reenen, J. (2007). Measuring and explaining management practices across firms and countries. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 4, 1351-1408; Judge, T.A. and Piccolo, R.F. (2004). Transformational and transactional leadership: A meta-analytic test of their relative validity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89(5), 755-768; Rodgers, R. and Hunter, J.E. (1992). A foundation of good management practice in government: Management by objectives. *Public Administration Review*, 52(1), 27-39; Harter, J.K., Schmidt, F.L., and Hayes, T.L. (2002). Business-unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(2), 268-279.

¹⁰ Goldstein, I.L. (1980). Training in work organizations. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 31(1), 229-272. According to 5 U.S.C. § 4101, training is “the process of providing for and making available to an employee, and placing or enrolling the employee in, a planned, prepared, and coordinated program, course, curriculum, subject, system or routine of instruction or education, in scientific, professional, technical, mechanical, trade, clerical, fiscal, administrative, or other fields which will improve individual and organizational performance and assist in achieving the agency's mission and performance goals.”

in his or her present or future job and work organization.”¹¹ Typically, training concentrates on improving employees’ performance in their current jobs. Development, on the other hand, concentrates on preparing them for new functions or roles.¹² While the terms “training” and “development” are distinct, this report will use them interchangeably because ultimately the purpose of training and development is to facilitate successful job performance. Factors such as effectiveness of the training activity, cost, time away from the job, and situations or circumstances where the method may be most appropriate, are discussed to help guide decisions about which training and development activities to use and when they will be most beneficial.

Purpose of Study

The purposes of this study are to examine leadership training and development activities to evaluate current practices and to provide agencies with information for determining the best strategies to pursue when developing executives.

Scope and Methodology

Many factors influence the role and preparedness of senior executives such as recruitment, compensation, selection, training, and performance management. This report limits its examination to training and development. Undeniably, senior executives are responsible for their own development. However, agencies also are responsible for developing their executives and this report focuses on what agencies can do. More specifically, the report concentrates on training and development for the senior executives who hold career appointments. These individuals serve as the stabilizing force in managing Federal agencies. They ordinarily serve through multiple Presidential administrations, averaging 23 years of Federal service, compared to noncareer appointees who average only 8 years of Federal service.¹³

Multiple sources of information were used for this study, including:

- *Literature Review.* We reviewed literature on the background and structure of the SES along with types of training and development activities for senior leadership.
- *Agency Questionnaires.* We sent questionnaires to 25 Federal agencies asking them about their practices for training and developing members of the career senior executive service. We received 22 completed questionnaires. In addition, a general request was made to the Small Agency Council Training Committee from which one agency responded. The total number of agency respondents is 23. Of those agencies eight employ less than 100, seven

¹¹ McCauley, C.D. and Hezlett, S.A. (2001). Individual development in the workplace in Anderson, Ones, Sinangil, and Viswesvaran (Eds). Handbook of Industrial, Work and Organizational Psychology, Vol. 1. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications, Inc. 313-335.

¹² Noe, R.A. (2010). *Employee Training and Development*. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill. p. 346-647.

¹³ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, FedScope, December 2014. Accessed at: <http://www.fedscope.opm.gov/>.

employ 100-300, and eight employ over 300 members of the SES. See Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire.

- *Office of Personnel Management Senior Executive Service Survey Results for Fiscal Year 2011.* We analyzed survey data to gather facts (*e.g.*, number of executives who completed EDPs, types of training activities received since becoming a member of the SES) and perceptions (*e.g.*, level of effectiveness of training and development activities).
- *Federal Executive Institute (FEI) communications.* FEI provided correspondence regarding its residential program and participated in an interview to expand upon its written comments.¹⁴
- *FedScope Records.* We analyzed data to determine demographics of the senior executive workforce.

¹⁴ The FEI is the Office of Personnel Management's Center for Leadership Development (CLD). It offers educational programs for employee development.

CHAPTER 2: FEDERAL LEADERSHIP

Who are the Federal Leaders?

A leader, within the organizational context, is someone whose primary function is to “deliver results by working through others.”¹⁵ The leader guides the group in achieving organizational goals. Although leader behaviors can be exhibited by individuals at any grade level, there are specific positions reserved for predominantly leader functions in the Federal Government. These are SES positions.

The SES was established with the passage of the Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA) of 1978. At its inception, the SES was envisioned as a corps of executives who possess a broad government perspective and are capable of serving in multiple leadership positions across government agencies. The purpose of the SES was “to ensure that the executive management of the Government of the United States is responsive to the needs, policies, and goals of the Nation and otherwise is of the highest quality.”¹⁶

Types of Senior Executive Service Appointments

There are four types of SES appointments: (1) career; (2) noncareer; (3) limited term; and (4) limited emergency. Of the appointment types, only career appointments require competition. Prior to making an initial career appointment, the agency must conduct a merit staffing process.¹⁷ Career appointees have no time limits for serving and have certain rights or entitlements (*e.g.*, reduction-in-force protections, fallback rights to non-SES positions) not afforded to the other types of appointees.¹⁸

Noncareer, limited term and limited emergency appointments do not require competition. Instead, the agency head or designee approves the candidate’s qualifications. Individuals in noncareer appointments have no time limits for serving but they do not receive any entitlements. As their names imply, limited term and limited emergency appointments are of relatively short duration. Limited-term appointees have a non-renewable appointment for up to 3 years; limited emergency appointments have a nonrenewable appointment for up to 18 months.¹⁹ Overall the intent of the SES is “to provide more effective management of agencies and their functions, and the more expeditious administration of the public business.”²⁰

¹⁵ Pandit, A. and Jhamtani, A. (2011). Growing leaders grows profits-A case study in leadership development. *Vision*, 15(2), 193-200.

¹⁶ 5 U.S.C. § 3131.

¹⁷ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *The Senior Executive Service*, February 2004.

¹⁸ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *The Senior Executive Service*, February 2004.

¹⁹ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *The Senior Executive Service*, February 2004.

²⁰ 5 U.S.C. § 1101.

Role of the Career SES

The SES is composed primarily of career appointees. Approximately 90 percent of senior executive positions are career appointments.²¹ Within the agency hierarchy career senior executives occupy leadership positions, often immediately below political appointees and their immediate staff.²² As reflected in the SES insignia of a keystone—the center stone that holds all the stones on an arch in place—career SES serve as the connection between politically-appointed agency leadership and civil servants.²³ Prior to establishment of the SES, the relationship between civil servants and political appointees often suffered, perhaps because of their different objectives.²⁴ Political appointees tended to focus on accomplishing the President’s agenda using executive and political skills.²⁵ In contrast, career employees advise political appointees about what is and what is not possible for an agency to do within its legal authority and tend to focus on program operations.²⁶ The purpose of the SES was to create a stronger link and facilitate a better working relationship between political appointees and Federal employees.²⁷ During Presidential transitions, which can take several months before a new administration is installed, the career SES can provide consistency and guidance for maintaining government operations. Once the new administration is in place, the SES continues to serve in a variety of roles. These include:

- Providing guidance and recommendations to top leadership in areas of the SES member’s expertise;
- Managing the Federal workforce fairly and effectively;
- Promoting workplace improvements, innovations, and creativity;
- Evaluating agency programs to determine if the desired outcomes are achieved; and
- Building and maintaining partnerships with other stakeholder groups.

Impact of the Career SES

The decisions made by senior executives in terms of priorities, practices and expenditure of government funds and management of teams and work units can

²¹ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, FedScope, December 2014. Accessed at: <http://www.fedscope.opm.gov/>.

²² National Academy of Public Administration. (2009). *Agencies in Transition: A Report on the Views of the Members of the Federal Senior Executive Service*. Accessed at: <http://politicalappointeeproject.org/sites/default/files/NAPA%20-Agencies%20in%20Transition.pdf>.

²³ Accessed at <http://www.opm.gov/faq/ses/What-does-the-SES-insignia-symbolize-2.ashx>. Senior Executive Service FAQ. What does the SES insignia symbolize?

²⁴ Carey, M.P. (2012). The senior executive service: Background and options for reform. Congressional Research Service. Accessed at: <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41801.pdf>.

²⁵ Carey, M.P. (2012). The senior executive service: Background and options for reform. Congressional Research Service. Accessed at: <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41801.pdf>.

²⁶ National Academy of Public Administration. (2009). *Agencies in Transition: A Report on the Views of the Members of the Federal Senior Executive Service*. Accessed at: <http://politicalappointeeproject.org/sites/default/files/NAPA%20-Agencies%20in%20Transition.pdf>; Roberts, M. Senior Executive Service: What is the Senior Executive Service? Accessed at: <http://govcareers.about.com/od/Glossary/g/Senior-Executive-Service.htm>.

²⁷ Carey, M.P. (2012). The senior executive service: Background and options for reform. Congressional Research Service. Accessed at: <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41801.pdf>.

have broad implications. Approximately one-third of career senior executives manages more than 200 employees or are responsible for budgets that exceed 100 million dollars.²⁸ Members of the SES affect not only their agency's capacity for carrying out its mission and generating appropriate products and services for the American public, but also the perceptions of their agency's value by their workforce, the public, Congress, and the White House. Indeed, they are visible and influential both within and outside of their agencies.

Specifically through their leadership, high performing career senior executives have effectively managed the budgets of massive programs, saved the Federal Government billions of dollars, made significant contributions to increasing national security, facilitated commerce, and helped create positive relationships with foreign countries, to name but a few accomplishments.²⁹ In contrast, poor leadership can result in mission failure, a demoralized workforce, tarnished agency reputation, and public distrust of the agency or Government as a whole.

While training is essential for individuals across all grade levels, it is arguably most important that those at the highest levels get the support they need to effectively carry out their roles and responsibilities. Indeed, it is imperative that SES have access to relevant training and development opportunities so that they can be in the best position to achieve optimal performance. Beyond the practical reasons, there is also a statutory basis for training senior executives. According to the CSRA, the SES is to be managed so as to "provide for the initial and continuing systematic development of highly competent senior executives."³⁰

²⁸ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

²⁹ Senior Executives Association. Presidential Distinguished Award Winner Accomplishments. Accessed at: <https://seniorexecs.org/2-uncategorised/150-presidential-distinguished-rank-award-winner-accomplishments>.

³⁰ 5 U.S.C. § 3131(12).

CHAPTER 3: WHAT IS REQUIRED OF SENIOR EXECUTIVES?

What are the Responsibilities of Senior Executives?

The CSRA established broad criteria that are common to all senior executive jobs. Those criteria are:³¹

- Directs the work of an organizational unit;
- Is responsible for the success of one or more specific programs or projects;
- Monitors progress toward meeting organizational goals, and periodically evaluates and makes appropriate adjustments to such goals;
- Supervises the work of employees other than personal assistants at least 25 percent of the time; or
- Otherwise exercises important policy-making, policy-determining, or other executive functions.

To perform these broad functions, the SES must possess a wide range of competencies.

What Competencies are Required of the SES?

As defined by OPM, a competency is a measurable pattern of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics that individuals need to successfully perform work roles or occupational functions. Competencies specify the “how” of performing job tasks, or what the person needs to do the job successfully.³² Based on extensive research conducted in the private and public sectors, OPM identified 22 leadership competencies that are necessary for successful executive performance.³³ Appendix B shows these competencies and their full definitions.

³¹ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Guide to the Senior Executive Service*, April 2014. Accessed at: <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/senior-executive-service/reference-materials/guidesessservices.pdf>; see 5 U.S.C. § 3132(2)(A-E).

³² Competency definition accessed at: <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection/competencies/>.

³³ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Guide to Senior Executive Service Qualifications*, September 2012. Accessed at: http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/senior-executive-service/reference-materials/guidetosesequals_2012.pdf.

The 22 leadership competencies are referred to as the ECQs and they are grouped into five categories, namely:

- *Leading Change*: creativity and innovation, external awareness, flexibility, resilience, strategic thinking and vision;
- *Leading People*: conflict management, leveraging diversity, developing others, and team building;
- *Results Driven*: accountability, customer service, decisiveness, entrepreneurship, problem solving, and technical credibility;
- *Business Acumen*: financial management, human capital management, and technology management; and
- *Building Coalitions*: partnering, political savvy, and influencing/negotiating.

In addition, OPM identified six fundamental competencies that serve as the foundation for the ECQs³⁴ including: (1) interpersonal skills; (2) oral communication; (3) integrity/honesty; (4) written communication; (5) continual learning; and (6) public service motivation. Collectively the ECQs and the fundamental competencies are the basis for selection into the SES.

What is Required for Selection into the SES?

In general, the procedure for selecting individuals into the SES consists of the organization's recruiting and assessing applicants to identify the person the organization believes is best suited to fill the vacancy. The organization then submits the person's application package to OPM for review by the Qualifications Review Board (QRB).³⁵ Figure 1 shows the criteria candidates must meet to be approved for selection into the SES.³⁶ Each candidate must meet *one* of the criterion types to be approved for selection.

³⁴ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Guide to Senior Executive Service Qualifications*, September 2012. Accessed at: http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/senior-executive-service/reference-materials/guidetosesquals_2012.pdf.

³⁵ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Guide to Senior Executive Service Qualifications*, September 2012. Accessed at: http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/senior-executive-service/reference-materials/guidetosesquals_2012.pdf.

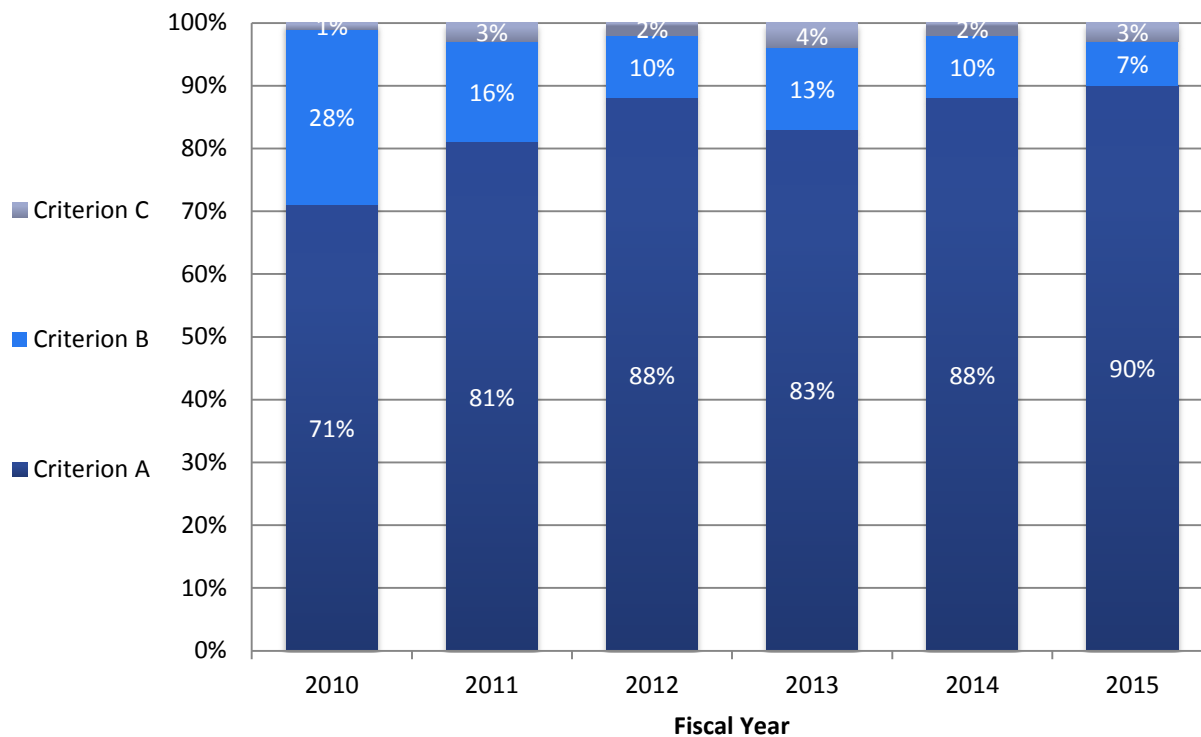
³⁶ Selection criteria for entry into the SES accessed at: <http://www.opm.gov/faqs/QA.aspx?fid=fcd37029-d607-4fec-a8d6-faecbdb08eef&pid=03166d33-10a2-4b86-b81c-7753b41aef3>.

Figure 1. SES selection criteria.

Criterion Type	Requirements
A	Candidates must show that they have experience or possess competence in all five major ECQs. Generally, candidates who meet the criteria are able to demonstrate that they have executive experience.
B	Candidates must have successfully completed an OPM-approved SES Candidate Development Program (SESCDP). ³⁷
C	Candidates possess special or unique qualities that show probable success in the SES. They must demonstrate that they have the qualifications for the position and have the ability to gain full competence in all five ECQs quickly. ³⁸

Figure 2 below shows the percent of individuals selected into the SES by each criterion type from fiscal year 2010 through March of fiscal year 2015.³⁹

Figure 2. Distribution of SES selections by criterion type.



³⁷ Selection into the SESCO must have included Governmentwide competition but successful completion does not guarantee placement.

³⁸ The package submitted to the QRB must include: (1) the organization's assessment of why the candidate is uniquely qualified for the position and (2) an Individual Development Plan (IDP) that concentrates on strengthening the specific ECQs that need improvement.

³⁹ Correspondence from OPM received 04/15/2015. QRB Results Governmentwide FY10 through FY (as of March 1, 2015).

ECQs and Technical Skills

The original vision of the SES was that leadership skills would be the primary requirement for entry. This vision was consistent with research that suggests technical skills become less important as individuals ascend the organizational hierarchy.⁴⁰ However, for many SES positions, technical skills also are needed. Less than one-fourth (21 percent) of the career SES agreed that their positions could be filled using just ECQs without requiring additional technical qualifications.⁴¹ This perception is supported by findings from an analysis of all permanent career SES vacancy announcements posted on USAJOBS during 2014. Approximately 80 percent of the announcements required applicants to describe at least one technical competency in addition to the ECQs to be considered qualified for the position. The use of technical qualifications varies widely by organization. Some organizations did not request technical qualifications for any of their SES vacancy announcements; others requested technical qualifications for all of their SES announcements; and still others had a combination of announcements that requested technical qualifications and some that did not.

While technical credibility is one of the ECQs, almost one-quarter (23 percent) of career senior executives consider a major portion (at least 46 percent or more) of their work to be of a technical/professional nature.⁴² These findings highlight the divide between the original vision of the SES and the practice. Perhaps this occurs because the work environment has changed since the SES was created over 30 years ago. For instance, the types of work performed in the Federal Government have become increasingly knowledge-based, which may result in a continued need for possessing specialized technical skills or advanced education to effectively lead others performing such work. The differences between vision and practice also may occur because the SES themselves lack appropriate staff and must perform some of the technical work or because job announcements do not accurately reflect what is required to perform the job. Regardless of the reasons, it is clear that, although the ECQs are important, agencies and senior executives believe that the ECQs alone are not sufficient for many Federal leadership positions.

If there are fundamental differences between the vision of how the SES was to function (*e.g.*, Governmentwide mobile corps of executives) and how the SES actually function, it may be time to examine what the executives' roles, duties, and responsibilities should be to meet present and future challenges. Ideally functions such as recruitment, selection, compensation, training, and performance management are driven by the roles, duties, and responsibilities of the position.

⁴⁰ Ford, J.K. and Noe, R. A. (1987). Self-assessed training needs: The effects of attitudes toward training, managerial level, and function. *Personnel Psychology*, 40, 39-53.

⁴¹ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

⁴² U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

ECQs as the foundation for performance management and training.

In addition to serving as the basis for entry into the SES, the ECQs are the basis for the performance-appraisal process⁴³ and training and development. Approximately three-fourths of career executives agree that the ECQs represent the critical skills needed to succeed in performing their roles as Federal leaders.⁴⁴ However, even though the ECQs reflect the requirements for membership in the SES, the competencies may be differentially needed based on demands in each agency. Further, many executive positions require more than the ability to master the leadership ECQs.

⁴³ In 2012, the Office of Personnel Management and Office of Management and Budget published a new performance appraisal system for the SES. More recently, OPM issued regulations creating new standards for Senior Executive Service appraisal effective October 26, 2015. 80 Fed. Reg. 57693 (daily ed. Sept. 25, 2015). The new performance standards continue to use critical elements based on the ECQs as the foundation for evaluation.

⁴⁴ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

CHAPTER 4: IDENTIFICATION OF TRAINING NEEDS AND MANAGEMENT OF TRAINING

General Process

Identifying the developmental needs of an individual requires a tailored evaluation of that individual's proficiencies compared with the demands of his or her current position, as well as the demands of any desired future positions. The same individually-based training needs assessment and developmental focus are needed for members of the SES.

Information from a training needs assessment can help determine if training is the appropriate intervention or if there are other ways (*e.g.*, clear communication of expectations, adequate resources, timely constructive feedback) to achieve the desired result.⁴⁵ A training needs assessment should consider a range of current and future job-related information such as:

- Career aspirations (*i.e.*, what functions or role they want to hold);
- Current proficiencies (*e.g.*, competencies, knowledge, skills, abilities);
- Areas needing improvement; and
- Capabilities needed for potential future roles or positions.

Training Needs Assessment Practices

According to responses to the MSPB questionnaire regarding training and development for senior executives, 16 out of 23 agencies indicate that the ERB or its equivalent identifies the training needs of their senior executives. When agencies assess training needs, it is likely that multiple methods are employed and that is probably the best strategy for capturing a full picture of executive training needs. Some of the most commonly used methods for identifying executive training needs are 360 degree type feedback, self-assessment and supervisor evaluations.⁴⁶

360 degree type feedback assessment. Twenty out of 23 agencies report that they use 360 degree type feedback.⁴⁷ This type of assessment provides executives with information about the impact of their actions and decisions from multiple perspectives (*e.g.*, supervisors, peers, and direct reports). The information then can be used to identify and address areas that need improvement and recognize and build upon strengths.

⁴⁵ Salas, E., Tannenbaum, S.J., Kraiger, K., and Smith-Jentsch, K.A. (2012). The science of training and development in organizations: What matters in practice. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 13(2), 74-101; Burke, L.A., and Hutchins, H.M. (2007). Training transfer: An integrative literature review. *Human Resource Development Review*, 6, 263-96. Accessed at: <http://www0.dmst.aueb.gr/nikolaou/blogs/training.pdf>.

⁴⁶ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Questionnaire for Agencies for the MSPB Study on Training and Development of Senior Executives, 2014.

⁴⁷ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Questionnaire for Agencies for the MSPB Study on Training and Development of Senior Executives, 2014.

Self-assessment. Twenty out of 23 agencies report that executive self-assessment is used to identify executives' developmental needs.⁴⁸ The advantage of self-assessment is that executives are in a good position to know what they do well. They may receive positive feedback or public acknowledgment for their accomplishments. Yet, individuals may not always know where their shortcomings exist and may not recognize areas where improvements can be made.⁴⁹

Supervisor assessment. Nineteen out of 23 agencies report that they use supervisor assessment as a means to identify executive developmental needs.⁵⁰ Slightly over half of career executives (52 percent) agree that discussion with their supervisor about their development is worthwhile.⁵¹ Providing performance feedback in addition to developing others is part of a supervisor's job. Minimally, performance feedback should be provided during the formal performance appraisal; optimally, it is provided on a more regular basis.

Despite the availability of several methods for identifying training needs of senior executives, slightly less than half (48 percent) agree that their developmental needs are assessed.⁵² However, 70 percent agree that their developmental needs are met. Perhaps this is because the executives take responsibility for their own development. Seventy-eight percent indicate that they take advantage of the developmental opportunities available to them.⁵³ Most likely career executives take the initiative to engage in developmental opportunities to improve their own performance. To be an effective leader of others, the SES may believe that they first need to be effective at leading themselves. This likely includes having the self-discipline to identify areas where improvement is needed and taking appropriate action. They also may want to lead by example showing those they supervise the importance of, and responsibility for, self-development.

How Is Training Managed?

Federal Requirements

Under 5 U.S.C. § 3396, Federal agencies are required to establish programs to provide continuing development to senior executives. As part of the development program, each executive should have an EDP that identifies

⁴⁸ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Questionnaire for Agencies for the MSPB Study on Training and Development of Senior Executives, 2014.

⁴⁹ Yammarino I, F.J., & Atwater, L.E. (1993). Understanding self-perception accuracy: Implications for human resource management. *Human Resource Management*, 32(2 &3), 231-247; Mabe, P. A., & West, S.G. (1982). Validity of self-evaluation of ability: A review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 67(3), 280-296.

⁵⁰ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Questionnaire for Agencies for the MSPB Study on Training and Development of Senior Executives, 2014.

⁵¹ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

⁵² U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

⁵³ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

activities to help improve his or her performance.⁵⁴ On an annual basis, the agency's ERB or its equivalent is responsible for reviewing and revising EDPs considering performance evaluation information.⁵⁵

Completion of EDPs

In practice, only half of career senior executives have completed EDPs.⁵⁶ The absence of completed EDPs indicates that there may not be written documentation to identify training needs and possible activities to address them. Yet, lack of an EDP does not exclude the possibility of different or informal ways of identifying training needs and developmental opportunities. Perhaps supervisors of senior executives or the senior executives themselves have their own method for identifying training needs and potential training activities.

Alignment of EDPs with Mission

When EDPs are completed, 15 out of 23 agencies report that the EDPs are aligned with the agency's mission and strategic plans.⁵⁷ This may indicate that for some agencies, there is not a direct link between training and agency mission or that the connection is more generalized. Mission statements are likely distinct but some training activities may be indirectly applicable for multiple missions. For example, training that helps build teams or improves communication to all organizational levels may be indirectly linked to multiple missions.

Use of EDPs to Guide Training

Fifteen out of 23 agencies agree that the EDPs are used to guide the training and development of senior executives.⁵⁸ Yet, only seven out of 23 agencies report that SES employees frequently receive the training and developmental activities identified in their EDPs.⁵⁹ The gap between identifying appropriate training and executives actually receiving the training may be due to changes in the organization's priorities and resources. In addition, many agencies (12 out of 23) are unable to judge how frequently such career executives receive the training indicated in their EDPs, which may reflect that such documentation is not kept or easily accessible.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Sample Executive Development Plan accessed at: <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/senior-executive-service/executive-development/edptemplate.pdf>.

⁵⁵ 5 C.F.R. § 412.401.

⁵⁶ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

⁵⁷ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Questionnaire for Agencies for the MSPB Study on Training and Development of Senior Executives, 2014.

⁵⁸ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Questionnaire for Agencies for the MSPB Study on Training and Development of Senior Executives, 2014.

⁵⁹ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Questionnaire for Agencies for the MSPB Study on Training and Development of Senior Executives, 2014.

⁶⁰ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Questionnaire for Agencies for the MSPB Study on Training and Development of Senior Executives, 2014.

How Training is Managed

In some agencies, there is an individual or group that centrally controls the training of senior executives.⁶¹ In other agencies, executive training is determined locally by each major component, division, bureau, or business unit.⁶² Yet still, some agencies use a combination of central and local control (*e.g.*, onboarding⁶³ managed centrally, other training and development managed locally) to manage executive development.⁶⁴ When there is local control, there may not be guidance to help ensure uniformity in how training is managed.⁶⁵

Collectively, these results suggest that there is no systematic way that career senior executives are trained and developed. Practices across and possibly within organizations may vary. In contrast to informal training and development, which is casual or incidental and typically has no specified training goals or process to evaluate outcomes,⁶⁶ systematic training and development is characterized by order and planning. To achieve continuous systematic development of senior executives, a more planned and methodical approach is needed. Some of the steps agencies can take are:

1. Assess executive training needs;
2. Identify appropriate training and development activities based on organizational goals and the executive's needs;
3. Monitor executives' training and development to ensure that executives participate in the identified or similarly appropriate activities; and
4. Evaluate results of the training and development activities, considering that some results may be long-term.

⁶¹ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Questionnaire for Agencies for the MSPB Study on Training and Development of Senior Executives, 2014.

⁶² U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Questionnaire for Agencies for the MSPB Study on Training and Development of Senior Executives, 2014.

⁶³ According to OPM, executive onboarding refers to the acquiring, accommodating, assimilating and accelerating of new leaders into the organizational culture and business. U.S. Office of Personnel Management. *Hit the Ground Running: Establishing a Model Executive Onboarding Program*. October 2011.

⁶⁴ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Questionnaire for Agencies for the MSPB Study on Training and Development of Senior Executives, 2014.

⁶⁵ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Questionnaire for Agencies for the MSPB Study on Training and Development of Senior Executives, 2014.

⁶⁶ McNamara, C. Development processes: Informal/Formal and self-directed/other-directed. Accessed at: <http://managementhelp.org/training/methods/formal-and-informal-methods.htm#informalformal>.

CHAPTER 5: HOW HELPFUL IS TRAINING?

From fiscal years 2008-2012, Federal agencies have spent approximately \$57 million on executive training courses offered by external providers.⁶⁷ This figure does not include funding spent on training that was developed in-house or on other developmental activities that incur costs such as participation in a formal mentoring program. To ensure that tax dollars are spent wisely, important considerations are: (1) can leadership competencies be trained; and (2) how can agencies gauge training effectiveness?

Can Leadership Competencies be Trained?

Before investing in training and development, the issue of nature vs. nurture or “are leaders born or made?” must be addressed. If leaders are born, then training and development is unnecessary as it would be unlikely to make a difference in performance. If that is the case, agencies should direct their funding to assessment and selection to ensure that the individual selected for a leadership position possesses the necessary skills to perform the job. On the other hand, if leaders can be made, then agencies should examine training and development activities to determine which activities are most appropriate for the executive considering the individual’s developmental needs and the agency’s mission and resources.

Research suggests that the answer to the nature vs. nurture question is that leaders are both born and made. There is a genetic as well as an environmental component (*e.g.*, family experience, work experience) associated with those who hold leadership positions. Based on studies of identical and fraternal twins,⁶⁸ genetic factors accounted for approximately 30 percent of the variation on whether the individual would occupy an organizational leadership position.⁶⁹ In other words, inherited characteristics played an important role in whether an individual took a leadership position. However, environmental influences, such as training and developmental experiences and work experiences, also are associated with those who undertook a formal leadership role.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Agencies Should More Fully Evaluate Costs and Benefits of Executive Training*, January 2014.

⁶⁸ Identical twins share 100% of the same genetic background while fraternal twins share approximately 50% of the same genetic background.

⁶⁹ Arvey, R.D., Rotundo, M., Johnson, W., Zhang, Z. & McGue, M. (2006). The determinants of leadership role occupancy: Genetic and personality factors. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 17, 1-20. p. 1, 15. Arvey, R.D. Avolio, B.J, Zhen, A., & Kruger, R.F. (2007). Developmental and genetic determinants of leadership role occupancy among women. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92 (3)693-705.

⁷⁰ Arvey, R.D., Rotundo, M., Johnson, W., Zhang, Z. and McGue, M. (2006). The determinants of leadership role occupancy: Genetic and personality factors. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 17, 1-20; Arvey, R.D. Avolio, B.J, Zhen, A., and Kruger, R.F. (2007). Developmental and genetic determinants of leadership role occupancy among women. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92 (3) 693-705; Barling, J., Weber, T., & Kelloway, E.K. (1996). Effects of transformational leadership training on attitudinal and financial outcomes: A field experiment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 81(6), 827-832.

As discussed in a previous MSPB report, some competencies may be more responsive to training than others.⁷¹ The competency trainability levels are summarized in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3. Trainability of Selected Competency Types⁷²

Type of Competency	Level of Trainability
Knowledge—job knowledge, academic subjects, knowledge of laws, policies, and regulations.	Highly Trainable
Language, social, and reasoning—oral communication, written communication, interpersonal skills, teamwork, conflict skills, diversity skills, customer skills, influencing and negotiating, partnering, and political savvy, analyzing and solving problems, financial calculation, computer skills, planning work and making standards.	Moderately Trainable
Motivation and mental style—resilience, work motivation, integrity, vision, flexibility, creativity, learning ability, decisiveness and entrepreneurship.	Less Trainable

Accordingly, agencies should focus training resources on those leadership competencies that are subject to environmental influence and responsive to training. In addition, agencies should carefully assess and select senior executive candidates based on those competencies that are more innate or less responsive to training—particularly if those competencies are used frequently and are critical to job success.

How Can Agencies Gauge Training Effectiveness?

In addition to looking at an individual’s specific training needs, a major determinant for whether a specific training activity should be used is how effective the activity is for accomplishing the intended developmental goals or conveying the desired knowledge, skills, or attitudes. Training effectiveness should be considered before having employees engage in any developmental activity to help prevent agencies and trainees from investing time, money, and effort on activities that do not yield the expected outcomes.

When examining the effectiveness of training and development activities, we can assess: (1) reaction outcomes; (2) affective outcomes; (3) learning or cognitive outcomes; (4) behavior and skill-based outcomes; (5) results; and (6) return on

⁷¹ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Making the Right Connections: Targeting the Best Competencies for Training, February 2011.

⁷² U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Making the Right Connections: Targeting the Best Competencies for Training, February 2011; Ford, J., Competencies and Trainability: The rest of the story. Presentation at International Personnel Assessment Council September 15, 2009. Accessed at: <http://annex.ipacweb.org/library/conf/09/ford.pdf>.

investment.⁷³ Additionally, and probably most importantly, agencies need to pay attention to the extent to which *training transfer* occurs, or whether trainees can apply what they learn on the job over an extended period of time. Each of these criteria for training effectiveness will be discussed in the paragraphs below.

Reaction outcomes refer to the learners' perceptions of the training regarding factors such as level of satisfaction with the instructor, satisfaction with training materials, clarity of course objectives, or usefulness of training content.⁷⁴ It helps identify what learners thought was successful and what they thought needed to be improved.⁷⁵ By measuring learners' reactions, organizations are able to gather valuable feedback for assessing instructor performance and the training environment. This information then can be used for several purposes including:

- Refining the training content or delivery;
- Helping instructors improve their teaching style or methods; and
- Ensuring easily accessible and appropriate training locations or facilities.

Frequently, learners' reaction is the only assessment of training effectiveness that is conducted.⁷⁶ This may be because it can be relatively easily obtained compared with the other criteria for assessing training effectiveness.

Affective outcomes are similar to reaction outcomes in that both measure trainees' responses. However, they differ in that reaction outcomes measure trainee perceptions of specific aspects of the training such as content, instructor skill and preparedness, while affective outcomes focus on attitudes or beliefs that predispose a person toward certain behaviors.⁷⁷ When the goal of training is to influence motivation and attitudes (e.g., diversity training, ethics training), affective outcomes are important because they measure how receptive learners are to attitude change.⁷⁸

Learning or cognitive outcomes are used to evaluate the knowledge (e.g., principles, facts, techniques, procedures, processes) that learners gain from the training.⁷⁹ Pre- and post-training tests or the production of work samples can be used to measure the degree to which learners understand the presented material. However, writing good test items to assess how well learners have understood training content can be difficult, time consuming, and require specific skill sets. Fortunately, research shows that the best predictor of immediate and delayed

⁷³ Noe, R.A. (2010). *Employee Training and Development*. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

⁷⁴ Noe, R.A. (2010). *Employee Training and Development*. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

⁷⁵ Noe, R.A. (2010). *Employee Training and Development*. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

⁷⁶ Saari, L.M., Johnson, T.R., McLaughlin, S.D., and Zimmerly, D.M. (1988). A survey of management training and evaluation practices in U.S. companies. *Personnel Psychology*, 41, 731-743; Bassi, L.J., Benson, G., and Cheny, S. (1996). The top 10 trends. *Training and Development*, 50, 28-42; Morgan, R.B., & Casper, W.J. (2002). Examining the factor structure of participant reactions to training: A multidimensional approach. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 11, 301-317.

⁷⁷ Landy, F.L. and Conte, J.M. (2004). *Work in the 21st Century: An Introduction to Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

⁷⁸ Sitzmann, T., Brown, K.G., Casper, W.J., Ely, K. and Zimmerman, R.D. and Polliard, C. (2008). A review and meta-analysis of the nomological network of trainee reactions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(2), 280-295.

⁷⁹ Noe, R.A. (2010). *Employee Training and Development*. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

procedural knowledge (*e.g.*, how to perform a task, ability to perform the task without exerting conscious effort) is post-training efficacy—employees’ belief that they can successfully apply the content of a training program.⁸⁰ By including a few questions on a post-training survey that ask learners to report their level of self-confidence that they will transfer what was presented in training to the job, organizations can gain a quick and cost-effective way into the likelihood of post-training knowledge transfer.⁸¹

Behavior and skills-based outcomes are used to evaluate the degree of technical or motor skills acquired by, and behavior change in, an individual after he or she receives training.⁸² Multiple-choice tests, observations, work samples, and ratings from self and others (*e.g.*, peers, customers, supervisors) can be used to measure the change.⁸³

Results refer to the benefits gained for the organization (*e.g.*, increased productivity, increased employee engagement, reduced unwanted turnover). Organizational results usually take time before they are realized and capturing the necessary data may be costly to collect. Further, it can be very challenging to determine if positive organizational results are caused solely from executives receiving training. There are many other factors unrelated to training that can influence organizational outcomes.

Return on Investment (ROI) is a calculation of the monetary benefits received from training compared to the costs of training.⁸⁴ The benefits of training may include monetary value of increased productivity, decreased errors, improved customer service, or reduced unwanted employee turnover. Training costs may include the salaries and benefits of learners, instructors, and course designers. It also may include expenses for course materials, supplies, equipment, general office supplies and facilities.

Training Transfer. Ultimately, the key to whether training is effective is whether individuals who are trained will take the information or skills from their training and apply them in their jobs. Positive training transfer has been described as “the degree to which trainees effectively apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained in a training context to the job.”⁸⁵ Transfer consists of two components:⁸⁶

- (1) “learned behavior must be generalized to the job context;” and
- (2) learned behaviors must be maintained over time.

⁸⁰ Noe, R.A. (2010). *Employee Training and Development*. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

⁸¹ Sitzmann, T., Brown, K.G., Casper, W.J., Ely, K. and Zimmerman, R.D. and Polliard, C. (2008). A review and meta-analysis of the nomological network of trainee reactions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(2), 280-295.

⁸² Noe, R.A. (2010). *Employee Training and Development*. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

⁸³ Noe, R.A. (2010). *Employee Training and Development*. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

⁸⁴ Noe, R.A. (2010). *Employee Training and Development*. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

⁸⁵ Baldwin, T.T., Ford, J.K. (1988). Transfer of training: A review and directions for future research. *Personnel Psychology*, 41, 63-105.

⁸⁶ Baldwin, T.T. and Ford, J.K. (1988). Transfer of training: A review and directions for future research. *Personnel Psychology*, 41, 63-105.

Without the positive transfer of knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes that were learned in training to the job, the expense, time, and effort devoted to the training would be for naught.

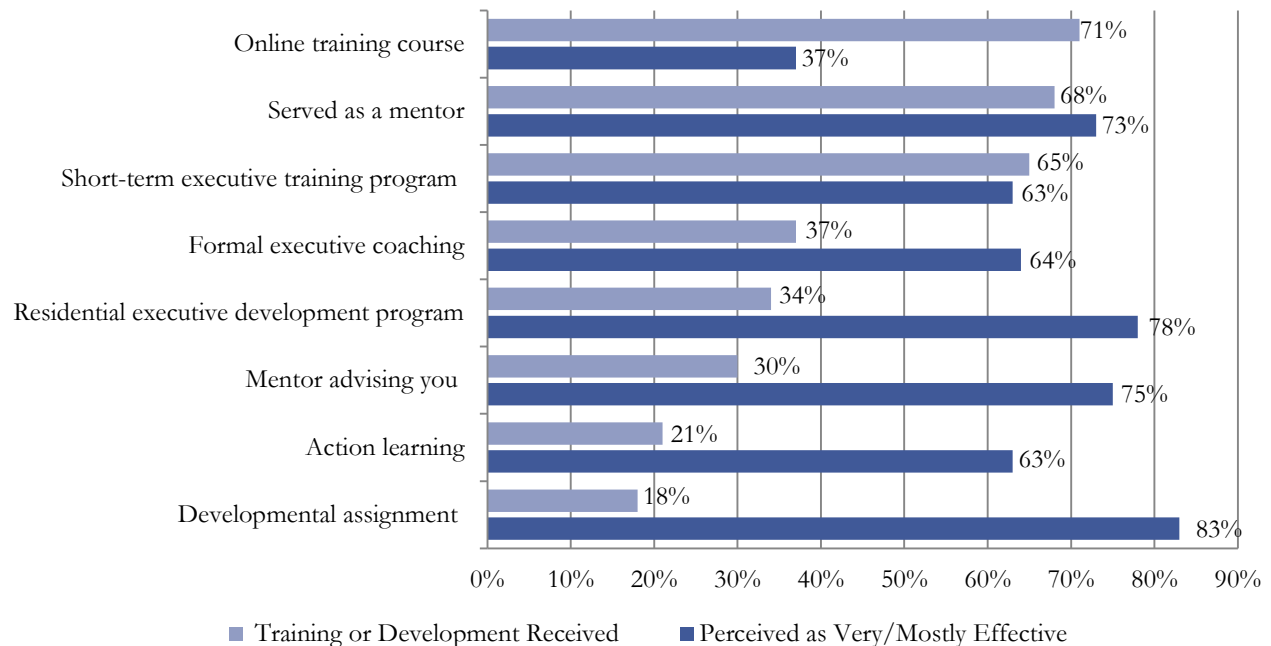
Different criteria for assessing training effectiveness may be more or less appropriate for each type of training activity. Agencies should carefully consider which (and how many) criteria to examine, and how much weight to give to each. Ideally, agencies should examine—in combination—all available criteria on the effectiveness of a particular training activity to help ensure a more holistic assessment of that activity. Although the assessment of training effectiveness is considered important, it is not frequently done.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Conger, J.A. and Xin, K. (2000). Executive education in the 21st century. *Journal of Management Education*, 73-101; Saari, L.M., Johnson, T.R., McLaughlin, S.D., & Zimmerly, D.M. (1988). A survey of management training and evaluation practices in U.S. companies. *Personnel Psychology*, 41, 731-741.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

This section examines the major training and development activities used by Federal agencies. Figure 4 below shows the percentage of career executives who participated in the activity after becoming a member of the SES and the perceptions of those participants regarding the effectiveness of the activity.⁸⁸

Figure 4. Career SES Participation in Training Activities and Perceptions of Activity Effectiveness



Below, we present summary information on the major activities agencies have used to develop Federal senior executives. We have grouped these training activities into four areas based on common attributes:

1. Residential Executive Development Programs;
2. Relationship-based Developmental Activities;
3. Experiential Developmental Activities; and
4. Formal Instruction Activities.

In discussing the activities within these areas and to facilitate comparison among them, we provide background information as well as advantages, disadvantages, measures of effectiveness, and costs. Agencies can use this information—in combination with an executive’s individual needs assessment for current or future roles and responsibilities along with the trainability of needed competencies—to help decide which training options would be most appropriate for an executive’s needs.

⁸⁸ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

Residential Executive Development Programs

Background

Leader development programs have been described as “structured, off-the-job events that bring executives together for shared learning and development experiences.”⁸⁹ Specifically, the residential executive development programs are “off-site from the participant’s work locations and last over a period of several days or weeks.”⁹⁰ They are designed for top-level executives and immerse participants in activities that may not be available in nonresidential settings. Some of the residential programs, particularly those that are attended by Federal employees, focus on the ECQs defined by the OPM. In 2014, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that the residential programs most frequently used by the Federal Government are: Leadership for a Democratic Society offered by the FEI; Senior Executive Fellows Program offered by Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government; Leadership at the Peak offered by The Center for Creative Leadership; and Executive Leadership for America offered by the Brookings Institute.⁹¹

Advantages

These programs are specifically designed to address the challenges senior executives face. Some of the residential programs have a Federal focus and incorporate many of the ECQs in their curriculum. Another major advantage of a residential program is that it can create a learning environment where distractions can be reduced. The residential setting promotes sharing information and engaging in discussion and debates among participants, faculty members, and facilitators outside the classroom in less formal settings (*e.g.*, meal times, common areas). The increased interactions can strengthen the bond between participants and provide team-building techniques that can be applied when they return to their home organizations. More importantly, the bond established may last beyond the course so that participants have additional resources to reach out to for support and guidance after the formal training has been completed. Experience away from the work environment can give participants the opportunity to reflect on what has been learned and how it can be applied to workplace issues.

Disadvantages

Executives typically have busy schedules and it may be challenging for them to carve out the necessary number of days to get away from their work environment to attend training.

⁸⁹ McCauley, C.D. (2008). *Leader development: A review of research*. Center for Creative Leadership.

⁹⁰ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Agencies Should More Fully Evaluate Costs and Benefits of Executive Training*, January 2014.

⁹¹ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Agencies Should More Fully Evaluate Costs and Benefits of Executive Training*, January 2014.

Effectiveness

Although only one-third (34 percent) of career executives have attended a residential executive development program, 78 percent of those who attended described the activity as either very effective or mostly effective for their continued development.⁹² To gauge the effectiveness of its residential leadership development program and identify where improvements can be made, FEI solicits feedback via a survey from participants, graduates, and graduates' supervisors.⁹³ In a similar manner, the Center for Creative Leadership sends a 360-degree instrument to graduates of its residential leadership development program and those who observe their behavior (*e.g.*, supervisors, peers, direct reports) to measure skills, behavioral improvement and impact of the program on the organization. The instrument is sent three or more months after program completion and requests that respondents provide both before and after training assessments.⁹⁴

Costs

Compared to other options for training executives, the costs for residential executive development programs are high. Of the programs most frequently used by the Federal Government, costs range from approximately \$6,000 to \$21,000.⁹⁵ Tuition generally includes lodging, course materials, and some if not all meals. However, agencies may incur additional expenses for travel.

Relationship-based Developmental Activities

“A relationship is categorized as developmental when the experience motivates the individual to want to learn and grow, exposes him or her to learning opportunities, and provides support for the learning and growth.”⁹⁶ Below we discuss two popular types of relationship-based developmental activities: mentoring and executive coaching.

⁹² U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

⁹³ Teleconference held with representatives of FEI on February 25, 2015.

⁹⁴ Center for Creative Leadership Impact Study-Reflections. Email correspondence with Andria Worland, Client Relationship Associate-Global Client Services dated March 23, 2015.

⁹⁵ Residential program costs for 2015: Brookings Institute \$5,750; Center for Creative Leadership-Leadership at the Peak \$11,900; Harvard Kennedy School-Senior Executive Fellows \$21,200; and Federal Executive Institute-Leadership for a Democratic Society \$19,875.

⁹⁶ Douglas, C.A. (1997). Formal mentoring programs in organizations: An annotated bibliography. Center for Creative Leadership. Greensboro, North Carolina. Accessed at: <http://www.centerforcreativeleadership.com/leadership/pdf/research/FormalMentoringPrograms.pdf>.

Mentoring

Background

Mentoring can be described as an interpersonal developmental relationship where one person assists in the personal and professional growth of another person.⁹⁷ Usually the relationship is between a more experienced individual (*i.e.*, the mentor) and one less experienced (*i.e.*, the mentee). Mentors can provide:⁹⁸

- Career-related support (*e.g.*, sponsorship, challenging assignments);
- Social support (*e.g.*, advice, encouragement); and
- Role modeling (*e.g.*, demonstrating and reinforcing appropriate behavior).

In general, there are two types of mentoring relationships: informal and formal. Informal mentoring relationships evolve naturally and voluntarily. The mentor and mentee select each other. Perhaps because participants choose each other, the duration of informal mentoring relationships tend to last longer than formal ones. For informal mentoring, there is minimal or no organizational involvement.⁹⁹ In contrast, formal mentoring relationships are typically established within mentoring programs where the mentor and mentee are matched by a third party (*e.g.*, Human Resources staff, management committee).¹⁰⁰ For such matched mentoring relationships, it is critical that participation is perceived as voluntary by both the mentor and mentee as pressure to participate may negatively impact their motivation.¹⁰¹ Overall, formal mentoring relationships tend to be considerably more structured than informal mentoring relationships and are managed and recognized by the organization.¹⁰²

When mentoring is effectively implemented, both mentees and mentors can benefit as will be discussed more fully below. Indeed, organizations also can benefit from formal mentoring programs through improved recruitment. Research suggests that job seekers appear to be more attracted to organizations

⁹⁷ Eby, L.T. (2011). Mentoring. In S. Zedeck (Ed.), *APA Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Selection and Development* (Vol 2 pp. 505-525). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

⁹⁸ Joo, B.K.; Sushko, J.S. and McClean, G.N. (2012). Multiple faces of coaching: Manager-as-coach, executive coaching, and formal mentoring. *Organization Development Journal*, 30(1),19-38; Chao, G.T., Walz, P.M., and Gardner, P.D. (1992). Formal and informal mentorship: A comparison of mentoring functions and contrast with nonmentored counterparts. *Personnel Psychology*, 45, 619-636.

⁹⁹ Ragins, B.R. and Cotton, J.L. (1999). Mentor functions and outcomes: A comparison of men and women in formal and informal mentoring relationships. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84(4), 529-550.

¹⁰⁰ Smith, W.J., Howard, J.T. & Harrington, K.V. (2005). Essential formal mentor characteristics and functions in governmental and non-governmental organizations from the program administrator's perspective. *Public Personnel Management*, 34, 31-57; Chao, G.T., Walz, P.M., and Gardner, P.D. (1992). Formal and informal mentorship: A comparison of mentoring functions and contrast with nonmentored counterparts. *Personnel Psychology*, 45, 619-636.

¹⁰¹ Chao, G.T., Walz, P.M., & Garddner, P.D. (1992). Formal and informal mentorship: A comparison of mentoring functions and contrast with nonmentored counterparts. *Personnel Psychology*, 45, 619-636.

¹⁰² Chao, G.T., Walz, P.M., & Garddner, P.D. (1992). Formal and informal mentorship: A comparison of mentoring functions and contrast with nonmentored counterparts. *Personnel Psychology*, 45, 619-636; Ragins, B.R. & Cotton, J.L. (1999). Mentor functions and outcomes: A comparison of men and women in formal and informal mentoring relationships. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84(4), 529-550.

that offer mentoring programs than those that do not.¹⁰³ Consequently, recruitment could be improved because job seekers view the presence of a formal mentoring program as an indication that the organization cares about its employees and is committed to their development.¹⁰⁴

MENTEE PERSPECTIVE

Advantages of Having a Mentor

A major advantage to having a mentor is that the mentee can receive individualized attention to specific areas in need of development or can receive guidance on strategies for addressing specific workplace issues. Unlike classroom instruction or more formal training venues, the support mentors provide can be tailored to the mentees' needs. At the executive level, when mentees have a specific workplace concern, their mentors may be able to provide insight on organizational culture or internal workings that can be helpful for circumventing obstacles, may know who the "go to" people are for obtaining information or getting things done, or may be able to share past practices or successful strategies used in similar situations. The interpersonal exchanges of the mentoring relationship are meant to function as a "safe space" for the mentee to ask questions, express uncertainties, or seek constructive criticisms. As long as the mentee does not have his or her supervisor functioning in the mentor role, the mentee may feel freer to ask questions without fear of being judged or creating a negative impression.¹⁰⁵

In addition, a mentor may be instrumental in providing mentees an opportunity to work on interesting and challenging assignments, which can build skills, expand professional networks, and increase organizational visibility. For the SES, the opportunity to work on challenging assignments is crucial for building a repertoire of responses to operate in changing and ambiguous environments. Network building also is crucial because other executives can be valuable resources of information and support. In general, mentees, whether in formal or informal mentoring relationships, reported slightly higher levels of job satisfaction, ability to perform their jobs, and successful work relations than their nonmentored colleagues.¹⁰⁶ This may be because mentees feel more comfortable and accepted in the organization. At the senior executive level, mentors may be most beneficial when mentees are new to the role or organization. Although new executives likely managed other work units prior to being selected to the SES,

¹⁰³ Horvath, M., Wasako, L.E. & Bradley, J.L. (2008). The effect of formal mentoring program characteristics on organizational attraction. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 19, 323-349; Allen, T.D. and O'Brien, K.E. (2006). Formal mentoring programs and organizational attraction. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 17(1), 43-58.

¹⁰⁴ Allen, T.D. and O'Brien, K.E. (2006). Formal mentoring programs and organizational attraction. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 17(1), 43-58.

¹⁰⁵ If the mentor is the immediate supervisor of the mentee, the ability to provide challenging assignments becomes easier. However, the mentee may experience increased anxiety due to potential impacts on performance appraisals and bonuses. Also, perceptions of unfairness and favoritism may develop within the work unit, creating a problem for both the mentee and mentor.

¹⁰⁶ Chao, G.T., Walz, P.M., and Gardner, P.D. (1992). Formal and informal mentorship: A comparison of mentoring functions and contrast with nonmentored counterparts. *Personnel Psychology*, 45, 619-636.

mentors can explain how the new duties are broader in scope and more strategic than previous responsibilities. Mentors also can introduce new executive mentees to other more established executives, thereby expanding the mentees' contacts throughout the organization and perhaps expanding their awareness of other functional areas.

Disadvantages of Having a Mentor

Although mentoring has the potential to benefit executives, and by extension the organizations they lead, not all mentoring relationships are created equal. The continuum of mentoring experiences ranges from highly satisfying relationships to dysfunctional or harmful ones.¹⁰⁷ To avoid negative impact, organizations must exercise judgment to ensure that their executives are in healthy mentoring relationships. Some practices agencies can institute to reduce the likelihood of negative experiences are: allow mentors and mentees to have input in the matching process; communicate realistic expectations and potential problems; provide training to mentors on coaching skills and conflict resolution; and provide a way to end a mentoring relationship that is not working.¹⁰⁸ Negative experiences most commonly occur when there is a mismatch between mentor and mentee work values, work styles, and personality and distancing behavior—for instance, mentors who neglect or intentionally exclude their mentees from attending important meetings or events.¹⁰⁹

All of the intended functions of mentoring—career-related support, social support, and role modeling—can be upended when mentees have negative mentoring experiences. Unless interactions are positive, the mentor may not share relevant organizational information or recommend the mentee for challenging job assignments, which can impede learning and development. Also, if there is minimal interaction, the mentee will not have opportunities to observe how the mentor handles various types of situations. Not surprisingly, negative mentoring experiences for mentees have been associated with less learning, less career-related support, greater depressed mood at work, and greater job withdrawal.¹¹⁰

Effectiveness

Thirty percent of career senior executives have had a mentor advising them for developmental purposes and approximately three-fourths of them described the

¹⁰⁷ Ragins, B.R., Cotton, J.L. and Miller, J.S. (2000) Marginal mentoring: The effects of type of mentor quality of relationship, and program design on work and career attitudes. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43, 1117-1194; Scandura, T.A. (1998). Dysfunctional mentoring relationships and outcomes. *Journal of Management*, 24(3), 449-467.

¹⁰⁸ Allen, T.D., Eby, L.T., & Lentz, E. (2006). The relationship between formal mentoring program characteristics and perceived program effectiveness. *Personnel Psychology*, 59, 125-153; Eby, L.T., Durley, J.R., Evans, S.C. & Ragins, R.R. (2008). Mentors' perceptions of negative mentoring experiences: Scale development and nomological validation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93 (2), 358-373; Scandura, T.A. (1998). Dysfunctional mentoring relationships and outcomes. *Journal of Management*, 24(3), 449-467.

¹⁰⁹ Eby, L.T., Butts, M.M., Lockwood, A. and Simons, S.A. (2004) Protégé's negative mentoring experiences: Construct development and nomological validation. *Personnel Psychology*, 57, 411-447.

¹¹⁰ Eby, L.T., Butts, M.M., Lockwood, A., and Simons, S.A. (2004) Protégé's negative mentoring experiences: Construct development and nomological validation. *Personnel Psychology*, 57, 411-447.

activity as being either very or mostly effective for their continued development.¹¹¹ Beyond the positive reaction to having a mentor, there are several studies that indicate mentees can learn reorganizational knowledge, cognitive strategies, interpersonal skills, problem solving, and supervisory skills through the mentoring relationship.¹¹² Mentees reported that they learned how to interact with others by observing their mentors' behaviors.¹¹³ Mentees also explained that they learned new skills based on their mentor's explanation or example. In contrast to negative mentoring experiences, positive experiences such as trust in the mentor, frequent interaction with the mentor, challenging job assignments, and coaching can facilitate learning.

MENTOR PERSPECTIVE

Advantages of Serving as a Mentor

Although mentoring tends to focus on the mentee, mentors also can learn from the experience. By serving as role models, mentors have ongoing opportunities to refine their own skills. For example, mentors need interpersonal skills to balance their dual roles of encouraging and supporting mentees while providing realistic assessments of mentees' strengths and areas where improvements could be made. These same skills are useful to executives when they provide feedback and conduct formal performance evaluations of their direct reports. In addition, mentors can learn new information or gain a different perspective from interacting with their mentees. Beyond refining existing skills and learning new information, mentors may derive a personal sense of satisfaction by assisting with the growth and development of their mentees as well as satisfaction for contributing to organizational knowledge and cultural transfer.

Disadvantages of Serving as a Mentor

The time commitment and effort for serving as a mentor can be considerable. When mentees and mentors are not compatible, mentors may feel that the benefits gained are not worth the effort that must be expended. As a result of negative mentoring experiences, mentors may provide less career-related (*e.g.*, coaching, challenging assignments, sponsorship) and social (*e.g.*, counseling, acceptance) support to mentees.¹¹⁴ In addition, mentors may be more likely to express intentions to leave the mentoring relationship.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

¹¹² Hezlett, S.A. (2005). Protégés' learning in mentoring relationships: A review of the literature and exploratory case study. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 7, 505-526.

¹¹³ Hezlett, S.A. (2005). Protégés' learning in mentoring relationships: A review of the literature and exploratory case study. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 7, 505-526.

¹¹⁴ Eby, L.T., Durley, J.R., Evans, S.C. and Ragins, R.R. (2008). Mentors' perceptions of negative mentoring experiences: Scale development and nomological validation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(2), 358-373.

¹¹⁵ Eby, L.T., Butts, Durley, J.R. and Ragins, R.R. (2010). Are bad experiences stronger than good ones in mentoring relationships? Evidence from the protégé and mentor perspective. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 77, 81-92; Eby, L.T., Durley, J.R., Evans, S.C. and Ragins, R.R. (2008). Mentors' perceptions of negative mentoring experiences: Scale development and nomological validation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(2), 358-373.

Effectiveness

A majority of senior executives (68 percent) have served as a mentor and 73 percent of them described the activity as either being very or mostly effective for their continued development.¹¹⁶ Serving as a mentor can reinforce knowledge and sharpen skills as “a final stage in learning is teaching others.”¹¹⁷

Costs

Whether the mentoring relationship is formal or informal, mentors and mentees must expend time and effort. Within informal mentoring relationships, these are the primary costs since the organization has minimal or no involvement. Within formal mentoring relationships, funding may be required for developing, administering, evaluating, and improving the program. As long as appropriate measures are taken to prevent negative experiences for mentors and mentees, the costs are relatively low.

Executive Coaching

Background

“Executive coaching is a practical, goal-focused form of one-on-one learning where the participant works with an internal or external coach who helps establish and monitor progress toward goals.”¹¹⁸ The purposes of executive coaching include:¹¹⁹

- Increasing self-awareness;
- Closing skill gaps;
- Improving performance;
- Preparing high potential employees and current executives for expanded leadership responsibilities; and
- Preventing derailment.¹²⁰

Although coaching and mentoring are similar in that both are individualized interpersonal development activities, there are distinct differences. Ordinarily,

¹¹⁶ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

¹¹⁷ Goldman, E. (2008). The power of work experiences: Characteristics critical to developing expertise in strategic thinking. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 19(3), 217-239.

¹¹⁸ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Executive Development Best Practices Guide*, November 2012. Accessed at: <https://vtfea.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/executivedevelopmentbestpracticesguidefinal.pdf>. p. 11

¹¹⁹ Sherman, S., & Freas, A. (2004). The wild west of executive coaching. *Harvard Business Review*, p. 1-8. Accessed at: <http://www.executivecoaching.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/WildWest.pdf>; Hall, D.T., Otazo, K.I., and Hollenbeck, G.P. (1999). Behind closed doors: What really happens in executive coaching. *Organizational Dynamics*, 39-52; Joo, B.K.; Sushko, J.S. and McClean, G.N. (2012). Multiple faces of coaching: Manager-as-coach, executive coaching, and formal mentoring. *Organization Development Journal*, 30(1), 19-38.

¹²⁰ Derailment occurs when “people who are highly skilled, knowledgeable in their field, fail. They are people who, prior to failing, were very successful.” Description from Carpetta, C., Clark, L., and Guagrone, D. (2008). Executive derailment: Three cases in point and how to prevent it. *Global Business & Organizational Excellence*, 27(3), 48-56.

coaching is narrowly focused on specific developmental or transition-related purposes and may be tied to organizational goals.¹²¹ The coaching arrangement is usually limited to a designated time period. In contrast, mentoring is a more generalized development activity that may encompass a broad range of activities such as mentors sponsoring mentees for projects or assignments, providing introductions to other senior executives, and providing information about organizational politics and culture. Unlike executive coaching arrangements, the mentoring relationship may last several years.¹²²

Executive coaching is a triangular relationship consisting of the organization, the coach, and the individual being coached (often referred to as the coachee or executive client). Typically, the organization initiates the arrangement by request or with consent of the executive client. The organization may provide input into the executive client's goals to ensure that they are aligned with the organization's goals.¹²³ If an external coach is used, the organization provides funding; if an internal coach is used, the organization provides support in terms of salary and work time of the coach. Whether external or internal coaches are used, it is best to define the objectives, roles, and responsibilities of each party beforehand and to agree upon and document the boundaries of confidentiality to minimize conflict.¹²⁴

The use of external coaches may be most helpful when the situation requires extreme confidentiality or a coach who has a wide range of experiences from a variety of organizations.¹²⁵ Conversely, external coaches may be less helpful in situations that require knowledge of the organization's culture and internal operations. Under these circumstances, an internal coach may be more helpful. However, potential drawbacks to using internal coaches are that some coaches may lack sufficient time to adequately perform coaching duties because they serve in multiple HR roles¹²⁶ and that the executive being coached may not feel free to discuss concerns and areas for improvement for fear of how the information could be perceived or used.

Advantages

One obvious advantage of executive coaching is that it is an individualized development activity that can target specific needs and concerns in a work environment. It poses minimal disruption to executives performing their day-to-day responsibilities as coaching may occur on an as needed basis in "real time" or

¹²¹ Hall, D.T., Otazo, K.I., and Hollenbeck, G.P. (1999). Behind closed doors: What really happens in executive coaching. *Organizational Dynamics*, 39-52; Kalman, F. (2014). The rise of executive coaching. *Chief Learning Officer*, January, 18-21.

¹²² Defilippo, D.J. and Hogan, M. (2014). Mentoring vs. coaching: When to use each. *Talent Magazine*, 17-19. Accessed at: <http://www.talentmgt.com/articles/print/mentoring-vs-coaching-when-to-use-each>

¹²³ Sherman, S., & Freas, A. (2004). The wild west of executive coaching. *Harvard Business Review*, p. 82-90.

¹²⁴ Sherman, S., & Freas, A. (2004). The wild west of executive coaching. *Harvard Business Review*, p. 82-90.

¹²⁵ Hall, D.T., Otazo, K.I., and Hollenbeck, G.P. (1999). Behind closed doors: What really happens in executive coaching. *Organizational Dynamics*, 39-52.

¹²⁶ Goldsmith, M. and Morgan, H. (2004). Leadership as a Contact Sport: You can't develop in a closet. *Leadership Excellence*, 22 (8), 6-7.

according to a set schedule that does not require a major time commitment. Within the coaching arrangement, the executive client will likely receive a level of candid feedback that is not generally provided. The intent of the feedback is to promote self-awareness and improve performance.¹²⁷ When executives receive stretch assignments¹²⁸ or other new challenges, the coach may be able to help the executive reframe the situation to see it from a different perspective or help the executive draw upon similar experiences to develop strategies for addressing new challenges. In a similar vein, coaches may be able to help the executive “develop new ways to attack old problems.”¹²⁹ Through goal setting and providing feedback regarding progress toward goal accomplishment, coaches can help executive clients manage multiple short-term and long-term demands. This may be especially important when executives have long-term goals for professional development (*e.g.*, improving a relationship with an immediate supervisor or other top leadership, improving listening and communication skills) as well as short-term task goals (*e.g.*, preparing a budget, negotiating a contract). Frequently, less time and attention is spent on long-term developmental goals because task goals are usually more concrete and immediate.¹³⁰ By helping executives achieve long-term goals in stages and continuing to focus attention on them, coaches may be able to assist executives in achieving both short-term task and long-term developmental goals.

Disadvantages

Despite the advantages of executive coaching, there can be challenges. For one, as with mentoring, the success of coaching depends in part on the executive’s willing participation. As noted by one author, not all executives are receptive to coaching.¹³¹ The individual being coached must be open to feedback and willing to make the effort to change.¹³² Forced coaching can be a waste of time and money.¹³³ Another disadvantage is that there is no single agreed upon definition or any standard qualifications for executive coaches. They may have educational and experience backgrounds as diverse as business, HR, linguistics, education, sports, and psychology.¹³⁴ Not surprisingly, certain coaches’ expertise may be more appropriate in some situations than others.¹³⁵ Before engaging an executive coach, the organization should clearly identify the needs of the individual to be

¹²⁷ Sherman, S., & Freas, A. (2004). The wild west of executive coaching. *Harvard Business Review*, 82-90.

¹²⁸ Stretch assignments occur when there is a mismatch between the executive’s current talents and those needed to successfully complete an assignment or project. They require executives to move beyond their comfort level to try a new approach. Description from Macauz, W.P. (2010). Making the most of stretch assignments. *T&D*, 64(6), 48-53.

¹²⁹ Michelman, P. (2005). What an executive coach can do for you. Harvard Business School.

¹³⁰ Beck, J.W., Gregory, J.B., and Carr, A.E. (2009). Balancing development with day-to-day task demands: A multiple-goal approach to executive coaching. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice*, 2, 293-296.

¹³¹ Kalman, F. (2014). The rise of executive coaching. *Chief Learning Officer*, January, 18-21.

¹³² Michelman, P. (2005). What an executive coach can do for you. Harvard Business School.

¹³³ Kalman, F. (2014). The rise of executive coaching. *Chief Learning Officer*, January, 18-21.

¹³⁴ Peterson, D.B. (2011). Executive coaching: A critical review and recommendations for advancing the practice. In S. Zedeck (Editor-in-Chief). *APA Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology* (527-566) Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

¹³⁵ Smither, J. W., London, M., Flautt, R., Vargas, Y. and Kucine, I. (2003). Can working with an executive coach improve multisource feedback ratings over time? A quasi-experimental field study. *Personnel Psychology*, 56, 23–44. doi:10.1111/j.1744-6570.2003.tb00142.x.

coached (*e.g.*, insight, motivation, skills or opportunity to practice existing skills)¹³⁶ and desired outcomes to help determine if a particular coach is likely to achieve the intended results. If the organization wants the coach to help identify the executive's needs, then it should select a coach who has the training, skills, and experience in problem identification.¹³⁷ Given the lack of consensus on both the definition of executive coaching and qualifications needed to become one, combined with the influx of new coaches, organizations may be concerned justifiably about the quality of coaching their executives receive.¹³⁸ People with minimal background in coaching have started coaching businesses.¹³⁹ Therefore, when using external coaches, the organization should check references and carefully review the coach's education and experience to help determine if the coach can provide the services (*e.g.*, close skill gaps, prevent derailment) the executive client wants or needs. Likewise, if internal coaches are used, the organization should ensure that the coach receives appropriate training, resources, and respect for confidentiality to be helpful and trusted by the executive client.

Effectiveness

Although only 37 percent of career executives have received formal executive coaching, the reaction to it generally has been favorable. Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of career executives who participated in the activity described it as either very effective or mostly effective for their continued development.¹⁴⁰ Other stakeholders, such as HR directors and immediate supervisors, also perceive coaching as beneficial for the executive client.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, other studies that couple executive coaching with additional development activities found that executive coaching contributed to increased productivity and more successful achievement of goals.¹⁴² These findings suggest that executive coaching singly or in conjunction with other development activities can produce positive outcomes on the job.

¹³⁶ Bono, J.E., Purvanova, R.K., Towler, A.J., and Peterson, D.B. (2009). A survey of executive coaching practices. *Personnel Psychology*, 62, 361-404.

¹³⁷ Bono, J.E., Purvanova, R.K., Towler, A.J., and Peterson, D.B. (2009). A survey of executive coaching practices. *Personnel Psychology*, 62, 361-404.

¹³⁸ In addition to the varied education and experience backgrounds of executive coaches, there are multiple certification and accreditation organizations.

¹³⁹ Peterson, D.B. (2011). Executive coaching: A critical review and recommendations for advancing the practice. In S. Zedeck (Editor-in-Chief). *APA Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology* (527-566), Washington, DC, American Psychological Association.

¹⁴⁰ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

¹⁴¹ McGovern, J., Lindemann, M., Vegara, M., Murphy, S., Barker, and Warrenfeltz, R. (2001). Maximizing the impact of executive coaching: Behavior change, organizational outcomes, and return on investment. *The Manchester Review*, 6(1), 1-9. Accessed at: http://www.evolve-coaching.com/uploads/ManchesterReview_Maximizing_Impactof_Exec_Coaching.pdf.

¹⁴² Hernez-Broome, G. (2002). In it for the long haul: Coaching is key to continued development. *LIA*, 22(1), p. 14- 16; Olivero, G, Bane, K.D., and Kopelman, R.E. (1997). Executive coaching as a transfer of training tool; Effects on productivity in a public agency. *Public Personnel Management*, 26, 461-469.

Costs

A comparison of costs between internal and external coaches reveals that the costs of internal coaches are relatively low while costs for external coaches are generally high.¹⁴³ A caveat, however, is that internal coaches may have other job responsibilities that may limit their availability or effectiveness.

Experience-based Activities

Experience-based activities are developmental activities that provide “people opportunities to learn from their work rather than taking them away from their work to learn.”¹⁴⁴ Based on interviews conducted with leaders, work experience was identified as making a major contribution to developing leader competencies.¹⁴⁵ More specifically, it is the challenging aspects of work experience, often referred to as developmental components, that are likely to prompt learning because they provide the opportunity and motivation to learn.¹⁴⁶ When existing strategies and processes are inadequate for achieving successful outcomes, executives must develop new methods to deal with the situation. Unlike the usual complex issues that executives face, challenging work experiences involve encountering novelty, visibility and ambiguity beyond the norm. For example, while executives make decisions surrounding complex issues for their work units in the normal course of their jobs, a developmental assignment may require them to participate in work groups with executives from diverse units to make policy recommendations or operational changes that will affect multiple work units or the entire organization. Developmental assignments and Action Learning (AL) are examples of experience-based activities.

Developmental Assignments (lasting more than 30 days)

Background

The premise behind using challenging job assignments to develop employees is that when there is a disparity between employee knowledge and skills for the assignment, employees must “stretch” to learn new information, develop new skills, and figure out how to apply what they have learned in other situations to master the new experience. Developmental assignments typically include the unexpected, high stakes, complex, high pressure, or novel challenges.¹⁴⁷ In a developmental assignment, some or all of these ingredients exceed the level of difficulty typically experienced.

¹⁴³ Rock, D. and Donde, R. (n.d.) Driving change with internal coaching programs.

¹⁴⁴ Hernez-Broome, G., & Hughes, R.L. (2012). Leadership development: Past, present, and future. *Human Resources Planning*, 24-32. Accessed at: <http://www.ccl.org/leadership/pdf/research/cclLeadershipDevelopment.pdf>.

¹⁴⁵ Davies, J. and Easterby-Smith, M. (1984). Learning and developing from managerial work experiences. *Journal of Management Studies*, 21(2), 169-183; McCall, M.W., Lombardo, M.M., and Morrison, A.M. (1988). *The lessons of experience: How successful executives develop on the job*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

¹⁴⁶ McCauley, C.D., Ruderman, M.N., Ohlott, P.J. and Morrow, J.E. (1994). Assessing the developmental components of managerial jobs. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 79 (4), 544-560.

¹⁴⁷ McCall, M.W. (2010). Recasting leadership development. *Industrial and Organizational psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice*, p. 3-19.

Career executives must possess a broad range of competencies. For the most part, selection into SES jobs requires demonstration of 22 executive competencies, six fundamental competencies, and often other technical competencies.¹⁴⁸ Due to the number and variety of competencies, executives may not be strong in all of them. Developmental assignments can provide the opportunity to strengthen competencies where improvement is needed or to build upon existing strengths. For example, while senior executives may routinely make presentations to higher level leaders in their organizations, a developmental experience may include presenting to external organizations or committees where members may possess varying degrees of familiarity with the technical content and agreement with the ideas that will be discussed. This type of presentation would have potentially higher stakes and greater visibility than the presentations normally made by the executive.

Advantages

Developmental assignments can benefit both the executive and the organization. The executive can gain skills and build confidence through successful completion of challenging assignments. A desirable effect is that developmental challenge can be associated with higher engagement.¹⁴⁹ In turn, leader engagement is associated with higher levels of leadership—behaviors that motivate followers as well as lead them to higher performance and better attitudes.¹⁵⁰ Depending on the number of other functional areas within the organization and interaction level with those other areas, the experience may provide the executive with a broader view of organizational operations and opportunities to expand professional networks. The organization gains by getting meaningful work accomplished and perhaps contributing to a continuous learning work environment. See Appendix C for various types of assignments and the contributions they can make to learning and development.

Disadvantages

According to the MSPB questionnaire regarding training and development for senior executives, some of the main causes of low participation in this type of developmental activity are current work demands and limited staff to complete the work of the executive while he or she is on assignment. An additional challenge with developmental assignments is striking the right balance between “stretching” one’s abilities towards success and being overwhelmed. Research suggests that, while some challenge is necessary for leadership skill development, too much can contribute to cognitive overload and reduce the amount of learning

¹⁴⁸ An analysis of permanent career SES vacancy announcements posted on USAJOBS during 2014 (N =1292) showed that a large number of them (N=1043) requested that applicants provide information on at least one technical competency to be considered qualified for the position.

¹⁴⁹ Courtright, S.H., Colbert, A.E. and Choi, D. (2014). Fired up or burned out? How developmental challenge differentially impacts leader behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 99 (4), 681-696.

¹⁵⁰ Courtright, S.H., Colbert, A.E., & Choi, D. (2014). Fired up or burned out? How developmental challenge differentially impacts leader behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 99 (4), 681-696.

that can occur.¹⁵¹ Another disadvantage is that, if there is too much emphasis on the results or work products of the assignment, then the learning portion of the assignment may not be fully recognized.

Effectiveness

Among the types of training and development activities agencies provide to their executives, developmental assignments are seldom used. Only 18 percent of career executives have been on a developmental assignment lasting more than 30 days.¹⁵² However, a very high percentage (83 percent) of career senior executives who were placed on such an assignment reported the experience as either very or mostly effective for their continued development.¹⁵³

Costs

When appropriately implemented, developmental assignments can be relatively inexpensive.¹⁵⁴ Yet, depending on the scope of the project and the costs of inefficiencies and errors, the consequences of a less than fully successful developmental assignment could be very expensive. This highlights the importance of organizations providing executives with the necessary resources (*e.g.*, executive coaches, partnering with others who have been successful with similar challenges, adequate funding, staffing, and technology) for the experience to be truly developmental and to achieve successful outcomes.

¹⁵¹ DeRue, D.S. and Wellman, N. (2009). Developing leaders via experience: The role of developmental challenge, learning orientation, and feedback availability. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 94(4), 859-875.

¹⁵² U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

¹⁵³ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

¹⁵⁴ Davies, J. and Easterby-Smith, M. (1984). Learning and development from managerial work experiences, *Journal of Management Studies*, 21 (2), 169-183; McCall, M.W. (1988). Developing executives through work experience. *Human Resource Planning*, 11(1), 1-11.

Action Learning Projects

Background

The term “action learning” (AL) describes project-based learning where the participant works alone or with cohorts on a real business challenge while analyzing and discussing progress and lessons learned.¹⁵⁵ AL can include a team of executives, usually from multiple units within an organization or even from other organizations, working together to tackle a complex problem while reflecting on what they are learning and how their learning benefits them, the group, and the organization.¹⁵⁶ Typically, the participants in an AL project are the team and a coach who helps the team focus on learning as well as solving the problem.¹⁵⁷ The learning that occurs within AL is not necessarily related to acquiring knowledge about facts and principles or about how to perform a task. Instead, it is about how learning occurs and how it can be applied to other situations. The team in AL must exercise critical-thinking and problem-solving skills to develop an action plan. By working on an AL team, group members can improve group or team performance, develop cognitive strategies and influence attitudes.¹⁵⁸ Ultimately, the result of the AL project is to have the team develop a plan to address the problem and then execute the plan.

Advantages

With AL, the organization simultaneously addresses a significant problem and develops its executives. AL projects can integrate with or flow from an organization’s mission and strategic plans and can identify goals for an individual EDP. The short-term benefit to AL team members is a sense of accomplishment for solving a problem and the long-term benefit is the acquisition of learning that can be applied to other settings. Further, when executives from different functional areas work together to solve common problems, they informally receive cross-training and build professional networks that can last beyond completion of the project. For organizations, in addition to getting a difficult problem resolved, AL can result in the long-term benefits of supporting a continuous learning environment and a focus on team problem solving and decision making. However, the projects selected must be important to the organization and top leadership. If the team perceives the project as merely

¹⁵⁵ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Executive Development Best Practices Guide*, November 2012. Accessed at: <https://vtfea.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/executivedevelopmentbestpracticesguidefinal.pdf>.

¹⁵⁶ Marquardt, M.J. Action learning: A powerful new training tool for developing individuals, teams, and organizations. The George Washington University, Feb. 18, 2004, accessed at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~bygeorge/021804/actionlearning.html>.

¹⁵⁷ Marquardt, M.J. Action learning: A powerful new training tool for developing individuals, teams, and organizations. The George Washington University, Feb. 18, 2004, accessed at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~bygeorge/021804/actionlearning.html>.

¹⁵⁸ Marquardt, M.J. Action learning: A powerful new training tool for developing individuals, teams, and organizations. The George Washington University, Feb. 18, 2004, accessed at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~bygeorge/021804/actionlearning.html>.

“make work,” development may not occur and team members could become cynical.¹⁵⁹

Disadvantages

The team may become so focused on solving the real-world problem that it unfortunately pays minimal attention to the learning experience. Workplace demands require that results be achieved and once achieved the next project is typically assigned. For learning to occur, the team needs to be allowed to reflect on its experiences, review the lessons learned, and generalize the learning to other situations. Unless the team is given sufficient time to process what has happened, the intended long-term learning may not occur.¹⁶⁰

Effectiveness

AL is a training activity that is used infrequently (only 21 percent of career senior executives have participated in an AL project) but the majority (63 percent) reported the experience as either very or mostly effective for their continued development.¹⁶¹

Costs

In general, the costs of developing and administering AL are low to moderate.¹⁶² For the most part, costs for AL projects consist of the salary and time of the team members and coach. However, the cost for implementing AL also may include the cost of training in the AL process. This expense can vary based on the length and depth of the training. Several organizations offer AL certificate programs, usually lasting a few days, and universities offer a certificate or course typically lasting multiple days that may extend over several months. In some instances, the services of a certified AL coach or facilitator may be required. Despite the potential for these added costs, AL projects usually have a return on investment that ranges between five to 25 times their costs.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ McCall, M.W. (2010). Recasting leadership development. *Industrial and Organizational psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice*, 3-19.

¹⁶⁰ Smith, P.A.C. and O’Neil, J. (2003). A review of action learning literature 1994-2000. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 15(2), 1-12. Accessed at: <http://www.tlinc.com/ifalcrev1.htm>; Daudelin, M.W. (1996). Learning from experience through reflection. *Organizational Dynamics*, 24(3), p. 36-48. p. 41, 45; DeRue, D.S. and Ashford, S.J. (2010). Power to the people: Where has personal agency gone in leadership development? *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice*, 3, 24-27.

¹⁶¹ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

¹⁶² Noe, R.A. (2010). *Employee Training and Development*. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

¹⁶³ Raelin, J. (2006). Does action learning promote collaborative leadership? *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 5(2), 152-168.

Formal Instruction Activities

Formal instruction methods use a structured environment such as a classroom or web-based medium to provide trainees with information on a particular topic.

Short-term Training Program for Executives

Background

Typically, the length of short-term training is from one day to one week. However, there are some courses that deliver training in “bite-size” modules. For example, executives can participate in 90-minute instructor-led training programs that cover a wide range of topics such as processes for making complex decisions, budget process, how to improve interactions with the Office of Management and Budget, and managing change and managing diversity in the workforce. These bite-size chunks of learning may be coupled with reading assignments or online training. Short-term executive training programs may be offered by consultants, training organizations, universities, and other Federal agencies.

Advantages

Many of the advantages of short-term executive training programs are similar to those of residential programs. The main difference is that the short-term program may not cover the training content at the same level of depth or may not include as much practice or feedback as a residential program. Generally, short-term executive training programs use multiple instructional methods, which require the use of different skill sets. For instance, reading assignments can be used to provide information on processes and practices for addressing poor performers while role plays can be used to practice giving feedback and developing an action plan to correct poor performance. Another advantage is that the training program may offer a safe place to refine interpersonal skills (*e.g.*, conducting a performance evaluation) and explore new ideas. Similar to residential programs, short-term training programs can target select ECQs. As an example, small group exercises can be designed to help participants practice influencing and negotiating skills. Also, instructors can capitalize on the depth of experience that senior executives have by facilitating information and experience sharing. As a result, executives can benefit from others’ experiences and insights. The interactions that occur during the training program can facilitate networking and continued communication after the course has ended.

Disadvantages

One disadvantage of classroom training is that the pace of instruction may not be appropriate for everyone.¹⁶⁴ Another disadvantage is that instructor-led classroom training is highly dependent upon the quality of instructors, which can vary widely. Even with the most gifted instructors, providing learners with

¹⁶⁴ DeRouin, R.E., Fritzsche, B.A., and Salas, E. (2004). Optimizing e-learning: Research-based guidelines for learner-controlled training. *Human Resource Management*, 43, 147-162.

immediate individualized feedback is limited.¹⁶⁵ Finally, although short-term training programs require less time commitment than residential programs, executives still may find it difficult to take the necessary amount of time away from the job to attend.

Effectiveness

Many career senior executives (65 percent) attended a short-term training program and many (63 percent) characterize the training as either very or mostly effective for their continued development.¹⁶⁶ Research conducted on leadership development programs indicates a very broad range of effectiveness from programs that failed to those that are highly effective.¹⁶⁷ Consequently, when agencies decide to use short-term executive training programs, it would be wise to check available information to assess the program's effectiveness (*e.g.*, independent research, comments from previous agency attendees, reputation of the instructor or training organization).

Costs

The costs of short-term executive training programs can vary greatly.¹⁶⁸ Factors such as generic vs. custom training, length of the training, and location of the training can affect cost. When short-term executive training programs are developed in-house or custom designed, they may be tailored to the organization's specific needs and implemented to coincide with major organization initiatives such as a pending reorganization, new legislation, or changes to operating procedures. However, the development and implementation costs could be considerable. When an existing training program is available, it may be inexpensive but may be too generic to be helpful on the job.¹⁶⁹ If training is held on-site, facility, travel, and lodging costs can be reduced or eliminated. Also, the amount of time to return to the job may be minimal. Yet, learners who received off-site training stated that they were better able to think strategically and focus on learning.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ Goldstein, I.L. and Ford, J.K. (2002). *Training in Organizations: Needs Assessment, Development, and Evaluation* (4th ed.). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Wadsworth.

¹⁶⁶ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

¹⁶⁷ Collins, D.B. and Holton III, E.F. (2004). The effectiveness of managerial leadership development programs; A meta-analysis of studies from 1982 to 2001. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, Vol. 15 (2), 217-248; Burke, M.J. and Day, R.R. (1986). A cumulative study of effectiveness of managerial training. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71 (2), 232-245.

¹⁶⁸ OPM offers some short-term training courses for executives free of charge. Other programs can have minimal costs from a few hundred dollars for a day-long class to more than \$50,000 for a six-week intensive seminar for senior managers.

¹⁶⁹ Merritt, J. (October 20, 2003). Special Report: The Education Edge. *BusinessWeek*.

¹⁷⁰ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Agencies Should More Fully Evaluate Costs and Benefits of Executive Training*, January 2014.

Web-based Instruction

Background

The use of online training or web-based instruction (WBI), a program that delivers training through a web browser over any computer network and allows instant updating, distribution, and information sharing, is becoming increasingly popular.¹⁷¹ Basically, WBI provides a way to train individuals via the web. This discussion will focus on asynchronous WBI that does not include instructor interaction (*e.g.*, serving as an expert to answer questions, facilitating discussion among learners) to provide a clearer contrast between the different types of training activities and the unique contributions each type can make to the learning experience.

Advantages

WBI provides many advantages. First, it can provide uniform training content to large groups of geographically-dispersed employees. Second, WBI training content can be accessed at any time and from almost any location, which allows executives to receive training when it is most convenient for them.¹⁷² The third advantage of “on-demand” availability of many WBI courses enables learners to access training “just-in time” (*e.g.*, right before or during a project that requires proficiency in the training material). Fourth, WBI courses can be designed to provide learners with control over various aspects of their training experience; such control can allow for customization and individualized feedback. Learner control features include:¹⁷³

- Pace—the speed of progression through the training material;
- Sequence—the option to skip topics or complete them in a non-sequential manner;
- Content—the flexibility to choose topics or assessment; and
- Advisory—feedback that informs learners how well they understand the training material or suggests a course of action to increase understanding (*e.g.*, completing additional practice items, reviewing other examples).

Finally, WBI can be paired with offline (typically conducted in a classroom setting) training.¹⁷⁴ This combination of training activities is often referred to as

¹⁷¹ Sitzmann, T., Kraiger, K., Steward, D., and Wisher, R. (2006). The comparative effectiveness of web-based and classroom instruction: A meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology*, 59, 623-664; Business Dictionary accessed at: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/web-based-instruction-WBI.html>.

¹⁷² The most commonly used type of WBI is asynchronous, which is “pre-recorded” and does not require that all learners be in front of their computers at the same time. Welsh, E.T., Wanberg, C.R., Brown, K. G. and Simmering, M.J. (2003). E-learning: Emerging uses, empirical results and future directions. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 7(4), 245-258.

¹⁷³ Kraiger, K. & Jerden, E. (2007). A meta-analytic investigation of learner control: Old findings and new directions, in S.M. Fiore & E. Salas (Eds.). *Toward a science of distributed learning* (pp. 65-90). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Books.

¹⁷⁴ Singh, H. (2003). Building effective learning programs. *Educational Technology*, Vol. 43(6), p. 51-54 accessed at: <http://asianvu.com/bookstoread/framework/blended-learning.pdf>.

blended learning and may be able to provide participants with the best of both instructional methods. Activities that require human interaction may be conducted during the classroom portion of the training, while conveying facts, principles, and procedures may be transmitted via the web-based portion. Depending on how online (*e.g.*, use of existing generic products, recorded e-learning events) and offline training are combined, organizations may be able to optimize their use of resources (*e.g.*, development costs, development time, training facilities, time away from the job).

Disadvantages

The reduced structure that accompanies freedom in when to complete training may make it easier for individuals to procrastinate or forget about completing the training. Granted, members of the SES are likely to be experts on planning, prioritizing, and time management, but the lack of required attendance days or times that accompany WBI may still pose a challenge. Yet another potential disadvantage is workplace interruptions (*e.g.*, telephone calls, priority emails). Since most WBI would occur at the executive's workstation, interruptions could prolong training.¹⁷⁵ In addition to workplace interruptions, there may be technical difficulties, which can negatively impact satisfaction with the training and possibly contribute to participants' willingness to complete it and how much they learn.¹⁷⁶ Lastly, the learner control feature in some web-based training can be a disadvantage. Some individuals make poor decisions about what or how much they need to learn and practice.¹⁷⁷

Effectiveness

WBI is most frequently used (71 percent) by agencies for training its executives.¹⁷⁸ Yet, the percentage of executives who report the experience as very or mostly effective for their continued development is the lowest (37 percent) among the types of training examined in this report.¹⁷⁹ Perhaps the WBI was not as interactive or perceived as interesting as the other types of training. However, research shows that WBI and instructor-led classroom training are equally effective for teaching declarative knowledge (*e.g.*, facts, principles, and relationships among knowledge elements) as long as the same instructional methods are used.¹⁸⁰ For example, a video lecture in WBI could be equivalent to a lecture in the classroom. The difference in effectiveness occurs for long

¹⁷⁵ Sitzmann, T., Ely, K. Bell, B.S., and Bauer, K.N. (2010). The effects of technical difficulties on learning and attrition during online training. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 16(3), 281-292.

¹⁷⁶ Sitzmann, T., Ely, K. Bell, B.S., and Bauer, K.N. (2010). The effects of technical difficulties on learning and attrition during online training. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 16(3), 281-292.

¹⁷⁷ DeRouin, R.E., Fritzsche, B.A., & Salas, E. (2004). Optimizing e-learning: Research-based guidelines for learner-controlled training. *Human Resource Management*, 43, 147-162.

¹⁷⁸ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

¹⁷⁹ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

¹⁸⁰ Sitzmann, T., Kraiger, K., Steward, D. and Wisher, R. (2006). The comparative effectiveness of web-based and classroom instruction: A meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology*, 59, 623-664.

courses, when web-based learners practice the training content and receive feedback during training. Under these circumstances, WBI learners outperform classroom-based learners in acquiring declarative knowledge.¹⁸¹ Overall, WBI appears to be most useful for less complex materials; more research is needed to assess its effectiveness for teaching “soft” or interpersonal skills and psychomotor skills.¹⁸²

Costs

The cost and time to develop WBI can vary widely. Factors such as the number and types of media (*e.g.*, text, audio, visual), the extent of interactive exercises, and the complexity of course content and programming will influence how much the training will cost and the time required to develop it. Understandably, more complex programming costs more and takes longer to produce. In general, WBI takes longer and costs more to develop than classroom instruction.¹⁸³ In addition to the costs for developing the training, there are costs for hardware, software, and technical support.¹⁸⁴ The savings for implementing WBI are due to the elimination of instructor expenses, elimination or reduction of accommodation and travel expenses, and reduction of time away from work. Additional savings can occur when the course is repeated multiple times to large audiences. To capture savings, many organizations are shifting to online instruction.¹⁸⁵ However, to ensure that costs savings actually occur, organizations should make sure their calculations reflect a realistic estimate of both development costs (which may be greater than expected) and delivery savings (which may depend on high use). Depending on the circumstances, the savings may not be what the agency envisions.

¹⁸¹ Sitzmann, T., Kraiger, K., Steward, D. and Wisher, R. (2006). The comparative effectiveness of web-based and classroom instruction: A meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology*, 59, 623-664.

¹⁸² Welsh, E.T., Wanberg, C.R., Brown, K. G. and Simmering, M.J. (2003). E-learning: Emerging uses, empirical results and future directions. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 7(4), 245-258.

¹⁸³ Chapman, B. (2010). How long does it take to create learning? Chapman Alliance LLC accessed at: www.chapmanalliance.com; Welsh, E.T., Wanberg, C.R., Brown, K. G. and Simmering, M.J. (2003). E-learning: Emerging uses, empirical results and future directions. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 7(4), 245-258.

¹⁸⁴ Welsh, E.T., Wanberg, C.R., Brown, K. G. and Simmering, M.J. (2003). E-learning: Emerging uses, empirical results and future directions. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 7(4), 245-258.

¹⁸⁵ Brown, K.G. and Sitzmann, T. (2011). Training and employee development for improved performance. In S. Zedeck (Editor-in-Chief), *APA Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Selecting and Developing Members for the Organization*, (Vol.2, 469-503). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Summary of Considerations for Determining How to Train Senior Executives

All organizations that responded to the MSPB questionnaire regarding training and development for senior executives reported that they used multiple methods to train and develop their senior executives. The OPM Senior Executive Service survey indicates that after becoming members of the SES, career executives tend to cluster into groups ranging from high levels of participation in training and development, where executives are engaged in multiple training activities, to minimal participation, where executives are engaged in only a few training activities. Of course, not all executives participated in every training method their organization has used. Agencies had to make decisions about which employee would get which training. A preliminary step in the decision-making process is to determine what the executive's training needs are, considering the executive's current role and performance, executive competencies needed to achieve strategic plans, and the executive's own interest in professional growth. Next, determining which training activity is the most appropriate will require an evaluation of several factors:

- *Competency trainability.* Some competencies are more trainable than others and agencies would be wise to use funding to address those competencies that are more responsive to training. Likewise, agencies should spend greater effort on recruitment and valid assessment instruments to help select candidates who possess those competencies that are less responsive to training.
- *Advantages and disadvantages.* Each training method has advantages and disadvantages. Some require more time away from the job than others. Many combinations of training activities seemed to complement or supplement each other (*e.g.*, short-term executive training program with executive coaching or mentoring; classroom instruction with WBI short-term executive training program and job assignment with an executive coach). Still other training methods combined developing executives' skills with accomplishing work (*e.g.*, AL, developmental job assignments).
- *Costs.* Some training methods are inexpensive while others are not. Even within a particular training type, the costs could vary considerably (*e.g.*, WBI that has been developed by another organization and is available to other organizations for free, compared to WBI that is custom developed and uses multiple types of media). Ultimately, the costs of training should be weighed against the benefits received from it.

- *Training effectiveness.* Research has provided measures of effectiveness for various types of training activities. Some training methods appear to be more effective for different types of learning. For instance, WBI is effective for conveying knowledge, principles, and processes, while training exercises involving human interaction may be more effective in teaching interpersonal skills.

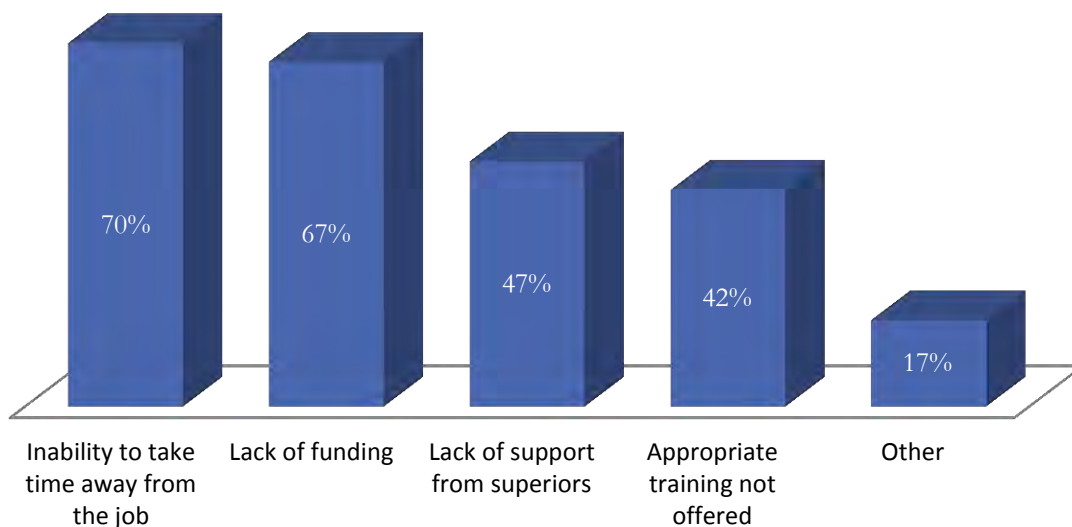
The above information is intended to help agencies understand the differences between various training activities and the kinds of factors to consider when deciding which activities would be most appropriate for their executives' needs. Unfortunately, there is no formula for determining the best approach to take. Agencies will need to evaluate options and accept compromises. For example, agencies should consider the factor of costs. Naturally, agencies want to get the most value for every dollar spent on training. However, if an SES training activity is free but fails to produce the desired results, then it is not worth the time and effort and in actuality costs the organization money in terms of lost productivity. Further, such a bad experience could contribute to other problems such as lack of motivation to engage in future development. Ultimately, it is critical that the training and development activities meet the needs of senior executives and their organizations. Appendix D highlights the key points to consider when determining which type of training activity may be most appropriate for a training activity.

CHAPTER 7: BARRIERS TO SES TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT AND STRATEGIES TO MITIGATE THEM

A sizeable portion (30 percent) of career senior executives believe that their developmental needs are not being met.¹⁸⁶ Considering their duties and responsibilities, the consequences for suboptimal performance can impact large numbers of employees and perhaps have implications for an agency accomplishing its mission. Undoubtedly, executives should be held accountable for their performance. However, agencies should provide them with the tools to be successful. Appropriate training is one of those tools.

Despite the availability of numerous activities for developing executives and the trainability of many of the core leadership competencies (*e.g.*, conflict management, influencing and negotiating, political savvy), there appear to be several barriers that impede executives from gaining the training that they want or need. Career executives were asked to rate their level of agreement (*i.e.*, strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree) with several factors that could contribute to their developmental needs not being met. Figure 5 shows the survey results.¹⁸⁷

Figure 5. Contributors to the failure to meet developmental needs of senior executives



This section will discuss each of the barriers and possible strategies to mitigate them.

¹⁸⁶ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

¹⁸⁷ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

Barrier 1: Inability to Take Time Away from the Job

The most frequently cited reason career senior executives identified for their developmental needs not being met was the inability to take time away from the job. Reduced staffing due to multiple year budget cuts has increased the workload of employees at all levels. In some instances, career senior executives have been required to perform the duties of their position of record and the duties of other executives who left the organization.¹⁸⁸ Even without being required to perform “double duty,” the executives’ workload is high. A further complication is that they also may have fewer staff members to perform the unit’s work. This may require them to devise processes for “doing more with less,” be more active in day-to-day operations, or advocate for changes that more realistically align performance standards and expectations with available resources. Regardless of the approach taken, the result is limited availability to participate in developmental activities.

Agency-Recommended Strategies to Mitigate Lack of Time¹⁸⁹

- Schedule executive training and development around large agency events. When personnel are already convened for one purpose, use that time to provide executives with opportunities to meet and exchange ideas and information on the challenges they face or to attend relevant classroom instruction.
- Offer multiple sessions of the same training event to allow flexibility in scheduling.
- Create or select short-term training courses or seminars (*e.g.*, one hour, two days) that address the needs and interests of executives. Record training events to make them available through voice, video, or online formats for convenient access.
- Use executive coaching or mentoring (either having a mentor or serving as a mentor) to schedule time for addressing workplace issues with minimal interruption to daily activities.
- Use action learning projects with flexible scheduling options to engage executives in real world application of the ECQs. The time spent on the project serves dual purposes—training executives and solving organizational problems.
- Hold training in locations that are convenient for the majority of attendees.

¹⁸⁸ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Questionnaire for Agencies for the MSPB Study on Training and Development of Senior Executives, 2014.

¹⁸⁹ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Questionnaire for Agencies for the MSPB Study on Training and Development of Senior Executives, 2014.

- Schedule training specifically for the SES. The training may be used to address agency-wide goals and planning. Encourage communication and collaboration across the agency.

Barrier 2: Lack of Funding

The second most frequently cited reason career senior executives identified for their developmental needs not being met was lack of funding. Although the importance of developing executives is generally acknowledged, the reality is that training funds are often severely reduced or eliminated when budgets are cut. To combat reduced funding for training and development, agencies have implemented the following practices to maximize the use of available resources.

*Agency-Recommended Strategies to Mitigate Lack of Funding*¹⁹⁰

- Identify no-cost or relatively low-cost training and development activities to use where appropriate. A list of activities may be developed to quickly recall the types and dates of activities that are available.
- Prioritize training to ensure that the most important courses or activities are funded. Identify courses that would be appropriate for a large number of executives.
- Share resources across agencies. Use training developed by other Federal agencies. Partner with other agencies to allow executives to attend training purchased by other agencies when the purchasing agency is unable to fill all of the seats.
- Develop low-cost internal training such as pro bono speakers to discuss a wide range of leadership topics, lunch and learn opportunities, and condensed or otherwise cost-effective training courses. These venues can be used to share information and allow executives opportunities to network with each other.
- Use experience-based activities (*e.g.*, developmental assignments, rotational assignments, shadowing, details, AL) to help develop executives.
- Use relevant online training, particularly training developed by others such as Federal agencies, training organizations, and universities to reduce or eliminate costs and to provide uniform training to potentially geographically dispersed groups of employees.

¹⁹⁰ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Questionnaire for Agencies for the MSPB Study on Training and Development of Senior Executives, 2014.

Barrier 3: Lack of Support

Nearly half (47 percent) of senior career executives identified lack of support from superiors as a reason why their developmental needs were not being met.¹⁹¹ Given the complex and often changing demands on executives, it is unrealistic to think that they will not need to refine their skills and abilities over time. In fact, several of the ECQs demand that executives stay abreast of recent changes. For instance, the technology management competency requires that executives keep up-to-date on technological advances and the “external awareness” competency requires that executives maintain current information on factors that affect the organization or influence the perceptions of stakeholders (*e.g.*, general public, other Federal agencies). In addition, other workplace changes (*e.g.*, best practices, restructuring) can necessitate the development of new skills and strategies or the refinement of skills not often used.

*Agency-Recommended Strategies to Mitigate Lack of Support from Supervisors of Executives*¹⁹²

- Communicate the importance of continuous learning and development (*e.g.*, for meeting short and long-term organizational goals to gain or maintain top leadership and other key stakeholder support).
- Develop strategies that promote greater accountability for those who attend training and development activities.
- Involve supervisors of senior executives in the training and development of their direct reports as well as other agency executives. Involvement may include: participating on the ERB, identifying training needs, providing input on training content, and participating in training events as instructors, speakers, or panelists.
- Use existing resources (*e.g.*, OPM’s Employee Viewpoint Survey, organizational surveys) to determine if training and development is an area that could be used to improve engagement and innovation of employees at all organizational levels.
- Develop policy or practices to support SES training and development. For example, supervisors of the SES may be evaluated on how well they “lead people” through providing feedback, coaching and supporting training and learning.

¹⁹¹ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

¹⁹² U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Questionnaire for Agencies for the MSPB Study on Training and Development of Senior Executives, 2014.

- Provide training events specifically designed for the SES and encourage attendance across the organization. Designated days may be established for training senior executives.
- Use the Executive Development Plan as the basis for training and development discussion and to facilitate buy-in and increase accountability of the supervisors of senior executives.
- Gain support from the highest levels in the organization (*e.g.*, communication to allow senior executives to attend training, notification of cancellations or withdrawals from training).

Barrier 4: Appropriate Training Not Offered

Slightly less than half (42 percent) of career executives indicated that their developmental needs were not being met because appropriate training was not offered. This perception may be due to the elimination or reduction of specific types of executive training because of budget cuts. With limited funding for training, organizations may be more inclined to spend available funds on training that targets a broader audience. However, this type of training may not appear to specifically address executives' needs or be considered transferable to their situations.

Agency-Recommended Strategies to Mitigate Perception that Appropriate Training is Not Offered¹⁹³

- Use learning activities that facilitate network building, are of a high quality, and are clearly relevant for executives in the Federal Government.
- Use a blended approach to learning that incorporates informal education, formal instruction and experiential-based activities (*e.g.*, action learning, developmental assignments).
- Review, and when necessary revise, existing training to ensure that it addresses the particular needs of executives.
- Widely advertise training to inform executives of their options. Also, announce training well in advance to allow sufficient time for executives to arrange their schedules.

Barrier 5: Other Factors

Only 17 percent of career executives indicated that their developmental needs were not met because of “other” factors. A possible “other” factor could be lack of incentive to pursue development due to pressure to produce results. While

¹⁹³ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Questionnaire for Agencies for the MSPB Study on Training and Development of Senior Executives, 2014.

producing results within a performance rating cycle are undoubtedly important, information and insight gained in training could better prepare executives for long-term future challenges. Another possible factor is that some executives may not believe that they need additional training. Yet, several of the required leadership competencies (e.g., continual learning, external awareness, technology management) mandate staying up-to-date.

Strategies to Facilitate Training Transfer

Even when executives are able to participate in developmental activities, there may be a problem of transferring what was learned in training to the job. One study on a general population of employees indicated that only 62 percent applied what they learned in training immediately after the training activity and 44 percent continued to apply what they learned 6 months later, but only 34 percent used what they learned over a year later.¹⁹⁴ This lack of carryover is referred to as the “transfer problem.”¹⁹⁵

Fortunately, there are practices that can facilitate transfer of training. While there are many helpful practices, this section will focus on those that can be implemented by the organization and seem most applicable to senior executives.¹⁹⁶

Organizational Support. There are organizational “situations and consequences that either inhibit or help to facilitate the transfer of what has been learned in training into the job situation.”¹⁹⁷ To facilitate transfer, top organizational leaders can communicate the importance of continuous learning, encourage participation in learning activities, and be active in training either as participants or as presenters.¹⁹⁸

Supervisor Support. Supervisors of executives can play a key role in facilitating training transfer.¹⁹⁹ To begin, they can provide feedback during performance reviews that help identify training needs and link those training needs to short and long-term organization initiatives. Once appropriate training is identified, they can support the executives’ time away from the job to participate in the developmental activity. After the training or developmental activity has been completed, supervisors of executives can provide opportunities to perform or

¹⁹⁴ Saks, A.M. and Belcourt, M. (2006). An investigation of training activities and transfer of training in organizations. *Human Resource Management*, 45(4), 629-648.

¹⁹⁵ Baldwin, T.T., Ford, J.K. (1988). Transfer of training: A review and directions for future research. *Personnel Psychology*, 41, 63-105.

¹⁹⁶ Trainee characteristics (e.g., cognitive ability, age), self-development activities, instructor ability, and peer support can impact transfer of training but are generally not under the organization’s control.

¹⁹⁷ Rouiller, J.Z. and Goldstein, I.L. (1993). The relationship between organizational transfer climate and positive transfer of training. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 4 (4), 377-390.

¹⁹⁸ Salas, E., Tannenbaum, S.J., Kraiger, K. and Smith-Jentsch, K.A. (2012). The science of training and development in organizations: What matters in practice. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 13(2), 74-101.

¹⁹⁹ Blume, B.D., Ford, J.K., Baldwin, T.T. and Huan, J.L. (2009). Transfer of training: a meta-analytic review. *Journal of Management*, published online as doi:10.1177/0149206309352880.

reinforce what was learned (e.g., after action reviews, assignments that use skills learned in training).²⁰⁰

Training Design. Whether the organization develops its own training or sends its executives to training developed by others, there are specific design elements that can facilitate learning and transfer. Some of those elements are:

- *Job relevance.* Respondents to the MSPB questionnaire noted that executives might not believe that appropriate training was offered unless the training was highly related to their jobs. Unless executives believe this, they may be unlikely to attend. Once they attend, transfer can be facilitated if they see a close link between the training content and the jobs they perform.²⁰¹
- *Instructional elements.* Evidence shows that when training incorporates specific design elements, there is greater likelihood that the learning will transfer to the job.²⁰² Learners need to be provided with information, given demonstrations of good and bad behaviors, allowed to practice the behaviors, and receive constructive feedback on their performance.²⁰³
- *Behavioral modeling technique (BMT).* Behavior modeling is a technique often used for interpersonal skills training. Some of the elements that contribute to good instructional design are incorporated in BMT. For instance, learners view demonstrations of specific behaviors, practice the behavior through role-playing exercises, receive feedback on their performance, and finally try the behavior on the job.²⁰⁴
- *Evaluations of Training Effectiveness.* Evidence suggests that organizations that conduct evaluations of their training programs are more likely to have higher rates of training transfer than organizations that do not.²⁰⁵ Perhaps this occurs because evaluations provide information about which training to discontinue and how other training can be improved, thus contributing to more effective training and greater likelihood of transfer.²⁰⁶ Yet another

²⁰⁰ Burke, L.A., and Hutchins, H.M. (2007). Training transfer: An integrative literature review. *Human Resource Development Review*, 6, 263-96. Accessed at: <http://www0.dmst.aueb.gr/nikolaou/blogs/training.pdf>.

²⁰¹ Burke, L.A., and Hutchins, H.M. (2007). Training transfer: An integrative literature review. *Human Resource Development Review*, 6, 263-96. Accessed at: <http://www0.dmst.aueb.gr/nikolaou/blogs/training.pdf>.

²⁰² Salas, E., Tannenbaum, S.J., Kraiger, K. and Smith-Jentsch, K.A. (2012). The science of training and development in organizations: What matters in practice. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 13(2), 74-101.

²⁰³ Salas, E., Tannenbaum, S.J., Kraiger, K. and Smith-Jentsch, K.A. (2012). The science of training and development in organizations: What matters in practice. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 13(2), 74-101.

²⁰⁴ Landy, F.L. and Conte, J.M. (2004). *Work in the 21st Century: An Introduction to Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, Boston, MA McGraw Hill; Burke, L.A., and Hutchins, H.M. (2007). Training transfer: An integrative literature review. *Human Resource Development Review*, 6, 263-96. Accessed at: <http://www0.dmst.aueb.gr/nikolaou/blogs/training.pdf>;

²⁰⁵ Saks, A.M. and Burke, L.A. (2012). An investigation into the relationship between training evaluation and the transfer of training. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 16(2), 118-127.

²⁰⁶ Saks, A.M. & Burke, L.A. (2012). An investigation into the relationship between training evaluation and the transfer of training. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 16(2), 118-127.

possible explanation is that “what gets measured gets done.”²⁰⁷ By conducting evaluations, organizations can communicate the practical importance of transferring what was learned in training to the job.

²⁰⁷ Burke, L.A., and Hutchins, H.M. (2008). A study of best practices in training transfer and proposed model of transfer. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 19, 107-128.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Federal Agency Practices. Training and development can improve individual and organizational performance when properly designed, delivered, and implemented.²⁰⁸ Thus, an investment in executive training and development can be an investment in improved performance. However, there appears to be no systematic way that senior executives are trained and developed. In some agencies the training and development of career senior executives is managed centrally, in some it is managed locally, and in others it is a combination of the two. The number and types of training that agencies offer its executives vary widely across agencies and perhaps between units within the same agency. Throughout the Federal Government, only half of career senior executives²⁰⁹ have an EDP to guide their developmental activities as stipulated by regulation.²¹⁰

Leadership and Technical Competencies. As expected, leadership skills are necessary for the successful performance of senior executives. However, technical skills are also necessary in many instances. Survey data and an analysis of SES job announcements show that agencies often require applicants to possess both technical and leadership skills to be considered qualified. These findings highlight the divide between the original vision of the SES, under which leadership and fundamental competencies were supposed to be sufficient to serve in an SES position, and the practice, where in many instances technical skills or knowledge are also required.

Unmet Developmental Needs. A sizeable portion (30 percent) of career senior executives indicated that their developmental needs are not being met.²¹¹ The main reasons given are inability to take time away from the job and lack of funding.²¹² While executives are responsible for their own development, agencies also are responsible for providing the tools, including appropriate training, that enable success.

Impact of Leadership. Whether in the public or private sector, effective leadership has far-reaching consequences. Good leadership can have a positive impact on organizational reputation, productivity, profitability, and employee job satisfaction and motivation.

Leadership in the Federal Government. Within the Federal Government, career senior executives hold high-level positions within the organizations. Usually they serve

²⁰⁸ Salas, E., Tannenbaum, S.J., Kraiger, K. and Smith-Jentsch, K.A. (2012). The science of training and development in organizations: What matters in practice. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 13(2), 74-101.

²⁰⁹ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

²¹⁰ 5 C.F.R. § 412.401.

²¹¹ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

²¹² U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Senior Executive Service Survey 2011*, SES Results: Survey Items by Appointment Type.

through multiple administrations and provide continuity during Presidential transitions. Often their positions are directly below political appointees. As such, they are the link between political appointees and the Federal workforce.

Heredity and Environment. There is a long standing question about whether leaders are born or made. The answer appears to be that they are both. Genetics may influence those who assume leadership positions but environment—training and development experiences, education, work experiences and life experiences—likely play a major role.

Competency Trainability. Research indicates that some competencies are more trainable than others. Therefore as a practical matter, organizations should provide training on those competencies that are more responsive to training and select individuals based on the competencies that are less responsive to training.

Recommendations

Policy Makers and Organizational Leaders

- Examine the current roles, duties and responsibilities of the SES. Determine the desired roles, duties, and responsibilities. If there is a difference, identify the impact on recruitment, compensation, selection, training, and performance. Then develop strategies to achieve the desired results, monitor the progress, evaluate the outcomes, and make adjustments as needed.

Organizational Leaders

- Support executive development. Top leadership support for training and development is essential. Individuals at the highest organizational levels can create a climate that encourages a continuous learning environment and contributes to transfer of training. When top leaders express through verbal and written communication, by example (*e.g.*, attending training activities, serving as the keynote speaker, or presenting at organization training events) and providing resources (*e.g.*, funding, staff), the organization gets a clear message about the importance of continuous growth and improvement.
- Hold all levels of employees in leadership positions accountable for developing their direct reports. According to the ECQ for developing others, supervisors are responsible for providing ongoing feedback and training and development opportunities through formal or informal methods.
- Embed leadership development programs in the organization (*e.g.*, performance management, rewards and recognition). This step will help

training and development activities “weather changes in administrations, organizational structures, and resources.”²¹³

Office of Personnel Management

- Serve as a clearinghouse to announce developmental assignments so that ERBs, executives’ supervisors and executives will be aware of the developmental opportunities that are available. USAJOBS may be modified to incorporate this information.

Executive Resources Boards and Supervisors of Senior Executives

- Ensure that EDPs are completed for all senior executives including the executive’s training needs and professional interest. Align training and development activities with the organization’s mission, goals, and strategic plans. Involve the executive in the development of his or her EDP and selection of developmental activities.
- Review and apply, where appropriate, the strategies proposed by respondents to the MSPB questionnaire for overcoming the various barriers for training and developing senior executives.
- Determine the best approach for training and developing executives by weighing the advantages, disadvantages, costs, and measures of training effectiveness considering the organization’s resources and its current and future needs.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of training and development activities. Use the information to determine whether the training should be continued, how it can be improved, or the circumstances under which it can be used most effectively.

Supervisors of Senior Executives

- Engage supervisors of executives in the continuous learning of supportive behaviors such as communicating the importance of learning, providing feedback, supporting time away from the job to participate in training, and involving the executive in his or her own EDP and selection of developmental activities.
- Provide opportunities for executives to practice or otherwise use (*e.g.*, present material to colleagues, conduct after-action reviews) what was learned in training.

²¹³ Turner, J. (2007-08). Developing executive leadership in the public sector. *The Public Manager*. Winter, 49-55. Accessed at: <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Developing+executive+leadership+in+the+public+sector%3a+government...-a0175444584>.

APPENDIX A. QUESTIONNAIRE TO AGENCIES

The original questionnaire was formatted to permit manual or electronic completion. The version below has been reformatted to reduce its length and improve its legibility.



Questionnaire for Agencies for the MSPB Study on Training and Development of Senior Executives

Introduction

You have been asked to complete this questionnaire or to forward it to appropriate individuals to support a study being conducted by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB). Under 5 U.S.C. §1204(a)(3), MSPB has the authority to study issues related to the civil service and issue reports of its findings to the President and Congress. MSPB is authorized by 5 U.S.C. § 1204(e)(3) to obtain from agencies the information, reports, and records it deems necessary to the performance of this mission. Because this information is being provided on the behalf of an agency, it may be subject to release under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), except when one or more of the FOIA exceptions applies, such as the prohibition on the release of personally identifying information.

Who Should Respond to the Questionnaire?

The questionnaire should be completed by the individual(s) who are most familiar with how your agency manages its leadership training and development of senior executives and those aspiring to become senior executives.

How to Respond to the Questionnaire

This paper copy of the questionnaire has been provided so that you may perform any necessary research and think about your answers before completing the form. We request that the individual(s) responsible for responding to this questionnaire contact the study project manager to (1) confirm receipt of the questionnaire, and (2) discuss the most effective way to provide the information requested. Also, if you have any questions about the study or this request, or require an extension, please contact Tanya Page, the study project manager, at (202) 254-4503 or tanya.page@mspb.gov. We would appreciate a response to the MSPB by May 9, 2014.

After this form has been submitted, you may be contacted for a follow-up interview.

Thank you for your assistance with this important project. If you would like to receive a copy of the report when it is completed, please send an e-mail to studies@mspb.gov and request that you be added to our mailing list.

Definitions of Questionnaire Terms:

- Career appointments refers to individuals who are “selected by agency merit staffing process and must have their executive qualifications approved by a Qualifications Review Board (QRB) convened by OPM.”
- Action learning (AL) refers to an educational approach that combines the application of formal knowledge with insightful questioning to solve real-world problems.

Questions for Agencies

Agency/subagency: _____

Contact name/title: _____

Contact organization: _____

Contact telephone: _____

Contact email: _____

1. How does your agency link career SES training and development activities to the agency’s mission and strategic plans? If you have a written policy or guidelines regarding training and development for senior executives or candidates for senior executive positions, please provide a copy of the document(s).
2. How are the training and development of career SES managed (e.g., centrally managed, each major component responsible for their own staff) in your agency?
3. What methods or tools are used to identify the developmental needs of career SES? Please check **all** that apply.
 - Self- assessment
 - Supervisor evaluation
 - 360 degree type feedback
 - Employee survey
 - Executive Resources Board or equivalent
 - Assessment center
 - Cognitive ability test
 - Personality inventory
 - Leadership style survey
 - Other (please specify) _____
4. How do you determine which training and development opportunities are appropriate for each career senior executive?

5. To what extent do you agree that Executive Development Plans (EDPs) are aligned with the agency's mission and strategic plans? Please check the response that applies.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Unable to Judge
6. To what extent do you agree that EDPs are used to guide the training and development of senior executives? Please check the response that applies.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Unable to Judge
7. How often do career SES receive training and developmental activities identified in their EDP? Please check the response that applies.
- Very Frequently
 - Frequently
 - Occasionally
 - Rarely
 - Never
 - Unable to Judge
8. What types of training and developmental activities does your agency offer career SES? Please check **all** that apply.
- 360°-type assessment
 - Developmental assignment (30 days or more)
 - Executive mentoring (had a mentor)
 - Executive mentoring (served as a mentor)
 - Formal executive coaching
 - Residential executive development program
 - Action learning
 - Short-term training program for executives
 - Online training course
 - Other (please specify) _____

Based on responses to the 2011 OPM SES survey, career SES identified the factors in questions nine through eleven as reasons their developmental needs were not met.

9. What strategies does your agency take or plan to take when the budget is severely limited in order to provide training and development to career SES?

10. What strategies have your agency developed that takes into consideration the work load and limited availability of career SES so that they can participate in training and development activities?
11. What strategies have your agency developed to get supervisors of SES to support the training and development of career SES?
12. According to the survey, approximately 42 percent of career senior executives who indicated that their development needs are not met stated that the reason was because appropriate training was not offered. What factors, both in your agency and Governmentwide, might be contributing to that perception?
13. According to the survey, 83 percent of career SES who participated in developmental job assignments (lasting 30 days or more), characterized the experience as either very effective or mostly effective for their continued development. However, only 18 percent of career SES have participated in developmental assignments.
 - 13a. What do you believe are the causes for low participation in this type of developmental activity?
 - 13b. What do you believe can be done to increase participation in developmental assignments?
 - 13c. Has your agency used developmental job assignments for career SES? If you answer no to this question, please skip to question 14.
 - Yes
 - No
 - 13d. Where have those developmental assignments been located? Please check **all** that apply.
 - Within the agency
 - Outside the agency
 - State government
 - Local government
 - Private industry
 - Academia
 - Non-profit organization
 - Other (please specify) _____
 - 13e. How was the effectiveness of the developmental assignment evaluated?
14. According to the survey, 63 percent of the career SES who participated in action learning projects characterized the experience as either very effective or mostly effective for their continued development. However, only 21 percent of career SES have participated in action learning projects.
 - 14a. What do you believe are the causes for low participation in this type of developmental activity?
 - 14b. What do you believe can be done to increase participation in action learning?

14c. Has your agency used action learning as a developmental activity for career SES? If you answer no to this question, please skip to question 15.

Yes

No

14d. How was the effectiveness of the action learning project(s) evaluated?

15. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the training and development of career SES (e.g., helpful practices or resources, recommendations)?

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX B. EXECUTIVE CORE QUALIFICATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

Competency		Definition
Leading Change	Creativity and Innovation	Develops new insights into situations; questions conventional approaches; encourages new ideas and innovations; designs and implements new or cutting edge programs/processes.
	External Awareness	Understands and keeps up-to-date on local, national, and international policies and trends that affect the organization and shape stakeholders' views; is aware of the organization's impact on the external environment.
	Flexibility	Is open to change and new information; rapidly adapts to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles.
	Resilience	Deals effectively with pressure; remains optimistic and persistent, even under adversity. Recovers quickly from setbacks.
	Strategic Thinking	Formulates objectives and priorities, and implements plans consistent with the long-term interests of the organization in a global environment. Capitalizes on opportunities and manages risks.
	Vision	Takes a long-term view and builds a shared vision with others; acts as a catalyst for organizational change. Influences others to translate vision into action.
Leading People	Conflict Management	Encourages creative tension and differences of opinions. Anticipates and takes steps to prevent counter-productive confrontations. Manages and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a constructive manner.
	Leveraging Diversity	Fosters an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued and leveraged to achieve the vision and mission of the organization.
	Developing Others	Develops 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.
	Team Building	Inspires and fosters team commitment, spirit, pride, and trust. Facilitates cooperation and motivates team members to accomplish group goals.

Competency		Definition
Results Driven	Accountability	Holds self and others accountable for measurable high-quality, timely, and cost-effective results. Determines objectives, sets priorities, and delegates work. Accepts responsibility for mistakes. Complies with established control systems and rules.
	Customer Service	Anticipates and meets the needs of both internal and external customers. Delivers high-quality products and services; is committed to continuous improvement.
	Decisiveness	Makes well-informed, effective, and timely decisions, even when data are limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences; perceives the impact and implications of decisions.
	Entrepreneurship	Positions the organization for future success by identifying new opportunities; builds the organization by developing or improving products or services. Takes calculated risks to accomplish organizational objectives.
	Problem Solving	Identifies and analyzes problems; weighs relevance and accuracy of information; generates and evaluates alternative solutions; makes recommendations.
	Technical Credibility	Understands and appropriately applies principles, procedures, requirements, regulations, and policies related to specialized expertise. Understands the organization's financial processes. Prepares, justifies, and administers the program budget. Oversees procurement and contracting to achieve desired results. Monitors expenditures and uses cost-benefit thinking to set priorities.
Business Acumen	Financial Management	Understands the organization's financial processes. Prepares, justifies, and administers the program budget. Oversees procurement and contracting to achieve desired results. Monitors expenditures and uses cost-benefit thinking to set priorities.
	Human Capital Management	Builds and manages workforce based on organizational goals, budget considerations, and staffing needs. Ensures that employees are appropriately recruited, selected, appraised, and rewarded; takes action to address performance problems. Manages a multi-sector workforce and a variety of work situations.
	Technology Management	Keeps up-to-date on technological developments. Makes effective use of technology to achieve results. Ensures access to and security of technology systems.
Building Coalitions	Partnering	Develops networks and builds alliances; collaborates across boundaries to build strategic relationships and achieve common goals.
	Political Savvy	Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization. Perceives organizational and political reality and acts accordingly.
	Influencing/ Negotiating	Persuades others; builds consensus through give and take; gains cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals.

APPENDIX C. DEVELOPMENTAL COMPONENTS OF JOB ASSIGNMENTS²¹⁴

	Developmental Component	Examples	Overall Development	Learning
Job Transitions	Unfamiliar Responsibilities	Line to staff. Increase in scope. Changes in employer, status, or function.	X	X
	Proving Yourself	Teach a course or workshop.	X	X
Task-Related Characteristics	Developing New Directions	Startup operation. Fix it assignment.	X	X
	Inherited Problems	Address performance problems of a direct report you inherited.		X
	Reduction Decisions	Supervise cost cutting. Determine which employees to lay off.		X
	Problems with Employees	Work with direct reports who lack adequate experience, are incompetent, or are resistant.		X
	High Stakes	Large-scale operation Write proposal for a new system, product, etc.	X	X
	Managing Business Diversity	Responsible for managing multiple functions, groups, products, etc.	X	X
	Job Overload	Size of the job requires a large investment of time and energy.	X	X
	Handling External Pressure	Negotiating with unions.		X
	Influencing without Authority	Serving on task forces. Negotiating deals and coordinating among departments.		X

²¹⁴ McCauley, C.D., Ruderman, M.N., Ohlott, P.J., & Morrow, J.E. (1994). Assessing the developmental components of managerial jobs. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 79 (4), 544-560.

	Developmental Component	Examples	Overall Development	Learning
Obstacles	Lack of Top Management Support	Senior leadership reluctant to provide direction, support, or resources for current or new projects.	X	
	Lack of Personal Support	Excluded from key networks and get little support and encouragement from others.	X	X
	Difficult Boss	Executive's opinions or management style differ from those of top leadership.	X	X

* Note: These developmental components have a negative relationship with perception of overall development or learning. The explanation provided was that these types of stressful situations may be so strong that an individual is unable to detect if learning has occurred or that learning may occur after the obstacle is diminished, overcome, or reframed. It is not recommended that organizations assign or create these types of challenges but that if executives are exposed to them that executives reflect about what they may learn from the experience.

APPENDIX D. SUMMARY OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Residential Executive Development Program

Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designed with executive challenges in mind.• Opportunity to establish professional bonds and networks.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limits access to those who can participate at a fixed time and location.• Requires extended period of time away from the job.
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perceived as very effective or mostly effective.
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High costs.• Depending on the length of the program and institution, costs varied from approximately \$6,000 to \$21,000.

Having a Mentor

Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individualized attention.• Opportunities for challenging assignments, expanding professional networks, and increasing organizational visibility.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some mentoring relationships can be dysfunctional or harmful.
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perceived as very effective or mostly effective.• Mentees can learn technical skills, improve interpersonal skills, and gain management skills.
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low costs as long as appropriate measures are taken to prevent negative mentoring relationships.

Serving as a Mentor

Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor can practice communication and interpersonal skills (<i>e.g.</i>, giving feedback, being supportive). • Contribute to organizational knowledge and culture transfer.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment of time and effort can be considerable. • If negative mentoring experiences occur, mentors are likely to express intentions to leave the mentoring relationship.
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived as very effective or mostly effective.
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low costs as long as appropriate measures are taken to prevent negative mentoring relationships.

Executive Coaching

Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individualized development activity to target specific needs and concerns of the executive client. • Minimal disruption to work activities.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No set standards for coaches. • External coaches may promote their company's products or services when they are not needed. • Internal coaches may experience a conflict in maintaining confidentiality.
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived as very effective or mostly effective. • Research suggests that there is greater gain when executive coaching is paired with short-term executive training programs.
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs for internal coaches may be relatively low but they may not be perceived as being as effective or be as trusted as an external executive coach. • Costs for external executive coaches can be high (<i>i.e.</i>, several hundred dollars an hour).

Developmental Assignments (lasting more than 30 days)

Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organization can get important work completed and develop executives at the same time.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without proper resources, some assignments may be too challenging, which can be detrimental to learning.
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived as very effective or mostly effective.
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When appropriately implemented, developmental assignments can be relatively inexpensive. However, executives must have the necessary resources to be successful.

Action Learning (AL)

Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization can solve problems and develop its executives at the same time. • Focus on team problem solving and decision making.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AL team can become so focused on problem solving that minimal attention is directed to the learning experience.
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived as very effective or mostly effective.
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs are moderate (<i>e.g.</i>, salary and time of members, training in AL process, expense for a coach). • Usually the ROI is between 5-25 times its costs.

<i>Short-Term Training Program for Executives</i>	
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally use multiple instructional methods to promote the use of different skill sets. • Instructors can facilitate information and experience sharing. • Instructors can gauge how well the training content is being understood and adjust accordingly.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pace of instruction may not be suitable for all participants. • Instructors unable to provide individualized feedback to all participants
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived as very effective or mostly effective. • Research supports nominal to moderate contribution to improving leader effectiveness.
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs vary widely from free (<i>e.g.</i>, existing courses offered by other Federal agencies) to very expensive (<i>e.g.</i>, custom-designed courses).

<i>Web-Based Instruction (WBI)</i>	
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniform training content to large groups of geographically- dispersed employees. • Available any time from almost any location. • Allows access to training content “just-in-time” for a specific project or activity. • May be paired with classroom instruction to capture the best of both instructional methods.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner control can be a disadvantage if participants make poor choices about what or how much they need to learn and practice. • Workplace interruptions. • Technical difficulties.
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective for teaching declarative knowledge—facts, principles, and relationships among knowledge elements. • More research is needed to assess how effective WBI is for teaching soft skills or psychomotor skills.
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs can vary widely. • Development of complex programs can be expensive and require considerable time. • Savings can occur through elimination of instructor expenses, elimination or reduction of accommodation and travel expenses, and reduced time away from work.
