

DECISION CRITERIA FOR TENURE AND PROMOTION IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE 2022 – 2025



MISSION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE:

The U.S. Department of State leads America’s foreign policy through diplomacy, advocacy, and assistance by advancing the interests of the American people, their safety, and economic prosperity.

BACKGROUND:

The following Core Precepts provide the guidelines by which Tenure and Selection Boards determine the tenure and promotability of U.S. Foreign Service employees. These Core Precepts will be in effect for the **2022-2023, 2023-2024, and 2024-2025 rating cycles**.

The Core Precepts reflect the competencies determined to be the most critical to successful service throughout a Foreign Service career and comprise the most important competencies in which potential must be demonstrated to advance.

Through evaluation of these competencies, Selection Boards identify and rank-order employees who, through their files, demonstrate potential to succeed in positions of greater responsibility.

Employees, raters, and reviewers are expected to view the Core Precepts as building block competencies through which effective Work Requirements and employee performance development should be framed during a given rating period. In the Employee Evaluation Report narrative, the rater in particular is asked to appraise the employee’s potential in these areas, citing specific institutional impact in support of that appraisal.

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**DECISION CRITERIA FOR TENURE AND PROMOTION
IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE – SECTION 1
CORE PRECEPTS**

The Core Precepts are comprised of five Service-wide competencies a Foreign Service employee must develop over the course of their career, from entry through tenure, and up to consideration for promotion into and within the Senior Foreign Service.

All Foreign Service Employees, regardless of tenure status, cone, skill code, and/or grade are expected to progressively demonstrate each Service-wide competency and should aim to perform each in support of people, programs, and policy. Each competency is important in its own right, and can be demonstrated in a variety of ways, by adhering to and/or by expanding upon each skill set. Selection Boards weigh all competencies equally and no one precept is more important than another.

Communication:

Foreign Service employees are expected to demonstrate impact in communications by progressively building upon the skills and qualities outlined below.

Entry-Level Onward:

Writes and speaks clearly, concisely, and effectively, using well-organized, grammatically correct, and persuasive language. Demonstrates persuasion and negotiation skills as appropriate to position; influences internal and external stakeholders. Listens actively and respectfully, including to differing viewpoints. Develops proficiency at communicating across cultures and organizational lines. In language-designated positions, uses language skills appropriately and effectively as required by the position. When possible, addresses diverse audiences as a representative of the U.S. Government and the American people. Uses social media, emerging technologies, and traditional methods for public outreach as appropriate to position.

Mid-Level Onward: As one advances in grade and/or responsibility and gains institutional experience:

Consistently demonstrates and models all the elements above. Writes and speaks clearly and persuasively; ensures policy and operational concerns are articulated in ways most helpful to the intended audience. Communicates a comprehensive understanding of issues in a professional manner to achieve mission-oriented results. Shows sophisticated ability to analyze, synthesize, and advocate in a timely manner. Influences and collaborates with others to advance mission and/or Department goals. Instills trust, motivates others to speak candidly, and understands and respects cultural sensitivities and constraints. Communicates effectively across organizational lines. Advocates U.S. perspectives to a variety of audiences, as appropriate. Maintains equanimity and a professional demeanor. Projects calm, is decisive, and communicates clearly to all stakeholders.

If encumbering a supervisory position (of USDH, EFM, LE Staff, or other):

Guides staff to develop effective written and oral communication skills; edits products to established Department standards.

Senior-Level Onward: For those seeking promotion into and within the Senior Foreign Service, as well as consideration for performance pay:

Consistently demonstrates and exemplifies all the elements above and leads and mentors others to develop the same skills. Communicates promptly, respectfully, and effectively internally and externally, at all levels. Demonstrates superior levels of tact, diplomacy, and perceptiveness in interactions with foreign interlocutors, USG colleagues (including the interagency), and American citizens. Provides policy and strategy advice to leaders based on an understanding of strategic and tactical considerations. Negotiates effectively; manages and resolves major disagreements in a goal-oriented manner; exhibits a faculty for compromise while achieving ultimate goals. Creates an environment that facilitates an open exchange of ideas. Shows mastery of cross-cultural and inter-organizational communication skills. Is active and effective in public outreach.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility:

Foreign Service employees are expected to demonstrate impact in diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility by progressively building upon the skills and qualities outlined below.

Entry-Level Onward:

Takes advantage of opportunities to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in interactions with colleagues and interlocutors. Demonstrates inclusivity and respect in relations with colleagues and interlocutors. Proactively seeks and is receptive to feedback to improve one's own self-awareness with respect to promoting inclusivity in the workplace. Builds, maintains, and fosters healthy, productive workplace relationships with all colleagues. Collaborates with others and achieves Department goals through inclusive teamwork. Exhibits cultural sensitivity with colleagues, including Locally Employed Staff and foreign interlocutors. Identifies and reports disrespectful and inappropriate workplace behaviors.

Mid-Level Onward: As one advances in grade and/or responsibility and gains institutional experience:

Consistently demonstrates and models all the elements above. Advances diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion in words and actions. Consistently treats all individuals fairly, justly, and impartially, particularly in supervisory duties. Where feasible, consults with impacted staff before finalizing decisions. Models and fosters a safe, inclusive, mutually respectful work environment – up, down, and laterally. Cultivates professional relationships, including across organizational lines and with host country contacts. Develops accessible communications, events, engagements, and interactions to the full complement of employees, interlocutors, and the public.

If encumbering a supervisory position (of USDH, EFM, LE Staff, or other):

Actively seeks to recruit and retain diverse teams and improve methods of attracting diverse candidates for positions. Ensures candidates of all backgrounds are given equitable consideration for vacant positions. Supports equity in staff opportunities, roles, and recognition. Supports efforts to ensure office workspaces and necessary technology are accessible for all employees, especially those with disabilities. Addresses inappropriate behaviors immediately in accordance with Department policy. Holds self and others accountable for behavior and performance. Recognizes that unconscious biases can affect decisions and actions and takes steps to identify and mitigate them in the evaluation of others' performance. Promotes fairness, equity, and inclusion in the treatment of others. Supports workplace flexibilities and the reasonable accommodation process to strengthen equity and accessibility.

Senior-Level Onward: For those seeking promotion into and within the Senior Foreign Service, as well as consideration for performance pay:

Consistently demonstrates and exemplifies all the elements above and leads and mentors others to develop the same. Promotes a culture of inclusion that incorporates the values and efforts of staff. Creates and cultivates diverse, equitable, inclusive, productive, and collaborative work environments. Fosters a culture that supports the recruitment and retention of a diplomatic workforce that reflects the diversity of our country, including underrepresented communities. Reacts immediately in accordance with Department policy in response to allegations of discrimination, harassment, and bullying, and all other inappropriate, non-inclusive, disrespectful, and toxic workplace behaviors; takes action to address such behaviors organization-wide.

Leadership:

Foreign Service employees are expected to demonstrate leadership by progressively building upon the skills and qualities outlined below.

Entry-Level Onward:

Manages conflict constructively. Exhibits self-awareness, compassion, professionalism, and composure under pressure. Adapts behavior and work methods as needed in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles. Demonstrates critical reasoning and adaptability. Identifies the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches; outlines realistic options. Holds oneself accountable; seeks informal feedback in order to grow. Raises concerns appropriately and, when necessary, uses appropriate avenues for dissent. Demonstrates open-mindedness to change and innovation.

Mid-Level Onward: As one advances in grade and/or responsibility and gains institutional experience:

Consistently demonstrates and models all the elements above. Makes sound, timely, and ethical decisions. Determines the best solution or action from a range of options; objectively analyzes problems and motivations of others. Provides feedback to colleagues and seeks feedback on own performance. Exhibits willingness to take strategic risks and to advance innovative ideas and processes. Develops and shares lessons learned from mistakes and failures. Encourages strategic, innovative, and results-oriented approaches with peers and staff. Champions and guides staff in adjusting to change; models and reinforces flexibility in staff. Encourages well-founded constructive dissent and solicits, weighs, and clearly articulates its appropriate expression. Shows empathy, respect, and encouragement to others in difficult times.

If encumbering a supervisory position (of USDH, EFM, LE Staff, or other):

Deepens and broadens own supervisory skills and develops the skills of the employees for whom they are responsible; treats subordinates with professionalism, respect, and fairness. Identifies employees needs and adapts supervisory style accordingly and as appropriate. Takes an active, involved approach to the performance development of those supervised, regardless of background. Empowers staff to take ownership of their work. Encourages innovative, creative, and strategic thinking as well as initiative-taking among those supervised. Takes responsibility when mistakes are made or calculated risks do not work out. Fosters an environment that prioritizes training and encourages staff to develop new skills. Models and supports work/life balance.

Senior-Level Onward: For those seeking promotion into and within the Senior Foreign Service, as well as consideration for performance pay:

Consistently demonstrates and exemplifies all the elements above and leads and mentors others to develop the same skills. Models integrity, respect, and dedication to public service. Demonstrates creativity and courage in crafting policy and strategy. Makes substantial contributions to the advancement of Department and whole-of-government goals; motivates, supports, and leads others toward the same. Fosters an organizational culture which instills a willingness to fail while taking strategic risks that further U.S. foreign policy and Department objectives. Responds wisely to situations in which information and analysis are incomplete; makes considered decisions in the face of such ambiguity. Embraces and drives institutional and cultural change in support of the Department and its objectives. Empowers and enables others to develop their skills as leaders. Works at the institutional level to build and sustain a strong supervisory ethic and the career-long development of supervisory skills. Anticipates, identifies, and deals effectively with workplace interpersonal conflict. Strengthens the institution by developing a diverse cross-section among the next Foreign Service generation and through service to the organization. Encourages personnel to express opinions and to use dissent channels; accords importance to well-founded constructive dissent. Recognizes and supports moral courage.

Management:

Foreign Service employees are expected to demonstrate management proficiency by progressively building upon the skills and qualities outlined below.

Entry-Level Onward:

Is well-prepared, dependable, and conscientious. Offers courteous customer service that responds to customers' needs. Effectively manages human, financial, physical, and time resources, as appropriate to position. Utilizes internal controls to prevent waste, fraud, and mismanagement; reports concerns appropriately for further investigation. Takes responsibility for mistakes and learns from them. Remains calm and professional, and contributes to the protection of lives, property, and American interests in times of crisis. Protects classified information; observes security practices.

Mid-Level Onward: As one advances in grade and/or responsibility and gains institutional experience:

Consistently demonstrates and models all the elements above. Develops and shares best practices to eliminate redundancies, reduce costs, improve transparency, and make appropriate use of limited resources. Ensures effectiveness of internal controls; allocates resources efficiently, equitably, and in accordance with policy and regulatory guidelines. Exercises accountability. Develops preventive plans to mitigate risk. Develops and upholds mission goals in accordance with security policies and practices. Implements strategies to balance mission requirements with threat environment.

If encumbering a supervisory position (of USDH, EFM, LE Staff, or other):

Ensures to the extent possible others have needed tools to work effectively. Delegates effectively, appropriately, and consistently. Works to prevent and resolve workplace conflict among staff. Addresses misconduct and poor performance by those within the supervisory chain. Delivers thorough and on-time work plans, performance management discussions, and performance evaluations of direct and indirect reports.

Senior-Level Onward: For those seeking promotion into and within the Senior Foreign Service, as well as consideration for performance pay:

Consistently demonstrates and exemplifies all the elements above and leads and mentors others to develop the same. Supports an environment that safeguards people, resources, and information. Confronts emerging transnational or organization-level challenges by making effective use of available U.S. Government resources. Demonstrates effective and innovative direction and stewardship of policy initiatives, programs, people, finances, time, property, and other resources. Delegates at the executive level. Effectively manages operations at domestic locations and overseas posts, as relevant. Evaluates internal control strengths, ensures improvements are implemented as warranted; holds managers accountable for their decisions; seeks resource adjustments as needed. Promotes the practice of good personal, information, and physical security measures. Makes sound decisions and delegates as appropriate in crises.

Substantive and Technical Expertise:

Foreign Service employees are expected to demonstrate substantive and technical expertise by progressively building upon the skills and qualities outlined below.

Entry-Level Onward:

Masters one's own portfolio, to include pertinent rules, regulations, procedures, and specific technical skills. Maintains and applies institutional and subject matter knowledge and relevant technical expertise, as applicable to position. Embraces innovation and improves processes. Pursues training opportunities to keep abreast of professional standards, policies, programs, and trends. Develops as appropriate the ability to read, understand, create, and communicate data as information. Identifies the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches based on data-driven analysis, as appropriate. Develops interagency knowledge and understanding of foreign cultures and languages as appropriate to position. Understands the roles and authorities of the Department and other USG agencies. Applies that knowledge to build interagency cooperation and provide effective customer service. Meets language requirements for tenure; uses foreign language skills to enhance job performance and better serve customers.

Mid-Level Onward: As one advances in grade and/or responsibility and gains institutional experience:

Consistently demonstrates and models all the elements above. Deepens professional expertise and applies this knowledge to achieve mission and/or Department goals. Uses expertise to evaluate policies and programs, and to advise, develop, and assist others. Bases recommendations and decisions on data-driven analysis, as appropriate. Uses knowledge of interagency as well as foreign cultures and languages to achieve policy and customer service goals. Builds language skills to meet Career Development Program requirements for Senior Foreign Service eligibility. Uses language skills to exercise influence and build relationships.

If encumbering a supervisory position (of USDH, EFM, LE Staff, or other):

Supports continuous learning by employees. Encourages subordinates to deepen their substantive knowledge and to build technical skills. Enhances own and staff's understanding of work-related technologies.

Senior-Level Onward: For those seeking promotion into and within the Senior Foreign Service, as well as consideration for performance pay:

Consistently demonstrates and exemplifies all the elements above and leads and mentors others to develop the same. Promotes an organization-wide culture of innovation. Demonstrates both mastery of own specialty and a broad knowledge of processes and practices throughout the Department. Anticipates the need for new knowledge for self and staff; identifies and communicates sources of new information; fosters a culture of professional growth and staff's full utilization of professional and technical skills, and technology to achieve bureau/mission customer objectives. Uses data-driven analysis as appropriate to influence and steer policy and processes and guides others to do the same. Uses sophisticated knowledge of foreign cultures and other USG agencies to advance U.S. goals and solve complex problems. Works to develop this ability in subordinates. Maintains and further develops proficiency in foreign language(s). Uses language skills to promote U.S. interests with a wide range of audiences.

**DECISION CRITERIA FOR TENURE AND PROMOTION
IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE – SECTION 2
ADDITIONAL FACTORS FOR ENTRY-LEVEL EMPLOYEES**

The criterion for a positive tenure decision will be the candidate's assessed potential, assuming normal growth and career development, to serve effectively as a member of the Foreign Service over a normal career span, extending to and including class FS-01.

The Service-Wide Competencies outlined in Section 1 of this document should be used as guiding principles for all employees seeking tenure into the Foreign Service. While no candidate is expected to display all of these qualities, individuals are expected to progressively demonstrate substantive knowledge and experience across each of the competencies.

Untenured Generalists and Specialists should demonstrate: responsibility, initiative and/or resourcefulness in carrying out assigned duties; the ability to carry out properly assigned tasks within a reasonable time; adaptiveness to the work environment abroad or a foreign culture; and an ability to work fairly and cooperatively with supervisors, colleagues, teammates, and subordinates, including Locally Employed Staff.

Additionally, such employees are expected to demonstrate EEO sensitivity and support the Department's efforts to promote diversity, and equity inclusion; the ability to carry out supervisory responsibilities if assigned; and reliability under conditions of hardship and danger. Good judgment, good writing and drafting skills, and the ability to communicate clearly and effectively are all expected of Entry-Level Employees.

**DECISION CRITERIA FOR TENURE AND PROMOTION
IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE
ANNEX AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

1. GTM Office of Career Development and Assignments (CDA)
 - a. Professional Development Plan(s)
 - b. Career Development Plan(s)
2. GTM Office of Organization and Talent Analytics (OTA)
 - a. Standardized Field Job Descriptions
3. GTM Office of Performance Evaluation (PE)
 - a. Tenure Procedural Precepts
 - b. Foreign Service Selection Board Procedural Precepts
 - c. Performance Pay and Department Senior Review Boards Precepts
 - d. Senior Threshold Information and Criteria
4. The Department's Leadership and Management Principles