



DECISION CRITERIA
FOR TENURE AND PROMOTION IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE
2025–2028



INTRODUCTION:

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 ***2025–2026, 2026–2027, and 2027–2028 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 in order to advance. Through evaluation of these competencies, Foreign Service Selection Boards identify and rank-order employees who, through their files, demonstrate potential to succeed in positions of greater responsibility and, assuming normal growth and career development, to serve effectively as Foreign Service Officers over a normal career span.

Foreign Service employees are expected to demonstrate proficiency by cumulatively and progressively building upon the skills and qualities outlined below and achieving results. Foreign Service performance evaluations should cite practical examples to demonstrate the accomplishments and impact at each employee's current level (entry, mid-, or senior) while illustrating potential to succeed at higher levels. Raters and Reviewers are encouraged to follow Department guidelines, including identifying areas for correction or improvement during professional development discussions and in performance evaluation narratives.

Fidelity

Entry Level Onward:	<i>Mid-Level Onward:</i> <i>As one advances in grade and/or responsibility and gains institutional experience:</i>	<i>Senior Level:</i> <i>For those seeking promotion into and within the Senior Foreign Service, and consideration for SFS Performance Pay:</i>
<p>Achieves results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for citizens of the United States of America. • for the Constitution of the United States by protecting and promoting executive power under Article II and civil rights as articulated in the Constitution and its Amendments, and by implementing applicable statutory authorities, including but not limited to EEO principles and Title 22 of the United States Code. • through productive relationships with peers, subordinates, managers, and the public to achieve USG goals. <p>*See Addendum 2: Constitution of the United States and Presidential Actions</p>	<p>Achieves results by continuing to demonstrate entry-level competencies, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protecting U.S. citizen and USG interests, especially in crisis situations. • zealously executing USG policy. • fulfilling the roles and authorities of the Department of State (“Department”) and effecting teamwork throughout the USG. • promoting professional relationships with state and local American stakeholders. • mediating between agents and principals, especially to ensure that principals receive agents’ advice and agents receive principals’ directives. 	<p>Achieves results by continuing to demonstrate entry-level competencies and mid-level competencies, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • directing strategies that achieve the best outcomes for United States citizens and the USG. • creating a professional culture of fiduciary duty from agents to principals, especially to the citizen. Simply put, a fiduciary is an agent entrusted to exercise authority according to the best interests of his or her principal. • resolving uncertainty on the side of fidelity to one’s chain of command. • quickly and completely aligning oneself and one’s team to the most current USG goals. • conforming oneself and one’s team to principals’ performance and strategy goals and ensuring work product is of the highest quality and meets or exceeds principals’ expectations.
<p><i>If encumbering a supervisory position (of USDH, EFM, LE Staff, or other):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures integrity and lawfulness in hiring practices by selecting candidates solely based on merit. • Holds oneself and others accountable for performance and conduct in accordance with Department guidelines. 		

Communication

Entry Level Onward:	Mid-Level Onward: <i>As one advances in grade and/or responsibility and gains institutional experience:</i>	Senior Level: <i>For those seeking promotion into and within the Senior Foreign Service, and consideration for SFS Performance Pay:</i>
<p>Achieves results by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writing and speaking concisely, persuasively, and in accordance with Department style guidelines. • communicating with and listening to peers, supervisors, and subordinates in a respectful and appropriate manner at all times even when disagreeing. • meeting foreign-language requirements and utilizing foreign-language skills. • adhering to communication safeguards and responsibly using social media. 	<p>Achieves results by continuing to demonstrate entry-level competencies, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrating advanced communication skills using analysis, synthesis, and advocacy to achieve USG goals. • influencing external audiences, including by demonstrating “a willingness and ability to explain United States policies in person and through the media,” “a willingness and ability to regularly and meaningfully engage with civil society and other local actors in country,” and “other demonstrated experience in public diplomacy.” • editing others’ writing and modeling respectful, clear, and persuasive communication. 	<p>Achieves results by continuing to demonstrate entry-level competencies and mid-level competencies, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing strategic policy advice and equipping participants in bilateral and multilateral settings tantamount to “experience serving at an international organization, multilateral institution, or engaging in multinational negotiations.” • creating a professional culture of free and respectful exchange of contrasting viewpoints. • encouraging and mentoring others to develop exemplary communication and foreign-language skills. • exhibiting superior tact and perceptiveness in interactions with USG and foreign counterparts, and United States citizens, to advance USG goals.
<p><i>If encumbering a supervisory position (of USDH, EFM, LE Staff, or other):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates opportunities for employees to demonstrate communication skills internally and externally, tailored to their portfolios and roles. • Facilitates the development of effective written and oral communication skills that meet Department standards, providing constructive criticism and opportunities to improve. 		

Leadership

Entry Level Onward:	<i>Mid-Level Onward:</i> <i>As one advances in grade and/or responsibility and gains institutional experience:</i>	<i>Senior Level:</i> <i>For those seeking promotion into and within the Senior Foreign Service, and consideration for SFS Performance Pay:</i>
<p>Achieves results by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deploying critical reasoning, strategic analysis, and problem-solving skills. • developing professional networks and utilizing formal and informal leadership opportunities with USG peers and external counterparts. • soliciting constructive criticism to strengthen performance. • following Department policies on performance, conduct, and ethics. 	<p>Achieves results by continuing to demonstrate entry-level competencies, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anticipating problems and proposing solutions that focus on USG goals. • providing constructive criticism to colleagues while promoting a respectful, merit-based work environment. • modeling composure and encouragement in challenging situations. • thoughtfully, confidently, directly, and enthusiastically taking strategic and tactical risks, especially when demonstrating “the ability to effectively manage and assess risk associated with the conduct of diplomatic operations.” 	<p>Achieves results by continuing to demonstrate entry-level competencies and mid-level competencies, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contributing to USG goals while motivating and supervising others to do the same. • creating a professional culture that empowers others, especially with leadership opportunities. • recognizing and rewarding excellent work to create a merit-based work environment throughout one’s organization. • effectively and appropriately resolving interpersonal conflicts and professional disagreements. • enforcing Department policy to report and address allegations of discrimination, harassment, misconduct, poor performance, and other adverse effects to the efficiency of the Service.
<p><i>If encumbering a supervisory position (of USDH, EFM, LE Staff, or other):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides opportunities for leadership training, opportunities, and experience. • Takes an active and frequent role in performance accountability, ensuring subordinates understand how their work fits into USG goals so they can take ownership of their work and outcomes. • Mentors subordinates to develop a strong work ethic focused on getting the job done. 		

Management

Entry Level Onward:	<i>Mid-Level Onward:</i> <i>As one advances in grade and/or responsibility and gains institutional experience:</i>	<i>Senior Level:</i> <i>For those seeking promotion into and within the Senior Foreign Service, and consideration for SFS Performance Pay:</i>
<p>Achieves results by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • efficiently and effectively managing human, financial, and material assets. • preventing and addressing waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement. • protecting classified assets and following security best practices. • reporting safety, security and ethics concerns appropriately. • supporting accessibility to spaces and events in accordance with all relevant laws and Department regulations. 	<p>Achieves results by continuing to demonstrate entry-level competencies, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving operational efficiency and effectiveness, especially by reducing costs and paperwork, and making difficult tradeoffs when necessary. • requesting necessary resources. • sharing best practices that improve program management and designing knowledge-management plans that facilitate smooth operational transitions. • implementing security policies responsive to the threat environment. • strengthening crisis preparedness. 	<p>Achieves results by continuing to demonstrate entry-level competencies and mid-level competencies, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overseeing program implementation to enforce management controls and hold programs accountable. • creating a professional culture that improves management controls and elevates performance accountability. • managing operations to offer assistance toward hardship posts and geographically distinct regions and demonstrating a “willingness to serve in hardship posts overseas where applicable and across geographically distinct regions.” • delegating at the executive level and holding managers accountable for resource management. • promoting security best practices, conducting advance planning for crises.
<p><i>If encumbering a supervisory position (of USDH, EFM, LE Staff, or other):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes clear, attainable work objectives for all employees in line with Department guidance. • Conducts performance management and timely evaluation of staff and holds them accountable to work objectives. • Allocates and advocates for the minimum necessary resources to ensure success, ensures staff possess all necessary tools and time to succeed, and delegates consistently and appropriately. • Constructively and productively addresses poor performance, misconduct, interpersonal conflicts, and professional disagreements using appropriate communication, performance evaluation, and conduct accountability tools. 		

Knowledge

Entry Level Onward:	Mid-Level Onward: <i>As one advances in grade and/or responsibility and gains institutional experience:</i>	Senior Level: <i>For those seeking promotion into and within the Senior Foreign Service, and consideration for SFS Performance Pay:</i>
<p>Achieves results by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mastering one’s own portfolio, especially relevant technical skills. • learning Department policies, regulations, and procedures. • applying new skills to strengthen one’s performance of work requirements. • demonstrating a “willingness to participate in appropriate and relevant professional development opportunities offered by the Foreign Service Institute or other educational institutions associated with the Department.” • utilizing data and critical and emerging technologies. 	<p>Achieves results by continuing to demonstrate entry-level competencies, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deepening and broadening mastery across various regional and functional areas to strengthen expertise over one’s portfolio. • applying expertise over one’s portfolio to successfully implement USG policy. • applying expertise about the Department, state and local institutions, interagency peers, and other counterparts to formulate tailored strategies that advance USG goals. • improving negotiation skills through on-the-job practical experiences and professional development. • developing “experience advancing policies or developing expertise that enhance the United States’ competitiveness with regard to critical and emerging technologies.” 	<p>Achieves results by continuing to demonstrate entry-level competencies and mid-level competencies, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enabling others to develop mastery and expertise, including but not limited to encouraging cross-training and temporary-duty assignments and demonstrating a “willingness to enable and encourage subordinates at various levels to avail themselves of appropriate and relevant professional development opportunities offered by the Foreign Service Institute or other educational institutions associated with the Department.” • creating a professional culture that inspires, rewards, and encourages innovation, expertise, and professional development. • implementing programs, policies, and processes that utilize critical and emerging technologies. • leveraging one’s expertise about multiple subject matters and institutions to solve complex problems.
<p><i>If encumbering a supervisory position (of USDH, EFM, LE Staff, or other):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides opportunities for professional tradecraft networking and cross-training, as appropriate, sharing best practices across the region or bureau to prepare subordinates for increased responsibility and leadership roles. • Promotes knowledge-management and knowledge-transfer best practices to increase productivity and enable mission success. 		

Addendum 1

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 (or the top grade of the skill code).

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 the list is not exhaustive, individuals are expected to progressively demonstrate substantive knowledge and experience across each of the competencies. Raters and Reviewers are encouraged to follow Department guidelines, including identifying areas for improvement or showing development during professional development discussions and in their respective performance evaluation narratives.

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 overseas; and the ability to work responsibly and cooperatively at all levels including with the public, Eligible Family Members, and Locally Employed Staff. Additionally, such employees are expected to demonstrate adherence to EEO principles and implement the Department's guidance, the ability to carry out supervisory responsibilities as assigned, and resilience under conditions of hardship and danger. Strong judgment, effective drafting skills, and the ability to communicate clearly and effectively are expected of all Entry-Level employees.

Addendum 2

Additional Information

1. The Constitution of the United States and its Amendments - [The Constitution of the United States | National Archives](#)
2. Presidential Actions - <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/>
3. [GTM Office of Career Development and Assignments \(CDA\)](#)
 - i. [Professional Development Plan\(s\)](#)
 - ii. [Career Development Program](#)
4. [GTM Office of Organization and Talent Analytics \(OTA\)](#)
 - i. [Foreign Service Position Classification](#)
5. [GTM Office of Performance Evaluation \(PE\)](#)
 - i. [Core Precept Writing Prompts and Other Tips](#)
 - ii. [Procedural Precepts](#) (annually updated)
 - iii. [Senior Threshold Information and Criteria](#)
 - iv. [Commissioning and Tenure Boards](#)

Bureau/Office	Clearer	OK
DGTM:	SBO Lew Olowski	OK
DGTM:	PDAS Rob Pyatt	OK
DGTM:	DAS Stephen Marquette	OK
GTM/CDA:	Eric Cohan	ok
GTM/ER:	Sara Craig	ok
GTM/G:	Dan Creekman	ok
GTM/PPC	Shannon Cazeau	ok
GTM/PPC/LM:	Chris Klemm	info
GTM/PE	Cassandra Hamblin	ok
L/EMP:	Marianne Percciacante	ok
M:	A/S Cunningham	ok
D-MR	Darren Thies	ok
C	Andrew Veprek	ok
S/P	Marcus Thornton	ok