

The Federal civil service includes all appointed positions in the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of the Federal Government, except military positions in the uniformed services. The civil service consists of:

- Competitive Service
- Excepted Service
- Senior Executive Service (SES)

The primary differences between the three services are in appointment procedures and job protections. In the competitive service, appointment procedures, merit promotion requirements, and qualification requirements are prescribed by law or by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and apply to all agencies. In the excepted service, only basic requirements are prescribed by law or regulation and each agency generally develops specific requirements and procedures for its own jobs.

Certain principles of the competitive service apply to the SES with some adaptations. However, SES provisions in some program areas differ significantly from those governing the other systems.

### **Competitive Service**

The competitive service includes all civilian positions in the Federal government that are subject to Title 5, US Code and are not specifically excepted from the civil service laws by statute, by the President, or by the OPM, and are not in the SES. It includes most positions in the executive branch of the Government. The majority of positions in NOAA are competitive service positions.

The most common method for entering the competitive service is to be selected for an appointment after competing in an examination with other non-status applicants. A non-status applicant is an individual who does not have basic eligibility for noncompetitive assignment to a competitive position in the competitive service and must compete with members of the general public in an open competitive examination. Career and career-conditional appointments are the most common competitive service appointments.

Competitive service may also be granted by statute, Executive Order, or the civil service rules without competitive examination, for example, former overseas employees.

### **Excepted Service**

Positions excepted from the competitive service by OPM or by law are placed into three categories, Schedule A, B or C.

- Schedule A positions are positions for which it is not practical to apply the qualification standards and requirements used in the competitive civil service system and that are not of a confidential or policy determining nature.

- Schedule B positions are positions for which it is not practical to hold open competitive examinations, and the positions are not of a confidential or policy determining nature. The persons appointed to Schedule B positions must meet the OPM qualification standards for the position.
- Schedule C positions are either key policy determining positions or positions which involve a close personal relationship between the incumbent and key officials. No examinations are required and the agency appoints persons who they determine to be qualified.

### **Senior Executive Service**

The SES was created by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978. Congress designed the SES to be an elite corps of managers charged with running the Federal government. The SES was set up as a separate, grade-less personnel system - distinct from the competitive and excepted services - whose positions are classified above the GS-15 level of the General Schedule.

For additional information: [WFMO Contact Lists](#)