

# Defense Senior Leader Development Program (DSLDP) Overview

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## What is the Defense Senior Leader Development Program (DSLDP)?

DSLDP is the Department of Defense (DoD) program to develop senior civilian leaders to excel in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century joint, interagency, and multi-national environment. This challenging and rewarding program supports the government-wide effort to foster interagency cooperation and information sharing by providing opportunities to understand and experience, first-hand, the issues and challenges facing leaders across DoD and the broader national security arena. Designed to support one of the Department's top transformational priorities, DSLDP is the senior-level component of the overall leader development strategy. The program provides learning opportunities to enable the deliberate development of a diverse cadre of senior civilian leaders with the Enterprise wide perspective and competencies needed to lead organizations, people, and programs and achieve results in the Joint, interagency, and multinational environment.

DSLDP is a key component of the Department's strategy for growing civilian leaders and is aligned with the implemented Department of Defense Civilian Leader Development Model. Additional information on this model can be found at:

- <https://dodhrinfo.cpms.osd.mil/Directorates/HRSPAS/Leadership-Learning-and-Development/Pages/Home1.aspx> Department of Defense Instruction 1430.16, "Growing Civilian Leaders"
- Framework
- Continuum
- Competency Definitions

## Who should be nominated for DSLDP?

DSLDP is designed for individuals who are already leading high performing organizations and programs, and have the potential and motivation to take on even more responsible senior leadership positions across the Enterprise. Candidates should be identified through their respective Component talent management processes, with an eye toward utilizing graduates in the Enterprise arena and return on investment for the Department. Successful nominees will pursue program elements as a cohort over the next two years, to include attending Professional Military Education beginning in July/August 2016. Only those with the capability, commitment and leadership support to pursue a rigorous two-year development program should be nominated. Specific eligibility requirements, further elaboration of the ideal candidate and additional guidance on identifying candidates follow.

## What does DSLDP entail?

DSLDP is Enterprise leadership in action. Designed to increase the participants' capabilities to effectively support DoD strategic priorities, the program integrates: the world-class academic experience of senior-level Professional Military Education; Defense-unique leadership seminars focused on the critical issues facing the Department today; and substantive opportunities for individual development. The program will feature hands-on involvement of current Defense and other public sector executives and appointees, along with noted experts from top ranking universities and the private sector. Participants will work together and learn from each other as they tackle real-life challenges as a joint cohort. Participants will also benefit by working directly with current DoD executives (military or civilian), as well as executive coaches, throughout their DSLDP experience. This holistic approach will empower participants to think strategically, envision what is on the horizon, and formulate proactive, competitive solutions that produce results for DoD and the nation.

### **Program Elements:**

**Professional Military Education (PME):** PME prepares individuals to assume broader responsibility, expands their knowledge of the national security mission, and strengthens their understanding of complex policy and operational challenges faced by senior DoD officials. Successful nominees will compete to attend senior-level PME in residence at the Army War College, College of Naval Warfare, Air War College, or National Defense University (National War College or Eisenhower School, formerly known as the Industrial College of the Armed Forces). Although personal preferences and Component recommendations will be considered, participants will be slated by a DoD board, to attend a school in a different Component, or National Defense University (NDU) in order to broaden their experience. Participants are expected to be mobile in order to attend the PME School to which they are slated.

- A three-month online prerequisite Defense Strategy Foundation course may be required prior to attending PME.
- Participants who attend PME are required to sign a Continuing Service Agreement with the Component and serve in the Federal government for a minimum of three times the length of the program after completing the program. (Other Component or organizational policies may apply)
- Some PME schools may require the participant to obtain a Top Secret (TS) and/or Secret Compartmental Information (SCI) clearance.

**Defense-Focused Leadership Seminars:** A series of seminars (generally five days each) will blend real-world learning and powerful, challenging experiences. They will provide core knowledge for the Enterprise-wide perspective and the opportunity to apply leadership skills in the increasingly complex joint and national security environments. The purpose of the leadership seminars is to foster expansion of thought so as to guide cognition, affect, and performance at the executive level. The seminars focus on: the interpersonal aspects of leadership and how these skills change at the executive level; solving complex problems in ambiguous environments; creativity and innovation; self-knowledge and how one operates and negotiates as a leader in a variety of contexts. Each seminar builds on the next to increase perspective and knowledge integration through a series of unique experiential learning activities, participant and facilitator-led discussions, and expert facilitation by renowned thought leaders and subject matter experts.

**Some work before and between Seminar sessions will be expected of participants.** The homework and other assignments will enhance the learning experience as well as ensure the transfer and application of knowledge. Some of the work will include readings, videos, team presentations, and application of knowledge and tools from seminars directly on the job.

Participants will attend all Seminars as a cohort, thus facilitating a team approach to learning and the development of long-lasting professional relationships. Seminars will be held at the Defense Executive Management Training Center (EMTC) in Southbridge, Massachusetts, unless specified otherwise.

**Individual Development:** The goal of individual development is for the participant to demonstrate targeted proficiencies in the critical leadership competencies, to include the Enterprise-wide Perspective. Feedback from both senior advisors and 360-Degree assessments will pinpoint where additional development is warranted to further hone existing competency talents and address identified competency needs. An Executive Development Plan (EDP) will outline the training, education, assignments, or other means for addressing any such gaps. Every participant will select an Enterprise-spanning experiential assignment to experience new strategic challenges in new environments and further strengthen the Enterprise perspective. The evolution of each individual EDP will be woven into every leadership seminar and developmental activity throughout the program. Each participant should also review their EDP with their Executive Advisors/Mentors, Executive Coach, and other champions after each personal and program milestone.

**Additional Information:**

- DSLDP is not a Senior Executive Service (SES) Candidate Development Program. Program elements are designed to enhance one's readiness for top leadership positions. While successful completion of the program does not imply eligibility for or guarantee promotion, DSLDP graduates are highly competitive for more responsible and challenging positions.
- All elements of the program will be accomplished within 24 months.
- To remain in the program, participants must demonstrate progress toward completion of program elements, targeted competency proficiencies and EDP objectives.
- Travel and per diem associated with approved DSLDP activities are paid for by the participant's organization.
- Participants will benefit from the sound advice, honest discussion and feedback of Executive Advisors/Mentors (EA/EM) at the executive (SES or General/Flag Officer) level assigned by the Program Management Office. In addition, participants will be assigned an Executive Coach.
- Beyond EA/EMs and Executive Coaches arranged by DSLDP, participants are encouraged and expected to independently seek out and work with other executive-level mentors.

**Eligibility for Graduation:** Participants who complete all cohort seminars and other activities on their EDP will participate in a structured interview, which focuses mainly on the Enterprise-wide Perspective competencies, to help discern the participant's ability in meeting or exceeding the targeted proficiencies of the critical leadership competencies. Prior to the structured interview, Participants will submit a learning portfolio that documents learning events, demonstrates comprehensive thinking about critical incidents of importance for senior leaders in the federal

government, and provides evidence of attaining a level of experience and competency-based proficiency necessary for senior Enterprise leadership.

Participants will demonstrate higher order cognition in reasoning, judgment, and approaches necessary to make the leap to thinking and operating at an executive level which includes: strategic thinking, Enterprise-wide perspective, operating in ambiguity, achieving results through people, and fostering and enacting creative and innovative approaches and environments. Participants are conscientious and improve the performance of the groups they lead. Participants encourage and support followership and are themselves followers to the common purpose. They demonstrate strategic leadership responsibility for initiating, inspiring, and facilitating change. They create ethical and positive climates and cultures for the organization. They design and support partnerships with other people, and other organizations, resulting in broader networks of operation. Participants are self-aware, self-directed, and continuous learners.

When the participant successfully completes the assessment(s), they are ready to graduate and will attend a formal graduation ceremony. The graduation certificate validates the participant has met DSLDP objectives and has attained the desired proficiencies for Enterprise leadership.

### **What are the eligibility requirements for DSLDP?**

**Eligibility Requirements:** To be eligible to be nominated for admission to DSLDP, an individual must:

- Be a permanent, full-time civilian employee of the Department of Defense;
- Occupy, on a permanent basis, a position at grade 15/ equivalent or be a GS-14/equivalent with tremendous advancement potential (i.e. Demonstrated work at the next higher level). (Those in other broad-banding systems such as DCIPS or on grade retention should check with their Human Resources advisors);
- Possess a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university, as required for admission to PME
- Have no prior in-resident Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) experience at a Senior Service School (Army War College, College of Naval Warfare, Air Force War College, or National Defense University); and
- Possess a minimum of 1 year (preferably more) of significant experience in supervising people (**must have supervised more than one employee**) in an official capacity that was **acquired no more than 5 years ago.** (Questions relating to this requirement are specified in the DSLDP Nomination Information Sheet)

### **What does the DSLDP nomination process involve?**

The nomination process is designed to be rigorous. This extensive process is intended to ensure that only ideal candidates are admitted into the program. DSLDP nominations involve two primary phases: the Component process and the DoD process. Each is described below:

**The Component process:** Each Component will establish its selection process and procedures, and apply the criteria (below) in nominating a slate of candidates for consideration in the DoD process. The use of a detailed checklist is encouraged. Components are to actively market and promote the annual DSLDP solicitation to a wide array of subordinate organizations and activities in order for nominations as a whole to be representative of the Department's demographics. Further, Component nominees should have been identified by leadership based on their observed accomplishments and potential. Components will submit their nominations in rank order and provide the methodology describing how those nominations were prioritized, as well as a detailed statement describing the return on investment (ROI) for each candidate.

**The DoD process:**

- Each nominee will participate in an interview process. The interviews will generally be conducted in October and November, 2015.
- An executive-level selection board, comprising both SES members and General/Flag Officers, will review all nominations forwarded by the DSLDP Program Manager and recommend selections to the OSD leadership for final ratification. The board review will include the entire nomination package and interview results.
- The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Civilian Personnel Policy) will ratify the selection of participants for each Class. Selectees will be notified by the DSLDP program office. Non-selectees will be notified by the nominee's Component.

## What are the selection criteria?

### Nomination and Selection:

As stated above, the DSLDP nomination and selection process is designed to be rigorous. This will ensure that the right individuals, i.e., those who have the requisite experience, competencies, and motivation to excel in more responsible senior Defense leadership positions, enter the program.

The selection criteria include:

- Proficiency in each of the ECQs and related competencies (see chart), as would be expected of a senior leader (i.e., no evidence of major competency gaps);
- Demonstrated career progression;
- Demonstrated exceptional performance record;
- Educational history that demonstrates the ability or potential to complete the academic requirements of the program, to include a baccalaureate degree from an accredited school, as required for admission to PME;
- Depth and breadth of experience in one or more of the broad functional areas in which DoD employs managers and leaders, to include at least 1 year of experience supervising or managing people in an official capacity;
- Supervisory recommendation addressing the employee's leadership competencies and potential for broad Enterprise leadership responsibilities; and
- Agreement to be functionally, organizationally and geographically mobile, as noted by career progression plans in the nominee's Statement of Interest.

### Office of Personnel Management EXECUTIVE CORE QUALIFICATIONS

#### (ECQs) and related Competencies

#### Fundamental Competencies

- Continual Learning
- Integrity/Honesty
- Interpersonal Skills
- Oral Communication
- Written Communication
- Public Service Motivation

#### ECQ 1: Leading Change

- Creativity/Innovation
- Flexibility
- Resilience
- (External Awareness) \*
- (Strategic Thinking) \*
- (Vision) \*

#### ECQ 2: Leading People

- Conflict Management
- Developing Others
- Leveraging Diversity
- Team Building

#### ECQ 3: Results-Driven

- Accountability
- Customer Service
- Decisiveness
- Entrepreneurship
- Problem Solving
- Technical Credibility

#### ECQ 4: Business Acumen

- Financial Management
- Human Capital Management
- Technology Management
- Computer Literacy

#### ECQ 5: Building Coalitions

- Influencing/Negotiating
- Partnering
- (Political Savvy) \*

#### Additional DoD ECQ: Enterprise-Wide Perspective

For more information on the OPM ECQs:

[http://www.resume-place.com/services/ses/opm\\_tips\\_ecqs-html/](http://www.resume-place.com/services/ses/opm_tips_ecqs-html/)

\* Competencies required at the Executive level

## **What are the application requirements?**

**Nomination Package:** Individuals must be nominated through their Component. All nominees are required to furnish a nomination package (original and one copy) that includes the following items:

- Nominee Information Sheet(form);
- Supplemental Nominee Information Sheet for DSLDP and relevant attachments (form);
- Resume (template – three page limit);
- Statement of Interest (form);
- DSLDP Supervisor Assessment (form);
- Biography (template)
- Completed Standard Form 182 on file with home organization/Component
- Additional information as may be required by nominating Component or organization.

***The DSLDP Application Forms can be found at the following web link:***

<https://dodhrinfo.cpms.osd.mil/Directorates/HRSPAS/Leadership-Learning-and-Development/Pages/DSLDP.aspx>

***Applications and supporting documents that do not clearly articulate eligibility, or are incomplete, will not be considered.***

**PME application requirements:** Upon selection, final nominees selected for DSLDP will be slated for a specific PME institution. Upon ratification, each individual selected for DSLDP will also be notified of the PME institution they have been slated to attend. Separate PME applications will be required for each PME institution.

***Note:*** Those with prior in-residence PME experience at Senior Service School (Army War College, College of Naval Warfare, Air Force War College, or National Defense University) will be disqualified.

## **Who is the ideal candidate?**

Generally, the ideal DSLDP candidate:

- Is a high performing leader with outstanding potential for more responsible leadership positions across the Enterprise;
- Submits a complete nomination package that includes compelling examples of accomplishments that demonstrate proficiency in the civilian leader competencies;
- Has supervisory experience acquired no more than 5 years ago;
- Is ready and able to contribute at a senior-level PME school;
- Has a broad and varied history of continually progressive experience leading to increased responsibility and broad perspectives;
  - In multiple organizations, commands, or Defense agencies;
  - At various organizational levels (operating, staff, headquarters);
  - In a range of related occupational areas; and
  - At multiple geographic locations.
- Has leadership and managerial experience that has demonstrated the competence, confidence, and motivation to be a bold and innovative leader in the public sector, to include significant experience in supervising or managing people in an official capacity;
- Has an exceptional performance record and has progressed through positions of increasing responsibility at a faster pace than his/her peers;
- Is supported by supervisory and Component recommendations that clearly articulate the candidates' demonstration of qualifications and readiness for DSLDP;
- Recognizes and appreciates the value of life-long learning
  - Has succeeded in rigorous programs of formal education, training, and self-development;
  - Has one or more degrees in fields related to his/her occupational specialty; and
  - Has successfully completed Component-sponsored leadership programs and other developmental activities toward attaining career goals.
- Is motivated to succeed and is willing to challenge himself/herself to do so; and
- Has the passion to lead, inspire, and produce results for the DoD.

### **Where can we find more information?**

**Additional Information** Program information and required application is posted to the website at: <https://dodhrinfo.cpms.osd.mil/Directorates/HRSPAS/Leadership-Learning-and-Development/Pages/DSLDP.aspx>. Specific questions can be forwarded via e-mail to the DSLDP Program Management Office at [dodhra.mc-alex.dcpas.mbx.hrspas-dsldp@mail.mil](mailto:dodhra.mc-alex.dcpas.mbx.hrspas-dsldp@mail.mil). Questions about the Component nomination process should be addressed through command channels.