

The Power that Unites the Republic of Korea



The

Senior  
Civil Service



Ministry of Personnel  
Management



# The Power that Unites the Republic of Korea

From recruiting public servants to training, performance management, human resource management, competency assessment and civil service ethics, integrated innovation in public personnel management based on respect for people helps realize the fairest and most transparent civil service.

Capable talent and an efficient system will lead the future of a united Republic of Korea.





Openness and Competition, Performance and Accountability,  
and Competency Development of the Senior Civil Service  
to Improve the Competitiveness  
and Quality of Administrative Service

# The Senior Civil Service

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# ABOUT The Senior Civil Service



**Q. What does the Senior Civil Service refer to?**

The Senior Civil Service (SCS) refers to a corps of high-ranking civil servants at the director-general level or above at administrative agencies.

Past Issues with Personnel Management



**Q. What were the issues with personnel management of high-ranking civil servants before the introduction of the SCS?**

Previously, public personnel management had been a grade and seniority-based system, which resulted in closed recruitment for government posts, limitations on developing core talent, and ineffective performance management and evaluation, etc. The SCS was introduced to address these issues.

**Q. What was the government's aim in introducing the SCS?**

The government introduced the SCS to build a competent civil service by deploying talent at the deputy minister or director-general level across government, while promoting openness and competitiveness, and strengthening performance accountability.



**Q. Do other countries have an equivalent to the SCS?**

Major OECD countries, including the US, the UK, Australia and Canada, introduced the SCS early on. Korea introduced the SCS in 2006.



**Q. Who is eligible to become a member of the SCS?**

Civil servants of Grades 3 and 4 in general service and civil servants of Grade 4 or above in research/advisory service can be promoted to become a member of the SCS. Also, experienced civilian professionals can be recruited to open competitive positions in the SCS.



Requirements to Become a Member of the SCS

**Q. What are the requirements to become a member of the SCS?**

A candidate for the SCS shall complete candidate development programs and pass competency assessment.



**Q. Why is competency assessment required to become a member of the SCS?**

Systematic assessment of a candidate's competency enables selection of the right people for key government posts and promotes the reliability and fairness of the selection process.

Major Achievements



**Q. What are the major achievements after the introduction of the SCS?**

The introduction of the SCS promoted the openness of senior government posts to the public and private sectors, increased performance and accountability of personnel management of high-ranking civil servants, and enhanced senior civil servants' job competency.

PART  
1

# HISTORY

Introduction and Development





# Background of the Introduction of the SCS

## Background

Since the United States introduced the Senior Executive Service for the first time in 1978, many OECD countries including the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada have followed suit. The Republic of Korea introduced the Senior Civil Service (SCS) on July 1, 2006 to improve the competitiveness of government service by deploying high-ranking civil servants to the right positions across government and promoting openness and competitiveness through job and performance-based personnel management.

## Past Issues with Personnel Management of High-ranking Civil Servants

Previously, there were four issues with personnel management of high-ranking civil servants. First, personnel management depended heavily on grade and seniority; second, many government posts were closed to outside recruits and job transfers between ministries were limited; third, there were few competency assessment or capability development programs available to high-ranking civil servants; and fourth, performance management was not effective enough to ensure accountability.

### ● Grade and Seniority-based Personnel Management

Personnel management based on grade and seniority was effective for ensuring individual job security and predictability of promotion, but in a rapidly changing environment, it could not guarantee the competitiveness of the overall civil service. Under the previous system, civil servants were paid based on their grades and years of service, not on the importance or complexity of their jobs or performance results. Frequent job rotation disturbed the development of professional skills and continuity of work. Also, qualifications and requirements were not clearly defined for each job position, making it difficult to recruit the right people.



## Background of the Introduction of the SCS

### ● Closed Recruitment for Government Posts

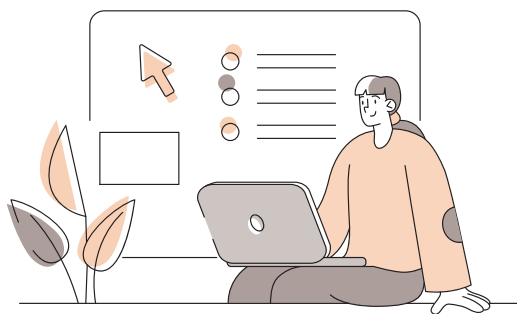
Closed recruitment for government posts acted as a limitation on maximizing the potential of the civil service. Particularly, it was not easy to utilize human resources across government as vacancies were only filled by civil servants within the same ministries and agencies. In addition, people from the private sector found it hard to join the civil service, and even if they did, conditions were not favorable for them to realize their full potential.

### ● Limitations on Developing Core Talent

One of the issues in the past was that finding and developing talent for senior government positions was not a priority of the government. There was little research systematically conducted on qualifications and requirements for senior government positions. Also, an effective system to assess qualifications and requirements objectively and nurture relevant talent was not in place.

### ● Ineffective Performance Management and Evaluation

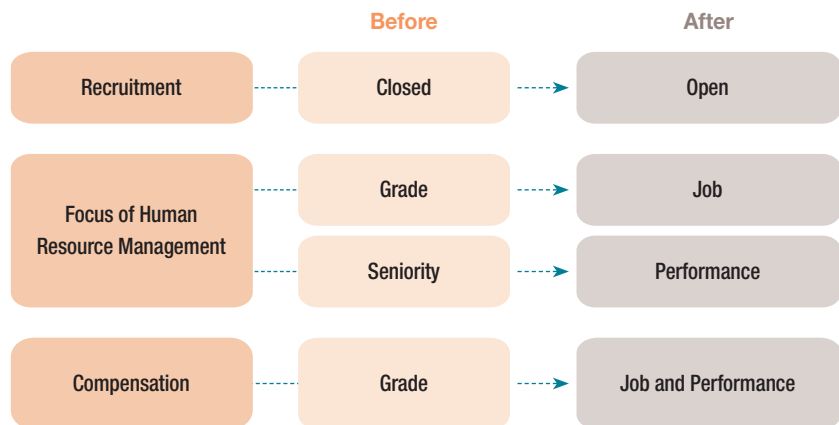
Due to the absence of a system to manage and evaluate senior civil servants' performance in a systematic manner and determine their compensation based on performance results, senior civil servants had little motivation to focus on performance improvement.



## Purpose of the Introduction of the SCS

The government introduced the SCS to address the aforementioned issues. The introduction of the SCS shifted the focus of the government’s personnel management from grade to job, and from seniority to performance. Recruitment for government positions became more open, and compensation was no longer based on grade but on performance results. The government expects that the SCS will eventually make the government more competitive and improve the quality of administrative service.

### Changes Made by the Introduction of the SCS





## Preparation for the Introduction Before 2003

### ○ Plan and Preparation for the Introduction of the SCS

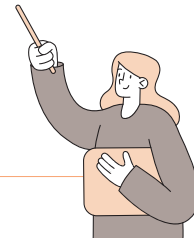
The Korean government had spent a considerable amount of time planning and preparing for the introduction of the SCS. During the Kim Young-sam Administration, the government reviewed plans to designate civil servants of Grade 3 or above as policy-making positions. After the Kim Dae-jung Administration was inaugurated, the government introduced a few aspects of the SCS, such as open competitive positions and performance-based compensation.

### ○ Decision to Introduce the SCS

The SCS was officially introduced under the Roh Moo-hyun Administration, i.e. the Participatory Government. The administration established the Roadmap for Personnel Management Innovation to carry out comprehensive government innovation, and decided to adopt the SCS as part of such efforts.



**The History of the Introduction of the SCS**



**Kim Young-sam Administration (Feb. 1993 – Feb. 1998)**

- Reclassified the grade scheme in the mid-1990s
- Reviewed plans to exclude civil servants of Grade 3 or above from the grade scheme and classify them separately as policy-making positions
- ☑ Introduced the plural class system for working-level positions

**Kim Dae-jung Administration (Feb. 1998 - Feb. 2003)**

- Carried out government reform to overcome the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s
- ☑ Introduced the open competitive position recruitment and performance-based compensation schemes

**Roh Moo-hyun Administration (Feb. 2003 - Feb. 2008)**

- Prepared a detailed timeline of the introduction of the SCS as part of government innovation under the Roadmap for Personnel Management Innovation
- Analyzed jobs and held public hearings to prepare for the introduction
- ☑ Introduced the SCS

## Formation (2003 – 2007)

### ● Job Analysis and Personnel Exchange

In 2003, the government conducted analysis of about 1,400 jobs at the director-general level or above at central administrative agencies. Experts from private consultancies, academia, and public ministries and agencies formed a taskforce to conduct job analysis, which lasted until 2006. In addition, the government carried out personnel exchange programs for about 30 director-general level positions from January 2004 to June 2006.

#### Case Examples

- Director-general at Local Finance Bureau, Ministry of the Interior
- 
- Director-general at Water Resource Bureau, Ministry of Construction & Transportation
- 
- Transport and Logistics Reviewer at the Ministry of Construction & Transportation



- Director-general at Fiscal Reform Bureau, Ministry of Planning and Budget
- 
- Director-general at Water Supply and Sewerage Bureau, Ministry of Environment
- 
- Director-general at Shipping and Logistics Bureau, Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries

### ● Preparation for Legal Grounds

In December 2005, the government enacted the amended State Public Officials Act to provide legal grounds for the SCS. Subordinate laws were enacted and amended afterwards, and the SCS was launched on July 1, 2006.

#### Process of Preparation for Legal Grounds

- May 10, 2005 | A proposal for amendment of the State Public Officials Act to provide legal grounds for the SCS was approved at the Cabinet meeting
- May 18, 2005 | The proposal was submitted to the National Assembly
- December 8, 2005 | The proposal was approved at the National Assembly's plenary session  
→ July 1, 2006 | Formation of the SCS was officially confirmed
- May 30, 2006 | 11 relevant enforcement decrees including the Regulations on the Personnel Management of the Senior Civil Service were approved at the Cabinet meeting

### Summary of the SCS System

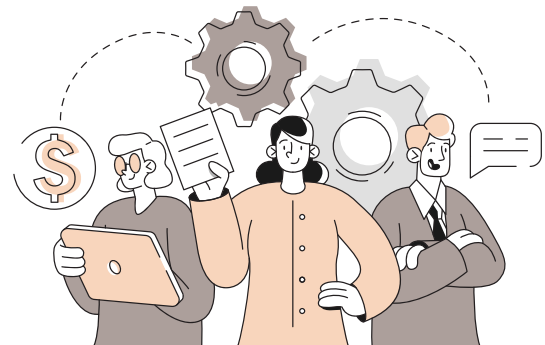
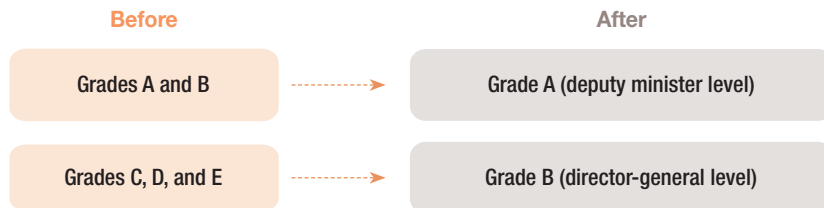
<b>Subjects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil servants at the deputy minister and director-general levels at central administrative agencies</li> <li>☑ 1,305 civil servants in 2006 → 1,544 civil servants in 2020</li> </ul>
<b>Recruitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General positions (positions filled at minister's discretion) + Open competitive positions + Positions recruited through job postings</li> </ul>
<b>Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidate development program → Competency assessment → Qualification screening</li> </ul>
<b>Job Grades</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two grades (A and B)</li> <li>☑ Reclassified from five grades since 2009</li> </ul>
<b>Compensation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic pay + Job-based pay + Performance-based pay</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluated into five grades</li> <li>☑ Very Good, Good, Ordinary, Poor, Very Poor</li> </ul>
<b>Dismissal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualification screening of those who receive low performance ratings or are not appointed to any position</li> <li>☑ An official may be dismissed if considered unable to perform his or her duty appropriately</li> </ul>



## Adjustment and Adaptation (2008 – 2012)

### ● Reclassification of Job Grades

There had been concerns that the five job grades (i.e. A – E) of the SCS were too segmented to enable flexible personnel management. In 2009, under the Lee Myung-bak Administration, the government reclassified the job grades into two grades.

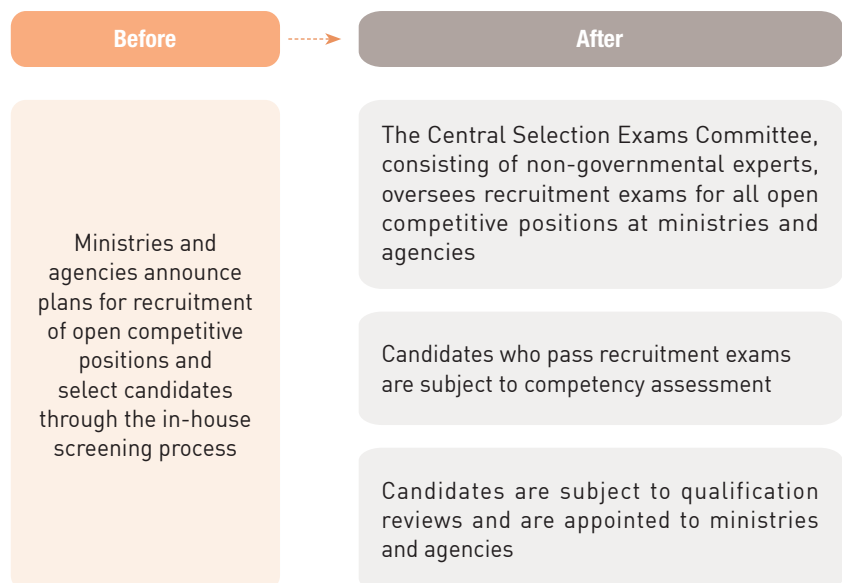


## Expansion and Improvement (2013 – Present)

### ● Revision of the SCS to Attract Talent from the Private Sector

The government revised the systems relating to the SCS to attract more talent from the private sector. In July 2014, the Ministry of Personnel Management established the Central Selection Exams Committee, consisting of non-governmental experts, to ensure fairness of recruitment for open competitive positions and promote expertise. Under the new system, the Central Selection Exams Committee conducts the selection process for all open competitive positions and recommends candidates to ministries and agencies.

#### Change of Recruitment of Open Competitive Positions





## Summary of the SCS

### ● Definition of the SCS

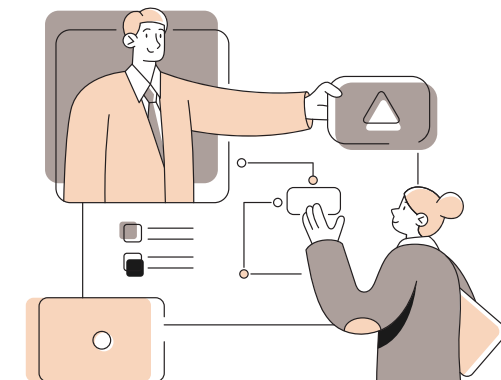
The SCS refers to a corps of civil servants assigned to positions of high importance and accountability in general service, special administrative service, and special service, currently employed, on a leave of absence or seconded, including those at the deputy minister, director-general or equivalent level at government agencies.

### ● Composition

The SCS corps consists of civil servants in general service, special administrative service, and special service. Civil servants in special service refer to foreign service officers, and civil servants in special administrative service refer to assistants and secretaries.

### ● Becoming a Member of the SCS

A civil servant can become a member of the SCS by way of promotion, recruitment, or job transfer (for those in research/advisory service).



### Option 1

To promote civil servants of Grades 3 - 4 to the SCS, relevant ministers shall select twice or up to three times the number of candidates through the Ordinary Promotion Screening Committee, list them in terms of priority and request their screening to the Senior Civil Servant Appointment Screening Committee of the Ministry of Personnel Management (MPM). The Senior Civil Servant Appointment Screening Committee selects qualified candidates in consideration of their suitability for the position, capability, personality and aptitude, and relevant ministers recommend the selected candidates for promotion based on the screening results.

### Option 2

To hire experts from the private sector (e.g. professors, researchers, and business people) or former civil servants, recruitment exams for experienced professionals are conducted to select qualified people. Relevant ministers shall select twice or up to three times the number of candidates and list them in terms of priority through document screening and interviews. Then, the candidates are reviewed by the Senior Civil Servant Appointment Screening Committee and relevant ministers recommend the selected candidates for hiring. When recruitment is for open competitive positions, the Central Selection Exams Committee oversees the recruitment process.

### ○ Compensation

Compensation to the members of the SCS is based on basic annual salary, which consists of basic pay and job-based pay, and performance-based annual salary.

#### Senior Civil Servant Appointment Screening Committee

- The MPM established the Senior Civil Servant Appointment Screening Committee to verify the fairness and objectivity of the promotion and recruitment process and candidate eligibility for the SCS. The Committee consists of more than five but less than nine members including one committee chair.



PART  
2

# SCS in DETAIL

Key Aspects and Features

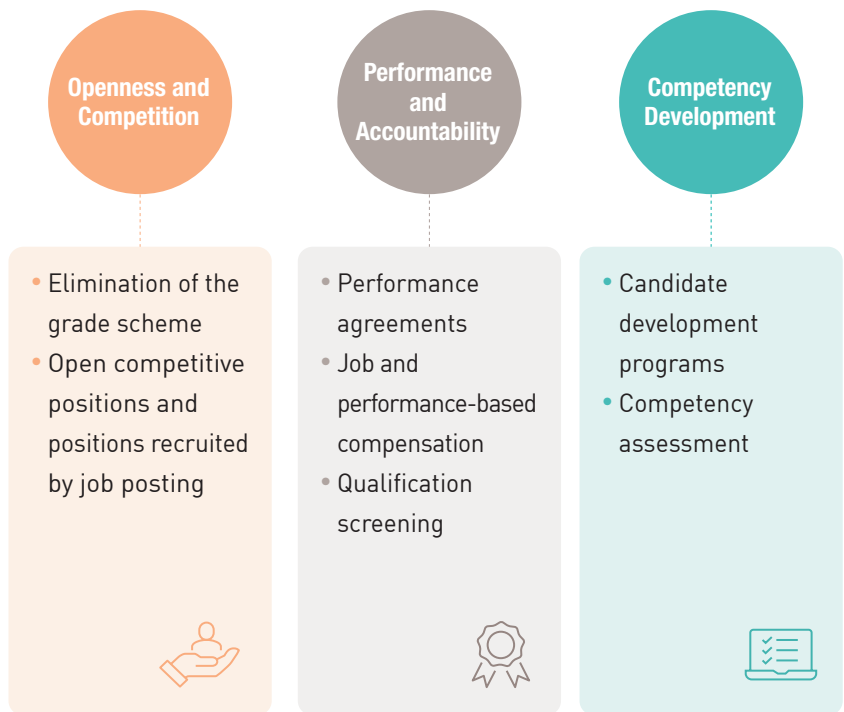




# Key Aspects of the SCS

## Three Key Aspects of the SCS

The three key aspects of Korea's SCS are openness and competition, performance and accountability, and competency development.





## Openness and Competition

### Assignment of Job Grades

#### ● Purpose

Under the SCS, job grades were assigned to each position based on its importance and accountability, enabling free transfer between positions within the SCS.

#### ● Assignment of Job Grades

The government conducted job analysis of civil servants to be included in the SCS and assigned job grades to each position based on its importance and accountability. For certain positions newly created in the SCS, the government also analyzed their importance and accountability and assigned either Grade A or B depending on the results of the analysis.

#### Number of Senior Civil Servants by Job Grades (as of the end of 2020)

Leave of absence, etc.  
8.94%

138

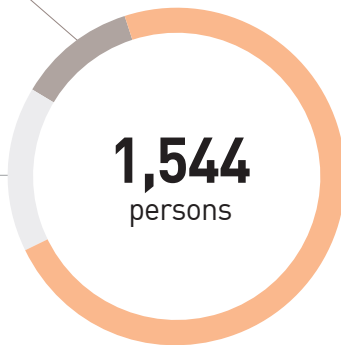
Grade A  
15.93%

246

1,544  
persons

Grade B  
75.13%

1,160



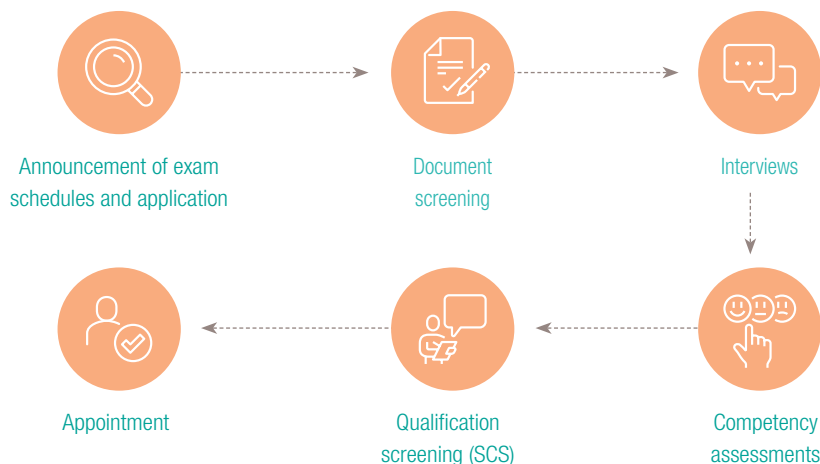
## Open Competitive Positions

The open competitive position system is a recruitment scheme designed to select the most qualified persons from the public and private sectors through open competition.

### Expansion of the Open Competitive Position System

In February 2000, the government designated 130 deputy minister and director-general level posts as open competitive positions. In 2011, it expanded the program further to mandatorily include director level posts. Currently, up to 20% of total Senior Civil Service and director level positions are filled through the Open Competitive Position System, and each ministry can determine the rate at its discretion and usually fills around 10% or more posts using the System. As of the end of 2020, 174 Senior Civil Service posts at 39 ministries and agencies were designated and recruited through the Open Competitive Position System.

### Selection Process for Open Competitive Positions



### ● Employment Period of Open Competitive Positions

Unless there are special provisions in other laws and regulations, the heads of relevant ministries determine the employment period. The mandatory period is a minimum of two years but less than five. If the person appointed is from the private sector, the initial employment period must be at least three years unless specifically determined otherwise (for instance, if the appointed person requests his or her employment period be less than three years or is unable to work for three years under relevant laws).

### ● A Wide Range of Incentives

The government provides a wide range of incentives to civil servants if their work performance during the initial employment period proves outstanding. Such incentives include extension of the employment period up to five years, appointment to a higher grade, transfer to general service positions, etc. These incentives aim to serve as the institutional grounds to attract gifted talent from the private sector.

### ● Open Competitive Positions Only for Experienced Civilian Experts

The government also designates some of the Open Competitive Positions to be open to private applicants only. This System aims to take advantage of the expertise and professional experience of the ample human resources in the private sector. As of the end of 2020, 52 Senior Civil Service posts were designated and recruited through this System.



## Performance Appraisal for SCS Members

### ● Performance Evaluation of the SCS

Members of the SCS are evaluated based on their fulfillment of performance agreements, etc. 'Evaluation of performance agreements, etc.' refers to a system through which the evaluators, who are typically vice ministers or deputy ministers, and members of the SCS agree upon a performance agreement, determine evaluation items and indicators, evaluate the progress of performance and use the evaluation results for personnel management purposes including promotion and payment of performance-based compensation.

### ● Evaluation Process

The process of evaluation consists of signing of performance agreements, interim review of the progress, and final evaluation. The evaluator shall make sure to conduct interim reviews and record the subject's progress regularly, and carry out interviews with the subject. The evaluator assesses the level of accomplishment of performance goals by the subject and produces evaluation results. Evaluation results are recorded as personnel data and can be used for personnel management purposes.

### ● Five Evaluation Grades

Performance results are evaluated into five grades – very good, good, ordinary, poor, and very poor. In case the evaluator gives either the highest or lowest grade to the subject, detailed reasons for such decision must be provided. A distributive grading scheme applies to evaluations, with the highest grade (i.e. very good) given up to 20%, and low grades (i.e. poor, very poor) not less than 10% of subjects.





## Performance and Accountability

### ○ Guidelines on Giving the Lowest Evaluation Grade

Previously, many evaluators hesitated to give the lowest grade when evaluating the subject's performance. To deal with this problem, in 2016, the MPM set guidelines on giving the lowest evaluation grade, and expanded the scope of ministers' discretion to remove poor-performing senior civil servants from their positions.

### Regulations on the Performance Evaluation, Etc. of Public Officials

#### ✔ Article 10 (Evaluation Methods)

- ⑤ When evaluating performance agreements, etc. of the Senior Civil Service, relevant ministers shall determine the distribution ratios of each evaluation grade. In this case, the highest grade shall go up to the top 20% of all subjects evaluated and the two lowest grades (referring to 'poor' and 'very poor' as defined under Article 20-2 of the Regulations on the Personnel Management of the Senior Civil Service) to more than the bottom 10% of all subjects evaluated.

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### Regulations on the Personnel Management of the Senior Civil Service

#### ✔ Article 20 (Work Performance Rating for the Senior Civil Service)

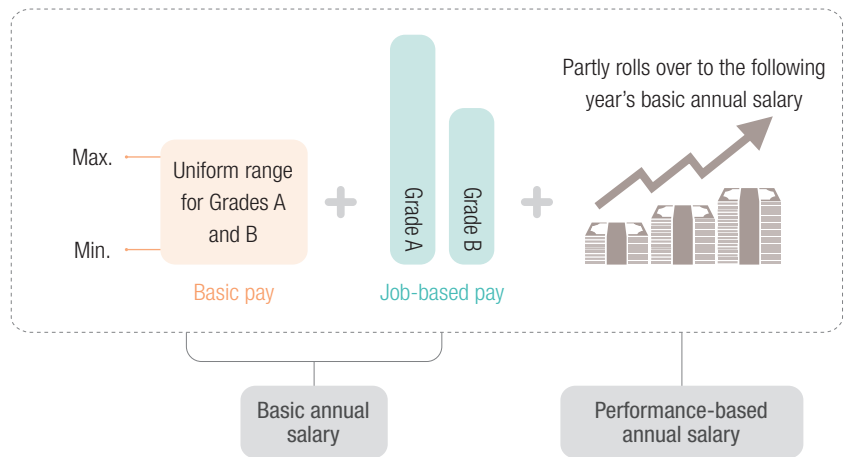
- ① Work performance rating of senior civil servants serving in positions in the Senior Civil Service shall be in accordance with the provisions on evaluation of performance agreements, etc. provided under Article 4 of the Regulations on the Performance Evaluation, etc. of Public Officials (hereinafter referred to as "Regulations on the Performance Evaluation").
- ② Evaluation of performance agreements, etc. shall be rated as very good, good, ordinary, poor, or very poor based on the subject's accomplishment of performance goals measured by objective indicators.
- ③ Notwithstanding Article 10-3 of the Regulations on the Performance Evaluation, if a senior civil servant fails to accomplish his or her performance goals, lacks competency, is involved in irregularities, or neglects his or her duty, relevant ministers give the lowest grade defined under paragraph ② above. Details of failure to accomplish performance goals, lack of competency, irregularities or neglect of duty shall be determined by relevant ministers in accordance with the criteria prescribed by the Minister of Personnel Management.

## Job and Performance-based Annual Salary

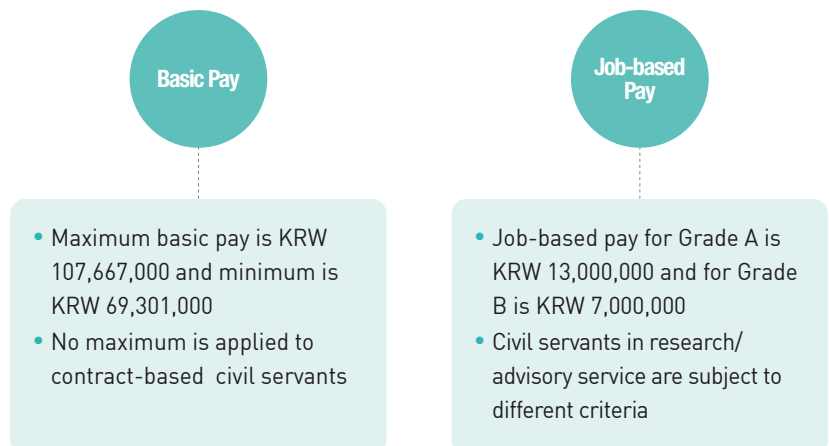
### ● Performance-based Compensation

With the introduction of the performance-based annual salary scheme, the government made sure good performance is well compensated by enabling part of previous year's performance-based pay to be rolled over to the following year's basic annual salary.

#### Structure of the Performance-based Annual Salary Scheme



#### Example of Basic Pay and Job-based Pay (as of 2021)





## Qualification Screening System

### ● Purpose of Qualification Screening

The qualification screening system enables ex officio dismissal of a senior civil servant, who is found unable to perform his or her duty appropriately. The government introduced the qualification screening system to promote performance accountability of the SCS.

### ● Process of Qualification Screening

Relevant ministers shall immediately request a qualification screening when an appropriate reason arises. Upon request, the Senior Civil Service Appointment Screening Committee determines whether the subject of the screening is qualified for the position, and passes a resolution as 'qualified', 'unqualified', or 'qualified on condition'. If the subject is determined 'unqualified', relevant ministers recommend ex officio dismissal of the subject. If the subject is determined 'qualified', he or she may retain the position in the SCS. If the Committee finds that the subject can improve his or her work performance and competency through learning and development, the Committee can issue a 'qualified on condition' opinion. In this case, the subject's learning and development outcomes are evaluated for re-screening.



## Summary of Qualification Screening

### ✔ Legal Grounds

Article 70-2 of the State Public Officials Act and Chapter 5 of the Regulations on the Personnel Management of the Senior Civil Service

### ✔ Subjects of Qualification Screening

If a civil servant's performance evaluation and period of non-appointment fall into either of the following three conditions:

- Received the lowest work performance grade for more than two years
- Not been appointed to any position for more than one year without justifiable reason
- Received the lowest work performance grade for more than one year and not been appointed to any position for more than six months without justifiable reason

### ✔ Screening Process

Relevant ministers request a qualification screening to the Senior Civil Service Appointment Screening Committee whenever a reason arises, and the Committee passes a resolution on qualification upon the concurrence of a majority of registered committee members

### ✔ Screening Criteria

The subject's qualification is determined based on his or her work performance, competency and personal qualities

### ✔ Screening Results

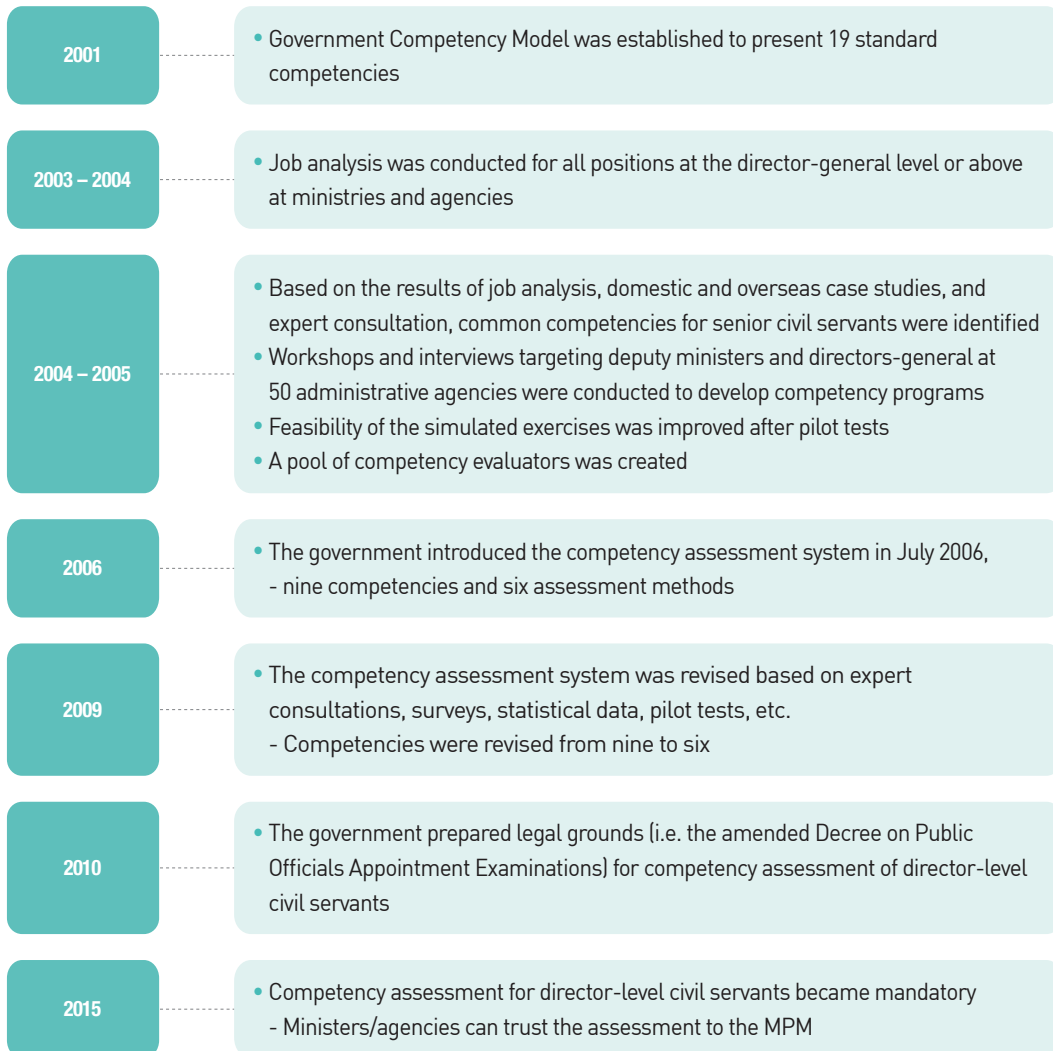
Screening results are either 'qualified', 'unqualified', or 'qualified on condition'

- If 'unqualified', relevant ministers can recommend ex officio dismissal of the subject
- 'Qualified on condition' is given if the subject is expected to be able to improve his or her work performance and competency

## Competency Assessment

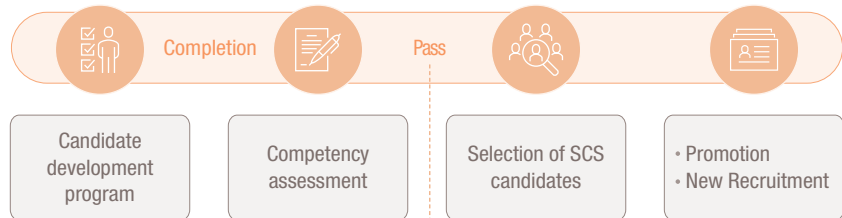
The competency assessment system ensures that the most qualified people are selected for the posts in the SCS by thoroughly verifying if a candidate has competencies required as a senior civil servant.

Competency assessment administered by the MPM is carried out in the form of a simulation exercise that puts the subject under actual or simulated work scenarios. A team of evaluators assesses how the subject plays his or her role in the simulated situation based on the subject's verbal and non-verbal communication and reports submitted.



## Operation of Competency Assessment

### ● Process of Competency Assessment



Re-assessment is available if the subject fails the competency assessment

### ● Subjects of Competency Assessment

A civil servant expected to be newly hired or promoted to a position in the SCS is subject to competency assessment.

#### Candidate Development Programs

- Basic education programs for prospective members of the SCS (Article 8 of the Regulations on the Personnel Management of the Senior Civil Service)
- Purpose: develop core competency and leadership required by a senior civil servant
- Subjects: civil servants of Grade 4 or above at ministries and agencies (including those in research/advisory service)



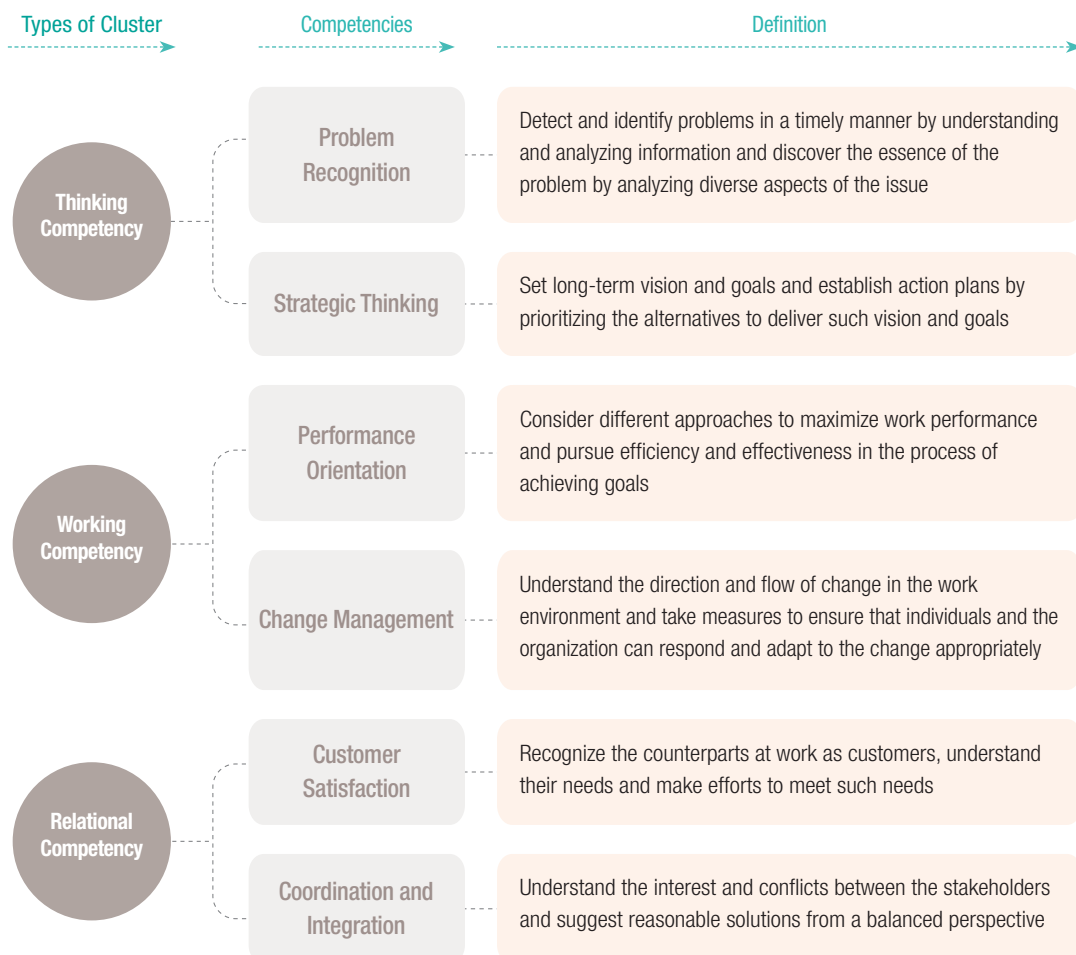


# Competency Development

## ○ Competencies Subject to Assessment

Based on the job analysis of senior government posts, domestic and overseas case studies, and expert review opinions, the government identified six types of competencies required by a senior civil servant. The six competencies are largely grouped into three clusters, i.e. thinking, working, and relational competencies.

### The SCS Competency Model



### ● Assessment Methods

The subject is presented with simulation exercises that are similar to actual work conditions, and a number of evaluators assess the characteristics of the subject's behavior in a given situation. Various assessment methods are employed to assess each of six competencies, including 1:1 role play, 1:2 role play, in-basket test and group discussion.

#### Examples of Four Simulation Exercises

Types of Simulation Exercise	Simulated Conditions (Example)	Time
1:1 Role Play	Media interviews on current issues, announcement of government measures, coaching subordinate staff, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparation: 30 mins</li> <li>Assessment: 30 mins</li> </ul>
1:2 Role Play	Coordinating overlapping work responsibilities between divisions and ministries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparation: 30 mins</li> <li>Assessment: 30 mins</li> </ul>
In-basket Test	Providing solutions to a diverse range of current issues (the subject writes the proposed solutions on the provided answer sheet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparation: 50 mins</li> <li>Assessment: 30 mins</li> </ul>
Group Discussion	Identifying common issues experienced by divisions and ministries and resolving a conflict of interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparation: 40 mins</li> <li>Assessment: 50 mins</li> </ul>



## Competency Development

### ● Evaluators of Competency Assessment

The government appoints former members of the SCS or persons with extensive knowledge and experience in personnel management or competency assessment as evaluators of competency assessment.

### ● Passing Competency Assessment

The evaluators measure each of six competencies on a scale from one to five, adjust the score during the evaluators' meeting and determine the final score. The subject passes competency assessment if the final average score of each competency is graded as 'ordinary' or above (average score of 2.5).

### ● Re-assessment in Case of Failure

In cases where civil servants fail the competency assessment, relevant ministers shall provide necessary support for the civil servant's competency enhancement. Those who have failed competency assessment at previous attempts may undergo re-assessment, and there is no limit to the number of re-assessments. However, if a civil servant has failed two assessments consecutively, the person can take a re-assessment after six months from the date of the latest assessment; if a candidate fails the test three times, he/she can take the test again after one year from the third/failed test.

### ● Feedback on Competency Assessment

Once competency assessment is complete, the subject is provided with the result of assessment (i.e. pass or fail), the level of competency, strengths and weaknesses in each competency, and suggestions for further competency development. Such feedback aims to help the subject to identify his or her current competency level and weaknesses and use it as a reference for further development.

### ● Expected Outcome of Competency Assessment

Competency assessment, where outside experts verify the overall competency of a candidate for a senior government position, enables the government to select and assign qualified people to policy decision-making and management positions and promote reliability and fairness of the candidate selection process.





PART  
3

# ACHIEVEMENTS

Major Achievements





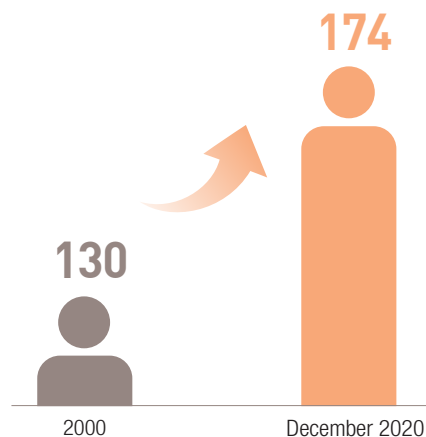
## Major Achievements

The introduction of the SCS has brought many benefits. Recruitment for senior government posts has become more open to people from the private sector, and job transfer among ministries has become more readily available. In addition, personnel management of senior civil servants has become more performance-oriented, and job competencies of senior civil servants have been enhanced.

### Openness of Senior Government Positions

The number of open competitive positions at the SCS level was 130 when the government first introduced the open competitive position system in 2000. By the end of 2020, 174 senior positions at 39 ministries and agencies were designated as open competitive positions.

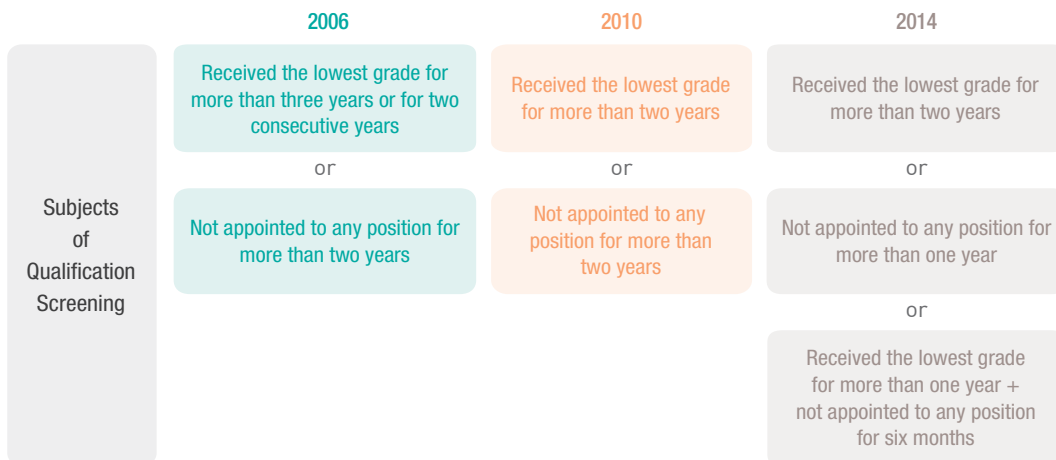
Number of Open Competitive Positions



## Performance-oriented Personnel Management of Senior Civil Servants

With the introduction of the SCS, the government has been able to strengthen performance management of senior civil servants. It changed the basis of evaluation from an absolute grading to a distributive grading scheme, and prepared guidelines on giving the lowest evaluation grade to those who failed to accomplish their performance goals or had been subject to disciplinary actions as a result of irregularities. Also, the government has continuously strengthened the requirements for qualification screening to provide the grounds for dismissal of civil servants who exhibit poor performance or have not been appointed to any position for a specified number of years.

### Strengthened Requirements for Qualification Screening



## Enhanced Competency of Senior Civil Servants

Since 2006, a total of 4,861 people have passed the Competency Assessment tests; annually, an average of 300 people become candidates for the SCS. In 2009, the government revised its competency model and assessment methods to promote the validity and reliability of the assessment system. In 2015, in an effort to foster intra-governmental cooperation, the government made it mandatory to have work experience at other ministries or agencies to apply for qualification screening. These measures enabled the government to verify the candidate's core competency in an objective manner and establish a fair and systematic personnel management system.



## Closing Remarks

The Korean government carried out thorough analysis and preparations for the introduction of the SCS. As can be seen from the precedents in advanced countries, the competitiveness of senior civil servants plays a pivotal role in determining the overall competitiveness of the public sector.

Before the government introduced the SCS, there had been a number of issues in the public sector, including the grade and seniority-based personnel management system, closed recruitment for senior government posts, and selfish behavior at ministries and agencies, often cited as a culprit for lowering the competitiveness of the public service. To tackle these issues, the government pursued ambitious reforms to bring about innovation in the public sector, and introduced the SCS in July 1, 2006.

The SCS has brought tangible changes to the Korean public sector. Many senior government posts have been open to experts from the private sector as well as civil servants at other ministries and agencies, enabling expertise and efficient policy-making in the public sector. Performance-based evaluation and compensation have motivated civil servants to work more proactively. In addition, education and assessment programs for competency development have served as an effective tool to enhance the core competency of senior civil servants.

The Korean government is committed to improving the SCS to enhance openness and competitiveness, strengthen performance and accountability, and promote competency of the country's public sector in a rapidly evolving administrative environment.



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