

**Federal Executive Institute: Leadership for a Democratic Society**  
**Frequently Asked Questions**  
**Updated: January 7, 2011**

- 1. Are employees in the excepted service eligible for FEI participation?**  
*Yes, employees must be at the SES, GS-15 level or equivalent to attend FEI.*
- 2. Why are post office boxes not acceptable as home addresses?**  
*FEI sends program information and pre-course work via UPS which cannot use P.O. boxes.*
- 3. What happens if an organization is unable to use the slot(s) that were assigned?**  
*If your organization's original nominee cannot use the slot and it is at least four weeks prior to the start of the program, you may offer the space to another eligible person within your organization. If no one can use it, let the HC FEI point of contact know at once so that they may offer it to someone else in the Department. **If no one can use the slot within DOE, and OPM is not able to sell it to another agency in time, your organization will be charged the full tuition rate.** Notification of substitutes and cancellations must be received by FEI no later than **four weeks** prior to the start of session.*
- 4. What information does OPM need from the FEI candidate on the SF-182?**  
*OPM requires home and work addresses, home and work phone numbers, work email, GS-level, job title, and last four digits of the SSN. Home address and phone number are necessary in order to receive program materials. Complete tuition billing information is also needed.*
- 5. What is the focus of the Leadership for a Democratic Society (LDS) program?**  
*The title of the program is the key. We assume that everyone coming to FEI has good professional and management skills. Leadership effectiveness at the executive level requires the development of specific skills. Leadership requires systems and critical thinking, which includes consideration of external factors that affect organizations' ability to achieve strategic goals. The executive who utilizes systems and critical thinking can utilize these skills to enhance decision making. Leadership includes the ability to influence others within a political environment for the purpose of achieving organizational goals. The purpose of the LDS is to foster outstanding leadership skills in the context of today's business world.*
- 6. What is the benefit to me and my organization for attending the LDS?**  
*You will get a better understanding of yourself and of the context in which you work as an executive. After participation in the LDS, you will be better equipped to be more responsive to your agency's needs at the executive level. Upon completion of the program, you will be better prepared to face key leadership*

*challenges. You will engage in real-world problem solving as part of the LDS curriculum and address a real-time agency problem. You will have an opportunity to interact with approximately 70 other executives in the program to gain a variety of perspectives and approaches to leadership issues and problems. You will also receive professional coaching from executive coaches who are trained to discuss executive-level issues. Participating executives and faculty will become part of your network when you leave FEI.*

**7. What are the weekend schedules for the Leadership for a Democratic Society Program?**

*Each program begins on Sunday afternoon. The weekend between Weeks 1 and 2 is required attendance in every program. Classes end at noon on Friday and the weekends are unscheduled for other weekends. In the split format programs, attendance is also required the weekend between Weeks 3 and 4. Participants must attend these working weekends. Graduation is on the last Friday at noon.*

**8. What happens if I need to stay after graduation?**

*If you need to stay after graduation, you will need to make late departure arrangements while you are at FEI during the program.*

**9. What if I arrive early, like on the Saturday prior to the beginning of the program? Is early arrival permitted?**

*If you expect to arrive earlier than the Sunday beginning your program, you will need to contact the Career Development Program Manager so that FEI staff and security officers can be alerted to your early arrival. Please keep in mind that the first meal at FEI will be Sunday evening. If you arrive early, you will receive recommendations for and directions to several eateries within an easy walking distance to the FEI campus. Again, please communicate early arrival plans to the Program Manager in advance.*

**10. How can I get the most out of the FEI and the LDS experience?**

*Getting the most from your LDS experience requires you to be fully engaged in the curriculum and the experience. Four weeks is a short time (senior military schools usually run 10 month courses!) for a senior executive course. If there are distractions from home and/or office, engagement in learning is difficult. "Clearing the deck" will allow you to get the most out of your time at FEI. As much as possible, delegate key assignments to others (this is also a good way to develop your subordinates). Cell phones must be turned off or on silent while in the classroom. Tell your office to contact you only in an emergency so you can work uninterrupted. In addition to keeping outside pressures away, you can get the most out of your time at FEI by being willing to take risks. Try new behaviors. Question your assumptions. Be willing to take courses that are outside your comfort zone. Forge new relationships by reaching out to people with whom you may think you have little in common. The LDS environment is a safe environment in which you can be creative and in which you can experiment.*

**11. What is a typical day like at FEI?**

*Classes are scheduled from 8:15-12 noon, from 2:30-5 pm, and again from 7:00-9:00 pm. The only "optional" activities at FEI are fitness classes offered before breakfast and during the midday break. Those times are also reserved for studying, reading, and working on class projects. Everything else on the agenda (e.g. courses, executive forums, etc.) are required, although for many of the required time blocks you will have a choice of which topical session you attend. Some people have heard before they come to FEI that it is a good place to relax, but no one believes that after they're here. While the atmosphere is informal, the curriculum is rigorous.*

**12. What about visitors or going home on weekends?**

*Visitors (e.g. family members) are welcome and encouraged to stay at FEI during non-working weekends. They may stay in your room and take meals here (no cost for the room, but you will need to reimburse the government for their meals). Visitors are not permitted during times when class is in session. The program is simply too intense and the facilities too full to be able to accommodate visitors at these times. The first weekend in every program is a working weekend and you will be in session all day Saturday and Sunday. Those attending split-format programs are also required to attend the weekend between Weeks 3 and 4. This is essential due to the nature of the curriculum, so please do not make any plans to be away or have visitors on that weekend.*

**13. I have strict dietary restrictions and require a special diet. What accommodations are made, and how do I communicate this information to FEI?**

*Please be sure to note your dietary restrictions on the participant information sheet that will be sent to you with your pre-work materials. The Executive Chef at FEI will make contact with you once you are on campus to ensure that your needs are being met.*

**14. Are vegetarian diets accommodated?**

*Yes, vegetarian diets are accommodated.*

**15. Are refrigerators and microwaves in the rooms?**

*No, refrigerators and microwaves are not provided in the bedrooms. However, there will be no need for you to bring or prepare your own food.*

**16. I have heard that the dress at FEI is "business casual." What does that mean?**

*Business dress (e.g. suit and tie) is only required at FEI at graduation on the last Friday and for some of the off-campus site visits. Dress at all other times is "business casual." Rather than try to define that precisely, it may be more helpful to say that we ask participants to dress casually, keeping in mind that they do represent the government when interacting with noted speakers and visitors to*

*FEI. Athletic clothes are, of course, perfectly acceptable during all fitness activities and at non-class times.*

**Directions to FEI:**

**Driving:**

If you are coming from Washington, D.C., take I-66 West until you reach the Gainesville/Route 29 South turnoff. Go south on Route 29 to Charlottesville. The Federal Executive Institute is located on the west side (right-hand side coming south) of Route 29 (also known as Emmet Street). A useful landmark is the Route 250 overpass (FEI is 200 yards south). The entrance is marked with a white brick pillar on each side. The 115-mile drive from most parts of Washington to Charlottesville requires about two and one-half hours.

**Air:**

To lower airfare costs, many who attend FEI fly to Dulles Airport (outside Washington, DC) or Richmond, VA and rent a car to drive to Charlottesville (2-hour drive from Dulles and 1½-hour drive from Richmond). It is possible to fly into Charlottesville. Taxi service is available from the Charlottesville Airport to the Institute. Automobile rental offices are located at the Charlottesville Airport.