

PART 2063 - EMPLOYEE RELATIONS AND SERVICES

Subpart B - Recognition Program

§2063.51 General.

This Instruction provides the criteria for granting Monetary and Nonmonetary Extra Effort Awards and Performance Bonuses. It is to be used in conjunction with the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) "Guide For Employee Recognition" and the Agency's recognition guidance handbook (See Exhibit A). Authority for recognition programs is given under 5 U.S.C. 45 and authority for Quality Step Increases is given under 5 U.S.C. 53.

§2063.52 Policy.

(a) It is the policy of the Agency to recognize outstanding performance, teamwork, cost-efficiency, empowerment of employees, work force diversity, and effective customer service. The purpose of the Agency Recognition Program is to improve Government efficiency, economy, and effectiveness by motivating employees to increase productivity and creativity by rewarding their efforts.

(b) The 10 principles of the Agency Recognition Program are:

- (1) Link recognition to mission, goals, and objectives;
- (2) Ensure equity in the distribution of recognition;
- (3) Give recognition for specific achievements that produce positive results;
- (4) Involve coworkers and customers in recognition decisions;
- (5) Give recognition in a timely manner;

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- (6) Emphasize group recognition;
- (7) Emphasize nonmonetary recognition;
- (8) Give employees a choice of the type of recognition they receive;
- (9) Hold simple, local presentation ceremonies; and
- (10) Publicize recognition distribution.

§§2063.53 - 2063.54 [Reserved]

§2063.55 Recommendations for Monetary and Nonmonetary Extra Effort Awards and for Performance Bonuses.

Any USDA employee who believes a fellow employee has made a significant contribution may recommend recognition for him/her. However, written concurrence by the receiving employee's supervisor is required before any award may be given. The receiving employee's supervisor is the Recommending Official.

§2063.56 [Reserved]

§2063.57 Delegated approval authorities for granting Monetary and Nonmonetary Extra Effort Awards and Performance Bonuses.

(a) The Approving Official for any award can be any official in the Agency at a higher level than the Recommending Official. EXCEPTION: Time Off Awards (one type of Nonmonetary Extra Effort Awards) of up to 1 workday do not require higher level approval. They simply require the written concurrence of the receiving employee's supervisor.

(b) Approval authority ceilings for Monetary Extra Effort Awards are as follows:

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| (1) Administrator   | \$10,000 |
| (2) Assistant Administrator/<br>Staff Director/State Director | \$ 2,500 |
| (3) All other Approving Officials                             | \$ 500   |

§2063.58 [Reserved]

§2063.59 Time Off Awards.

Time Off Awards may be granted to an employee for up to 80 hours per leave year. Each single Award may not exceed 40 hours. No employee may receive more than two individual Time Off Awards per leave year. Time Off Awards must be used within 1 year after the award is made. The scheduling of the time off will be coordinated between the employee and the supervisor.

§2063.60 [Reserved]

§2063.61 Documentation of all categories of recognition.

All categories of recognition must be documented with a Form AD-287-2, "Recommendation & Approval of Awards."

§2063.62 [Reserved]

§2063.63 Certificates.

Certificates are considered a form of nonmonetary recognition. Forms RD 263-5, "Certificate for Outstanding Accomplishment," RD 263-4, "Certificate of Merit," and RD 263-3, "Certificate of Appreciation," are included in this category but other appropriate certificates may also be used.

§2063.64 [Reserved]

§2063.65 Career Service Awards.

Certificates (Forms AD-68 through AD-69) and emblems for Career Service Awards may be ordered on RD Form 2024-9, "Request for Forms, Supplies, Equipment or Services."

§§2063.66 - 2063.100 [Reserved]

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HOW TO GIVE AN AWARD

**Which Award is Appropriate?**

Once you have decided to give an employee an award, the first thing to determine is "which award is appropriate?" Below you will find a brief description of the reasons why a particular award should or should not be given.

Concentrating on the basis for the award, there are two types:

- A. Performance Awards (Quality Step Increases and Performance Bonuses) - which are based upon an employee's rating of record (which is the performance appraisal required at the end of the rating period); and
- B. Superior Accomplishment Awards (Extra Effort and Spot Monetary Awards, and Nonmonetary Awards, including Time Off) - which are based upon specific, one-time employee contributions.

Once you have selected the most appropriate award, refer to the page number given at the end of the entry for information on how to submit a complete recommendation for that particular award, including any required supporting documentation.

**1. Quality Step Increase (QSI)**

Appropriate when:

- the employee has received an Outstanding performance rating for the period covered by the recommendation;
- the high quality performance covered a period of at least 6 months and it is likely this performance will continue in the future; and
- the employee has not received a QSI within the past 52 weeks. The ending date of the rating cycle is not important here, just the effective date of the previous QSI.

A QSI is not in the best interests of the employee if it is expected that the employee will be promoted in the near future. In this case, the QSI would be "wiped out" by the promotion and so would be of little use to the employee.

Information on how to submit a recommendation is given on page 4 of this exhibit.

## **2. Performance Bonus**

Appropriate when:

- the employee has received a Fully Successful or better performance rating for the period covered by the recommendation and no elements are rated equal to "Does Not Meet";
- the observed performance covered a period of at least 6 months; and
- the employee has not received a Performance Bonus within the past 52 weeks. As with the QSI, the ending date of the rating cycle is not important here, just the effective date of the previous Performance Bonus.

Information on how to submit a recommendation is given on page 4 of this exhibit.

## **3. Individual Extra Effort Award**

Appropriate when:

- the employee performed a one-time job, service, or special project in a manner that was substantially beyond expectations. Some examples of this might include overcoming exceptional job difficulties or exceeding records of production without a reduction in quality.

Information on how to submit a recommendation is given on page 5 of this exhibit.

## **4. Team/Group Extra Effort Award**

Appropriate when:

- two or more employees were involved in a task or project which meets the criteria for the Individual Extra Effort Award in paragraph 3 of this exhibit.

Information on how to submit a recommendation is given on page 5 of this exhibit.

**5. Spot Award**

Appropriate when:

- the employee performed a specific task which does not warrant recognition at the Extra Effort level. Some examples of this might include: Savings Bond or Combined Federal Campaign coordinators or accomplishments in small special projects of a short duration.

NOTE: An employee may not receive more than \$500 total in Spot Awards in any 12-month period. There is no limit on the number of Spot Awards an employee may receive, only on the total dollar amount.

Information on how to submit a recommendation is given on page 6 of this exhibit.

**6. Time Off Award**

Appropriate when:

- the employee performed a one-time job, service, or special project in a manner that was substantially beyond expectations. Some examples of this might include overcoming exceptional job difficulties or exceeding records of production without a reduction in quality.

Information on how to submit a recommendation is given on page 6 of this exhibit.

**7. Other Nonmonetary Awards**

Appropriate when:

- the employee performed a specific task which does not warrant recognition at a higher level. Some examples of this might include Savings Bond or Combined Federal Campaign coordinators or accomplishments in small special projects of a short duration.

Information on how to submit a recommendation is given on page 6 of this exhibit.

### **Timeliness**

For a Performance Award, all recommendations should be made as soon as possible after the end of the performance appraisal period (September 30). For a Superior Accomplishment Award, all recommendations should be submitted immediately after the event. An explanation as to why recommendations are late may be required if the recommendation is tardy.

### **How To Recommend An Individual For A QSI**

1. Using Form AD-287-2, "Recommendation & Approval of Awards," complete Blocks 1 through 7, 11, and 16. The Recommending Official signs in Block 20. The Approving Official (any Agency official at a higher level than the Recommending Official) signs in Block 22.
2. As justification, attach:
  - a. A copy of the cover sheet (Form AD-435, "Performance Appraisal") of the employee's performance appraisal for the period covered by the recommendation; and
  - b. A written justification (this may be the written justification required with all ratings of Outstanding, or something prepared specifically for the award recommendation). See Attachment 4 of this exhibit for guidance on what a justification should include.

### **How To Recommend An Individual For A Performance Bonus**

1. Using Form AD-287-2, complete Blocks 1 through 7, 11, 16, and 19. The Recommending Official signs in Block 20. The Approving Official (any Agency official at a higher level than the Recommending Official) signs in Block 22.

The recommended amount for a Performance Bonus should be based on the measurable or nonmeasurable benefits to the Government (see Attachments 1 and 2 of this exhibit), not on the employee's salary.

2. As justification, attach:
  - a. A copy of the cover sheet (Form AD-435) of the employee's performance appraisal for the period covered by the recommendation, and;
  - b. A written justification (see Attachment 4 of this exhibit for guidance on what this should include).

**How To Recommend An Individual For An Extra Effort Award**

1. Using Form AD-287-2, complete Blocks 1 through 7 and 11 through 15. The Recommending Official signs in Block 20. The Approving Official (any Agency official at a higher level than the Recommending Official) signs in Block 22.

The recommended amount for an Extra Effort award should be based on the measurable or nonmeasurable benefits to the Government (see Attachments 1 and 2 of this exhibit), not on the employee's salary.

2. Attach a written justification (see Attachment 4 of this exhibit for guidance on what this should include).

**How To Recommend A Team/Group For An Extra Effort Award**

1. Using Form AD-287-2, complete Blocks 1, 2 (name of team/group, not any individual), 7, and 11 through 15. The Recommending Official signs in Block 20. The Approving official (any Agency official at a higher level than the Recommending Official) signs in Block 22.

Attach a list of employees in the group, giving all the information requested by Blocks 2 through 6 of Form AD-287-2 and the amount each individual is being recommended for.

The recommended amount for a Team/Group Extra Effort award should be based on the measurable or nonmeasurable benefits to the Government of the team/group as a whole (see Attachments 1 and 2 of this exhibit), not on any of the employees' salaries.

2. Attach a written justification (see Attachment 4 for guidance on what this should include).

**How To Recommend An Individual For A Spot Award**

1. Using Form AD-287-2, complete Blocks 1 through 7 and 11 through 15. The Recommending Official signs in Block 20. The Approving Official (any Agency official at a higher level than the Recommending Official) signs in Block 22.

The recommended amount for a Spot Award should be based on the measurable or nonmeasurable benefits to the Government (see Attachments 1 and 2 of this exhibit), not on the employee's salary. A Spot Award can be any amount between \$50 and \$500, in \$50 increments.

2. No additional written justification is necessary.

**How To Recommend An Individual or Team/Group For A Time Off Award**

1. Using Form AD-287-2, complete Blocks 1 through 7 and 11 through 15. The Recommending Official signs in Block 20. The Approving Official (any Agency official at a higher level than the Recommending Official) signs in Block 22.

NOTE: The Recommending Official can also sign as the Approving Official where the benefits do not exceed the Small/Moderate level (see Attachment 3 of this exhibit).

The recommended number of hours for a Time Off Award should be based on the table in Attachment 3 of this exhibit, not on the employee's salary.

2. A written justification (see Attachment 4 of this exhibit for guidance on what this should include) is only required if the benefits exceed the Small/Moderate level (see Attachment 3 of this exhibit).

**How To Recommend An Individual or Team/Group For Nonmonetary Awards Other Than Time Off ("Keepsakes")**

1. Using Form AD-287-2, complete Blocks 1 through 7 and 11 through 15. The Recommending Official signs in Block 20. The Approving Official (any Agency official at a higher level than the Recommending Official) signs in Block 22.

The recommended value of the "keepsake" should be based on the measurable or nonmeasurable benefits to the Government (see Attachments 1 and 2 of this exhibit), not on the employees' salary. No more than \$250 can be spent on any one "keepsake".

2. No additional written justification is necessary.

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**How To Determine Amount of Award  
When Benefits Are Measurable**

Measurable Benefits Scale

Benefit	Award
Up to \$10,000	10 percent of the benefits.
\$10,001 - \$100,000	\$1,000 for the first \$10,000 in benefits, plus 3 percent of benefits over \$10,000.
\$100,001 or more	\$3,700 for the first \$10,000 in benefits, plus .005 of benefits over \$100,000.* Award amount should not exceed recipient's annual salary.

All recognition for individuals or team/group members exceeding \$5,500 per person require approval from the appropriate Under or Assistant Secretary or General Officer. The Secretary approves Recognition Awards for Senior Executive Service employees.

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**How To Determine Amount Of Award  
 When Benefits Are Nonmeasurable**

Nonmeasurable Benefits Scale

Value of Benefits	Application		
	Limited	Broad	General
	Impacts the public interest or a specific small work unit to as large as a Division or	Impacts the public interest or several regional areas, or an entire Agency	Impact the public interest or more than one Agency, or the entire Department
Small/ Moderate	\$50 - \$325	\$325 - \$650	\$650 - \$1,300
Moderate/ Substantial	\$325 - \$650	\$650 - \$1,300	\$1,300 - \$3,150
Substantial/ Extended	\$1,000 - \$2,500	\$2,500 - \$5,500	\$5,500 - \$10,000

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**How To Determine Number Of Hours For A Time Off Award**

Value of Employee's Contribution	Hours to be Awarded
<b>Small/Moderate</b> Contributions that helped to ease a backlog or completing a special project that benefitted primarily the employee's home office.	<b>1 - 10 hours</b>
<b>Moderate/Substantial</b> Contributions that helped an entire Division, Staff, region, or other large geographic area.	<b>11 - 40 hours</b>

NOTE: An employee may not be granted more than 80 hours in a leave year. Senior Executive Service employees are not eligible for Time Off Awards.

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**What To Put In The Justification**

1. Describe what the employee(s) did.
2. Describe in what ways the employee's contribution exceeded the expected level. Areas to look at include:
  - improving quality
  - increasing productivity - overcoming adverse obstacles or working under unusual circumstances
  - using unusual creativity
  - saving the Government time and/or money
  - increasing program effectiveness.
3. Describe what the results of the employee's contribution were. Areas to look at include:
  - project acceptance
  - savings in time, money and/or materials
  - increased efficiency
  - technological advancement
  - productivity increase
  - improved levels of cooperation.

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