

July 14, 1999

SUBJECT: Merit Promotion Plan

TO: All Rural Development Employees

This memorandum transmits the new Merit Promotion Plan for Rural Development employees including the Rural Business-Cooperative Service, the Rural Housing Service, and the Rural Utilities Service. It is also intended to cover positions assigned to the new Support Services Bureau.

This policy is effective July 12, 1999, for non-bargaining unit employees. Before implementing or applying this policy to bargaining unit positions, negotiations with the appropriate union local must be completed.

This is the second Service Center agency common policy issuance. The plan is being issued in its present format pending implementation of a uniform directives system. The plan is available from the Internet at:

<http://dc.ffasintranet.usda.gov/hrd/cover.html>

Human Resources is planning to hold a teleconference in August with Administrative Officers and State Human Resource Managers to review the plan and answer questions regarding significant differences from present policy. A Question/Answer presentation is currently being developed for this policy and will appear on the website shortly.

Questions regarding this memorandum or the policy may be directed to your State Administrative Programs Staff, Human Resource Manager or to the Human Resources headquarters staff.

LEONARD HARDY, JR.
Deputy Administrator
for Operations and Management

Attachment

EXPIRATION DATE:
Until Superseded

FILING INSTRUCTIONS
Administrative/Other Programs

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MERIT PROMOTION PLAN

	Paragraph	Page
Background	1	1
Policy	2	1
Objectives	3	1
Coverage	4	2
Exceptions	5	3
Methods for Filling Vacancies	6	4
Priority Placement Programs	7	4
Initiating the Vacancy	8	5
Procedures When Vacancy is Announced	9	6
Submitting Applications	10	7
Evaluation to Determine Eligibility, Basic Qualifications, and Notification to Candidates	11	8
Rating and Ranking Procedures	12	9
Alternative Evaluation Method	13	12
Selection Process	14	12
Promotion Records and Information	15	13
Program Review	16	14

ATTACHMENTS:

Employee, Supervisor and Human Resources Responsibilities

1. BACKGROUND

This establishes the procedures for merit promotion and placement actions for positions in the National Offices, Service Centers, and other Field Offices of the Rural Business-Cooperative Service, Rural Housing Service, and Rural Utilities Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, (NRCS), Risk Management Agency, (RMA), Foreign Agricultural Service, (FAS), Farm Service Agency, (FSA), and the Support Services Bureau, (SSB). This document is in accordance with 5 CFR 335 and provides supplemental information to comply with these requirements.

2. POLICY

- A. In order to promote fair and equitable treatment for all employees, this plan defines how consideration will be given to all interested applicants.
- B. This Supplement does not guarantee promotion; nor does it require a vacancy be filled by promotion.
- C. Actions under this Merit Promotion Plan--whether in identification, qualification, evaluation, or selection of candidates, or any other phase of the promotion process--shall be made without discrimination for any nonmerit reason.
- D. This plan covers promotions in the competitive service through GS-15 and similar pay schedules, and to or from any prevailing rate schedule position.
- E. Any exception to this merit promotion policy must be approved by the head of the national Human Resources Office.

3. OBJECTIVES

- A. The objectives of this plan are to:
 - narrow the number of candidates to a reasonable number and assure that selections are made from among the best qualified applicants;
 - give employees an opportunity to receive fair, equitable, and appropriate consideration for higher level jobs;
 - provide an incentive for employees to improve their performance and develop their knowledges, skills, and abilities, (KSAs);
 - provide career opportunities for employees;
 - bring the best qualified candidates to the attention of the selecting official; and,
 - enhance and support diversity in the workforce.

4. COVERAGE

The following types of personnel actions are covered:

- A. Competitive promotion.
- B. Reassignment or demotion to a position with more promotion potential than the highest actual grade held by an employee on a permanent basis under a career or career-conditional appointment.
- C. Transfers to a higher-graded position or a position higher promotion potential than the highest actual grade previously held by an employee on a permanent basis under a career or career-conditional appointment.
- D. Reinstatement to a higher-graded position or a position with higher promotion potential than the highest actual grade held by an employee on a permanent basis under a career or career-conditional appointment.
- E. Selections for details for more than 120 days to a higher-graded position or to a position with known promotion potential.
- F. Selection for training that is any one of the following:
 - Part of an authorized training agreement.
 - Part of a promotion program, although the promotion may not immediately follow the training.
 - Required before an employee is qualified for reassignment to a different occupational series.
 - Part of a Career Enhancement Program.
 - Designed primarily to prepare employees for advancement or to fulfill specific qualification requirements for a position with known promotion potential.
- G. Time limited promotion for more than 120 days to a higher-graded position or a position with higher promotion potential, unless the selectee has held the grade previously on a permanent basis.

5. EXCEPTIONS

The following types of personnel actions are not covered:

- A. Competitive selection from an Office of Personnel Management (OPM) certificate or a certificate issued by an Agency with delegated examining authority.
- B. Promotions resulting from an employee's position being reclassified at a higher grade because of accretion of duties and responsibilities.
- C. Promotions resulting from upgrading a position, without significant changes in the duties or responsibilities, because of either the issuance of a new classification standard or the correction of an initial classification error.
- D. Career-ladder promotions when an employee was previously selected for an assignment intended to prepare him/her for the position being filled. Sources of selection may be:
 - an Office of Personnel Management certificate
 - a list of employees issued under delegated examining authority
 - selection under competitive promotion procedures
 - Special Placement Programs or
 - any other direct hire authority.
- E. Promotion, reassignment, demotion, transfer, reinstatement, or detail to a position having promotion potential no greater than the potential of a position an employee currently holds or previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service, provided the employee was not demoted or separated from that grade because of deficiencies in performance or "for cause" reasons.
- F. Details, not longer than 120 days, to a higher-graded position or to a position with no known promotion potential.
- G. Details at the same or lower grade.
- H. Actions taken as a remedy for failure to receive proper consideration in a competitive promotion action.
- I. Promoting an employee upon exercise of reemployment rights if the employee's former position was reclassified during his/her absence.

- J. Selection of a candidate from the Reemployment Priority List (RPL) for a position up to the highest grade previously held in the competitive service.
- K. Position changes permitted by Reduction-in-Force (RIF) regulations.
- L. Repromotion to a grade or position from which an employee was demoted as a result of RIF.
- M. Selection by reassignment to a position with the same or less promotion potential than a position previously held under a career or career-conditional appointment.
- N. A temporary promotion for 120 days or less to a higher-graded position or to a position with known promotion potential.
- O. Permanent promotion to a position held under temporary promotion when:
 - (1) the assignment was originally made under competitive procedures; and
 - (2) it was made known under competitive procedures to all competitors at the time that it might lead to a permanent promotion.
- P. Voluntary change to a lower grade with the same or less promotion potential than previously held under a career or career-conditional appointment.
- Q. A position change from a position having known promotion potential to a position at the same grade having no higher potential.
- R. Selection of an eligible CTAP or ICTAP candidate.

6. METHODS FOR FILLING VACANCIES

Vacancies may be filled by any appropriate method including special placement programs, new appointment, reassignment, transfer, reinstatement or promotion, etc.

7. PRIORITY PLACEMENT PROGRAMS

- A. When a position is announced with an area of consideration limited to all or some portion of the USDA workforce, the order of consideration for priority and other candidates is as follows:
 - 1. Agency CTAP eligibles
 - 2. USDA CTAP eligibles
 - 3. Agency/USDA repromotion eligibles

4. Agency priority consideration eligibles
5. All other applicants within the area of consideration, and
6. RPL registrants at the option of the selecting official.

B. When a position is announced with an area of consideration which exceeds the current USDA workforce (e.g., Government-wide or all sources), the order of consideration for priority and other candidates is as follows:

1. Agency CTAP eligibles
2. USDA CTAP eligibles
3. USDA RPL registrants
4. USDA ICTAP applicants
5. Agency/USDA repromotion eligibles
6. Agency priority consideration eligibles
7. ICTAP eligibles (other than those displaced from USDA) and
8. All other applicants.

C. USDA REPROMOTION PLACEMENT PLAN

Employees downgraded through no fault of their own are entitled to priority consideration for a period of 2 years from the effective date of the employee's downgrade.

D. PRIORITY CONSIDERATION

Employees are entitled to priority consideration whenever reconstruction of a promotion action shows that, except for some error, (i.e. wrong qualification determination, failure to consider, improper rating, failure to follow competitive procedures, etc.), the employee would have appeared on a promotion certificate. The employee shall be entitled to one bonafide consideration for the type (same series, grade, up to the same promotion potential, and geographic area) of position previously applied for under competitive procedures. A priority consideration certificate will be forwarded to the selecting official prior to issuing a competitive certificate. If no priority consideration candidate is selected, the selecting official must provide job-related justification for the non-selection.

8. INITIATING THE VACANCY

- A. The supervisor of the vacancy will submit an SF-52, Request for Personnel Action, through appropriate channels. With the SF -52, the supervisor will attach a Position Description Cover Sheet and a current position description that accurately describes the position to be filled.
- B. No action will be taken to staff the vacant position until the position is classified.
- C. The selecting official will determine, in consultation with the Personnel Specialist, the best way to fill the vacancy (OPM register, transfer, reinstatement, merit promotion procedures, Special Placement Programs, etc.).

9. PROCEDURES WHEN VACANCY IS ANNOUNCED

The following procedure will be followed for all merit promotion vacancies:

- A. Identification of Selection Criteria.
 - 1. Prior to posting the vacancy announcement, the Personnel Specialist determines:
 - a. That KSAs are established for the position. The Personnel Specialist will discuss and review with the selecting official the existing KSAs to determine if they are still appropriate; or
 - b. That KSAs are not established for the position. The Personnel Specialist will contact the selecting official to establish the KSA's.

B. Minimum Area of Consideration

The following is designated as the minimum area of consideration:

- 1. Any single Agency, Service, or Bureau, National/Headquarters Offices -commuting area
- 2. Any single Agency, Service, or Bureau, State/Field Offices - commuting area

A wider area of consideration may be initially established to obtain more qualified candidates if it is anticipated that sufficient candidates will not be available.

C. Preparation and posting vacancy announcements.

1. Vacancy announcements will normally be posted for a minimum of 10 workdays. Announcements with the area of consideration limited to CTAP/ICTAP candidates may be open for 5 calendar days.
2. Nationwide/Government wide will be posted for a minimum of 21 calendar days.
3. Close of business in Field Offices will be determined by the appropriate official in each office.
4. Vacancies will be posted on the automated bulletin board systems prescribed by OPM. Offices will ensure announcements are posted to provide for adequate publicity to employees.

10. SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS

A. To be considered for posted vacancies, the following procedures must be followed:

1. Applicants must submit:
 - SF-171, Application for Federal Employment; or OF-612, Optional Application for Federal Employment; or
resume; and
 - Supplemental statement that addresses each of the KSAs separately or other information included in the announcement; and
 - Current performance appraisal/rating, or a statement advising the performance appraisal/rating is unavailable. (This applies only to current Federal Employees).
 - Any other information as specified in the vacancy announcement.
2. Non-competitive referral candidates are not required to submit KSA supplemental statements although they are encouraged to do so.

NOTE:

- Failure on the part of the applicant to submit the requested material will result in not being considered for the advertised position.
- KSA supplemental statements may not be more than 2 single-spaced pages per KSA unless otherwise stated on the vacancy announcement.
- Additional materials, such as copies of position descriptions, publications, award certificates, will not be considered in the ranking process.

- B. Applications must be received at the specified location by the close of business on the closing date of the vacancy announcement unless otherwise stated on the vacancy announcement. Exceptions to this requirement may be made by the servicing Human Resources Office for reasons such as extended power outages, severe weather, etc.
 - C. Applications submitted by facsimile or other electronic means as specified in the announcement will be accepted.
 - D. Employees who are on extended leave are responsible for notifying their supervisor if they want to be considered for promotional opportunities while they are on travel or leave. Employees shall leave a telephone number, e-mail address and/or facsimile number with their supervisor. The supervisor is responsible for contacting the employee to provide vacancy information.
 - E. Voluntary applications within the Agency will not be accepted unless so stated on the vacancy announcement. The vacancy announcement will outline the method of considering candidates when applications are accepted.
 - F. Applications will be accepted from candidates under special hiring authorities, i.e., VRA, 30% Disabled Veteran, Persons with Disabilities, etc. Qualified candidates will be placed on the Promotion Certificate as non-competitive referrals.
 - G. Section 765 of P.L. 05-277 states that permanent employees of FSA County Committees employed on or after October 1, 1998, shall be considered as having Federal Civil Service status for the purpose of applying for USDA Civil Service vacancies. Applications will be accepted from permanent FSA County Committee employees who are employed on or after October 1, 1998, when the area of consideration includes FSA employees. FSA County Committee Employees do not receive any priority consideration for Civil Service vacancies.
11. EVALUATION TO DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY, BASIC QUALIFICATIONS, AND NOTIFICATION TO CANDIDATES
- A. Qualifications of the applicants will be determined from the application package submitted and the applicant notified of the results.
 - B. Minimum qualification standards used for placements are standards approved by the Office of Personnel Management and may be found in OPM Handbook, Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions and the X-118C, Internal Qualifications Guide for Trade and Labor Jobs. The Personnel Specialist will assure that all of the following requirements are met:

1. Time-in-grade restrictions.
 2. Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions or the X-118C standards.
 3. 90-day after competitive appointment restriction.
 4. Any other requirements such as selective placement factors (e.g., ability to communicate in a foreign language).
 5. Summary performance rating of fully successful or results achieved.
- C. Applicants must meet all of the above requirements by the closing date of the announcement.
- D. Submission of additional information after the closing date will not be accepted.

12. RATING AND RANKING PROCEDURES

Either a Merit Promotion Panel or a Personnel Specialist/Subject Matter Expert may be used to rate and rank candidates.

A panel may be used for any vacancy regardless of the number of competitive candidates.

A Personnel Specialist/Subject Matter Expert may be used if there are 10 or less competitive candidates for any particular advertised grade level.

The same method will be used for any position(s) advertised at multiple grade levels.

A. Merit Promotion Panel Method

1. Merit Promotion Panel Composition

- a. The Personnel Specialist will assemble a Merit Promotion panel consisting of at least two members who occupy positions at a grade level not lower than the full performance level of the position being filled. The selecting official may recommend members to serve on the panel subject to the approval of the Personnel Specialist.
- b. The Personnel Specialist will serve as a facilitator with responsibility for assuring the requirements of merit promotion procedures are followed and to assist in expediting the process.

- c. Neither the supervisor, the selecting official, nor the approving official of the vacancy may be a member of the panel. They may, however, be asked to appear before the panel to answer any questions regarding the vacancy or the crediting plan.
- d. Merit Promotion Panels should include minority group members and/or women.
- e. Members of the panel will protect the confidentiality of all information received or reviewed during the committee process.
- f. There may be an EEO observer present during this process.

2. Merit Promotion Panel Delegated Responsibility

The Merit Promotion Panel has the final responsibility for determining best qualified candidates based on valid, job-related criteria and employee's application package. They are accountable for defending their final decision to any regulatory or investigative agency.

3. Merit Promotion Panel's Rating of the Candidates

- a. The Merit Promotion Panel will use the following rating instruments to determine a candidate's possession of each identified KSA and the level of proficiency attained.
 - Rating Instrument - application, KSAs, performance appraisal, related awards, training and self development.

NOTE: These factors may be considered in the evaluation process only to the extent that they are clearly related to one or more of the skills and knowledges important to successful performance in the job to be filled.

- b. A rating scale will be developed for each KSA against which an applicant's possession of that KSA will be measured.
The point range is 5 - 0.

Superior assigned)	- (5 points will be
Satisfactory assigned)	- (3 points will be
Minimally acceptable assigned)	- (1 point will be
No evidence assigned)	- (0 point will be

- B. Personnel Specialist/Subject Matter Expert Ranking Method
 - 1. If there are 10 or fewer qualified competitive applicants at each particular grade level for a vacancy, a Personnel Specialist may be used to determine the best qualified.
 - 2. The Personnel Specialist or a subject matter expert will apply the same rating criteria used by a merit promotion panel as described above in paragraph 12.A.3.

C. Determining the Best Qualified

- 1. Each basically qualified competitive candidate is evaluated against criteria developed from the job analysis process which was developed prior to rating. Each candidate is given a score based on their experience, education, related awards, training, and self development. These scores are then combined and recorded on the master score sheet.
- 2. Up to 10 candidates may be certified for each grade level if meaningful distinctions cannot be made among a smaller number.
- 3. Where distinctions simply cannot be made, if a tie occurs for the 10th position, all names with that score will be referred.
- 4. If more than 1 position is to be filled, three additional names may be certified for each additional vacancy.
- 5. If insufficient candidates, (three or less) are best qualified, the selecting official may make a selection or request that the area of consideration be extended.
- 6. There is no provision allowing the selecting official to request and make a selection from candidates who have not been rated best qualified.

13. Alternative Evaluation Method

- 1. This is an alternate approach for determining well qualified candidates when 10 or fewer applications are received from basically qualified candidates who must compete.
- 2. The Personnel Specialist reviews application materials to determine that an applicant meets basic qualifications and any selective factors identified for the position. A further review is conducted to distinguish well qualified candidates from those who only meet minimum requirements.

3. If a Personnel Specialist is not familiar with the requirements of the position to determine whether experience, education, or training relates to the evaluation criteria, then a subject matter expert may perform the evaluation or his/her technical advice may be obtained.
4. Applicants who meet all these requirements are referred to the selecting official as well qualified candidates for consideration by the selecting official.
5. Any basically qualified candidates for lateral reassignment and those eligible for consideration under special hiring authorities or for reinstatement will be referred to the selecting official without being evaluated by any of these methods.

14. SELECTION PROCESS

- A. The names of the best qualified candidates will be listed on the Promotion Certificate by grade level in alphabetical order.
- B. The selecting official may be provided with all Best Qualified candidates' KSA supplemental statements, applications and any other related material.
- C. The selecting official has the option to either interview or not to interview the best qualified candidates on a promotion certificate. If one best qualified candidate is interviewed, then all best qualified candidates must be interviewed. Non-competitive referrals need not be interviewed, nor must the selecting official interview all non-competitive referrals if they interview one.
- D. The selecting official is entitled to make a selection from any of the candidates listed on a promotion certificate based on his/her judgment of how well the candidate will perform in the particular job being filled.
- E. The selecting official will make his/her selection, forward it through appropriate approving officials. Each candidate will be notified of the selection.
- F. The promotion certificate should be returned within 30 days. If the selecting official is unable to make the selection, extensions may be granted up to 90 days from the date the certificate was originally issued. In the event a like (same Agency, official title, series, grade, and geographic location) vacancy occurs within the original area of consideration during the 90 day period, the same certificate may be used to fill the subsequent vacancy(s) without re-advertising.
- G. The selecting official is not required to make a selection from the promotion certificate but may select from any other appropriate source.

- H. A selected candidate will normally be released to enter on duty in the new position no later than 1 full pay period after selection. Extensions beyond the normal 1 pay period will be negotiated between the supervisors involved by the Personnel Specialist.

15. PROMOTION RECORDS AND INFORMATION

- A. The Human Resources office will establish and maintain an official promotion case file for 2 years.
- B. The following information will be provided to any employee upon request:
 - 1. Explanations and supporting regulations concerning the Merit Promotion Plan.
 - 2. The qualifications required for a position.
 - 3. If the employee was considered and basically qualified.
 - 4. Whether the employee was among the best qualified and how the employee was evaluated by the Merit Promotion Panel or Personnel Specialist.
 - 5. Cut-off score for best qualified.
 - 6. Scores of other candidates (not identified by name).
 - 7. Number of qualified candidates.
 - 8. Number of candidates certified as Best Qualified.
 - 9. Who was selected.
- C. Employee Complaints: An employee has the right to file a grievance or complaint if he or she feels:
 - 1. There has been an improper application of governing rules and regulations.
 - 2. The Merit Promotion Plan procedures were not followed.

Individual judgments used in merit promotion process or non-selection from a group of properly ranked or certified candidates are not subject to the formal administrative grievance process.
- D. All employees are encouraged to discuss plans and opportunities for advancement with their supervisor and request information and/or assistance from the servicing office on specifics of the Merit Promotion Plan, qualification standards, etc.

16. PROGRAM REVIEW

This plan will be reviewed and reported on periodically in conjunction with managers, supervisors and employees to ensure that:

- A. The plan is effective and useful to employees and management;
- B. Promotion actions and employee complaints are handled promptly and properly;
- C. Promotions are used to encourage competent employees to investigate new careers and to make the best use of their knowledge and skills; and
- D. Employees, supervisors and managers have a full understanding of the merit promotion process.

ATTACHMENT 1

EMPLOYEE, SUPERVISOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES RESPONSIBILITIES

Employee Responsibility:

1. Review announcements under the Merit Promotion Program.
2. Review announcements and, if they feel they meet specific experience and training requirements for the position, properly complete and forward all required application material by the closing date for each position for which they wish to be considered, keeping in mind that the Promotion Certificate can be used for another like (same Agency, official title, series, grade, and geographic location) vacancy that occurs within 90 calendar days.
3. Keep supervisors informed of career interests. Before departure on temporary duty, scheduled leave, and other absences, provide supervisor with a telephone number, e-mail address and/or facsimile number at which they may be contacted.
4. Take advantage of self-development and training opportunities, both on and off the job.
5. Demonstrate competence and readiness for advancement by diligent and effective performance in current assignment.
6. When requested, participate in applying OPM regulations to establish reasonable job-related evaluation criteria (KSAs), and participate on promotion panels for determining best qualified candidates.
7. Assure that official personnel records reflect all experience, education and training.
8. Keep informed of the provisions of this Plan.

Supervisor Responsibility:

1. Maintain a current copy of this plan, make it available to their employees, and exert every effort to ensure that employees fully understand the plan.
2. Inform new employees where position vacancy announcements are posted.
3. Periodically inform employees, either orally or in writing, that questions about the Plan or specific promotion actions should be referred to the servicing Personnel office for informal handling; that formal means for resolving promotion complaints are available through Agency Grievance Procedures.

4. Anticipate personnel vacancies and initiate action in a timely manner so that sufficient qualified applicants can be found to facilitate the best selection.
5. Participate in applying OPM regulations to establish reasonable job-related evaluation criteria (KSAs).
6. Participate in or make employees available for rating panels.
7. Give fair, equitable, and full consideration to all candidates referred and make a final selection from the list without discrimination for any nonmerit reason and without favoritism based on personal relationship or patronage.
8. Under the provisions of this plan, release a selected employee for assignment to his or her new job.
9. On a fair and equitable basis, guide and assist employees in developing skills and abilities through cross-training, special assignments, and formal education, as needed. Encourage and advise employees regarding self-development needs and opportunities, and on areas where improvement should be made to increase chances for future promotion.

Human Resources Responsibility:

1. Develop and administer the Merit Promotion Plan.
2. Ensure the quality and effectiveness of the merit promotion program and management/employee understanding and acceptance.
3. Through job-analysis, develop and administer selective placement factors for basic eligibility and identification of job-related criteria.
4. Determine and/or develop appropriate evaluation methods and instruments to be included in crediting plans.
5. Provide technical advice and assistance to panel members responsible for rating candidates.
6. Publicize the program to keep management and employees well informed.
7. Furnish advice and assistance to employees interested in advancing or transferring to new career fields.
8. Evaluate program effectiveness to include initiation of improvements or necessary changes.
9. Maintain records in accordance with OPM and USDA requirements.

10. Give new employees general information on the program as a part of employee orientation.
11. Advise of methods and procedures for filling all vacancies.
12. Advise candidates who apply for promotion whether they meet basic eligibility requirements and inform them of action taken on their applications.
13. Ensure that position vacancy announcements are published.

July 22, 1999

SUBJECT: Employee Recognition Program

TO: All Rural Development Employees

This memorandum transmits the new Employee Recognition policy for Rural Development employees including the Rural Business-Cooperative Service, the Rural Housing Service, and the Rural Utilities Service. It is also intended to cover positions assigned to the new Support Services Bureau.

This policy became effective April 1, 1999, for non-bargaining unit employees. For bargaining unit employees, negotiations with the appropriate union local must be completed before this policy can be implemented.

Until further notification, approval to issue gift certificates and savings bonds to Federal employees and FSA non-Federal county employees is suspended (p. 4, p. 10, and p. 15). Approval will be given to issue gift certificates and savings bonds as soon as the USDA, National Finance Center considers the tax implications and updates the personnel payroll system to accommodate these types of awards. Servicing Human Resources offices will be notified when nature of action codes have been developed. Gift certificates may still be used to recognize accomplishments of private citizens (including volunteers, Conservation District employees, and other mission-related partners.)

This is the second Service Center Agencies common policy issuance. It is being issued in its present format pending implementation of a uniform directives system. This document is also available on the internet at <http://dc.ffasintranet.usda.gov/hrd/cover.html>.

If you have questions related to this program, please contact your Servicing Human Resources Office.

(Signed by Leonard Hardy, Jr.)

LEONARD HARDY, JR.
Deputy Administrator
for Operations and Management

Attachment

EXPIRATION DATE:
Until Superseded

FILING INSTRUCTIONS
Administrative/Other Programs

**EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION
TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
1 Purpose	1
2 Background	1
3 Legal Authorities That Govern Employee Recognition	1
4 Effective Date	2
5 Definitions	2
6 Acronyms and Abbreviations	2
7 Coverage	3
8 Responsibilities	3
9 Policy	4
a Overview	4
b Delegations of Authority for Employee Recognition	5
c Program Funding	5
d Recommendation and Approval of Recognition	5
e Documentation	7
f Team Recognition	8
g Recognition of Private Citizens	8
h Publicity	9
i Employee Recognition Committee	9
 <u>Exhibits</u>	
Exhibit 1 Recognition Categories	10
Exhibit 2 Employee Recognition Delegation Worksheet	15
Exhibit 3 SCA-4130, Employee Recognition Nomination and Approval	16
Exhibit 4 Justification Outline	17

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

1. PURPOSE

The Service Center Agency employee recognition program is designed to fairly and equitably recognize and reward individuals and groups for excellence in service. The program acknowledges contributions that lead to achievement of organizational, team, and individual results. Timely recognition provides a source of motivation for continued excellence.

2. BACKGROUND

Consistency is the basic principle of the employee recognition program. The issuance of awards at all organizational levels must be carried out with consistent application of the appropriate guidelines and policy. The following guiding principles promote an effective employee recognition program:

- Funding of the employee recognition program should be consistent among each of the Service Center Agencies.
- Issuance of employee recognition should be based on consistently applied guidelines.
- Approval authorities should be consistently delegated to the lowest practical levels.
- Outstanding accomplishments should be consistently recognized in a timely manner.
- Approved employee recognition should be consistently publicized to a wide audience.

This policy emphasizes immediate recognition of teams and individuals for noteworthy contributions and/or achievements.

3. LEGAL AUTHORITIES THAT GOVERN EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

- Chapter 45, Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.) provides authority to establish an employee recognition program (5 U.S.C. 4503); and Title 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 451.
- The Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act of 1990 (FEPCA), Public Law 101-509, provides Federal agencies authority to grant employees time-off from duty, without loss of pay or charge to leave, as employee recognition.
- Regulatory requirements for Quality Step Increases for General Schedule (GS) employees are found in 5 CFR Part 531.
- Regulatory requirements for Senior Executive Service Recognition are found in 5 U.S.C. 5384, 5 U.S.C. 4502 through 4503 and 5 U.S.C. 4507.

Distribution: All Employees

4. EFFECTIVE DATE

The effective date for this policy is April 1, 1999.

5. DEFINITIONS

- a Designated Approving Official - An individual that has been delegated the authority to review and approve recognition.
- b National Board of Directors - The Farm Service Agency's Administrator, Natural Resources Conservation Service's Chief, the Deputy Under Secretary for Operations and Management for Rural Development, and other officials as designated.
- c Nominating Official - Any Service Center Agency or Support Services Bureau employee.
- d Private Citizens - With the exception of FSA Non-Federal County Employees, any non-federal individual. Conservation District employees, volunteers, state agency employees, and other mission related partners are considered private citizens.
- e Rating Official - An employee's first line supervisor or other person designated with responsibility for issuing ratings of record.
- f Service Center Agencies - The Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the mission areas of Rural Development.
- g State Board of Directors - The three Service Center Agency leaders in a state.
- h Support Services Bureau - The converged administrative staff for the Service Center Agencies.
- i Unique Program Entity Administrative Support Unit - Program offices, located outside the Washington DC area, i.e., Atlanta, Fort Worth, Kansas City, and St. Louis.

6. ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- SCA - Service Center Agencies
- SSB - Support Services Bureau
- CFR. - Code of Federal Regulations
- U.S.C. - United States Code
- SES - Senior Executive Service

7. COVERAGE

This program covers all employees of the Service Center Agencies, including Farm Service Agency Non-Federal County employees and the employees in the Support Services Bureau.

Excluded from coverage are political appointees at the GS-13 level and above (e.g., Executive Schedule). Current Administration policy (as of January 1999) precludes Schedule "C" and non-career Senior Executive Service (SES) employees from receiving cash awards.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES

a The Agency Heads are responsible for:

- (1) Ensuring that the program supports the Department's mission, goals, and objectives.
- (2) Ensuring equity in the distribution of recognition.
- (3) Ensuring that employees are informed of recognition policies and procedures.
- (4) Providing periodic training on the effective use of the recognition program.
- (5) Conducting annual reviews to ensure the effective use of the program.
- (6) Emphasizing the importance of teamwork through recognition of groups.
- (7) Incorporating funding for recognition into agency budget planning.
- (8) Ensuring that employee recognition is publicized.
- (9) Delegating recognition program authority and funding to the lowest level consistent with the Secretary's policies and guidelines.
- (10) Eliminating unnecessary levels of review to ensure timely processing of recognition.
- (11) Encouraging innovative recognition at the local level.

b The Servicing Human Resources Office is responsible for:

- (1) Providing technical and operational support and advice.
- (2) Ensuring the employee recognition program is administered in a manner consistent with applicable laws, rules, and regulations.
- (3) Processing personnel actions related to recognition.
- (4) Ensuring that employee recognition records are maintained in the Servicing Human Resources Office in accordance with requirements in 5 CFR Parts 430 and 432.
- (5) Providing training on the employee recognition program.

c Supervisors and Managers are responsible for:

- (1) Recognizing employees for specific achievements.
- (2) Ensuring equity in the distribution of recognition.
- (3) Considering input as appropriate from co-workers, customers, or other sources such as unions and employee organizations when making recognition decisions.
- (4) Recognizing contributions in a timely manner.
- (5) Emphasizing the importance of teamwork through recognition of groups.
- (6) Promoting the recognition program by encouraging employee participation, arranging for appropriate presentation, and publicizing recognition.
- (7) Allowing those recognized to choose the type of recognition, when appropriate.
- (8) Reviewing nominations to ensure that recognition is linked to the contribution and the amount accurately reflects the value of the contribution rather than grade level or other non-merit factors.

d Designated Approving Officials are responsible for:

- (1) Providing support to employees, supervisors, and managers.
- (2) Reviewing employee-initiated awards for compliance to stated criteria and certifying funds availability.

e Nominating Officials are responsible for:

- (1) Actively seeking out exceptional achievements worthy of recognition.
- (2) Developing employee recognition nominations in a nondiscriminatory manner.
- (3) Accurately documenting the exceptional achievements of others and ensuring the appropriate guidelines are applied to all nominations.

9. POLICY

a Overview

There are many different types of employee recognition available. Recognition may be given for a specific outstanding accomplishment such as a superior contribution on a short-term assignment or project, an act of heroism, scientific achievement, major discovery or significant cost savings. The following types of recognition are covered by this policy:

- Cash
- Certificates - Merit & Appreciation
- Gift Certificates
- Keepsake Items
- Letters of Commendation
- Quality Step Increase
- Thank You Cards & Letters
- Time Off
- U.S. Savings Bonds
- Length of Service
- Agency Honorary Awards
- Department Honor Awards
- Federal Honor Awards
- External Awards

Exhibit 1 describes each of the recognition categories in detail.

b Delegation of Authority for Employee Recognition

- (1) Exhibit 2, Employee Recognition Delegation Worksheet, describes the employee recognition approval limitations, as authorized by USDA. The National, State, and ASU Boards of Directors and equivalent positions are required to jointly discuss and, whenever possible, establish appropriate, consistent delegations of authority for their service area.
- (2) Further limitation of authority for employee recognition approval is within the area of responsibility of the National, State and ASU Boards of Directors and equivalent positions. Delegating authority and responsibility to the lowest level is encouraged. Exhibit 2, Employee Recognition Delegation Worksheet, should be used in assigning delegations of authority within the appropriate area of responsibility.

c Program Funding

The National and State Boards of Directors and equivalent positions are required to jointly discuss and, whenever possible, establish appropriate, consistent awards budgets within delegated budgetary authority. Consistency of funding levels among the Service Center Agencies will promote equity and teamwork between employees.

d Recommendation and Approval of Recognition

- (1) All Service Center Agency employees should be considered for recognition based on work accomplishments, without regard to grade level, or other non-merit factors. Review and approval requirements are determined by the National and State Boards of Directors and equivalent positions, as documented in the local Employee Recognition Delegation Worksheet (Exhibit 2).

Designated approving officials are responsible for ensuring funding is available.
- (2) Except for Quality Step Increases (QSI's), employees may develop award nominations involving co-workers or employees from any of the Service Center Agencies, including the Support Services Bureau. Subordinates cannot approve an award for their immediate supervisor or higher level official.
- (3) When recognition is nominated from outside an Agency, the approving official must be from the Agency benefiting from the service. The approving Agency is responsible for funding the recognition.

For example:

- (a) If an NRCS employee nominates an FSA employee for work that benefited NRCS, the approving official must be from NRCS and NRCS is responsible for funding the award.
 - (b) If a Rural Development employee nominates a team that consisted of employees from Rural Development, FSA, and NRCS for work that benefited all three agencies, approval must be obtained from each of the agencies. Funding of the award would be shared by all three agencies.
 - (c) If an FSA employee nominates a Rural Development employee for work that benefited only Rural Development, the FSA employee would need to work with approving officials within Rural Development to obtain funding and approval.
- (4) In determining appropriate levels of recognition, nominators should determine if the contribution can be measured in terms of time saved, money saved or expenditures avoided. The measurable benefits scale will help nominators determine the appropriate level of recognition. If the contribution cannot be precisely measured, the Nonmeasurable Benefits Scale criteria should be applied.

Measurable Benefits Scale

Savings to Government	Award Amount
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 \$100,000 in benefits plus .005 of benefits over \$100,000. Award amount should not exceed recipient's annual salary

Nonmeasurable Benefits Scale

Contribution Level	Definition	Amounts
Moderate	Moderate change or modification of operating procedures meeting minimum standard for cash award, simple modification of methods, or limited service to the public, which affect the functions, mission, or employees of a specific work unit (e.g., easing a backlog or completing a project of short duration).	Certificate, or ≤ \$500, or 1 to 24 hours of time off.
Substantial	Substantial change or modification of an operating procedure. An important improvement to value of a product, activity, program, or service to the public, which affect an entire state, or several divisions, offices, or counties.	\$501 - \$2,500, or 25 to 40 hours of time off
High	Major improvement, usually affecting major problems; major changes in methods, or procedures, which affect numerous states, regions, or divisions.	\$2,501 - \$5,500
Exceptional	Initiation of a new principle or major program. Superior improvement to the quality of a critical activity, program, or service to the public, which affect more than one agency, is Department-wide, or is in the public interest throughout the United States.	\$5,501 - \$10,000

- (5) Rating officials are the only persons authorized to nominate their employees for QSI's. Approval must be obtained as defined in Exhibit 2.
- (6) Employees may be allowed to choose the type of recognition they receive.

e Documentation

- (1) Nomination and approval of recognition may be documented on form SCA-4130, "USDA Service Center Employee Recognition Nomination and Approval" (Exhibit 3) or on form AD-287-2, Recommendation and Approval of Awards. Documentation may also be in the form of a letter or a memo containing all the necessary criteria outlined on Form SCA-4130.

- (2) When the value of the recognition is \$500 or less, or time off is 10 hours or less, only a brief description of the accomplishment is necessary.
- (3) For recognition greater than \$500, or time off greater than 10 hours, a written justification is required. Exhibit 4 outlines helpful hints for preparing a justification.
- (4) Nominating and approving officials are responsible for ensuring that dual recognition for the same accomplishment does not occur. However, the combination of two forms of recognition (e.g., a plaque may be given in conjunction with cash) cannot exceed the total value of the approved award.

f Team Recognition

- (1) Employees working as a team may be recognized when team contributions and results exceed expectations. In addition to the guidelines and delegations of authority, the following guidelines apply to teams:
 - (a) Team recognition may be issued only when a strong interdependence exists among team member tasks and team outcomes.
 - (b) Clear goals for the team were established in advance of team performance and evaluation of accomplishments.
 - (c) Team recognition should be distributed to individual team members equitably (i.e., based on individual performance within the team) rather than equally (i.e., all team members receive equal amounts).
- (2) Teams of interagency employees may be nominated for recognition. Nominations requiring a higher level approval must be jointly reviewed and approved by appropriate personnel from each agency involved. Team members that are private citizens may be included in the team recognition; however, they may only receive keepsakes, letters of commendation, certificates of appreciation, certificates of merit, or thank you letters/cards.

g Recognition of Private Citizens

- (1) Private citizens who contribute to the mission of the Service Center Agency or USDA's mission as a whole may receive recognition for those efforts. Conservation District employees, volunteers, state agency employees, and other mission-related partners are eligible on the same basis as other private citizens.
- (2) Private citizens (including volunteers, Conservation District employees, etc.) may receive thank you letters/notes, letters of commendation, certificates of appreciation, certificates of merit, gift certificates, or keepsakes. They are not eligible to receive other types of recognition.

h Publicity

- (1) Publicizing exceptional accomplishments establishes performance benchmarks for the workforce and promotes accountability in the utilization of agency resources.
- (2) Public recognition and communication of exceptional contributions is encouraged. The announcement should describe the accomplishment and the recognition issued.
- (3) Local newspapers and similar sources may be contacted when recognition warrants this level of publicity.

i Employee Recognition Committee

- (1) The National and State Boards of Directors and equivalent positions may consider establishing an Employee Recognition Committee. Membership of this committee should include a diverse cross-section of employees, Associations, and Union representation in locations with Bargaining Units.
- (2) Following are examples of the roles of the Committee:
 - (a) Ensuring consistency in funding of the employee recognition program among each of the Service Center Agencies.
 - (b) Ensuring that employee recognition is based on consistently applied guidelines.
 - (c) Ensuring nondiscriminatory employee recognition distribution.
 - (d) Ensuring recognition is issued in a timely manner.

- (3) The committee should not be used for routine approval of individual or team award nominations. However, to support employee involvement in the employee recognition decision process, the Committee may be used as a source of input for high-level or large dollar value nominations.

RECOGNITION CATEGORIES

Exhibit 1

a Cash

- (1) All Federal employees and Farm Service Agency Non-Federal County Employees are eligible to receive cash awards.
- (2) Cash awards may range from \$50 to \$10,000, depending on the contribution level. Awards may not exceed 10% of an employee's annual salary.

Cash awards less than or equal to \$500 will be issued immediately and taxes will be added to the award amount. When an employee reaches the threshold of \$501 during the preceding twelve (12) months, taxes cannot be added to the award. The award must be processed through the NFC system for payment and taxes must be deducted from the award.

b Certificates, Letters of Commendation, and Thank You Notes

- (1) All Federal employees and nonfederal individuals and organizations are eligible to receive certificates of appreciation, certificates of merit, letters of commendation, and thank you notes.
- (2) All employees are encouraged to write letters of thanks, appreciation, and commendation for individuals when they believe a contribution to be noteworthy. When a contribution warrants additional recognition, a letter of commendation from a higher organizational level may be requested.

c Gift Certificates

- (1) All Service Center Agency employees and private citizens (including volunteers and other mission-related partners) are eligible to receive gift certificates. Gift Certificates may not exceed \$100.
- (2) Gift certificates are items that can be redeemed for merchandise or services at a particular place of business, a group of businesses, or a retail location (this includes chain stores, restaurants, and shopping centers).
- (3) The Internal Revenue Service considers gift certificates to be taxable fringe benefits that must be taxed on the fair market value. The face value of the gift certificate is the fair market value. At the time the personnel action recording the recognition is processed, the amount will be adjusted to include the taxes due. The total of the gift certificate plus taxes will be reflected on the employee's Leave and Earning Statement.
- (4) A gift certificate cannot be converted to a cash payment.

d Keepsakes

- (1) All Service Center Agency employees are eligible to receive keepsakes. Private citizens who contribute to the mission of USDA or the Federal government as a whole may also receive keepsakes. Non-Federal County office employees, Conservation District employees, state agencies, and other mission-related partners are eligible on the same basis as other private citizens. When appropriate, concurrence from the non-Federal employer should be gained prior to issuing recognition.

For recognition of Volunteers, refer to respective Agency guidelines for additional direction.

- (2) Keepsake items emphasize symbolic recognition of significant contributions and public recognition. Items presented as honorary awards must meet all the following criteria:
- Be something that the recipient could reasonably be expected to value, but not something that conveys a sense of monetary value;
 - Have a lasting trophy value;
 - Symbolize the Agency - recipient relationship in some fashion;
 - Take an appropriate form to be purchased with public funds and be used in the public sector.
- (3) Keepsakes can include such items as paperweights, key chains, clocks, plaques, jackets, T-shirts, coffee mugs, pen and pencil sets, etc. Presenters of awards should be particularly sensitive to public perceptions that could arise from granting expensive, keepsake items. Offices are cautioned not to give "personal gifts" to employees. Keepsake awards should normally meet the following criteria:
- be of an honorary nature;
 - be able to be worn, displayed, or used in the recipient's work environment; and
 - at a minimum, include the Department seal or logo. The Department name, or logo, should be clearly visible on the keepsake and must be permanently affixed. A peel-off sticker is not adequate.
- (4) No more than \$250 may be spent on any one item. The cost of customizing the item must be included in the total cost.

e Quality Step Increases

- (1) Service Center Agency employees, except wage grade employees, may receive one Quality Step Increase (QSI) in a 52-week period.
- (2) A QSI is an additional within-grade increase which may be granted for sustained, high quality performance significantly above that expected at the "results achieved" level. It must be supported by a "results achieved" rating. The supervisor must provide documentation that specifically describes:
 - the actual results(s) achieved and their linkage to established targets;
 - how the employee substantially exceeded the performance standards and expected work results communicated to the employee by the supervisor; and
 - how the employee's performance has been sustained at such a high level throughout the performance appraisal period.
- (3) Quality increases are not appropriate when it is known an employee is in step 10 of the pay range or when it is known that the employee is about to receive a promotion or vacate a position within 60 days. A QSI may be appropriate if the employee is moving to a similar position at the same grade level and performance is expected to continue at the same level of effectiveness.
- (4) Since quality increases are in addition to within grade increases, an employee who receives a quality increase does not start a new waiting period to meet the time requirements for a regular within grade increase. The time the employee served in the previous pay step (before the quality increase was effective) will count toward the total waiting period for the next within grade increase.

When the QSI places the employee into a step at which the waiting period becomes longer (e.g., at step 4 the waiting period becomes 104 weeks, and at step 7 the waiting period becomes 156 weeks), the waiting period for the next within-grade increase is extended by 52 weeks; however, the employee receives the benefit of the quality increase during this period.

f Time Off Awards

- (1) All Service Center Agency employees are eligible for time off awards.
- (2) A full-time employee may be granted up to 80 hours of time off during a leave year. A part-time employee or an employee with an uncommon tour of duty may be granted up to the average number of hours worked in a pay period or the employee's scheduled tour of duty. Awards are in full-hour increments.

The amount of time off that can be granted for a single contribution is one-half the maximum that may be granted during the leave year.

- (3) A time off award must be scheduled and used within 1 year after the effective date of the award; any unused time off is forfeited. The award is effective the first full pay period following approval. Before using any time off, the supervisor must concur with the requested dates.
- (4) A time off award will not convert to a cash payment under any circumstances.

g U.S. Savings Bonds

- (1) All Service Center Agency employees are eligible to receive Savings Bonds.
- (2) U.S. Savings Bonds must be purchased in the employee's name.
- (3) The amount of the award should be equal to the purchase price of the bond.
- (4) The Internal Revenue Service considers U.S. Savings bonds to be taxable fringe benefits that must be taxed on their fair market value. The fair market value of a savings bond generally is the purchase price of the bond. For example, if a \$200 bond is purchased for \$100, tax withholding must be based on \$100. At the time the personnel action recording the recognition is processed, the amount will be adjusted to include the taxes due. The total of the fair market value plus taxes will be reflected on the employee's Leave and Earning Statement.

h Length of Service Awards

Length of Service Awards are given to recognize an employee's federal and FSA County service. Employees should be recognized at 5 years of service and each 5-year increment thereafter. In computing eligibility, employees shall receive credit for total federal and FSA County service, including civilian and all honorable military service.

Recognition should be timely, as close to the anniversary date as possible. Keepsakes may also accompany Length of Service certificates. Keepsakes should be appropriate, of nominal value (not exceeding \$100) and be commensurate with the length of service.

i Agency Honorary Awards

Each agency may establish honor awards and criteria as appropriate.

j Department Honor Awards

Departmental Honor Awards provide recognition to employees of the Department and our partners. Honor awards are the most prestigious recognition that can be granted by the Department for career accomplishments, exceptional support of the departmental mission, or for heroism.

k Other Federal and External Honor Awards

These awards are sponsored by other federal agencies or organizations or are co-sponsored with the Department. These awards may include, but are not limited to, the GEICO Public Service Award, the Roger W. Jones Award, the William T. Pecora Award, and the WISE (Women in Science and Engineering) Award. The Department will disseminate award criteria including the sponsor, the due dates, and other pertinent information, through Agency Human Resources Management Divisions, when awards are announced.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION DELEGATION WORKSHEET

Exhibit 2

This chart describes approval limitations as authorized by USDA and provides a worksheet to define the delegations within their area of responsibility. Delegations for each area of responsibilities must be defined.

RECOGNITION CATEGORY	MAXIMUM AUTHORITY ALLOWED BY USDA POLICY	Approval with No higher level review required.	Approval with One Higher Level Review (Manager, Supervisor or Equivalent)
Example: Cash		Title* Value All emp <\$100 DC, CED, <\$500 CDM, & above	Title* Value All emp \$101 - 500 CED, DC, CDM \$501-999 AC, RDM, DD \$501-2,000 State Ldr < \$10,000
Cash Up to \$500 \$501 to \$10,000	Nomination and approval by all employees (no higher level review is required) Approval with one higher level of review	Title* Value	Title* Value
Quality Step Increase	Rating officials nominate; one higher level of review is required		
Thank-you Card or Letter & Certificates	Nomination and approval by all employees (no higher level review required)		
Savings Bonds Up to \$250 Purchase Price	Nomination and approval by all employees (no higher level review required)		
Keepsake Items Up to \$250	Nomination and approval by all employees (no higher level review required)		
Gift Certificates Up to \$100	Nomination and approval by all employees (no higher level review required)		

Time-Off Up to 10 Hours 11-40 hours	Nomination and approval by a manager or supervisor (no higher level review required)** Approval with one higher level of review**		
--------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--	--

*At a minimum designated approving officials must be identified by title. Approval indicates funding is available.

** Further limitations apply to part-time and intermittent employees.

Effective: _____ Area of Coverage: _____
Authorized Official: _____

Employee Recognition Nomination and Approval

Recipient's Name: Title, Series and Grade: Employer (specify agency):	Social Security Number: Duty Station:
Recipient's Contribution:	Time Period of Contribution: _____ to _____
Award Type: Cash: \$_____.00 Gift Certificate: \$_____.00 Keepsake: (Description of recognition item): _____ _____ QSI: _____ New Grade and Step: _____/_____ Time Off: _____ hours U. S. Savings Bond: \$_____.00 Funding Code: _____	Human Resources Use Only NOA: _____ Auth: _____ Eff Date: _____ Recognition during previous 12 months:
Nominating Employee: (Name) Signature: _____ Date: _____	
If Required, Reviewing Official: (Name) Signature: _____ Date: _____	
Approving Official: (Name) Signature: _____	Approved: () Yes () No Date: _____

Filing Instructions: Cash, QSI, Time-off, Savings Bonds, Gift
Certificates - Employee Performance File and Official Personnel Folder
(optional, left hand side); Keepsakes - Attach to procurement and/or
payment document.

SCA-4130

JUSTIFICATION OUTLINE

Exhibit 4

Following is a step-by-step outline that describes the sections and verbiage to justify an award.

- I. During the period of (give time of performance), (give name of individual or group), (give explanation of accomplishment).

- II. This exceeded expectations as identified in the current position description by:
 - a Improving quality.
 - b Timely completion of the project.
 - c Increasing productivity.
 - d Overcoming adverse obstacles or working under unusual circumstances.
 - e Using unusual creativity.
 - f Saving the Government time and/or money.
 - g Increasing program effectiveness.

- III. As a result:
 - a Project acceptance.
 - b Savings in time, money, and/or material.
 - c More efficiency.
 - d Effectiveness.
 - e Technological advancement.
 - f Productivity increase.
 - g Improved levels of cooperation that will result in . . .

- IV. Therefore, we propose an award of (amount/hours).