

For: FSA Offices

FSA Administrator's Awards for Service to Agriculture

Approved by: Acting Deputy Administrator, Management



1 Overview

A

Purpose

The FSA Administrator's Awards for Service to Agriculture (AASA) are the highest recognition that FSA can bestow upon an individual or group of individuals.

AASA link performance awards with service to agriculture and USDA Honor Awards. Any individual or group of individuals receiving:

- a Quality Step Increase, a monetary award, or a Time Off Award within the past year should be considered for nomination for AASA
- AASA will automatically be considered for nomination for a USDA Honor Award.

B

AASA

Categories

The AASA categories are as follows:

- emergency response
- environmental protection
- equal opportunity
- heroism
- personal and professional excellence
- public service
- reinventing government
- support services.

See Exhibit 1 for description of the categories.

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Disposal Date	Distribution
October 1, 1999	All FSA Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices

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1 Overview (Continued)

C

Types of AASA

There are 4 types of AASA:

- individual
- team, consisting of 2 members
- group, consisting of 3 or more members (see Exhibit 2 for criteria)
- County Office Group.

Note: This award is for an entire County Office operation, including COC and minority advisor (see Exhibit 3 for criteria).

D

Nominations

Although supervisors will normally be the persons who initiate nominations, **any** employee may submit a nomination; however, nominations should be routed through the supervisor of the recommended employee.

AD-495 shall be used to submit nominations of employees for AASA. This form is available at the Landover Warehouse and in WordPerfect release.

Notes: Ensure that nomination procedures on AD-495 are followed; particularly, Part D, Detailed Basis for Recognition shall not exceed 2 pages. Supporting documentation exceeding 2 pages shall not be considered.

A 10 pitch print font shall be used when possible.

D

Labor Relations Obligations

Where exclusive representation exists, this notice does not apply until bargaining takes place. Where contract language addresses these policies and procedures for bargaining unit employees, contract language prevails.

2 Processing Nominations - Federal and Non-Federal Employees in County Offices

A

Supervisor's Responsibilities

Supervisors shall:

- review and critically evaluate both Federal and County Office employees to ensure that all deserving employees receive consideration for being nominated (see Exhibit 3 for guidelines)
 - submit nominations only for clearly outstanding achievements (see Exhibit 4 for documentation guidelines)
 - use AD-495 to nominate employees.
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2 Processing Nominations - Federal and Non-Federal Employees in County Offices
(Continued)

**B
DD
Responsibilities**

Before **September 1** of each year, all supervisors of employees in County Offices shall:

- discuss potential nominees with DD
- submit nominations to DD.

Note: Only 1 County Office Group nomination per district shall be submitted.

DD's shall forward all nominations to the State Office by **September 1** for consideration.

**C
SED
Responsibilities**

SED:

- shall review all nominations to select individuals, teams, and groups for State awards for service to agriculture. Recipients shall be recognized in a suitable occasion at an appropriate time after the selection.
 - may nominate individuals, teams, groups, and 1 County Office group for AASA
 - shall sign as recommending official for nominations being submitted for AASA
 - shall forward AASA nominations to Area Office no later than **October 1**.
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**D
EDSO
Responsibilities**

EDSO shall:

- review nominations
 - submit additional nominations for EDSO staff
 - initial field nominations and sign nominations as Recommending Individual for EDSO staff
 - forward nominations to the Associate Administrator no later than **October 15**.
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3 Processing Nominations - Employees in National Office, Kansas City, St. Louis, Salt Lake City, and State and District Offices

A Supervisor's Responsibilities

Supervisors shall:

- review and critically evaluate all employees to ensure that all deserving employees receive consideration for being nominated (see Exhibit 3 for guidelines)
 - submit nominations only for clearly outstanding achievements (see Exhibit 4 for documentation guidelines) to Office Directors by **September 1**
 - use AD-495 to nominate employees.
-

B Office Director's Responsibilities

Office Directors shall:

- review nominations
 - submit additional nominations
 - sign nominations as Recommending Individual
 - forward nominations to appropriate Deputy Administrator for review no later than **October 15**.
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4 Processing Nominations - All Employees

A Deputy Administrator's Responsibilities

Each Deputy Administrator shall:

- review nominations submitted from all offices
 - recommend and submit nominations to HRD, Performance Management, Benefits and Awards Branch (PMBAB) by **November 1**.
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4 Processing Nominations - All Employees (Continued)

B

**HRD, PMBAB
Responsibilities**

HRD, PMBAB shall:

- collect all nominations to be submitted to the Administrator's selection committee by **November 1**
 - route names of employees to the Employee Relations staff and the EO/CR staff to ensure that nominees have no pending administrative actions
 - prepare and distribute nominations to the selection committee members by **November 15**
 - attend the selection committee meeting to provide technical advice and document selection process
 - prepare certificates/plaques for recipients by **January 30**.
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C

**Administrator's
Selection
Committee
Responsibilities**

The Administrator shall appoint the selection committee to review the AASA nominations and to make final recommendations.

Members of the selection committee shall be drawn (1 each) from:

- Administrator's staff or office
 - Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs
 - Deputy Administrator for Farm Loan Programs
 - Executive Director for State Operations
 - Deputy Administrator for Commodity Operations
 - Deputy Administrator for Management
 - EO/CR staff
 - labor organizations
 - HRD, PMBAB.
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4 Processing Nominations - All Employees (Continued)

D

Selection Committee's Responsibilities

The selection committee shall:

- review and rate nominations by category
 - ensure that a diversified group of nominees is recommended
 - submit recommendations to the Administrator for:
 - AASA's
 - USDA Honor Awards Program.
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E

Administrator's Responsibilities

The Administrator shall:

- make the final selection based on the selection committee's recommendations for both awards
 - determine the number of recipients for AASA's
 - forward selected nominations to the Department for the USDA Honor Award Program.
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F

Administrator's Awards Recognition

Unless determined otherwise:

- plaques or certificates shall be mailed to field offices for an appropriate presentation
- National Office recipients shall be recognized in an appropriate presentation by the Administrator.

Pictures shall be taken at presentations to be included in the Agency's newsletter.

AASA Categories

AASA may be given for outstanding performance in any of the following categories.

Category	Description
Emergency Response	An award for employees who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in responding to floods, fires, storms, earthquakes, diseases, outbreaks, or other conditions requiring emergency response. This category also includes any other situation in which an employee surmounted unusual obstacles to further the programs or activities of the Department.
Environmental Protection	An award for employees who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in performing scientific research, educating the public, and taking other specific actions to conserve water, soil, air, timber, and other natural resources.
Equal Opportunity	An award for employees who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in achieving bottom-line results in making equal opportunity a reality in all facets of FSA. This category includes those achievements that help to increase work force diversity, including persons with disabilities, and expand program delivery to all Americans regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, marital status, disability, or sexual orientation.
Heroism	An award for employees who perform acts of unusual selflessness or heroism in the line of duty.
Personal and Professional Excellence	An award for employees who, over time, consistently demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in furthering the mission of the Department. This category includes notable achievements in scientific research, economic analysis, soil conservation, risk management, farm program delivery, rural economic and community development, food program delivery, administrative management, and improvements to the safety, health, and well-being of others. This category also includes significant accomplishments in improving service, both internal and external, to the Department.
Public Service	An award for employees who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in public service. This category includes those employees that assist the Department to better reach and serve all parts of our diverse American population.
Reinventing Government	An award for employees who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in reinventing the way to do business to benefit every American. This includes improvement to our business practices, achieving bottom-line results in cutting costs, and taking concrete actions to promote the ideals of "Team USDA".
Support Services	An award for employees who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in providing support. This category includes employees at lower grade levels, usually GS-9 or equivalent, and below, whose dedication and hard work enable or assist the work of fellow employees. Achievements may reflect dollar savings, system benefits, increased productivity, or improved procedures or techniques.

AASA - Group Achievement

AASA's for Group Achievement will be given for outstanding group achievement in 1 of the following areas:

- distinguished performance resulting in better service to agriculture
 - cooperation with another Agency
 - restructuring or initiating new FSA programs or solutions to problem program areas
 - efforts in any of the categories listed in Exhibit 1.
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AASA - County Office Achievement

Award Criteria

AASA's for County Office Achievement will be given for providing outstanding service to the farmers of the county. Some areas of consideration and examples of the types of achievement that could warrant receipt of an AASA by a County Office are listed in this paragraph.

- **Areas of consideration**, which include:
 - distinguished service to farmers and ranchers
 - program knowledge
 - planning and organizing work
 - efficiency and economy of operations
 - timeliness and accuracy of work
 - information activities
 - communications and public relations with farmers, other Agencies, community and civic group leaders, and agri-business organizations.
- **Achievement**, which includes:
 - contributions to farmers through increased program effectiveness or cost-reduction in county office administration
 - significant improvements in efficiency and economy of program operations through increased:
 - knowledge and significant cutbacks in the time it has taken to accomplish program requirements
 - accuracy with which all programs are being completed
 - achievement reflecting dollar savings, system benefits, results of intensive attention to areas of concern, increased productivity, and improved procedures or techniques
 - contributions to programs to assist farmers and others affected by drought and other natural disasters
 - development of good public relations with farmers and other agencies, by providing technical and advisory service.

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AASA - County Office Achievement (Continued)

Eligibility

All County Offices and COC's are eligible.

Nomination

The nomination shall include the following personnel:

- Entire County Office staff (Federal and non-Federal).
 - COC.
 - Minority advisor.
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Guide to Documentation of AASA

AASA documentation should justify reasons why an individual's or a group of individual's service to agriculture is outstanding, clearly exceeds job requirements, and deserves honorary recognition by the Administrator.

Documentation must convince various organizational screening levels and the Administrator's selection committee that the nominee has accomplished more than the job required, or that the results of those accomplishments, while within the job's responsibilities, are highly significant and clearly warrant recognition. The following questions may stimulate ideas for developing a nomination.

- What was done that deserves recognition?
 - Was it unique, a new approach, exceptionally creative?
 - If so, why?
- What was the effect of the accomplishment?
 - Was it local, area, national, or international in scope?
 - Was it a model for others?
- Did the accomplishment result in increased program effectiveness?
 - Did it reduce costs?
 - Did it result in more effective operation or better public service?
 - Describe the results.
- What distinguished the nominee's profession or career? What special qualities or capabilities make the individual outstanding?
- What specific performance far exceeded job requirements?
 - Was the work done with less than usual supervision, help, or resources?
 - What obstacles were overcome?
 - What new techniques or procedures were developed?

The justification should avoid:

- emphasizing job responsibility rather than accomplishment
- retirement testimonials

Note: Nominees should be recognized for current achievements; that is, October 1 through September 30 of the past year.

- quoting statistics and making progress statements without comparing them to earlier periods or circumstances
- general or vague statements about what was done, without referring to how it was done or by whom.