

For: FSA Offices

2001 FSA Administrator’s Awards for Service to Agriculture (AASA)

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Management



1 Overview

A

Purpose

The FSA Administrator’s Award for Service to Agriculture is the highest recognition that FSA can bestow upon an individual or group of individuals.

AASA links 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.

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<p>Disposal Date</p> <p>October 1, 2002</p>	<p>Distribution</p> <p>All FSA Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices</p>
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1 Overview (Continued)

B

**AASA
Categories**

AASA categories are as follows:

- expanding economic trade opportunities for agricultural producers and other rural residents
- promoting health by providing access to safe, affordable, and nutritious food
- maintaining and enhancing the nation's natural resources and environment
- enhancing the capacity of all rural residents, communities, and businesses to prosper
- operating an efficient, effective, and discrimination-free environment
- heroism and emergency response.

See Exhibit 1 for descriptions of the categories.

C

Types of AASA

There are 4 types of AASA:

- individual
- team, consisting of 2 members
- group, consisting of 3 to 25 members (see Exhibit 2 for criteria)
- County Office group.

Note: The award for County Office group is for an entire County Office operation, including COC and minority advisor. See Exhibit 3 for criteria.

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1 Overview (Continued)

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 on the MSD forms website at <http://intranet.fsa.usda.gov/>.

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

A **12-pitch** print font shall be used when possible.

E

**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.

Notice PM-2263

2 Submitting Nominations for GS and CO Employees in County Offices

**A
Supervisor's
Responsibilities**

Supervisors shall:

- review and critically evaluate both GS and CO 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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**B
DD
Responsibilities**

Before **October 19, 2001**, all supervisors of employees in County Offices shall:

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

DD's shall forward all nominations to the State Office by **October 22, 2001**, for consideration.

**C
SED
Responsibilities**

SED:

- shall review all nominations to select individuals, teams, and groups for State awards for service to agriculture

Note: 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 EDSO no later than **October 24, 2001**.
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Notice PM-2263

2 Submitting Nominations for GS and CO Employees in County Offices (Continued)

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 Deputy Administrator, Management, no later than **October 26, 2001**.
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3 Submitting Nominations for Employees in National Office, Kansas City, St. Louis, Salt Lake City, and State and District Offices

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**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 **October 19, 2001**
 - use AD-495 to nominate employees.
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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 23, 2001**.
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Notice PM-2263

4 Processing Nominations Received From Recommending Individuals

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 **October 26, 2001**.
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B

HRD, PMBAB Responsibilities

HRD, PMBAB shall:

- collect all nominations submitted, either directly or to the Deputy Administrator, Management, by **October 26, 2001**
 - route names of employees to the Employee Relations Branch and the Civil Rights and Small Business Utilization Staff (CR&SBUS) to ensure that nominees have no pending administrative actions
 - prepare and distribute nominations to the selection committee members by **November 5, 2001**
 - attend the selection committee meeting to provide technical advice and document selection process
 - prepare certificates/plaques for recipients by **December 31, 2001**.
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C

Administrator's Selection Committee Responsibilities

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

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

- Administrator's staff or office
 - DAFP
 - DAFLP
 - EDSO
 - DACO
 - DAM
 - CR&SBUS
 - labor organizations
 - HRD, PMBAB.
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Notice PM-2263

4 Processing Nominations Received From Recommending Individuals (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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**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. These categories track those of the Secretary’s Honor Awards because many AASA nominations are also submitted into this program. Review the categories carefully and select the one that best fits the contribution.

Category	Description
Expanding Economic Trade Opportunities for Agricultural Producers and other Rural Residents	Recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment by providing fair, cost-effective, and efficient farm income support programs. These programs include disaster assistance, farm loans, conservation, price supports, and commodity operations. Also recognizes those who help ensure long-term income stability for farmers and ranchers, assist United States agricultural producers to manage risks effectively, and expand market opportunities to United States agricultural producers.
Promoting Health by Providing Access to Safe, Affordable, and Nutritious Food	Recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding commitment to reducing hunger and improving nutrition with targeted nutrition assistance; reduce the incidence of foodborne illness and ensuring that commercial supplies are safe and wholesome; and promote better nutrition, health, and well-being through nutrition education, promotion, and research.
Maintaining and Enhancing the Nation’s Natural Resources and Environment	Recognizes contributions supporting the productive capacity of the natural resource base for future generations, protecting the quality of the environment, and providing multiple benefits to people from the nation’s forests and rangelands. This includes conservation reserve, emergency conservation, and environmental quality programs.
Enhancing the Capacity of All Rural Residents, Communities, and Businesses to Prosper	Recognizes contributions which support enhancing job opportunities in rural communities and improving the standard of living for rural residents, and ensuring the neediest rural residents and communities have access to the technical assistance needed to be successful and equal access to USDA farm loan and credit programs.

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AASA Categories (Continued)

Category	Description
Operating an Efficient, Effective, and Discrimination-Free Organization	Recognizes those who, over time, consistently demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in furthering the mission of USDA through providing high quality and convenient service; ensure effective and efficient management of human capital; ensure that USDA policies, practices, and programs provide fair and equitable service and enforce the civil rights of all USDA employees and customers; improve financial management and reporting; strengthen the management of information technology using best practices and innovative solutions that will enable efficient and effective means in the delivery of Departmental programs and services; and ensure USDA facilities are maintained and operated in a safe, cost-effective, and efficient manner.
Heroism and Emergency Response	Recognizes USDA employees who perform acts of unusual selflessness or heroism in the line of duty. This category also recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in responding to floods, fires, storms, earthquakes, disease outbreaks, or other conditions requiring emergency response.

AASA's for 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 for 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 receiving 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's for 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 (GS and CO)
 - COC
 - Minority advisor.
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Documenting AASA

AASA documentation should justify reasons why an individual's or a group'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, regional, 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.
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