

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

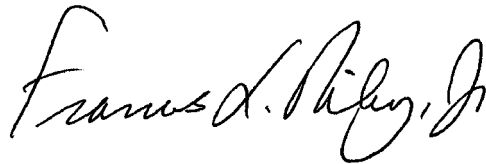
Farm Service Agency
Washington, DC 20250

Notice PM-2312

For: FSA Offices

FSA Administrator's Awards for Service to Agriculture (AASA)

Approved by: Acting Deputy Administrator, Management



1 Overview

A

Background

AASA remains the highest recognition that FSA can bestow upon an individual or group of individuals.

AASA links performance and special act 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 nominations will automatically be considered for nomination for a USDA Honor Award.

B

Purpose

This notice:

- informs all offices that AASA has become an ongoing program accepting nominations at any time during the year
- obsoletes Notice PM-2263.

Continued on the next page

Disposal Date	Distribution
October 1, 2003	All FSA Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices

1 Overview (Continued)

B

Eligibility

All FSA employees are eligible for AASA, including State and County Committee members.

C

AASA

Categories

AASA categories match USDA Honor Award categories and 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.

Continued on the next page

1 Overview (Continued)

D

Nominations

Nominations may be submitted at any time during the year.

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" that 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.

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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
 - submit nominations only for clearly outstanding achievements (see Exhibit 2 for documentation guidelines)
 - use AD-495 to nominate employees.
-

B DD Responsibilities

Periodically, 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 for consideration.

C SED Responsibilities

SED:

- shall review all nominations to select individuals, teams, and groups for State awards for service to agriculture
 - may nominate individuals and groups for AASA
 - shall sign as recommending official for nominations being submitted for AASA
 - shall forward AASA nominations to EDSO.
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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.
-

3 Submitting Nominations for 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
 - submit nominations only for clearly outstanding achievements (see Exhibit 2 for documentation guidelines) to office directors
 - 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.
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Notice PM-2312

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).
-

B

HRD, PMBAB Responsibilities

HRD, PMBAB shall:

- collect all nominations submitted, either directly or to the Deputy Administrator, Management
 - route names of employees to the Employee and Labor Relations Branch and the Civil Rights and Small Business Utilization Staff (CR&SBUS) to ensure that nominees have no pending administrative actions
 - at the end of each quarter, prepare and distribute nominations to the selection committee members
 - attend the selection committee meeting to provide technical advice and document selection process
 - prepare certificates/plaques for recipients.
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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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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.
-

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**

Recipients shall be recognized at quarterly ceremonies held at different locations around the country. Where possible, the Administrator will present the awards.

Pictures shall be taken at presentations to be included in the Agency's newsletter or other appropriate forum.

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.

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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