

For: FFAS Employees

57th Secretary's Honor Awards Program

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Management



1 Overview

**A
Background**

The Secretary's Honor Awards:

- are the most prestigious awards given by USDA
- recognize outstanding contributions supporting the mission of USDA by enhancing the quality of life for American people by:
 - supporting the production of agriculture
 - ensuring safe, affordable, nutritious, and accessible food supply
 - caring for public land and helping people care for private lands
 - supporting sound, sustainable development of rural communities
 - providing economic opportunities for farm and rural residents
 - expanding global markets for agricultural and forest products and services
 - working to reduce hunger in America and throughout the world.

The Honor Awards categories are written to support the strategic goals for USDA policies and programs, and the USDA Human Capital Plan by recognizing high levels of performance. Strategic goals include:

- expanding economic and trade opportunities for United States agricultural producers
- promoting health by providing access to safe, affordable, and nutritious food
- maintaining and enhancing the nation's natural resources and environment

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<p>Disposal Date</p> <p>February 1, 2003</p>	<p>Distribution</p> <p>All FAS, FSA, and RMA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices</p>
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1 Overview (Continued)

A

Background (Continued)

- enhancing the capacity of all rural residents, communities, and businesses to prosper
- operating an efficient, effective, and discrimination-free organization.

Note: The Honor Awards categories have been revised to support these goals as well as other aspects that focus on the USDA Strategic Plan. See Exhibit 1.

B

Purpose

This notice informs all offices of the opportunity to submit nominations for the 57th Secretary's Honor Awards Program. All nominations must be submitted by COB **Tuesday, December 31, 2002.**

C

Equal Opportunity/ Workforce Diversity Policy

In keeping with the Secretary's initiative to promote equal opportunity in employment and programs, agencies are encouraged to consider nominations from all segments of the workforce. All nominees are eligible for the same level of recognition.

It is the Department's policy and practice to prohibit discrimination against any employee on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, marital status, political affiliation, national origin, or sexual orientation.

D

Labor Management Obligations

Where exclusive representation exists, bargaining may be requested to the extent allowed by applicable statutes. Where contract language already addresses these policies and procedures for bargaining unit employees, contract language prevails.

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2 Criteria

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Nomination Considerations

Offices should review highly successful programs and management improvements to identify potential nominees for awards. Consideration should also be given to nominating those who have earned recognition through outstanding performance ratings, promotions, quality step increases, cash awards, or special awards within or outside the Department.

B

Evaluation Period

Contributions must have been made, or the results realized within the **past 3 years**. Heroic acts should have occurred within the **past year**.

C

Eligibility

Employees at all grade levels and private citizens are eligible to receive these awards.

Note: See Exhibit 1 for a description of eligible award categories.

3 Nominating Procedures

A

Types of Nominations

There are 2 types of nominations as shown in this table.

Types of Nomination	Number of Individuals
Individual	
Group	Shall consist of 2 or more individuals working together as a unit. Note: Include only those individuals who have significantly contributed to the cited work of the group.

Continued on the next page

3 Nominating Procedures (Continued)

B

Nomination Content

All nominations **must** clearly describe:

- the significance of the contribution being recognized
- how the quality of performance substantially exceeds normal job expectations
- the measurable or nonmeasurable benefits achieved, or both.

Nominations shall contain adequate background information to establish the context and scope of each nominee's contribution.

Note: The use of acronyms is discouraged without initial explanation.

C

Photographs

Photographs of the individual nominees must be submitted with the nomination. There shall be **2** black and white, 5" x 7" portrait photographs, showing the head and shoulders only.

Note: Scanned photos are not acceptable.

D

Justification

Award nominations will **not** be considered and will be returned to the nominating official, without action, if justifications are:

- **in excess of 2 pages**
 - submitted in reduced print font
 - submitted with additional attachments, unless provided on AD-495.
-

E

Completing AD-495

Each nomination will consist of a completed AD-495. Ensure that:

- a **12-pitch courier print font** is used

Note: If a 12-pitch courier print font is **not** available, other 12-pitch print fonts may be used.

- margins are identical to AD-495
-

Continued on the next page

3 Nominating Procedures (Continued)

E

Completing AD-495 (Continued)

- names, titles, citations, and other relevant information are double-checked for spelling, grammar, and format

Note: Employee's name will be printed as shown on the nomination.

- citations are **25 words or less**

Note: The citation will be used on the Honor Awards Program brochure and on the recipient's plaques and certificates. **Be sure to edit them carefully.**

- all requested information on AD-495 is completed, such as employee's congressional district, awards, and publications.

Note: Group nominations must list any previous individual or group Departmental Honor Awards presented to any group member.

A nomination must include the original and 1 copy. Except for list of group members, attachments or continuation sheets will not be accepted. A nomination is limited to 6 pages of the nomination form.

F

Obtaining AD -495

AD-495 consists of 5 pages and 1 double-sided cover sheet and is available in JetForms, InForms, and PDF.

All offices may download AD-495 from the USDA website at http://www.ocio.net.usda.gov/ocio/irm/forms/ocio_forms.html.

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4 Submitting AD-495's

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Contacts for Submitting AD-495's Submit AD-495's according to this table.

Note: Nominations submitted after Tuesday, December 31, 2002, will **not** be accepted by the Reviewing Committee.

IF nomination is from...	THEN submit AD-495...
FSA and RMA National Office	through the Staff Office or Division Director to: ATTN: Stephen Crisp, HRD STOP 0595 2101 L Street, NW, Suite 5805 Washington, DC 20037
RMA, Regional and Compliance Field Offices	to HRD address shown above.
FAS	through appropriate Deputy Administrator to HRD address shown above.
FSA State and County Offices	through SED to DAFO. DAFO shall initial field nominations and forward nomination to HRD address shown above..
APFO	through Director to HRD address shown above.
Kansas City Complex, including St. Louis	through: KCAO, Personnel Division STOP 8398 6501 Beacon Drive, Room 132 Kansas City MO 64133 to HRD address shown above.

B

Selections HRD shall inform recommending officials of the Agency's decision in January.

Secretary’s Honor Awards Categories

Type	Categories
1	<p><u>Expanding Economic and Trade Opportunities for United States Agricultural Producers</u></p> <p>This category recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing fair, cost-effective, and efficient farm income support programs to help ensure long-term stability for farmers and ranchers • assisting United States agricultural producers to manage risk effectively • expanding market opportunities to United States agricultural producers.
2	<p><u>Promoting Health by Providing Access to Safe, Affordable and Nutritious Food</u></p> <p>This category recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding commitment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing hunger and improving nutrition with targeted nutrition assistance • reducing the incidence of food-borne illness and ensuring that commercial supplies are safe and wholesome • promoting better nutrition, health, and well-being through nutrition education, promotion, and research.
3	<p><u>Maintaining and Enhancing the Nation’s Natural Resources and Environment</u></p> <p>This category recognizes contributions supporting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the productive capacity of the natural resource base for future generations • protecting the quality of the environment • providing multiple benefits to people from the nation’s forests and rangelands (which includes greening the Government through leadership in environmental management).
4	<p><u>Enhancing the Capacity of All Rural Residents, Communities, and Businesses to Prosper</u></p> <p>This category recognizes contributions that support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhancing job opportunities in rural communities • improving the standard of living for rural residents • ensuring the neediest rural residents and communities have access to the technical assistance needed to be successful and equal access to USDA credit programs.

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Secretary’s Honor Awards Categories (Continued)

Type	Categories
5	<p data-bbox="285 327 1268 363"><u>Operating an Efficient, Effective, and Discrimination-Free Organization</u></p> <p data-bbox="285 405 1398 474">This category recognizes those who, over time, consistently demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in furthering the mission of USDA through:</p> <ul data-bbox="285 516 1451 884" style="list-style-type: none"> • providing high quality and convenient service • ensuring effective and efficient management of human capital • ensuring that USDA policies, practices, and programs provide fair and equitable service, and enforce the civil rights of all USDA employees and customers • improving financial management and reporting • strengthening the management of information technology utilizing best practices and innovative solutions that will enable efficient and effective means in the delivery of Department programs and services • ensuring USDA facilities are maintained and operated in a safe, cost-effective, and efficient manner. <p data-bbox="285 926 1455 1037">This category includes, but is not limited to, notable achievements in meeting the public’s demands of operating the Government fairly, effectively, and efficiently as resources become more restrained. In addition, this category recognizes significant accomplishments in:</p> <ul data-bbox="285 1079 1166 1299" style="list-style-type: none"> • re-engineering service capabilities • improving data systems and processes • providing better program management information • improving communications with the public • eliminating inefficiencies in general operations • improving customer service, both internal and external, to USDA. <p data-bbox="285 1341 1438 1524">Also included in this category are individuals who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in providing support which includes employees at lower grade levels, usually GS-9 or equivalent and below, whose dedication and hard work enable or assist the work of their fellow employees. Achievements may reflect dollar savings, system benefits, increased productivity, or improved procedures or techniques.</p>

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Secretary’s Honor Awards Categories (Continued)

Type	Categories
<p>5 Contd.</p>	<p>The elements listed below are not all inclusive; other factors may also be addressed. All nominees will be considered for the equal opportunity award on the basis of exceptional achievements in the following areas:</p> <p>Recruitment and Retention</p> <p>(1) Recruitment and outreach activities undertaken by the individual or individuals that have been successful in attracting minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities, including 30 percent or more disabled veterans.</p> <p>Example: Nominees who visit colleges and universities with large numbers of minorities, women, or persons with disabilities that resulted in the hiring of targeted individuals.</p> <p>(2) Highly successful methods to improve advancement opportunities for minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities, such as the use of the USDA Career Enhancement Program, or use of the mentoring programs employed by an individual or individuals that resulted in opportunities for career advancement for program participants.</p> <p>(3) Innovative actions to enhance employee retention, such as use of rotational or developmental assignments, spousal placement, job sharing, part-time employment, or flexiplace.</p> <p>(4) Creative initiatives undertaken by an individual or individuals that have proven to be successful in removing barriers to employment of minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities, including 30 percent or more disabled veterans.</p> <p>Example: Nominees’ use of volunteer assignments that lead to employment for targeted persons.</p> <p>(5) Liaison activities with outside groups that have been especially successful in the referral of minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities, including 30 percent or more disabled veterans.</p> <p>Example: Nominees’ liaison activities with the 1890 Institutions, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities Institutions, the President’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, and state vocational rehabilitation centers that led to employment of targeted persons.</p>

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Secretary’s Honor Awards Categories (Continued)

Type	Categories
<p>5 Contd.</p>	<p>(6) Demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in furthering the mission of USDA. This category includes notable achievements in scientific research, economic analysis, soil conservation, risk management, farm program delivery and rural economic and community development, food program delivery, administrative management, improvements to the safety, health, and well-being of others. This category also includes significant accomplishments in improving service, both internal and external, to USDA.</p> <p>Accommodations and Accessibility</p> <p>(1) Plans or initiatives that represent substantial progress in achieving special accommodations and accessibility for individuals with disabilities, including 30 percent or more disabled veterans. These plans or initiatives may include, but are not limited to, the establishment of model USDA Service Centers with program access for persons with disabilities, for example, model program delivery mechanisms.</p> <p>(2) Creative initiatives, such as job restructuring or redesign, to facilitate the employment of individuals with disabilities, including 30 percent or more disabled veterans.</p> <p>(3) Innovative and substantial use of technology to enhance the capability and productivity of persons with disabilities, including 30 percent or more disabled veterans. Include contacts with technology resources centers such as the USDA TARGET Center, and the Job Accommodations Network, etc. that provide information on technology that assists employees in performing their jobs.</p> <p>(4) Exceptional efforts to support the initiatives of USDA advisory committees, and the Association for Persons with Disabilities in Agriculture, including 30 percent or more disabled veterans.</p> <p>Program Delivery and Customer Service</p> <p>(1) Significant efforts to develop public outreach techniques, mechanisms, or program information to small and disadvantaged businesses, small minority and women-owned businesses, contractors, minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities, resulting in increased business and program delivery to these groups.</p> <p>Example: Nominees’ participation in procurement fairs to small and disadvantaged business, small minority and women-owned business/contractors that led to the letting of contracts with these targeted groups.</p>

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Secretary's Honor Awards Categories (Continued)

Type	Categories
5 Contd.	<p>(2) Highly successful initiatives in developing new and improved means of delivering programs to our clients in a fair and equitable manner. Include examples of prompt action to resolve complaints.</p> <p>(3) Highly successful action to increase the representation of minorities, women and individuals with disabilities on State Advisory committees, or on local boards, council, and committees.</p>
6	<p><u>Heroism and Emergency Response</u></p> <p>This category 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.</p>
