

For: All FSA, RMA, and FAS Employees

58th Secretary's Honor Awards Program

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Management



1 Overview

A Background

The Secretary's Honor Awards:

- are the most prestigious awards that are given by the USDA
- recognize outstanding contributions supporting the mission of USDA by enhancing the quality of life for American people by:
 - enhancing economic opportunities for agricultural producers
 - supporting increased economic opportunities and improved quality of life in rural areas
 - enhancing protection and safety of the nation's agriculture and food supply
 - improving the nation's nutrition and health
 - protecting and enhancing the nation's natural resource base and environment
 - supporting the president's management agenda and civil rights
 - heroism and emergency response.

Disposal Date	Distribution
May 1, 2004	All FSA, RMA, and FAS employees; State Offices relay to County Offices and LSA's

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1 Overview

A Background (Continued)

Honor Award categories reflect the goals of the USDA Strategic Plan (Plan) for FY 2002-2007. See Exhibit 1. The Plan focuses on programmatic goals and objectives and management plans that detail USDA's strategies to improve human capital and financial management, expand electronic government, and establish budget and performance integration.

B Purpose

This notice informs all offices to of the opportunity to submit nominations for the 58th Secretary's Honor Awards Program. All nominations must be submitted by COB **December 31, 2003**.

C Equal Opportunity/Work Force 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.

2 Criteria

A 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.

Although there are no limits to the number of nominations you may submit, we ask that nominations be submitted in priority order to maintain quality control, and expedite the review process.

B Evaluation Period

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

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2 Criteria (Continued)

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 Awards

A Types of Nominations

Nominations may be submitted for:

- individuals
- groups.

Groups should:

- be limited to 35 employees
- include only those individuals who have significantly contributed to the group's accomplishments.

Note: Agencies that wish to nominate groups containing more than 35 employees must submit justification for exceeding the recommended group size.

B Nomination Contents

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: Every word must be spelled out throughout the narrative. Do not use acronyms or abbreviations.

3 Awards (Continued)

C 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.

D 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
- 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 30 words or less

Note: The citation will be used in 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 Departmental Honor Awards, individual or group, presented to any group member.

E Obtaining AD-495

AD-495 consists of 8 pages and is available online through: <http://intranet.fsa.usda.gov/fsa>.

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4 Nominating Procedures

A Nominations

The procedures outlined in paragraph 5 shall be followed when submitting nominations.

B Selections

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

The Reviewing Committee will not accept nominations submitted after the December 31, 2003, due date.

5 Submitting AD-495's

A Contacts for Submitting AD-495's

Submit AD-495's as shown in the following table.

IF nomination is from...	THEN submit AD-495...
FSA or RMA National Office	through the Staff Office Director or Division Director to Angela Jackson HRD at 418-9019. Note: The Staff Office Director or Division Director shall be the recommending official on AD-495, Part E:
RMA/Regional and Compliance Offices	through appropriate Deputy Administrator to Angela Jackson, HRD.
FAS	through appropriate Deputy Administrator to Angela Jackson, HRD.
FSA State and County Offices	through SED and DAFO to Angela Jackson, HRD. Note: SED shall be the recommending official on AD-495, Part E.
FSA/APFO	through Director to Angela Jackson, HRD. Note: The Director is the recommending official on AD-495, Part E.
FSA/Kansas City Complex, including St. Louis	through KCAO, HRD, at 816-926-6643 to Angela Jackson, HRD.

SECRETARY'S HONOR AWARD'S CATEGORIES**1. Enhancing Economic Opportunities for Agricultural Producers**

This category recognizes contributions that support expanding markets for agricultural products that are critical to the long-term economic health and prosperity of our food and agricultural sector. United States (US) farmers have a wealth of natural resources, cutting edge technologies, and a supporting infrastructure that result in a production capacity beyond domestic needs. This capacity can be used in expanding global markets and in the development of new uses for agriculture in industrial and pharmaceutical markets.

2. Supporting Increased Economic Opportunities and Improved Quality of Life In Rural Areas

This category recognizes contributions which support the enhancement of Rural America (RA), which is home to one fifth of the Nation's population, and is a collage of people and economic activity. Seven out of eight rural counties are now dominated by varying mixes of manufacturing, services, and other non-farming activities. While the majority of rural residents are not dependent on agriculture for their income, many small family farmers rely on local, off-farm employment to supplement their farm income.

Of the 60 million people who live in RA, only 2 million are directly engaged in production agriculture. A diversity of other enterprises, including support services for agriculture, forestry and mining, recreation, and manufacturing, provide most of the jobs and income in RA. The Department of Agriculture's (USDA) role is to enhance the economic opportunities and quality of life for rural residents by providing financial and technical assistance for business and industry, water and waste disposal and other essential community facilities, advanced telecommunications, electric utilities, and housing. Our objective is to ensure that rural residents have equal opportunity to share in the Nation's prosperity and technological advancement.

USDA takes a leadership role in fulfilling Presidential initiatives, such as increasing minority homeownership by the end of the decade and encouraging the production of renewable energy. We will work with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and the full range of private sector interests to achieve a coordinated effort for the realization of Presidential initiatives, as well as other activities important to RA.

3. Enhancing Protection and Safety of the Nation's Agriculture and Food Supply

This category recognizes contributions which support USDA's unique and critical responsibilities to help ensure the safety of the US food and fiber supply chain and the security of the US agricultural production system. The Department will continue to assess current systems and develop countermeasures against threats to farms and ranches, in coordination with the private sector, other Federal agencies, and State governments. Research programs are essential to an effective US agricultural biosecurity program to develop methods of early detection, rapid and accurate assessment, and immediate responses that prevent spread and control harmful agents. USDA facilities and operations must also be secure from external and internal threats.

4. Improving the Nation's Nutrition and Health

This category recognizes commitment by endorsing America's health through food and nutrition education, guidance and promotion to the general public, and to targeted groups. We teach, inform, and motivate Americans to use this information to improve their diets and physical activity patterns. We expand research and scientific knowledge about public health. By promoting better diets, reaching children early and ensuring access to healthy food, we make a major contribution to the Nation's health.

USDA is seeking to contribute to significant changes in the US population's nutrition status, and in management of the nutrition assistance programs for 2007. We are targeting:

- reductions in overweight and obesity that are consistent with the Nation's Healthy People 2010 objectives published by the US Department of Health and Human Services
- a 30 percent decrease in hunger among low-income people
- a 15 percent increase in the participation rate among eligible people in the Food Stamp Program
- a 12 percent increase in the participation rate in the National School Lunch Program and continued high participation rate in the Women Infants and Children Program
- 5-point increases in the Healthy Eating Index (HEI) scores of children and low-income people and a 2-point increase among the general public (HEI uses food intake data to measure the quality and variety of the American diet.).

5. Protecting and Enhancing the Nation's Natural Resource Base and Environment

The category recognizes contributions supporting the management of our natural resources, both public and private, which is a continual balancing act between sometimes contrary and competing concerns. In maintaining this balance, it is imperative that a portfolio approach be utilized that incorporates various conservation management tools including technical assistance, cost-share, incentive, land retirement, easement and regulatory assistance programs. In ensuring these program funds are spent effectively and leveraged wisely, continued and increased cooperation with State, local, and Tribal governments, as well as private for-profit and not-for-profit partner organizations is needed.

6. Supporting the President's Management Agenda and Civil Rights

This category recognizes individuals who demonstrate a commitment by working to strengthen USDA's management through vigorous execution of the President's Management Agenda. Better management will result in more efficient program operations that offer improved customer service and more effective stewardship of taxpayer funds. This goal may be accomplished by:

- ensuring an efficient, high-performing, diverse, competitively sourced workforce, aligned with mission priorities and working cooperatively with USDA partners and the private sector

6. Supporting the President's Management Agenda and Civil Rights (Continued)

- enhancing internal controls, data integrity, management information, and program and policy improvements as reflected by an unqualified audit opinion and a reduction of erroneous payments by USDA programs
- implementing business processes and information technology needed to make our services available electronically
- linking budget decisions and program priorities more closely with program decisions and program performance, and recognize the full cost of programs.

7. Heroism and Emergency Response

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.

In making nominations, agencies must give equal consideration to all employees regardless of duty station or grade level. Agencies must also ensure that nominations are nondiscriminatory on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, protected genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal or source of income (public assistance).