

For: FFAS Employees

Food and Recognition

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Management



1 Overview

A Background

Since the issuance of Comptroller General (CG) Decision B-235163.11, February 13, 1986, agencies have used their operating appropriations to pay for refreshments and meals in conjunction with agency employee awards ceremonies citing the Government Employees Incentive Awards Act, 5 U.S.C. 4503.

Recently, alternatives to cash awards were being explored. The question arose as to the appropriateness of using food as an award in itself. In 1997, CG consulted with OPM on this question and issued CG Decision B-271511, March 4, 1997. This decision allows for food to be used as informal recognition awards as both:

- meals, such as, lunches, dinners, banquets or picnics
- vouchers, such as a gift certificate to a restaurant.

Note: FFAS is **not** authorizing food to be used as an informal recognition award.

B Purpose

This notice:

- provides guidance on the use of refreshments and meals in conjunction with an employee awards ceremony
- prohibits the use of food as an informal recognition award.

Disposal Date	Distribution
October 1, 2004	All FAS, FSA, and RMA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices

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1 Overview (Continued)

C 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.

D Contacts

If there are questions about this notice, contact the appropriate office according to this table.

Location	Contact
FSA National Office, and all FAS and RMA employees	HRD, Performance Management, Benefits, and Awards Branch at 202-418-8975 or 202-418-8973 or TTY at 202-418-9116
APFO, KCCO, KCAO, KC-ADC, and KCFO employees	KCAO, Personnel Division, Employee and Labor Relations Branch at 816-926-6643 or TTY 816-926-6148
State and County Office employees	State Office

2 Government Employees Incentive Awards Act

A Refreshments and Meals in Conjunction With Employee Award Ceremonies

Under the Incentive Awards Act, agencies are authorized to “incur necessary expenses for the honorary recognition of employees”. This has been interpreted by CG to mean agencies are permitted to use operating appropriations to pay for refreshments and meals in conjunction with employee awards ceremonies, but only if it is determined that a reception with food enhances the recognition value of the awards.

Note: FFAS is **not** authorizing agencies to use operating appropriations to pay for meals in conjunction with employee awards ceremonies.

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2 Government Employees Incentive Awards Act (Continued)

B FFAS Allowances

FFAS encourages offices to provide refreshments in conjunction with employee award ceremonies under the following conditions:

- refreshments served must **not** constitute meals

Note: They must be of nominal value and incidental to the recognition event, enhancing the overall program.

- overall expenditure on refreshments should **not** come to more than \$10 per person.

Note: All expenses incurred in conjunction with the event must come from the office awards budget.

FFAS encourages local awards ceremonies down to the lowest practical level. In Headquarters (Washington and Kansas City), this would be the Staff/Division level, and in the field it would be FSA State or County Office, RMA Regional Service/Compliance Office, or FAS post.

The following must be stressed:

- using sound judgement when considering such expenditures
- never jeopardize the credibility and integrity of the government employees incentive awards program
- always be mindful of the perceptions you may create
- do **not** overspend
- award ceremonies are **not** to be “created” as an excuse to purchase refreshments.

Note: There must be a legitimate awards ceremony in place before consideration can be given to the purchase of refreshments.

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2 Government Employees Incentive Awards Act (Continued)

C Using Meals as a Non-Monetary Award

FFAS has decided **not** to allow offices to use (meals or vouchers) as informal recognition awards.

The following are concerns:

- problems with ensuring that awards are reported to NFC
- using government credit cards to purchase meals or vouchers.

Note: Meals or vouchers may **not** be used as an informal recognition award at this time.

3 Agency Specific Accounting Requirements

A FSA Accounting Requirements

The following accounting and budget object class code (BOC) should be used to charge refreshment cost in FSA:

- 484xxx84100000, where:
 - 4 = the current fiscal year
 - 84 = fund (will always be 84)
 - xxx84 = office organizational code
 - 10 = sub-object code (to be used in conjunction with BOC 2671)
 - 0000 = non-IT special project code.