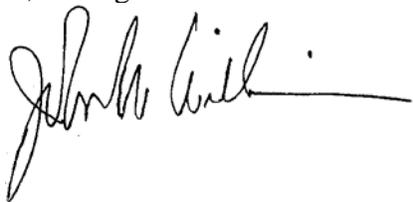


For: FSA Employees

2007 FSA Administrator's Awards for Service to Agriculture (AASA)

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Management



1 Overview

A Background

An honorary awards program is an important tool in creating a workplace where the extra efforts shown by individuals and teams are given due recognition. Recognizing employees for their extra efforts has always been vitally important in FSA and USDA. Within FSA, AASA awards are the highest honorary awards management can bestow upon their employees.

B Purpose

This notice:

- announces the 2007 FSA AASA Program
- details the procedures for submitting nominations for AASA.

C Labor-Management 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.

Disposal Date	Distribution
September 1, 2007	All FSA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices

Notice PM-2582

2 AASA Program Provisions

A Eligibility

All FSA employees are eligible for AASA, including STC and COC members.

B Timeline

Nominations:

- shall be submitted **by COB May 31, 2007**
- will be reviewed by FSA
- will be presented in August 2007.

C AASA Categories

AASA categories have been revised and are as follows.

- **Civil Rights Leadership Award:** An award granted annually to both FSA employees at any organizational level and FSA supervisors. Both categories of this award recognize individuals for their valuable contributions and commitments made in the support of USDA and FSA civil rights objectives. See Exhibit 1, subparagraph A.
- **Excellence in Program Support Award:** An award granted annually to employees who perform duties related to clerical, assistant, or program technician responsibilities. The employee's knowledge of the procedures and techniques involved in carrying out these duties far exceed expectation and has contributed to meeting the office's (or Agency's) goals and objectives. See Exhibit 1, subparagraph B.
- **Excellence in Leadership and Management Award:** An award granted annually to FSA supervisors and managers at the GS/GM-15 level **and below** at all organizational levels, whose accomplishments and performance are judged as the most outstanding, and who demonstrate the greatest combination of skills in leading people and managing activities through interactive team building, while valuing diversity. See Exhibit 1, subparagraph C.
- **Outstanding Team Accomplishment Award:** An award granted annually to teams who worked on a specific significant project as a team, contributing to FSA's goals and objectives. The team may include members from different units within FSA or from outside FSA. Working as a team should be emphasized, rather than individual effort. See Exhibit 1, subparagraph D.
- **Excellence in Achieving Goals and Objectives Award:** An award granted annually to a specific FSA employee or FSA work unit, for their efforts in contributing to FSA's goals and objectives. See Exhibit 1, subparagraph E.

Notice PM-2582

2 AASA Program Provisions (Continued)

C AASA Categories (Continued)

- **Heroism and Emergency Response Award:** An award granted annually to an FSA employee or team who performed acts of unusual selflessness or heroism in the line of duty. See Exhibit 1, subparagraph F.
- **Newcomer Award:** An award granted annually to an employee with less than 5 years of FSA service that shows growth, potential, and dedication in making significant contributions to FSA. See Exhibit 1, subparagraph G.

Note: See Exhibit 1 for criteria of each category.

D Nominations

An employee or team does **not** need to meet **all** the criteria listed to be nominated. The criterion serves as an outline for the committee members in reviewing nominations and making recommendations to the Administrator.

Any employee may recommend another employee for this award. However, nominations should be routed through the supervisor of the recommended employee.

Submit nominations electronically to audrey.armstrong@wdc.usda.gov or mail the hard copy to the following.

US Dept of Agriculture
FSA/HRD/EPB STOP 0595
(ATTN: A ARMSTRONG)
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-0595

Nominations must include the following:

- AASA category for which the individual/team is being nominated
- name of nominee or team name, if a team nomination

Note: The employee's/team's name should be written as it is to be printed in the booklet.

- position title, official duty station, and telephone number of nominee

Note: If a team nomination, list information for all team members.

Notice PM-2582

2 AASA Program Provisions (Continued)

D Nominations (Continued)

- team leader, if a team nomination
- citation, **not** to exceed 25 words, as it should be printed in the booklet
- narrative justification detailing the basis for recognition, **not** to exceed 2 pages.

Notes: Accomplishments may go back up to 1 year. See:

- Exhibit 2 for nomination format
- Exhibit 3 for assistance with writing the narrative justification.

Nominations **must** be received by HRD, Employee Program Branch (EPB),
Attn: A Armstrong, **by COB May 31, 2007.**

3 Submitting Nominations for GS and CO Employees in County Offices

A Supervisor's Responsibilities

Supervisors shall:

- periodically discuss potential nominees with DD
- review and critically evaluate both GS and CO employees to ensure that all deserving employees receive consideration
- submit nominations only for clearly outstanding achievements

Note: See Exhibit 3 for documentation guidelines.

- submit nominations to their DD.

B DD Responsibilities

DD's shall:

- periodically discuss potential nominees with supervisors
- forward all nominations to the State Office for consideration.

Notice PM-2582

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

C SED Responsibilities

SED:

- shall review all nominations to select individuals and teams for State Awards for Service to Agriculture
- may nominate individuals and teams for AASA
- shall sign as recommending official for nominations being submitted for AASA
- shall forward AASA nominations to Sederis Fields, DAFO, **by COB May 15, 2007** at the following address.

US Dept of Agriculture
FSA/DAFO STOP 0542
(ATTN: S FIELDS)
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-0542

D DAFO Responsibilities

DAFO shall:

- review nominations
- submit nominations for DAFO staff
- initial field nominations and sign nominations as recommending individual for DAFO staff
- forward nominations to HRD, EPB (STOP 0595) **by COB May 31, 2007**.

4 Submitting Nominations for Employees in National Office, Kansas City, St. Louis, APFO, and State Offices

A Supervisor's Responsibilities

Supervisors shall:

- review and critically evaluate all employees to ensure that all deserving employees are considered for nomination

Notice PM-2582

4 Submitting Nominations for Employees in National Office, Kansas City, St. Louis, APFO, and State Offices (Continued)

A Supervisor's Responsibilities (Continued)

- submit nominations only for clearly outstanding achievements

Note: See Exhibit 3 for documentation guidelines.

- submit nominations to the Division/Staff Directors.

B Office Director's Responsibilities

Office Directors shall:

- review nominations
- submit nominations
- sign nominations as recommending individuals
- forward nominations to appropriate Deputy Administrator for review.

5 Processing Nominations Received From Recommending Individuals

A Deputy Administrator's/Staff Director's Responsibilities

Deputy Administrators/Staff Directors shall:

- review nominations submitted from all offices
- recommend and submit nominations to HRD, EPB by **COB May 31, 2007**.

B HRD, EPB Responsibilities

HRD, EPB shall:

- collect all nominations submitted
- route names of employees to the Employee and Labor Relations Branch and the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) to ensure that nominees have no pending administrative actions
- prepare and distribute nominations to the reviewing committee members
- attend the reviewing committee meeting to provide technical advice and document reviewing/recommendation process
- prepare ceremony keepsakes.

5 Processing Nominations Received From Recommending Individuals (Continued)

C Administrator's Reviewing Committee Responsibilities

The Administrator shall appoint the reviewing committee to:

- review AASA nominations
- make final recommendations.

The reviewing committee shall include 1 member from each of the following:

- Administrator's staff or office
- DACO
- DAFLP
- DAFO
- DAFP
- DAM
- OCR
- labor organizations
- HRD, EPB (Advisory).

D Reviewing Committee's Responsibilities

The reviewing committee shall:

- review and rate nominations
- ensure that a diversified group of nominees is recommended
- submit recommendations to the Administrator for AASA's.

E Administrator's Responsibilities

The Administrator shall determine the following:

- recipients for AASA's
- nominations to be considered for the Secretary's Honor Award Program.

F Administrator's Awards Recognition

Recipients (individuals and team leaders) shall be recognized at a ceremony in August 2007 in Washington, DC. The Administrator shall present the awards. Individual and team leader recipients will be authorized travel to Washington, DC to attend the ceremony. Team members will be recognized at local ceremonies.

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

AASA Categories

A Civil Rights Leadership Award

Description: An award granted annually to both of the following:

- FSA employees at any organizational level
- FSA supervisors.

Both categories of this award recognize individuals for their valuable contributions and commitments made in the support of USDA and FSA civil rights objectives.

Nominations will be considered for the following 2 categories:

- supervisory
- nonsupervisory.

Criteria: Outstanding accomplishment of objectives beyond normal expectations in activities are as follows:

- involvement or participation in professional organizations, task groups or committees, and programs directly affecting the recruitment, training, and advancement of women, minorities, and persons with disabilities in USDA and/or FSA
- active and sustained involvement to increase and diversify the workforce at FSA, including specific efforts at recruitment of women, minorities, and persons with disabilities

Note: This is required for supervisor nomination.

- active involvement in expanding, promoting, or enforcing civil rights
- personal involvement in social issues impacting women, minorities, and persons with disabilities
- establishment of a positive work environment about equality in the office

Note: This improves the opportunities or strengthens the performance of employees by facilitating the development of projects or programs that improve the quality of work life.

AASA Categories (Continued)**A Civil Rights Leadership Award (Continued)**

- planning or supporting special interest programs and activities, which would enrich cultural understanding of diverse groups by attending and encouraging participation of employees

Note: This demonstrates intolerance of inappropriate comments or presentations in the workplace.

- demonstrates a marked improvement/increase in FSA programs provided to women and/or minorities.

B Excellence in Program Support Award

Description: An award granted annually to employees who perform duties related to clerical, assistant, or program technician responsibilities. The employee's knowledge of the procedures and techniques involved in carrying out these duties far exceed expectation and has contributed to meeting the office's (or Agency's) goals and objectives.

Criteria: Outstanding accomplishment of objectives beyond normal expectations in activities are as follows:

- demonstrates high-quality performance of the technical responsibilities for his or her position
- demonstrates outstanding customer service to internal and external customers
- performs at a level that substantially exceeded the performance standards of the position
- develops and/or implements a system or methodology that improves program delivery either internally or externally.

C Excellence in Leadership and Management Award

Description: An award granted annually to FSA supervisors and managers at the GS/GM-15 level **and below** at all organizational levels, whose accomplishments and performance are judged as the most outstanding, and who demonstrate the greatest combination of skills in leading people and managing activities through interactive team building, while valuing diversity.

AASA Categories (Continued)

C Excellence in Leadership and Management Award (Continued)

Criteria: Outstanding accomplishment of objectives beyond normal expectations in activities are as follows:

- demonstrates effective skills in motivating and leading employees and in human resource management, including recruitment, selection, promotion, details, and special assignments, to fully use the skills of all employees on an impartial basis

Note: This uses appropriate employee recognition and corrective action in employee management, and capitalizes on teamwork to meet work objectives and organizational goals and to foster employee development.

- develops employee's and organization's culture to support a high-performing workforce that continuously improves its productivity
- furthers the goals of the Agency and Program Area EEO plans, implements an active Civil Rights/EEO program within the work unit, and demonstrates concern for the career development of staff, as well as the pursuit of individual career goals
- participates regularly in various individual development efforts to enhance performance and increase knowledge of current issues affecting the role of Federal managers
- communicates effective guidance and direction of activities with clear goals and objectives

Note: Staff accomplishment of assignments is results-driven and timely, resulting in superior performance.

- ensures that human capital strategies and initiatives are supporting the Agency's work on the other governmentwide management initiatives, such as supporting E-Gov initiatives, demonstrating budget and performance integration, and demonstrating sound financial practices.

AASA Categories (Continued)**D Outstanding Team Accomplishment Award**

Description: An award granted annually to teams who worked on a specific significant project as a team, contributing to FSA's goals and objectives. The team may include members from different units within FSA or from outside FSA. Working as a team should be emphasized, rather than individual effort.

Criteria: Outstanding accomplishment of objectives beyond normal expectations in activities are as follows:

- demonstrates outstanding performance in meeting or exceeding all team objectives
- demonstrates results with specific benefits to FSA and/or USDA
- significant contributions made by each team member are included in the nomination.

E Excellence in Achieving Goals and Objectives Award

Description: An award granted annually to a specific FSA employee or FSA work unit, for their efforts in contributing to FSA's goals and objectives.

Criteria: Outstanding accomplishment of objectives beyond normal expectations in activities are as follows:

- demonstrates outstanding performance in meeting strategic objectives
- demonstrates outstanding performance in meeting program goals
- employee's accomplishments are explicitly linked to and in support of 1 of the Agency strategic objectives or a management initiative, defined in the FSA Strategic Plan
- establishes program goals that improve the agency performance in relation to the strategic objectives, and institutes a system to measure and/or monitor these goals resulting in improving Agency performance.

AASA Categories (Continued)**F Heroism and Emergency Response Award**

Description: An award granted annually to an FSA employee or team who performed acts of unusual selflessness or heroism in the line of duty.

Criteria: Outstanding accomplishment of objectives beyond normal expectations in activities are as follows:

- demonstrates an outstanding level of accomplishment in responding to floods, fires, storms, earthquakes, disease outbreaks, or other conditions requiring emergency response
- provides assistance to Agency customers experiencing critical needs that resulted in a marked improvement to the critical situation.

G Newcomer Award

Description: An award granted annually to an employee with less than 5 years of FSA service that shows growth, potential, and dedication in making significant contributions to FSA.

Criteria: Outstanding accomplishment of objectives beyond normal expectations in activities are as follows:

- less than 5 years of FSA service
- exceeds expectation in job performance
- shows initiative in improving business practices
- demonstrates excellent customer service internally and externally.

Checklist for Completion of Honorary Award Nominations

Nominations must include the following:

- the AASA category
- the following information on the individual being nominated:
 - name

Note: Names should be written exactly how the individual wishes it to appear in the booklet.

- position title
- organization (Deputy Administrator, Division)
- telephone number
- FAX number
- mailing address

Note: If the nomination is for a team, include this information for all team members.

- a narrative justification to support the award nomination must include the following:
 - time period covered
 - accomplishments
 - scope of accomplishment
 - impact of accomplishment

- a citation exactly as it should appear in the booklet.

Note: Ensure that the citation does **not** exceed 25 words and is appropriate for public recognition.

Documenting AASA

AASA documentation should justify reasons why an individual's or team'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 reviewing committees 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
- 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.