

For: FSA Employees

Farm Service Agency (FSA) FY 2019 Non-Rating-Based (Spot Cash and Extra Effort) Awards

Approved by: Administrator



1 Overview

A Background

Award programs are essential to the success of any organization. The award program should include meaningful distinctions in relative performance and reward top performers using appropriate recognition. FSA awards policy is documented in 5-PM, Performance Management Program.

B Purpose

This notice:

- advises FSA supervisors to recognize employee accomplishments (extra efforts) for FY 2019 with cash awards, time off awards (TOA's), or a combination of cash award/TOA
- provides guidance for:
 - individual special act or group awards
 - spot awards
 - time off awards.

C Labor-Management Obligations

Where exclusive representation exists, bargaining may be requested to the extent allowed by applicable statutes and according to contract language. Negotiation issues raised **must** be resolved before implementation of this notice for employees in that collective bargaining unit.

Disposal Date

November 1, 2019

Distribution

All FSA employees; State Offices relay to
County Offices

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1 Overview (Continued)

D Effective Date

All FY 2019 non-rating-based (Spot Cash and Extra Effort) awards must be entered by pay period (PP) 16 (ending August 17, 2019).

No later than August 17, 2019, States must notify DAFO by email of Extra Effort/Spot Cash award funding that will not be used in FY 2019. The DAFO contact for this notification is Allison Bridges at allison.bridges@usda.gov. Additionally, in order to meet fiscal year-end close requirements, States should make every effort to have all Extra Effort/Spot Cash awards loaded in the system by August 17, 2019. The final date for all awards to be in the system is September 1, 2019. Please make every effort to get awards in the system prior to the September 1st cut-off.

E Award Justifications

Justifications for the non-rating-based accomplishment awards must clearly state:

- the employee or group accomplishment
- the time period covered by the accomplishment
- how the accomplishment exceeded normal expectations of the employee(s') role
- the result or outcome of the accomplishment
- the calculation of measurable or non-measurable benefits.

Any split between cash and a TOA should be documented in the justification and addressed in the calculation of benefits.

F Publishing Awards

FSA encourages supervisors to use the various resources available to them to publicize the accomplishments and contributions of their employees. When publicizing awards, the employee's name and the general type of award (extra effort, or spot), along with information, such as a description of the accomplishments, can be published.

Example: An acceptable method for publishing awards would be a combined list titled, "Cash Awards, TOA's, or Cash Award/TOA" with the recipients' names.

G Contacts for TOA's and/or Cash Awards

If there are questions about processing TOA's or cash awards, contact the appropriate servicing personnel office (SPO) as follows.

Location/Office	SPO Contact
State or County Office	State Administrative Officer (AO)
Headquarters	Yolanda Provost or Michael Braswell, HRD, Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) Business Center

If there are EmpowHR system questions related to awards, contact the EmpowHR Help Desk at 816-823-3996.

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2 Individual or Group Special Act (Extra Effort) and Spot Awards

A General

Extra effort and spot awards are non-rating-based awards that are given based on employee accomplishments or contributions on a short-term assignment, project, or detail. Funds for extra effort or spot awards are allocated based on funding availability. **Each award pool will receive an allocation by memorandum from the Budget Division, FPAC Business Center.**

- Extra effort awards are monetary awards that recognize individuals or groups who make a significant one-time contribution (special project, assignment, detail) to FSA's mission or goals. Extra effort award amounts can range from \$50 to more than \$10,000 depending on the value of the benefits and the application of the contributions to the Government. Award amounts over \$5,500 require approval of the Secretary.
- Spot awards are monetary awards designed to grant immediate recognition to individuals or teams of employees for their special contributions. Spot awards are generally for a special contribution over a relatively short period of time. Spot awards range from \$50 to \$750 and will be issued immediately; and the total amount of the spot award (including taxes) will be documented on your pay statement. Only enter the award amount in EmpowHR for the spot award. For budgetary purposes, supervisors should deduct, from their spot award budget, the spot award amount plus taxes. For taxes, add 55 percent if the State has no income taxes, or 60 percent if the State has income taxes.

Example: \$500 award (entered in EmpowHR) + \$300 taxes = \$800 deducted from the spot award budget.

Note: TOA's can be granted (instead of cash) to recognize employee accomplishments or contributions. TOA's are subject to limitations in subparagraph 3 B.

B Award Amounts

Funds for extra effort or spot awards are allocated by Budget. These award funds will **only** be used to award employees for their short-term accomplishments or contributions using extra effort and spot cash awards. The agency has allocated approximately \$4 million to support non-performance-based awards for the entire agency. The allotment provided is based on an analysis of available funding for non-rating-based awards.

For State Offices, States will be notified by the FPAC Business Center Budget Division via memo as to their (Fund 84 and Fund 87) allotment levels.

For Headquarters, Deputy Administrators will be notified by the FPAC Business Center Budget Division via memo as to their allotment levels.

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2 Individual or Group Special Act (Extra Effort) and Spot Awards (Continued)

C Justification

Extra effort and spot awards require written justification regardless of the award amount. Written justification **must**:

- accompany the award recommendation
- describe the employee's accomplishments or contributions
- clearly reflect to the approving official where the award falls on the Non-Measurable Benefits Scale (Exhibit 1)
- follow the format in Exhibit 2.

D Current Practices

If an office currently has a system in place for handling extra effort or spot awards, such as a review committee, the system may be kept as long as the provisions of the system comply with this notice.

3 Time Off Awards

A Award Preference

FSA recognizes that time off is a valuable tool in rewarding the workforce. TOA's may be preferred by employees instead of cash awards.

B TOA Hour Limitations

TOA's are granted to employees in the form of time off from work without loss of pay or charge to leave. Full-time employees may:

- be granted up to 80 hours of time off during a leave year
- not be granted more than 40 hours for a single achievement.

TOA's **must** be scheduled and used within 26 PP's from the effective date of processing. After 26 PP's, unused time off will be automatically forfeited and may **not** be restored or otherwise substituted.

Part-time employees or employees with uncommon tours of duty may be granted up to the average number of hours worked in a PP or the employee's scheduled tour of duty. This figure should be prorated for part-time employees or employees with uncommon tours of duty.

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4 Processing TOA’s Using EmpowHR

A Recommending Individual Responsibilities

Recommending individuals using EmpowHR will take the following steps to nominate an employee for a TOA. See paragraph 5 for making recommendations **without** using EmpowHR.

Step	Action	
1	Prepare the TOA recommendation in EmpowHR (Manager Self Service - Tasks - Awards).	
2	IF the recommendation...	THEN EmpowHR forwards the TOA recommendation...
	is within the supervisor’s approval authority (up to 10 hours time off)	directly to the SPO for processing.
	exceeds the supervisor’s approval authority (10 or more hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">to the supervisor’s supervisor for approvalto the SPO for processing after approval.

B Supervisor Review and Approval or Disapproval

After receiving notification from the approving official, the recipient’s supervisor will:

- inform the employee of the decision
- if approved, let the employee know the TOA will be reflected on their National Finance Center (NFC) Employee Personal Page (EPP).

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4 Processing TOA’s Using EmpowHR (Continued)

C Approval Official Responsibilities

The approving official will review the TOA recommendation and make one of the following decisions.

IF the approving official...	THEN...
approves the recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EmpowHR forwards the recommendation to the SPO for processing • notify, verbally or by e-mail, the recipient’s supervisor and recommending individual of action.
modifies and approves the recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note changes • EmpowHR forwards the recommendation to the SPO for processing • notify, verbally or by e-mail, the recipient’s supervisor and recommending individual of action.
disapproves the recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EmpowHR forwards the recommendation to the SPO where it will be canceled • notify the supervisor verbally or by e-mail.

5 Processing TOA’s Not Using EmpowHR

A Recommending Individual Responsibilities

The recommending individual will take the following steps to nominate an employee for TOA.

Step	Action
1	Prepare the TOA recommendation on AD-287-2.
2	Sign AD-287-2.
3	Forward AD-287-2 and all supporting documents to the recipient’s supervisor.

B Action After Approval Received

After receiving notification that the TOA has been approved from the approving official, the supervisor can inform the employee:

- of the decision
- that the TOA will be reflected on their EPP after SPO processing.

6 Extra Effort and Spot Awards

A TOA and Transfer Between CO and GS

If an employee is transferred between the FSA CO and GS systems and they have unused TOA hours, the TOA hours will be dropped by NFC. To restore TOA hours, the SPO will process another TOA, in the amount of the unused hours, for the employee after their transfer is complete.

Note: The SPO will **only** process another TOA if the employee is transferring **within FSA**.

B Connecting to NFC's EPP

To access your EPP, go to <https://www.nfc.usda.gov> and under "Application Launchpad", CLICK "My EPP" icon. On the Employee Personal Page Warning Screen, read message and then CLICK "I Agree".

On the EPP Log-In Screen, follow directions to log into EPP using one of the following options:

- enter user ID and password and CLICK "Log In"
- CLICK "New User Sign Up"
- CLICK "eAuth Log In".

Note: For user ID or password assistance, contact the EPP Help Desk directly, as follows:

- CLICK either "Forgot Your User ID?" or "Forgot Your Password?"
- e-mail osc.etix@usda.gov
- telephone toll free at 800-767-9641
- telephone at 504-426-6435.

To view leave balances in EPP, under "Home", "Personal Info", CLICK "**Leave**".

Note: To ensure privacy, close all other tabs on the screen.

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7 Processing Awards Other Than TOA’s Using EmpowHR

A Recommending Individual Responsibilities

Anyone may be the recommending individual for an extra effort or spot award. Recommending individuals using EmpowHR will take the following steps to nominate an employee for an award. See paragraph 8 for making recommendations without using EmpowHR.

Step	Action	
1	Prepare the award recommendation in EmpowHR. Include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the timeframe and justification for the award • the accounting information. <p>Note: Do not use the stored accounting option</p>	
2	IF the recommendation is by a...	THEN forward the award recommendation...
	nonsupervisor	to recommending individual’s supervisor.
	supervisor and recommended amount is within supervisor’s approval authority (up to \$750 in cash and up to 10-hour TOA)	directly to the SPO for processing.
	supervisor and recommended amount exceeds supervisor’s approval authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to the supervisor’s supervisor for approval • then to the SPO for processing after approval.
	<p>Note: In all cases, before creating the award recommendation, the recommending individual must notify the recipient’s supervisor of the award recommendation for concurrence.</p>	

B Supervisor Review and Approval/Disapproval

The recipient’s supervisor will review the award recommendation and notify the recommending individual of their decision.

After receiving notification from the approving official, the recipient’s supervisor will:

- inform the employee and recommending individual of the decision
- if the award was approved, let the employee know the award will be reflected on their EPP after processing by the SPO.

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7 Processing Awards Other Than TOA's Using EmpowHR (Continued)

C Approving Official Responsibilities

When an award is recommended by a supervisor that exceeds the amount authorized for supervisory approval, an approving official is required. The approving official will review the award recommendation and make one of the following decisions.

IF the approving official...	THEN...
approves the recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• forward the award recommendation to the SPO for processing• notify the recipient's supervisor and recommending individual of action, verbally or by e-mail.
modifies and approves the recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• note changes• forward the award recommendation to the SPO for processing• notify the recipient's supervisor and recommending individual of action, verbally or by e-mail.
disapproves the recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• forward the award recommendation to the SPO where it will be canceled• notify the recipient's supervisor, verbally or by e-mail.

Note: The extra effort and spot award amount will be deducted from the approving official's extra effort and spot awards allotment.

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8 Processing Awards Other Than TOA’s Not Using EmpowHR

A Recommending Individual Responsibilities

Anyone may be the recommending individual for an extra effort or spot award. The recommending individual will take the following steps to nominate an employee for an award.

Step	Action				
1	Prepare the award recommendation on AD-287-2.				
2	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>IF recommending for...</td> <td>THEN...</td> </tr> <tr> <td>an extra effort or spot award</td> <td>prepare a written justification.</td> </tr> </table>	IF recommending for...	THEN...	an extra effort or spot award	prepare a written justification.
IF recommending for...	THEN...				
an extra effort or spot award	prepare a written justification.				
3	Sign AD-287-2.				
4	Forward AD-287-2 and all supporting documents to the recipient’s supervisor.				

B Recipient’s Supervisor

The recipient’s supervisor will review the award recommendation and make one of the following decisions.

IF the recipient’s supervisor...	THEN...
approves the recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sign AD-287-2 • forward the award recommendation to the approving official.
modifies and approves the recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note changes • sign AD-287-2 • forward the award recommendation to the approving official.
disapproves the recommendation	attach a note to AD-287-2, or note can be done by e-mail, and return to the recommending individual.

After receiving notification that the award has been approved from the approving official:

- inform the employee of the decision
- let the employee know the award will be reflected on their EPP after processing by the SPO.

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8 Processing Awards Other Than TOA's Not Using EmpowHR (Continued)

C Approving Official Responsibilities

The approving official will review the award recommendation and make one of the following decisions.

IF the approving official...	THEN...
approves the recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• sign AD-287-2• forward the award recommendation to the SPO• notify the recipient's supervisor and recommending individual of action.
modifies and approves the recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• note changes• sign AD-287-2• forward the award recommendation to the SPO• notify the recipient's supervisor and recommending individual of action.
disapproves the recommendation	attach a note to AD-287-2, or note can be done by e-mail, stating the reason for disapproval, and return one copy to the recipient's supervisor and one copy to the recommending individual.

Extra Effort and Spot Award Benefits Scales

The following table provides the benefits scale for extra effort and spot awards.

Non-measurable Benefits Scale			
Value of Benefits	Application		
	Limited	Broad	General
	Impacts the public interest, or a specific small work unit, including a division or region.	Impacts the public interest, several regional areas, or an entire agency.	Impacts the public interest, more than one agency, or the entire department.
Small to Moderate	\$50 - \$325	\$325 - \$650	\$650 - \$1,300
Moderate to Substantial	\$325 - \$650	\$650 - \$1,300	\$1,300 - \$3,150
Substantial to Extended	\$1,000 - \$2,500	\$2,500 - \$5,500	\$5,500 - \$10,000 **

Measurable Benefits Scale	
Benefit	Award
Up to \$10,000	10 percent of the benefits.
\$10,001 to \$100,000	\$1,000 for the first \$10,000 in benefits, plus 3 percent of benefits over \$10,000.
\$100,001 or more	\$3,700 for the first \$100,000 in benefits, plus .005 of benefits over \$100,000. The award amount should not exceed the recipient's annual salary.

** Any award over \$5,500 **requires** the Secretary's approval.

TOA Scale	
Value of the Employee's Contribution	Hours To Be Awarded
Small to moderate contributions that helped to ease a backlog or completion of a special project that benefited primarily the employee's home office.	1 to 10 hours
Moderate to substantial contributions that helped an entire division, region, or other large geographic area.	11 to 40 hours

Example of Extra Effort and Spot Award Justification

Notes: All extra effort and spot awards, regardless of amount **unless** otherwise specified in a Union Agreement, require a separate written justification.

All other awards justification will be entered in EmpowHR using the drop-down list choices, when supervisors input the award information.

The following is an outline that describes the sections and wording to justify an award:

“During the period of [mmdyyy to mmdyyy], [Employee/Group Name], [description of accomplishment and/or list of duties and accomplishment the employee has done to deserve this award].

This exceeded expectations as identified in the current performance plan by: [As applicable.]

[Improving quality.]

[Timely completion of the project.]

[Increasing productivity.]

[Overcoming adverse obstacles or working under unusual circumstances.]

[Using unusual creativity.]

[Saving the Government time and/or money.]

[Increasing program effectiveness.]

As a result: [As applicable.]

[Project acceptance.]

[Savings in time, money, and/or material. More efficiency.]

[Effectiveness.]

[Technological advancement.]

[Productivity increase.]

[Improved levels of cooperation that will result in...]

Therefore, we propose an award of [amount and/or hours].”