

For: FSA Employees

FSA FY 2022 Achievement Award Guidance

Approved by: Administrator



1 Overview

A Background

In FY 2021, USDA transitioned to the new two-tier (pass/fail) performance and awards system using the Enterprise Performance Management Application (EPMA). Most of the USDA workforce transitioned to the new pass/fail performance management which recognizes employees with achievement awards, including spot awards, individual special act or service/extra effort awards, and time-off awards (TOA) based on FPAC employee accomplishments throughout FY 2022.

FY 2022 total non-executive (GS and FSA CO) award spending is capped at 2.5 percent of the respective agency’s aggregate salaries (defined as aggregate salaries, not including benefits for onboard non-executive positions as of September 30, 2021).

FPAC guidance, “Employee Performance and Awards” is found at [fpac-fy2022-performance-management-awards-guidance.pdf \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov/fpac-fy2022-performance-management-awards-guidance.pdf).

B Purpose

This notice:

- advises FSA supervisors to recognize employee accomplishments for FY 2022 with cash awards, time off awards (TOA’s), or a combination of cash award and TOA
- provides guidance for:
 - individual special act
 - TOA’s.

Disposal Date	Distribution
November 1, 2022	All FSA 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 and according to contract language. Negotiation issues raised **must** be resolved before implementation of this notice for employees in that collective bargaining unit.

D Effective Date

All FY 2022 achievement (spot cash and extra effort) awards must be entered and processed by pay period (PP) 17, ending August 27, 2022.

State Offices must notify DAFO by e-mail of extra effort/spot cash award funding that will not be used in FY 2022. Notification must be sent to April MacDonald at april.macdonald@usda.gov no later than September 1, 2022. To meet fiscal year-end close requirements, State Offices must have all extra effort/spot cash awards processed in the system before August 27, 2022, as this is the final date for awards to be loaded and processed using FY 2022 funding.

E Award Justifications

Justifications in EmpowHR (or on the [Form AD-287-2](#)) for achievement 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, using the appropriate benefits scale in Exhibit 1 that describes how the award amount was determined.

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

Note: Supervisors are responsible for ensuring adequate award justification is included in the award request. Awards requests with insufficient justification will not be processed until the justification meets the above outlined criteria.

1 Overview (Continued)

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 (spot cash or extra effort), 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 Purchasing Mementos for Employees

Some employees value a memento more than other types of recognition, including cash awards or TOA’s. Offices may spend up to 15 percent of their achievement award pool on mementos for employees. Before purchasing mementos offices must develop a written proposal for the memento program and submit it to the national office for approval. States will submit plans to Mark Warnick at mark.warnick@usda.gov and Headquarter Offices will submit plans to Kara Napier at kara.napier@usda.gov.

Purchasing all employees a polo shirt, jacket, or other memento awards all employees equally, the high performers and low performers, and does not make distinctions based on the level of performance. This practice does **not** meet OPM requirements.

H 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	Lisa Slade, Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) Business Center, HRD

If there are EmpowHR system questions related to awards, headquarters employees may contact the Employee Care Center at 855-344-4793, or submit a ticket in the ECC Portal at https://usdafpacbc.servicenowservices.com/eccportal?id=ecc_portal. State Office employees may contact the DAFO PPOD ATEAM at sm.fpac.fsa.dafo.ppod.ateam@usda.gov.

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

A General

Extra effort and spot awards are achievement 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. **Headquarter Offices will receive an allocation by memorandum from the FPAC Business Center, Budget Division (BUD) and State and County Offices will receive an allocation by memorandum from DAFO.**

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

A General (Continued)

- 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 \$100 to more than \$10,000 depending on the value of the benefits and the application of the contributions to the Government. See Exhibit 1.
- 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 \$100 to \$750; and the total amount of the spot award (including taxes) will be documented on the employee's 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. Spot awards require first-level supervisor approval if the requestor is not the first-level supervisor.

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

Note: More than one spot or extra effort award can be awarded to an individual employee during the performance year. TOA's can also be granted (instead of cash) to recognize employee accomplishments or contributions. TOA's are subject to limitations in subparagraph 3 B.

B Employee Eligibility

An employee's most recent performance rating, if applicable, must have been "Pass/Fully Successful" to be eligible for an achievement (including monetary and time-off) award. Employees who were on leave restrictions within the 52 weeks prior to the award effective date are not eligible for a TOA.

See section 6 of the [FPAC guidance](#) for examples of prohibited award bases/scenarios.

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.

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

D Award Authorization and Approval

The recommending official is either the employee’s first or second level supervisor of record and is responsible for ensuring an award is not duplicative.

The authorizing official is determined by the award amount, as described in the table below. **Approval levels are determined by reviewing the previous 52-week period of cumulative award amounts/hours.**

The following table to provides the authorization requirements for monetary and time off awards.

Discrete or cumulative awards within a consecutive 52 week period, up to:		Organizational authorization levels are no lower than:
\$750	and/or 8 hours	the immediate supervisor.
\$2,000	and/or 20 hours	the 2 nd level supervisor.
\$4,000	and/or 40 hours	the first SES in the employee’s chain of command. <u>1/</u>
\$6,000	and/or 80 hours	the agency or staff office head.
\$8,000		the subcabinet official.
\$10,000		the Secretary. <u>2/</u>

1/ DAFO is considered the first SES in the employee’s chain of command for all FSA State and County Office employees.

2/ An award for a highly exceptional and unusually outstanding suggestion, invention, superior accomplishment, or other meritorious effort exceeding \$10,000 per individual requires the Secretary’s approval, as well as authorization from OPM prior to payment. Mission areas, agencies, and staff offices must consult with OHRM before initiating such a request to ensure it complies with current OPM guidance.

See [FPAC guidance](#) for specific direction on any award package that requires authorization at the Under Secretary and Secretary level.

E Award Amounts

Funds for extra effort or spot awards are allocated by BUD. These award funds will **only** be used to award employees for their short-term accomplishments or contributions using extra effort and spot cash awards.

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

E Award Amounts (Continued)

Award amounts must be commensurate with the contribution(s) and consistent with the applicable benefits identified in Exhibit 1. Award amounts must be given in a fair and consistent manner. Monetary awards may never exceed 20 percent of the employee's rate of basic pay.

F 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.

Employees may carry over up to 80 hours of TOA at the end of each leave year. Any hours in excess of 80 are forfeited. Because a TOA is not annual leave, it cannot be transferred to another Federal employee under the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program

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.

4 Initiating 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) ensuring that the justification is included, and the recommended TOA adheres to guidance in Exhibit 1.	
2	IF the recommendation...	THEN EmpowHR forwards the TOA recommendation...
	is within the supervisor’s approval authority (up to 8 hours time off)	directly to the SPO for processing.
	exceeds the supervisor’s approval authority (8 or more hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to the supervisor’s supervisor for approval • to 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 Employee Personal Page (EPP).

4 Initiating TOA’s Using EmpowHR (Continued)

C Approval Official Responsibilities

The approving official will review the TOA recommendation and make 1 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 Initiating 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 ensuring that the justification is included, and the recommended TOA adheres to guidance in Exhibit 1.
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 Initiating Extra Effort and Spot Awards 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.

Note: Spot awards for CO employees cannot be processed through 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. Note: Do not use the stored accounting option.	
2	IF the recommendation is by a... nonsupervisory recommending individual supervisor and recommended amount is within supervisor’s approval authority (up to a cumulative amount of \$750 in cash and up to 8-hour TOA over the past 52-week period) supervisor and recommended amount exceeds supervisor’s approval authority	THEN forward the award recommendation... to recommending individual’s supervisor. directly to the SPO for processing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to the appropriate individual for approval based on the cumulative award amount • then to the SPO for processing after approval.
Note: In all cases, before creating the award recommendation, the recommending individual must notify the recipient’s supervisor of the award recommendation for concurrence.		

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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6 Initiating Extra Effort and Spot Awards 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 1 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.

7 Initiating Extra Effort and Spot Awards 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	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.	

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7 Initiating Extra Effort and Spot Awards Not Using EmpowHR (Continued)

B Recipient's Supervisor

The recipient's supervisor will review the award recommendation and make 1 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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7 Initiating Extra Effort and Spot Awards Not Using EmpowHR (Continued)

C Approving Official Responsibilities

The approving official will review the award recommendation and make 1 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 1 copy to the recipient's supervisor and 1 copy to the recommending individual.

Extra Effort and Spot Award Measurable and Non-Measurable Benefits Scales

Use the following Measurable Benefits Scale when a contribution, suggestion, or invention results in a quantifiable benefit, such as a process improvement that saves a program a particular monetary amount. The benefit is calculated based on the first 52 weeks of the contribution, invention, or of the implemented improvement or suggestion.

Benefit	Award
Up to \$10,000	10 percent of the benefits
\$10,001 - \$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 0.005 percent of benefits over \$100,000. Award amount may not exceed 20 percent of recipient’s basic pay.

Use the following Non-Measurable Benefits Scales when a contribution, suggestion or invention results in benefits which cannot be readily quantified, such as contributions described in the examples after Table 1.

Table 1: Non-Measurable Benefits Scale for Monetary Awards

Scope	Type of Contribution			
	Limited	Moderate	Significant	Substantial
Level 1	Up to \$250	Up to \$500	Up to \$1,000	N/A
Level 2	Up to \$500	Up to \$750	Up to \$1,500	N/A
Level 3	N/A	Up to \$1,000	Up to \$2,000	Up to \$3,500
Level 4	N/A	Up to \$1,250	Up to \$3,000	Up to \$5,000
Level 5	N/A	Up to \$1,500	Up to \$4,000	Up to \$7,500
Level 6	N/A	Up to \$2,000	Up to \$5,000	Up to \$10,000

Table 2: Non-Measurable Benefits Scale for Time Off Awards

Scope	Type of Contribution			
	Limited	Moderate	Significant	Substantial
Level 1	Up to 4 hours	Up to 8 hours	Up to 16 hours	N/A
Level 2	Up to 8 hours	Up to 10 hours	Up to 20 hours	N/A
Level 3	N/A	Up to 12 hours	Up to 24 hours	Up to 40 hours
Level 4	N/A	Up to 20 hours	Up to 30 hours	Up to 40 hours
Level 5	N/A	Up to 30 hours	Up to 40 hours	Up to 40 hours
Level 6	N/A	Up to 40 hours	Up to 40 hours	Up to 40 hours

Extra Effort and Spot Award Measurable and Non-Measurable Benefits Scales (Continued)

Table 3: Key to Types of Contribution

This table provides examples of the types of contributions that result in a benefit that cannot be readily quantified.

Type	Examples
Limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisted a colleague on a project to help meet a deadline. • Provided support for a specific initiative by scheduling meetings, tracking documents through approval, following up on deliverable due dates, etc. • Served in an “acting” capacity for two pay periods (without a temporary promotion). • Served as a team member on a short-term project.
Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed an administrative process improvement. • Provided technical expertise and guidance to a project team. • Performed an absent colleague’s duties for 60 days, as well as the awardee’s own workload. • Served as the lead on a short-term project. • Served as a fully contributing team member on a large, long-term project.
Significant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed a strategic program enhancement which facilitated Mission Area, agency, or staff office decision-making, or improved delivery to external customers. • Delivered an important project with high quality on a very short timeline. • Served as the lead on a large, long-term project, accountable for the results.
Substantial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Led an interagency initiative to develop a new methodology to improve program delivery to USDA’s external stakeholders. • Led a research team that developed a ground-breaking agricultural industry innovation.

Extra Effort and Spot Award Measurable and Non-Measurable Benefits Scales (Continued)

Table 4: Key to Scope of the Contribution’s Impact

This table provides examples of the levels of scope related to contributions that result in a benefit that cannot be readily quantified.

Scope	Definitions of Levels
Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operations of the immediate office or Ranger District. • The employees of an entire State or Region up to 300 employees. • Equivalent.
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operations of a division, service center agency’s District or an entire small State or Forest. • The services delivered to the local community. • The employees of an entire State, Region, agency, or staff office up to 3,000 employees. • Equivalent.
Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operations of an entire medium State or Forest, or a small agency or staff office (up to 3,000 employees). • The services delivered to an entire small State, or delivered by multiple agencies to the local community or service center agency’s entire District. • A significant mission-centric program delivered State or Forest-wide. • A subset of the general public equivalent to an entire small State. • The employees of an entire medium agency (3,001 - 10,000) employees. • Equivalent.

Extra Effort and Spot Award Measurable and Non-Measurable Benefits Scales (Continued)

Scope	Definitions of Levels
Level 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operations of an entire large State or Forest, multiple States, a Region, an entire medium agency (3,001 –10,000 employees), or all the offices of multiple agencies serving an entire State. • The services delivered by multiple States, or by multiple agencies to the entire State. • A mission program delivered agency-wide. • A subset of the general public equivalent to an entire medium or large State. • The employees of multiple agencies, or an entire large agency (over 10,000 employees). • Equivalent.
Level 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operations of an entire large agency (over 10,000 employees), multiple agencies, multiple Regions, or a bureau or independent agency outside USDA. • The services delivered by multiple Regions. • A program delivered Department-wide. • A subset of the general public equivalent to multiple States. • The employees of the entire Department. • Equivalent.
Level 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operations of the entire Department. • A significant mission-centric program delivered Department-wide. • The general public of the entire Nation. • Equivalent

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 award justifications will be entered in EmpowHR using the drop-down list choices, when supervisors input the award information. For CO spot awards, the justification must be entered on the [AD-287-2](#).

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

“During the period of [mmddyyyy to mmddyyyy], [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...]

This accomplishment is commensurate with a [Limited/Moderate/Significant/Substantial] Level [#] contribution.

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