

PERSONNEL

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MSA Policy #04-01

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SF-182 – Training Form

PERSONNEL

Awards

General information

Assigning Case Numbers - Case numbers are assigned by Area Personnel Office

The full 8-digit Award Case Number consists of the following:

Positions 1-2, Agency Code = 64 (Mid South Area)

Position 3, Fiscal Year Award Effective = 1 (for FY 2001)

Position 4, A "I" for Individual Award or "G" for Group Award

Position 5-8, Sequential Case Number from the list assigned by Marie Bishop

Who is Approving Official?

Area Director must approve Employee Suggestion Awards. Spot, Extra Effort, Performance, Time Off Awards and Quality Step Increases may be approved by Research Leaders, Center Directors, and Location Administrative Officer AS LONG AS THE RECOMMENDING INDIVIDUAL AND APPROVING OFFICIAL ARE DIFFERENT PEOPLE.

CHECK WITH YOUR LOCATION ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER (LAO) FOR PROCESSING COMPLETED AWARD FORMS.

Key to Award Amounts

1. **Extra Effort Award**

Apply the Contribution in Block 11 of the AD-287-2 Award form to the Scale on page 12 of the Guide for Employee Recognition, and itemized in Block 15, and the result is the Award Amount in Block 14. However, if the Contribution in Block 11 can be measured in terms of time saved, money saved, or expenditures avoided, use the Scale on page 11 of the Guide to determine the Award Amount in Block 14. The contribution (and justification, if necessary) must support the applicable Benefits Scale and the Award Amount.

2. **Spot Award**

Apply the Contribution in Block 11 of the Award Form to the Scale on page 12 of the Guide (and itemized in Block 15), and the result is the Award Amount in Block 14. The Contribution must support the Benefits Scale and Award Amount.

3. **Time-Off Award**

Apply the Contribution in Block 11 of the Award Form to the Scale on Page 10 of the Guide (and itemized in Block 15), and the result is the Award Amount in Block 14. The Contribution (and justification, if necessary) must support the Time-Off Scale and number of Time-Off Hours.

4. **Performance Bonus Award**

Apply the Contribution in Block 11 of the Award Form to the Scale on page 12 of the Guide, and the result is the Award Amount in Block 19. The Contribution (and justification, if necessary) must support the Benefits Scale and Award Amount.

Justification Statements

Justification Statements are required in addition to completing Block 11 of the Award form:

1. For any award amount over \$500
2. If giving over 10 Time-Off hours
3. A separate Performance Appraisal narrative explaining how the employee met the Elements can also be used as the Justification Statement.
4. Appendix C of the Guide for Employee Recognition provides a justification outline that may be helpful.

Award Limitations

1. Spot Award Range to a maximum of \$500 per award.
2. Time-Off Award Employee may be granted a maximum of 40 hours of time off for a SINGLE contribution. Employee may be granted a TOTAL of 80 hours of time off during a LEAVE YEAR. The leave must be used within 1 year after the effective date of the award. Award is effective on the first pay period following approval. After the 1-year period, any unused time off is forfeited.
3. Performance Bonus Award Employee must receive a Performance Appraisal Summary of Fully Successful or higher. Award amount cannot exceed 10% of an employees annual salary. Employee can receive only one Performance Bonus Award per Performance Appraisal Cycle.
4. Quality Step Increase Employee must receive Outstanding Performance Appraisal Summary Rating. Not appropriate if employee appointed or promoted within the past year. A minimum of 52 weeks must elapse between QSIs.

References:

- USDA Guide for Employee Recognition (Blue Book)



United States Department of Agriculture

Research, Education, and Economics
Agricultural Research Service

MSA Policy #04-01

October 7, 2004

SUBJECT: Policy on Awards

TO: Mid South Area All

FROM: Edgar G. King /s/ Edgar G. King
Area Director, Mid South Area

Awarding performance is a critical part of personnel management. The Mid South Area Office supports the need to recognize individuals that perform at the outstanding or superior level or otherwise display extra effort. However, we also are concerned that these awards are consistent across the Mid South Area. So, we developed a Mid South Area Award Policy after reviewing the USDA award policy and award policies in other ARS Areas.

The following applies to approval of Cash, Quality Step Increase (QSI), and Time Off Awards in the Mid South Area. If no Center Director (CD) or Laboratory Director (LD) is present, the responsibilities shift to the Research Leader (RL) level.

1. All recognition must be linked to Agency's mission, goals, and objectives.
2. There should be no preconceived distribution of awards.
3. All employees who receive an Outstanding rating for their annual performance must be offered a choice of either Cash, Quality Step Increase (QSI), or Time Off award. Employees already at Step 10 of the grade and thus not qualifying for a QSI must be given a choice of Cash or Time Off. An employee cannot receive more than one form of award for a single performance event.

Employees may receive only one QSI within any 52-week period. QSIs are based on the grade level in which performance is measured.

Consequently, employees promoted or reassigned to duties near the end of the rating cycle are not eligible for QSIs. QSIs would not be appropriate for an employee in the 10th step of their grade or for someone who has announced their retirement or otherwise would not be in their position long enough to benefit from the increase. Moreover, QSIs affect future within grade increases (WGI). If a QSI will put an employee in the 4th or 7th step of their grade, then the employee's current WGI waiting period will be extended by one additional year. The 4th step is the step that begins the two-year waiting period, and the 7th step is the step that begins the three-year waiting period. Finally, QSIs should be initiated as soon as practical after the end of the rating cycle. Delaying a QSI could have an impact on an employee's eligibility for future QSIs.

4. The enclosed guideline applies for the maximum cash award for those employees receiving an Outstanding performance rating for performance cycle December 31, 2004. The guidelines are set at five percent of the salary at Step 1 of the current grade the employee is in. The enclosed table shows the amounts for GS, WS, and WG employees. The dollar amounts have been rounded up to the next \$50. This method of determining a maximum cash award is simple to implement, clear to both supervisors and employees, and reflects a realistic balance between impact and job performance. The guideline amounts will be updated annually.
5. If Time Off is selected as an award option, 40-hours off will be awarded for an Outstanding Rating.
6. Performance awards and QSIs for employees whose Outstanding performance ratings have been approved by the reviewing official may be approved by the CD/LD/RL. The approval of the Area Director will not be needed. The written justification for the Outstanding rating suffices as justification for the award.
7. All employees receiving a Superior rating must be given a cash award or a Time Off award. Cash awards should be between two-thirds (high superior) to one-half (low superior) of the amount in the Guidelines for Outstanding performance. A written justification for Cash awards is required if they are more than \$500 each. This justification must address how the employee's performance exceeds Fully Successful and why that justifies an award. Twenty-four hours off will be awarded for a Superior Rating.
8. According to the USDA Guide for Employee Recognition, Extra Effort Awards recognize specific accomplishments such as superior contribution on short-term assignment or project, an act of heroism, scientific achievement, major discovery, or cost savings. Extra Effort Awards should not be given as a result of an annual performance rating. The USDA Guide for Employee Recognition is attached for your reference.

9. Employee Recognition (<http://www.usda.gov/da/employ/recog.htm>) provides guidance on appropriate amounts for these awards. Extra Effort Awards for amounts over \$500 require a written justification explaining why the contribution is deserving of special recognition. CD/LD/RL may approve Extra Effort Awards up to \$1500 unless they are the originator of the award nomination; awards in excess of that amount and award nominations originating with the CD/LD/RL must be approved by the Area Director. CD/LD/RLs are responsible for the equitable execution of this policy within their units.
10. Extra Effort Awards, Spot Awards, and Time-Off Awards are separate from performance rating of record. However, any award proposed for an employee whose most recent performance rating was less than Fully Successful must be justified in writing and can be approved only by the Area Director. Such approvals will be very rare. Supervisors are encouraged to use Spot Awards, Time-Off Awards, and other non-monetary recognition as appropriate. No written justification is required for Spot Awards or for Time-Off Awards of 10 hours or less or other non-monetary awards. These awards are approved by the CD/LD/RL except where the award nomination is originated by the CD/LD/RL.
11. The Area Director has the authority to approve awards up to \$3,000.

2 Enclosures:

Fixed Cash Award for Outstanding Performance Rating Table for Calendar Year 2004
USDA Guide for Employee Recognition

cc w/encl:

E. B. Knipling
Helene Saylor
Deborah Brennan
Archie Tucker
Karen Brownell

**Fixed Cash Award for Outstanding Performance Rating
Calendar Year 2005**

(For Performance Cycles Ending December 31, 2005 and March 31, 2006)

GS Employees	Suggested Award Amount \$	WG Employees	Suggested Award Amount \$	WS Employees	Suggested Award Amount \$
01	900	01	950	01	1,450
02	1,000	02	1,050	02	1,550
03	1,100	03	1,150	03	1,600
04	1,250	04	1,200	04	1,700
05	1,400	05	1,300	05	1,750
06	1,550	06	1,350	06	1,850
07	1,700	07	1,400	07	1,900
08	1,900	08	1,500	08	1,950
09	2,100	09	1,550	09	2,050
10	2,300	10	1,600	10	2,100
11	2,550	11	1,700	11	2,200
12	3,000	12	1,750	12	2,350
13 & above	3,000	13 & above	1,850	13 & above	2,500

The Guiding Principles of Recognition

1. Link recognition to USDA's and agencies' mission, goals, and objectives. Recognition decisions must support defined goals and values.
2. Provide greater equity in the distribution of recognition. All USDA employees should be given an equal opportunity to be rewarded for the results of their work without regard to grade level.
3. Give recognition for specific achievements. Actions that produce positive results, rather than subjective feelings and visibility, should be rewarded.
4. Hold managers accountable for using recognition to achieve or recognize results. Employees feel strongly that managers should be responsible for ensuring recognition is specifically linked to positive actions and contributions.
5. Involve coworkers and customers in recognition decisions. Peers and customers often have a good awareness of the contribution that an employee makes, and local units should experiment with ways in which such input can be used.
6. Give recognition in a timely manner. Employees feel that recognition given in a timely manner, such as spot awards, is most effective.
7. Emphasize group recognition. Group recognition encourages teamwork and fosters the cooperation needed to address the many complex issues faced by USDA.
8. Emphasize nonmonetary recognition. Use of innovative nonmonetary recognition can create a positive work environment.
9. Keep recognition ceremonies simple and local. Employees feel that recognition given within the local unit is more meaningful than recognition from higher level offices and supervisors.
10. Give employees a choice in type of recognition they receive. Whenever possible, recipients should be allowed a choice in the type of recognition they receive.
11. Publicize recognition distribution. Agencies must be open in publicizing who receives what recognition for what actions.
12. Provide flexibility for recognition decisions at the local level. Agencies should move responsibility for recognition decisions to the local administrative level and eliminate layered review process.
13. Incorporate funding for recognition into agency budget planning for the local level. Employees feel that agencies are inconsistent in budgeting for recognition, with some agencies having no formal recognition budget.
14. Provide uniform training for managers and employees in effective use of recognition. A discussion of the recognition process should be included in all departmental and agency management training programs, and recognition guidelines should be included in the orientation package for all new employees.
16. Publish an annual recognition report. The Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) would be responsible for the report and should include in it statistical trends.

Introduction to Employee Recognition Program

What is the goal of the USDA recognition program?

The Department's recognition program is designed to fairly and equitably recognize and reward individuals and groups for excellence in service to USDA's mission.

All USDA employees are eligible for most types of recognition. This includes all full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees, regardless of appointment type. In addition, former employees whose contribution occurred when they were employed with USDA and private citizens who contributed to the mission of USDA or the Federal Government as a whole are eligible to receive recognition. Private citizens are eligible only for nonmonetary recognition.

What legal authorities govern recognition programs?

- Chapters 45, Title 5 United States Code (U.S.C.) provides authority to establish employee recognition programs (5 U.S.C. 4503); and Title 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 451.
- Regulatory requirements for performance recognition for employees in General Schedule (GS) and prevailing rate employees are found in 5 CFR Part 430. Regulatory requirements for Quality Step Increases for GS employees are found in 5 CFR Part 531.
- Regulatory requirements for Senior Executive Service Recognition are found in 5 U.S.C. 5384, 5 U.S.C. 4502 through 4503 and 5 U.S.C. 4507 through 4508.

Responsibilities

What are the Department's responsibilities for the employee recognition program?

The Office of Human Resources Management will:

- Provide policy guidance and training for agencies about the employee recognition program.
- Refer suggestions with Government-wide applicability to the Office of Personnel Management
- Establish and maintain a clearinghouse to disseminate innovative recognition practices.
- Publish an annual awards report.

Agency Heads are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the program supports the Department's mission, goals, and objectives.
- Ensuring equity in the distribution of recognition.
- Ensuring that employees are informed of recognition policies and procedures.
- Providing periodic training on the effective use of the recognition program.
- Conducting annual reviews to ensure the effective use of the recognition program.
- Emphasizing the importance of teamwork through recognition of groups.
- Incorporating funding for recognition into agency budget planning.
- Emphasizing nonmonetary recognition for specific achievements.
- Ensuring that employee recognition is publicized.
- Delegating recognition program authority and funding to the lowest level consistent with the Secretary's policies and these guidelines.
- Eliminating unnecessary levels of review to ensure timely processing of recognition.
- Encouraging innovation for nonmonetary recognition at the local level.

What are Supervisors' and Managers' responsibilities?

Supervisors and Managers are responsible for:

- Recognizing employees for specific achievements.
- Ensuring equity in the distribution of recognition.
- Considering input as appropriate from coworkers, customers, or other sources such as unions and employee organizations when making recognition decisions.
- Recognizing contributions in a timely manner.
- Emphasizing the importance of teamwork through recognition of groups.
- Emphasizing nonmonetary recognition for specific achievements.
- Promoting the recognition program by encouraging employee participation, arranging for appropriate presentations and periodically publicizing recognition activities.
- Allowing those recognized to choose the type of recognition they receive when

choices are possible.

- Forwarding suggestions and inventions promptly to the appropriate party for evaluation.
- Reviewing nominations to ensure that recognition is linked to the contribution and that the amount accurately reflects the value of the contribution rather than grade level or other nonmerit factors.

What are Agency Recognition Coordinators responsibilities?

Agency Recognition Coordinators are responsible for:

- Administering the Recognition Program based on Departmental objectives outlined in this Guide.
 - Providing support and training to employees, supervisors and managers.
 - Monitoring program effectiveness.
-

Determining Appropriate Recognition

Who can recommend and approve recognition?

Anyone who believes an employee or private citizen has made a significant contribution may make a recommendation. A nominator should consider customer and coworker input in determining if an individual is deserving of recognition. Approval levels vary depending on the amount and type of the award. Check with your agency for delegations of authority.

How do I determine which type of recognition is appropriate?

Carefully read the following sections on nonmonetary and monetary recognition and monetary performance bonuses to help you determine which type and the amount of recognition to give.

What factors determine who should receive recognition?

All USDA employees should be given an equal opportunity to be rewarded for the results of their work without regard to grade level, or other nonmerit factors.

Should there be customer/coworker involvement in the recognition system?

Yes. This is encouraged when practical. For example, information could be gathered from customer evaluation surveys, telephone contact, etc. Also, coworker input could be valuable. Each agency should consider implementing its own method for obtaining the information.

Can an employee choose which type of recognition he or she prefers?

Yes. This is encouraged when choices are possible. However, employees should be given a specific option, such as a choice between a small monetary recognition versus time off or choice of available keepsake items.

Should I give recognition to a group of employees?

Yes. Group recognition is highly advantageous because it helps to foster teamwork and equity.

Publicity

Should employee recognition be publicized?

Yes. Publicity is an integral part of the recognition program. Supervisors and employees are encouraged to work together to publicize recognition. You may wish to consider posting an announcement on a bulletin board or in an agency newsletter. Recognition presentations can also be held but they should be kept simple and local.

How can I share our agency's recognition program successes?

As agencies experiment with different types of recognition, they should inform OHRM of successful innovations. OHRM will act as a clearinghouse for such ideas so that other agencies can benefit from them.

Definitions of Recognition Categories

What are the recognition categories? What are the different types in each category?

- *Nonmonetary Extra Effort Awards*- Recognition given for a specific outstanding accomplishment such as a superior contribution on a short-term assignment or project, an act of heroism, scientific achievement, major discovery or significant cost savings.
- *Types of Nonmonetary Extra Effort Awards*- These include time off awards, keepsakes, letters of appreciation and honorary awards. Monetary Extra Effort Awards - Recognition given for a particular accomplishment such as those defined above under nonmonetary recognition. Dollar amounts are determined by the value of benefit and application of the contribution to the Department's or agencies' missions or goals. Nonmonetary recognition can be given in conjunction with monetary recognition; e.g., a plaque given in conjunction with a cash award.
- *Types of Monetary Extra Effort Awards* - These include extra effort (formerly called special act or service awards), spot, gainsharing, invention and suggestion awards.

- *Performance Bonuses* - Monetary recognition given for performing well, over the course of the rating cycle, such as consistently high productivity or high quality work.
- *Performance Bonuses* - These include lump-sum performance bonuses (formerly sustained superior performance awards) and Quality Step Increases (QSIs).

Is there any special recognition for Senior Executive Service (SES) employees?

SES career employees are eligible for performance bonuses, Presidential Rank and Extra Effort Awards (except Spot and Time Off).

SES non-career employees are eligible for Extra Effort Awards (except Spot and Time Off).

Guidance and Procedures for Recognition Categories

Nonmonetary Extra Effort Awards

What role should nonmonetary recognition play?

Nonmonetary recognition is equally valued with monetary recognition. The form of recognition is less important than the act of recognizing an accomplishment.

What kind of nonmonetary recognition is available?

Nonmonetary recognition can take many forms, including mementos, such as an engraved plaque or a framed certificate of appreciation, or time off. Following are a few examples of nonmonetary recognition: a keepsake item; a letter of appreciation; a designation, as "employee of the month;" or a mention in an "honor roll" section of an employee newsletter.

What are the Secretary's Honor Awards? Who may receive this recognition?

The Secretary's Honor Awards are the most prestigious awards that USDA can present. Employees at all grade levels and private citizens are eligible. These awards are presented annually by the Secretary to individuals for notable contributions to the Department's mission, the Nation or public service. (See Appendix A for identification of Honor Awards categories.)

What kinds of keepsakes can be given as recognition?

Medals, certificates, plaques, citations, badges, pen-and-pencil sets, pins and coffee cups are types of keepsakes that can be presented as long as the item displays the Department's name and is suitable for display.

How much money may be spent on individual nonmonetary recognition?

No more than \$250 can be spent on any one item. (\$100 or less for accomplishments of minimal value and up to \$250 for honorary/major accomplishments; examples of honorary recognition are the Secretary's Honor Awards Program, the Agricultural Research Service, Hall of Fame Award; the Forest Service, Chief's Award. etc.).

Who can approve and what steps are necessary to approve time-off awards?

A supervisor may authorize up to 10 hours of time off by using the approval form AD-287-2. If granting more than 10 hours, consult your Agency's guidelines.

How much time off should an employee receive as recognition?

The following chart covers most situations:

TIME OFF AWARDS	
VALUE OF THE EMPLOYEE'S CONTRIBUTION	HOURS TO BE AWARDED
SMALL/MODERATE - Contributions that helped to ease a backlog or completing a special project that benefitted primarily the employee's home office.	1 - 10 Hours
MODERATE/SUBSTANTIAL - Contributions that helped an entire division, region, or other large geographic area.	11 - 40 Hours

NOTE: An employee may not be granted more than 80 hours in a leave year. SES employees are not eligible for time-off awards.

Guidance and Procedures for Recognition Categories

Monetary Extra Effort Awards

What kinds of monetary recognition can be awarded?

Monetary recognition can take the form of spot awards, extra effort awards (formerly special act or service awards), gainsharing, suggestion awards, and invention awards.

What are the steps involved in recommending and approving monetary recognition?

Monetary recognition must be approved at a management level higher than that of the recommending individual. Recommendations are submitted on Form AD-287-2. Monetary awards exceeding \$500 require written justification, in addition to Form AD-287-2. The Secretary approves monetary recognition for SES employees.

How do I determine the amount of the monetary recognition to recommend?

Whenever possible, nominators should determine if the contribution can be measured in terms of time saved, money saved or expenditures avoided by using the following "Measurable Benefits Scale." If the contribution cannot be measured this precisely, the nominator should determine the award amount by weighing the "value of benefits" and the "application" as shown in the following "Nonmeasurable Benefits Scale."

When a team or a group of employees receives monetary recognition, the amount given to each group member may be different. In such cases, the nominator can recommend how much each group member should receive based on their individual contribution. In addition, each group member may be asked his or her preference concerning the type of recognition.

Measurable Benefits Scale

<i>MEASURABLE BENEFITS SCALE</i>	
<i>Benefit</i>	<i>Award</i>
<i>Up to \$10,000</i>	<i>10 percent of the benefits</i>
<i>\$10,001-\$100,000</i>	<i>\$1,000 for the first \$10,000 in benefits, plus 3 percent of benefits over \$10,000</i>
<i>\$100,001 or more</i>	<i>\$3,700 for the first \$100,000 in benefits plus .005 of benefits over \$100,000.* Award amount should not exceed recipient's annual salary.</i>

*NOTE: *All recognition for individuals or an individual as a member of a group up to \$5,500 per person requires approval from the appropriate Under or Assistant Secretary or Staff Director. The Secretary of Agriculture approves all Senior Executive Service awards and awards in excess of \$5,500 and not greater than \$10,000. Awards in excess of \$10,000 per individual must be approved by the Office of Personnel Management. Awards in excess of \$25,000 require Presidential approval.*

Nonmeasurable Benefits Scale

NONMEASURABLE BENEFITS SCALE			
<i>Value of Benefits</i>	<i>Application</i>		
	<i>Limited:</i>	<i>Broad:</i>	<i>General:</i>
	Impacts the public interest, or a specific small work unit to as large as a division or region.	Impacts the public interest, or several regional areas or an entire agency.	Impacts the public interest, or more than one agency, or the entire Department.
<i>Small/Moderate</i>	\$50-\$325	\$325-\$650	\$650-\$1300
<i>Moderate/Substantial</i>	\$325-\$650	\$650-\$1300	\$1300-\$3150
<i>Substantial/Extended</i>	\$1000-\$2500	\$2500-\$5500	\$5500-\$10,000

NOTES: As of the date of this publication, the monetary amounts apply throughout the Federal Government. Agencies may refine these definitions to fit the needs of the organization.

What is a Spot Award?

<http://www.usda.gov/da/employ/spotforweb.htm>

The Spot Awards Program allows supervisors and other individuals to grant employees (as individuals or in groups) immediate monetary recognition for extra efforts that warrant small awards. Spot awards are considered small to moderate in value and limited to broad in application

Awards may range in value from \$50 to \$500 (in any dollar amount) with no award amount exceeding \$500. Employees may receive more than one Spot award within a one-year period. When determining award amounts refer to the non-measurable benefits scale.

Individual Awards:

Amount is not less than \$50 and no more than \$500 per person.

Group Awards:

There is no ceiling on the total amount of any group award. However, the award amount for each group member may not exceed \$500.

Usually, the contributions recognized will have been completed within a period of 4 to 6 weeks or less. Recognition should be made within 3 days, but not later than 30 days after completion of the accomplishment. Spot awards are approved or disapproved by a superior or management level higher than the recommending individual who has signature authority.

What is an Extra Effort Award?

Extra Effort Awards recognize individuals or groups who make significant one-time contributions (eg. special project, task force, etc.) to the agency's or the Department's mission or goals. The award amount can range from \$50 to more than \$10,000, depending on the application and value of benefit of the contribution to the Government.

Does USDA have an employee suggestion or invention recognition program?

Yes. Employees may be recognized for the approval of written suggestions or development of inventions that improve the efficiency or effectiveness of Government operations. Employees may be recognized for their suggestions and inventions on a monetary or a nonmonetary basis. For more detailed information regarding suggestion or invention programs contact your agency's recognition program coordinator. Employees may also refer to the "Employee Suggestion Program Brochure" at <http://www.usda.gov/da/employ/suggestion-brochure.pdf>

What is gainsharing?

Under this program, a portion of savings resulting from gains earned by an organization through improved quality, more efficient use of resources and process improvement is distributed to employees. For more detailed information regarding gainsharing contact your agency's recognition program coordinator.

Performance Bonuses

What is a performance bonus?

A performance bonus is monetary recognition given to an employee for having performed well their normal day-to-day duties.

Employees can demonstrate this in many ways (i.e., regularly contributes high work output; consistently completes work products of high quality; provides exceptionally prompt and courteous service to customers, clients and coworkers). The key point to remember is that performance bonuses are intended to recognize a good performance throughout the rating cycle.

What types of performance bonuses are there?

There are two kinds: (1) lump-sum performance bonus (formerly Sustained Superior Performance Awards); and (2) Quality Step Increase (QSI), an extra step increase. What type of justification is required for a performance bonus? Supervisors are required to provide documentation of accomplishments whenever an employee is given a summary rating of "Outstanding." No additional justification is required if a performance bonus is also granted. If a performance bonus is given to an employee whose summary rating is other than "Outstanding," and the award amount exceeds \$500, one of the following is required: (1) separate written justification; or (2) individual performance element accomplishment writeup.

How much money can be awarded in a lump-sum performance bonus?

Use the charts listed in the monetary extra effort recognition section, but note that a lump-sum performance bonus cannot exceed 10 percent of an employee's annual salary.

Is everyone eligible for lump-sum performance bonuses?

No. Noncareer SES employees are not eligible. However, Career SES employees are eligible.

What level of performance is required for a lump-sum performance bonus?

Employees must receive at least a fully successful or pass rating on their performance rating.

When should I give a lump-sum performance bonus?

Generally these should be given within 90 days of the end of the performance cycle.

What level of performance is required for a QSI?

Employees must receive an outstanding performance rating.

Does a QSI require any extra justification?

No. The narrative justifying the outstanding performance rating is sufficient.

Who is not eligible for QSI's?

SES and wage-grade employees are not eligible for QSI's.

Can I give a QSI or a lump-sum payment to an employee who received one this year?

No. Only employees who have not received a QSI or lump-sum payment in the last 52 weeks are eligible.

What are the advantages of performance bonuses?

Performance bonuses are significant recognition because they encourage employees to continue to excel in the manner in which they carry out their duties and responsibilities.

What should be done if there are funds for only a few performance bonuses?

In these circumstances, consideration should be given to smaller monetary recognition amounts supplemented by nonmonetary recognition for all employees who performed at the same level. The emphasis should be on equitable treatment for each individual.

Preparing Justifications

When is it necessary to prepare a narrative justification in addition to an AD-287-2?

A narrative justification must be prepared for any monetary extra effort recognition exceeding \$500 or any time off awards exceeding 10 hours. If the recognition awarded is \$500 or less, or 10 hours or less, complete only the citation block on Form AD-287-2--a separate attachment is not necessary (Appendix B identifies helpful hints on how to write a justification). Refer to Performance Bonuses in this Guide for writing justifications for performance bonuses and QSI's.

Reporting Requirements

What are requirements for recognition reports?

In order to effectively monitor the Department's recognition program, each mission area/agency will provide information and reports to OHRM concerning the operation of its program(s) as requested.

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 FROM THE STANDPOINT 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).

Appendix - Justification Outline

1. During the period of (give time of performance), (group/person) did what . (Beginning paragraph should start with this sentence.)
2. This exceeded expected performance as identified in the current position description by:
 - 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.
3. As a result:
 - Project acceptance
 - Savings in time, money, and/or material

- More efficiency
 - Effectiveness
 - Technological advancement
 - Productivity increase
 - Improved levels of cooperation that will result in ...
4. Therefore, we propose an award of (amount/hours) which has been calculated using the (measurable benefits/nonmeasurable benefits/time-off scales.)
- If based on measurable benefits, the expected benefit to the organization is (put amount here)
 - If based on nonmeasurable benefits, the APPLICATION is (insert here), and the VALUE OF BENEFITS is (put amount here)

Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

Within two weeks of the performance appraisal discussion session, an IDP must be prepared for all permanent employees. The following are a couple of IDP tips to remember:

A new IDP has to be prepared each year.

IDPs are not limited to only formal and on-the-job training. IDPs should also include such self-development activities as:

Reading material related to the work of the position. Self-directed learning such as watching videos, reading books, listening to cassettes, etc. that are related to the employees performance. Videos and books may be checked out from the SMART Center.

On any IDP reviewed at the Area level, checking Block 8 “. . . no training or development needs at this time . . .” is not acceptable.

Reference:

- BForm ARS-48
- IDP and SMART Center Web Sites:

<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/empdev/index.htm>

INSTRUCTIONS - ARS-48, INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (IDP)
(Items 1, 2, and 3 are self-explanatory)

4. DESCRIPTION OF WORK ASSIGNMENTS –

- A. Current Performance Elements Identified for Development/Training - List those performance elements from the established performance requirements for which training and/or development will be given during the appraisal period. (It is unlikely that all elements would ever appear in this block.) Training and/or development might be given to enhance current performance, correct deficiencies, or prepare an employee for some job-related change. These elements must relate in some way to the current job and the performance elements agreed upon by the supervisor and employee.
- B. Projected/Potential assignments - List any assignments which may result in a need for development and/or training. These assignments may be current or projected and could be the result of changes in assignments, reorganizations, changes in unit mission or restructuring of work.

5. PERFORMANCE RELATED KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, and ABILITIES –

List the knowledges, skills, and abilities associated with each of the performance elements identified in Item 4A. (No knowledge, skill, or ability would appear in this item without a direct connection to a performance element in Item 4A.) Only list those knowledge, skills, and/or abilities for which development or training is planned.

6. DEVELOPMENTAL WORK EXPERIENCES (*On-the-job assignments, Self development*) –

For the appropriate knowledge, skill, and/or ability, list the applicable activity which will lead to achieving the required knowledge, skill, or ability. Additional information such as dates, locations, or other commitments should be included with a description of the ability.

7. FORMAL TRAINING (*Courses, Seminars*) -

Match the proper knowledge, skill, and/or ability to the formal training activity. If known, list the course title, sponsoring institution/vendor, location and dates when training will be taken. (It is possible to use both a developmental activity and formal training to achieve the same development objective.)

8. – When the supervisor and employee have analyzed the work assignments and conclude that no development and/or training is required or appropriate, check the box in this item.

9. SIGNATURE AND DATE –

Employee and supervisor should sign and date this form in all cases. The signatures indicate that the two parties concur in the content of the IDP. Signatures do not mean that the agency is bound to support the activities and/or training nor that the employee must complete the plan. The allocation of resources is a local matter and should be discussed by the affected parties. The Approving Official should sign and date the IDP. This signature indicates that the official concurs with the content.

DISTRIBUTION -

Employee Performance Folder (EPF) - Original
Employee - Part 2
Supervisor - Part 3

NOTE: See instructions on reverse.

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

<p>1. EMPLOYEE'S NAME <i>(Last, first, initial)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Secretary, Ima G.</p> <hr/> <p>2. CURRENT POSITION TITLE</p> <p>Secretary (Office Automation)</p> <hr/> <p>3. ORGANIZATION NAME AND LOCATION</p> <p>USDA-ARS</p> <p>Name of Location</p>	<p>4. DESCRIPTION OF WORK ASSIGNMENTS</p> <p>A. Current Performance Elements Identified for Development/Training</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Computer operations and telecommunications 2. Resource management plan/budget 3. Clerical support <hr/> <p>B. Projected/Potential Assignments</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 & 2. Monitors unit expenditures accurately 3. Prepares manuscripts, correspondence, etc. accurately and promptly 				
<p>5. Performance Related Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 & 2. Knowledge of computer spreadsheets. 1. Knowledge of computer operations. 3. Ability to communicate effectively in writing. 	<p>6. Developmental Work Experiences <i>(On-the-job assignments, Self development)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 & 2. Read and study manuals for Excel. Practice by completing exercises and tutorials in manuals and workbooks. 1. Develop a better understanding of computer operations through working with other staff members. <p>Develop the ability to communicate more effectively in writing through continued practice.</p>	<p>7. Formal Training <i>(Courses, Seminars)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 & 2. Attend short courses for Excel (include the training course name, vendor, course dates, tuition costs, if known) 1. Attend related courses at local university/community college. 3. Attend short courses for improving written communication. 			
<p>8. The supervisor and employee have completed the IDP process and have determined that no training or developmental needs are indicated at this time.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>9. SIGNATURE and DATE</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="border: none; width: 33%; text-align: center;">EMPLOYEE</td> <td style="border: none; width: 33%; text-align: center;">SUPERVISOR</td> <td style="border: none; width: 33%; text-align: center;">APPROVING OFFICIAL</td> </tr> </table>		EMPLOYEE	SUPERVISOR	APPROVING OFFICIAL
EMPLOYEE	SUPERVISOR	APPROVING OFFICIAL			

Performance Appraisals-BAD-435

Form AD-435, Performance Appraisal Form, is used for ARS permanent employees and those appointed initially for longer than one year. To be rated, an employee must have been in his/her position and under performance standards for 90 days or more.

Technicians (Categories 5 and 7), Wage Grade (Category 8), and Clerical/Secretarial (Category 9) are rated from April 1-March 31 each year.

Research Scientists (Category 1), Support Scientists (Category 3), Service Scientists (Category 4), Research Associates/Affiliates (Category 2), and Specialists (Managerial, Advisory, or Administrative) (Category 6) are rated January 1-December 31 each year.

A very complete Mid South Area Timetable for Completion of Appraisals is sent out with the appraisal forms from the Area Office each year. This timetable lists the various deadlines involved with completion of the AD-435 forms and any award forms needed in conjunction with Performance ratings (Fully Successful, Superior and Outstanding).

The AD-435 is received from the Area Director's office with Blocks 1-10 preprinted. Type each element from the employee's Performance Standards on the corresponding line of the Form AD-435 and check Block 15a if the element is a critical one.

Give the AD-435 and current Performance Standards to the employee's supervisor to prepare the rating. For Category 1 and 4 scientists, a copy of the Detail by Author Report is necessary for documentation of accomplishments. The supervisor rates the employee in the appropriate blocks 15B-D, totals blocks 15E-15H, and checks the appropriate rating box in 16A. After the rating is done, the form goes to the reviewing official for approval. After the supervisor and reviewing official have discussed the rating and are in agreement, the supervisor meets with the employee to discuss the rating and to have the employee sign the completed form. The completed form should contain the signatures of the supervisor, the rating official and the employee.

If the employee is not required to attend the ethics training, the employee shall write "NA" in block 17b.

If the employee is recommended for a monetary performance award, Form AD-287-2 should be included in the packet. If an employee receives an outstanding rating, the justification provided for that rating will be sufficient for the award justification; a monetary award or a quality step increase can be given. A copy of the AD-435 is justification for the award if the award is not outstanding.

Once the employee has signed the AD-435, the Original (NFC Processing Copy) and the blue copy (Official Personnel File) with the original of the Performance Plan for the rating year attached are sent to the Area Personnel Office for processing.

Attach the employee's copy of the completed AD-435 to a copy of the performance standards and distribute to the employee.

Attach the supervisor's copy of the completed AD-435 to a copy of the performance standards

and distribute to the supervisor.

New performance standards for the coming year should be put into place at this time and the cover sheet should be signed and dated by Employee, Supervisor, and Reviewing Supervisor.

Checklist for Preparing Performance Standards

Performance plans should be developed by the supervisor for each employee within 30 days of the beginning of the appraisal period or within 30 days of hire. The following are some reminders for establishing a performance plan.

1. Check the employee's position description for accuracy. The major duties in the position description should be included in the performance plan as critical elements. Accomplishment of organizational objectives and goals can be included in Performance Plans. Elements should be clearly stated and measurable.
2. Employee participation in developing the plan is desirable. However, the rating and reviewing officials have the final responsibility for establishing the performance plan.
3. There must be at least three, but no more than ten, elements.
4. At least one element must be critical, and at least one element must be noncritical.
5. Standards should be as objective as possible.
6. Each employee whose position is classified a supervisor must have performance element(s) that address supervisory responsibilities. (Positions classified as supervisor usually include the term Supervisory, Supervisor, Manager, Officer, or Administrator in the title.) Remember, non-supervisory employees also include those individuals who have limited supervisory responsibilities (such as, supervision of one technician or student, team leaders, etc.).
7. All employees' performance plans must include a separate element that addresses EEO/CR.
8. All employees with health, safety, environmental protection, and/or energy management responsibilities should have an element and standard in their performance plan that addresses these responsibilities.
9. The performance plan must be signed by the employee, the supervisor, and the reviewing supervisor (normally, the second-line supervisor). The employee should then receive a copy of the approved plan.

REMINDER!

There must be at least one documented progress review during the appraisal period. The documentation can be a note on the performance plan that the discussion took place and the date of the discussion initialed by employee and supervisor.

See P&P 418.3 for information on Performance Standards and the ARS Performance Appraisal System

Web site: <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/performance/index.htm>

Detail by Author Report

The following instructions are to be used by the MU Secretary to develop the Detail by Author Report, which will be used at appraisal time. A copy of the Detail by Author Report is to be attached to all Performance Appraisal forms.

The following ARIS instructions begin from the Main Menu:

- 1) Research Documentation
- 2) Reports
- 3) 115 Author Reports
- 4) Author's name (query"?)")
- 5) Query > Execute (this should pull up all ARS-115's entered in the last five years or you can list a specific time period in the "approval date" field) NOTE: If you query under your location's mode code, you will only receive a listing of the Author's 115's that were entered at your location. However, since many scientists co-author papers with other ARS scientists, you may want to query without the mode code in order to pull up 115's that may have been entered at other locations.
- 6) Action
- 7) Mark All Records
- 8) Reports (there are several choices, but the most helpful are as follows):
 - Detail by Author (gives a list of all ARS-115's with pertinent information)
 - Detail by Author Missing citation
 - Detail by Author Citation (list of all 115's including citations)

For Appraisal Purposes--"January 1- December 31" (Use cutoff date set by Area Office or cutoff date your Management Unit uses for appraisal purposes; may change each year.)

Request For Personnel Action - SF-52

Request for Personnel Action (SF-52) is required for any recruit, new hire, work schedule change, termination, retirement, promotion, or reclassification. If the action is included in ARMPS, the supervisor signs Block 5 (action requested) and the RL signs Block 6 (action authorized). If the action is not included in ARMPS, then the supervisor and RL both sign in Block 5 and the AD signs Block 6. Everyone in the supervisory chain should sign SF-52s.

Check with your Location Administrative Officer for additional information.

Web Site: <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/divisions/hrd/hrdhomepage/52request.htm>

Position Description Cover Sheet - AD-332

A position description cover sheet (Form AD-332) must accompany all position descriptions going forward to Personnel. The supervisor signs Block 19. Type information into Block 21.

If a standardized PD is being used, a copy of the AD-332 accompanying the standardized PD must be used because it has the classification of the description documented in Blocks 11 through 17. Only when non-standardized PDs are used should "original" AD-332s be used. Standard Position Discriptions can be found at the following website:

<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/classification/index.htm>

Time and Attendance Records

Currently the agency is using the STAR application. In the future the agency will be changing from STAR (desktop application) to STAR WEB. When the agency changes to STAR WEB then you may wish to see for further information

http://intranet.fsa.usda.gov/fsatraining/star_web_training_2004.htm.

T&As (Time and Attendance) - AD-331; Audits

Reference:

P&P 401.1 (Flexible Work Schedules)

P&P 402.3 (Premium Pay)

P&P 402.6 (Leave)

ARS T&A Errors and Tips

Time and Attendance Instructions Manual (Title I, Chapter 7, Section 1)

System for Time and Attendance Reporting (STAR) Manual

When an employee leaves federal service, a final T&A and leave audit (AD-717) must be completed. If the NFC database and STAR T&As disagree, an audit (AD-717) is required. AD-717 now requires Supervisor's signature.

Contact your LAO/AAO, Admin Office, or Budget & Fiscal Clerk for instructions.

Web site for leave audit forms:

<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/divisions/hrd/hrdhomepage/webforms/auditform.htm>

T&A Transaction Code Table

01 REGULAR TIME	45 BEGIN COST LIV
04 SUNDAY DIFF.	46 BEGIN FORGN POST/D
05 SUNDAY DIFF. W/ND	47 DISC COST LIV
11 NIGHT DIFF.	48 DISC FORGN POS/D
12 COMP TIME W/ND	49 QTRS ALLOWANCE
13 NIGHT DIFF. SUN	50 CREDIT LEAVE TAK
14 HAZARD PAY DIFF.	60 COMP USED - RELG
17 COMMUTE GOV AUTO	61 ANNUAL LEAVE
18 INVALID FOR ARS	6166 TIME-OFF AWARD
19 O/T OVR 8 HRS DAY	62 SICK LEAVE
21 O/T OVR 40 HRS WK	6262 FAMILY SICK LEAVE
22 INVALID FOR ARS	63 RESTORED ANN LV
23 O/T UNDER FLSA	64 COMP TIME USED
24 O/T TRAVEL TIT V	65 MILR LEAVE - REG
25 O/T EX 40 H WK ND	66 OTHER LEAVE
26 O/T OV 8H DAY ND	67 OWCP INJURY LV
29 CRED LEAVE EARN	68 MILR LEAVE EMERG
30 O/T CALLBACK NW	69 HOME LEAVE USED
31 HOLIDAY WORK	71 LWOP
32 COMP TIME LU O/T	72 AWOL
33 INVALID FOR ARS	73 SUSPENSION
35 REG TIME BAS-NEG	74 FURLOUGH
36 REG TIME MD-TERM	86 INVALID FOR ARS
37 REG TIME ON-GO	91 QTRS/SUBS DEDUCT
38 REG TIME GRV-APP	92 MEALS DEDUCTION
40 HOME LEAVE EARN	
41 AD UNCONTROL O/T	

Training – SF-182

The SF-182, Training Form, must be prepared for ALL instances of training; e.g., workshops, correspondence courses, programmed instruction, individual college study, traditional classroom courses, etc. This includes short courses and videos of 1-4 hours (or less than a day).

Remember, however, “abbreviated” SF-182s can be done in these instances where no funds are expended or groups of employees attend. Training is paid by credit card. The SF-182 is for documentation purposes only.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING FORM SF-182

- A. AG-03-64XX code (your location code) must be entered on all SF-182s.
- B. Obtain Document Control Number from the LAO or the Training Designee.
- C. Check appropriate box.
 - 1. Enter trainee’s full name; enter first five digits of last name in shaded area.
 - 2. Enter trainee’s Social Security Number (nine digits).
 - 3. Complete ONLY for Graduate School, USDA (formerly OPM) courses. Enter trainee’s year/month of birth, e.g., 43/01.
 - 4. Complete ONLY for Graduate School, USDA courses. Enter trainee’s home address.
 - 5. Complete ONLY for Graduate School, USDA courses. Enter trainee’s home telephone number, including area code.
 - 6-7. Self-explanatory.
 - 8. Enter commercial telephone number.
 - 9-10. Complete ONLY in case of long-term training (e.g., full-time training of 120 days or more).
 - 11a. Trainee’s position title/function.
 - 11b. If the applicant is disabled or handicapped and in need of special arrangements (braille, taping, interpreters, facility accessibility, etc.), mark block with an X and describe the special arrangements on a separate sheet and attach to the Vendor Copy. NOTE: The applicant is not required to furnish this information. Their signature on the description sheet indicates agreement to release it to the training vendors.
 - 12. Trainee’s pay plan, job series and present grade, example GS-201-12/3.
 - 13. Complete ONLY for Graduate School, USDA courses. Use the following symbols to

show type of appointment.

C = Career EP = Excepted permanent
T = Temporary Term = Term

14. Complete ONLY for long-term training programs (over 120 days). Enter the highest degree attained.
- 15a. Training Vendor's name and mailing address.
- 15b. Site of training, if same, place an X in the box.
16. Self-explanatory.
17. Enter catalog/course number, if provided by vendor.
18. Enter the year, month, and day the course begins and ends.
19. Self-explanatory. [If the training is over 80 hours for a single program (during duty or nonduty) and is conducted by a non-Federal Government vendor, and official funds will be expended, the employee must read and sign the reverse side of Copy 1 of the SF-182.]
20. Use training code definitions. (Attached)
21. Enter OCC 2523 directly across from and on the same line as "Direct costs and appropriation/fund chargeable."

Enter the current fiscal year's 10- or 14-digit financial data code from which the training costs will be paid in the "Appropriation/fund" column.
- 21a,b,c. Enter four-digit dollar amount as appropriate for each item and leave Cents column blank or enter "00."

If any costs will be paid from a credit card enter the words "Credit Card" directly across from the item under the appropriation/fund column.
- 21d. Enter four-digit total dollar amount and leave cents column blank or enter "00". If the form is being sent to NFC for payment, do not include in the total any items (a, b, or c) that will be paid from credit card.
22. As appropriate, enter rounded-off dollar amounts for travel and per diem. Leave cents column blank or enter "00". Leave "Appropriation/fund" column blank.
23. Enter dollar amount to be obligated by this training request in parenthesis on right side of this block, e.g., (\$0325). This amount should be the same as the amount shown in Block 21d.

24. For Government sponsored courses only, i.e., OP, Graduate School, USDA, GPO, Enter NFC's eight-digit station symbol 12-40-0001.
25. If vendor is a Government Agency such as Graduate School, USDA, OP, GPO, etc., place the following in Block 25:

USDA-NFC-FSD-ARB
Reporting Section No. 4
P.O. Box 53326 TANO Bldg.
New Orleans, LA 70153

If commercial or non-Government vendor, such as AMA, USDA, Grad School, etc., place the following in Block 25:

USDA-NFC-FSD-ARB
Reporting Section No. 4
P.O. Box 53326 TANO Bldg.
New Orleans, LA 70153

NOTE: If training is paid by credit card, leave Block 25 blank.

- 26-27. Type name, title, and commercial telephone number of appropriate officials.
- 28a. Type name, title, and commercial telephone number of LAO or HQS Training Designee.
29. Type name, title, and commercial telephone number of authorizing official*:
for HQSBDivision/Staff Director or Administrative Officer for Field-Research Leader.
30. Type name, title, and commercial telephone number of LAO or HQS Training Designee.

*RLs can authorize:

Non-federal government training not in excess of \$1,500.

University training not in excess of \$1500 (includes tuition, books/materials, travel, per diem, miscellaneous fees, etc.) and not to exceed 120 hours (8 credit hours) in a single program per person per semester/term.

All Federal Government training except Executive Development Programs.

Reference:

P&P 440.1

Training Codes/Purpose -- Block 20a

- 1 As a result of mission or program changes
- 2 As a result of new technology
- 3 As a result of new work assignments
- 4 To improve present performance
- 5 To meet future staffing needs
- 6 To develop unavailable skills
- 7 Trade or craft apprenticeship
- 8 Orientation
- 9 Adult basic education

Training Codes/Type -- Block 20b

- 1 Executive and management
- 2 Supervisory
- 3 Legal, medical, scientific, or engineering
- 4 Administrative and analysis
- 5 Speciality and technical
- 6 Clerical
- 7 Trade and craft
- 8 Orientation
- 9 Adult basic education

Training Codes/Source -- Block 20c

- 1 Government--Agency
- 2 Government--Interagency
- 3 Non-government--designed for Agency
- 4 Non-government--off shelf
- 5 State or local government

Training Codes/--Block 20d

- 00 None
- 01 Executive development
- 02 Supervision
- 03 Supervisory/Manager probationary period
- 04 Upward mobility (Department)
- 05 Upward mobility (Agency)
- 06 SES candidate development program
- 07 Management development program (Department)
- 08 Management development program (Agency)
- 09 FSC Midlevel
- 10 FSC Senior threshold
- 11 PMI
- 12 COOP
- 13 Presidents Executive Exchange Program
- 14 LEGIS
- 15 Com sci
- 16 Woman's career and/or executive development
- 17 PTO law program

- 18 Long-term full-time
- 19 Long-term part-time
- 20 EEO training
- 21 Computer training
- 22 Self development
- 23 Congressional fellowship
- 24 Foreign language training
- 25 Total Quality Management
- 26 Procurement Integrity Act Ethics Training
- 27 InfoShare Training
- 28 HIV/AIDS Training



HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION

QUICK GUIDE

e-OPF

PREPARED BY THE
HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION
Deputy Director, Human Capital, Planning and
Development Staff



WHAT IS eOPF?

Electronic Official Personnel Folder (eOPF) is a system developed as a management solution to handle official personnel files and to simplify your access to your own Official Personnel Folder (OPF). The OPF contains human resource (HR) records and documents related to Federal civilian employees. An OPF is created when an employee begins Federal service, and is maintained throughout the employee's career in accordance with the United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations.

The eOPF solution provides electronic, web-enabled access for all employees and HR staff to view eOPF documents. All employees will be able to view their own OPF through this eOPF solution.

WHAT IS STORED IN MY eOPF?

- ❖ Human Resource documents
- ❖ Beneficiary Forms
- ❖ Email Address
- ❖ Emergency Contacts

WHEN CAN I VIEW MY eOPF?

The eOPF is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can access your eOPF from any computer with internet access. We strongly advise against using a publicly shared computer.

eOPF website: <https://eopf.nbc.gov/usda/>

WHAT IF I FORGET MY USER-ID?

Your eOPF-ID is constructed based on information available to you. The ID consists of 8 to 10 characters.

Your eOPF ID is case sensitive. All letters must be uppercase.

- ❖ First initial of your first name
- ❖ First 3 characters of your last name
- ❖ Last 4 characters of your SSN
- ❖ Day of your birth
(If your day of birth is 9 or less, use only one character.)

Note: If your last name has only 2 characters, then your ID will only have 2 characters from your last name.

WHAT IF I FORGET MY PASSWORD?

If you forget your password, eOPF has the capability to allow you to request that your password be reset. The "Forgot Your Password" link will bring you to an eOPF password reset request web page. This web page will prompt you for your eOPF ID, eOPF email address of record, the eOPF home zip code of record and a free text field to put in any contact information you choose.

eOPF Helpdesk:
EOPF.HELPDESK@USDA.GOV

HOW DO I LOGIN TO eOPF?

- ❖ Launch your internet browser.
- ❖ Type in the address for the eOPF.
- ❖ Click the "ACCEPT" button, after reading the user agreement.
- ❖ Enter your user-id.
- ❖ Enter your password.
- ❖ Click on the "Submit" button.
- ❖ From the "Welcome Page", click on "My eOPF" in the blue menu selection area.
- ❖ To view a document, single click on the orange action icon and select "View".
- ❖ Select "Open" from the Adobe message screen. Your document is returned in a .pdf format.
- ❖ Close the Adobe document by selecting "File" and "Exit", to return to the eOPF system.
- ❖ To logout of the eOPF, select the "Logout" button in the blue menu selection area.