

**NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH  
AWARDS HANDBOOK**

**February 2002**

# NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH AWARDS HANDBOOK

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# GENERAL HONOR AWARD INFORMATION

## Purpose of the Handbook

This handbook provides guidance for preparation and submission of nominations for the NIH Director's Award, the NIH Director's Award for Mentoring, the HHS Secretary's Award for Distinguished Service, and the Commissioned Officers Awards Program. The entire handbook may be copied and distributed to staff responsible for submitting nominations. In addition, each section may be removed and individually copied for distribution to staff.

## General Information about Award Nominations

Nominations for the HHS Secretary's Award, the NIH Director's Award and the NIH Director's Award for Mentoring must be submitted to the Workforce Performance and Measurement Division (WPMD), Office of Human Resource Management (OHRM), by the specified date for each type of award. CO award nominations are submitted to the Division of Senior and Scientific Employment (DSSE), OHRM. ICs should plan their internal review and nomination process to allow enough time for timely submission. ICs will be reminded each year. Nominations for the NIH Director's Award, the NIH Director's Award for Mentoring and the HHS Secretary's Award are submitted using an Access database. In addition, an original copy of the NIH Director's Award for Mentoring must be forwarded to the Workforce Performance and Measurement Division, OHRM by the specified due date. All requested information must be provided. Nominations for CO awards are submitted using the appropriate form and format stated in the CO Section of this handbook. This document provides general information on awards, specific information about each award, and detailed instructions for preparing and submitting nominations. Questions may be addressed to the NIH Awards Coordinator in the Workforce Performance and Measurement Division, OHRM.

## Helpful Information

- Be certain that each nomination is carefully proofread. Information entered in the Access database is used as submitted for the award notification letter, the plaque, and the program book. Information submitted for the HHS Award is printed in the HHS format using the information exactly as entered. The NIH Awards Coordinator **does not** make corrections or retype the submissions.
- Rank NIH and HHS nominations in priority order (regardless of category for the NIH award) and submit the ranking via E-mail message to the NIH Awards Coordinator, WPMD, OHRM, prior to or by the specified deadline. All nominations entered in the system must be listed in this E-mail message. For the Mentoring Award, only one nomination per Institute is allowed for submission therefore, a priority ranking email is not necessary.
- All citations, approximately 25 words, must fit in the fields provided in the Access database.
- Narratives must clearly state and document the specific details of the accomplishment(s). In addition, language describing scientific or technical accomplishments should be understandable by a diverse audience. Avoid technical jargon.

Detailed information for each type of award is presented in the following sections:

- The NIH Director's Award
- The NIH Director's Award for Mentoring
- The HHS Secretary's Award for Distinguished Service
- The Commissioned Officers Awards Program

## **The NIH Awards Committee**

The permanent members of the NIH Awards Committee are the incumbents in the following positions:

- Deputy Director, NIH
- Deputy Director for Management
- Deputy Director, Intramural Research
- Deputy Director, Extramural Research
- Director, Office of Human Resource Management
- Director, Office of Equal Opportunity

In addition, there are 2 temporary members who change each year:

- 2 IC Directors

The NIH Awards Committee will review a printed copy of all nominations, exactly as they have been entered in the Access database by the IC Awards Coordinators. Each Committee member scores the nominations and an average score is calculated for each nomination. The Committee then submits its recommendations on award recipients to the Director, NIH, who makes the final decision.

## **The Leadership Development Committee (LDC)**

The LDC is composed of 15 members representing various ICs and offices within the OD. Membership and Co-chairpersons will be nominated and approved by the Director, NIH. Members shall serve for staggered terms of 3 years with 1/3 rotating every 1 year.

The LDC will review the original copy of all NIH Director's Award for Mentoring nominations. The committee will meet and discuss nominations before making final recommendations. The LDC will recommend no more than 6 nominations for approval to the Director, NIH.

## **The CO Awards Board**

The CO Awards Board is composed of seven officers from various PHS Agencies from several professional categories. The Board's action on each nomination is based on the information in the nomination and occasionally on a review of prior award nominations in the official personnel file.

The Board reviews and discusses each nomination it receives. Each Board member votes a score (from 0 to 10) and the average is calculated. Nominations are tabulated according to decreasing score and transmitted to the Surgeon General. A summary of major comments is recorded by the Board's Executive Secretary. Occasionally the Board makes a formal additional comment.

# THE NIH DIRECTOR'S AWARD

## Purpose

The purpose of the NIH Director's Award is to recognize employees who exhibited superior performance or special efforts significantly beyond their regular duty requirements, but directly related to fulfilling the NIH mission.

## Overview of the Nomination and Review Process

Nominations for the NIH Director's Award are submitted for a specific category according to the nature of the act, service, or work performance. Nominations are submitted using an Access database via the Workforce Performance and Measurement Division (WPMD). It is the responsibility of the IC to complete their internal nomination and review procedures, and the IC Director must approve the nominations prior to entry into the Access database. Prior to each award deadline, the WPMD will provide an updated version of the Access database with all the required information.

**Submission Deadline:** The Priority Listing E-mail message described below must be received by the NIH Awards Coordinator, WPMD/OHRM, and all nominations must be submitted via the Access database no later than c.o.b. of the date indicated in the Call memo for Nominations, usually February 15th each year (or the first regular work day immediately following February 15th if the 15th is a weekend or holiday).

- 1.) ICs conduct and complete their own internal nomination and review process to allow sufficient time for actual nominations to be entered in the Access database by the IC Awards Coordinator prior to the deadline.
- 2.) The IC Awards Coordinator submits their IC Director's list of nominees ranked in priority order (highest priority nomination listed first), regardless of the category via email prior to or by the deadline. This message must be received before any nominations can be processed. The message should be sent to: [Lewisla@mail.nih.gov](mailto:Lewisla@mail.nih.gov), with a cc: to your IC Director. Ms. Lewis is located in the Workforce Performance and Measurement Division, OHRM.
- 3.) The IC Awards Coordinator submits all IC nominations via the Access database prior to or by the deadline. See specific instructions for entering the nominations in the next major section of this document. It is suggested that you print each nomination and check it carefully for typing errors, especially the citation, the employee's name and degrees. For the NIH Director's Award, these items will be used in the congratulatory letter from the NIH Director, the program book, and on the plaque -- exactly as you type them.

Nominations may be submitted prior to the due date. If you find that there is an error in a nomination after you've submitted the database, contact the NIH Awards Coordinator so that you can resubmit your database with the corrections provided the error was discovered prior to the deadline. For errors discovered after the deadline, contact the NIH Awards Coordinator for further instructions.

- 4.) After submission by the ICs, the NIH Awards Committee will review each nomination, using the printed copy provided by WPMD.
- 5.) The NIH Awards Coordinator will provide each IC Awards Coordinator with the following: Final decision on awards recipients; congratulatory letter from the Director, NIH; and a memo outlining attendance instructions for the Awards Ceremony. IC Directors may wish to add their own congratulatory letter at this time.

## **Timeframe Covered by the Award**

The activities used as justification for a nomination should take place during the previous calendar year, or any portion of the previous calendar year.

## **Nature and Presentation of the Award**

The Award is an engraved plaque, presented by the Director, NIH, at the annual NIH Director's Awards Ceremony. The ceremony is usually held in June.

## **Categories, Eligibility, and Criteria for Nominations**

There are three employee categories for the NIH Director's Award, each with specific eligibility and nomination criteria, as outlined below.

### **Category A - Scientific/Medical**

Eligibility: All NIH employees or group of employees in the scientific/medical professions.

Criteria:

1. Unusual display of leadership which promoted the advancement of the understanding or application of scientific phenomena, processes, or problems.
2. Unusual achievement in the application of scientific principles and methods to improve the efficiency or extend the benefits of the NIH.
3. Discovery or invention of a new principle, process, or device or a scientific nature that resulted in substantial benefits.
4. Unusual competence, compassion, or heroism in an emergency situation at the NIH.
5. Sustained and excellent performance in carrying out a difficult task.
6. Outstanding contribution to a special committee or task force dealing with NIH-wide policies, procedures, or operations.
7. Skill and leadership in science.

### **Category B - Technical/Clerical/Support**

Eligibility: All NIH employees or groups of employees in grades GS-1 through GS-9, and Wage Grade equivalent.

Criteria:

1. Outstanding efforts in applying technical or clerical support skills to accomplish NIH mission.
2. Exceptional initiative in carrying out activities to improve NIH program operations or to benefit the NIH environment.
3. Unusual competence, compassion, or heroism in an emergency situation at NIH.
4. Sustained and excellent performance in carrying out a difficult task.

### **Category C - Administrative**

Eligibility: All NIH employees or group of employees not covered by Categories A nor Category B.

Criteria:

1. Exceptional initiative or leadership in carrying out activities to improve NIH program operations or to benefit the NIH environment.
2. Development and improvement of methods, procedures, or equipment that resulted in substantial benefits to the NIH or Government.
3. Unusual competence, compassion, or heroism in an emergency situation at NIH.
4. Sustained and excellent performance in carrying out a difficult task.

5. Outstanding contribution to a special committee or task force dealing with NIH-wide policies, procedures, or operations.
6. Notable competence and resourcefulness in improving the administrative management of the NIH.
7. Skill and leadership in administration.

### **Citation Guidelines**

The citation will be engraved on the plaque exactly as submitted. Total number of characters is 120, or 3 lines of 40 characters each. Start each citation with "For ..." or "In recognition of ..." Depending on your wording, 120 characters may not fit if long words must be moved to the next line. You may wish to use your word processor and set margins to allow a 40 character length line to get a general idea of how the lines will fit on the plaque, or alter the wording for a better fit.

### **Justification Guidelines**

The narrative justification should focus on the employee's contributions, and the significance of and how the employee's actions have compared to or exceeded what is expected of an employee of this grade and experience. Routine responsibilities and career progression should be included only to establish the context for the actions cited. The cited actions, their impact and significance are important and should be stated clearly, emphasizing the period covered in the nomination. If the employee received an honor award(s) in the period cited or for earlier actions that may seem similar or overlapping with those in the current nomination, clarify the basis for the prior award(s) and its relevance or non-relevance to the present nomination. If an award is based in part on achievements which were the basis for a prior award, the new nomination must clearly delineate how the current accomplishment has advanced beyond the previous one(s).

When preparing the justification, remember that reviewing officials at NIH must base their decisions on the written material alone. Therefore, carefully review the award criteria and then focus the written narrative on the nominee's accomplishments as they related to the criteria. Give specific examples.

Some points to consider, if applicable:

- Extent to which the field of health and/or biomedical research has been strengthened or improved by the particular superior service or achievement;
- Extent to which knowledge and sound principles have been applied, especially in relation to a variety of work areas, workloads, etc.;
- Extent to which "ideas," "concepts," etc, represent originality, creativeness, and/or initiative;
- Extent to which service, technical and clerical support skills were applied to accomplish the NIH mission;
- Extent to which unusual ability has been exercised in solving difficult problems;
- Extent to which competence and resourcefulness improved the scientific or administrative management of the NIH; or
- Degree of demonstrated skill and leadership in administration and science.

When writing the justification, follow these guidelines:

- Write in a specific and objective manner, answering the following questions:
  - What did the employee do to warrant recognition?
  - What is the employee's scope of responsibility relative to his/her grade?
  - What were the outcomes (impacts) of the employee's accomplishments on the program and NIH in general? What was scope of the outcome versus the employee's scope in his/her job?
  - How did this accomplishment bring honor upon the employee and the NIH?

- Avoid use of glowing adjectives or global phrases unrelated to the accomplishment; allow the accomplishment to speak for itself.
- Be consistent between the proposed citation and the narrative.
- Avoid overly technical language. Do not assume the reviewers will be familiar with technical terms or jargon. If the use of technical terms is required, the narrative should contain clarifying statements that are understandable to a multi-disciplinary Committee.
- Write the narrative for the highest level of reviewing authority. Keep it simple, but comprehensive. A neutral party should be able to read the narrative and based on it alone, understand the reason for the proposed award and make an informed decision.

### **Category D - Mentoring**

Eligibility: All NIH employees who mentor others.

Criteria:

1. Demonstrates effective people skills -- effectively communicating and actively listening; resolving conflicts and giving appropriate feedback.
2. Valuing and taking pride in NIH and its work; understanding its mission, vision, and values and supporting its initiatives.
3. Exhibiting patience and willingness to spend and provide adequate time serving in the role of mentor.
4. Serving as a role model -- teaching and demonstrating high standards of performance, integrity, and ethical conduct.
5. Motivating and inspiring the mentee to do better--through encouraging feedback and challenging his/her potential.
6. Providing visibility through securing challenging projects and assignment for the mentee and by discussing his/her accomplishments with others.



# THE NIH DIRECTOR AWARD FOR MENTORING

## Purpose

This award is designed to support and encourage the continuation of mentoring activities, and to establish mentoring as a core value at NIH. The award is given to individuals who have demonstrated significant leadership, skill, and ability in serving as a mentor to one or more individuals.

## Overview of the Nomination and Review Process

A number of formal and informal mentoring activities and relationships currently exist throughout organizational components within NIH. As an example, guidelines were recently distributed regarding training and mentoring within the NIH intramural research program. Similarly, the NIH Management Cadre Program and other career development programs require a formalized mentoring relationship as a key part of their training programs. Throughout the I/Cs there are a wide variety of both formal and informal mentoring relationships that have been established to meet the needs of specific organizational components and staff.

In an effort to support and encourage the continuation of mentoring activities and to establish mentoring as a core value at NIH, it is recommended that formal recognition be given to those individuals who are both officially and voluntarily giving of their time and efforts in serving as mentors. The recognition would be in the form of a plaque. All nominations must be reviewed and recommended by the I/C Director. The nominations will be submitted to the NIH Leadership Development Committee (LDC). The LDC will review the nominations and forward, with its endorsement, up to six nominations to the Director, NIH, who will make the final selection(s).

Nominations for the NIH Director's Award for Mentoring are submitted for two categories research and administration. Nominations are submitted using an Access database and an original copy to the Workforce Performance and Measurement Division, OHR M. It is the responsibility of the IC to complete their internal nomination and review procedures, and the IC Director must approve the nominations prior to entry into the Access database. Prior to each award deadline, the WPMD will provide an updated version of the Access database with all the required information.

**Submission Deadline:** All nominations must be submitted via the Access database and hard copy no later than c.o.b. of the date indicated in the Call Memo, usually February 15th each year (or the first regular work day immediately following February 15th if the 15th is a weekend or holiday).

- 1.) ICs conduct and complete their own internal nomination and review process to allow sufficient time for actual nominations to be entered in the Access database by the IC Awards Coordinator prior to the deadline.
- 2.) The IC Awards Coordinator submits their one IC Mentoring nomination via the Access database and hard copy prior to or by the deadline. See specific instructions for entering the nominations in the next major section of this document. It is suggested that you print each nomination and check it carefully for typing errors, especially the citation, the employee's name and degrees. For the NIH Director's Award for Mentoring, these items will be used in the congratulatory letter from the NIH Director, the program book, and on the plaque -- exactly as you type them. Nominations may be submitted prior to the due date. If you find that there is an error in a nomination after you've submitted the database, contact the NIH Awards Coordinator so that you can resubmit your database with the corrections provided the error was discovered prior to the deadline. For errors discovered after the deadline, contact the NIH Awards Coordinator for further instructions.
- 3.) After submission by the ICs, the LDC Committee will review each nomination, using the original copy provided by the ICs.
- 4.) The NIH Awards Coordinator will provide each IC Awards Coordinator with the following: Final decision on award recipient; congratulatory letter from the Director, NIH; and a memo outlining

attendance instructions for the Awards Ceremony. IC Directors may wish to add their own congratulatory letter at this time.

### **Timeframe Covered by the Award**

The activities used as justification for a nomination should take place during the previous calendar year, or any portion of the previous calendar year.

### **Nature and Presentation of the Award**

The Award is an engraved plaque, presented by the Director, NIH, at the annual NIH Director's Awards Ceremony. The ceremony is usually held in June.

### **Categories, Eligibility, and Criteria for Nominations**

There are two employee categories for the NIH Director's Award for Mentoring, Research (including intramural and extramural staff) and administration (including administrative and technical/clerical support).

### **Nomination Process for the NIH Director's Award and the NIH Director's Award for Mentoring**

Nominations are submitted using the Access database and transmitted as an email attachment to the Workforce Performance and Measurement Division, OHRM. Follow the instructions below containing specific criteria for entry in each field.

The NIH Awards Coordinator will send the IC Awards Coordinator an updated version of the Access database as an attachment via email. Awards Coordinators may choose to work directly from the email, however, it is recommended that they save the attachment to a folder of their choice.

A reminder that the IC process for nomination and review must be completed and approved by the IC Director before nominations are entered in the Access database.

Steps for retrieving the database are as follows:

- Open the email from the NIH Awards Coordinator
- Open the attachment of the Access database.
- Select the forms tab along the left margin of the window (Notice the selections inside the window).
- Select the Nominee Form -This form should be used to enter the following:
  1. ICs individual nomination(s)
  2. Group Nomination – complete all fields except individual group member information.
- The Group Nominee Form should be used to enter group member information.

### **New Individual Nomination**

This option allows you to enter an individual nomination. **Please double check the spelling of the employee's name and his or her credentials. Information will not be verified or corrected by the NIH Awards Coordinator. Information is used directly from the database, as entered by the ICs. Any incorrect information will be engraved on the recipient's plaque, printed in the award program book, and used in the congratulatory letters from the NIH Director.** Complete each field as described below. **Use your mouse or the tab key at all times to move from field to field.**

ID	This number will be entered automatically.
IC Awards Coordinator	Enter the IC Awards Coordinator or designee's first initial and last name.
Category	Category of employee's position, i.e., Scientific/Medical, Administrative, or Technical/Clerical/Support Scientific/Medical Administrative Technical/Clerical/Support Mentoring
Type	Enter Individual (I) or Group (G).
Nominating IC	Enter the nominating Institute.
Group Name	Not applicable for individual nominations.
Last Name, First Name, MI	Self-explanatory. VERIFY THE SPELLING. Use Lead Capital Letters.
Degree(s)	Enter the degree(s) the employee normally uses, such as Ph.D., M.D., M.P.H., Dr.P.H. <u>Include</u> periods between the initials. This will be used on the plaque. Multiple degrees are permissible. VERIFY THE DEGREES.
Salutation	Enter Dr. Mr. or Ms. The salutation will be used in the congratulatory letter to the employee.
Position Title	Enter the nominee's official title, such as Secretary, Laboratory Technician, or Health Scientist Administrator, etc.
Section	Enter the nominee's section and division, for example, Workforce Performance and Measurement Division, OHRM.
Office	Enter the nominee's organizational location, and address, for example, Office of the Director, 31 Center Dr. MCS 2272, 31/1C39 Bethesda, MD 20892-2272.
Previous Awards	Enter a Yes or No in this field to indicate whether the employee has received, within the last 5 years, any awards in the following three categories: 1) NIH, PHS or DHHS; 2) IC Honor Award; or 3) Outside Awards. This information is NOT required for individual members of Group Awards.
Nominator	Enter the name of the person who nominated this employee.
Relationship to Nominee	Enter the relationship of the nominator to the nominee, i.e., Supervisor, Colleague, Team Member, etc.
Nominator's IC	Enter the acronym for the nominator's IC, not necessarily the same as the nominee's IC.
IC Nomination Ranking	Enter the rank number of this employee in the overall ranking list determined by the IC Director, and as was indicated on the submission/ ranking E-mail message to the NIH Awards Coordinator.

IC Total Nominations	Enter the total number of IC nominations. NOTE: Each group award counts as _ nomination, despite how many people may be part of the group.
Citation	Type in the citation. Start each citation with: "For ..." or "In recognition of ..." The fields are designed to approximate the lines on the plaque. Type each line and press <b>Tab</b> to move to the next line. Total number of characters is limited to 120. Depending on your wording, 120 characters may not fit if long words must move to the next line. Adjust the citation to fit the space. <b>Citation is <u>not</u> needed for the Mentoring Award.</b>  NOTE: This citation will be engraved on the plaque <b>exactly as you type it here</b> . The NIH Awards Coordinator will <u>not</u> retype it or make any corrections. You may wish to use your word processor margins to approximate the size to determine wording, and then cut and paste the text from your word processor.
Justification	Copy and paste the justification from your word processor or type it in. The box holds the equivalent of one page of single spaced text, 1 inch margins, 12 characters per inch (total of 4212 characters). It is suggested that you type this in your word processor, verify size, font, spelling, grammar, etc., and then cut and paste it into this field. The Awards Committee will review this <b>exactly as you type it here</b> The NIH Awards Coordinator will <u>not</u> retype it or make any corrections.

P After entering all the information, go back and review your entries. Once you review your nominations, you may close that window. The database automatically saves all information entered, but if you are working through the email, you must save the email before exiting in order to keep your newly entered information in the Access database. Again we recommend that you save the Access database to a folder of your choice to prevent losing any information. You may go back and edit your nomination at any time prior to your submission.

### New Group Nomination

This option allows you to enter a new group nomination. Group nominations consist of two parts, the group information, and the names of the members. A group nomination is counted as one nomination for purposes of indicating the total number of nominations from your IC. Enter all appropriate information. **Please double check the spelling of the employees' name and their credentials to preclude errors on recipients' plaque, program book and congratulatory letters. Information will not be verified or corrected by the NIH Awards Coordinator. Information is used directly from the database, as entered by the ICs.** Complete each field as described below.

P On the Nominee Form, enter the following information.

ID	This number will be entered automatically.
IC Awards Coordinator	Enter the IC Awards Coordinator or designee's first initial and last name.
Award Category	Category of employee's position, i.e., Scientific/Medical, Administrative, or Technical/Clerical/Support Scientific/Medical Administrative Technical/Clerical/Support
Type	Enter Individual (I) or Group (G).
Nominating IC	Enter the nominating IC.

Group Name	Enter the name of the Group, not the individuals. Use a name which incorporates your IC Acronym and other identifying information. Keep the name short, for example, "OHRM Award Team."
Nominator	Enter the name of the person who nominated this employee.
Relationship to Nominee	Enter the relationship of the nominator to the nominee, i.e., Supervisor, Colleague, Team Member, etc.
Nominator's IC	Enter the acronym for the nominator's IC, not necessarily the same as the nominee's IC.
IC Nomination Ranking	Enter the rank number of this group in the overall ranking list determined by the IC Director, and indicated on the submission/ranking E-mail message to the NIH Awards Coordinator.
IC Total Nominations	Enter the total number of IC nominations. NOTE: Each group award counts as one nomination, despite how many people may be part of the group.
Citation	<p>Type in the citation. Start each citation with: "For ..." or "In recognition of ..."</p> <p>The box is designed to approximate the lines on the plaque. Type each line and press <b>Tab</b> to move to the next line. Total number of characters is limited to 120. Depending on your wording, 120 characters may not fit if long words must move to the next line. Adjust the citation to fit the space.</p> <p>NOTE: This citation will be engraved on the plaque <b>exactly as you type it here</b>. The NIH Awards Coordinator <u>will not</u> retype it or make any corrections. You may wish to use your word processor to approximate the size to determine wording, and then cut and paste the text from your word processor.</p>
Justification	<p>Copy and paste the justification from your word processor or type it in. The box holds the equivalent of one page of single spaced text, 1 inch margins, 12 characters per inch (total of 4212 characters). It is suggested that you type this in your word processor, verify size, font, spelling, grammar, etc., and then cut and paste it into this field. The Awards Committee will review this <b>exactly as you type it here</b>. The NIH Awards Coordinator will <u>not</u> retype it or make any corrections.</p>

P After verifying all group information for accuracy, close the form.

P On the Group Nominee Form, enter the following group member information.

IC Awards Coordinator	Enter the IC Awards Coordinator or designee's first initial and last name.
Group Name	Enter the name of the Group exactly as it is on the Nominee Form. Use a name which incorporates your IC Acronym and other identifying information. Keep the name short, for example, "OHRM Award Team."
Last Name, First Name, MI	Self-explanatory. VERIFY THE SPELLING. Use Lead Capital Letters.
Degree(s)	Enter the degree(s) the employee normally uses, such as Ph.D., M.D., M.P.H., Dr.P.H. <u>Include</u> periods between the initials. This will be used on the plaque. Multiple degrees are permissible. VERIFY THE DEGREES.

Salutation Enter Mr., Ms. or Dr. The salutation will be used in the congratulatory letter to the employee.

Position Enter the nominee's official title, such as Secretary, Laboratory Technician, or Health Scientist Administrator, etc.

IC Enter the acronym for the group members IC not always the nominating IC.

P Enter the information regarding the first group member and tab to the next blank form each time to enter a new member.

# HHS SECRETARY'S AWARD FOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

## Purpose

The purpose of the HHS Secretary's Award for Distinguished Service is to recognize service that significantly advances the Department's mission and goals. It will reinforce the growing importance of achievement through teams. It recognizes high achievers who demonstrate teamwork and partnerships, as well as individuals whose accomplishments can be attributed directly to their personal skills and abilities.

## Overview of the Nomination and Review Process

Nominations for the HHS Secretary's Award are submitted using the Access database transmitted as an email attachment to the Workforce Performance and Measurement Division (WPMD), OHRM. It is the responsibility of each IC to complete their internal nomination and review process, and obtain the IC Director's approval for the nominations prior to entry into the Access database. Generally, the process is as follows:

**Submission Deadline:** The Priority Listing E-mail message described below must be received by the NIH Awards Coordinator, WPMD/OHRM, and all nominations must be submitted via the Access database no later than c.o.b. of the date indicated in the Call memo for Nominations, usually January 5th each year (or the first regular work day immediately following January 5th if the 5th is a weekend or holiday).

- 1.) ICs conduct and complete their own internal nomination and review process to allow sufficient time for actual nominations to be entered in the Access database by the IC Awards Coordinator prior to the deadline.
- 2.) The IC Awards Coordinator submits their IC Director's list of nominees ranked in priority order (highest priority nomination listed first) via email prior to or by the deadline. This message must be received before any nominations can be processed. The message should be sent to: [Lewisla@mail.nih.gov](mailto:Lewisla@mail.nih.gov), with a cc: to your IC Director. Ms. Lewis is located in the Workforce Performance and Measurement Division, OHRM.
- 3.) The IC Awards Coordinator submits all IC nominations via the Access database prior to or by the deadline. See specific instructions for entering the nominations in the next major section of this document. It is suggested that you print each nomination and check it carefully for typing errors, especially the citation, the employee's name and degrees. These items will be used in the congratulatory letter from the Secretary of HHS, the program book, the award and certificates for group members -- exactly as you type them.

Nominations may be submitted prior to the due date. If you find that there is an error in a nomination after you've submitted the database, contact the NIH Awards Coordinator so that you can resubmit your database with the corrections provided the error was discovered prior to the deadline. For errors discovered after the deadline, contact the NIH Awards Coordinator for further instructions.

- 4.) After submission by the ICs, the NIH Awards Committee will review each nomination, using the printed copy provided by WPMD.
- 5.) Decisions on which nominations are being forwarded to HHS will be communicated to each IC Awards Coordinator with a memo from the Director, Workforce Performance and Measurement Division.

## **Timeframe Covered by the Award**

The activities used as justification for a nomination should take place during the previous calendar year, or any portion of the previous calendar year.

## **Nature and Presentation of the Award**

The Award is an engraved obelisk, presented by the Secretary, HHS, at the annual HHS Awards Ceremony. The ceremony is usually held in May.

## **Eligibility**

All DHHS employees are eligible for recognition whether for team or individual achievements, regardless of position, grade or status. See the sample accomplishments in the next section for individual or team accomplishments. The list is illustrative, not exhaustive. Other accomplishments are also appropriate for nomination.

## **Criteria for Nomination**

The most critical feature of the nomination is to set forth the achievements making the team or individual worthy of recognition by the Secretary. Nominations should highlight displays of leadership, skill, ability, and customer service performed in such a manner that the team and/or employee exceeded standards significantly above those with similar duties, and that the results of these efforts were distinctly beneficial to the Department. In all cases, performance should clearly exceed expectations.

While the nominations of individuals will be accepted, the award encourages the recognition of teamwork. Teams may consist of employees from the same organization or from a number of different organizations. Although specific categories have not been prescribed, it is expected that a diverse pool of employees from all organizational levels will be nominated. Managers and supervisors should broadly distribute the nomination guidelines and should encourage and accept nominations from peers, team members, team leaders, supervisors, and internal customers.

Examples of accomplishments advancing the mission and goals of the DHHS include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A re-engineered work process which provides better customer service and positive performance outcomes.
- Major improvement to the operation of an HHS office or program by integrating processes.
- Active involvement in a community effort which successfully allows persons with disabilities and older Americans to remain independent, or one which discourages children from adopting high-risk behaviors.
- An innovative way to deliver an HHS program to more customers at no increase in cost.
- A new strategy that reduces risk-taking behaviors and promotes healthy life styles.
- A self directed team which developed ways to do work better at no additional cost or at less cost.
- An HHS program made more accessible to customers.
- A newly developed protocol that resulted in timely and effective methods, techniques, processes or treatments. A strengthened partnership between HHS and its customers.
- A work place with noticeable improvements in employee morale, safety, and/or health. Voluntary risk of personal safety and demonstration of courage which directly benefit HHS or the community at large.



## Nomination Process for the HHS Secretary's Award for Distinguished Service

Nominations are submitted using the Access database and transmitted as an email attachment to the Workforce Performance and Measurement Division, OHRM. Follow the instructions below containing specific criteria for entry in each field.

The NIH Awards Coordinator will send the IC Awards Coordinator an updated version of the access database as an attachment via email. Awards Coordinators may choose to work directly from the email, however, it is recommended that they save the attachment to a folder of their choice.

A reminder that the IC process for nomination and review must be completed and approved by the IC Director before nominations are entered in the Access database.

Steps for retrieving the database are as follows:

- Open the email from the NIH Awards Coordinator.
- Open the attachment of the Access database.
- Select the forms tab along the left margin of the window (Notice the selections inside the window).
- Select the Nominee Form -This form should be used to enter the following:
  1. ICs individual nomination(s)
  2. Group Nomination – complete all fields except individual group member information.
- The Group Nominee Form should be used to enter group member information.

### New Individual Nomination

This option allows you to enter an individual nomination. Enter the appropriate information requested. **Please double check the spelling of the employee's name and his or her credentials. Information will not be verified or corrected by the NIH Awards Coordinator. Any incorrect information you enter will be forwarded as submitted.** Complete each field as described below. **Use your mouse or the tab key to move field to field.**

ID	This number will be entered automatically.
IC Awards Coordinator	Enter the IC Awards Coordinator or designee's first initial and last name.
Nominating IC	Enter the nominating IC.
IC	Enter the acronym for your IC.
Group Name	Not applicable for individual nominations.
Last Name, First Name, MI	Self-explanatory. Verify the spelling. Use Lead Capital letters for names.
Degree(s)	Enter the degree(s) the employee normally uses, such as Ph.D., M.D., M.P.H., Dr.P.H. <u>Include</u> periods between the initials. This will be used on the plaque. Multiple degrees are permissible. <b>VERIFY THE DEGREES.</b>
Salutation	Enter Dr., Mr., or Ms. The salutation will be used in the congratulatory letter to the employee.
Position/Title	Enter the nominee's official working title, such as Secretary, Procurement Analyst, Health Scientist Administrator, Chemist, Division Director, etc.

Address	Use the 4 lines to enter the nominee's organizational location and mailing address, i.e., Division of IC Consulting OHRM 31 Center Drive MSC-2272 Bethesda, MD 20892-2272 <b>Tab</b> to move to the next line. (It is not necessary to fill each line.).
Previous Awards	Enter a Yes or No in this field to indicate whether the employee has received, within the last 5 years, any awards in the following three categories: 1) NIH, PHS or DHHS; 2) IC Honor Award; or 3) Outside Awards. This information is NOT required for individual group members.
Nominator	Enter the name of the person who nominated this employee. At NIH, this is usually the IC Director.
Relationship to Nominee	Enter the relationship of the nominator to the nominee. At NIH, this is usually the IC Director.
Nominator's IC	Enter the acronym for the nominator's IC, not necessarily the same as the nominee's IC.
IC Ranking	Enter the rank of this employee in the overall ranking list determined by the IC Director, and indicated on the submission/ranking E-mail message to the NIH Awards Coordinator.
IC Total Nominations	Enter the total number of IC nominations. NOTE: Each group award counts as <u>one</u> nomination, despite how many people may be part of the group.
Citation	Type in the citation. Start each citation with: "For ..." or "In recognition of ..." The box is designed to approximate the lines on the plaque. Type each line and press <b>Tab</b> to move to the next line. Total number of characters is limited to 120. Depending on your wording, 120 characters may not fit if long words must be moved to the next line. Adjust the citation to fit.  NOTE: The NIH Awards Coordinator <u>will not</u> retype the citation or make any corrections. You may wish to use your word processor margins to approximate the size to determine wording, and then cut and paste the text from your word processor.
Justification	Copy and paste the justification from your word processor or type it in. The box holds less than one page of single spaced text, 1" margins on top and both sides, 3" bottom margin, 12 characters per inch (use 12 pitch courier)(approximately 3300 characters). It is suggested that you type this in your word processor, verify size, font, spelling, grammar, etc., and then cut and paste it into this field. If it is too long, the extra text will be omitted when the final form is printed. The NIH Awards Coordinator <u>will not</u> edit it. The Awards Committee will review this <b>exactly as you type it here</b> .

P After entering all the information, go back and review your entries. Once you review your nominations, you may close that window. The database automatically saves all information entered, but if you are working through the email, you must save the email before exiting in order to keep your newly entered information in the Access database. Again we recommend that you save the Access database to a folder of your choice to prevent losing any information. You may go back and edit your nomination at any time prior to your submission.

## New Group Nomination

This option allows you to enter a group nomination. Group nominations consist of two parts, the Group information, and the names of the members. A group nomination is counted as one nomination for purposes of indicating the total number of nominations from your IC. The nomination screen is shown below. Enter the appropriate information. **Please double check the spelling of the employee's name and his or her credentials. Information will not be verified or corrected by the NIH Awards Coordinator. Any incorrect information you enter will be forwarded as submitted.** Complete each field as described below. The justification and citation for a group award are entered once, but each name is entered individually so appropriate information is available for the congratulatory letters.

P On the Nominee Form, enter the following information.

ID	This number will be entered automatically.
IC Awards Coordinator	Enter the IC Awards Coordinator or designee's first initial and last name.
Type	Enter Individual (I) or Group (G).
Nominating IC	Enter the nominating IC.
Group Name	Enter the name of the Group, not the individuals. Use a name which incorporates your IC Acronym and other identifying information. Keep the name short, for example, "OHRM Award Team."
Nominator	Enter the name of the person who nominated this group. At NIH, this is usually the IC Director.
Nominator Relationship	Enter the relationship of the nominator to the nominee, not the nominator's official title. At NIH, this is usually the IC Director.
Nominator IC	Enter the acronym for the nominator's IC, not necessarily the same as the nominee's IC.
IC Ranking	Enter the rank of this group in the overall ranking list determined by the IC Director, and indicated on the submission/ranking E-mail message to the NIH Awards Coordinator.
IC Total Nominations	Enter the total number of IC nominations. NOTE: Each group award counts as <u>one</u> nomination, despite how many people may be part of the group.
Citation	Type in the citation. Start each citation with: "For ..." or "In recognition of ..." The box is designed to approximate the lines on the plaque. Type each line and press <b>Tab</b> to move to the next line. Total number of characters is limited to 120. Depending on your wording, 120 characters may not fit if long words must move to the next line. Adjust the citation to fit the space
Justification	Copy and paste the justification from your word processor or type it in. The box holds less than one page of single spaced text, 1" margins on top and both sides, 3" bottom margin, 12 characters per inch (use 12 pitch courier)(approximately 3300 characters). It is suggested that you type this in your word processor, verify size, font, spelling, grammar, etc., and then cut and paste it into this field. If it is too long, the extra text will be omitted when

the final form is printed. The NIH Awards Coordinator will not edit it. The Awards Committee will review this **exactly as you type it here**.

P After verifying the group information for accuracy, close that form.

P On the Group Nominee Form, enter the following group member information.

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| IC Awards Coordinator     | Enter the IC Awards Coordinator or designee's first initial and last name.  |
| Group Name                | Enter the name of the Group exactly as it is on the Nominee Form. Use a name which incorporates your IC Acronym and other identifying information. Keep the name short, for example, "OHRM Award Team."                         |
| Last Name, First Name, MI | Self-explanatory. Verify the spelling. Use Lead Capital letters for the names.  |
| Degree(s)                 | Enter the degree(s) the employee normally uses, such as Ph.D., M.D., M.P.H., Dr.P.H. <u>Include</u> periods between the initials. This will be used on the plaque. Multiple degrees are permissible. <b>VERIFY THE DEGREES.</b> |
| Salutations               | Enter Dr., Mr., or Ms. The salutation will be used in the congratulatory letter to the employee.  |
| Position/Title            | Enter the nominee's official working title, such as Secretary, Procurement Analyst, Health Scientist Administrator, Chemist, Division Director, etc.  |
| IC                        | Enter the acronym for the group members IC not always the nominating IC.  |

P Enter the information regarding the first group member and tab to the next blank form each time to enter a new member.

# THE COMISSIONED OFFICERS AWARDS PROGRAM

## Purpose

The purpose of the commissioned officers' (CO) Awards Program is to recognize those COs whose outstanding performance and accomplishments merit recognition. The awards system is not intended to have officers compete against each other. There are neither minimum nor maximum numbers of nominations of awards.

## Overview of the Nomination and Review Process

Nominations for a CO award are submitted to the NIH CO Awards Coordinator in the Division of Senior Systems (DSS), Office of Human Resource Management (OHRM), at NIH. It is the responsibility of the ICs to complete their internal nomination and review procedures in a timeframe to allow submission of the nominations by the due date. Generally, the process is as follows:

**Submission Deadlines:** Nominations for CO awards are due by May 8th and August 29th each year, or the next working day if either date falls on a weekend or holiday.

- 1.) ICs complete their own internal nomination and review process to allow timely preparation of nominations.
- 2.) By the deadline date, the IC Awards Coordinators and/or IC Personnel Offices submit the original and 8 of copies of each nomination to the NIH CO Awards Coordinator, in the Division of Senior Systems, OHRM (Bldg 31, Room B3-C12).
- 3.) After submission by the ICs, the NIH CO Awards Coordinator will review the nominations and forward them to the CO Awards Board.
- 4.) The NIH CO Awards Coordinator will inform the ICs of the decisions regarding the approved CO nominations that will be forwarded.
- 5.) The Department Awards Board reviews the nominations and provides feedback to the NIH CO Awards Coordinator regarding who will receive an award.
- 6.) The NIH CO Awards Coordinator informs the ICs of the Board's decision.

## NIH Contact

The NIH CO Awards Coordinator is located in the Division of Senior Systems (DSS), Office of Human Resource Management (OHRM), in the Office of the Director (OD) at NIH. Questions or problems should be addressed to the NIH CO Awards Coordinator.

## Timeframe Covered by the Award

Each recommendation for an individual or unit honor award should be formally initiated within thirteen (13) months after the noteworthy accomplishment or specific period of service to be recognized. No officer may receive two individual honor awards in one award cycle year (July 1 through June 30) from their assigned agency except in extraordinary circumstances or for valor.

## Eligibility

The CO Awards Program is open to all commissioned officers, regular and reserve corps on active duty. Officers in the inactive reserves and retired officers may receive awards for significant accomplishments and performance which occurred while on active duty. See the information specific to each award below.

## Criteria for Nomination

Awards must be based on actions and activities that have not been the basis for a prior Commissioned Corps award, except what has been previously honored may serve as part of the basis for a more senior subsequent award that is based on significantly more actions and accomplishments over a longer period of time. There are no criteria for the number of awards or percent of officers receiving awards. In addition, see the criteria for each award listed below.

## Types of Awards

There are two main types of awards: Honor Awards and Service Awards.

**Honor Awards:** There are eight individual and two unit honor awards.

- **Distinguished Service Medal (DSM):** The DSM is the highest award bestowed on an officer. It recognizes exceedingly high level of achievements, which may range from the management of a major health program to an initiative resulting in a major impact on the health of the nation. The award can also be awarded for a one-time heroic act resulting in great saving of life, health, or property.
- **Meritorious Service Medal (MSM):** The MSM recognizes meritorious service on the basis of a single, particularly important achievement; a career notable for accomplishments in technical or professional fields; or unusually high quality and initiative in leadership. The level of performance meriting this award may include a highly significant achievement in research, program direction, or program administration; a series of significant contributions; a continuing period of meritorious service; or exhibition of great courage in hazardous work, or in an emergency.
- **Outstanding Service Medal (OSM):** The OSM is presented to officers who have either demonstrated outstanding continuous leadership in carrying out the mission of the PHS or have performed a single accomplishment which has had a major effect on the health of the nation, or have performed a heroic act resulting in the preservation of health or property.
- **Commendation Medal (CM):** The CM is awarded to an officer who has demonstrated a level of proficiency and dedication distinctly greater than that expected of an average commissioned officer. The CM recognizes sustained high quality work performance in scientific, administrative, or other professional fields; application of unique skill or creative imagination to the approach or solution of problems; or noteworthy technical and professional contributions that are significant to a limited area.
- **Achievement Medal (AM):** The AM recognizes noteworthy contributions towards the attainment of program objectives, or sustained above-average performance over a relatively short period of time, such as a short tour of duty (120 days or less).
- **PHS Citation (PHS CIT):** The PHS CIT recognizes special contributions towards the attainment of program objectives, sustained above average performance of duty, or high quality performance of duty over a relatively short period of time.

- **Outstanding Unit Citation (OUC):** The OUC is awarded to commissioned officers who constitute a group which exhibited exceptional service of national or international significance. The award is usually given for specific actions over a relatively short period of time, marked by discrete beginning and ending dates.
- **Unit Commendation (UC):** The UC is presented to acknowledge outstanding accomplishment by a designated organizational unit within PHS. The award is made to commissioned officers who have demonstrated a significant level of performance well above that normally expected, but at a somewhat lesser level than is required for the OUC.

**Service Awards:** Service awards may be initiated by the officer or supervisor at any time after the criteria for the award have been met. There are five service awards and one campaign award.

- **Foreign Duty Award (FDA):** For service outside the US for 30 consecutive or 90 non-consecutive days in a foreign duty post (not in training status).
- **Hazardous Duty Award (HDA):** For service of over 180 days in a position requiring frequent risk to officer's safety. Assignments where the officer's professional knowledge should significantly reduce or abolish the risk do not qualify for the HDA. See CCPM27.1, Instruction 2, for the designated sites.
- **Isolated Hardship Award (ISOHAR):** For service of over 180 days at a site designated as isolated, remote, insular, or constituting a hardship. There are designated sites for the ISOHAR; see CCPM27.1, Instruction 2.
- **National Emergency Preparedness Award (NEPA):** For two continuous years of service in an organized unit that is mandated to provide emergency medical/support services and meet required activities, training, and certification.
- **Special Assignment Award (SAA):** For service of a minimum of 30 consecutive days in a detail to a specific program initiative of other Federal or State Agency.
- **Smallpox Eradication Campaign Ribbon (SPEC):** For 90 days service between January 1, 1966, and October 26, 1977, in the smallpox campaign.
- **Crisis Response Service Award (CRSA):** For service in PHS intervention activity in a crisis situation. Service must be direct/on-site, participation of a non-routine nature.

### Nature, Level of Approval, and Presentation of the Award

Each CO awardee receives a ribbon. Presentation of awards is at either the annual NIH Awards Ceremony or at IC Awards Ceremony, depending on the approving authority. See the table below.

Award	Recommended By:	Reviewed By:	Approved By:	Presented By:
DSM	NIH Awards Board	CC Awards Board Director	Director, PSC	NIH Director
MSM	NIH Awards Board	CC Awards Board Director	Director, PSC	NIH Director
OSM	NIH Awards Board	CC Awards Board Director	Director, PSC	NIH Director
CM	Supervisor	IC Director	IC Director	IC Director
AM	Supervisor	IC Awards Committee	IC Director	IC Director
PHS	Supervisor	IC Awards Committee	IC Director	IC Director
OUC	NIH Awards Board	CC Awards Board	Director, PSC	IC Director
UC	Supervisor	NIH Director	IC Director	IC Director

## Citation Guidelines

The citation is limited to 25 words maximum; all words are counted. Begin the citation with “For ....” Be consistent between the proposed citation and the narrative. Avoid overly technical language. Do not use abbreviations unless spelled out previously in the citation.

## Justification Guidelines

In addition to the following guidelines, refer to the PHS Commissioned Corps Personnel Manual, CC 27.1, Instructions 1-4, for additional guidance.

- The period for which the honor nomination is proposed must be compatible with the period for which actions are cited.
- Remain within the maximum page limitations:
  - "2 pages for DSM, MS, OSM, OUC
  - "1 page for CM, UC
- Keep the text simple. Do not over complicate it nor use a lot of technical jargon. Avoid using glowing adjectives or global phrases unrelated to the accomplishment; let the accomplishment speak for itself.
- Avoid overly technical language. Do not assume that the reviewers will be familiar with in-house technical terms. Do not use abbreviations unless they are spelled out earlier in the narrative.
- Write the narrative first, and then decide on the level of award. (Many nominators reverse this process.)
- Start the narrative with the nominee’s present position and responsibilities, then go on to his/her accomplishments.
- Write in a specific and objective manner, answering the following questions:
  - What did the officer do to warrant recognition?
  - What is the officer’s scope of responsibility relative to his/her grade?
  - What were the outcomes (impacts) of the officer’s accomplishments on the program and the PHS in general?
  - What was the scope of the outcome versus the officer’s scope in his/her job?
  - How did this accomplishment bring honor upon the officer and the PHS?
- **Important:** If previous awards overlap the period of the proposed award (such as for an award based on a career), “weave” the previous honor awards received into the text of the nomination by stating when the award was given and the reason it was given. Board members need this information to fully consider the proposed award.
- Be consistent between the proposed citation on the cover sheet and the narrative. If the award is for a career, the narrative should encapsulate and summarize a career of accomplishments rather than one particular accomplishment. If the proposed award is to recognize a more focused number of accomplishments, the narrative should concentrate on them.
- Write the narrative geared for the highest level of reviewing authority. Keep it simple, yet comprehensive. A neutral party should be able to read the narrative and based on it alone, understand the reason for the proposed award and agree or disagree without looking at any other document.
- Do not include a *curriculum vitae*, COER, or list of publications.



## Assembly and Submission of the Nomination Package

- Complete the cover sheet, including Grade, Category, and correct 5-digit PHS number. After the Officer's full name, indicate their doctoral degree in parentheses (MD, PhD), if applicable. Copies of the cover sheet/official nomination form (form PHS 6342-1 for unit nominations; form PHS 6342-2 for individual nominations) are available from the IC Awards Coordinators. Electronic copies in Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) format are also available from the IC Awards Coordinator. (This allows you to print a clean original.)
- Type Agency Head signature block on each form.
- Attach the 1 or 2 page narrative justification.
- Submit an **original, and 8 copies** to the NIH CO Awards Coordinator in DSS for both the PHS and NIH approved awards by c.o.b. on the deadline date.