



United States Department of Agriculture

Research, Education, and Economics
Agricultural Research Service

MSA Policy #08-01

September 5, 2008

SUBJECT: Policy on Awards

TO: Mid South Area Employees

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, Superior, or the Fully Successful level or otherwise display extra effort. It is our responsibility to ensure that these awards are consistent across the Mid South Area. The Mid South Area Award Policy is consistent with Agency policy and pay for performance in keeping with the President's Management Agenda.

Due to the shortened rating cycle, changes have been made for all award types; Quality Step Increases (QSI) have been removed. Cash and Time Off awards have been pro-rated.

The following applies to approval of Cash 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 or Time Off award. An employee cannot receive more than one form of award for a single performance event.



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Conducting the national research programs in Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee

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4. The enclosed guidelines apply for the maximum cash award for those employees receiving an Outstanding performance rating for performance cycle ending September 30, 2008. The two tables include one for those employees being rated from January 1 – September 30, 2008 (75%) and one for those employees being rated from April 1 – September 30, 2008 (50%). The guidelines are set at four percent of the salary at Step 1 of the current grade the employee is in, but cannot exceed \$4,000 in accordance with P & P 115.0. The enclosed tables show the amounts for GS, WS, WG, and WL employees. The dollar amounts have been rounded to \$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 are updated annually.
5. If Time Off is selected as an award option, 30-hours off will be awarded for an Outstanding Rating.
6. Performance awards 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 for High Superior (one element scored Fully Successful) should be 75% of the amount in the Guidelines for Outstanding performance. Cash awards for Low Superior (more than one element scored Fully Successful) should be at 50% of the amount in the Guidelines for Outstanding performance. Also, cash awards for Fully Successful should be at 25% of the amount in the Guidelines for Outstanding performance. A written justification for all Cash awards and Time Off awards is required. This narrative must address how the employee's performance justifies an award. A time off award of eighteen (18) hours off will be awarded for a High Superior Rating and twelve (12) hours off will be awarded for a Low Superior Rating. Six (6) hours off will be awarded for a Fully Successful rating.
8. *Extra Effort Awards should not be given as a result of an annual performance rating.* 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.

Employee Recognition (<http://www.usda.gov/da/employ/recog.htm>) provides guidance on appropriate amounts for these awards. **All monetary and time off awards now 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.

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9. 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. Again, all monetary and time-off awards require written justification. These awards are approved by the CD/LD/RL except where the award nomination is originated by the CD/LD/RL.

Enclosure

cc w/encl:

E. B. Knipling

Kit Hoyle

Deborah Brennan

Archie Tucker

Dave Love

Fixed Cash Award for Outstanding Performance Rating
Calendar Year 2008, ¾ Cycle
(For Performance Cycle Ending September 30, 2008)

GS Employees	Award Amount \$	WG Employees	Award Amount \$	WS Employees	Award Amount \$	WL Employees	Award Amount \$
01	550	01	550	01	950	01	700
02	650	02	650	02	1,000	02	750
03	700	03	700	03	1,050	03	800
04	800	04	750	04	1,100	04	850
05	850	05	850	05	1,150	05	900
06	950	06	900	06	1,200	06	1,000
07	1,100	07	950	07	1,300	07	1,050
08	1,200	08	1,000	08	1,350	08	1,100
09	1,300	09	1,100	09	1,350	09	1,150
10	1,450	10	1,150	10	1,400	10	1,200
11	1,600	11	1,200	11	1,500	11	1,250
12	1,900	12	1,300	12	1,600	12	1,300
13	2,250	13	1,350	13	1,650	13	1,350
14	2,700	14	1,400	14	1,750	14	1,400
15	3,150	15	1,450	15	1,900	15	1,450
				16	2,050		
				17	2,200		
				18	2,350		
				19	2,500		

*** See MSA Policy on Awards for ratings other than Outstanding.

Fixed Cash Award for Outstanding Performance Rating
Calendar Year 2008, ½ Cycle
(For Performance Cycle Ending September 30, 2008)

GS Employees	Award Amount \$	WG Employees	Award Amount \$	WS Employees	Award Amount \$	WL Employees	Award Amount \$
01	400	01	300	01	650	01	450
02	450	02	400	02	700	02	500
03	500	03	450	03	700	03	550
04	550	04	500	04	750	04	600
05	600	05	550	05	800	05	600
06	650	06	600	06	800	06	650
07	700	07	650	07	850	07	700
08	800	08	700	08	900	08	750
09	900	09	750	09	900	09	750
10	1,000	10	750	10	950	10	800
11	1,100	11	800	11	1,000	11	850
12	1,300	12	850	12	1,050	12	850
13	1,550	13	900	13	1,100	13	900
14	1,800	14	950	14	1,200	14	950
15	2,100	15	1,000	15	1,250	15	950
				16	1,350		
				17	1,450		
				18	1,600		
				19	1,650		

*** See MSA Policy on Awards for ratings other than Outstanding.