

VA ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARDS PROGRAM

1. REASON FOR ISSUE. To update Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) guidance and procedures on implementing an effective environmental awards program and to be consistent with the White House's "Closing the Circle" Awards Program.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES. This handbook changes the name of VA Handbook 0053 from "Acquisition, Recycling, and Waste Prevention Awards Program" to "VA Environmental Excellence Awards Program;" updates procedures and responsibilities for implementing the VA Environmental Excellence Awards Program; and provides information regarding:

- a. Eligibility Criteria
- b. Nomination Criteria
- c. Evaluation Criteria and Process
- d. Recognition Mechanism
- e. Listing of Awards Categories

3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE. The Office of Acquisition and Materiel Management (OA&MM), Office of the Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Program Management and Operations (049M).

4. RELATED DIRECTIVE. VA Directive 0053, VA Environmental Excellence Awards Program.

5. RESCISSIONS. This handbook rescinds VA Handbook 0053, Acquisition, Recycling, and Waste Prevention Awards Program, dated June 6, 1996.

CERTIFIED BY:

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**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY
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Distribution: Electronic Only

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VA ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARDS PROGRAM

1. PURPOSE. This handbook establishes the mandatory procedures and assigns responsibilities for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Environmental Excellence Awards Program. The awards focus on waste prevention, recycling, and “green” purchasing activities under Executive Order (EO) 13101, Greening the Government Through Waste Prevention, Recycling, and Federal Acquisition; leadership in environmental management under EO 13148, Greening the Government Through Leadership in Environmental Management; green/sustainable buildings under both EO 13101 and 13148; and reduced fuel consumption under EO 13149, Greening the Government Through Federal Fleet and Transportation Efficiency. This handbook is to be used in conjunction with VA Directive 0053.

2. ELIGIBILITY

a. All VA personnel employed at the time of nomination will be eligible to be nominated for an award under this program.

b. Nominations may be submitted for either individuals or any size group or facility, but only one nomination may be submitted per person or group.

c. These awards will not be used in lieu of superior performance awards.

d. Nominations for awards will be submitted not later than December 5 of the current year, unless an alternate date is announced by the Assistant Secretary for Management, who serves as the VA Environmental Executive (VA EE), and will cover the period October 1 to September 30 of the previous fiscal year. If the project represents a multi-year effort, accomplishments must be demonstrated for the fiscal year for which the nomination is being submitted.

e. Only the winners of the VA Environmental Excellence awards will be eligible to compete in the White House’s “Closing the Circle” Awards Program.

3. NOMINATION CRITERIA

a. General. Nominations must be submitted on double-sided, recycled-content paper containing at least 30 percent postconsumer material. Nominations must not exceed 2,000 words or a total of four pages (two sheets of 8 ½ by 11” paper, printed double-sided), not including the cover page. Mail a hard copy of the nomination package postmarked by the closing date to: Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of the Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Program Management and Operations (049M), 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420. Photographs and supporting documentation, e.g., quantitative data showing reductions in waste generation, amount of green products purchased, and percentage of construction and demolition debris recycled, are encouraged and may be submitted in excess of the two-

page limit. The complete nomination package must also be e-mailed by the closing date to vacogreen@va.gov.

b. Nomination Format

(1) The nomination package must have a cover page to include the following information:

(a) Category of Award Nomination: Specify which award category the nomination package addresses. Choose **only one** category, i.e., Waste/Pollution Prevention (Hazardous Waste or Non-Hazardous Solid Waste); Recycling; Green Purchasing; Environmental Management Systems; Sustainable Design/Green Buildings; Minimizing Petroleum Usage in Transportation.

(b) Title of Nomination (program/project name), e.g., Aluminum Recycling at XYZ Facility.

(c) Contact Name: Indicate a single point of contact for the nomination. Include name, title, facility name, mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone and facsimile numbers.

(d) Nominee: List the name, title, facility name, mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone and facsimile numbers of the employees performing the actual work.

(e) Location: Identify the VA facility at which the nominated work was performed.

(f) VA Facility Director: List the name, title, facility name, mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone and facsimile numbers of the director of the VA facility at which the nominated work was performed.

(2) The first page of the nomination must begin with a 100-150 word summary describing the project and the improvements or benefits resulting from the project. The summary may be used to publicize the nomination.

(3) The remaining pages must address the evaluation criteria listed in paragraph 4.a, Evaluation Criteria, and clearly identify accomplishments in one of the activities related to Executive Orders 13101, 13148, or 13149, as described in Appendix A.

c. Nomination Process

(1) VA employees may submit a nomination for themselves, a peer, supervisor, or any size VA group or organization.

(2) Nominations should include consolidated achievements of a particular individual or group. Achievements accomplished by a group should only be nominated once in the name of the group and not multiple times by individual members of the group.

(3) Nominations must be submitted to the facility director or other designated key official for written and signed concurrence. The director or other key official must certify that there are no violations of Federal, state, or local environmental requirements outstanding at the time of the nomination.

4. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND PROCESS

a. Evaluation Criteria. To ensure full consideration, all nominees must address the criteria listed in paragraphs (1) to (6). Nominations submitted in the categories of hazardous waste and recycling must also address paragraphs (7) and (8), as appropriate. These criteria will be used as a guide to evaluate nominations submitted under the specified categories:

(1) Does the project involve the use of innovative approaches, techniques, or technologies? That is, does the project represent something that is not well demonstrated or proven for the category under which you are submitting your nomination? Please describe.

(2) Is the project cost effective when considering life cycle costs? Describe actual cost savings, revenue generated, and costs avoided, including the means by which the foregoing was determined. Also, describe any other tangible benefits, such as improved health and safety or reduced waste.

(3) Does the project have an education/training or outreach component designed to inform or promote the goals of your project at the facility, or within VA, or to the public? Please describe.

(4) Does the project involve or promote partnerships with the local community, another Government agency, a non-Governmental agency, private industry, or other entity outside your facility? Please describe.

(5) Were performance measures or goals identified to determine the success of the project? If so, please describe them and indicate if they were met or exceeded.

(6) Can the project be replicated by or serve as a best practice for another VA facility, Government agency, or entity outside the Federal Government? Please describe.

(7) If the project involves recycling of documents, computers, or other electronics with media storage components, please describe how privacy/data security measures were considered and managed.

(8) If the project involves hazardous waste, the nomination must be reviewed by and concurred on—in writing—by the facility safety officer, industrial hygienist, or other appropriate staff member to ensure that the process and outcome do not negatively impact the environment or public health or safety.

b. Evaluation Process

(1) Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials may develop and implement a mechanism for the evaluation of facility and individual environmental nominations for submission to the Office of Acquisition and Materiel Management (OA&MM), Office of the Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Program Management and Operations (049M). In the absence of other mechanisms, the facility director will develop an evaluation methodology for selecting nominations and will submit those nominations directly to OA&MM (049M), providing concurrence and certification as noted in paragraph 3c.(3), Nomination Process.

(2) A subcommittee of the VA Environmental Council will meet to evaluate nominations when requested by the VA EE. The subcommittee will select and recommend award winners and any honorable mentions to the VA EE for final selection.

(3) The awards categories and evaluation criteria may be changed by the VA EE to meet the needs of the Department or the requirements of external environmental managers, e.g., Office of the Federal Environmental Executive. Any revisions will be issued as part of the annual call for nominations.

5. RECOGNITION MECHANISM

a. A monetary award in the amount of \$2,000 may be given to the winner in each of the awards categories. In the event of a group being selected as a winner, the monetary award will be divided equally among the group members. In the event of a facility being selected as a winner, the facility will receive a trophy or other appropriate non-monetary award.

b. Award winners will be recognized, and awards will be presented as appropriate on an annual basis by the VA EE. In addition to the Department-level recognition and awards, the award winner's facility or organization director is encouraged to promote this program and recognize the achievements of the award winner for the various recognition categories through that facility's or organization's preferred mechanism (awards ceremony, newsletter, special notices, etc.).

c. Honorable mentions will receive Department-level recognition with a certificate or other form of acknowledgement. The honorable mention's facility or organization director is similarly encouraged to promote this program and recognize the achievements of the honorable mention through that facility's or organization's preferred mechanism.

6. AWARDS CATEGORIES

a. **Waste/Pollution Prevention (Hazardous Waste and Non-Hazardous Solid Waste)**: This category recognizes the best examples of how VA facilities and organizations prevent pollution through source reduction and how they protect natural

resources through conservation or increased efficiency in the use of energy, water, or other materials. Source reduction reduces the amount of both hazardous and non-hazardous solid waste to be disposed. Source reduction reduces exposure of the public to health hazards posed by environmental pollutants. It also reduces the amount of hazardous and non-hazardous substances, wastes, pollutants, or contaminants that would otherwise enter waste streams or be released to the environment, e.g., air emissions. For the purposes of this category, source reduction does not include the recycling of non-hazardous waste. Source reduction includes equipment or technology modifications; process or procedure modifications; reformulation or redesign of products; substitution of raw materials; and improvements in housekeeping, maintenance, training, or inventory control. Nominations should be limited to projects that are operational.

b. **Recycling:** This category recognizes outstanding and innovative activities, including collection, separation, and processing, by which products or other materials are recovered from the solid waste stream at a VA facility for use in the manufacture of new products (other than fuel for producing heat or power by combustion).

c. **Green Purchasing:** This category recognizes the most effective and innovative programs implemented for the purchase and use of recycled content, biobased, energy efficient, or other environmentally preferable products or services at a VA site, facility, or operation. For recycled content products, this award category focuses on, but is not limited to, those products designated in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines (CPG). (For the complete list of CPG items and program information, visit www.epa.gov/cpg.) For environmentally preferable products (EPP), this award category recognizes the best examples of acquiring, using, or validating products or services that have a reduced impact on human health and the environment when compared with competing products or services that serve the same purpose; an outstanding improvement to a process that resulted in significant monetary savings and benefit to the environment; or product testing that led to the approval and use of environmentally preferable products or services. (Visit www.epa.gov/opptintr/epp for more information about the EPP program.) For biobased products, this award category focuses on acquiring, using, or validating biobased products or services proposed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A “biobased product” is defined as a commercial or industrial product (other than food or feed) that uses biological products, or renewable domestic agricultural (plant, animal, marine) or forestry materials. (For more information on the USDA biobased products program, visit www.biobased.oce.usda.gov.)

NOTE: To be eligible under the Green Purchasing category, the nomination must indicate whether the facility has a local Affirmative Procurement Plan in place or follows the Department-level Affirmative Procurement Plan (VA Directive and Handbook 0052), regardless of whether the nomination focuses on recycled content, biobased, energy efficient, or other environmentally preferable products or services.

d. **Environmental Management Systems**: This category recognizes the most effective and innovative programs to implement an Environmental Management System (EMS) at VA facilities in accordance with Executive Order 13148, Greening the Government Through Leadership in Environmental Management. Implementation of a VA facility level EMS shall include measurable environmental goals, objectives, and targets that are reviewed and updated as appropriate. The system should also include a compliance component. This category also recognizes the use of quantitative or qualitative consideration of the full range (cradle to grave) of environmental costs and impacts of certain activities or procurement. The effort should include environmental consideration in either descriptive or accounting format of raw material derivations; use and disposal of final products services; material and energy usage and waste; environmental, health, and safety management costs; or the use of environmental accounting and life cycle assessment in multiple types of decision-making.

e. **Sustainable Design/Green Buildings**: This category recognizes the most innovative VA sustainable building design and green building projects. Nominations should be limited to projects that have been completed, are under construction, or have completed the planning process and have been awarded to a successful offeror and should address all facets of a structure/projects life cycle; i.e., encompass project design, energy efficiency, and building operations. Each nomination should highlight the cost-effective use of innovative techniques and solutions that utilize sustainable design principles in the planning, construction, and operation of VA facilities. Sustainable design and construction of green buildings considers the environmental, economic, and social impacts of a construction project as an integrated whole. It applies to the life cycle of a building, its design, construction, operation, maintenance, and deconstruction, and involves consideration of how the construction of a building promotes environmental quality, wellness of building occupants, economic vitality, and social benefit.

f. **Minimizing Petroleum Use in Transportation**: This category recognizes programs, practices and procedures implemented in a VA fleet that result in significant reduction in petroleum use. This includes establishment of new fuel infrastructure; methods for encouraging the use of alternative fuels; ride sharing programs; increased vehicle usage efficiency programs; hybrid vehicle or neighborhood electric vehicle acquisition and use; or any other methods the fleet uses to decrease its petroleum consumption. Preference will be given to nominations that demonstrate innovation in response to technical, logistical, financial and other hurdles and support the goals of Executive Order 13149, "Greening the Government Through Federal Fleet and Transportation Efficiency."