Department of the Interior
Departmental Manual

Effective Date: 7/16/08
Series: Personnel Management
Part 370: Departmental Personnel Program
Chapter 451: Awards and Recognition Program
Subchapter 1: General

Originating Office: Office of Human Resources

370 DM 451.1

1.1 **General**. This chapter provides Departmental policy for an Awards and Recognition Program. The main purpose of the program is to allow maximum flexibility in the design and application of a variety of traditional and non-traditional mechanisms to recognize individual and group achievement, and to acknowledge contributions that lead to achievement of organizational, team, or individual results. Departmental awards fall into the following categories:

A. Performance Awards (370 DM 451.2)

B. Honor Awards (370 DM 451.3)

C. Monetary Awards (370 DM 451.4)

D. Non-Monetary Awards (370 DM 451.5)

E. Outside Awards (370 DM 451.6)

1.2 **Scope**. This policy covers all bureaus and offices of the Department.

1.3 **Authorities**. Authorities governing the Awards Program include:

A. 5 U.S.C. Chapter 43 and 45;

B. 5 CFR Parts 430 and 451;

C. Comptroller General Decisions B-223319 July 21, 1986; and B-235163.11, February 13, 1996.

1.4 **Objective**. The objective of the awards program is to encourage recognition of employees and partners. The program strives to be simple to use, allow for approval at the lowest practical level, and reduce paperwork. Timely recognition encourages improvement in individual, team, and organizational performance.

1.5 **Policy**.

A. Achievements should be recognized at the time of accomplishment, and acknowledgement of progress toward achieving individual, team, or organizational results should be a continuous process.

B. Awards should be presented in a way that supports the significance of the recognition.

C. Refreshments may be purchased with operating appropriations when it is determined that the effectiveness of an official award ceremony would be materially enhanced by serving light refreshments.

D. Travel expenses for an employee award recipient and one guest may be paid by the bureau when holding a major presidential, Departmental, or bureau award ceremony or Convocation.

1.6 **Limitations**. There are prohibitions on awards for certain Federal employees, such as political employees (Schedule C and non-career Senior Executive Service (SES) members) who are not eligible to receive awards between June 1 of any year in which there is a Presidential election and January 20 of the following year. (See 5 CFR § 451.105)

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Chapter 451: Awards and Recognition Program
Subchapter 2: Performance Awards

Originating Office: Office of Human Resources

370 DM 451.2

2.1 **General**. The Department's 5-level performance management system for general workforce employees became effective on October 4, 2004. Under this performance system the year-end performance rating is used as a basis for appropriate personnel actions, including rewarding noteworthy performance.

2.2 **Policy**. An employee must be rated at Superior (Level 4) or Exceptional (Level 5) to be eligible for a performance-based award. Any employee rated Exceptional (Level 5) must be considered for an award as required by 370 DM 430. There may be circumstances when awards cannot be given. However, in accordance with 5 CFR Section 451.104(g), performance-based cash awards must make a meaningful distinction based on levels of performance. In other words, an employee who receives an award based on a performance rating of Level 5 must receive a larger cash award, in terms of percentage of base pay, than an employee at the same grade/pay level who received a rating of Level 4.

2.3 **Rating Levels for Recognition**. Managers/Supervisors have the flexibility to recognize employees using any of the award recognitions outlined below, or a combination thereof:

A. Exceptional (Level 5) - Eligible for one or more of the following: a Cash Award of up to 5 percent of base pay, a QSI, Time-Off Award, or other appropriate equivalent recognition.

B. Superior (Level 4) - Eligible for a Cash Award of up to 3 percent of base pay, Time-Off Award, and/or other appropriate equivalent recognition.

C. Fully Successful (Level 3) - Not eligible for any performance-based award. However, an employee is eligible to receive an award for reasons other than sustained performance tied to the rating of record. For example, the employee is eligible to be recognized for a noteworthy contribution within the rating period (e.g., recognition for work on a special project that contributed to its success).

2.4 **Performance-based Cash Awards**. Monetary or non-monetary awards given to employees who rated at Level 4 (Superior) or Level 5 (Exceptional) under the Department's 5-level performance management system. A cash award may be a specific dollar amount or a

percentage of the employee's pay. Cash awards based on a specific dollar amount that are in excess of $5,000 require approval of the Assistant Secretary or equivalent. When performance-based cash awards based on a percentage of the employee's pay are in excess of $5,000, approval of the Assistant Secretary or equivalent is not required. Based on 5 CFR 451.104(g), when awards are computed as a percentage of an employee's rate of base pay, the rate of base pay must include locality payments under 5 U.S.C. 5304, special rate supplements under 5 U.S.C. 5305 and/or other similar payments. Such awards are recommended by the immediate supervisor or rating official, and are approved under appropriate bureau delegations.

2.5 **Quality Step Increase**. A Quality Step Increase (QSI) is a pay increase that provides faster than normal progression within grade steps for permanent General Schedule employees. To be eligible, the employee must achieve an overall rating of Exceptional (Level 5) on their Employee Performance Appraisal Plan and display exceptional performance that is expected to continue.

2.6 **Time-Off Awards**. An excused absence awarded to an employee without charge to leave. Bureaus must establish approval authorities, scheduling guidance, and an appropriate number of hours commensurate with employee contributions, and supervisory responsibilities. The minimum time-off recognition is one hour; the time-off award shall not exceed 40 hours per event or 80 hours total per year. This limit includes performance-based time-off awards. Employees normally have the discretion to determine when they will use a time-off award, subject to supervisory approval. A time-off award must be used while the recipient is employed at the Department; the time-off award cannot be transferred to another agency upon separation of the employee. Further, upon separation from the Department, employees are not entitled to receive payment for any unused time-off award hours. These limits apply to all employees.

2.7 **Nomination Process and Approval Authority for Performance Awards**. Performance awards may be documented using either the front page of the performance appraisal form or the revised awards form, DI-451. An example of the form is provided in the Appendix to this chapter. An overview of the process is provided below:

A. Processing Timelines. For employees whose performance appraisal cycle ends on September 30, all awards should be input into FPPS no later than November 30. For those on other than a Fiscal Year Cycle, awards should be input within 60 days after the end of the performance cycle.

B. Processing Codes. All performance-based cash awards must be input using Nature of Action Code 840-A1, which is "performance award (Cash)". Performance-based time off awards must be input using Nature of Action Code 846-A2, performance (time-off).

C. Delayed Processing of QSIs. Supervisors should attempt to process all QSIs no later than December 31, or 90 days from the end of the performance cycle for those on other than a fiscal year cycle. However, when situations preclude timely processing, the QSI can be delayed past the 90 days, but cannot be delayed past the end of the next performance year. Whenever processing of the QSI is delayed for more than 90 days, a request for exception should be submitted to the respective Bureau or Office head, through the servicing Human Resources

Office and the Bureau Headquarters Human Resources Office for approval. Since a QSI must be supported by a performance rating of Level 5 (Exceptional), which requires the approval of a rater and reviewer, both signatures are required for a QSI exception request. Requests should be in the form of a memorandum and include an explanation as to why it was not possible to process the rating and the QSI within 90 days from the end of the performance cycle.

D. **Responsibility**. Bureaus and offices are responsible for establishing nomination processes and approval authorities for implementing this policy.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
RECOMMENDATION AND APPROVAL OF AWARDS

Agency/Bureau	Name Of Employee (Last, First, Middle Initial)	
Social Security No. X X X – X X – _____	Position Title	Pay Plan-Series/Grade/Step
Duty Station	Period Covered For Award (MM/DD/YY) From: To:	Cost Account Number

COMPLETE THE APPROPRIATE AWARD SECTION BELOW

MONETARY AWARD:

_____ Performance-Based Cash Award

_____ Exceptional (Level 5) Performance Rating $_____ or % _____

_____ Superior (Level 4) Performance Rating $_____ or % _____

_____ Quality Step Increase

(Exceptional (Level 5) Performance Rating Required

_____ Star (Special Thanks for Achievement) Award $_____

_____ Productivity Improvement Award $_____

_____ Invention/Patent Award $_____

NON-MONETARY AWARD:

_____ Time-Off Recognition

Number of Hours: _____

_____ Non-Monetary Recognition

Cash Value of $_____

HONOR AWARD:

_____ Distinguished Service Award

_____ Partners in Conservation Award

_____ Valor Award

_____ Outstanding Service Award

_____ Meritorious Service Award

_____ Unit Award for Excellence of Service

_____ Superior Service Award

_____ Exemplary Act Award

_____ Citizen's Award for Exceptional Service Award

_____ Citizen's Award for Bravery

_____ Other Award _____

BUREAU-SPECIFIC AWARD:

Name of Award: _____

It is the policy of the Department to ensure that consideration for awards is made without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, disability, or other non-merit factors. Information on this form is protected by the Privacy Act. Disclosure may be made only to authorized persons according to Title 5 U.S.C., Section 552a(b).

RECOMMENDATION AND APPROVAL

Recommending Individual (Signature)	Date	Reviewing Official (Signature)	Date
Name/Title (Print)		Name/Title (Print)	
Reviewing Official (Signature)	Date	Approving Official (Signature)	Date
Name/Title (Print)		Name/Title (Print)	

CONVOCATION HONOR AWARD REVIEW APPROVAL

HR Review of Official Personnel Folder (Signature)	Date	Finding
Bureau Office of Civil Rights (Signature)	Date	Finding
Department Office of Civil Rights (Signature)	Date	Finding
Office of Inspector General (Signature)	Date	Finding
Office of the Solicitor (Signature)	Date	Finding

JUSTIFICATION

Summary of Accomplishments/Contributions Being Recognized by Award

It is the policy of the Department to ensure that consideration for awards is made without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, disability, or other non-merit factors. Information on this form is protected by the Privacy Act. Disclosure may be made only to authorized persons according to Title 5 U.S.C., Section 552a(b).

FINANCIAL ACTION RECORD

This record is to initiate payment, accounting, and tax transactions for only non-monetary recognition of significant value.				
Recipient Name:				Social Security No. X X X – X X – _____
_____ Bureau	_____ Sub-Bureau	_____ Block	_____ Org. Code	_____ Cost Account
NON-MONETARY RECOGNITION OF SIGNIFICANT VALUE				(Date Presented: _____)
Cash Value of Award (Hours Code 66A)				$ _____ (Net Amount)
Value Including Taxes (Cash Value divided by .55) (Hours Code 30A)				$ _____ (Gross Amount)

Disposition of this form: Original to servicing personnel office, copy to recipient. FAX this form to the Payroll Operations Division. This FAX is in lieu of Original**.** ***DO NOT*** **SEND ORIGINAL OF THIS DOCUMENT TO PAYROLL.**

It is the policy of the Department to ensure that consideration for awards is made without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, disability, or other non-merit factors. Information on this form is protected by the Privacy Act. Disclosure may be made only to authorized persons according to Title 5 U.S.C., Section 552a(b).

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Chapter 451: Awards and Recognition Program
Subchapter 3: Honor Awards

Originating Office: Office of Human Resources

370 DM 451.3

3.1 **General**. Departmental Honor Awards provide non-monetary recognition to employees and partners of the Department. Honor Awards are the most prestigious recognition that can be granted by the Department for career accomplishments, exceptional support of the Department mission, or for heroism.

A. Honor Awards are not intended to serve as a substitute for deserved monetary awards, but are designed to bestow singular honor on an individual as an official recognition of achievement at all levels of the organization when the high standards required for these honors are met.

B. Employees at all grade levels are eligible to be nominated for an honor award in accordance with the criteria established for each category of award. Employees may receive only one Meritorious Service Award and one Distinguished Service Award in the course of their career.

C. Any employee may initiate an Honor Award nomination by completing form DI-451, Award Certification. However, the nomination and supporting documents must be prepared and submitted through supervisory channels to the appropriate bureau awards coordinator for review.

D. When granted, Honor Awards are meant to be progressive career recognition as described in paragraph 3.2. However it is not a requirement to award them in successive order. They may also be awarded upon an employee's retirement.

3.2 **Honor Awards**. Honor Awards can be granted and presented throughout the year and also may be given to an employee at a retirement ceremony. Honor awards include:

A. Highest Level Honor Awards. The highest Departmental Honor Awards presented to career employees or non-employee partners. Recipients must have demonstrated extremely significant long-term contributions to Departmental programs and missions. These awards are signed by the Secretary of the Interior.

(1) Distinguished Service Award - This award is granted to career employees of the Department. Normally the recipients of this award will have received a Meritorious Service Award (MSA), but a Distinguished Service Award may be granted to an employee who has not been awarded a MSA. A one page citation is required for this award.

(2) Cooperative Conservation Award - This award is granted to Department employees and partners, including individuals and groups who work cooperatively with the Department, its bureaus or offices, to achieve common goals related to conservation. The award may be granted for outstanding performance and direct service to the effectiveness of the Department's mission including service to any of the bureaus or offices of the Department. A one page citation is required for this award.

B. Mid-Level Honor Awards. The second highest Departmental Honor Awards presented to employees and groups who have made exceptional continuing contributions to Department or bureau mission accomplishment. These Awards are signed by the appropriate Assistant Secretary or bureau/office head as described below.

(1) Meritorious Service Award - For career employees of the Department, typically in mid-career, who may have received one or more Superior Service Awards. However, prior receipt of a Superior Service Award is not a prerequisite for a Meritorious Service Award. A one page citation is required for this award.

(2) Unit Award for Excellence of Service - For exceptional contribution(s) of employee groups, units, or teams. The award may be signed by the bureau/office head.

C. Entry-Level Honor Awards. The first level of recognition in the Departmental Honor Awards program presented to career employees, volunteers, or other partners who have made significant contributions to the Department through outstanding service to a bureau program. These awards are signed by the bureau/office head.

(1) Superior Service Award - For career employees of the Department who have made significant achievements, acts, or services that materially aid the mission of the Department of the Interior. A one page citation is required for this award.

(2) Citizen's Award for Exceptional Service - Bureau-specific award for private citizens or organizational partners, including volunteers.

D. Heroic Act Honor Awards - Departmental honorary recognition granted to employees or private citizens for heroic acts or unusual bravery. These awards are signed by the Secretary.

(1) Valor Award - The highest honors granted to employees of the Department who demonstrate unusual courage involving a high degree of personal risk in the face of danger and risk their lives while attempting to save the life of another. The heroic act does not have to be related to official duties and the site of the incident does not have to be the official duty station. A one page citation is required for this award.

(2) Citizen's Award for Bravery - For private citizens who risk their lives to save the life of a Departmental employee serving in the line of duty or the life of any other person, while on property owned by or entrusted to the Department. A one page citation is required for this award.

(3) Exemplary Act Award - For Department employees or private citizens who attempt to save the life of a Departmental employee serving in the line of duty or the life of any other person while on property owned by or entrusted to the Department, when risk to their own lives is not an issue.

E. Other Honor Awards - Special Honor Awards granted by the Department to recognize significant accomplishments by individuals or groups in support of the Department's mission.

(1) Departmental Unsung Hero Award recognizes employees of the Department who have made valuable behind-the-scene contributions. These awards are signed by bureau or office heads.

(2) Secretary's Diversity Award recognizes and honors employees or groups of employees of the Department who have provided exemplary service and/or have made significant contributions to the Department in its efforts to increase diversity at all levels. These awards are signed by the Secretary.

(3) Environmental Achievement Award recognizes Department employees and teams as well as DOI cooperators (contractors or outside partners) who have attained exceptional environmental achievements. These awards are signed by the Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget.

(4) Safety Awards. Accurate information about the Department of the Interior Safety Awards can be found in 485 DM 10, Safety Management Awards. The Safety Awards given by the Department are:

(a) Award of Merit. The Safety Award of Merit is given to an individual or to a group, bureau, office, or organizational unit which has performed an outstanding service or made a contribution of unusual value to the DOI Safety and Occupational Health Program.

(b) Professional Service Award. The Professional Service Award is the top recognition presented to members of the Department's safety and health community who have demonstrated sustained accomplishments in preventing injury, illness, and accidents and have contributed quality service to their bureau, office, and the Department during their career.

(5) Outstanding Service Award (for Political Appointees). Established in 1972, the Outstanding Service Award may be granted to non-career employees for outstanding performance in a policy or personal staff relationship with the Secretary or the various Secretarial offices. This award gives the Secretary a means to recognize outstanding personal

and policy service to his or her administration. The Outstanding Service Awards may be made at a bureau ceremony and the presentation may be delegated to a ranking executive in an organization component.

3.3 **Responsibility**. Bureaus and offices are strongly encouraged to establish mechanisms, such as an awards committee, to ensure that a consistent approach is applied in the review, evaluation, and recommendation of the award nomination. These mechanisms should also provide oversight of equity and cultural diversity to ensure that employees at all levels of the organization who meet the high standards required for these honors are considered for the awards.

3.4 **Requirements for Nominations for Awards**.

A. Any employee may recommend an honor award recipient by completing an Award Certification Form (DI-451) and submitting the form to the recipient's supervisor for concurrence and transmittal through the bureau awards coordinator to the approving official.

B. Before final approval of an honor award, the bureau's servicing human resources office must ensure that there is no derogatory information in the nominee's Official Personnel Folder (OPF). Potential derogatory information may include issues such as discriminatory actions, garnishment orders, suitability and security findings.

C. Bureau servicing human resources offices are also required to check with their bureau's Office of Civil Rights, the Departmental Office of Civil Rights, the Departmental Ethics Office, and the Office of Inspector General to determine whether there are any known complaints or investigations on the proposed awardees.

D. Potential derogatory information will be forwarded to the Departmental Office of Human Resources for evaluation to determine if there is justification to disapprove the award. In this evaluation the Office of Human Resources will consider recency, seriousness, relationship to the award, notoriety and impact of the incident, and other relevant factors.

3.5 **Nominating Procedures.** All honor award nominations should be submitted in a timely manner. Nominations must be received no later than six months after the date of retirement or separation of an employee. When appropriate, the sample format provided in the Appendix to this chapter should be used as a guide to write a citation for an honor award.

A. Distinguished Service Award /Valor Awards. Although these awards are presented officially only once a year, at the Department Convocation, nominations may be submitted year round. The following instructions apply:

(1) Bureau and Office Awards Coordinators will ensure that: the nomination packet consists of proper documentation; the citation has been signed and approved by the Office of the Executive Secretariat and Regulatory Affairs, approval of the nominee is signed by the head of the bureau and the appropriate Assistant Secretary; the bureau human resources office has documented its review of the employee's OPF; and the Departmental Office of Civil Rights,

the Departmental Ethics Office, and the Office of Inspector General have followed the procedures in section 3.4 of this chapter if derogatory information was found.

(2) The Bureau and Office Awards Coordinators will give the nomination packets to the Department of the Interior Awards Coordinator; and when requested, a digital photograph of the nominee or media files illustrating the event.

(3) The Departmental Awards Coordinator will then prepare Certificates and send a copy of the packet and the certificate to the Office of the Executive Secretariat and Regulatory Affairs. The certificate will be signed by the Secretary.

(4) The Office of the Executive Secretariat and Regulatory Affairs is responsible for obtaining the Secretary's signature, ensuring the certificate format is correct, and sending a copy of the packet and certificate to the Secretary's files.

B. Citizens Award for Bravery. These awards are presented once a year at the Department Convocation but the nominations may be prepared year round. The Citizens Award for Bravery nomination packets will include the materials required for the Valor Award except that certifications of review from the Office of Civil Rights and the servicing Human Resources Office are not required. Certification of review procedures for the Citizen Award for Bravery procedures will be provided to Bureau and Office Coordinators by the Departmental Awards Coordinator.

C. Cooperative Conservation Award. When the Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget (PMB) calls for the Cooperative Conservation Awards, the following information must be submitted:

(1) Electronic and paper copies of the justification of the group's or individual's accomplishments in relation to the award; the one-page citation; the bureau Director and appropriate Assistant Secretary approval of the nominee; and OPF review that there is no derogatory information on Department employees.

(2) Other required reviews will be done only for nominations recommended to the Secretary. PMB will coordinate these reviews.

(3) The Cooperative Conservation Award and citation must be signed by the Secretary. The Office of the Executive Secretariat and Regulatory Affairs is responsible for obtaining the Secretary's signature, ensuring the certificate format is correct, and sending a copy of the packet and certificate to the Secretary's files.

D. Meritorious Service Award. The Meritorious Service Award should follow the general awards procedure and is presented to recipients at an appropriate bureau ceremony. The award nomination should be primarily based on the employee's recent contributions while an employee of the Department of the Interior, although contributions to other Government agencies where the employee worked may be cited.

E. Outstanding Service Award. The Outstanding Service Award nominations may be initiated by the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, an Assistant Secretary, the Solicitor, and the Inspector General in the form of a memorandum to the Secretary. The nomination is based on personal and policy contributions of an employee rather than the length of professional performance implied in the Distinguished Service and Meritorious Service awards. Each recipient of the Outstanding Service Award receives an engraved silver medal, a silver lapel pin, a certificate, and a citation signed by the Secretary outlining the achievements of the employee. Award presentation is made at a bureau or office ceremony which may be delegated to a ranking executive in an organization component.

Appendix

FORMATTING AND PROCESSING OF DEPARTMENTAL HONOR AWARDS

HONOR AWARD CITATIONS:

The citation must be clearly written, in plain language, with sufficient detail so that a layman can easily understand the contributions of the recipient. Specific examples of accomplishments should be included with limited laudatory expressions.

CITATION FORMAT:

Margins should be at least one inch and the text should be justified. The font used will be Times Roman 12 point.

Citations should not be dated; the Executive Secretariat will date the citation

The citation should have a heading that is in capital letters, in bold, and centered on the page as follows:

CITATION
[Double Space]
FOR MERITORIOUS SERVICE
[Double Space]
JOHN D. DOE

The name may be an individual or a group. Triple space between full name and first paragraph.

The body of the citation consists of two paragraphs. The first paragraph always begins, "In recognition of his /her ...” and ends with the bureau name. For example:

> "**In recognition of his** outstanding leadership of international water resources programs **for the Bureau of Reclamation**."

or “In recognition of the outstanding contributions of the Florida Upland Invasive Plant Management Program to preserve the recreational, economic, and ecological values of Florida’s uplands.”

The citation must reflect formal reference to the nominee, i.e., Dr. Brown, Mrs. Jones, Mr. Smith - not John, Barbara, or Henry. Always use the formal reference except in the last sentence of the second paragraph where the full name must be used.

The final sentence of the second paragraph for Distinguished Service Awards will read: "For ...(full name) is granted the highest honor of the Department of the Interior, the Distinguished Service Award."

The final sentence of the second paragraph for MSAs will read: "for ...(full name) is granted the Meritorious Service Award of the Department of the Interior."

The final sentence for other Honor Awards will read similarly to MSAs. The final sentence may use the group name.

The signature block will be six spaces below the body of the citation and will begin at the center of the page.

Citations should be approximately 350 words and must fit on one page with heading and signature block.

Eliminate large gaps in spacing on citations.

When the bureau name is first used in citation, spell out the bureau name. Use the word "Bureau" or "Service" for all subsequent references to the bureau instead of spelling it out.

Use action verbs in the citation.

Citations should be checked for correct spelling (including nominee's name), grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure prior to sending to the Executive Secretariat.

Citations should be clear and concise.

If the nominee is deceased, and is receiving a Distinguished Service Award, the citation should follow normal procedure and the closing statement should read as follows, “For his contributions to the (insert bureau or office), (Insert name) is posthumously granted the Distinguished Service Award of the Department of the Interior.”

Before processing a Departmental Secretarial honor award, bureau award coordinators must conduct a review to ensure that there is no derogatory information in the employee's Official Personnel Folder, and there are no findings of discrimination or wrongdoing as determined by the bureau’s Office of Civil Rights, the Departmental Office of Civil Rights, the Departmental Ethics Office, the Office of Inspector General, and the Office of the Solicitor, if appropriate. If derogatory information is found, see section 3.4 of this chapter for further instructions.

The above review results must be documented under Honor Award Review Application on the Form DI-451, Award Certification.

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Chapter 451: Awards and Recognition Program
Subchapter 4: Monetary Awards

Originating Office: Office of Human Resources

370 DM 451.4

4.1 **General.** Monetary awards are cash awards that may be granted to recognize an individual or team of employees of the Department. An employee can be recognized for the same accomplishment by granting two different types of awards provided that the combined value of both awards is commensurate with the accomplishment. Monetary awards may be given for:

A. Achieving organizational results.

B. Providing quality customer service.

C. Displaying exemplary behavior, dedication, innovation, and/or team cooperation.

D. Fostering partnerships.

E. Promoting diversity.

F. Ensuring safety in the workplace.

4.2 **Scope**. This policy covers all employees of the Department. Volunteers, contract employees, and partners are not eligible for monetary awards unless a different authority states otherwise.

4.3 **Monetary Performance-Based Awards.** Monetary performance-based awards (Performance Awards and Quality Step Increases) are covered in 370 DM 451.1. The other types of monetary awards are: Special Thanks for Achieving Results Awards (STAR), Productivity Improvement Awards, and Invention/Patent Awards. On-the-Spot Awards may no longer be issued but STAR Awards of amounts consistent with the criteria in Appendix A to this chapter can be issued. The scale of awards based on intangible benefits and the scale of award amounts based on tangible benefits to the government can be found in Appendices A and B to this chapter. All monetary awards are processed using gross, not net, dollar amounts.

A. Special Thanks for Achieving Results Award. A STAR Award is used to recognize noteworthy accomplishments that are limited to a one-time occurrence or for exceptional

accomplishments over a period of months. It should not be issued in relation to an employee's annual performance appraisal. Accomplishments may be either within or outside the scope of an employee's normal duties. Examples of situations for which it would be appropriate to give an employee a STAR Award are those in which employees: produce exceptionally high quality work under tight deadlines; perform added or emergency assignments in addition to their regular duties; or exercise extraordinary initiative or creativity in addressing a critical need or difficult problem.

B. Productivity Improvement Award. Productivity Improvement Awards are recognition for process improvement, cost-saving suggestions, streamlining, or the elimination of non-value added processes. The award shares some portion of actual savings resulting from cost reduction or productivity gains with the employee(s) who recommends or achieves the savings. Suggested guidelines to use, when deciding on the award amount, are provided in Appendices A and B to this chapter.

C. Invention/Patent Award. The Department encourages the use of monetary awards to reward employees for their inventions. An automatic $500 (gross) compensation is awarded upon the actual filing of a patent application at the Patent Office by the Office of the Solicitor. An additional $800 (gross) will be awarded if the patent is granted. Further recognition based on the benefit of the contribution may be granted through the use of an additional cash award. The awardee's organization is responsible for payment of the award amount. Suggested guidelines to use to award employees are provided in Appendix B to this chapter.

4.4 **STAR Awards**.

A. An employee may be recommended for a STAR award by another Federal employee who is aware of an achievement he/she believes deserves recognition. Form DI-451, Award Certification, is used to recommend a STAR award and must be submitted to the proposed recipient's supervisor for concurrence. Supervisors concur and/or transmit award nominations to the approving official for the amount recommended. If an award recognizes team achievements and members are to receive different award amounts, the justification must describe each individual team member's contribution. There is no limit to the number of STAR awards an employee may receive, but managers should administer the program fairly to ensure consistent and equitable opportunity for employee recognition.

B. When another bureau within the Department of the Interior, or another agency, wishes to recognize an individual through a monetary award, the outside bureau or agency will prepare the award documentation and contact the award recipient's servicing personnel office for guidance on how to process the award. The award must be submitted for approval within six months following the contribution.

4.5 **Approval Authority for Monetary Awards.**

A. Assistant Secretaries, the Solicitor, and the Inspector General have approval authority for individual awards from $5,001 to $10,000. However, when a performance-based cash award that is based on a percentage of pay instead of a set dollar amount is over $5,000,

approval by an Assistant Secretary, the Solicitor, or the Inspector General is not required. All awards in excess of $10,000 must be submitted by bureau/office heads through the appropriate Assistant Secretary, the Director of Human Resources, and the Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget, to the Office of Personnel Management for approval or further processing.

B. Bureau and office heads may approve group awards up to $10,000 if no group member receives more than $5,000. They may also approve individual awards up to $5,000, QSIs, and Performance Based Cash Awards; however, bureau/office heads are encouraged to delegate approval authority for these awards to the lowest practical level.

C. The Department's Executive Resources Board must approve all monetary awards for SES including non-career and limited term employees. The White House Liaison Office should be consulted on all awards for Schedule C employees.

Appendix A

SCALE OF AWARDS BASED ON INTANGIBLE BENEFITS

	EXTENT OF APPLICATION		
	Local	**Bureau**	**Department Wide**
Value of Benefit	Example Affects: • one or more field facilities or Central Office organizational elements or staff office, or • a minor change or correction of a DOI form, policy, or procedure, or • optional use of an idea or procedure, or • minor change in the area of technology or automation	Example Affects: • an entire network, region, or • all Central Office organizations, or • ideas approved for optional use in the Department or an administration, or • important area of technology or automation	Example Affects: • more than one region, or bureau • has impact DOI wide or beyond.
Moderate. Change or contribution to an operating principle, practice, procedure or program of limited impact or use.	**Up to $500**	**Up to $1,500**	**Up to $3,000**
Substantial. Significant or important change, contribution to, or modification of an operating principle, practice, procedure, program, or service to the public.	**Up to $1,500**	**Up to $3,000**	**Up to $5,000**
Exceptional. Complete revision or initiation of a major policy, practice, or procedure that has significant impact on DOI's mission. Major improvement in the quality of a critical product, activity, program or service to the public.	**Up to $3,000**	**Up to $5,000**	**Up to $10,000** Awards more than $10,000 require OPM approval. Awards more than $25,000 require Presidential approval after OPM review.

Appendix B

SCALE OF AWARD AMOUNTS BASED ON TANGIBLE BENEFITS TO THE GOVERNMENT

Benefits	Awards
Estimated First-Year Benefits	Amount of Award to Employee
Up to $100,000 in benefits	10% of benefits
$100,001 and above in benefits	$10,000 plus 1% of benefits above $100,001, up to $25,000 with the approval of the Office of Personnel Management
	Presidential approval is required for all awards of more than $25,000

Department of the Interior
Departmental Manual

Effective Date: 7/16/08
Series: Personnel Management
Part 370: Departmental Personnel Program
Chapter 451: Awards and Recognition Program
Subchapter 5: Non-Monetary Awards

Originating Office: Office of Human Resources

370 DM 451.5

5.1 **General**. Non-monetary recognition awards are granted to employees to recognize their contributions to the Department. Contributions may include:

A. superior accomplishment of regularly assigned duties;

B. exceptional achievements of project goals;

C. noteworthy accomplishments over a sustained period; or

D. specific contributions to an organization's mission.

5.2 **Eligibility for Non-Monetary Awards**. Employees of the Department and employees of other Federal agencies may receive non-monetary recognition of nominal value and informal honors.

5.3 **Items of Nominal Value**. The upper limit for non-monetary recognition of nominal value within the Department of the Interior is $50 cash value. The Department may increase this amount in succeeding years based on the inflation rate. Nominal value items can be tickets to events, balloons, lapel pins, coffee cups, key chains, pens, paperweights, pen and pencil sets, clocks, plaques, jackets, caps, T-shirts, watches, fruit baskets, gift certificates, and U.S. Savings Bonds or other similar items. Approving officials should exercise care in selecting an appropriate item for non-monetary recognition to avoid potential appearance of misuse of government funds. The approving official should consider whether public disclosure of the item would cause embarrassment to the Department. The item must take an appropriate form to be used in the public sector to be purchased with public funds. Where appropriate, a non-monetary award item should contain the bureau or Departmental name, logo, award title, and/or mission. If there is some level of discomfort or concern, the supervisor should always check with the servicing human resources office for guidance.

A. The recognition method selected should be based on the employee's effort expended, the behavior exemplified or the results achieved. Supervisors can tailor recognition of their

employees based on the personal interests of the individual. Supervisors may ask an employee how he/she would like to be rewarded.

B. Gift certificates cannot exceed nominal value because a gift certificate conveys a clear monetary value, does not have a lasting "trophy" value, nor does it symbolize the employer/employee relationship therefore, it does not meet the criteria for exceeding the nominal value threshold. Because gift certificates can be easily exchanged for cash, gift certificates must be taxed regardless of the amount. Employees may choose whether money is withheld for taxes or claiming the amount of the gift certificate as an increase in income.

5.4 **Items that Exceed Nominal Value**. Items that can exceed nominal value are those items similar to those listed in paragraph 5.3 of this chapter except that the cost exceeds $50.00. A non-monetary recognition item may exceed the nominal cash value threshold; however, the cost of any non-monetary item in excess of the nominal value must be included in the employee's gross wages and would be taxable. The maximum value for a non-monetary award is $250.00. Items that exceed the nominal cash value threshold must:

A. Be something that the recipient could reasonably be expected to value, but not something that conveys a sense of monetary value;

B. Have lasting trophy value. An employee can show the item to coworkers and friends as a "trophy" given in appreciation of good work; and,

C. Clearly symbolize the employer-employee relationship in some fashion.

5.5 **Informal Honors**. Bureaus must establish guidelines and controls for granting informal recognition and awards.

5.6 **Time-Off Awards**. An excused absence awarded to an employee without charge to leave. Bureaus must establish approval authorities, scheduling guidance, and an appropriate number of hours commensurate with employee contributions, and supervisory responsibilities. The minimum time-off recognition is one hour; the time-off award shall not exceed 40 hours per event or 80 hours total per year. This limit includes performance-based time-off awards. Employees normally have the discretion to determine when they will use a time-off award, subject to supervisory approval. A time-off award must be used while the recipient is employed at the Department; the time-off award cannot be transferred to another agency upon separation of the employee. Further, upon separation from the Department, employees are not entitled to receive payment for any unused time-off award hours. These limits apply to all employees.

5.7 **Length of Service Award**. Certificates and/or pins awarded at various milestones in an employee's career. Recognition is usually given in 10-year increments but bureaus may give it in 5-year increments. Bureaus may develop their own Length of Service certificates or order Government-issued certificates through the publication rider process. Pins for 10, 20, 30, 40, and 50 years of Government service are available for procurement through a Departmental contract. Bureaus may use Government-issued Length-of-Service pins if they choose to do so through the GSA procurement process.

5.8 **Processing Awards**. Any employee aware of an achievement(s) that he/she believes deserves recognition may make an award recommendation to the award recipient's supervisor. The recommendation must be signed by the bureau or office official authorized to approve non-monetary awards.

A. Items of Nominal Value and Informal Honors. Items may be awarded, as appropriate, without completion of form DI-451, Award Certification. There is no limit on how many non-monetary awards an employee can receive in a fiscal year. However, supervisors should avoid granting non-monetary awards and presenting award items several times throughout the fiscal year to avoid any possibility of abuse in granting awards, and to prevent creating tax liabilities for the employee (even if the individual awards are under the nominal value). Tax liability is determined based on the cumulative value of the awards even if each award is under the nominal value. The specific item should be purchased through normal procurement channels. Bureaus and offices should order supplies of specific award items to affect cost savings and provide for immediate recognition of employees.

B. Items that Exceed Nominal Value. A DI-451, Award Certification, is required for items that exceed nominal value. Before finalizing and granting a non-monetary award that exceeds nominal value, the employee should be advised that the award will be taxable to determine if the employee concurs in the granting of the taxable award item.

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Chapter 451: Awards and Recognition Program
Subchapter 6: Outside Awards

Originating Office: Office of Human Resources

370 DM 451.6

6.1 **General**. Outside awards are award programs sponsored by external organizations. The Department will provide criteria, the exact due date, and other pertinent information concerning outside awards via the Office of Human Resources Website at: http://www.doi.gov/hrm/. A list of Outside Awards is available at the Office of Personnel Management website at: http://www.opm.gov/perform

6.2 **Nominations for Outside Awards**. Any employee may recommend another employee for an outside award by providing all information required by the recommended recipient's supervisor for concurrence and transmittal to the approving official.

6.3 **Required Reviews**. The bureau or office servicing human resources office must ensure that there is no derogatory information in the nominee's Official Personnel Folder and it is required to check with its Office of Civil Rights, the Departmental Office of Civil Rights, the Departmental Ethics Office, the Office of Inspector General, and the Office of the Solicitor, if appropriate, to determine if there are any findings of discrimination or OIG investigations on the proposed awardee. If derogatory information is found, refer to the procedures in 370 DM 451.3, section 3.4.

6.4 **Concurrence and Approvals**. When the reviews are completed, the nominations must be consolidated and submitted through the appropriate Assistant Secretary, the Solicitor, or the Inspector General to the Office of Human Resources.