



United States Department of Agriculture

Departmental
Administration

Office of the
Assistant Secretary
for Administration

Office of Human
Resources
Management

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Washington, DC
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TO: Agency Heads
Mission Area Chief Operating Officers and Staff Office Equivalents
Mission Area Chief Human Capital Officers

FROM: Anita R. Adkins
Chief Human Capital Officer (Acting)

SUBJECT: Employee Recognition Reminder for FY 2022

USDA actively promotes a culture of recognition and understands the importance of acknowledging our employees' contributions to the mission throughout the year. Having entered the second half of the FY22 performance year, I want to remind all Mission Area, Agency, and Staff Office leadership of the importance of operating effective performance management systems and robust recognition programs. As such, it is imperative that managers and supervisors ensure they are utilizing awards and other forms of recognition to acknowledge group and individual contributions. In today's highly competitive job market, organizations that promote and embrace a workplace culture that recognizes and acknowledges employees for their efforts achieve greater employee satisfaction.

With the issuance of [Departmental Regulation \(DR\) 4040-430, *Employee Performance and Awards*](#) effective for the FY21 performance year, USDA replaced the previous five-tier system (e.g., Outstanding, Superior, Fully Successful, etc.) with a two-tier system (i.e., Fully Acceptable and Unacceptable) commonly referred to as "Pass/Fail." Since moving away from the prior system that generally awarded higher performing employees based on their summary ratings, USDA now relies on managers and supervisors to actively monitor employee performance and timely recognize and reward employees commensurate with their respective contributions. When used effectively, this system provides robust award mechanisms to recognize the efforts, contributions, and achievements of groups or individual employees throughout the fiscal year which they may not have had in the past.

The current DR provides the options of granting timely Achievement Awards, i.e., monetary, Time off Awards (TOAs), or a combination of both for eligible employees, as well as additional non-monetary means of recognition at any time. Although not all inclusive, awards may be granted for:

- An exemplary accomplishment;
- Work that advances the quality, efficiency, economy, or other improvement of Government operations;
- Excellence in Customer Service;

- A suggestion or invention that advances USDA's mission and services;
- Achieving a significant reduction in paperwork; and
- A special act or service in the public interest in connection with, or related to, the employee's official employment.

Mindful that the granting of awards remains discretionary and is not an entitlement, I encourage each of you to remain consistent and equitable in both your assessment and recognition of employee performance and contributions. Leadership and supervisors are highly encouraged to take advantage of the wide range of employee recognition opportunities provided in [DR 4040-430](#). Your respective servicing Human Resources Offices are there to assist you with required awards documentation, guidance, and advice.

Each agency/office is responsible for managing its allocated award budget and must **not** spend above the levels identified. Please consult with your budget officers who provide your budget, accounting, fiscal, and related financial management services for information that contains specific award allotments and budgetary guidance. This information will ensure compliance with the U.S. Office of Management and Budget's imposed spending limits. FY 2022 spending levels were provided in OHRM Memorandum titled "*Fiscal Year 2022 Non-Executive Awards and Quality Step Increases*" dated February 4, 2022.

If you have any questions about this memorandum, please contact Michael Rafferty, Director, Human Resources Policy Division, at Michael.Rafferty@usda.gov or (202) 604-1377, or Doug Lattimer, Senior Human Resources Specialist, Performance Management Policy, at Douglas.Lattimer@usda.gov or (202) 993-0136.

An engaged workforce and culture of recognition advances USDA's mission, and we as leaders must model these policies and behaviors to make them effective and impactful.