



## PERSONNEL NOTES #4

# PERFORMANCE AWARDS



Supervisors play a vital role in recognizing employee achievements. Appropriate recognition is of major importance in employee morale. The following is a guide to the different types of recognition available under the Incentive Awards Program. In conjunction with these established awards, and to recognize good performance that may not quite meet the criteria under the Incentive Awards Program, supervisors are encouraged to provide ongoing recognition to their employees for a job well done.

### *Who initiates the recognition?*

The SUPERVISOR is the key to employee recognition. Supervisors should consider action to recognize subordinates whenever:

- (1) an employee, over a sustained period of time, exceeds job requirements (sustained performance must be at least over a six month period of time or more), or
- (2) an employee or group of employees perform(s) substantially beyond expectations on a specific assignment or aspect of an assignment or job function of a non-recurring nature.

Supervisors and managers have the major responsibility for assuring effective use of recognition. They must determine the type of recognition that most appropriately recognizes the contribution, is most motivating to the employee(s), and is most cost-beneficial to the organization; and should recommend appropriate awards promptly.

### **Steps in Processing Performance Awards**

- Review performance standards.
- Evaluate employee's performance to determine if it merits recognition through an award.
- Compare performance with awards criteria and select most appropriate award.
- Write a recommendation stating benefits and describe how performance exceeded standards.

- Nomination is to be reviewed by appropriate supervisory official and/or approving authority. Nomination should be sent through the Incentive Awards Coordinator at the appropriate Park, Regional, and if applicable, Washington Headquarters channels.
- Recommendation approved.
- Award presented.

Recognition has the greatest impact when it is prompt. Award recommendations should be submitted as soon as a contribution has been made, processed promptly, and the award presented on the first suitable occasion.

### **How to Write an Award Recommendation**

**BE BRIEF:** generally no more than one to three pages of justification.

**BE FACTUAL:** use precise statements and use work measurements whenever possible. Reviewing and approving officials should be able to see clearly that the award is merited.

**BE OBJECTIVE:** justification should cover employee's job performance rather than personality traits.

**IDENTIFY BENEFITS:** whenever possible, state savings or identify benefits derived by the Government from the employee's performance.

### **Have You Considered Honorary Recognition?**

Distinguished Service Award  
Meritorious Service Award  
Superior Service Award  
Unit Award for Excellence of Service  
Valor Award  
Exemplary Act Award  
Length of Service Emblems/Certificates

For more information on any of the above awards contact your Incentive Awards Coordinator.

### **Monetary Recognition**

#### *Special Achievement: Special Act or Service*

**Who?** An individual or a group, including a former employee, provided the special act or service took place while the person was a Government employee.

**Why?** When work performance exceeds job requirements as a one-time occurrence or for a contribution in the public interest that is in connection with or related to official employment.

**CRITERIA:** This type of recognition is appropriate when an employee or group of employees perform(s) substantially beyond expectations on a specific assignment of a non-recurring nature. This may involve overcoming unusual difficulties, performance of assigned duties with special effort or innovation that resulted in significant economies or other highly desirable benefits, creative efforts that made important contributions to science or research, or exemplary or courageous handling of an emergency situation related to official employment.

There is no limit on the number and frequency of this type of award provided the special act or service warrants recognition.

**AWARD AMOUNT:** The amount of the award is in direct proportion to the benefits (either tangible or intangible) derived by the NPS, Department of the Interior or Government as a result of the contribution. Each individual may share equally in the award or in proportion to his/her contribution to the group effort. The established award scales for tangible and intangible benefits can be found in FPM Chapter 451, Appendix C.

**FORMS:** DI-411 – Recommendation for Monetary Award. The award nomination must detail the manner in which job performance was exceeded. If this is a group award, use one DI-411 and attach to it a listing of each member and his/her title, series, grade, work location, Region (if different), and the proposed individual award amount. The nomination must outline each individual's specific contribution(s) to the overall project.

### *Special Achievement: Sustained Superior Performance*

**Who?** An individual, including a former employee, provided the performance took place while the person was a Government employee. (Employees covered by the Performance Management and Recognition System (PMRS) or the Senior Executive Service (SES) are not eligible for this type of award since these systems already have mechanisms in place to recognize sustained superior performance.)

**Why?** In recognition of performance that has clearly increased the productivity, economy, efficiency or effectiveness of government operations.

**CRITERIA:** Individual work performance of regularly assigned duties exceeds the requirements for a period of at least six months. The employee's performance in all critical elements must meet or exceed an acceptable level of competence (fully satisfactory) and overall performance is substantially above that level.

The individual's total performance is of a higher level than that required to merit a regular periodic within-grade increase.

**AWARD AMOUNT:** A percentage of salary depending upon performance appraisal summary rating. Award scales as of July 1985 are:

Level I — 3% to 5% of salary

Level II — 1% to 3% of salary

**FORMS:** DI-411 – Recommendation for Monetary Award. Recent Performance Appraisal (If over 60 days old, additional justification is required.)

### *Quality Increase*

**Who?** An individual employee paid under the General Schedule.

**Why?** For high quality performance, above that normally expected of an employee in the position and which has been sustained over a reasonably sufficient period of service in the job (at least six months) and is expected to continue in the future in that position.

**CRITERIA:** The employee's recent performance appraisal must support the conclusion that overall performance of his or her assigned duties and responsibilities substantially exceeds an acceptable level of competence so that, when viewed as a whole, the employee's performance is at a high level of quality, and performance meets or exceeds all critical elements and the summary rating is Level I (outstanding).

Performance must give promise of continuing at this level or higher, and the employee is expected to remain in the same or similar position at the same grade level for at least 60 days following the effective date of the increase.

This award would be inappropriate if the employee had recently been, or soon will be, promoted. The promotion itself would be sufficient recognition of high quality performance.

The employee cannot have received a Quality Increase during the past 52 weeks.

**AWARD AMOUNT:** An additional within-grade increase.

**FORMS:** DI-411 – Recommendation for Monetary Award. Recent Performance Appraisal (If over 60 days old, additional justification is required.)

### **Common Questions:**

*What should I do if an employee really merits a Quality Increase but is ineligible because of other reasons?*

Consider another form of recognition. For example, a lump-sum cash award for sustained superior performance would be an appropriate form of recognition. A lump-sum cash award might also be given to an employee at the statutory salary ceiling, for whom a Quality Increase would not produce an increase in actual take-home pay.

*Why is a Quality Increase harder to get when both the Quality Increase and Special Achievement Award recognize sustained superior performance?*

The standards are higher for a Quality Increase. The average Quality Increase benefits the employee for a period of four years. Accordingly, it is important that they be granted only to those employees who merit faster than average salary advancement and whose performance is *expected to continue* indefinitely at the same high level in the same job.

*How do I decide between a Special Achievement Award for Sustained Superior Performance or a Quality Increase for an employee?*

Although both of these are granted for sustained superior performance by an individual employee over a minimum period of time, a Special Achievement Award is based only on past performance, and the employee's performance is required to substantially exceed what is normally expected in only one major aspect (Regions/Centers should check with their own awards policy for more specific requirements). A Quality Increase is based on both past and predicted (future) performance substantially exceeding normal requirements in the most important aspects. In both instances, other performance aspects must meet or exceed the requirements for a regular within-grade increase.

*When would a Quality Increase not be appropriate?*

A Quality Increase can be given only when agency management has funds available for it. Further, a Quality Increase usually is not appropriate when the employee:

- Is nearing retirement and would benefit only for a limited period
- Has been detailed to another position
- The employee is changing jobs, or the job itself is changing
- The employee is paid under a pay system other than GS such as the Performance Management and Recognition System (PMRS) and, therefore, is not eligible to receive this form of recognition.

### **Recording Requirements**

The original of the approved award nomination is filed in the employee's Official Personnel Folder. Regional policy should be reviewed for its recording requirements.

### **For More Information**

Please contact your Personnel Office if you would like more information about the topics discussed.

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