

U.S. Department of Agriculture
SECRETARY'S HONOR AWARDS NOMINATION FORM

Purpose of the Secretary Honor Awards

The purpose of the Honor Awards is to provide Departmental recognition to distinguished employees and other individuals who have made the most significant accomplishments that support USDA's mission, strategic goals, objectives, and priorities.

Eligibility

With the exception of Schedule C employees, Administrators/Chiefs, and non-career SES employees, all USDA employees, employees of other Federal agencies, and organizations collaborating with USDA to accomplish the Department's mission are eligible to be nominated for a Secretary's Honor Award.

In most cases, nominations are submitted by USDA Agencies or Staff Offices to recognize outstanding contributions of USDA employees, or of mixed teams led by USDA employees. In those instances where the contributions were led by external organizations collaborating with USDA, nominations must be sponsored by and cleared through the applicable Under/Assistant Secretary.

Nominee(s) listed have neither had a finding of discrimination, nor received disciplinary action, within 3 years of the nomination deadline.

General Structure

Awards will be given for each USDA strategic goal. Nominations will be developed from the (Tier 2) awards at the Under/Assistant Secretary level. The number of nominations to be considered and the selection process will be determined by the Office of the Secretary for the (Tier 3) Secretary's Honor Awards.

The awards will prioritize cross-agency collaboration in support of the strategic goals and may represent the amalgamation of two or more awards granted at the Under Secretary level.

Employees who were most pivotal to the accomplishment should be submitted for nomination.

Administrators/Chiefs and non-career Senior Executive Service and Schedule C employees are not eligible. Awards at this level are honorary and no monetary awards will be attached. These awards will be designated the Secretary's Honor Awards.

General Information

- The current version of the AD-495 is required; nominations submitted on older versions will be returned to the nominating agency.
- Nomination packages must be submitted electronically - no hard copies are required.
- Once approved by the Under/Assistant Secretary, a PDF of the full nomination form with a digitally signed page must be submitted to OHRM.
- Nomination forms must include the phonetic spelling for individual nominees' or team leaders' names, terminology, automated systems, etc.
- Congressional District numbers must be completed or indicated as "At Large" if applicable. Congressional Districts may be found at [Find your Representative](#).

Citation Requirements

- No more than 25 words in length, suitable for reading during the ceremony, that briefly explains the accomplishment AND the results achieved.
- Focus on the action and result, rather than the level of effort or teamwork.

The following are examples of acceptable and unacceptable citations:

Acceptable: For implementing the Plain Writing Act of 2010, enabling USDA to better serve the millions of people who depend on our programs and services.

Acceptable: For mutually crafting a Collective Bargaining Agreement that promotes increased quality and productivity, customer service, mission accomplishment, quality of work life, and organizational performance.

Unacceptable: For exceptional teamwork and commitment in the development of a performance accountability tracking service.

Nomination Requirements

Do NOT use acronyms or abbreviations in your justifications. Clearly justify the accomplishment, including how it significantly contributes to the Department's mission and/or goals. Supplemental attachments will not be accepted.

Format

Nomination content must be single-spaced, with double-spacing between paragraphs. The justification is limited to the blocks provided for the four criteria.

Approval of Nominations

All nominations must be submitted through, and have the concurring signature of, the Under/Assistant Secretary, as appropriate.

Nomination Package Checklist

- PDF of the nomination form, including the completed Clearance section
- Excel spreadsheet with nominee(s) information
- JPEG image

File Naming Conventions

Since each submission will consist of three electronic files, they must be named consistently to ensure that they are properly associated with the correct nomination package. File names should start with the category number, then the agency/staff office, then the individual or team name. Examples:

- 02NRCSJones.pdf (original, unscanned)
- 02NRCSJones.xlsx
- 02NRCSJones.jpeg

Photograph Requirements

Each nomination package should include one clear, crisp JPEG digital image appropriate for use in the PowerPoint presentation at the ceremony. Acceptable image content includes:

- the individual nominee
- the team leader
- the entire team
- the nominee(s) interacting with customers
- the nominee(s) otherwise at work at their clearly identified location (e.g., the sign at the entrance to the National Forest or other identifiable location)

Deadline

All documents must be submitted on the Secretary's Honor Awards Form AD-495 by your respective agency's/staff office's Honor Awards point of contact. The complete packet must be received in OHRM by close of business on the due date in the annual announcement memorandum and submitted to USDAHonorAwards@usda.gov.

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GENERAL NOMINATION INFORMATION					
Submitting Agency/Staff Office or External Collaborative Organization	Recognition Type		Period Covered		
Lead Project Agency, if Different Than Submitting Agency	Individual Group		From: To:		
Individual Nominee or Group Name (exactly as it should appear on the certificate)					
AWARD GOALS					
<p><i>A description of the award category criteria is provided in the annual announcement memorandum.</i></p> <p>Goal 1 - Honor Award for combating climate change to support America's working lands, natural resources, and communities</p> <p>Goal 2 - Honor Award for ensuring America's agricultural system is equitable, resilient, and prosperous</p> <p>Goal 3 - Honor Award for fostering an equitable and competitive marketplace for all agricultural producers</p> <p>Goal 4 - Honor Award for providing all Americans safe, nutritious food</p> <p>Goal 5 - Honor Award for expanding opportunities for economic development and improving quality of life in rural and tribal communities</p> <p>Goal 6 - Honor Award for attracting, inspiring, and retaining an engaged and motivated workforce that's proud to represent USDA</p>					
CITATION					
<p><i>Suggested citation that will be printed on certificate (25 words or fewer; include the accomplishment/contribution's result)</i></p>					
EMPLOYEE DATA FOR SUBMISSIONS					
<p>NOMINEE(S): <i>(Non-Career SES, Schedule Cs and Administrators/Chiefs are not eligible). Provide names in alphabetical order by last name)</i></p>					
NAME (last, first, middle initial)	POSITION TITLE	USDA AGENCY/STAFF OFFICE/ NON-USDA ORGANIZATION	SERIES/ GRADE	DUTY STATION <i>(city, state)</i>	EMAIL
JUSTIFICATION FOR NOMINATION					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All nominations must address all five criteria below. Avoid the use of: general or vague statements; emphasizing job responsibilities rather than accomplishments; in-house terminology and technical language; retirement testimonials, lengthy statements and excessive superlatives; and descriptions of outside personal activities. If utilizing statistics, include comparative data (e.g., if the data show an increase of 50%, please include "from _____ to _____") to clearly indicate the scope. Descriptions of accomplishments must be consistent with USDA's most recent annual Agency Financial Report and/or Performance and Accountability Report, if applicable. Each description can be no more than 200 words. 					
<p>1. MISSION <i>Briefly describe the extent to which the contribution/accomplishment achieves the specified strategic goal, objectives, strategies and, as applicable, the related human capital management methodology.</i></p>					
<p>2. OUTCOMES</p> <p><i>a. The extent to which the contribution/accomplishment aligns with the outcomes articulated in the strategic goals</i></p> <p><i>b. It's demonstrated benefits to internal and external stakeholders, and/or</i></p> <p><i>c. It's demonstrated support of USDA's diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility values.</i></p>					

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3. POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND EVIDENCE BUILDING

Describe the degree to which the contribution/ accomplishment:

- a. Streamlines regulations and/or eliminates unnecessary regulations,*
- b. Removes regulatory obstacles to productivity, economic growth, or agricultural trade,*
- c. Implements and/or improves internal assessment capabilities,*
- d. Develops and tracks evidence-based measures,*
- e. Increases analytics capacity, and/or*
- f. Strengthens data-supported decision making and future policy development.*

4. INITIATIVE AND INGENUITY

- a. In what manner the contribution/accomplishment substantially exceeds normal job expectations,*
- b. The ingenuity and/or resourcefulness demonstrated, and*
- c. The degree to which the contribution/accomplishment establishes a model for the successful execution of similar undertakings throughout the Department*

5. CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Describe to the degree to which the contribution/accomplishment improves the end-to-end customer experience, e.g.:

- a. Decreasing the regulatory burden and reporting requirements,*
- b. Streamlining access to USDA programs and people,*
- c. Speeding up processes for faster service and/or program delivery,*
- d. Obtaining ongoing tactical feedback, and using this information to continuously improve the customer's experience, and*
- e. Removing barriers which result in more equitable and accessible USDA programs and services.*

SUMMARY STATEMENT

*Prepare a synopsis of **no more than 150 words** describing the achievements on which the nomination is based. The synopsis should be concise and descriptive and should fully outline the outstanding achievements related to the award for which the individual/group is nominated. (Note: The summary statement should be written to give the Secretary and other senior leaders a brief overview of the accomplishment.)*

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NOMINATOR CONTACT INFORMATION

Name (First, Last)	USDA Agency/Staff Office	Official Title
Work Address	Work Email	Work Phone
SURVIVOR INFORMATION (POSTHUMOUS AWARD)		
Name	Email	Mailing Address
Name of Team (if applicable)		

REVIEWS AND CLEARANCES

- *Nominations must be submitted through the respective Human Resources Director, Agency Head/Staff Director, and the appropriate Under/Assistant Secretary.*
- *Agencies are required to screen their nominee(s) for any Employee Relations (ER), Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), or Civil Rights (CR) violations on their record which might in any way discredit the Secretary's Honor Awards program, should the nominee(s) be approved for an award. Federal employees are disqualified from nomination if a finding of discrimination or any disciplinary action has occurred within 3 years of the nomination deadline.*
- *Agency Heads/Staff Directors must ensure the validity of all nomination accomplishments.*
- *Once selected, Honor Award recipients may also be screened by OHRM.*

I certify that the nominees listed above have been vetted through the appropriate review and clearances.

Recommending Official	Signature	Date
Contracting Officer (for any nominations that include contractor personnel)	Signature	Date