HUMAN RESOURCES

3.3 Performance & Related Matters

USMS AWARDS PROGRAM

A. **Purpose:** The purpose of the Awards Program is to recognize and reward employees who perform in an exemplary manner; make significant contributions to the efficiency and effectiveness of Government operations; achieve a significant reduction in paperwork; or perform a special act in the public interest in connection with their duties.

B. **Authority:** The authority to give awards is set forth in 5 USC 4302, 4501-4509, and 5336, and 5 CFR 451 and 531. This policy complies with the current Department of Justice Human Resources Order, DOJ 1200.1, Chapter 2-18.

C. **Policy:** Awards are given to recognize employees who, individually or through a team effort, contribute to meeting Service, Departmental and/or Government-wide goals. There should be a direct relationship between organizational goal attainment and performance recognition. The U.S. Marshals Service rewards employees using the following types of awards: sustained superior performance awards (SSP), special act awards, time off awards, quality step increases (QSI) and Director's honorary awards. SSPs and QSIs recognize employees whose individual performance contributes to meeting these goals. The USMS Performance Management Program ensures that individual performance work plans and ratings are clearly linked to higher-level organizational goals. SSPs and QSIs reinforce this strategic alignment by recognizing those individuals who have made significant contributions to organizational goal attainment. Special act and time off awards should also be given for contributions that assist in meeting organizational goals, and the justifications should include a statement concerning the employee's goal attainment.

1. **Types of Awards**

a. **Sustained Superior Performance Awards (Cash):** Awards based solely on the employee's performance rating of record assigned at the end of the appraisal period. These awards recognize sustained levels of successful or higher performance over the course of the rating period. The rating of record is the justification. A cash award or a time off award may be given based on the rating of record, but not both.

1) Criteria: Employee's current rating of record must be Successful, Excellent, or Outstanding. An award for sustained superior performance can only be made on an individual basis. One or more critical elements must be performed for at least six months in a manner clearly exceeding normal requirements. Employee must not have received another cash performance award within six months before the date of the nomination. A special act award during the six-month period is not disqualifying.

2) Award amounts: Minimum - Generally $250. For sustained superior performance awards, the Human Resources Division, through the Management and Budget Division, will provide guidance for awards amounts. Statutory maximum amounts: sustained superior performance awards may not be more than 10 percent of the employee's annual rate of basic pay, unless the head of the agency determines that exceptional performance by the employee justifies a higher percent, not to exceed 20 percent of the employee's annual rate of basic pay. Computation of the basic pay includes locality pay, special rate supplements, or similar payments under other legal authority.

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b. **Special Act Awards (Cash):** Recognize specific accomplishments that exceed normal job requirements. These may be for contributions of a one-time nature that increase productivity, economy or other highly desirable benefits, or a special act in the public interest in connection with official duties. The accomplishments should help to meet the goals of the USMS or the district/division. A narrative justification is required.

1) Criteria: For performance substantially beyond expectations on a specific assignment; an accomplishment which has involved overcoming unusual difficulties; creative efforts that make important contributions; an accomplishment requiring special effort or innovation; exemplary or courageous handling of an emergency situation related to official employment; initiating quality improvements to operations, work flow, cost effectiveness, streamlining, or customer satisfaction; or demonstrating exceptional teamwork by two or more people working together, or one individual who works well with other team members (Special Act for Teamwork).

2) Award amounts: Minimum - Generally $250; maximum - $5,000.

c. **Time Off Awards:** Grant time off from duty without loss of pay or charge to leave. They recognize superior accomplishments or other personal efforts that contribute to the quality, efficiency or economy of government operations. These awards may be used to recognize contributions that are of a one time, non-recurring nature, and may also be used to recognize sustained high-level performance.

1) Criteria

a) *Special Act:* For making a high quality contribution involving a difficult or important project or assignment; displaying special initiative and skill in completing an assignment or project before a deadline; using initiative and creativity in making improvements in a project, activity, program or service; ensuring the mission of an organization is accomplished during a difficult period by successfully completing additional work or a project assignment while still maintaining one's own workload; or demonstrating exceptional teamwork by two or more people working together, or one individual who works well with other team members (Special Act for Teamwork). A narrative justification is required.

b) *Sustained Superior Performance Award (Time Off):* The employee's current rating of record must be Successful, Excellent, or Outstanding. A maximum of 40 hours may be given for an Outstanding rating; a maximum of 32 hours may be given for an Excellent rating; and a maximum of 24 hours may be given for a Successful rating. The rating of record is the justification. A cash award or a time off award may be given based on the rating of record, but not both.

c) *Fitness-In-Total Performance:* Employee must be operational; eight hours may be given for employees who score excellent or superior in all four categories of push-ups, sit-ups, aerobic assessment, and flexibility; four hours may be given for excellent or superior in three of the above categories with no category rated lower than fair; employees must complete all four of the categories to be eligible for a FIT award; Fitness Assessment Summary must be dated within one year; an employee may receive two time off awards for FIT per leave year if both of the FIT assessments completed during the year meet the qualification requirements. The Fitness Assessment Summary is the justification.

2) Award amounts and limitations: The minimum time off award is four hours. The maximum that can be given for one time off award is 40 hours. The maximum per employee, per leave year, is a total of 120 hours. This total includes all awards from all offices, including Director's Awards.

A time off award is effective at the beginning of the pay period following approval of the award; however, recipients must wait six weeks after the award has been submitted before using it, to allow time for keying by the Human Resources Division. If the total amount of a time off award is not used within one year after its approval, any unused time off is forfeited and is not eligible for restoration. A time off award is not transferrable to another Federal agency or to another DOJ component. A time off award may not be converted to cash. The written justification for the award must be based solely on the merit of the employee's contribution and shall not be used to compensate or reward employees for working outside of the basic work week or in lieu of premium pay, such as overtime. Intermittent employees are not eligible for time off awards. Promotion has no impact on the granting of a time off award.

3) Scheduling and Documentation: To use the time off, employees must complete OPM Form 71, *Request for Leave or Approved Absence*, indicating the date(s) they would like to use the time off. The employee should check the block for *Other Paid Absence* and write "Time Off Award" in remarks. The time off must be approved by the supervisor.

d. **Director's Honorary Awards (Cash or Honorary Without Cash):** The highest U.S. Marshals Service honor that can be bestowed on an employee, Director's awards are presented to those who perform in an exemplary manner or make significant contributions to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Service.

e. **Suggestion Awards:** Are awarded by the Management and Budget Division, and should be submitted on USM-224, *Employee Suggestion*.

f. **Quality Step Increases (QSI):** A QSI is an increase in basic pay from one step of the grade to the next step. A QSI provides faster than normal progression through the steps of the General Schedule. Unlike other forms of monetary recognition, a QSI permanently increases an employee's rate of basic pay by one step. The rating of record is the justification.

1) Limitations on QSIs: QSIs may be allowed by the Director, dependent upon the availability of funding. If funding is available, districts and divisions would be advised of the limitations on QSIs for that year, for example, five or ten percent of the current on board permanent employees of that office could be submitted for QSIs.

2) Criteria: No more than one QSI may be granted to an employee in a 52-week period. The employee's most recent rating of record must be Outstanding. The employee must have been performing at that grade for a minimum of six months, and there is an expectation that the performance will continue at that level for a minimum of an additional six months.

2. **Coverage:** All USMS employees are eligible for awards under this policy, except members of the Senior Executive Service (SES), senior-level employees, employees paid under the Executive Schedule, and United States Marshals. Contract Guards and Court Security Officers are not USMS employees; therefore, they are only eligible for honorary recognition, such as a plaque or certificate of appreciation.

3. **Limitation on Awards During a Presidential Election Period:** Under 5 USC 4508, cash awards and time off awards may not be granted to employees in an excepted service position of a confidential or policy-determining character (Schedule C) during a Presidential election period (beginning June 1 in a calendar year in which the popular election of the President occurs and ending on January 20 following the date of such election).

4. **Impact of pending internal investigations, or disciplinary actions received, when considering employees for Sustained Superior Performance, Special Act and Time Off Awards:**

If an employee is under investigation, is facing a disciplinary action, or has had a disciplinary action greater than a letter of reprimand based on misconduct that took place within the last year, the approving official should consider whether giving an award is appropriate. Consideration should be given to such matters as employee morale and the perception of fairness in the system. The decision is made by the approving official.

Specific instructions regarding consideration of employees for cash and time off awards for sustained superior performance are given each year. For example, if a district or division nominates employees for SSPs, all employees with Outstanding ratings of record must receive a cash or time off award. However, if an employee is under investigation, is facing a disciplinary action, or has had a disciplinary action greater than a letter of reprimand based on misconduct that took place within the last year, it is not required to give them an award. The decision is made by the approving official.

5. **Impact of pending internal investigations, or disciplinary actions received, when considering employees for cash Director's Awards, Attorney General's Awards, and awards by external organizations:**

   a. **Pending Investigations:** In most cases, an employee under misconduct investigation or involved in an active disciplinary case that could result in a disciplinary action greater than a letter of reprimand is not eligible for a cash Director's Award, an Attorney General's Award, or an award by an external organization.

   However, if an employee has a pending investigation or an active disciplinary case, the Office of Inspections and/or the Employee Relations Team may be asked to provide information concerning the nature of the issue and the likelihood of confirmed misconduct. The nature of the misconduct, the likelihood of its accuracy, and the amount of time that has passed since the investigation was initiated will be relayed to the Director for consideration in making the final decision.

   b. **Disciplinary Actions Received:** If an employee has received a disciplinary action greater than a letter of reprimand in the past two years, and is recommended for a cash Director's Award, an Attorney General's Award or an award by an outside organization, the Employee Relations Team will indicate the date the offense was committed or when headquarters/management became aware of it (if there was a delay in reporting).

   If the date of offense or when headquarters became aware of it has occurred within the past year, the employee is not eligible for the award.

   If the date of offense or when headquarters became aware of it has occurred within the past two years, this information will be referred to the Director. At the discretion of the Director, the employee may be deemed ineligible for the award based on the nature or severity of the offense.

D. Procedures

1. **Approval Authority for Cash Awards:** Awards in excess of $5,000, as well as cash awards for Schedule C employees, must be approved by the Attorney General. The Director has authority to approve cash awards up to $5,000. This authority may be redelegated. Accordingly, authority to approve cash awards that total more than $2,500 per employee, per fiscal year, is delegated to the Deputy Director. This total includes awards from other offices, but does not include Director's Awards, Attorney General's Awards, or sustained superior performance awards.

   Authority to approve cash awards that total no more than $2,500 per employee, per fiscal year, is delegated to U.S. Marshals, Assistant Directors, the Comptroller, the General Counsel, and the EEO Officer, and may be redelegated to a lower supervisory level. The approving official must be a supervisor at a higher grade level than the award recipient. Each office must keep a written record of the delegation identifying who may approve awards. This total includes awards from other offices, but does not include Director's Awards, Attorney General's Awards, or sustained superior performance awards.

2. **Approval Authority for Time Off Awards:** Authority to approve awards that total no more than 80 hours per employee, per leave year, is delegated to U.S. Marshals, Assistant Directors, the Comptroller, the General Counsel, and the EEO Officer. Approval authority for time off awards totalling 24 hours or less may be redelegated to a lower supervisory level. The approving official must be a supervisor at a higher grade level than the award recipient. Each office must keep a written record of the delegation identifying who may approve awards.

   Time off awards totalling more than 24 hours, and up to 80 hours, per employee, per leave year, must be approved at the level of the U.S. Marshals, Assistant Directors, the Comptroller, the General Counsel, and the EEO Officer, and may not be redelegated. This total includes all awards from all offices, and any time off awarded for sustained superior performance.

   Time off awards totalling more than 80 hours per employee, per leave year, must be approved by the Deputy Director.

3. **Nominating employees from other offices:** When nominating an employee from a different office for a cash, time off, or honor award, including the Director's and Attorney General's Awards, the nominating office must contact the employee's Marshal, Assistant Director, the Comptroller, the General Counsel, or the EEO Officer, to receive their concurrence on the award. This is to ensure that the employee has not already received an award for the same contribution and that there are no other considerations that would prevent the award. The award form must include a statement of who was contacted for concurrence. Do not advise the employee of the award until after all approvals are received.

   In addition, nominating office Administrative Officers must contact the nominee's employing office Administrative Officer to ensure that they will not exceed the authorized limits.

4. **Funding for Cash Performance Awards:** The Assistant Attorney General for Administration will issue guidance on the designated component award reserve for each fiscal year.

5. **Submission of Awards:** Administrative Officers should be assigned to submit award forms. Any office that does not have an Administrative Officer should designate an appropriate employee to handle awards. Approving officials forward the forms to the Administrative Officer or designated employee, who is responsible for the complete accuracy of the forms and attachments. The Administrative Officer submits awards to the Awards Program Manager, or the Deputy Director, based on the amount of the award.

   Time off awards and cash awards that can be approved below the level of the Deputy Director are submitted to the Awards Program Manager. Cash awards that total over $2,500 per employee, per fiscal year, and time off awards that total more than 80 hours per employee, per leave year, must be submitted directly to the Deputy Director with a memo requesting that the award be forwarded to the Awards Program Manager after the Deputy Director's review.

6. **Specific Instructions for Submitting Awards:** Instructions are attached to the award nomination forms, USM-196, *Request for Cash Awards*, and USM-200, *Request for Time Off Awards*. The procedures for the submission of cash or time off sustained superior performance awards may be different from year to year, and managers will be advised of any updated procedures.

7. **Point of Contact for Employees and Supervisors:** Employees and supervisors who have questions about specific awards should contact their Administrative Officer or the designated employee in their office. That individual will keep records of the awards and when they were submitted to the Awards Program Manager or the Deputy Director.

8. **Point of Contact for Administrative Officers and Designated Employees:** The Awards Program Manager is the point of contact.

9. **Documenting, Filing, and Reporting:** All cash and time off awards are documented with an SF-50, *Notification of Personnel Action*. Each award recipient receives the employee copy of the SF-50. Award documents will be filed in compliance with the OPM Operating Manual, *The Guide*

to Personnel Record-keeping. Award data are reported to the Central Personnel Data File (CPDF). A copy of the award forms and justifications for special act and time off awards must be maintained in the nominating office for two years after the presentation of the award. Completed original ratings of record justifying SSPs and QSIs will be maintained in the district/division's individual Employee Performance Files (EPF) for four years.

10. **Notice of Awards:** At least quarterly, each district/division must post the names and the types of awards bargaining unit employees have received. Offices have the option of posting the names of all employees who have received awards, but it is required for bargaining unit employees. The Administrative Officer or designated employee will ensure that the lists are posted in a convenient location for review by district or division employees.

E. Responsibilities

1. **Approving Officials:** Ensure that documentation is adequate, awards are given for appropriate contributions, and eligibility requirements are met. Before approving an award, verify the employees' total awards with the Administrative Officer to ensure that the maximum limits are not exceeded. The approving official may then sign the forms and provide them to the Administrative Officer or the designated employee in their office, who forwards the award forms to the Awards Program Manager or the Deputy Director, depending on the employees' award totals.

2. **Administrative Officers or Designated Employees:** Responsible for complete accuracy of the award forms and attachments. They are also responsible for ensuring that no faxes or duplicate copies of awards are submitted; ensuring that the funds do not exceed the allowed amount; submitting original award forms to the Awards Program Manager or the Deputy Director based on the approval level required; checking SF-50s for accuracy; reporting overpayments or under payments to the Awards Program Manager for corrective action; maintaining a copy of the award forms and justifications for special act and time off awards for two years after the presentation of the award; and maintaining completed original ratings of record justifying SSPs and QSIs in the individual Employee Performance Files (EPF) for four years.

3. **Awards Program Manager:** Oversees the Awards Program, performs audits, ensures that the overall program complies with regulations, and provides assistance to managers and employees regarding the program.

4. **Employees:** Notify the Administrative Officer or the designated employee in their office of overpayments or under payments on their awards. If the award recipient is unsure of whom to contact, they should contact the Awards Program Manager.

Effective Date:

9-27-2007

By Order of:

/S/

John F. Clark
Director
U.S. Marshals Service

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