

NIH POLICY MANUAL

2300-451-1 – NIH Employee Awards Program

Issuing Office: OHR/WRD, 301-402-9203

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1. **Explanation of Material Transmitted:** This chapter establishes policy and describes the requirements for administering the NIH Employee Awards Program. This chapter is revised to include information on employee performance awards.
2. **Filing Instructions:**

Remove: NIH Manual Chapter 2300-451-1 dated 12/02/96

Insert: NIH Manual Chapter 2300-451-1 dated 7/23/07

PLEASE NOTE: For information on:

- Content of this chapter, contact the issuing office listed above.
- NIH Manual System, contact the Office of Management Assessment, OM, on 301-496-2832.
- Online information, enter this URL:
<http://www1.od.nih.gov/oma/manualchapters>

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2300-451-1 – NIH Employee Awards Program

A. **PURPOSE:** This manual chapter states NIH policies and requirements for administering the NIH Employee Awards Program.

B. **COVERAGE:**

- All NIH employees are covered by this manual chapter. Specific eligibility requirements are located in **Appendices A and B**.
- Former employees and their legal heirs or estates of deceased employees are eligible for awards for contributions made during Government employment with the NIH.
- Contractors are eligible for honorary and non-monetary informal awards.
- Employees of other Federal agencies are eligible for NIH awards based on contributions that benefit the NIH mission.
- Private citizens who contributed to the mission of NIH are eligible only for honorary awards.

C. **POLICY:** It is the policy of NIH to fairly and equitably recognize and reward individuals and groups for excellence in service to the overall mission of NIH and the missions of its Institutes and Centers (IC). This program provides various means of demonstrating, through monetary and non-monetary recognition, the high value NIH sets on employee contributions and achievements that enhance organizational performance, support organizational goals and objectives, and improves organizational quality.

D. **REFERENCES:**

- 5 United States Code (USC) 4501 through 4507 (Incentive Awards)
- 5 USC 5336 (Quality Step Increase)
- 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 451 (Awards)
- 5 CFR Part 430 (Performance Management)
- 5 CFR Part 531, Subpart E (Quality Step Increase)
- 5 USC 4501 through 4503 and 5 USC 4505, 4508 (SES Recognition)
- 15 USC 3710c(a)(1)(B) (Disposition of Royalties)
- 45 CFR Part 7 (Employee Inventions)

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- HHS Performance Management Appraisal Program (PMAP), dated January 17, 2006: <http://hr.od.nih.gov/PerfMgmt/documents/HHSPerfMgmtPlan.doc>
- Senior Executive Service Organizational and Performance Management System, dated July 2007: <http://hr.od.nih.gov/PerfMgmt/SES/SESPerfManag.pdf>
- NIH Manual Chapter 2300-451-3 – Employee Suggestion Program: <http://www1.od.nih.gov/oma/manualchapters/person/2300-451-3/>
- PHS Commissioned Corps' Award Program: <http://hr.od.nih.gov/corps/default.htm> and http://dep.psc.gov/PDF_docs/CCPM_P67.pdf
- NIH Awards Handbook, February 2002: <http://hr.od.nih.gov/Awards/documents/AwardsHandbook.pdf>
- Delegation of Authority for Monetary Awards, including compensation limits: <http://delegations.od.nih.gov/DOADetails.aspx?id=1956>
- Delegation of Authority for Non-Monetary Awards: <http://delegations.od.nih.gov/DOADetails.aspx?id=2104>

E. DEFINITIONS:

1. **Employee Referral Award:** An award granted to an employee for referring a high quality external candidate for a “hard to fill”, mission critical, and high value position.
2. **Federal Technology Transfer Act Award:** A cash award that recognizes scientific, engineering and technical personnel for inventions, innovations, computer software, or other outstanding scientific or technological contributions of value to the United States due to commercial application or contributions to the missions of NIH, HHS and/or the Federal Government, or for exemplary activities that promote the domestic transfer of science and technology development within the Federal Government resulting in use by American industry or business, universities, State or local governments, or other non-Federal parties.
3. **Honorary Award:** A non-monetary symbolic award bestowed on employees for significant accomplishments and contributions to the NIH, HHS and/or the Federal Government.
4. **Invention Award:** An award (cash and honorary) for an invention determined to be of value to the NIH and for which patent coverage is sought or obtained that contributes to an improvement in Government economy, efficiency, or operations. (Refer to **Appendices A and C** for information on the Federal Technology Transfer Act (FTTA) Award.)

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5. **Monetary Award:** A cash award granted to an employee or group.
6. **Non-monetary Informal Award:** An award that recognizes a contribution made by an employee or group that does not meet the standard for a cash award or in cases where the supervisor chooses to not grant a cash award (e.g., T-shirt, mug, gift card). For additional information on non-monetary informal awards, including gift cards/certificates, refer to [OPM Honorary Awards and Informal Recognition Awards FAQs](#) .
7. **On-the-Spot Award (OTS):** A small cash award given by the supervisor to recognize an employee for a worthy accomplishment or for an unusual one time achievement.
8. **Performance Award/Bonus:** A lump sum cash payment given to an employee based on the employee's rating of record. A performance award does not increase base pay.
9. **Quality Step Increase (QSI):** An increase in the rate of base pay equivalent to one step within the grade given to recognize exceptional performance in lieu of a performance award/bonus.
10. **Special Act or Service Award:** A lump-sum cash award used to recognize short-term accomplishments, meritorious acts, service, scientific or other achievements accomplished within or outside assigned job responsibilities. The act, service or achievement results in either tangible or intangible benefits to the government.
11. **Suggestion Award:** An award granted for an adopted idea, method or device, submitted through a formal documentation process for evaluation that directly contributes to the economy, efficiency or effectiveness of Government operations. For additional information, refer to [NIH Manual Chapter 2300-451-1, Employee Suggestion Program](#).
12. **Time-off Award:** An award given in the form of paid time off of up to 80 hours during the leave year without charge to leave that may be based on performance reflected in the rating of record or as a specific contribution.

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F. RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Director, NIH:
 - Overall authority and responsibility for the Employee Recognition and Awards Program.
2. Director, Office of Human Resources, NIH:
 - Develops, implements, and updates the recognition awards program;
3. Director, Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management:
 - Monitors the equitable distribution of awards throughout the NIH.
 - Identifies systemic barriers to the effectiveness of the awards program in recognizing NIH employees;
 - Recommends nominees for the Harvey Bullock and the NIH EEO Awards to the NIH Director; and
 - Advises NIH senior management on the overall EEO compliance of the program.
4. IC Directors:
 - Implement and administer the awards program within their IC;
 - Assure funding in the IC budget for recognition and awards;
 - Encourage recognition of employees through monetary, non-monetary, and other informal forms of appreciation; and
 - Ensure equity in the distribution of awards.
5. Institutes and Center (ICs):
 - Provide advice and guidance to managers on awards mechanisms and policy;
 - Assist IC managers and supervisors in completing required forms for submitting awards; and
 - Submit awards requests for processing to OHR, Client Services Division (CSD).
6. Managers and Supervisors:
 - Recognize employees for specific contributions and achievements;
 - Ensure equity in the distribution of awards;
 - Recognize contributions and achievement promptly; and
 - Use informal types of recognition to acknowledge employees' activities or services and provide personalized, immediate recognition (e.g., thank you, letter of appreciation, sign or banner, item of nominal value).

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G. RECOGNITION CATEGORIES:

1. Monetary Awards: Include Special Act or Service Awards, On-the-Spot Awards, Invention Awards, FTTA Awards, Employee Referral Awards, and Suggestion Awards. NOTE: Employees should not receive more than one monetary award for the same activity. Refer to the Monetary Awards Categories Chart in Appendix C.

Title 42 senior staff performance bonuses are governed by the [IC Director/NIH Deputy Director Compensation Model](#).

Guidance on compensation limits for Title 42 and SBRS are located at:

- Title 42 Staff: [Title 42 Pay Model](#).
- SBRS Staff: [Senior Biomedical Research Service \(SBRS\) Performance Management & Awards](#).

2. Performance Award/Bonus: A lump sum cash award based on the employee's most recent rating of record. A Quality Step Increase (QSI) is a monetary award that may be given to an employee in lieu of a performance award/bonus for performance rated Exceptional under PMAP. Refer to Performance Awards under the Monetary Awards Categories Chart in **Appendix C**.

Performance Awards for employees are covered by the following:

- Senior Executive Service (SES): HHS SES Organizational and Performance Management System.
- Title 42 Senior-Level Scientist Performance Management Plan is pending Departmental issuance. _____
- All other employees: [DHHS Performance Management Appraisal Program](#).

3. Non-Monetary Awards: Include Time-off, Informal Non-monetary, NIH Director's Award and Award for Mentoring, NIH Merit Award, Certificate of Service, and Retirement Certificate. Refer to the Non-Monetary Awards Categories Chart in **Appendix D**.
4. Other Awards: Refer to **Appendix F** for other awards administered by the DHHS, NIH/OEODM, and the Commissioned Corps.

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H. NOMINATIONS, DOCUMENTATION, AND APPROVALS:

Nominations and approval of awards must be in accordance with NIH and IC delegations of authority. For monetary awards, refer to the Tangible and Intangible Benefits Scales in **Appendix E** to help determine appropriate award amounts.

Nomination documentation and justifications must be submitted using the NIH Award Nomination Form, [NIH 2833](#), with appropriate supporting documentation attached. Monetary awards must also be documented by a Notification of Personnel Action, SF-50.

I. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Formal and informal recognition must comply with ethics and procurement restrictions as specified in agency, departmental and Federal regulations.

Employees may not appeal or grieve decisions to grant or not to grant monetary or non-monetary recognition or amounts of monetary recognition.

J. RECORDS RETENTION AND DISPOSAL

All records (e-mail and non-e-mail) pertaining to this chapter must be retained and disposed of under the authority of NIH Manual 1743, "Keeping and Destroying Records, Appendix 1, "NIH Records Control Schedule," Item 2300-450-1.

NIH e-mail messages. NIH e-mail messages (messages, including attachments, that are created on NIH computer systems or transmitted over NIH networks) that are evidence of the activities of the agency or have informational value are considered Federal records.

These records must be maintained in accordance with current NIH Records Management guidelines. Contact your IC Records Officer for additional information.

All e-mail messages are considered Government property, and, if requested for a legitimate Government purpose, must be provided to the requester. Employees' supervisors, NIH staff conducting official reviews or investigations, and the Office of Inspector General may request access to or copies of the e-mail messages. E-mail messages must also be provided to Congressional oversight committees if requested and are subject to Freedom of Information Act requests. Since most e-mail systems have back-up files that are retained for significant periods of time, e-mail messages and attachments are likely to be retrievable from a back-up file after they have been deleted

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from an individual's computer. The back-up files are subject to the same requests as the original messages.

K. MANAGEMENT CONTROLS: The purpose of this chapter is to provide guidance on the NIH Employee Recognition and Awards Program.

1. Office Responsible for Reviewing Management Controls Relative to this Chapter:

The Office of Human Resources (OHR), Workforce Relations Division (WRD) has operational responsibility for the NIH Employee Recognition and Awards Program.

2. Frequency of Review: On-going review.

3. Method of Review: An overall NIH-wide evaluation of the compliance with the policy.

4. Review Reports: Reports are sent to the Director, OHR, and the Deputy Director for Management upon request.

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APPENDIX A.

ELIGIBILITY FOR MONETARY RECOGNITION							
Employee Category	Special Act or Service	On-the-Spot	Suggestion	Employee Referral*	Invention	Federal Technology Transfer Act Award (FTTA)	Quality Step Increase
SES, ST/SL	X	X	X	X	X	X	NA
SBRS	X	X	X	X	X	X	NA
General Schedule (GS)**	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Temporary Employment Program	X	X	X	NA	X	X	NA
WG, WL, WS	X	X	X	X	X	X	NA
Commissioned Corps	NA	NA	X	NA	X	X	NA
IRTA and Visiting Fellow	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	X	NA
Title 42 (f) & (g)	X	X	X	X	X	X	NA

*All HHS employees are eligible EXCEPT: human resources employees; supervisors/managers over the position filled; any employee involved in the selection of the referred candidate (e.g., QRB members.); any employee with recruitment as an official duty; and Commissioned Corps. For additional eligibility information, refer to the [HHS Employee Referral Award Program](#).

** Employees in pay plans GP and GR covered by Title 38 Physician and Dentist Pay are also eligible.

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APPENDIX B

ELIGIBILITY FOR NON-MONETARY RECOGNITION							
Employee Category	Time-Off	Informal Non-Monetary	NIH Director's Award	NIH Director's Award for Mentoring	NIH Merit Award	Certificate of Service	Retirement Certificate
SES, ST/SL	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
SBRS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
General Schedule*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Temporary Employment Program	X	X	X	X	X	NA	NA
WG, WL, WS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Commissioned Corps	NA	X	X	X	X	X	X
IRTA and Visiting Fellow	NA	NA	**	**	**	NA	NA
Title 42 (f) & 42(g)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

* Employees in pay plans GP and GR, covered by Title 38 Physician and Dentist Pay, are also eligible.

** IRTA and VF are **ONLY** eligible for the NIH Director's Award, Mentoring Award, and Merit Award and only IF they are part of a group.

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APPENDIX C.

MONETARY AWARDS CATEGORIES		
Award Type	Special Act or Service	On-the-Spot
Purpose	Recognition for a significant one-time contributions of an employee or group in the public interest in connection with or related to official employment.	Recognition of an employee or group for their day-to-day extra efforts and contributions.
Frequency	Anytime to an employee or for group contributions that are within, as well as outside, normal job duties or responsibilities.	Anytime. No limit.
Amount	Up to \$10,000 based on the tangible and intangible benefits to the government. Refer to Appendix E to determine the amount for this type of award.	Limitations vary, but usually up to \$2,500.
Timeframe	45 to 60 days of completion of the noteworthy contribution.	6 weeks or less from the time of the contribution.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceptional participation or leadership on a project, detail or regular assignment. • Achieving substantial savings or resources in meeting an objective. • Achieving a scientific or technical breakthrough that contributes significantly to the accomplishment of a goal or mission. • Showing creativity or overcoming unusual difficulties in meeting an objective. • Completion of an important objective in record time • Other efforts that contribute to the efficiency, economy, or improvement of the IC, NIH, or another federal agency's performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A one-time noteworthy achievement that does not meet the criteria for other types of awards. • Volunteering for an extra or emergency assignment while maintaining own workload. • Use of personal initiative and creativity to solve an unusual problem. • Creating a work product of exceptionally high quality under tight deadlines.

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APPENDIX C (continued)

MONETARY AWARDS CATEGORIES continued		
Award Type	Suggestion	Employee Referral
Purpose	Recognition for an idea, submitted in writing, by an employee or group that identifies a specific need and proposes a course of action for improvement to the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of IC and NIH programs and mission.	Recognition for referring an external candidate hired into a "hard-to-fill," mission critical, high value position at the grade levels specified in the Program. Refer to the NIH Employee Referral Awards Program and the HHS Employee Referral Award Program .
Frequency	No limit on the number of suggestion awards in a given year. Note: The suggestion must be accepted by management prior to the granting of an award.	Anytime
Amount	Refer to NIH Manual Chapter 2300-451-3 - Employee Suggestion Program , Appendix 5, to determine the amount for an adopted suggestion.	Up to \$1,000.
Timeframe	Anytime.	The referring employee must be on the payroll: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when the candidate is referred and hired, and • at the time the award is made (except for referring employees who retire) Note: The amount of the cash award will be granted after the referred candidate has completed 90 days of service.
Examples	Refer to Purpose, above.	NA

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APPENDIX C (continued)

MONETARY AWARDS CATEGORIES continued		
Award Type	Federal Technology Transfer Act (FTTA)	Invention
Purpose	<p>Recognition for :</p> <p>(1) inventions, innovations, computer software, or other outstanding scientific or technological contributions of value to the United States due to commercial application or due to contributions to missions of the Federal agency or the Federal Government, or</p> <p>(2) exemplary activities that promote the domestic transfer of science and technology development within the Federal Government and result in utilization of such science and technology by American industry or business, universities, State or local governments, or other non-Federal parties.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> Refer to PHS Technology Transfer Manual Chapter 312 for further details.</p>	<p>Recognition of an employee or group for development of a new, useful apparatus or process that is or may be patentable under the patent laws of the U.S. and has value to the NIH, the public and the U.S. Government.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> Generally, those who invent or otherwise successfully use the tools of technology transfer to benefit the NIH are rewarded through the use of the FTTA award; however, the Invention Award is an available mechanism for recognizing inventors' contributions where the FTTA mechanism is not appropriate.</p>
Frequency	Anytime	Anytime.
Amount	Not to exceed \$10,000 per year	Not to exceed \$10,000 per person per year.
Timeframe	Anytime	Anytime after the disclosure of an invention to the NIH Office of Technology Transfer has resulted in an application for a patent being filed with the US Patent Office.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovery or development of technologies that considerably enhanced the conduct of biomedical research or that have resulted in a significant improvement in public health. • Development of a new tool for the domestic transfer of government technologies that can be widely used across the PHS. • Through effective representation at various public events, initiation of substantial contacts that directly led to the domestic transfer of government technologies. • Creation of educational materials for, or execution of training of, government personnel, designed to lead to substantial additional utilization of the tools of technology transfer. 	NA

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MONETARY AWARDS CATEGORIES continued	
<u>Award Type</u>	<u>PERFORMANCE AWARDS</u>
	<u>PMAP</u>
Purpose	<p>Performance Award: Recognition in the form of a lump sum cash payment based on the employee's rating of record.</p> <p>QSI: Recognition in the form of an increase in an employee's rate of basic pay, equivalent to one step within the grade.</p>
Frequency	End of rating cycle.
Amount	<p>Performance Award: Exceptional: 2.5% - 5% of base pay Fully Successful: up to 2% of base pay after employees rated Exceptional are paid "in full". (Refer to pages 13 and 14 of PMAP)</p> <p>QSI: One Step (GS Pay Scale). Note: The employee may only receive one QSI in a 52 week period and not be at the top step of the pay range.</p>
Timeframe	<p>Performance Awards and QSIs are granted annually after the end of the rating cycle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees may receive a QSI in lieu of a performance award only for an Exceptional rating under the HHS PMAP. • Employees rated Exceptional may not receive both a QSI and a performance award for the same performance. • Employees rated Fully Successful, Minimally Successful or Unacceptable are not eligible for a QSI. (SES: not eligible to receive a QSI.)
Examples	Final rating of record is Exceptional.

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APPENDIX D.

NON-MONETARY AWARD CATEGORIES				
Award Type	Time-Off	Informal Non-Monetary	NIH Director's Award	NIH Director's Award for Mentoring
Purpose	Recognition in the form of excused absence without loss of pay or charge to leave to recognize an accomplishment or personal achievement that contributes to the quality, efficiency, or economy of government operations.	Recognition of individuals or groups for their efforts in the form of items of nominal value such as mugs, hats, T-shirts, tote bags, etc.	Recognition of individuals or groups whose special efforts and contributions beyond regular duty requirements have resulted in significant benefits to the programs or NIH staff and the fulfillment of the NIH mission.	Recognition of individuals who have demonstrated significant leadership, skill, and ability in serving as a quality mentor to one or more individuals.
Frequency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum amount for a full-time employee during the leave year: 80 hours. (PMAP limited to 40 hours.) • Maximum amount for a part-time employee during the leave year: Number of hours in the employee's biweekly scheduled tour of duty. Time-off awards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry over from year-to-year, • Will not transfer if the employee leaves NIH for a position with another federal agency or retires, and • May not be converted to cash. 	Anytime. No limit on number of informal non-monetary awards employees may receive.	Annual.	Annual.
Amount	NA	Item value NTE \$100.	Plaque	Plaque
Timeframe	Anytime. <i>Note:</i> Supervisory permission must be obtained prior to using time-off.	Anytime.	NIH Director's Award Ceremony.	NIH Director's Award Ceremony.
Examples	Unusual efforts spent, exemplary services, or results achieved in achieving daily or special activities.	Refer to Purpose, above	Refer to the NIH Awards Handbook , Categories , Eligibility and Criteria for Nomination for examples.	Refer to the NIH Awards Handbook , NIH Mentoring Award Criteria for examples.

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NON-MONETARY AWARD CATEGORIES - continued			
Award Type	NIH Merit Award	Certificate of Service	Retirement Certificate
Purpose	Awarded by IC Directors and NIH Deputy and Associate Directors to recognize individuals or groups whose superior service and achievement warrant special appreciation.	Recognition of milestones (e.g., 10, 20, 30, 40 years) in an employee's federal career.	Recognition given to a retiring employee.
Frequency	Annual	Annual	Retirement from federal service.
Amount	Plaque	Certificate or pin.	Certificate.
Timeframe	IC Awards Ceremonies (IC-specific dates)	10, 20, 30, 40 years of federal service. May be recognized at NIH and/or IC Awards ceremonies.	Awarded close to retirement date.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership that contributed to the successful accomplishment of an NIH or IC program; • Significant scientific research or administrative support efforts which contributed substantially to the accomplishment of an IC's primary mission; • Effective supervisory leadership in training and using employees in a manner that maximizes their career development; • Creative or outstanding efforts in applying technical or service skills; or • Notable competence and resourcefulness in improving the scientific or administrative management of NIH. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate for 10 years of federal service. • Pin for 20, 30, 40 years of service. 	Appreciation for employee's contributions to the NIH and the federal government.

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The initiating official determines if the contribution can be measured in terms of time saved, money saved, or expenditures avoided by using the “*Tangible Benefits Scale*.” If the contribution cannot be measured this precisely, the initiating official determines the award amount by weighing the “value of benefits” and the “application” as shown in the “*Intangible Benefits Scale*.”

TANGIBLE BENEFITS SCALE (Special Act or Service, Suggestion Awards)	
BENEFITS	AWARD
Estimated First-Year Benefits to Government	Amount of Award to Employee
Up to \$10,000 in benefits.	10% of benefits.
Between \$10,000 and \$100,000 in benefits.	\$1,000 for the first \$10,000 in benefits, plus 3% to 10% of benefits over \$10,000.
More than \$100,000 in benefits.	\$3,700 to \$10,000 for the first \$100,000 in benefits, plus 0.5% to 1.0% of benefits above \$100,000, up to \$250,000 with the approval of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Presidential approval is required for all awards of more than \$25,000.

INTANGIBLE BENEFITS SCALE (Special Act or Service, Suggestion Awards)			
Value of Benefits	APPLICATION		
	Limited: Impacts a specific small work unit to as large as a Division or IC.	Broad: Impacts several ICs or NIH	General: Impacts the mission of other components of DHHS, or other Federal Agencies
Small/Moderate	\$100 - \$325	\$325 - \$650	\$650 - \$1,300
Moderate/Substantial	\$325 - \$ 650	\$650 - \$1,300	\$1,300 - \$3,150
Substantial/Extended	\$650 - \$2,500	\$1,300 - \$5,500	\$3,150 - \$10,000

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APPENDIX F.

OTHER AWARDS	
DHHS Secretary's Award for Distinguished Service	Highest level honor award within DHHS, granted for accomplishments that advance the mission and goals of the Department. Award emphasizes displays of leadership, skill, and ability through improved teamwork; empowerment of employees; improved partnerships across or among organizations; better customer service; continuous improvement; or innovative solutions.
Harvey J. Bullock, Jr. Award for Equal Opportunity Achievement	Award granted to an employee for significant contributions in furthering equal opportunity for all NIH employees; efforts made to improve communication between employees and management; contributions that increased awareness or sensitivity of management to concerns and problems of NIH employees; or contributions that have had an impact on the upward mobility efforts for NIH employees.
National Institutes of Health Equal Employment Opportunity Award of the Year	Award granted to an employee who has clearly excelled in actively and effectively furthering equal employment opportunity within NIH. Employees who have received EEO Special Achievement Awards during the preceding calendar year will automatically be considered for this award.

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AWARDS ADMINISTERED BY THE COMMISSIONED CORPS	
Distinguished Service Medal	Award recognizes an exceedingly high level of achievement. It is the highest award given a commissioned officer who has demonstrated a genuine sense of public service by making exceptional contributions to the mission of the PHS. Achievements to be recognized may range from extraordinary management of a major health program to a heroic act.
Meritorious Service Medal	Award recognizes a single important achievement or career of notable accomplishments. It is the second highest award a Commissioned Officer may receive. Granted for a highly significant achievement in research, program direction, or program administration; a series of significant contributions; a continuing period of meritorious service; or exhibition of great courage in hazardous work or an emergency.
Outstanding Service Medal	Award for continuous outstanding leadership presented to officers who have either demonstrated outstanding continuous leadership in carrying out the mission of the PHS or have performed a single accomplishment that has had a major effect on the health of the nation. It may also be granted for the performance of a heroic act resulting in the preservation of health or property.
Outstanding Unit Citation	Award for superior service toward achieving the goals and objectives of the PHS. It recognizes the performance of exceptional service of national or international significance and is usually granted for specific actions over a relatively short period of time.

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COMMISSIONED CORPS AWARDS PRESENTED AT THE IC LEVEL	
PHS CITATION	Award for special contributions towards the attainment of program objectives, sustained above average performance of duty, or high quality performance of duty over a relative short period of time.
PHS ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL	Award for noteworthy contributions towards the attainment of program objectives, or sustained above-average performance over a relatively short period of time, such as a short tour of duty (120 days or less).
PHS COMMENDATION MEDAL	Award to an officer who has demonstrated a level of proficiency and dedication distinctly greater than that expected of an average commissioned officer. The CM recognizes sustained high quality work performance in scientific, administrative, or other professional fields; application of unique skill or creative imagination to the approach or solution of problems; or noteworthy technical and professional contributions that are significant to a limited area.
PHS UNIT COMMENDATION	Award to acknowledge outstanding accomplishment by a designated organizational unit within PHS. The award is made to commissioned officers who have demonstrated a significant level of performance well above that normally expected, but at a somewhat lesser level than is required for the OUC.
COMMISSIONED CORPS' AWARDS NOMINATION FORMS	http://hr.od.nih.gov/corps/Awards/COSUBMIT.HTM