

**Functional Series 400 – Personnel
ADS Chapter 491 – USAID Awards Program**

*This is a new chapter.

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ADS Chapter 491 – USAID Awards Program

491.1 OVERVIEW

Effective Date: 04/11/2002

This chapter establishes the policy directives, required procedures, and guidelines for the Agency's Awards Program. This program provides a means of recognizing and rewarding individuals and groups for contributions to the accomplishment of USAID's mission, goals, and objectives. Specific incentive awards under the Agency's Awards Program are found in the Mandatory Reference, [Descriptions of Incentive Awards](#). This reference contains a listing of individual awards with detailed information about their purpose, eligibility, approval steps, and type of recognition.

For policy directives and required procedures on performance cash awards based on an employee's rating of record, see the following ADS chapters.

- For Civil Service and Foreign Service employees, see [ADS 462](#), Employee Evaluation Program.
- For Foreign Service National (FSN) direct hires and personal services contractors, see [ADS 495](#), Foreign Service National Personnel Administration, and [3 FAM 7610](#), Performance Evaluation.
- For Senior Executive Service employees, see [ADS 423](#), Personnel Operations: Senior Executive Service.
- For Senior Foreign Service employees, see [ADS 422](#), Personnel Operations: Senior Foreign Service.

For policies and procedures on quality/meritorious step increases, see [ADS 470](#), Pay under the Foreign Service, and [ADS 471](#), Pay under the General Schedule. For FSN direct hires and Personal Service Contractors (PSCs), see [ADS 495](#), [3 FAM 7585](#) and [AIDAR, Appendix J, Section 4c\(3\)](#).

For joint USAID/State awards policies, see [3 FAM 4800](#). Where differences exist with the Department of State between 3 FAM 4800 and Agency-specific procedures and requirements contained herein, this chapter has precedence.

491.2 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Effective Date: 04/11/2002

- a. The Administrator (A/AID), or designee, is responsible for the overall direction of the USAID Awards Program and approval of new Agency-wide incentive awards.
- b. The Assistant Administrator for Management (AA/M) has management oversight and support responsibilities for the USAID Special Awards Committee (SAC) and the USAID Awards Program.

c. The Director, Office of Human Resources (M/HR), has responsibility for development of policy and implementation of the USAID Awards Program. The Director, M/HR also recommends to the Administrator the designation of the Chairperson and members of the Special Awards Committee or their reappointment upon completion of their two-year terms. In addition, the Director, M/HR, designates an M/HR staff member to carry out the responsibilities of the Agency Awards Coordinator.

d. The Director, Office of Equal Opportunity Programs (D/EOP), has responsibility for reviewing Special Awards Committee membership and designating EOP staff to serve on the committee. The D/EOP will also review [award](#) nominations for diversity.

e. The USAID Special Awards Committee is responsible for

(1) Working with the AA/M and Director, M/HR, to provide central direction for the Agency's Awards Program, recommending policies for administration of the program, and evaluating the effectiveness of the Program.

(2) Acting on behalf of the Administrator, reviewing all Agency-wide awards including honor awards and annual awards as well as [external awards](#) to ensure that awards are granted equitably and on the basis of merit. It is also responsible for recommending selected nominees for the approval of the Administrator. In undertaking its review of award nominations, the Committee is also responsible for requesting further justification for an award, as needed, disapproving an award nomination, or recommending a more appropriate form of recognition.

(3) Maintaining the confidentiality of all deliberations.

f. The Bureau for Management, Office of Human Resources (M/HR), Agency Awards Coordinator is responsible for providing staff support for the USAID Awards Program and the Special Awards Committee including:

(1) Acting as liaison with staff designated as Awards Coordinators for their Bureaus, independent Offices, and Missions and advising them of the status of award nominations;

(2) Processing all awards that require approval by the Special Awards Committee, which includes maintaining records on awards that are forwarded to the USAID Special Awards Committee, obtaining necessary clearances before nominees are considered by the SAC (see [491.3.4](#)) and ordering certificates, pins, etc., as a result of approved nominations;

(3) Collecting data on awards and submitting information and reports to EOP, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and other offices, as necessary;

(4) Forwarding copies of approved nominations to the Bureau/Office concerned and to the M/HR Records Center for filing in the performance folder of Civil Service employees and the evaluation file of Foreign Service employees;

(5) Processing awards that do not require action by the USAID Special Awards Committee and preparing length of service letters, ordering certificates and/or pins for employees upon completion of 30, 35, 40, and 50 years of Federal service; and

(6) Coordinating the [annual Agency awards](#) ceremony.

g. Bureau/Independent Office Awards Coordinators are responsible for reviewing all Bureau or Office-level award nominations for completeness, coordinating their review by the Bureau/Independent Awards Committee and submitting approved nominations to M/HR for further processing and/or review by the Special Awards Committee, if required. In addition, Awards Coordinators are responsible for preparing length of service letters and ordering certificates for employees in their Bureaus/Offices upon completion of 10, 20, and 25 years of service.

h. Executive Officers are responsible for informing supervisors and employees of USAID Missions about the USAID Awards Program and coordinating award nominations for employees recommended at post.

i. Supervisors are responsible for

(1) Recommending the type of recognition that most appropriately reflects the value of the contribution of the employee or group to the organization;

(2) Considering the input of coworkers, customers, and other sources such as working groups or team members when making recognition decisions;

(3) Ensuring the prompt recognition of contributions by submitting award nominations in a timely manner to the Executive Officer or the Bureau/Independent Office Awards Coordinator within the required timeframes;

(4) Arranging for an appropriate presentation of the recognition to the recipient employee or group of employees; and

(5) Emphasizing the importance of teamwork through recognition of groups.

j. The Bureau or Independent Office Awards Committee is responsible for

(1) Serving in an advisory capacity to the Bureau Assistant Administrator (AA) or Independent Office Head, and with the endorsement of the AA or Office Head, referring appropriate award recommendations to M/HR for review by the USAID Special Awards Committee;

(2) Reviewing all Bureau or Office-level award nominations and making recommendations to the Bureau AA or Independent Office Head regarding which form of recognition is most appropriate; and

(3) Working with supervisors in their Offices and Bureaus to ensure that employees who have made significant contributions to the Agency are nominated for an appropriate award.

k. [Joint Country Awards Committees \(JCAC\)](#), consisting of representatives from all agencies, are responsible for administering the awards program on a post-wide basis.

l. The Offices of Security (SEC) and Inspector General (IG) are responsible for clearing award nominations for U.S. direct hires (USDHs) and U.S. Personal Service Contractors (USPSCs).

491.3 POLICY DIRECTIVES AND REQUIRED PROCEDURES

Effective Date: 04/11/2002

491.3.1 Eligibility

Effective Date: 04/11/2002

U.S. direct hire (USDH) staff including General Schedule (GS), Foreign Service (FS), Senior Foreign Service (SFS), Senior Executive Service (SES), Foreign Service National direct hires including Cooperating Country Nationals (CCN) and Third Country National (TCN) Direct Hires and Resident Hires are eligible to participate in the USAID Awards Program, unless otherwise excluded by eligibility criteria specified for the individual award.

Schedule C, Administratively Determined (AD), and non-career SES employees are eligible for individual and group [non-monetary awards](#). Eligibility for monetary awards will be determined in conjunction with guidance issued by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

U.S. Personal Services Contractors (USPSCs) are eligible for individual and group non-monetary awards in accordance with [Appendix D of the USAID Acquisition Regulation \(AIDAR\)](#).

Direct hires assigned to USAID under a Participating Agency Service Agreement (PASA) or a Resources Support Services Agreement (RSSA), who serve as Technical Advisors in AIDS and Child Survival (TAACs) or detailed-in to the Agency are eligible to receive individual and group non-monetary awards and external awards. Fellows and individuals in the above categories who are not Government employees are eligible to receive group non-monetary awards and certificates of appreciation.

Cooperating Country National (CCN) and Third Country National (TCN) Personal Services Contractors are eligible to participate under a separate interagency Incentive

Awards Program in accordance with 3 FAM 7000, Foreign Service National Personnel (see Mandatory References [3 FAM 7620](#), Incentive Awards, and [AIDAR, Appendix J Section 4c\(3\)](#)). CCN and TCN PSC awards are administered jointly with the CCN and TCN direct hire awards. CCN and TCN direct hires and PSCs are eligible for Agency [honor awards](#) and annual Agency awards as specified by the eligibility criteria for the individual award. On-the-spot and time-off awards are both administered locally with funding for on-the-spot awards determined by the Mission.

Individuals assigned to USAID under Intergovernmental Personnel Agreements (IPAs) are eligible to receive individual and group non-monetary awards. Only those employees appointed to USAID while on leave without pay (LWOP) from the participating organization are eligible to receive monetary awards and time-off awards.

Former employees and the estates of deceased employees are eligible for awards provided the contributions on which the awards are based were made while employed with the Agency or the U.S. Government.

Institutional contractors and private citizens who contributed to the mission of the Agency may receive a certificate of appreciation.

491.3.2 Objective

Effective Date: 04/11/2002

- a. The USAID Awards Program recognizes and rewards employees, individually or as a member of a group, for
 - (1) Performance clearly above that normally expected;
 - (2) Innovations, suggestions, or other personal or group efforts that contribute to the efficiency, economy, or other improvements of Government operations; and
 - (3) Special acts or services related to their official employment.
- b. Acknowledgment of an individual employee or group contribution may be in the form of an honor, informal recognition, time off, or [cash award](#).
- c. Honor awards may not include cash awards. However, if a cash award is warranted, a separate nomination may be prepared and submitted through appropriate channels; that is, a special act award.
- d. All cash awards granted to USAID employees are considered income by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and subject to withholding and other payroll taxes.

491.3.3 Multiple Nominations for Awards in Same Rating Cycle

Effective Date: 04/11/2002

An employee may be nominated for more than one award (including a combination of incentive awards and a performance award based on an employee's rating of record) during the same rating cycle. Each award nomination will be reviewed on its own merit, and decisions to approve it will be based on whether the employee's performance meets the criteria of that particular award. However, nominating and approving offices are responsible for ensuring that employees do not receive multiple awards for the same act or service.

491.3.4 Clearance

Effective Date: 04/11/2002

The Office of Security (SEC), Office of Inspector General (IG) and Office of Equal Opportunity Programs (EOP) must clear award nominations for USDHs and USPSCs, with the exception of on-the-spot and time-off awards. M/HR is responsible for obtaining the required clearances.

If a nominee is the subject of an investigation or an adverse action, no processing will be taken on the award nomination pending the resolution of the investigation or appeal. If it is determined that there is no justification for the charges or the appeal results in the disciplinary action being dropped, the nomination will be processed in the usual manner.

Security clearances of award nominations for CCN and TCN direct hires and PSCs are handled locally.

491.3.5 Justification

Effective Date: 04/11/2002

A written narrative justification, separate from the employee's performance rating, is required to support all award nominations.

All written justifications must be prepared on [Form JF-66, Nomination for Award](#), unless otherwise noted.

491.3.6 Approval

Effective Date: 04/11/2002

All awards, except time-off awards of one day or less, require approval at a level higher than the first line supervisor.

491.3.7 Awards Cycle
Effective Date: 04/11/2002

The Agency's awards cycle is operated and funded on a fiscal year basis. Nominations for honor and annual Agency awards requiring action by the Special Awards Committee must be forwarded through appropriate channels to M/HR within required time frames.

Normally, by April 1 of the current year's awards cycle, M/HR will issue a General Notice with a call for award nominations with a time frame for submission specified in the notice, usually in July of each year. After the Committee completes its review of the award nominations and forwards its recommendations to A/AID for final decision, the awards will be presented to individual and group recipients at the annual Agency awards ceremony.

For awards presented overseas, the awards cycle will be determined by the Mission in coordination with the Embassy.

Timeframes for submission of nominations for external awards vary and will be publicized in individual Agency Notices regarding these awards.

491.3.8 New Awards
Effective Date: 04/11/2002

Requests to establish new Agency-wide awards must be forwarded to M/HR and the Special Awards Committee for review. New Agency awards and significant revisions to existing awards require approval by the Assistant Administrator for Management (AA/M) and the Administrator.

491.3.9 Agency Awards Ceremony
Effective Date: 04/11/2002

An awards ceremony will be held each year, normally in the fall, to present annual Agency awards, honor awards, and external awards conferred to award recipients.

491.3.10 Records and Reporting Requirements
Effective Date: 04/11/2002

M/HR is required to maintain records by fiscal year on awards that are the responsibility of the USAID Special Awards Committee and must comply with U.S. Office of Personnel Management annual reporting requirements.

The Agency will retain all documents relating to awards in accordance with the disposition instructions contained in ADS 502. (See Internal Mandatory Reference ADS 502, [USAID/W Disposition Schedule](#) for Personnel Records.) Documents related to an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint of discrimination will be retained for four years after resolution of the complaint.

Copies of all approved nominations for awards will be placed in the performance folder of Civil Service employees and in the evaluation files of Foreign Service employees.

491.3.11 Funding of Awards

Effective Date: 04/11/2002

All awards for USDH employees, with the exception of those awards discussed below, are centrally budgeted from the appropriation used to fund the salaries of USDH employees. Payment of cash awards is subject to available funding. The Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination, Office of Budget, Support Budget Division (PPC/B/SB) will determine appropriate funding levels for cash awards on a fiscal year basis.

[Joint State/USAID awards](#) are funded by the Department of State. Awards for CCN and TCN direct hires and PSCs are normally funded by the Missions. Private endowment awards and external awards have their own specific funding sources.

491.3.12 Composition of USAID Special Awards Committee (SAC)

Effective Date: 04/11/2002

The USAID Special Awards Committee consists of a chairperson and no fewer than eight members appointed by the Administrator. The regional Bureaus will each have one member. The remaining members will be drawn from other Bureaus and Offices so that the Committee reflects the workforce profile of the Agency. The Director, EOP, will designate a staff member to serve on the SAC as a voting member.

491.3.13 Term of USAID Special Awards Committee Membership

Effective Date: 04/11/2002

The Chairperson and the Committee members serve a two-year term. Appointment to the Committee is an official assignment for the Chairperson and the Committee members. Upon completion of a two-year term, M/HR will place a letter reflecting this additional assignment in the Official Personnel Folder of the individuals concerned.

491.3.14 Appeals

Effective Date: 04/11/2002

Award decisions may not be appealed. The granting or failure to grant an employee an award is not grievable.

An EEO complaint of discrimination may be filed regarding award decisions (see [ADS 110.3.1](#)).

491.3.15 Award Restrictions

Effective Date: 04/11/2002

By law, ([5 U.S.C. 4508](#)), the Agency may not grant any monetary or **time-off awards** during a Presidential election to Senior Executive Service (SES) employees who are not career appointees (that is, non-career or limited appointees) or employees in a confidential or policy-determining Schedule C position.

The statute defines a presidential election period as beginning on June 1 in a calendar year in which the popular election of the President occurs and ending on January 20 following the date of the presidential election.

491.3.15.1 Political Appointees

Effective Date: 04/11/2002

By law ([5 U.S.C. 4509](#)), the Agency may not grant cash awards to employees appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate who are paid under or with reference to the Executive Schedule (EX).

491.4 MANDATORY REFERENCES

Effective Date: 04/11/2002

491.4.1 External Mandatory References

Effective Date: 04/11/2002

- a. [5 CFR 451, Awards](#)
- b. [3 FAM 4800, Department Awards Program](#)
- c. [3 FAM 7620, Incentive Awards](#)
- d. [Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended](#)
- e. [Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended](#)
- f. [5 U.S.C. 4501-4513, Incentive Awards](#)

491.4.2 Internal Mandatory References

Effective Date: 04/11/2002

- a. [ADS 110, Equal Employment Opportunity](#)
- b. [AID Form 456-1, On-the-Spot Cash Award Program](#)
- c. [AID Form 400-11, Time-off Award Nomination Form](#)
- d. AID Form 450-3, Suggestion Form (to be revised)

- e. [Descriptions of Incentive Awards](#)
- f. [JF-66, Nomination for Award](#)
- g. Matrix, USAID Awards Program (to be issued separately)
- h. [Scale of Recommended Award Amounts Based on Intangible Benefits](#)
- i. [USAID Acquisition Regulations \(AIDAR\), Appendix D and Appendix J](#)
- j. [USAID/W Disposition Schedule](#)

491.5 ADDITIONAL HELP
Effective Date: 04/11/2002

491.6 DEFINITIONS
Effective Date: 04/11/2002

The terms and definitions listed below have been incorporated into the ADS Glossary. See the [ADS Glossary](#) for all ADS terms and definitions.

award

Something bestowed or an action taken to recognize and reward individual or group achievement that contributes to meeting organizational goals or improving the efficiency, effectiveness, and economy of the Government or is otherwise in the public interest. Such awards include, but are not limited to, employee incentives that are based on predetermined criteria such as productivity standards, performance goals, measurement systems, award formulas, or payout schedules. (Chapter 491)

annual Agency awards

These awards are given out annually to an employee or group for outstanding performance in a particular area based on criteria specified for an individual award. Annual awards include the Michael H.B. Adler Award, C. Herbert Rees Memorial Award, Michael K. White Memorial Award, Outstanding Support Staff Award, Foreign Service National of the Year Award, Equal Employment Opportunity Award, Science and Technology Award, Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) "Extra Mile" Award, Molly Kux Award, George C. Marshall Award, USAID Award for Heroism, Administrator's Implementation Award, Administrator's Management Improvement Award, and the Ethics Award. (Chapter 491)

cash award

Individuals or groups may receive a monetary award granted for specific commendable acts or contributions in the course of Government service. Cash awards include Special Act and On-the-Spot Awards. (Chapter 491)

external awards

Awards presented to Federal employees by non-governmental groups. (Chapter 491)

honor awards

These awards bestow high honor and official recognition to an individual or group for exceptional contributions to the Agency's mission. Honor awards include Distinguished Honor Awards, Superior Honor Awards, Meritorious Honor Awards, Administrator's Distinguished Career Service Awards, and Outstanding Career Achievement Awards. (Chapter 491)

informal recognition awards

These awards are items of extremely nominal value granted as an immediate, informal recognition of employee accomplishment. (Chapter 491)

intangible benefits

Benefits to the Government that cannot be measured in terms of dollar savings. (Chapter 491)

Joint Country Awards Committee (JCAC)

This Committee is an advisory group established by the chief of Mission to review nominations for awards for the staff of the agencies under that official's jurisdiction. The Committee will normally include members from all of the agencies represented at post. (Chapter 491)

joint State/USAID awards

These jointly administered awards are open to employees of the Department of State and USAID and are awarded by the Secretary of State. These awards may or may not contain a monetary component. Joint State/USAID awards are the Secretary's Award, the Award for Heroism, the Luther I. Replogle Award for Management Improvement, and the Herbert Salzman Award for Excellence in International Economic Performance. (Chapter 491)

non-monetary award

Non-monetary awards include medals, certificates, plaques, citations, badges, or other similar items that have an award or honor connotation. (Chapter 491)

special act or service

A contribution or accomplishment in the public interest that is

- A non-recurring contribution either within or outside of job responsibilities;
- A scientific achievement; or
- An act of heroism. (Chapter 491)

tangible benefits

Benefits or savings to the Government that can be measured in terms of dollars.
(Chapter 491)

time-off award

Time off from duty, without loss of pay or charge to leave, to encourage and reward superior accomplishments or other personal efforts that contribute to the quality, efficiency, or economy of Government operations. (Chapter 491)

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