



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Secretary of Commerce
Washington, D.C. 20230

April 2 , 2024

MEMORANDUM FOR: Secretarial Officers
Heads of Operating Units

FROM: The Secretary *Gina Raimondo*

SUBJECT: Gold and Silver Medal Recognition

It is my pleasure to invite you to nominate Department of Commerce employees for the 76th Annual Honor Awards Program.

Employees may be nominated, individually or in groups, in the following categories: Leadership, Personal and Professional Excellence, Scientific/Engineering Achievement, Organizational Development, Customer Service, Administrative/Technical Support, and Heroism. These categories reflect my belief there are many types of contributions by the hardworking men and women of this Department that deserve recognition.

The Honor Awards, in the form of Gold and Silver Medals, constitute the highest and second highest levels of recognition granted for distinguished and exceptional performance within the Department. Although no monetary reward is associated with this recognition, these awards are regarded by Department employees as the ultimate recognition for their contributions. I urge you to consider all types and levels of employee accomplishments within your organizational unit to ensure that only the best are forwarded for consideration. Nominations for group accomplishments may include members from other organizational units.

Your servicing human resources office will provide instructions on requirements for submitting nominations. The criteria are attached. Nominations are due to the Department using the Honor Awards Nomination System by May 31, 2024. Should you have any questions, please contact David Logan, Departmental Incentive Awards Officer, at dlogan@doc.gov.

The Department appreciates the hard work and great contributions that were recognized in the past, and I look forward to a very successful awards program that rewards outstanding performance across the full breadth of the Department during this period.

Attachment

HONOR AWARDS PROGRAM

CRITERIA

GOLD MEDAL

The highest honorary award granted by the Secretary. A Gold Medal is defined as distinguished performance characterized by extraordinary, notable, or prestigious contributions that impact the mission of the Department and/or one operating unit and that reflect favorably on the Department. To warrant a Gold Medal, a contribution must focus on qualitative and quantitative performance measures reflected in the Department's Strategic Plan and be identified in one of the following areas: leadership, personal and professional excellence, scientific/engineering achievement, organizational development, customer service, administrative/technical support, or heroism.

SILVER MEDAL

The second highest honorary award granted by the Secretary. A Silver Medal is defined as exceptional performance characterized by noteworthy or superlative contributions that have a direct and lasting impact within the Department. To warrant a Silver Medal, a contribution must focus on qualitative and quantitative performance measures reflected in the Department's Strategic Plan and be identified in one of the following areas: leadership, personal and professional excellence, scientific/engineering achievement, organizational development, customer service, administrative/technical support, or heroism.

Leadership

Recognizes personal leadership and management of an organization that produces substantial, innovative achievements resulting in high-quality service to the agency.

In addition, this area recognizes:

- creativity and innovation
- external awareness
- flexibility
- resilience
- motivation
- strategic thinking
- vision

Achievements may include, *but are not limited to*:

- significant improvements in program effectiveness
- efficient use of resources
- sensitive and difficult assignments of major importance achieved through great personal initiative, commitment, effort, and competence
- improvement in labor-management relations
- leadership that encourages employee freedom to make decisions and to maximize the scope for individual initiative within a given job
- acumen in developing breakthrough strategies or concepts in finding new and effective ways of accomplishing the agency's mission
- leadership in the productive use of teams that cross organizational and agency boundaries
- leadership that models and rewards behaviors conducive to the effective management of diversity

Personal and Professional Excellence

Recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in furthering the agency's mission.

Achievements are to be derived from all occupations and functional areas of the Department, including, *but are not limited to*:

- administration
- information technology
- labor-management relations
- legal
- trade

Scientific/Engineering Achievement

Recognizes scientific/engineering or technological breakthroughs that:

- resolve long-standing problems
- radically advance the state-of-the-art
- significantly impact Commerce or the economy
- significantly advance the understanding, knowledge, or mastery of a given discipline

Achievements may include, *but are not limited to*:

- authorship or editorship that affect the primary principles of the discipline involved
- opening up new fields of inquiry
- redefining major issues of investigation
- contributions to the body of knowledge in a given field

Organizational Development

Recognizes those whose accomplishments contribute to creating an organizational culture that is constantly learning and growing -- one that maximizes employee potential and fosters high ethical standards.

Achievements may include, *but are not limited to*:

- designing and implementing successful organization-wide programs that facilitate meeting management/supervisory responsibilities for mentoring and coaching
- being widely recognized as an individual whose capabilities and relationships have had a direct and positive impact on the career development of a significant number of others
- creating an environment in which teamwork thrives, one that reflects knowledge sharing, trust, pride, commitment, self-direction, and group identity, and one in which teams have produced extraordinary results

Customer Service

Recognizes those who provide or foster a culture that nurtures world-class customer service. Achievements in customer service may include, *but are not limited to*:

- activities related to establishing measurements and standards for improving service
- implementing and continuously assessing performance against standards for improvements

Accomplishments are expressed in measurable terms, such as:

- cycle time
- cost reduction
- increased courtesy
- quality to customers

Administrative/Technical Support

Recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in providing administrative and technical support.

Achievements reflect dedication and hard work that enable or assist the work of fellow employees and may include, *but are not limited to*:

- advancing the goals of the team, office, division, operating unit, or Department through outstanding performance
- creative or innovative problem-solving
- developing new systems, methods, or procedures

Heroism

Recognizes a special one-time service or act of heroism by an employee or group of employees that is in the public interest or connected with or related to official employment. Heroism is defined as exhibiting courage, daring, and self-sacrifice.

Achievements may include, *but are not limited to*:

- voluntarily risking one's own life, knowingly, while saving or attempting to save the life of another person
- displaying extraordinary skill or resourcefulness in assisting law enforcement officers, firefighters, or search and rescue professionals in saving or attempting to save the life of another person
- demonstrating courage in risking one's own life to protect or preserve government or private property

76th Annual Honor Awards Program

Submission Requirements

The Secretary recently invited Secretarial Officers and Heads of Operating Units to nominate employees for Gold and Silver Medals. This paper outlines the submission requirements and the due date for this year's Honor Awards nominations using the Honor Awards Nomination System (HANS).

HANS is a secure web-based system used for entering, editing, approving, and transmitting nominations. The system operates from the menu-driven HANS Main Menu. The Bureau Incentive Awards Officers have been designated as HANS Bureau Administrators. In that role, they are responsible for granting HANS access to nominators and the approving officials (restricted to the Secretarial Officers and Heads of the Operating Units).

Training has previously been conducted for the HANS Bureau Administrators; however, additional assistance is available through David Logan, and [online](#).

All nominations must adhere to the following program requirements in HANS:

- The summary (previously certificate) citation (*maximum of 150 characters*) for each nomination must begin with the word “*For*” followed by a statement, which summarizes the accomplishment. (Example – For developing a technique to estimate current and historic rates of natural gas flaring through an effective use of satellite imagery data.)
- The program booklet citation (*minimum of 450, maximum of 600 characters*) for each nomination must adhere to the following format: Individual nominations (*Mr. Smith is recognized for...*); Group nominations (*The group is recognized for...*); Organizational nominations (*The organization is recognized for...*). In lieu of “*recognized for,*” the following may also be used, “*honored for*” or “*cited for.*” The program booklet must begin with one of the above introductory phrases, which clearly states what is being recognized, followed by details on the nominee's work, and must conclude with a sentence on the impact or importance of the accomplishment.
- Ratings of record are deemed to be PII and may not be associated with an individual nominee. As such, we have included a check box on the Nominee Information section of HANS that requires each nominator to certify that nominee(s) have a current rating of record of Level 3 or higher; Eligible (CAPS or APMS); or Meets or Exceeds Expectations (Two-Level).
- There are limits on the number of nominations that may be submitted by each bureau. Combined with the question addressing how the accomplishment exceeds the performance expectations of the individual(s) or the organization(s), the Department's goal is to encourage bureaus to submit higher quality nominations rather than simply submitting higher numbers of nominations.

In addition to the requirement to use HANS to enter, approve, and transmit nominations, bureaus must submit one hard copy of the following:

- A memorandum from the Secretarial Officer or Head of the Operating Unit transmitting a list of the Gold and Silver Medal nominations, which must include statements:
 - that no nominated employees are delinquent in filing a financial disclosure report; and
 - that the nominating bureau received approval to include nominees from other bureaus in their nominations (also known as Crossover Nominations).
- Summary Citations; and
- Program Booklet citations.

The following limitations apply to all nominations. No exceptions will be granted to these limitations:

- Groups are limited to 10 members. Nominations with more than 10 group members must be submitted as an organizational award.
- Joint organizational awards are limited to three organizational units.
- An employee can only be nominated for one individual award and may be nominated for more than one group award.
- Only Department of Commerce employees may be nominated (contractors, private citizens, and employees of other Federal agencies are not eligible).
- Employees who are delinquent in filing a financial disclosure report are not eligible to be nominated.
- The leader of a group cannot be singled out for an individual nomination while the remainder of the group is submitted as a group nomination; and
- Only an employee with a Level 3 or higher (or equivalent) rating is eligible to be nominated.
- The period of eligibility is April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024.

The nominations must be approved and transmitted by the appropriate Secretarial Officer or Head of the Operating Unit using HANS and the hard copies mentioned above forwarded to the Department's Incentive Awards Officer no later than May 31, 2024. Please note, late nominations will not be accepted.

The Department conducts a certification process for all nominations prior to submission to the Department's Incentive Awards Board. This review process is intended to ensure that all nominations are complete and adhere to program and formatting requirements.

The Department's Incentive Awards Officer will conduct the review from June to July 2024. Bureaus must make the necessary corrections before their nominations will be forwarded to the Board.

Prior to submission, please verify that there is no adverse information on the nominees that would negatively impact the nominations. Because these awards are so prestigious, we will

consult appropriate organizations to ensure that there is no adverse information on the individual nominees.

All nominations must be transmitted to the Office of Human Resources Management by the response date of May 31, 2024. In an effort to ensure the integrity of the Honor Awards nomination, review, and approval process, we will deactivate HANS on June 1, 2024.

Please feel free to contact David Logan, (202) 482-3795, or via email, DLogan@doc.gov if you have any questions.

Department of Commerce

History of the Honor Awards Program

Every year since 1949, the Department has honored its best employees with Honor Awards: Gold and Silver Medals. They are the most prestigious awards the Department gives its employees.

To warrant a Gold or Silver Medal, a contribution must focus on qualitative and quantitative performance measures reflected in the Department's Strategic Plan and be identified in one of the following seven categories: Leadership, Personal and Professional Excellence, Scientific/Engineering Achievement, Organizational Development, Customer Service, Administrative/Technical Support, and Heroism.

Each year, the Secretary issues a memorandum to the Secretarial Officers and Heads of Operating Units requesting nominations for Gold and Silver Medals. Individuals, groups, or organizations are eligible. All nominees are cleared by the Office of Security, Office of Inspector General, Office of the General Counsel, Office of Human Resources Management, and Office of Civil Rights prior to submitting nominations. The bureaus prepare and submit their nominations to the Office of Human Resources Management on the secure Web-based Honor Awards Nomination System (HANS). There is a limit on the number of nominations submitted by each bureau.

In May and June, the award nominations are reviewed by the Department's Incentive Awards Board, which is composed of senior career and political staff (e.g., Deputy Under Secretary level) representing the bureaus. Each Board member independently reviews the nominations based on the established criteria. Their votes are anonymously recorded in HANS, which aggregates the scores to produce a list of recommended recipients. On average, 40 Gold and 30 Silver Medal recommendations are made each year. Once voting is completed, the Board's recommendations are forwarded to the Secretary for approval.

The Secretary presents the medals at an annual formal ceremony. The Secretarial Officers and Heads of Operating Units assist the Secretary in presenting the awards to each recipient. Historically, the Secretary has hosted a reception following the ceremony.