



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, D.C. 20240

JUL 26 2002

PERSONNEL BULLETIN NO. 02- 11 (451)

Subject: Non-monetary Recognition

Non-monetary recognition awards are granted to employees to recognize their contributions to the Department of the Interior (DOI). These contributions may include superior accomplishment of regularly assigned duties; exceptional achievements of project goals; noteworthy accomplishments over a sustained period; or specific contributions to the organization's mission.

Approving officials should exercise care in selecting an appropriate item for non-monetary recognition to avoid potential appearance of misuse of Government funds. The approving official should consider whether public disclosure of the item would cause embarrassment to the Department. If there is some level of discomfort or concern, a cash award could be an alternative.

The recognition method selected should be based on the employee's effort expended, the behavior exemplified or the results achieved. Supervisors can tailor recognition of their employees based on the personal interests of the individual. Supervisors gain insight into the values of their employees and their personal interests, hobbies, or activities. Supervisors may ask an employee how he/she would like to be rewarded.

Who can receive a non-monetary award?

Employees of the Department of the Interior and other Federal agencies.

Who cannot receive a non-monetary award?

Private-sector organizations and their employees, customers, volunteers, private citizens, etc., whose contributions directly or indirectly support the mission of the DOI are not permitted to receive awards under Chapter 45 of title 5, United States Code.

Also, contract employees are not permitted to receive awards under Chapter 45 of title 5, United States Code. It is anticipated that contractors will be used by Federal agencies on an on-going basis in the future. Bureaus/equivalent offices are encouraged to consider providing written provisions in contracts whereby a contract employee may receive recognition.

However, your bureau and equivalent office's budget and procurement offices can provide additional information on a budget authority to use to recognize individuals other than employees. For example, some bureaus can use the Department's Appropriations Act of 1992, (Sec. 115 of H.R. 2686, Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1992), for the authority,

that states: “Notwithstanding any other provision of law, in fiscal year 1992 and thereafter, any appropriations or funds available to the Department of the Interior in this Act may be used to provide nonmonetary awards of nominal value to private individuals and organizations that make contributions to Department of the Interior programs.”

What are the criteria and dollar amount for a non-monetary award of nominal value?

The item must take an appropriate form to be used in the public sector to be purchased with public funds. Where appropriate, a non-monetary award item should contain the bureau or Departmental name, logo, award title, and/or mission.

The threshold for non-monetary recognition of nominal value in the Department of the Interior is \$50 cash value. The Department may increase this amount in succeeding years based on the inflation rate.

What types of nominal non-monetary recognition items may be granted?

Nominal value items can be gift certificates, tickets to events, balloons, lapel pins, coffee cups, key chains, pens, paperweights, pen and pencil sets, clocks, plaques, jackets, caps, T-shirts, watches, fruit baskets, or other appropriate items.

Can a non-monetary recognition item exceed a nominal cash value?

Yes, but the cost of any non-monetary item in excess of the nominal value must be included in the employee's gross wages and would be taxable.

If a non-monetary award item will exceed nominal value, it is suggested that the employee be advised that the award would be taxable and concur in the decision.

What is the criteria for a non-monetary item that exceeds a nominal value?

The item must be something that the recipient could reasonably be expected to value, but not something that conveys a sense of monetary value.

The item must have a lasting trophy value. An employee can show the item to coworkers and friends as a “trophy” given in appreciation of good work.

The item must clearly symbolize the employer-employee relationship in some fashion.

The item must take an appropriate form to be used in the public sector and be purchased with public funds.

What types of recognition items may be granted if the item exceeds a nominal cash value?

Items can be plaques, pen and pencil sets, clocks, desk organizers, jackets, watches, briefcases, or other appropriate items.

Where appropriate, a non-monetary award item should contain the bureau or Department's name, logo, award title, and/or mission.

Can a gift certificate exceed nominal value?

No, gift certificates may be used only as informal recognition awards, and cannot exceed nominal value.

Because a gift certificate conveys a clear monetary value and does not have a lasting "trophy" value, it does not meet the honorary awards criteria. Also, a gift certificate does not symbolize the employer-employee relationship.

Can a savings bond exceed nominal value?

Yes. A U. S. Savings Bond does convey a sense of monetary value; however, because the minimum 6 months holding time period gives it some lasting value, it is considered to show an employer-employee relationship. Therefore, a savings bond may be of nominal value or can exceed the nominal value.

Is there a limit on how many non-monetary awards an employee can receive in a fiscal year?

No. However, supervisors should avoid granting non-monetary awards and presenting award items several items throughout the fiscal year to avoid any possibility of abuse in granting awards, and to prevent creating tax liabilities for the employee (even if the individual awards are under the nominal value).

How are non-monetary award items processed?

A DI-451 Award Certification Form must be submitted only if the non-monetary award exceeds the nominal value.

The specific item should be purchased through normal procurement channels. To effect cost savings and provide for immediate recognition, bureaus and equivalent offices should order supplies of specific award items.

Are there other forms of non-monetary recognition?

Yes, **informal honors** such as certificates, letters of commendation, thank you notes, or other similar items.

In addition, **time-off recognition**, an excused absence awarded to an employee without charge to leave, may be granted. The minimum time-off recognition is one hour; there is no maximum time-off recognition or any time limit for a time-off award. A time-off award must be used while employed in DOI; the time-off award cannot be transferred to another agency upon separation of the employee.

Length of Service (LOS) recognition is awarded at various milestones in an employee's career

Recognition items include certificates and/or pins. Recognition is usually given in 10-year increments. However, bureaus may give recognition in 5-year increments.

Bureaus may develop their own LOS service certificates or order Government-issued certificates through the publication rider process.

Pins for 10, 20, 30, 40 and 50 years of Government service are available for procurement through a Departmental contract. Bureaus may use Government-issued LOS pins if they choose to do so through the GSA procurement process.

What are the authorities for granting non-monetary awards?

5 U. S. C. 4303; 5 U.S.C. 4502(e)

5 CFR 451.102 and 5 CFR 451.104(a)

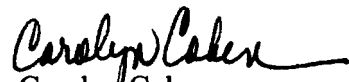
Comptroller General Decisions: B-243025, dated May 2, 1991, and B-256399, dated June 27, 1994.

Who should you call for additional information?

The awards coordinator for your bureau/office equivalent.

The point of contact in the Office of Personnel Policy for awards and recognition is Jackie Johnston, phone (202) 208-0144, fax (202) 219-2184, Mail Stop 5221 MIB.

This policy will be included in the Departmental Manual chapter on Awards and Recognition when revised.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carolyn Cohen", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Carolyn Cohen
Director, Office of Personnel Policy