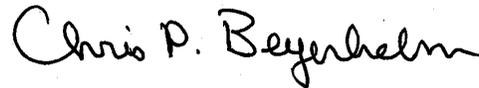


For: FSA Employees

Farm Service Agency (FSA) FY 2016 Performance Awards

Approved by: Associate Administrator for Operations and Management



1 Overview

A Background

A performance management and awards program is critical to the success of any organization. According to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), performance management **must** effectively differentiate between high and low performance, and the awards system **must** reward top performers with meaningful and appropriate recognition. FSA awards policy is documented in the 5-PM Handbook, Performance Management System.

FSA supervisors will be able to recognize FY 2016 employee performance with cash awards, time off awards (TOA's), or a combination cash award/TOA according to 5-PM and as provided in this notice.

Funding for FY 2017 Extra Effort and Spot Awards has not yet been determined because of budgetary constraints under the Continuing Resolution. Once full FY 2017 Agency funding availability is known, a separate notification will be provided to all employees.

B Purpose

This notice allows supervisors to recognize the workforce fairly and equitably for the level of performance being delivered, and provides guidance for:

- FY 2016 (October 1, 2015, to September 30, 2016) performance awards for rating-based awards
- rating-based award cash amounts
- non-rating based awards.

Disposal Date	Distribution
October 1, 2017	All FSA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices

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1 Overview (Continued)

C Labor-Management Obligations

Where exclusive representation exists, bargaining may be requested to the extent allowed by applicable statutes and according to contract language. Negotiation issues raised **must** be resolved before implementation of this notice for employees in that collective bargaining unit.

D Effective Date

Every effort should be made to process FY 2016 awards by pay period (PP) 24 (ending December 10, 2016) for employees with FY 2016 performance ratings.

Note: FY 2016 performance rating **must** be entered in EmpowHR or the Entry, Processing, Inquiry and Correction (EPIC) System before entering the performance cash award.

E Award Justifications

Rating-based awards do not require a separate award justification, provided the justification for the rating of record is thoroughly documented during the appraisal process. A copy of the rating justification must be filed with the award documentation.

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1 Overview (Continued)

F Servicing Personnel Office Contacts for TOA’s, Cash Awards, or Quality Step Increases (QSI’s)

Contact the appropriate servicing personnel office (SPO) according to this table.

Location/Office	SPO Contact
Southwest Area State or County Offices (AZ, CA, CO, HI, KS, NV, NM, OK, TX, UT)	Southwest Area Regional Service Office Human Resources Team by e-mail to HRM.SWARSO@FSA.USDA.GOV.
FSA State or County Office	State Administrative Officer (AO)
FSA National Office Employees HR Contacts	
DACO, KCCO, and DAFP	Dana Candler by 1 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e-mail at dana.candler@kcc.usda.gov, • telephone at 816-926-6117, or • FAX at 816-926-6156.
DAM	Patty Gepford by 1 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e-mail at patricia.gepford@kcc.usda.gov, • telephone at 816-926-6259, or • FAX at 816-926-6156.
ITSD	Ernest Kary by 1 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e-mail at ernest.kary@kcc.usda.gov, • telephone at 816-926-6225, or • FAX at 816-926-6156.
DAFO and OBF	Karen Williams by 1 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e-mail at karen.williams@kcc.usda.gov, • telephone at 816-926-2670, or • FAX at 816-926-6156.
OA, DAFLP, and APFO	Kedra Watts by 1 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e-mail at kedra.watts@wdc.usda.gov, • telephone at 202-401-0678, or • FAX at 202-205-9017.

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2 FY 2016 Rating-Based Awards

A General Information

Rating-based awards are based on employee performance accomplishments over the course of the rating cycle, as documented on the employee's rating of record. See 5-PM for further information.

Rating-based awards do not require a separate award justification, provided the justification for the rating of record is thoroughly documented during the appraisal process. A copy of the rating justification must be filed with the award documentation.

B Types of Rating-Based Awards

Employees may receive **one** of the following types of awards in recognition of their FY 2016 performance rating of record:

- cash award (lump-sum) **only**,
- TOA **only**, or
- combination of cash award and TOA.

It is the employee's choice as to which authorized award they receive. Document the employee's choice by e-mail and on the FSA Awards Calculation Worksheet (Exhibit 1).

Note: See paragraph 3 for the opportunity to offer QSI's instead of awards listed above to select employees with outstanding ratings.

IF the rating is...	THEN the award can be one of the following...
outstanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 percent of the employee's base salary, including locality pay, or• 40 hour TOA, or• .5 percent of the employee's base salary, including locality pay, and 20 hour TOA.
superior	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• .5 percent of the employee's base salary, including locality pay, or• 20 hour TOA, or• 0.25 percent of the employee's base salary, including locality pay, and 10 hour TOA.

Cash award amounts are determined based on the employee's base salary, including locality pay. This includes salary rates because of a temporary promotion that is or was in place for **six months or more** during the FY 2016 performance period.

2 **FY 2016 Rating-Based Awards (Continued)**

B Types of Rating-Based Awards (Continued)

If a temporary promotion is or was for **less than six months**, then use the appropriate rate for the position of record as of September 30, 2016.

Example: An employee was on a temporary promotion for one year that ended on August 23, 2016. Use the salary rate in place as of August 23, 2016, if higher than salary as of September 30, 2016.

Notes: Exceptions to the salary used to calculate the award amount **must** be approved by the appropriate deputy administrator or the Associate Administrator for Operations and Management (AAOM).

C Eligibility

All FSA employees, Federal and non-Federal, rated superior are eligible for a rating-based award. All employees rated outstanding are eligible for QSI consideration. Employees rated fully successful or below are **not** eligible for rating-based awards.

3 **QSI's**

A Overview

QSI's are a faster than normal within grade increase (WGI) used to reward employees at any general schedule (GS) or county (CO) grade level rated outstanding. Receiving a QSI will **not** affect receiving the next WGI, **unless** the employee is in step 3 or step 6 **before** receiving the QSI, in which case receiving a WGI will be pushed back exactly one year. QSI's are earned by employees who have far exceeded job expectations and their performance is expected to continue into the future. A QSI may be granted, instead of the award options listed in subparagraph 2 B, for employees with a rating of record of outstanding.

3 QSI's (Continued)

B Allocation Award Pools

For QSI rating-based award purposes, allocation of QSI's will be divided into award pools. The award pools are as follows:

- Office of the Administrator (immediate Office of the Administrator and staff offices reporting to the Administrator),
- Office of Budget and Finance (OBF),
- Deputy Administrator for Commodity Operations (DACO),
- Deputy Administrator for Farm Loan Programs (DAFLP),
- Deputy Administrator for Field Operations (DAFO), excluding state and county offices,
- Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs (DAFP),
- Deputy Administrator for Management (DAM),
- Information Technology Services Division (ITSD), and
- each State Office.

Note: The U.S. Virgin Islands are included with the Florida award pool.

3 QSI's (Continued)

B Allocation Award Pools (Continued)

Each award pool may give a number of QSI's up to 1 percent of the total number of ratings of record given that year within that award pool. Fractions of 0.5 or greater shall be rounded up; fractions less than 0.5 shall be rounded down.

Example: An award pool gives 210 ratings of record, 1 percent of 210 =2.1; therefore, a maximum of 2 QSI's may be given in this award pool.

For small award pools where this percentage would not allow any QSI's, one QSI per award pool may be given.

All decisions about QSI's will be made by the:

- AAOM for the Office of the Administrator award pool,
- Chief Financial Officer,
- Chief Information Officer,
- deputy administrator for all other associated award pools, and
- State Executive Director (SED) for each State Office award pool.

C Criteria

QSI's are the highest rating-based award that an employee can earn. FSA has established stringent criteria for QSI's to maintain QSI integrity. The following criteria **must** be met to be considered for a QSI:

- the rating of record **must** be outstanding,
- the employee has **not** received a QSI within the last 52 weeks,
- the employee is **not** at step 10 of their grade level,
- the employee demonstrates sustained performance of high quality significantly above expectations and is expected to continue in the future, and
- the employee has held the same grade and type of position, or similar position, in a pay status for at least six months **before** the end of the appraisal cycle.

Note: If an employee is in the process of being promoted within 60 calendar days after the effective date of the QSI, check the next salary level to ensure that the QSI will **not** be lost.

3 QSI's (Continued)

D Employees at Step 10

Employees at step 10 of their grade **cannot** receive a QSI. Employees at step 10 of their grade rated outstanding will receive their award of choice as listed in subparagraph 2 B.

E Effective Date

QSI's will be made effective the first day of the PP after written notification is received in the SPO that the QSI should be processed. Written notification may take place through EmpowHR, by submitting a completed AD-287-2, Recommendation and Approval of Awards, or by using some other form of written communication, such as a spreadsheet or memorandum. The effective date may be delayed up to four PP's when advantageous to the employee. The effective date of the award is the date the award is approved. Generally, the QSI should be made effective as soon as practicable after it is approved, usually at the beginning of the next pay period, and as close as practicable to the rating of record upon which it is based.

Note: Employees may **not** receive both of the following based on a rating of record for the same appraisal period:

- QSI, and
- cash award, TOA, or combination cash award/TOA.

4 Cash Award Only Option

A Overview

When giving a cash award **only**, determining the individual award amounts may be accomplished by using the spreadsheet in Exhibit 1.

B Award Amount Based on Employee Salaries

Issuing awards based on a percentage of the employee's salary:

- provides consistency throughout the program area and/or State,
- shows distinctions based on levels of performance, and
- is based on the employee's annual base pay; that is GS or CO pay, plus locality pay.

Note: See contacts listed in subparagraph 1 F for assistance in determining award amounts.

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4 Cash Award Only Option (Continued)

C Effective Date

Cash performance awards will be made effective the first day of the PP after written notification is received in the SPO. Every effort should be made to submit award requests by PP 24, 2016 to allow for processing and pay out by PP 25, 2016. Written notification may take place through EmpowHR, by submitting a completed AD-287-2, or by using some other form of written communication such as a spreadsheet or a memorandum.

Note: The FY 2016 performance rating **must** be entered in EmpowHR or EPIC before entering the performance cash award.

Important: When entering the cash awards in SPPS or EmpowHR, a line of accounting must be entered. This line of accounting is the 14 digit accounting code that is located in the employee webTA timesheet. It is also located in 98-FI. If this accounting code is not manually entered the award may be rejected and it may slow the issuance of the award. Not only will the accounting code be rejected by NFC but the awards will not be properly reflected in the payroll reports for the respective offices where the awards are issued.

5 TOA's

A Award Preference

FSA recognizes that time off is a valuable tool in rewarding the workforce. TOA's may be preferred by employees instead of cash awards.

B TOA Hour Limitations

TOA's are granted to employees in the form of time off from work without loss of pay or charge to leave. Full-time employees may:

- be granted up to 80 hours of time off during a leave year, and
- not be granted more than 40 hours for a single achievement.

TOA's **must** be scheduled and used within 26 PP's from the effective date of processing. After 26 PP's, unused time off will automatically be forfeited and may **not** be restored or otherwise substituted.

Part-time employees or employees with uncommon tours of duty may be granted up to the average number of hours worked in a PP or the employee's scheduled tour of duty. This figure should be prorated for part-time employees or employees with uncommon tours of duty.

Note: All FY 2016 performance appraisals **must** be entered into the National Finance Center (NFC) **before** processing FY 2016 performance TOA's. Managers **must** check with their State Office or HRD for Federal employees, to ensure that the FY 2016 appraisal has been entered **before** entering TOA's for performance.

6 Processing TOA’s Using EmpowHR

A Recommendation Responsibilities

Only the supervisor may be the recommending official for a rating-based TOA. Recommending individuals using EmpowHR shall take the following steps to nominate an employee for a TOA. See paragraph 7 for guidance on making recommendations **without** using EmpowHR.

Step	Action	
1	Prepare the TOA recommendation in EmpowHR (Manager Self Service - Tasks - Awards).	
2	IF the recommendation...	THEN EmpowHR forwards the TOA recommendation...
	is within the supervisor’s approval authority (up to 10 hours time off)	directly to the SPO for processing.
	exceeds the supervisor’s approval authority (10 or more hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to the supervisor’s supervisor for approval • to the SPO for processing after approval.

B Supervisor Review and Approval or Disapproval

After receiving notification from the approving official:

- the recipient’s supervisor shall inform the employee of the decision, and
- the SPO will notify the supervisor after TOA is approved. The supervisor will notify the employee of the TOA and let the employee know the TOA will be reflected on their Employee Personal Page (EPP) (subparagraph 8 F).

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6 Processing TOA’s Using EmpowHR

C Approval Official Responsibilities

The approving official shall review the TOA recommendation and make one of the following decisions.

IF the approving official...	THEN...
approves the recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EmpowHR forwards the recommendation to the SPO for processing, and • notify, verbally or by e-mail, the recipient’s supervisor and recommending individual of action.
modifies and approves the recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note changes, • EmpowHR forwards the recommendation to the SPO for processing, and • notify, verbally or by e-mail, the recipient’s supervisor and recommending individual of action.
disapproves the recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EmpowHR forwards the recommendation to the SPO where it will be canceled, and • notify the supervisor verbally or by e-mail.

7 Processing TOA’s Not Using EmpowHR

A Recommendation Responsibilities

The recommending individual shall take the following steps to nominate an employee for TOA.

Step	Action
1	Prepare the TOA recommendation on AD-287-2.
2	If recommending for a rating-based TOA, use the write-up accompanying the rating.
3	Sign AD-287-2.
4	Forward AD-287-2 and all supporting documents to the recipient’s supervisor.

B Action After Approval Received

After receiving notification that the TOA has been approved from the approving official, the supervisor can inform the employee:

- of the decision, and
- that the TOA will be reflected on their EPP after SPO processing.

8 TOA's

A TOA and Transfer Between CO and GS

If an employee is transferred between the FSA CO and GS systems and they have unused TOA hours, the TOA hours will be dropped by NFC. To restore TOA hours, the SPO will process another TOA, in the amount of the unused hours, for the employee after their transfer is complete.

Note: The SPO will **only** process another TOA if the employee is transferring **within FSA**.

B Connecting to NFC's EPP

To access your EPP, go to <https://www.nfc.usda.gov> and under "Application", CLICK "My EPP" icon. On the Employee Personal Page Warning Screen, read message and then CLICK "I Agree".

On the EPP Log-In Screen, follow directions to log into EPP using one of the following options:

- enter user ID and password and CLICK "Log In",
- CLICK "New User Sign Up", or
- CLICK "eAuth Log In".

Note: For user ID or password assistance, contact the EPP Help Desk directly, as follows:

- CLICK either "Forgot Your User ID?" or "Forgot Your Password?"
- e-mail osc.etix@usda.gov,
- telephone toll free at 800-767-9641, or
- telephone at 504-426-6435.

To view leave balances in EPP, under "Home", "Personal Info", CLICK "Leave".

Note: To ensure privacy, close all other tabs on the screen.

Calculating Award Amounts

The following is an example of the award worksheet for supervisors to calculate award amounts based on the policy of 1 percent for an outstanding rating and .5 percent for a superior rating, and the combination option of .5 percent and 20 hours TOA for an outstanding rating, and 0.25 percent and 10 hours TOA for a superior rating.

To access the actual spreadsheet for supervisor’s use, go to <http://intranet.fsa.usda.gov/fsa/operations/hrd/> and CLICK “Awards Calculation Worksheet”.

FSA Awards Calculation Worksheet

Step 1: Input the employee's name.
 Step 2: Input the employee's salary including locality pay (rounded up).
 Step 3: From the drop down menu select the employee's rating.
 Step 4: Under the ratings columns to select which option the employee wants (employees may only select QSI when that option has been specifically offered).

Employee Name	Base Salary with Locality Pay	Rating	Superior			Outstanding				
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