

U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary's Awards Guidance

Award Categories

- Secretary's Award for Exceptional Service (Gold Medal);
- Secretary's Meritorious Service Award (Silver Medal);
- Secretary's Award for Valor;
- Secretary's Award for Exemplary Service;
- Secretary's Award for Excellence;
- Secretary's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Diversity Management; and
- Secretary's Award for Volunteer Service.

Overall Criteria

- The 2014 Secretary's Awards program will recognize contributions made from 2013-2014. If there is an effort that was submitted for recognition during the 2012 program – which was cancelled due to sequestration – that merits recognition, please resubmit that submission with a one-page memorandum justifying continued consideration.
- Review the accomplishments of your employees in light of the criteria for specific award categories, and submit nominations as appropriate. Please emphasize accomplishments that address employee contributions to the Department's goals and mission.
- When conducting your review of potential nominees, consider employees who are at the non-supervisory levels who may not be eligible for other awards, such as Senior Executive Service bonuses.
- If you plan to nominate an individual outside your own Component, you must obtain and provide written concurrence from the head of that individual's employing Component.
- You cannot submit nominations for individuals or teams whose accomplishments are pending final action or involve a pending investigation. If you require an exception to this guidance, you must provide a written justification for review and consideration by the Secretary's Awards Board.
- You cannot nominate individuals for more than one award, and you should limit the number of employees nominated for a group award to only those that significantly contributed to a project or investigation. Component awards programs exist to recognize the numerous individuals responsible for particular accomplishments.
- Presidential appointees normally do not qualify for these awards unless otherwise noted in a specific award description. Further, your Component should clear all nominees for concerns related to misconduct and/or indebtedness prior to submission.

- All nominations must include a short, factual, one paragraph synopsis of the recommendation. Your Component must clear the synopsis for public use.
- Ensure that you follow the included instructions for submitting a nomination. Incomplete nominations or those in excess of three pages will be returned to Components and will not be considered.
- All nominations should be in an acceptable manner for review. Ensure correct spelling, including middle initial and suffix (if applicable) of each nominee prior to submission of nomination. This name will be used for the program and award device. Components will assume all costs or fees associated with errors caused by inaccurate or incorrect information which they forward.
- All recipients recommended by the Secretary's Awards Board and approved by the Secretary are final. No exceptions will be made.

Awards for Non-Employees

- The Secretary's Awards are intended to honor Department employees. Contractors may not be nominated.

Limitation on Nominations

- We recognize that the Department has many employees whose significant contributions merit special recognition. However, to ensure that only the most deserving nominations come forward, each Component should utilize formal screening procedures to select its nominees. The Board is not a screening agent.
- Components may submit one nomination for the Secretary's Exceptional Service Award (Gold Medal). Operational Components may submit two nominations for all other awards; three nominations are allowed for the Secretary's Award for Excellence. Headquarters Components are limited to one submission per category. If you require an exception to this guidance, you must provide a written justification to the Secretary's Awards Board.

Submission Information

- The cover sheet and nomination forms are due by 5:00 p.m., Friday, June 13, 2014, to Donna.Sankar@hq.dhs.gov. We will not accept late submissions, nominations that are incomplete, or nominations that are longer than three pages.

**U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Secretary's Annual Awards Program Categories**

Secretary's Exceptional Service Award (Gold Medal)

This is the highest award for service granted by the Secretary of Homeland Security. The award honors exceptional leadership or service that is distinguished by achievements of unique national or international significance, reflecting great credit on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) by markedly improving the security of our homeland. The Secretary may present the award to an individual or a group. *Typically, only one award in this category will be granted annually.*

Secretary's Meritorious Service Award (Silver Medal)

This award is the second highest award presented by the Secretary and recognizes outstanding leadership, superior public service, or unusually significant contributions to strengthening homeland security. It may recognize a body of work regarding remarkable innovation or notable resourcefulness and diligence that improved the effectiveness of one or more DHS missions. *No more than fifteen awards will be presented in this category annually.*

Secretary's Award for Valor

This award is the highest recognition for extraordinary acts of valor occurring either on or off duty. The employee will have demonstrated selfless response by performing courageously in a highly dangerous or life-threatening situation to protect another's life or to save significant assets or infrastructure from harm. Both civilian and military employees of the Department are eligible for this award.

Typically, only one award in this category will be awarded annually.

Secretary's Award for Exemplary Service

This award recognizes exemplary individual service by DHS employees serving in administrative, technical, clerical, and general support positions. Employees in support services positions below GS-11 and WG-8 can be nominated for this award.

No more than fifteen of these awards will be presented annually.

Secretary's Award for Excellence

This award recognizes achievement or innovation by an individual or team engaged in work to advance the mission of the Department of Homeland Security. The work of the nominee(s) may have resulted in superior performance, significant operational improvements, or notable innovation in support of DHS missions. A team nomination may be a result of an ongoing or an ad hoc team.

Typically, 10-15 awards in this category will be presented annually.

Secretary's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Diversity Management

This award recognizes an employee who has excelled in efforts to promote diversity at DHS through outstanding leadership and innovation. It may acknowledge individual efforts exclusively within DHS or with external partners who assist DHS in meeting our commitment to diversity.

Typically, only one award in this category will be presented annually.

Secretary's Award for Volunteer Service

This award recognizes significant contributions by DHS employees who serve as volunteers with non-profit or community service programs or activities. The employee's contributions should be direct, sustained, and have meaningful results for individuals or larger public good.

Typically, only one award in this category will be granted annually.

**U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Instructions for Submitting Awards Nominations**

Nomination Submission Instructions

- Nominations must be submitted by Friday, June 13, 2014; including the cover sheet and all nomination forms with Component Head approval should be to Donna.Sankar@hq.dhs.gov. Late submissions, nominations that are incomplete, or nominations that are longer than three pages will not be accepted.
- Each nomination must be typed using Times New Roman 12 point, conform to the space provided, and submitted on the nomination form, “Recommendation for Secretarial Award.” A document with a list of the individuals included in a team nomination should be attached to the nomination form.
- The program will recognize contributions made from 2011-2013. If there is an effort that was submitted for recognition during the 2012 program—which was cancelled due to sequestration—that merits recognition, please resubmit that submission with a one-page memorandum justifying continued consideration.

Nomination Form

- Please ensure that your nomination form includes the following:
 - a clear, “plain English” citation for each nomination of one paragraph;
 - a separate listing of team members by name (first name, middle initial, last name), title, unit, Component/office for team nominations (limited to 10-15 employees per nomination);
 - a current job title for each individual nominated; and
 - a current Component and office for each individual nominated.
- Nominations for the Secretary’s awards must have the personal endorsement of the head (or acting head) of Department Components. This is signified by obtaining the appropriate signature on the cover memo and the nomination form. If you plan to nominate an individual outside your own organization, you must obtain and provide written concurrence from the head of that individual’s employing organization.
- For a nomination to be considered by the Secretary, all fields in the included nomination form must be completed with accurate information.
- Please include a one-paragraph summary of the achievements upon which the nomination is based. The synopsis should be concise, descriptive, and fully outline the outstanding achievements related to the award for which the employee is nominated. The nominating Component must clear the synopsis for public use, and ensure that it is suitable for the awards ceremony program.
- Nominations should not exceed three pages in length, including the nomination form.

- Ensure correct spelling, with middle initial and suffix (if applicable) prior to submission of nomination as this will be used when printing awards. Components will assume all costs or fees associated with errors caused by inaccurate or incorrect information which they forward.

Award Guidance Reminders

- Components cannot submit nominations for individuals or teams whose accomplishments are pending final action or involve a pending investigation. If you require an exception to this guidance, you must provide a written justification for review by the Secretary's Awards Board.
- Components may not nominate an individual for more than one award.
- For group nominations, Components should ensure the inclusion of only employees who contributed significantly to a project or investigation. Nominations for cross-Component teams are encouraged and signatures by the necessary individuals from all involved Components should be obtained.
- Components should seek to recognize employees who have not been previously honored with Secretarial awards. The Secretary's awards are not intended to recognize or honor retirees; these awards honor past contributions and offer incentives for future performance.
- Components must internally clear nominees for concerns related to misconduct and/or indebtedness prior to submission.
- Nominations must be submitted to the Secretary's Awards Board, who will forward the nominations and recommendations to the Secretary for final approval. All recipients approved by the Secretary are final. No exceptions will be made.

Should you have any questions, you may contact Donna Sankar on 202-357-8374 or via e-mail at Donna.Sankar@hq.dhs.gov.

+<Date>

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairperson, Secretary's Awards Board

FROM: <name and signature>
<title>
<Component>

SUBJECT: Secretary's 2014 Awards Ceremony – Nominations

Attached please find nominations in the following categories:

| Secretary's Awards | Number of Nominations |
|---|------------------------------|
| <i>Exceptional Service (Gold Medal)</i> <i>1 nomination max.</i> | <number > |
| <i>Meritorious Service (Silver Medal)</i> | <number > |
| <i>Valor</i> | <number > |
| <i>Exemplary Service</i> | <number > |
| <i>Excellence</i> | <number > |
| <i>Outstanding Achievement of Diversity Management</i> | <number > |
| <i>Volunteer Service</i> | <number > |

Thank you for your favorable consideration of these award nominations, which have my support and endorsement. If you have any questions, please contact me directly at <e-mail> or <phone number>.

NOMINATION FORM: SECRETARIAL AWARDS

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY RECOMMENDATION FOR SECRETARIAL AWARD

Instructions for completing Form (Type All Requested Data)

1. This form must accompany each nomination.
2. Submit eight copies of this form.

Items 1. - 5. Complete all data.

Item 6. Enter a brief one paragraph summary that describes why the employee is being nominated.

Item 7. Enter a brief description of the nominee's work history - indicate special honors and awards. This should be in **chronological order**.

Item 8. Provide a nomination justification that addresses award criteria in space provided.

Item 9. Reserved for the appropriate nominating and approving officials' name, title, signature and date. Approval must include highest level in chain of command.

TYPE OF AWARD RECOMMENDATION

1. SECRETARY'S AWARD FOR:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exceptional Service (Gold Medal) | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meritorious Service (Silver Medal) | <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Valor | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary Service | |

SECRETARY'S HONORARY AWARDS

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DHS Distinguished Service Medal (civilian) | <input type="checkbox"/> DHS Outstanding Service Medal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DHS Distinguished Service Medal (Coast Guard) | <input type="checkbox"/> DHS Outstanding Public Service Medal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DHS Distinguished Public Service Medal | <input type="checkbox"/> DHS Outstanding Partnership Award |

2. NAME OF EMPLOYEE:

3. POSITION:

4. COMPONENT:

5. LOCATION: (Address, City and State)

6. BRIEF SUMMARY: (Brief statement of no more than one paragraph to be included in ceremony program and remarks)

NOMINATION FORM: SECRETARIAL AWARDS

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
RECOMMENDATION FOR SECRETARIAL AWARD
(Continued)

7. NOMINATION JUSTIFICATION: (be sure to address award criteria)

8. EMPLOYMENT HISTORY: (include Special Honors and Awards for the last 5 years)

| 9. NOMINATING AND APPROVING OFFICIALS (Name and Title) | SIGNATURE | DATE |
|--|-----------|------|
| | | |
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