U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2015 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
- Secretary's Award for Volunteer Service

Overall Criteria

The 2015 Secretary's Awards program will recognize significant employee contributions made for the period June 1, 2014 through May 31, 2015.

- 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 Rank Awards.

- 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.

- The Secretary's Awards Board will review all nominations and make recommendations to the Secretary for final decision.

- You can nominate individuals for only one award. You should limit the number of employees nominated for a group award to only those who significantly contributed to a project or investigation.

- 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. We will not consider and will return incomplete nominations or those in excess of three pages to components.

- All nominations should be in an acceptable state for review. Ensure correct spelling, including middle initial and suffix or prefix (if applicable) of each nominee prior to submission of nomination. We will use this name 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. We will make no exceptions.

Awards for Non-Employees

- The intent of the Secretary's Awards is to honor DHS employees. You may not nominate contractors.

Limitation on Nominations

- Each component should use formal screening procedures to ensure that you only submit the most deserving nominations.

- Components may submit one nomination for the Secretary's Exceptional Service Gold Medal Award. You can submit three nominations for the Secretary's Award for Excellence. Operational components may submit two nominations for all other awards. 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

Completed nominations, with the signed cover memorandum, are due to donna.sankar@hq.dhs.gov **by 5:00 p.m. EDT on Friday, June 19, 2015**. The Office of

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.*