



# U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

PART 224 FW 3-6	SUBJECT Personnel Service Awards and Recognition Program Monetary Awards Nonmonetary Awards & Informal Honors Honor Awards	RELEASE NUMBER 384
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT Division of Human Resources		DATE December 27, 2001

## EXPLANATION OF MATERIAL TRANSMITTED:

These chapters are revised to mandate the use of FWS Form 3-2207 (Award Certification) for processing all awards.

  
Acting ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - BUDGET,  
PLANNING AND HUMAN RESOURCES

## FILING INSTRUCTIONS:

### Remove:

224 FW 3, FWM 382, 11/29/01 (2 sheets)  
224 FW 4, FWM 382, 11/29/01 (2 sheets)  
224 FW 5, FWM 382, 11/29/01 (1 sheet)  
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**4.1 What are the general considerations for monetary awards?**

**A.** The Service Awards and Recognition Program is designed to motivate employees to increase productivity by rewarding those whose performance is substantially above normal job requirements and standards. One of the keys to productivity improvement is performance management through a variety of methods, including the effective use of incentives. It is our intention to make maximum use of the recognition authorities delegated by law and regulation to administer a recognition program that supports and enhances our organizational mission and national goals as well as achieve the level of recognition warranted by employees.

**B.** Supervisors and managers have a major responsibility for ensuring the effective use of recognition. They must determine the type of recognition that most appropriately recognizes the contribution, is most motivating to the employee(s), and is most cost-beneficial in terms of return on investment to the organization. When they have determined the most appropriate form of recognition, they should effect it promptly. Effective use of recognition involves:

- (1) Granting recognition based solely on merit.
- (2) Selecting the most appropriate form of recognition.
- (3) Awarding contributions in a timely manner.
- (4) Assuring equity of consideration for awards within respective organizations.
- (5) By publicly making known the reasons recognition is granted, supervisors and managers motivate others and preserve the credibility of the program.

**C. Who is eligible for a monetary award?**

(1) Any employee of the Service is eligible for a monetary award. Partners-in-mission are not eligible for monetary awards, except see Director's Order 121 for policy regarding monetary awards for volunteers. Monetary awards may also be given to groups or teams of employees and may be presented to other Federal employees for contributions to our programs and mission.

(2) Political appointees (Schedule C) are not eligible to receive monetary awards between June 1 of any year in which there is a Presidential election and January 20 of the following year.

(3) Political appointees (Schedule C) above the GS-12 level and noncareer SES are not eligible for monetary awards.

(4) Career SES employees may receive monetary awards under this program. However, the Executive Resources Board must approve these awards.

**D. Who can approve a monetary award?** Except for the Director, in no instance can a recommending official also approve an award. Since an award may be approved in an amount or type that differs from the original recommendation or it may be disapproved, managers and supervisors must not discuss an award nomination with the nominee until the award has received final approval. Although reconsideration may be requested if an award is denied, failure to receive an award is not grievable or appealable. An employee's immediate or second-level supervisor must surname or sign the award nomination, even when the nomination is initiated by another office. Paragraph 3-9, 224 FW 3, provides guidance on who may approve monetary awards.

**E. When is a monetary award inappropriate?** Some circumstances that make a monetary award inappropriate are:

- (1) Pending or recent grade promotions that recognize the same performance and thereby provide adequate recognition of the employee's high level of performance.
- (2) An employee has already been recognized with a monetary award for the same accomplishment.
- (3) The employee received a quality step increase at an earlier date that is still considered to be adequate recognition of the employee's high level of performance.
- (4) The employee is currently under consideration for disciplinary action based on conduct or performance issues.

**F. How are monetary awards processed?**

(1) The employee's servicing personnel office will process the nomination for a monetary award. In instances where the employee is under the supervision of one Region but is serviced by another Regional personnel office, only the servicing personnel office will process the award nomination for payment. This procedure will prevent an employee from receiving duplicate compensation for the same contribution.

(2) Single monetary awards more than \$4,000 require review by the Service Incentive Awards Committee before the Director approves them. The appropriate Assistant or Regional Director must sign all monetary awards requiring

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Committee review and/or the Director's signature; e.g., single awards more than \$4,000 or awards over an employee's annual limit. Forward these nominations to the Division of Human Resources, Washington, D.C., for final approval.

**G. How are monetary awards presented?** Present all monetary awards to employees in an appropriate manner as determined by the recommending official.

**H. Are there auditing and review procedures for monetary awards?**

(1) Each fiscal year, servicing personnel offices must review all monetary awards processed by their Region. The review should analyze award patterns, program equality, and compliance with Service policy. Provide reports of each review to the Service Incentive Awards Coordinator, Division of Human Resources, Washington Office, on or before January 31 for the previous fiscal year.

(2) Upon receipt of the Regional audit reports, the Division of Human Resources will prepare a Servicewide report on the monetary awards program.

**4.2 What is the Special Thanks for Achieving Results (STAR) award?** A STAR award is a monetary award of \$50 or more, *gross* amount. The amount of the award should be commensurate with the value of the individual or team accomplishment, considering the overall benefit to the Government. This award may be granted for achievement on an individual project or for overall performance. Only one STAR award may be given for a specific accomplishment.

**A. How are STAR awards initiated?** An employee's immediate supervisor normally initiates an award nomination; however, any other supervisory official knowledgeable of the employee's contributions may initiate one. In the event that someone other than the employee's immediate supervisor initiates the nomination, the employee's supervisor must sign FWS Form 3-2207 (Award Certification) before the award can be processed for payment. Under no circumstances will an award nomination be processed without the concurrence of the individual's immediate or second-level supervisor.

**B. Is a justification required for a STAR award?** The justification must reflect the employee's accomplishments and must be personalized and specific to the employee and his or her activities. Include details and outcomes of the employee's actions. Prepare justifications in a neat, easy to read format. Incomplete or illegible justifications will be returned to the nominating office for corrective action.

**C. Are there time limits for STAR awards?** There is no minimum requirement regarding the time period involved with a STAR award. We achieve the greatest motivational impact when an award is recommended, approved, and presented promptly following the contribution. Therefore, the documentation for this award should contain a specific statement of achievement and of tangible and/or intangible benefits to the Government that provides the basis for the amount of the award granted. Award nominations initiated more than 3 months following the contribution(s) for recognition must include a statement justifying the tardiness of the nomination.

**D. What dollar amounts apply to STAR awards?**

(1) A single STAR award may be \$50 or more, *gross*.

(2) There is no limit on the total dollar amount of combined awards that an employee may receive in a performance year; however, an annual limit of \$5,000 does apply for approval purposes. Once an employee receives \$5,000 in monetary awards during the performance year, the Director must approve all subsequent award nominations.

**E. Can I give a STAR award to a team or group?** Cash awards to groups of employees are appropriate when you can show that the total achievement of a project, an assignment, or team effort was dependent on the performance of each member involved. Generally, the total amount of a cash award to a group should not exceed the amount that would be authorized if only one individual had made the contribution. Therefore, exercise prudence when considering a group award consisting of more than 8 or 10 employees, since the total amount of the award is distributed to each member of the group in proportion to individual contributions. As the number of individuals increases, a member's share may diminish to the point that it is insignificant. In such cases, a Unit Award for Excellence of Service may be more appropriate (see paragraph 6.5D, 224 FW 6). The written justification for a group award must include the specific contribution of each member of the group to the overall organizational accomplishment. Each member of the group, including supervisors, may share equally in the award or in proportion to the individual contribution. Submit a separate FWS Form 3-2207 for each group member.

**F. How is a STAR award paid?** We will pay STAR awards through the Federal Personnel and Payroll System.

**4.3 What is a Quality Step Increase?** This form of monetary recognition results in immediate benefits to the recipient. A QSI immediately raises the employee's basic rate of pay and has continuing benefits such as increasing immediately the recipient's life insurance coverage. In many instances, a QSI will favorably affect subsequent promotions and retirement computations. Because a QSI is a continuing benefit, recommending and reviewing

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officials should consider carefully the continuing costs to the Government versus the motivational value to the employee. Federal Wage System employees and Senior Executive Service members are not eligible for QSI's.

**A. When is a QSI appropriate?** A recommendation for a QSI is appropriate only when the following conditions exist:

- (1) The employee has received a summary performance rating level of results achieved.
- (2) The high level of performance has been sustained for at least 6 months to warrant the conclusion that it may be considered as a characteristic.
- (3) The employee's recent performance appraisal supports the conclusion that the overall performance of his/her assigned duties and responsibilities substantially exceeds an acceptable level of competence so that, when viewed as a whole, the employee's performance is at a high level of quality.
- (4) The performance exceeds the normal or typical to such an extent that faster than usual pay advancement is warranted.
- (5) The performance must give promise of continuing at the same high level in the future.
- (6) The employee is expected to remain in the same or similar position at the same grade level for at least 60 days after the effective date of the QSI.

**B. When is a QSI not appropriate?** Although otherwise merited, certain circumstances are inconsistent with a determination that the high-level performance is expected to continue in the future. A QSI is not appropriate when one or more of the following conditions exist:

- (1) The employee is nearing retirement and would benefit only for a limited period.
- (2) The employee is about to receive or has just received a promotion, selection for which included consideration of the high level performance the QSI would recognize.
- (3) The employee's contribution is so significant that a large lump-sum payment would be more fitting recognition than a smaller continuing benefit.
- (4) The employee is moving to a position not in his/her normal career development progression either within or outside of the Service.

(5) The employee has been detailed to another position.

(6) The employee's job is changing to a degree where new performance requirements have an impact on the position.

**C. What other issues should I consider before granting a QSI?** Supervisors and managers should consider if a repeat QSI may be granted to an employee still in the same job, and if a QSI may be granted to an employee whose position has been downgraded and is in receipt of retained pay. While there is nothing to preclude a QSI being granted in either of these situations, recommending and approving officials should carefully consider whether or not the relationship between pay and performance that would result from such an action is appropriate to these situations.

**D. Are there any prohibitions that apply to QSI awards?**

- (1) The processing of a QSI will not be deliberately delayed for the purpose of waiting for an employee's regular within-grade increase to be processed.
- (2) A QSI will not be approved for an employee who is moving to a position outside of the Service.
- (3) A QSI will not be granted to an employee who has not been in the same position at the same grade level continuously for the last 6 months before the end of the rating period.
- (4) A QSI will not be granted to an employee who receives a summary performance rating that is not results achieved.
- (5) No more than one QSI may be granted within any period of 52 weeks. Use the approval dates to determine if the QSI is within the 52-week period.

**E. Does a QSI affect a within-grade increase?** A QSI is an additional within-grade salary increase. It is in addition to a regular within-grade increase and is not considered an equivalent increase in compensation. Therefore, an employee who receives a QSI does not have to begin a new waiting period to meet the requirements for a regular within-grade increase. However, in some instances, a QSI will extend the waiting period for the regular within-grade increase. A quality increase will extend the waiting period for the regular within-grade increase in those instances when the QSI places the employee in the fourth or seventh step of the pay range where the waiting period between steps is longer. In those instances in which a within-grade increase is due at the time a QSI is being processed, the QSI is to be processed to the advantage of the employee so that the employee can receive both deserved forms of recognition: the within-grade increase for performance that has been determined to be of an acceptable level of

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competence and the QSI for superior performance that is expected to continue at the same high level in the future.

**F. What is the effect of repetitive QSI's?** When supervisors and management officials are considering recommending a QSI for an employee who received the same type of award the previous year, they must consider the continuing benefits of the previous award and ensure that the employee's performance for the proposed award exceeds the performance that merited the award the previous year. When an employee performs to the extent his/her overall performance warrants annual monetary recognition, this could be indicative of the need for the supervisor to consider the possibility of job reassignment and/or promotion to better utilize the capabilities of the employee and to enhance his/her effectiveness and contributions to the organization. However, repeated awards to one individual also could be an indicator of low performance standards or a need for job reclassification. A repetitive award, in the latter instance, becomes less meaningful to the employee and less beneficial to the organization.

**G. How do I initiate a QSI?**

(1) Initiate nominations for QSI's no later than 120 days after the end of the performance appraisal period for which the QSI is recommended. Under the current performance management system, the annual rating is due by November 29, resulting in a QSI nomination deadline of March 29 in any given year.

(2) Normally, the immediate supervisor initiates recommendations for QSI's, but an official or supervisor higher in the line authority who is able to document and substantiate the justification for the proposed award may submit them.

(3) Use FWS Form 3-2207 to recommend QSI's. Forward Form 3-2207 and supporting documentation indicated below through normal supervisory channels to the servicing personnel office for processing.

(4) Supporting justifications for all QSI's must contain factual information that clearly indicates that the performance exceeded normal requirements to a degree that justifies award recognition. Forward a current performance appraisal with each QSI recommendation.

**H. How are QSI awards presented?** Present QSI awards in an appropriate manner as determined by the recommending official.

**4.4 What is a continuous improvement incentive?** A continuous improvement incentive comprises the following:

**A. Productivity Improvement Award.** A monetary award or other form of recognition for process improvement, cost-

saving suggestions, streamlining, or eliminating non-value added processes. The employee(s) shares some portion of the actual savings from cost reduction or productivity gains.

**B. Invention/Patent Award.** An automatic \$500 (gross) monetary award that is paid when the Office of the Solicitor files an application at the Patent Office. An additional \$800 (gross) will be awarded if the patent is granted. Further recognition based on the benefit of the contribution may be granted through the use of a STAR award.

**C. How are continuous improvement incentive awards initiated?** We encourage employees to submit a narrative description of the idea and benefits through normal supervisory channels to the office with implementing authority for the idea. Supervisors and co-workers may recommend individuals and teams for continuous improvement incentives based on the value of estimated or actual first-year savings or other benefits. The monetary award amount should be commensurate with the savings or value of the improvement realized.

**D. Who can approve a continuous improvement incentive award?** The same approval requirements and annual limits apply to continuous improvement incentive awards as with all other monetary awards. See paragraph 3.9, 224 FW 3, for additional information.

**E. How are continuous improvement incentive awards processed?** Use FWS Form 3-2207 to submit nominations for a continuous improvement incentive award. Nominations for these awards must conform to the same procedures as any other monetary award.

**F. How are continuous improvement incentives presented?** Present continuous improvement incentive awards in an appropriate manner as determined by the recommending official.