

Department of Commerce

History of the Honor Awards Program

Every year since 1949, the Department has honored its best employees with Honor Awards: Gold and Silver Medals. They are the most prestigious awards the Department gives its employees.

To warrant a Gold or Silver Medal, a contribution must focus on qualitative and quantitative performance measures reflected in the Department's Strategic Plan and be identified in one of the following seven categories: Leadership, Personal and Professional Excellence, Scientific/Engineering Achievement, Organizational Development, Customer Service, Administrative/Technical Support, and Heroism.

Each year, the Secretary issues a memorandum to the Secretarial Officers and Heads of Operating Units requesting nominations for Gold and Silver Medals. Individuals, groups, or organizations are eligible. All nominees are cleared by the Office of Security, Office of Inspector General, Office of the General Counsel, Office of Human Resources Management, and Office of Civil Rights prior to submitting nominations. The bureaus prepare and submit their nominations to the Office of Human Resources Management on the secure Web-based Honor Awards Nomination System (HANS). There is a limit on the number of nominations submitted by each bureau.

In May and June, the award nominations are reviewed by the Department's Incentive Awards Board, which is composed of senior career and political staff (e.g., Deputy Under Secretary level) representing the bureaus. Each Board member independently reviews the nominations based on the established criteria. Their votes are anonymously recorded in HANS, which aggregates the scores to produce a list of recommended recipients. On average, 20 Gold and 40 Silver Medal recommendations are made each year. Once voting is completed, the Board's recommendations are forwarded to the Secretary for approval.

The Secretary presents the medals at an annual formal ceremony. The Secretarial Officers and Heads of Operating Units assist the Secretary in presenting the awards to each recipient. Historically, the Secretary has hosted a reception following the ceremony.