March 22, 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR: Secretarial Officers
               Heads of Operating Units

FROM: Gina M. Raimondo
      Secretary of Commerce

SUBJECT: Gold and Silver Medal Recognition

It is my pleasure to invite you to nominate Department of Commerce employees for the 75th Annual Secretary Honor Awards Program.

Employees may be nominated, individually or in groups, in the following categories: Leadership, Personal and Professional Excellence, Scientific/Engineering Achievement, Organizational Development, Customer Service, Administrative/Technical Support, and Heroism. These categories reflect my belief that many types of contributions by the hardworking employees of this Department deserve recognition.

The Honor Awards, in the form of Gold and Silver Medals, constitute the highest and second highest levels of recognition granted for distinguished and exceptional performance within the Department. Although no monetary reward is associated with this recognition, these awards are regarded by Department employees as the ultimate recognition for their service to our mission. I urge you to consider all types and levels of employee accomplishments within your organizational unit to ensure that only the best are forwarded for consideration. Nominations for group accomplishments may include members from other organizational units.

Your servicing human resources office will provide instructions on requirements for submitting nominations. The Honor Awards Program Criteria and the History of the Honor Awards Program are attached. Nominations are due to the Department using the Honor Awards Nomination System by April 28, 2023. Should you have any questions, please contact Jessica S. Palatka at (202) 384-4342.

The Department appreciates the hard work and great contributions celebrated at past ceremonies, and I look forward to a very successful 2023 awards program recognizing the latest outstanding accomplishments of employees.

Attachments
   (1) Honor Awards Program Criteria
   (2) History of the Honor Awards Program
HONOR AWARDS PROGRAM

CRITERIA
GOLD MEDAL

The highest honorary award granted by the Secretary. A Gold Medal is defined as distinguished performance characterized by extraordinary, notable, or prestigious contributions that impact the mission of the Department and/or one operating unit and that reflect favorably on the Department. To warrant a Gold 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 areas: leadership, personal and professional excellence, scientific/engineering achievement, organizational development, customer service, administrative/technical support, or heroism.

SILVER MEDAL

The second highest honorary award granted by the Secretary. A Silver Medal is defined as exceptional performance characterized by noteworthy or superlative contributions that have a direct and lasting impact within the Department. To warrant a 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 areas: leadership, personal and professional excellence, scientific/engineering achievement, organizational development, customer service, administrative/technical support, or heroism.
Leadership

Recognizes personal leadership and management of an organization that produces substantial, innovative achievements resulting in high-quality service to the agency.

In addition, this area recognizes:

- creativity and innovation
- external awareness
- flexibility
- resilience
- motivation
- strategic thinking
- vision

Achievements may include, but are not limited to:

- significant improvements in program effectiveness
- efficient use of resources
- sensitive and difficult assignments of major importance achieved through great personal initiative, commitment, effort, and competence
- improvement in labor-management relations
- leadership that encourages employee freedom to make decisions and to maximize the scope for individual initiative within a given job
- acumen in developing breakthrough strategies or concepts in finding new and effective ways of accomplishing the agency’s mission
- leadership in the productive use of teams that cross organizational and agency boundaries
- leadership that models and rewards behaviors conducive to the effective management of diversity

Honor Awards Program Criteria
**Personal and Professional Excellence**

Recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in furthering the agency’s mission.

Achievements are to be derived from all occupations and functional areas of the Department, including, but are not limited to:

- administration
- information technology
- labor-management relations
- legal
- trade
Scientific/Engineering Achievement

Recognizes scientific/engineering or technological breakthroughs that:

- resolve long-standing problems
- radically advance the state-of-the-art
- significantly impact Commerce or the economy
- significantly advance the understanding, knowledge, or mastery of a given discipline

Achievements may include, but are not limited to:

- authorship or editorship that affect the primary principles of the discipline involved
- opening up new fields of inquiry
- redefining major issues of investigation
- contributions to the body of knowledge in a given field
Organizational Development

Recognizes those whose accomplishments contribute to creating an organizational culture that is constantly learning and growing – one that maximizes employee potential and fosters high ethical standards.

Achievements may include, but are not limited to:

- designing and implementing successful organization-wide programs that facilitate meeting management/supervisory responsibilities for mentoring and coaching
- being widely recognized as an individual whose capabilities and relationships have had a direct and positive impact on the career development of a significant number of others
- creating an environment in which teamwork thrives, one that reflects knowledge sharing, trust, pride, commitment, self-direction, and group identity, and one in which teams have produced extraordinary results
Customer Service

Recognizes those who provide or foster a culture that nurtures world-class customer service. Achievements in customer service may include, but are not limited to:

- activities related to establishing measurements and standards for improving service
- implementing and continuously assessing performance against standards for improvements

Accomplishments are expressed in measurable terms, such as:

- cycle time
- cost reduction
- increased courtesy
- quality to customers
Administrative/Technical Support

Recognizes those who demonstrate an outstanding level of accomplishment in providing administrative and technical support.

Achievements reflect dedication and hard work that enable or assist the work of fellow employees and may include, but are not limited to:

- advancing the goals of the team, office, division, operating unit, or Department through outstanding performance
- creative or innovative problem-solving
- developing new systems, methods, or procedures
Heroism

Recognizes a special one-time service or act of heroism by an employee or group of employees that is in the public interest or connected with or related to official employment. Heroism is defined as exhibiting courage, daring, and self-sacrifice.

Achievements may include, *but are not limited to*:

- voluntarily risking one’s own life, knowingly, while saving or attempting to save the life of another person

- displaying extraordinary skill or resourcefulness in assisting law enforcement officers, firefighters, or search and rescue professionals in saving or attempting to save the life of another person

- demonstrating courage in risking one’s own life to protect or preserve government or private property
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.