




# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, D.C. 20240

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Memorandum

To: Heads of Bureaus and Offices

From: Rhea S. Suh   
Assistant Secretary Policy, Management and Budget

Subject: Non-Monetary Awards Policy

The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify and communicate changes to the Department of the Interior awards policy found in Departmental Manual (DM) 370 DM 451.5 as it pertains to non-monetary awards. This memorandum replaces the November 21, 2012 policy memorandum and the policy in 370 DM 451.5. We are in the process of amending the DM to reflect these changes.

Basis for this Policy Change: The President's Executive Order Promoting Efficient Spending (E.O. 13589) has prompted the Department to re-evaluate policies on the use of non-monetary recognition. We have worked with the human resources, budget and finance communities within the Department and evaluated the practices in place in other agencies to develop the following revised policies on non-monetary awards. Based on input we received in response to the issuance of non-monetary policy on November 21, 2012, we conducted another round of review by human resource and budget/financial staff. This revision addresses the comments we received about the need to recognize career achievements of staff in addition to annual or event-driven recognition.

Non-Monetary Policy Statement: Non-monetary recognition awards are granted to employees to recognize their contributions to the Department that may include superior accomplishment of regularly assigned duties, exceptional achievements of project goals, noteworthy accomplishments over a sustained period, or specific contributions to an organization's mission.

Managers are urged to continue to recognize and reward employees for noteworthy accomplishments in compliance with this new guidance. Bureaus and offices are encouraged to use STAR and time off awards when possible and appropriate.

Implementation: Effective immediately, the following changes apply to the policy found in 370 DM 451.5 regarding non-monetary awards:

- Approving officials should exercise care in selecting an appropriate item for non-monetary recognition to avoid any potential appearance of misuse of government funds. The approving official should consider whether this is an appropriate use of public resources and exercise prudence in the use of non-monetary awards.

- The upper limit for an item used for non-monetary recognition is a \$50.00 cash value annually per employee within the Department. Bureaus and offices should carefully review spending on non-monetary awards to ensure items purchased are cost effective. If there is some level of discomfort or concern, the supervisor should always check with the servicing human resources office for guidance.
- Items that exceed the \$50.00 cash value limit may be provided to employees only the approval of the bureau or office director. Bureau and office directors may delegate this authority. However, an appropriate level of approval is required to ensure the organization limits expenditures in excess of the cap to recognize the most valued achievements made by an employee or group of employees. An example of an instance of exceeding the \$50.00 cap would be a retirement recognizing the career contributions of an employee, a bureau/office special award, or a service award.
- Bureaus and office directors (or appropriate official) are asked to review and approve items that exceed the \$50.00 cash value threshold based on the criteria set forth in the instruction below. An example of an item that meets this test is a plaque with the bureau or office logo and an inscription signifying the valued contribution of the employee or employees.
- Items that exceed the \$50.00 cash value threshold must:
  - A. Be something that the recipient could reasonably be expected to value, but not something that conveys a sense of monetary value;
  - B. Have lasting trophy value. An employee can show the item to coworkers and friends as a “trophy” given in appreciation of good work; and,
  - C. Clearly symbolizes the employer-employee work relationship in some fashion.
- Please consider using letters or certificates of appreciation to recognize achievements. Items that can be provided as non-monetary awards include those that can be used in an office setting such as a business card holders, portfolios, lapel pins, pens, paperweights, pen and pencil sets. Where appropriate, a non-monetary award item should contain the bureau or Departmental name, logo, award title, and/or mission.
- Gift cards or other items that can be easily converted to cash (i.e., gift certificates, gift cards, U.S. Savings Bonds, tickets, or similar items) may not be used for this purpose. The issuance of gift cards is hereby disallowed based on the Department’s policy. Bureaus and offices should use any inventory of cards they have already purchased, deploying effective internal controls, and discontinue further use as soon as possible.
- Consistent with E.O. 13589, *Promoting Efficient Spending*, and DOI policy, *Restriction on the Purchase of Promotional Items*, March 29, 2012, promotional items may not be used for the purpose of employee recognition, including, for example, watches, fruit baskets, balloons, coffee cups, key chains, jackets, caps, T-shirts, clocks, or similar items.



- Employees are responsible for the requirements associated with reporting these non-monetary awards relative to taxable income. Please contact your human resources staff for guidance.

A revised DM chapter 370 DM 451.5 will be issued. Bureaus/offices must establish guidelines and controls for granting informal recognition and awards consistent with these changes in policy.

If you have any questions on this guidance, please consult your Servicing Human Resource Office or Darrell R. Hoffman at 202-208-6754 or [Darrell\\_r\\_hoffman@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Darrell_r_hoffman@ios.doi.gov).

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