BUPERS INSTRUCTION 12450.4B

From: Chief of Naval Personnel

Subj: CIVILIAN AWARDS PROGRAM FOR THE BUREAU OF NAVAL PERSONNEL

Ref: (a) 5 CFR 451
(b) DoD Instruction 1400.25 of 4 November 2013
(c) DON Civilian Human Resources Manual (CHRM) 451.1 (Awards) of September 2005
(d) DON Human Resources Implementation Guidance 451-02, Guidance on Implementing Awards Program of September 2005
(e) OPNAVINST 1650.8D

Encl: (1) Guidance for a Fair, Credible and Transparent Award Process

1. Purpose. The purpose of this instruction is to document the policies and procedures for the Bureau of Naval Personnel (BUPERS) Civilian Awards Program per references (a) through (e). Major revision to this instruction includes change to awards board processes.

2. Cancellation. BUPERSINST 12450.4A.

3. Scope and Applicability. This instruction applies to BUPERS commands and applicable subordinate activities.

4. Policy. Ensure an active civilian awards program be implemented and integrated per references (a) through (e) and this instruction. The following policies must be in place:

   a. Establish a command awards board and ensure it reviews and endorses proposed civilian awards. The awards board must provide oversight of the Civilian Awards Program.

   b. Evaluate and assess award programs and ensure awards are used to motivate, recognize and reward eligible personnel.

   c. Grant awards commensurate with the value of the employee’s contribution and or accomplishment.

   d. Establish awards criteria for granting monetary or non-monetary awards for individual, team or organizational achievements or contribution and ensure criteria for awards do not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin or disability.
5. **Responsibilities**

   a. **Chief of Naval Personnel**

      (1) Endorses award nominations that require Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) approval.

      (2) Delegates authority for BUPERS civilian awards program per references (a) through (e) to Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel (DEP CHNAVPERS).

   b. **DEP CHNAVPERS**

      (1) Issues guidance and procedures, per references (a) through (e), on the implementation and oversight of the awards programs to subordinate commands.

      (2) Ensures the subordinate activity awards program is in place and that awards are used to motivate, recognize and reward eligible employees.

   c. **Head of the Organizational Unit, Commanding Officer (CO), Officer in Charge (OIC), or Department Head (DH)**

      (1) Establishes an awards board and or serves as a member of the awards board for his or her activity.

      (2) Identifies an awards coordinator to manage the budget and act as a liaison between the activity, command or department, and BUPERS Total Force Human Resources and Manpower Office (BUPERS-05).

      (3) Encourages recognition of top civilian performers throughout the year.

      (4) Rewards superior performance and presents cash awards or other tangible incentives (e.g., time-off, certificates, etc.).

   d. **Awards Board**

      (1) Provides final approval for time-off awards exceeding 60 hours cumulative, Federal Executive Association (FEA) awards, civilian of the quarter (COQ) and civilian of the year (COY) awards, military cash, and beneficial suggestion awards and monetary awards exceeding or totaling over $3,500, whether individually or as a result of multiple awards;

      (2) Reviews all awards for equity and consistency in the awards systems;

      (3) Meets, as necessary, at the convening of the chairperson; and
(4) Reviews recommendations for all honorary and non-monetary awards, as needed or as requested by BUPERS-05.

e. **BUPERS-05**

(1) Acts as the BUPERS Awards Program Manager,

(2) Advises and provides guidance on civilian awards to the DEP CHNAVPERS, activity heads, COs, OICs, DHs, managers and supervisors,

(3) Communicates and solicits nominations to BUPERS DHs for recurring award programs,

(4) Reviews, processes, and finalizes all awards packages, and

(5) Endorses award submissions per references (a) through (e) prior to submission for DEP CHNAVPERS approval.

6. **Procedures**

a. The BUPERS Civilian Awards Program is established to increase productivity by recognizing creativity in the workplace and by rewarding employees and groups of employees when significant contributions are made. To achieve this objective, the awards program is designed to:

(1) Recognize outstanding or exceptional personnel performance and special achievements as a single contributor or member of a team,

(2) Encourage positive participation of personnel at all levels in improving business operations, and

(3) Award cash payments, grant time-off, or incur necessary expenses for both honorary and informal recognition of personnel, either individually or as a member of a group, on the basis of:

   (a) Superior accomplishment or other personal effort that contributes to the efficiency, economy or important business operations, or achieves a significant reduction in paperwork;

   (b) Special acts or service in the public interest in connection with or related to official employment, and

   (c) Exceptional performance as reflected in the employee's departmental recommendation.
(4) Recognize and reward employees as soon after the achievement as possible and not at the end of the annual performance rating cycle.

b. Nominations

(1) Awards are to be completed on NAVPERS 12451/3 Civilian Award Recommendation. NAVPERS 12451/3 is available at: https://www.npc.navy.mil/ReferenceLibrary/Forms/NAVPERS/

(2) Nomination packages must be endorsed by the head of the organizational unit.

(3) Award packages requiring awards board review must be forwarded to BUPERS-05 for submission to the awards board for final review and approval.

7. Eligibility. Each award may have various eligibility policies per references (a) through (e) and must be reviewed prior to nominating an employee for an award. At the very least, Federal civilian employees assigned to BUPERS commands must be onboard at least 90 days to be considered for an award.

8. Award Types

a. BUPERS Monetary and Time-off Awards

(1) Quality Step Increase (QSI). Because of long-term fiscal costs to the Navy and command, QSIs will be the exception, vice the rule, and must be endorsed by the head of the organizational unit. QSIs are aligned with the performance period. QSIs may only be submitted when call for nominations go out to commands and departments at the end of the performance period.

(a) QSIs are awarded for sustained superior performance.

(b) The most important consideration in determining whether a QSI should be awarded is whether the employee made a significant and lasting contribution to the command or Navy mission.

(c) Under no circumstances will a QSI be awarded if an employee has received a promotion during the same fiscal year.

(d) All QSIs will be submitted to the awards board for approval. The awards board will review the employee’s performance history for a period of 3 years prior to the approval of any QSI.

(e) DEP CHNAVPERS is the final approving authority for QSIs.
(2) Incentive and Financial Awards. Awards recognize employee outstanding achievements and accomplishments. Recognition should be made as soon after the achievement as possible and not at the end of the annual performance rating cycle. BUPERS-05 will send quarterly reminders to assist managers in recognizing employees throughout the year. Recognition is appropriate when an employee performs substantially beyond expectations. Accomplishments may include, but are not limited to:

(a) Exceptional program or project management or

(b) Individual contribution or teamwork that results in a high-quality product or service to a customer.

1. On-the-Spot Awards

   a. This award is utilized to quickly recognize and provide immediate reinforcement of one-time achievements by employees that have resulted in service of an exceptionally high quality or quantity. This award is particularly appropriate for rewarding and recognizing employee efforts that might otherwise go unrecognized.

   b. On-the-Spot awards range from $100 to $750, commensurate with the nature of the service or act being recognized.

   c. The head of the organizational unit, CO, OIC or DH may approve on-the-spot awards.

   d. Awards will be reviewed by BUPERS-05 to ensure compliance with all applicable regulations. BUPERS-05 may choose to forward any awards to the BUPERS Awards Board for review and final approval.

2. Special Act or Service Awards

   a. This award is utilized to recognize an individual or a group for a non-recurring, specific exemplary contribution within or outside normal job responsibility.

   b. The head of the organizational unit, CO, OIC or DH may approve financial awards up to $3,500 cumulative within a fiscal year.

   c. Awards will be reviewed by BUPERS-05 to ensure compliance with all applicable regulations. BUPERS-05 may choose to forward any awards to the BUPERS Awards Board for review and final approval.

3. Time-Off Awards

   a. Time-off awards will not be counted against the awards budget.
b. The head of the organizational unit, CO, OIC or DH must consider daily labor costs, the impact on use-or-lose leave and the amount of worked overtime. CO, OIC or DH is authorized to approve time-off awards up to 60 hours cumulative within a fiscal year.

c. Time-off awards granted in excess of 60 hours cumulative must be submitted to the awards board for review and approval.

d. Time-off awards may only be awarded for 4 hours or more.

b. COQ and COY. The COQ and COY Program is designed to recognize and reward General Schedule (GS) civilian employees whose accomplishments, performance and conduct are above the normal standards of excellence.

(1) Eligibility. Civilian employees may be selected only once in any 24-month period as the command civilian employee of the quarter and year and only once in a 12-month period at the department level in any of the below categories.

(2) Smaller commands and activities may have a different COQ and COY organization structure than larger commands. For example, a selection of only one COQ per quarter and one COY per year may be more appropriate because of the smaller number of civilians onboard and smaller award budget. An example for a larger command structure is a selection of three civilians per quarter and year as indicated:

(a) Senior Civilian Employee. All permanent or term civilian employees in grades GS-11 through GS-13, who have been employed by the nominating command for at least 1 year prior to the quarter in which they are being nominated.

(b) Mid-Grade Civilian Employee. All permanent or term civilian employees in grades GS-07 through GS-09 who have been employed by the nominating command for at least 1 year prior to the quarter in which they are being nominated.

(c) Junior Civilian Employee. All permanent or term civilian employees in grades GS-04 through GS-06 who have been employed by the nominating command for at least 1-year prior to the quarter in which they are being nominated.

(3) Awards Board Voting. The awards board members will review and vote quarterly on recommended nominees. The awards board will evaluate the following areas:

(a) Achievement or service that is exceptional when measured against the position requirements of the individual, which should exceed the contributions and service of others with comparable responsibilities.

(b) Accomplishments which show unusual management abilities, innovative thinking, and or outstanding leadership that benefit the command.
(c) Indications of innovative leadership or highly successful programs or projects, which had impact beyond the command.

c. Recognition Awards

(1) Informal recognition awards, such as letters of appreciation, are intended to recognize contributions informally.

(2) Length of service (LOS) certificate award is to recognize significant milestones in employees’ careers and emphasize service to the Government. LOS certificates are available in 5-year increments starting at the 10-year LOS. BUPERS issues LOS certificates based on the civilian employee’s official service computation date.

(3) Retirement certificates are issued per reference (d).

d. Honorary Awards. References (b) and (c) list Department of the Navy and Department of Defense (DoD) honorary awards in recognition of contributions to the Department’s national security, mission, humanitarian or peacekeeping efforts. Examples include meritorious, superior and distinguished civilian service awards. These awards will not be used as retirement awards.

e. Military Cash Program and Beneficial Suggestion Program. Beneficial suggestions that warrant adoption and cash award up to $2,000 will be submitted to the awards board for approval. Reference (e) contains detailed information on this type of award.

f. FEA Regional Awards Program. The FEA regional awards program instruction will depend on the location of the BUPERS activity or command region. For the Mid-South region, the FEA announcement and solicitation is requested annually from the Federal agencies within the Memphis, TN area.

(1) The FEA Employee of the Year Award Program is an effective means of publicizing the high caliber of devoted and dedicated civilian and military employees in the Federal service to the public and the Federal community.

(2) The selected Federal employee(s) of the year, in each category, will receive on-stage recognition and a plaque at an awards luncheon.

(3) Eligibility. Nominees must be either civilian employees of the Federal government or uniformed military personnel. Eligibility excludes local heads of installations and agencies, Senior Executive Service civilians, O6 and above (military) and contractors in all categories.

(a) All nominees must have served a minimum of 12 months (months do not have to be consecutive) in Federal service, at least 6-months of which must have been in the activity or command region, e.g., Memphis, TN metropolitan area.
(b) Award recipients from the previous year are eligible nominees for the following year’s nominations.

(c) To ensure all deserving civilian and military employees in the Federal service receive recognition for exemplary job performance and contributions to the government, public or community, in some categories and according to the number of employees located at the agency or installation, multiple awards may be presented.

9. Civilian Awards Budget. The following policies apply concerning civilian awards program:

   a. The United States Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) establish the awards budget guidance for each year. The comptroller of the organization will establish a budget and grant budgetary approval for awards and QSIs.

   b. The fiscal year civilian awards budget is based on the total salary levels for all civilians on board 30 September of the previous fiscal year. No dollars will be associated with vacant positions or will be allocated as new civilians report on board throughout the fiscal year. Awards budget amounts may be changed during any year if mandated by higher level authority.

   c. The total yearly cost of a QSI (3 percent of salary), regardless of when awarded, will count against the awards budget.

   d. The COQ and COY awards will come from the head of the organizational unit’s award budget. Award amounts as follows: COQ departmental winners - $500 and 4-hours time-off; COQ command winners – $1,000 and 8-hours time-off; and COY command winners - $1,500 and 8-hours time-off.

10. Questions. Questions may be directed to the BUPERS frequently asked questions (FAQ) e-mail box at MILL_BUPERS-05_FAQ@navy.mil.

11. Records Management

   a. Records created as a result of this instruction [notice, change transmittal], regardless of format or media, must be maintained and dispositioned for the standard subject identification codes (SSIC) 1000 through 13000 series per the records disposition schedules located on the Department of the Navy/Assistant for Administration (DON/AA), Directives and Records Management Division (DRMD) portal page at https://portal.secnv.navy.mil/orgs/DUSNM/DONAA/DRM/Records-and-Information-Management/Approved%20Record%20Schedules/Forms/AllItems.aspx.

   b. For questions concerning the management of records related to this instruction [notice, change transmittal] or the records disposition schedules, please contact your local records manager or the DON/AA DRMD program office.
and statutory authority using OPNAV 5215/40 Review of Instruction. This instruction will be in effect for 10 years, unless revised or cancelled in the interim, and will be reissued by the 10-year anniversary date if it is still required, unless it meets one of the exceptions in OPNAVINST 5215.17A, paragraph 9. Otherwise, if the instruction is no longer required, it will be processed for cancellation as soon as the cancellation is known following the guidance in OPNAV Manual 5215.1 of May 2016.


![Signature]

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Releasability and distribution:  
This instruction is cleared for public release and is available electronically only via BUPERS Web site, [http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/Pages/default.aspx).
GUIDANCE FOR A FAIR, CREDIBLE AND TRANSPARENT AWARD PROCESS

1. Civilian awards are utilized to increase productivity by recognizing and rewarding employees when significant contributions are made. The Defense Performance Management and Appraisal Program (DPMAP) requires continuous rewards and recognition throughout the entire year. Therefore, civilian awards are no longer tied to end of year performance. Additionally, it is not expected that each employee will be awarded a standard percentage of their salary. This is counter to DPMAP guidance and employees should be recognized and rewarded based on their achievements, not their pay grade. It is important that the head of the organizational unit (i.e., department heads, officers in charge (OIC), commanding officers (CO)) closely review all awards coming from their office. This is to ensure a fair, credible and transparent awards process. Things to look for in award nomination submissions:

   a. **Consistency in Award Justifications.** Ensure write-ups are commensurate with the award amounts (monetary and time-off hours) being recommended. For example, award nominations for $500 should equate to the same or similar level of achievement. A $1000 award should equate to a more significant accomplishment or achievement than the $250 award. A $250 award does not need half a page or more for justification. Likewise, an award for $1000 would be best served with a paragraph or two.

   b. **Consistency in Award Amounts.** Ensure award amounts are fair and equitable across your departments. Did one division director award $500 for an effort and a different division director award $1,000 for a similar effort? Try to standardize within your organizational unit.

   c. **Duplication of Awards.** Ensure you are not awarding an employee twice for the same achievement.

   d. **Awards Are Based On Specific Actions.** Ensure award submissions are not written up as performance awards, tied specifically to critical elements within the performance plan. Performance within these elements is recognized by the ratings given in the annual appraisal.

2. Additionally, BUPERS-05 recommends setting certain thresholds within your organizational unit. For example:

   a. **$250** - The employee performed a specific task beyond his or her normal daily job, it may have had impact internally within the division.

   b. **$500** - The employee performed a specific task beyond his or her normal daily job, it may have had impact internally within the department.

   c. **$750** - The employee performed a specific task beyond his or her normal daily job, it may have had impact within the Command.

   d. **$1000** - The employee performed a special act that had significant impact across the command.
e. $1500 - The employee performed a special act that had significant impact within the Navy.

Please note, these are examples ONLY. Organizational units can establish their own thresholds and guidance for each award level as long as they are fair, credible and transparent.

3. BUPERS-05 reviews award submissions for consistent application across the command. A review at the organizational unit level will expedite award processing for your employees.