



## United States Department of the Interior

10-24-06

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Washington, D.C. 20240

OCT 17 2006

## Memorandum

To: Deputy Assistant Secretaries  
Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Director, Bureau of Indian Education  
Central Office Directors

From: Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs 

Subject: Indian Affairs Award Policy

Effective immediately the Awards and Recognition Policy-Monetary Limits of Awards memorandum dated March 3, 2006 is modified as explained below.

An employee may not receive a combination of awards from all sources (inside or outside the employee's chain of command) that exceed \$5000 in any Fiscal Year, without written approval of the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs. This includes performance, Special Thanks for Achieving Results (STAR), and other awards. This includes the cash value of quality step increases, time-off awards, group awards, and on-the-spot awards.

A STAR award given by someone from outside the employee's chain of command must include written concurrence of the employee's first line supervisor.

Any questions should be directed to your servicing human resources office.



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240



5-9-08

MAR - 9 2006

Memorandum:

To: Deputy Assistant Secretaries  
Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs  
All Central Office Directors  
All Regional Directors  
Director, Office of Indian Education Programs

From: *Acting* Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs *Mike [Signature]*

Subject: Awards and Recognition Policy - Monetary Limits of Awards

This memorandum rescinds the previous memorandum dated October 15, 2004, with the subject: Awards and Recognition Policy.

Pending completion and signature of a final Indian Affairs Manual on Recognition and Awards Policy, the following pertains to awards given to employees in the Office of the Secretary for Indian Affairs and in the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

## POLICY

Employees may receive awards at any time. The cash or cash equivalent limit that any one employee may receive, without higher level approval, has been raised from \$2000 to \$2750. No employee may exceed this limit, for any one performance rating period, without the approval of an official delegated the authority for the amount paid. (See the Table of Approval Authority for Performance Awards.) Performance rating periods for Indian Affairs are from October 1 to September 30. (The rating cycle for the Office of Indian Education is July 1 to June 30.)

### Performance Awards

#### Cash Awards

Performance awards may come in several forms: cash, Quality Step Increases (QSI), or time-off-awards. Performance Awards are granted at the conclusion of an employee's performance rating period. The end date for performance rating periods is normally September 30; however, there are circumstances whereby performance rating periods are extended beyond that date. Employee cash awards for performance, for any one performance rating period, may not exceed the delegated limit listed in the chart below without written approval from the next higher level with the authority to grant the amount requested.

**Table of Approval Authority for Performance Awards**

AMOUNT	APPROVING OFFICIAL	REDELEGATION*
Up to and including \$2750	Deputy Regional Directors/Division Directors/Superintendents	Yes
\$2751-\$3700	Education Line Officers, Office Directors (who report through another Office Director to a Deputy Assistant Secretary or equivalent)	No
\$3701-\$4000	Deputy Bureau Directors Office Directors (who report to a Deputy Assistant Secretary or equivalent), Regional Directors	No
\$4001-\$4599	Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Deputy Assistant Secretary	No
\$4001-\$5000	Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs Director, Office of Indian Education	No
\$5001-\$10,000	Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs	No
\$10,001-\$25,000	OPM	No
Over \$25,000	President	No

\* Approving officials listed in the chart above have authority to redelegate upward approvals to subordinate supervisors as long as the delegated approval authority does not exceed \$2750. All redelegations must also be in compliance with delegation instructions issued by higher supervisory authorities.

### Quality Step Increases (QSI)

For purposes of performance awards, a QSI is considered a cash award. Therefore, the annual value of the step increase (as determined by the pay table for the year for which the QSI becomes effective and the grade and step of the employee) along with any other cash awards given for performance, may not exceed an approving official's limit in the table above. (For calendar year 2006, those with limits of \$3700 or more have sufficient authority to grant QSIs.) **Note: by regulation, only one QSI may be granted in a 52 week period. An employee must have been in his/her position for 6 months, or a similar predecessor to that position, before a QSI can be given.**

### Time-Off-Awards

When time-off-awards are granted as a performance award, (in lieu of cash or a QSI) the monetary value of the time-off (based upon the hourly rate of the employee, calculated according to the pay table in effect at the time the award is approved) may not exceed an approving official's limit in the Table of Authority for Performance Awards. Time-off awards may be granted in conjunction with other types of performance awards (cash and QSIs), however, the total value of all such performance awards cannot exceed the approving official's limit.

### STAR Awards

#### *STAR Award Given by Someone in an Employee's Chain of Command*

Special Thanks for Achieving Results (STAR) awards. STAR awards can be given anytime during a performance year. STAR awards may be in cash or in time-off. STAR awards are paid by the office who recommends the award. If the STAR award is recommended and approved within the employee's chain of command, the amount of the reward counts toward the approving official's limit. Such an award counts against the performance rating period limit during which the award was approved. Thus, a STAR award approved on September 15, 2005 counts toward the 2004-5 performance year limit and a STAR award approved on October 15, 2005 counts toward the 2005-6 performance year limit.

#### *STAR Award Given by Someone from Outside the Employee's Chain of Command*

If the STAR award is recommended and approved by an official who is outside the chain of command for the employee, then it does not count toward the performance period award limits for that employee or his/her supervisor. Such an award must be first agreed to with the employee's first line supervisor.

### Other Awards

Suggestion awards, gainsharing travel awards, on-the-spot awards, and group awards given by the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs received by an employee do not count towards the limits placed on performance and STAR awards.

### Questions and Answers:

Q: I am an Office Director who reports to a Deputy Assistant Secretary. In May, 2005 I gave an employee a \$3700 cash award for the rating period that ended on September 30, 2004. Can I give the same employee another \$3700 cash award in January, 2006 for the rating period that ended on September, 2005, without seeking higher level approval?

A: Yes. As long as the awards are for different rating periods and do not exceed your monetary approval limit for the rating period for which the award is being given, the employee may be granted the award, without higher level approval, even if they occur within the same 12 month period. For various reasons, award payments are delayed; and thus, may overlap in a 12 month period. You must clearly mark for what performance rating period the award is being granted.

Q: I am a Deputy Regional Director. I gave an employee a \$1500 cash award for the performance period which ended on September 30, 2005. Can I grant a second performance award to the same employee for the same performance period as long as I keep the amount under my approval limit of \$2750 (without seeking higher level approval)?

A: Yes. The sum total of all awards you give to one employee as a result of his/her efforts during a particular rating period cannot exceed your delegated amount. Since your limit is \$2750, you could give two separate awards of \$1500 and \$1250 without exceeding your limit; however, if the second award exceeds your delegated limit of \$2750, and it is for performance during the same rating period, then you must seek higher level approval.

Q: I am an Education Line Officer. During the course of the rating cycle, the Director for Indian Education gave one of my employees a \$5000 STAR award as recognition for work they did on a particular project. Am I now precluded from approving a performance award for the same employee at the end of the rating period?

A: Yes. Since the Director for Indian Education is in an Education Line Officer's chain of command, you must seek higher level approval for any awards granted during a performance period, if the accumulated sum of the awards exceed your approval limit. If the award was recommended and paid for by someone outside of the line officer's chain of command, e.g., a Regional Director, then the amount would not count towards your limit. This exception is made so that employees who provide exceptional services to organizations outside their chain of command can be rewarded by their clients. You should note that you are not precluded from recommending this same employee for an additional award; however, since your award approval limit is \$2750 and the employee has already received an award for the same performance year of \$5000, any additional awards would have to be approved by an approving official who had approval authority over \$5000.

Q: I am a Division Director under the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Management. A Regional Director approved my employee for an award. Can this be done? Whose budget does the award come out of?

A: Yes, an employee may receive a cash award from another manager outside of his/her chain of command. When this occurs, the awarding manager must consult with you before the award is announced or authorized to ensure that you agree that the employee should receive such an award. (Sometimes there are circumstances for which an employee should not receive an award that another supervisor may not be aware of, e.g., pending serious discipline, less than successful performance in own job, etc.) The official who approves the award, in this case the regional director, must also pay for the award and ensure the amount does not exceed his/her designated monetary limit.

Q: I am a Deputy Assistant Secretary. I want to give an employee who is a GS-13 step 6 a QSI. The QSI will be effective on January 15, 2006. (The employee works in Reston, VA.) Can I also give the person a cash award?

A: Since the QSI will be effective during the new pay year, the value of the QSI is calculated using the new pay table for the locality area of Washington-Baltimore-Northern Virginia. The pay rate for the GS-13 step 6 is \$90,242. The pay rate for the GS-13 step 7 is \$92,820. Therefore, the annual value of the QSI is the difference between the two rates or \$2578. As Deputy Assistant Secretary, the amount of your performance award approval is \$4999. Therefore, you can grant this employee a QSI, plus a cash award of \$2421, without exceeding your approval limit for a particular performance year.

Q: I am a Superintendent. I gave an employee a STAR award during the performance year 2004-5 of \$2750. Can I now give the employee a performance award for the performance year 2004-5 without seeking higher level approval?

A: No. STAR awards given during the performance year count towards the monetary limit of awards that an employee may receive. Since the STAR award was given to that employee during Performance Year 2004-5, any further awards, given by you to that employee for work done during that performance year, also count towards the monetary limit. Therefore, you will need to seek appropriate higher level approval. You could, however, give a STAR or performance award for the current performance year of 2005-6.