



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT  
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

**MEMORANDUM FOR: HEADS OF DEPTS AND AGENCIES AND IGs AND CIGIE**

FROM: Kathleen M. McGettigan, Acting Director

Subject: Call for Nominations for FY2021 Presidential Rank Awards

I am pleased to announce the call for nominations for the FY2021 Presidential Rank Awards (PRA) program. As President Biden stated in EO 14003, “[c]areer civil servants are the backbone of the Federal workforce, providing the expertise and experience necessary for the critical functioning of the Federal Government.” Through good times and challenging ones, Federal workers persist every day to deliver on their agencies’ critical missions. The PRA program allows us to celebrate some of the most extraordinary accomplishments.

A Presidential Rank Award is one of the most prestigious awards in the Federal career civil service; and, accordingly, I am asking you to nominate your most exceptional career executives and senior professionals – those who have made extraordinary and lasting contributions to the Federal Government. The individuals who are nominated and chosen for these awards perform valuable services on behalf of the American public and consistently demonstrate strength, integrity, industry, and a relentless commitment to public service. We are looking for extraordinary leaders who have made significant contributions in delivering mission-critical solutions, providing excellent customer service, and being good stewards of taxpayers’ dollars.

The PRA is an opportunity to recognize and reward your highest performers. These leaders address some of the most difficult organizational challenges while developing a strong and diverse workforce for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This award program was established by statute in 1978 as a means of recognizing extraordinary performance. This is an excellent opportunity to recognize career Senior Executive Service (SES) members and other senior career employees (SL/ST) who have made significant impacts on your agency's effectiveness on a sustained basis and communicate to the public the value of their leadership which provides the highest level of service to the Nation. I encourage agencies of all sizes to draw upon a diverse workforce, including one that is based on an array of skills and talents to nominate every deserving individual for this honor.

**Nominations for the FY2021 Presidential Rank Awards are due April 9, 2021. Beginning this year, agencies should submit nominations electronically.**

Inspectors General should nominate executives through the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE).

By regulation, all agencies, as well as Inspectors General nominations made through CIGIE, may nominate up to nine percent of their career SES and SL/ST populations; however, Agency Heads should consider their fiscal conditions and resources needed to meet overall agency mission priorities in determining the number of nominations to submit. Earlier this year, OPM asked agencies to provide a list of nominees for FY2020 PRAs to maintain their eligibility and consideration in FY2021. Agencies may amend and/or supplement this list for FY2021, however, nominations cannot exceed the nine percent threshold set forth at [5 CFR § 451.301](#). Agencies with fewer than 12 SES or SL/ST may still nominate one SES or SL/ST member respectively.

As set forth in [5 U.S.C. § 4507\(d\)\(1\) and \(2\)](#), awards for the Distinguished Rank may not exceed one percent, and for the Meritorious Rank may not exceed five percent, of the career SES and SL/ST populations. The President makes the final decision no later than September 30<sup>th</sup>.

Attached is detailed guidance for preparing and submitting nominations. Please review the guidance carefully as there are necessary changes to the nomination review and vetting processes. Due to on-going precautions concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, and to ensure the health and safety of everyone, nominations for the FY2021 PRA will only be accepted electronically. Additionally, unlike past years, boards to determine finalists for the awards will be conducted virtually. Furthermore, there are changes to the billing process for on-site evaluations in the guidance. Beginning with this award cycle, agencies may submit only one Interagency Agreement for vetting costs and will be required to provide completed billing documents for on-site investigations of finalists before any work commencing.

Nominees are subject to extremely rigorous reviews and evaluation process, therefore, when considering potential nominees, agencies must exercise due diligence in reviewing the background of nominees including: any issues relating to personal and professional conduct, such as past misconduct or disciplinary actions; timely payment of Federal taxes; findings in a final resolution of an Equal Employment Opportunity proceeding suggesting that the individual discriminated in violation of a civil rights statute; findings by an Office of Inspector General (or equivalent) proceeding that the individual engaged in misconduct; and evidence of as yet unadjudicated misconduct in relation to Office of Inspector General (or equivalent) matters, as well as the programs and organizational components for which the nominees have any responsibility. This is to help determine the appropriateness of the individuals receiving this Presidential recognition. (In relying upon proceedings which have not concluded, or to which the individual was not a party, it will be important to consider countervailing accounts and evidence as well.)

If you or your staff members would like any additional information about the program, please contact Kristopher Goas, Manager, Senior Executive Resources Services, by telephone at (202) 606-4269 or Karen English, PRA Program Manager, by email at [PRAProgram@opm.gov](mailto:PRAProgram@opm.gov).

Attachments (see 508-conformant, fillable PDFs below): FY2021 Presidential Rank Awards Program Guidance, Senior Career & SES Nomination Templates, Biographical/Career Summary Template, Authorization for Release of Information Form, Code of Conduct Self-Certification Form, 7600 A/B Billing Forms,

cc: Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCOs), Deputy CHCOs, and Human Resources Directors