



Natural Resources Conservation Service  
210 Walnut Street, Room 693  
Des Moines, IA 50309-2180

April 22, 2013

## IOWA INSTRUCTION 360-395 – NRCS EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION PROGRAM

### **IA395.0 PURPOSE**

This Iowa Instruction specifies how Iowa will administer its employee recognition program.

This Iowa Instruction replaces Iowa Instruction 360-395, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, dated June 25, 2012.

### **IA395.1 SCOPE**

These instructions will be followed all employees.

### **IA395.2 FILING INSTRUCTIONS**

This Iowa Instruction will be posted on the Iowa NRCS Employee Website, which can be accessed under the Iowa NRCS eDirectives System section at this link [Iowa NRCS eDirectives website](#).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jay T. Mar, acting".

Jay T. Mar  
State Conservationist

Attachment

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(IA Instruction 360-395 Second Edition – April 2013)

*Helping People Help the Land*

An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

## IOWA INSTRUCTION 360-395 – NRCS EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION PROGRAM

### 1. PURPOSE:

This Iowa Instruction specifies how Iowa will administer its employee recognition program.

This Iowa Instruction replaces Iowa Instruction 360-395, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, dated June 25, 2012.

### 2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Natural Resources Conservation Service Employee Recognition Program policy is provided in General Manual, Title 360 – Human Resources, Part 414 – NRCS Employee Recognition Program. To ensure compliance with the General Manual, this instruction is being provided to clarify how Iowa will implement and administer its employee recognition program.

### 3. MONETARY AWARDS

Iowa's monetary awards program recognizes the valuable contributions of Iowa NRCS employees. Funds allocated to Areas and the State Office will be available for the Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations (ASTC-FO) and State Office Principle Staff members to recognize their staffs through Extra Effort Awards and Spot Awards. Funds will be allocated at the State Level for Performance Bonus Awards. This instruction does not cover Suggestion/Invention Award Procedures. Please contact Human Resources (HR) directly for instructions on how to nominate an employee for a Suggestion/Invention Award.

- A. All monetary award nominations will be documented by the nominating employee on an AD-287-2, Recommendation and Approval of Awards, and forwarded through the supervisory chain to a Leadership Team (LT) Member for review. The LT Member will forward the form to his/her HR Assistant in the Iowa State Office. *(Please do not use EmpowHR to nominate an employee for an award.)*
  - An Awards Flowchart is attached that will provide further guidance on the AD-287-2 review and approval process. (See ATTACHMENT 1—Monetary Awards Flowchart)
- B. The State Conservationist (STC) will:
  - Determine the state-wide budget available for all monetary awards based on allocated funding within 30 days of notification of Iowa's allocation.
  - Allocate individual employee recognition budgets to each Area and the State Office for use in nominating employees for Extra Effort Awards and Spot Awards. (These budgets will also be used for purchase of nonmonetary award items. Nonmonetary award procedures are covered in the next section.)
    - All awards for LT Members will be charged to the State Office and those members will be included for the purpose of determining the State Office's allocation.
  - Notify the LT Members regarding the availability of employee recognition funds when they are made available.
- C. The Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations will:
  - Forward information to the STC for consideration when special circumstances warrant awards given in excess of an Area's allocation.

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- D. Awards for group recognition that include members from more than one Area (including State Office) will be charged to the Area originating the award.
- E. Extra Effort Awards and Spot Awards will occur when actions merit throughout the fiscal year (budget permitting), ensuring that contributions are recognized in a timely manner, rather than delayed for end of year recognition.
  - o Spot Awards that are older than three months past the ending date of the event/activity being recognized may not be approved. Documentation supporting why the nomination was not submitted in a timely manner must be included and will be used by the STC when making the approval determination.
- F. Performance Awards are supported by documentation provided in the year end summary performance appraisal. Supervisors are not required to submit AD-287-2 forms for each employee receiving a Performance Award.
  - o All performance evaluations that warrant an Outstanding Rating **must** be provided to the STC for review prior to the Reviewer signing the rating in EmpowHR.

### 4. NONMONETARY AWARDS

#### **Bennett Bucks Award Program:**

Iowa's nonmonetary award program will also be referred to as the "Bennett Bucks" program. When a supervisor observes an employee's noteworthy accomplishment, he or she will fill out a "Bennett Buck" (see ATTACHMENT 3—Bennett Buck Template) and give it to the employee. The Bennett Buck must include the supervisor's signature and a description of the accomplishment. The employee can redeem the Bennett Buck at a Bennett Buck Store and obtain a nonmonetary award. Assistant State Conservationists—Field Operations (ASTC-FO) have the option of requiring supervisors in their area to obtain ASTC-FO approval before Bennett Bucks are awarded. A Bennett Buck Flow Chart is attached that will provide further guidance of the process (see ATTACHMENT 2—Bennett Buck Flowchart).

- A. Award Information. There will be two levels for Bennett Buck award items, corresponding to the value of the award items. Level One items are given in recognition of noteworthy accomplishments that go beyond normal day-to-day actions. The value of Level One items is in the \$20 - \$70 range. Level Two items are given in recognition of noteworthy accomplishments that greatly increase efficiency or significantly exceed supervisor expectations. The value of Level Two items is in the \$70 – \$150 range. Examples of both the Level One and Level Two Bennett Buck are attached (see ATTACHMENT 3—Bennett Buck Template). Management Services Division will identify the award level for each item in the Bennett Bucks Catalogue. Employees may save two Level One Bennett Bucks to redeem for a Level Two Bennett Buck Store item. Employees may redeem one Level Two Bennett Buck for two Level One Bennett Buck Store items.
  - o Bennett Bucks and awards received for Bennett Bucks cannot be transferred to other employees.
  - o Bennett Bucks may be given for group accomplishments. In this case, each group member will receive a Bennett Buck.

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- B. Nomination Process: An NRCS or partner employee can nominate any NRCS or partner employee for Bennett Buck recognition by filling out a Bennett Buck form and forwarding it to the employee's supervisor. The supervisor will present the Bennett Buck if appropriate.
- C. Award Process: Bennett Bucks may only be awarded by direct supervisors or supervisors in the employee's supervisory chain. For instance, an ASTC-FO may give a Bennett Buck to one of his/her District Conservationists or to a Soil Conservationist working in his/her area. However, a Soil Conservationist cannot award a Bennett Buck to his/her District Conservationist. Likewise, a District Conservationist cannot give a Bennett Buck to a Soil Conservationist he/she does not supervise.
  - o Supervisors must provide sufficient explanation on the Bennett Buck form to justify the award.
  - o All LT Members, including the ASTC-FOs, who receive Bennett Bucks will redeem those Bennett Bucks from the State Office Bennett Bucks Store.
  - o Store Managers are eligible to receive Bennett Bucks, but when they redeem them, someone other than the Store Manager must sign the Award Inventory Tracking Spreadsheet to document the transaction.
- D. Partner Employees. Bennett Bucks may be given to partners, but the office manager nominating the partner for the award must obtain approval first from the partner's employer. To obtain partnership employer approval, the office manager should forward, through his or her LT Member, a Bennett Buck form to his/her designated HR Assistant. HR will contact the partnership employer to obtain approval. Once approval is granted, HR will notify the office manager to proceed. If required by the partnership employer, award items will be embroidered with the employer's logo. Items may need to be special ordered in this case.

### **Bennett Bucks Store Management:**

Every Area and the State Office will establish and maintain a Bennett Buck Store where nonmonetary award items will be kept. Each ASTC-FO will designate, in writing, a Bennett Buck Store Manager (see ATTACHMENT 6 – Store Manager Appointment Letter). The Assistant State Conservationist—Management (ASTC-M) will designate the State Office Store Manager. The ASTC-M will keep a record of each Store Manager's appointment memorandum.

- A. Store Managers must be permanent NRCS employees. Store Manager responsibilities include:
  - o Managing store inventory. The Store Manager shall keep an accurate record of store inventory at all times and shall be responsible for replenishing inventory when necessary.
  - o Keeping record of all store transactions. The Store Manager shall document on the Award Inventory Tracking Spreadsheet (See ATTACHMENT 4—Award Inventory Tracking Spreadsheet) every instance of an item going out or coming into the store.
  - o Filing Bennett Bucks. The Store Manager shall maintain a file of all Bennett Bucks that have been redeemed at the store. Bennett Bucks shall be kept on file for at least three years after award redemption. On a quarterly basis, the Store Manager shall forward copies of all Bennett Bucks to the HR staff. Store Managers should forward the copies by January 15 for the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the FY, April 15 for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, July 15 for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, and October 15 for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter.

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- Performing inventory reviews. The Store Manager shall perform an inventory of the store on a quarterly basis. The inventory shall include a physical counting of each award item to ensure the actual inventory matches the numbers on the Award Inventory Tracking Spreadsheet. The bottom of the Award Inventory Tracking Spreadsheets shall be signed at the end of each quarter to document that the inventory took place. Award Inventory Tracking Spreadsheets shall be kept on file for three years.
  - Assisting award recipients with selecting and obtaining their awards.
- B. Each Store Manager will be responsible for ordering replacement items, but Store Managers will only order the items that have been approved for Bennett Buck Store Inventory. Management Services Division (MSD) will maintain a Bennett Bucks Catalogue that contains the ordering information for each store item.
- C. Each Bennett Buck Store will contain the same type of award items, although quantities of items may differ.
- At ASTC-FO discretion, Store Managers may share inventory amongst stores. If this becomes necessary to meet a shortage of inventory in an area, the sending Area's Store Manager will send an email to the receiving Area's Store Manager identifying the item description(s) and quantity sent. The receiving Area's Store Manager will reply to that email with a confirmation that all items have been received. These emails will be used as supporting documentation to record the transaction on the Award Inventory Tracking Spreadsheet.
- D. Unredeemed Bennett Buck Store items must be kept in a securely locked location at all times.
- E. Upon redemption of each Bennett Buck, the Store Manager must sign the Award Inventory Tracking Spreadsheet, and the receiving employee must sign the back of the Bennett Buck.
- F. Each Store Manager must keep record of the supporting documentation as it pertains to the Award Inventory Tracking Spreadsheet. Each entry in the spreadsheet that either adds to or depletes the award inventory will be supported by appropriate documentation. For instance, if a spreadsheet entry states that a shirt was given to an employee on a specific date, then the Store Manager must be able to produce the Bennett Buck that was redeemed for that award. If a spreadsheet entry states that five shirts were added to replenish inventory, then the Store Manager must be able to produce an invoice or packing slip that identifies five shirts were purchased. For additions to the store inventory, the Store Manager will sign the Award Inventory Tracking Spreadsheet.

### **Bennett Bucks Store Review:**

Someone other than the Store Manager must conduct a semiannual review of each Bennett Buck Store. At least one of the two yearly reviews must be completed by the ASTC-FO (ASTC-M for the State Office). The other review will be completed by a permanent NRCS employee designated by the ASTC-FO. The reviewer shall forward a signed copy of the Semiannual Inventory Certification Statement (see ATTACHMENT 5—Semiannual Review Certification Statement) to the ASTC-M by July 15 and

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January 15 of each year. The ASTC-FO, ASTC-M, or STC can direct out-of-cycle reviews at any time. Each semiannual review shall include:

- Verify that there is a signed Award Inventory Tracking Spreadsheet for each quarter.
- Verify that appropriate documentation exists for each entry on the Award Inventory Tracking Spreadsheet.
- Review the justification for the award written on the back of each Bennett Buck to ensure that sufficient justification was provided. Supervisors who did not provide sufficient justification will be counseled by the ASTC-FO or ASTC-M.
- Compare actual store inventory to the inventory reflected on the Award Inventory Tracking Spreadsheet. Reviewers will work with Store Managers to correct any discrepancies.

Approved By: *Martin Odlin, acting*

Date: *4/23/2013*

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Attachments:

1. Monetary Awards Flow Chart
2. Bennett Buck Flow Chart
3. Bennett Buck Templates
4. Award Inventory Tracking Spreadsheet
5. Semiannual Review Certification Statement
6. Example Store Manager Appointment Letter