



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Heads and Acting Heads of Departments and Agencies

FROM: Scott Kuper, Director, U.S. Office of Personnel Management

DATE: September 21, 2026

RE: Delegation of OPM Review and Approval Authority for Individual Cash and Performance Awards Exceeding \$10,000 and Not Exceeding \$25,000

One of the President's highest priorities for the federal workforce is to promote a culture of high-performance where excellence is celebrated and rewarded and low performance is swiftly addressed. Recent changes to the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) performance management regulations improves agencies' abilities to distinguish high levels of performance such that they may appropriately reward them for their achievements. To further support these efforts, OPM is removing a hurdle to agencies seeking to quickly reward employee performance.

Pursuant to the authority vested in the Director of OPM by 5 U.S.C. 1104, I hereby delegate to agency heads the authority to review and approve recommendations for individual awards in excess of \$10,000 but not in excess of \$25,000 under 5 U.S.C. 4502(b), provided that the agency head certifies that the suggestion, invention, superior accomplishment, or other meritorious effort for which the award is proposed is highly exceptional and unusually outstanding. This delegation of authority to review and approve recommendations for individual awards under 4502(b) is effective immediately and may be redelegated to the agency's Chief of Staff, Chief Human Capital Officer, or a Bureau or Component head. It may not be redelegated further. An agency official exercising this delegated authority acts pursuant to authority delegated by OPM and performs the OPM review and approval function for purposes of 5 U.S.C. 4502(b) and 5 C.F.R. 451.106(b) and 451.107(a). For purposes of 5 C.F.R. 451.106(b) and 451.107(a), submission of a recommendation to, and review and action by, an official exercising this delegated OPM authority constitutes submission to OPM and review and approval or disapproval by OPM.

This delegation is issued as part of broader reforms to Federal performance management. Awards covered under this delegation are identified under 5 U.S.C. 4503 (special act, suggestion, invention, and other agency awards), 4505 (awards to former employees) and 4505a (performance awards). This does not apply to Presidential awards (5 U.S.C. 4504), Presidential Rank Awards (5 U.S.C. 4507 and 4507a), or performance awards (5 U.S.C. 5384) for career appointees of the Senior Executive Service. A performance management system that makes meaningful distinctions in performance must also deliver meaningful rewards. Agencies should use this authority to provide larger awards to their highest performers, ensuring that the employees who contribute most to agency missions and results receive recognition commensurate with their contributions.

This delegation covers incentive awards to employees eligible to receive such awards under subchapter I of chapter 45 of title 5, United States Code. Awards in excess of \$25,000 remain subject to Presidential approval under 5 C.F.R. 451.107(b).

This memorandum does not waive, vary, suspend, or supersede 5 C.F.R. 451.106 or 451.107. Rather, consistent with 5 U.S.C. 1104(a)(2), it delegates the OPM review and approval function prescribed by 451.106(b) and 451.107(a). This memorandum does not delegate the functions prescribed by 451.107(b) or (c).

For further questions regarding this delegation, agency headquarters-level human resources offices may contact OPM at performance-management@opm.gov. Component-level human resources offices must contact their agency headquarters for assistance. Employees must contact their agency human resources office for assistance.

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