

Hints for Developing an NRCS Engineer of the Year Nomination (2023)

Background: Each year the Conservation Engineering Division (CED) assembles a panel to select the NRCS Engineer of the Year. Selection as NRCS Engineer of Year. After the panel selects the NRCS Engineer of the Year, CED nominates that individual for the Federal Engineer of the Year Award (FEYA). The Professional Engineers in Government (PEG), an Interest Group within the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE), sponsors the FEYA, which recognizes Federal engineers for their engineering achievements, continuing education, professional and technical society activities, other awards and honors, and civic and humanitarian activities.

NRCS uses the NSPE FEYA application form for nominations of the NRCS Engineer of the Year. Doing so ensures that the application captures the information requested by NSPE for the FEYA. CED receives an average of 4 to 6 nominations for the NRCS Engineer of the Year.

Helpful Hints:

The following hints provide information to nominators for developing strong applications. This does not cover every section of the application. If there are questions about any part of the application, contact Terri Ruch, National Energy Engineer, CED, at terri.ruch@usda.gov.

1. Read the entire form carefully to ensure understanding about the requested information.
2. All NRCS engineers are eligible. The panel receives more nominations for State Conservation Engineers than other engineers, however 6 of the last 10 NRCS Engineers of the Year were not State Conservation Engineers.
3. The nomination process does not have to be secret. The panel encourages the nominator to collaborate with the nominee, their spouse or significant other, and other people who know the nominee, to complete the form. Provided the engineer's supervisor is supportive, individual engineers can self-nominate and request their supervisor submit the application as the official nominator.
4. **PE Registration Section:** If the candidate holds registration in more than one state, make a note of that somewhere on the application. The panel representative responsible for compiling the final FEYA application for the NRCS candidate can edit the form to include it.
5. **Continuing Education Section:** This section of the form specifies listing only those items completed during the last three years of employment (July 2019 – June 2022).
6. **Professional/Technical Society Activities Section:** Provide information beyond a list of societies in which the nominee is a member. Include information such as service on technical committees and accomplishments of those committees. Consider using the Situation-Action-Results format (see item 9 below). Also include any technical papers prepared for society conferences, journal articles, etc. *(NOTE: For the FEYA, NSPE gives preference to those candidates who are NSPE members, make sure to list NSPE if the candidate is a member or took part in NSPE activities.)*

7. **Civic and Humanitarian Activities Section:** The instructions explicitly ask for a summary of activities. Do not just include a list of organizations without further description. Include information about the organization, its mission, any offices the candidate held, hours involved (annually), what the candidate did for the organization, and the results of the candidate's involvement. (For example, how much money raised, for what purpose, the impact of the fundraising). Be explicit and consider using the Situation-Action-Results format (see item 9 below).
8. **Engineering Achievements Section:** The **Eligibility** section of the FEYA application states that "Individual agency nominees must be currently engaged in the practice of engineering as an employee of the federal government in either a managerial or technical position.". The review panel often sees nominations for engineers who served details in NRCS administrative and management positions not directly related to engineering. The panel, nor NSPE, will not consider this time. Further, the **Engineering Achievements** section of the form specifies that "The statement should include engineering achievements in design, research, development or management during the nominee's engineering career but with strong emphasis on the **last three years (July 2019 – June 2022)**." Focusing on the engineer's contributions over the past three years helps to ensure nominators can describe everything within the 300-word limit.
9. For both the **Civic and Humanitarian Activities** and **Engineering Achievements** portions of the form, be specific. Select two or three (maybe four) items the nominee worked on and provide details of their actions. Consider using the Situation-Action-Results format to describe each item by answering the following questions: (1) What was the situation? (2) What did the nominee do to address the situation? (3) What were the results of the nominee's actions?
Example: [SITUATION] Nominee oversees dam rehabilitation projects to bring these dams, originally constructed in the 1960s, up to current State and Federal Standards. [ACTION] Currently nominee coordinates \$24 million in NRCS financial and technical assistance and \$12 million in State and local funding with local sponsors and State government for five dam rehabilitation projects. [RESULT] Following rehabilitation, these five dams will continue to provide over \$2 million in average annual benefits; flood protection to 6 cities (29, 716 residents in 7,837 homes, and 1,173 business); water supply to over 400 homes and farms; and water-related recreation opportunities for over 400,000 visitors each year. (Note: Additional information such as when the candidate worked on these dams would also be helpful.)
10. Final thoughts:
 - Double and triple check for any spelling errors.
 - Use principles of Plain Language Writing. Be clear, be concise, and avoid use of passive voice.
 - The lead reviewer will work with nominators to capture additional or clarifying information for the FEYA application after selection of the NRCS Engineer of the Year.
 - Leave no blanks. If there are blanks on the form, reviewers cannot award points for blanks. (See **Selection Process** on the FEYA Application to review the process for awarding points.) The one exception to this is section **3. Agency Awards / Incentives Officer**. Either leave blank, or list Terri L. Ruch, PE, Engineer, CED, 1400 Independence Avenue, Room 4651-S, Washington, D.C. 20250. Phone: 202-720-5709. E-mail: terri.ruch@usda.gov