TO: State Directors
Rural Development

ATTN: Program Directors
Multi-Family Housing

FROM: Tony Hernandez
Administrator
Housing and Community Facilities Programs

SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 2014 Site Manager of the Year Recognition Program

We are pleased to announce guidelines for our annual Multi-Family Housing Site Manager of the Year program for Fiscal Year (FY) 2014.

Awards may be presented in each of the following three categories: (1) Site Manager of the Year for Housing for the Elderly; (2) Site Manager of the Year for Housing for Families; and (3) Site Manager of the Year for Farm Labor Housing. We will choose a national winner in each of the categories this spring. The awards will be presented during the Council for Affordable and Rural Housing’s 2014 Annual Meeting and Legislative Conference at Ritz-Carlton Pentagon City, Arlington, Virginia on June 8-10, 2014.

You should use the following selection criteria for making your choice in each category:

- Tenant satisfaction with the manager is high.
- Property has good curb appeal on a continuous basis.
- Manager has no incidents of noncompliance and no unresolved findings.
- Manager consistently does more than what is expected.

These criteria may be added to, but do not eliminate any. We ask that you use these primary criteria so that the program can be consistent Nationwide.

Please see the attached checklist (Attachment 2) to make sure that all items necessary for adequate judging of the entry are included. Please attach the completed checklist to your nomination package.

EXPIRATION DATE: December 31, 2014

1400 Independence Ave, S.W. - Washington DC 20250-0700
Web: http://www.rurdev.usda.gov
Committed to the future of rural communities.
"USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender."
To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (Voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).
As in past years, if you want a certificate of recognition for your State winners signed by a National Office official, please submit Attachment 5. Do not include the certificate request in your nomination package, as it may be overlooked. This form should be sent by fax to (202) 720-0302 or e-mail to tonya.boykin@usda.gov.

In those cases where you are requesting a signed certificate only, and are not entering your site manager in the national competition, please reconsider. It is well worth the time and effort of preparing a nomination package if your site manager is selected as the best in the country and is eligible to attend the awards ceremony in the Nation’s capital. If you are submitting the name of someone to be considered for National Site Manager, please submit a complete package. This should include all the information you used in determining the selection at the State level, and should contain all of the items provided in Attachment 2, along with the completed checklist.

Good photographs and letters of commendation from public officials and tenants are always beneficial. The selection panel at the National Office level has only the material you submit upon which to base their determination of the winners. Use any materials at your disposal to showcase your nominee at his or her best in each category. If your candidate has done an outstanding job in an area not listed in this Unnumbered Letter, please do not hesitate to add that information to your nomination package.

Please be sure to address the criterion regarding compliance with Rural Development regulations. In the past, the typical issue that eliminated a nominee was that the last supervisory visit and or compliance review reports were not included in the nomination packet. We are asking for these reports to be submitted by the Agency to ensure that the complete report is submitted. The report should include the complete report, letter to borrower/management agent and response from borrower/management agent, if available.

We request that you submit your package in a three-ring binder so that no information is misplaced or overlooked. Please clearly mark your State and the category (family, elderly, or labor housing) on the nomination package. Your packages should be sent by Federal Express or similar carrier in order to be received in good condition and in a timely fashion. Address packages to: USDA Rural Housing Service, Multi-Family Housing Portfolio Management Division, STOP 0782 – Room 1263-S, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-0782.

The deadline for receipt of nomination packages for National Site Manager of the Year is May 16, 2014.

It is our hope that you will continue to make this valuable program a success. If you have any questions, please call the Multi-Family Housing Portfolio Management Division at (202) 720-8473.

Attachments
1. Site Manager of the Year Recognition Program Guidelines
2. Best Section 515 or Section 514 Site Manager Nomination Form/Checklist with evaluation criteria
3. Sample Cover Letter Announcing Awards Program to People Who Might be Interested in Making Nominations
4. Example of Letter to Senator
5. 2014 Site Manager of the Year Award Winners National Office Certificate Request Form
SITE MANAGER OF THE YEAR RECOGNITION PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Following are guidelines and suggestions for implementing or continuing a Manager of the Year program in your State.

1. Determine who is eligible to receive the award. The idea behind this recognition program is to reward site managers who have close interaction with tenants and who deal with properties hands-on and on a daily basis. In some States, these managers live on the property they manage, while in others they live off-site and manage more than one property. Each State should decide whether it makes sense to limit the nominations to resident managers or to extend it to traveling site managers. Remember; however, that the recognition should be for an individual site manager and not owners or management companies.

2. Solicit nominations from tenants and Section 515 and Section 514 owners and management companies, as well as others you consider knowledgeable. The nomination process should be open so that you get the maximum number of nominations. Rural Development employees with a good knowledge of the nominee may make nominations, so long as the employee is not on the judging panel.

3. Publicize the program so as to maximize the number of nominations you get. Consider using local media resources and your local borrower associations and housing groups as well.

4. Make your selection based on the following criteria (you may add more, but at a minimum use the ones below):
   a) Tenant satisfaction with the manager is high.
   b) Property has good curb appeal on a continuous basis.
   c) Manager has no incidents of noncompliance and no unresolved findings.
   d) Manager consistently does more than what is expected.

Please use these primary criteria so that the manager recognition program can be consistent nationwide.

Attachment 2 provides the national criteria and the necessary documentation that needs to be provided. It is important that all items are addressed so that the package will be considered complete. Please attach this completed checklist to your nomination package.

5. Use a panel of representatives from different stakeholder groups to make your selections. Use panels consisting of Rural Development Multi-Family Housing (MFH) staff and management industry representatives, as well as others you think would be appropriate. Possible panelists include tenants, staff from Housing and Urban Development, a State Housing Finance Agency, a Public Housing Authority, or local civic leaders. The idea is to give an award that is recognized by a wide variety of industry and civic professionals.

6. If you have a large portfolio, you might consider using a two-phased process to make your selection. District or Area Offices could convene a panel to choose the best manager in their region and then forward the nomination package to the State Office, which could convene a panel to make the final selection.
7. Choose the best manager and submit your nomination to the National Office by **May 16, 2014.** Attachment 2, “Best Section 515 or Section 514 Site Manager Nomination Form/Checklist” must be completed and submitted with the complete package.

8. Notify the National Office of the name (or names) of the Site Managers of the Year in your State if you wish to have a certificate signed by the Administrator for your State winner(s). Send this information, as well as the name and address of the facility or facilities the manager oversees, to Tonya Boykin, Multi-Family Housing Portfolio Management Division at fax number (202) 720-0302. If you are nominating your winner for the National Site Manager competition, please send (by Federal Express or similar carrier) the complete package upon which you based your determination. Please do not include your request for a certificate in your nomination package. Send it by facsimile only. Requests included in a package may be overlooked, as the nomination packages are not reviewed until immediately before judging takes place.

9. Consider presenting this award jointly with other management groups or at a State management conference. That way, you can highlight the achievements of the manager to a broad group of his or her peers. You may also consider presenting the award at a housing complex the manager oversees.

10. Take advantage of this opportunity for favorable press coverage. The manager recognition program is a chance to highlight one of the most positive aspects of our MFH program. Not only will press coverage help remind communities of how our programs help them; it will also focus their attention on one of their truly outstanding members whom they may not know. Encourage press coverage by inviting the press to your awards ceremony and by distributing press releases.

11. Let your Congressional delegation know about the winners in their districts. This gives members of Congress a chance to send a letter of recognition to the managers. It also highlights the success of our MFH program in serving communities. Attached is a sample letter you may use to send to your congressional delegation for the Site Manager of the Year program.
BEST SECTION 515 OR SECTION 514 SITE MANAGER
NOMINATION FORM/CHECKLIST

Please address the following criteria in the space provided. Remember, keep your answers short and to the point; however, the more letters, pictures, and documentation you can provide, the better. The nomination package should include the nomination letter summarizing nominee’s qualifications and address all the following items and include attachments. This completed checklist should be attached to your nomination package. Failure to address each item will cause the package to be considered as incomplete.

Name of Nominee ____________________________________________________________
Name of Property(s) __________________________________________________________
Name of Management Company (if applicable) _____________________________________
Year Began Managing at Property ____________________________

Brief Biography of Nominee:

SECTIONS I – III ARE TO BE COMPLETED BY THE NOMINATING PARTY:

___ I. Tenant Satisfaction. Overall, are tenants happy with the efforts this manager makes on their behalf and on the behalf of the housing complex? How do you know? Include photographs. Attach the following:

   • Letters commenting on the site manager’s accomplishments from Congressmen or other officials or tenants.

___ II. Curb Appeal. Is the property attractively maintained and landscaped? If applicable, you may wish to discuss particular actions the manager has taken to increase the appeal of the property. Attach the following:

   • ___ Pictures of grounds, buildings and signage indicating curb appeal.
III. Actions above and beyond what is expected. Please describe any actions this manager takes on a consistent basis which make him or her truly exceptional and outstanding. Good pictures also help in this category. Document activities such as:

- Pictures of tenants engaging in activities sponsored by site manager.
- Copies of publications (such as newsletters) initiated and maintained for the residents by the site manager.
- Newspaper articles depicting site managers care of tenants and property.
- Articles or letters showing site manager involvement in the community.
- Manager helps residents obtain additional services.

Section I – III - Completed By: ________________________________

SECTION IV MUST BE PROVIDED BY THE AGENCY FOR SUBMISSION BY THE NOMINATING PARTY:

IV. Compliance With Rural Development’s Regulations. Attach the following documents:

- Letter or written statement from servicing office verifying there are no incidents of noncompliance and no unresolved findings.
- Copy of last Supervisory Visit (MFIS Form 2000) (complete supervisory visit report must have been completed during the nominee’s tenure at property).
- Copy of last Compliance Review (Form RD 400-8) (complete compliance review report must have been completed during the nominee’s tenure at property).
- Copy of most recent Physical Inspection Report (Form RD 3560-11) (complete physical inspection report must have been completed during the nominee’s tenure at property).

Section IV - Completed By: ________________________________
SAMPLE COVER LETTER ANNOUNCING AWARDS PROGRAM TO PEOPLE WHO MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN MAKING NOMINATIONS

NOMINATOR’S NAME
NOMINATOR’S ADDRESS

Dear [NOMINATOR]:

I know you will agree with me that USDA Rural Development’s Section 515 and Section 514 rental housing site managers guarantee the success of these complexes. They make sure that day-to-day operations go smoothly, and often they invest a great deal of their own free time in providing tenants with a safe and cohesive community. Although these managers would do their jobs regardless of whether they received recognition, I believe we as management industry professionals should do whatever we can to let them know we appreciate their efforts. They deserve recognition for their outstanding work, and for this reason, we are sponsoring a program to recognize the best Rural Development site manager in [STATE NAME]. I hope that you might be able to join me in this important program by nominating someone you consider to be an outstanding site manager.

Please use the attached form to nominate the manager. You will note that the form asks you to comment on three factors:

- The level of tenant satisfaction with the manager.
- The curb appeal of the manager's property.
- Compliance with Rural Development’s regulations
- The manager consistently doing more than what the job requires.

Make your presentation as complete as possible. Letters from tenants, members of the community, housing groups, and others highlighting the good qualities of your nominee are encouraged. Also include any local media coverage which has occurred. Please enclose as many pictures as you like of the manager’s property that depict its curb appeal. Pictures of tenant activities sponsored, encouraged, or provided by the manager are beneficial. Submit the nomination package to [ADDRESS] no later than [YOUR DEADLINE].

After we receive the nominations, we will use the following process to choose the best site manager in [STATE NAME].

[DESCRIBE YOUR EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS HERE.]

We will present a plaque of recognition to the winner at a ceremony in [DATE, LOCATION, SPECIFY IF CEREMONY WILL BE HELD JOINTLY WITH SOMEONE ELSE OR AT AN ALREADY SCHEDULED CONFERENCE]. We also hope to engage the press in recognizing the exceptional efforts of the winning manager as well as all of our other great managers.

I hope that you will make the necessary effort to complete the enclosed nomination form. I can assure you that it will be worth your time.

Sincerely,
[STATE DIRECTOR]
EXAMPLE OF LETTER TO SENATOR
[PLEASE CONSIDER A SIMILAR LETTER TO YOUR CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION]

Honorable Name of Senator
United States Senate
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-0103

Dear Senator XXXX:

I am writing to inform you that xxxxxxx has been chosen as the (State Office) 2014 Site Manager of the Year for the USDA Rural Development Multi-Family Housing program. XXXXXXXXXXX operates the xxxxxxx Apartment in xxxxxxxx.

Rural Development administers a national loan portfolio of over 16,000 rural rental housing complexes. In partnership with our private sector and non-profit borrowers, we house very low-and low-income rural families, elderly people, and farmworkers. The site managers of the housing complexes we finance are employees of private companies, not the U.S. Government.

The site managers guarantee the success of our housing complexes. They make sure that day-to-day operations go smoothly, and they often invest a great deal of their own free time in providing tenants with a safe and cohesive community. Although these managers would do their jobs whether or not they received recognition, we believe that as lenders and program managers we should reward excellent performance.

In this spirit, we conducted a Manager of the Year competition in each State this year. State Rural Development staffs convened panels of public and private housing management experts to choose their best site managers. They used the following criteria: 1) tenant satisfaction; 2) property curbside appeal; 3) compliance with Rural Development’s regulations; and 4) consistent performance of actions above and beyond the call of duty. States could add to these criteria, but they could not change or drop any of them.

The comments we received from tenants and our State Offices are testimony to the outstanding performance of the site managers. Following are a few typical examples:

Insert actual excerpts from your nomination packages. The following are examples.

- He makes us very proud of where we live.
- They are always there to help with anything you need, no matter how big or small.
- He shows genuine concern and really puts his heart into the job.
- They look after my parents when I'm not there. I don't know what I would do without them.
- He listens to the tenants.
- She enforces the rules fairly and makes us all feel safe.
- My friends [from outside the complex] always comment on how beautiful and well maintained our grounds and buildings are.
- One of the greatest things about living here is the great security I feel. Once I became ill in the middle of the night. I pulled the chain on my alarm system and the managers were in my apartment immediately.
• Living here is like living at a big home full of loving friends and family. Once I was too sick to go to the barbecue [which the manager had organized], so the manager brought me a plate of food and sat down to tell me who was there and what the grandkids were doing. She really made me feel included in the fun.

Ms. Xxxxxxxx is a credit to herself, the apartments she manages, her employer, her community, USDA, and the Federal Government as a whole. If you would like to recognize Ms. Xxxxxxxx, you may contact her at xxxxxxxxxx. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact (Name of State) State Director (Name of State Director) at (State Office phone number).

Sincerely,

State Director
Rural Development
2014 SITE MANAGER OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS
NATIONAL OFFICE CERTIFICATE REQUEST FORM

Please use this form to let the National Office know who the winners were in your State, for whom you would like a certificate prepared signed by the Administrator. Please complete a separate Attachment for each award winner.

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TO: MFHPMD
PHONE #: 202-720-8473
FAX #: 202-720-0302
Contact: Tonya Boykin – tonya.boykin@usda.gov

STATE CONTACT: ________________________________
STATE NAME: ________________________________
PHONE #: _________________________________
FAX #: _________________________________

1. Name of Award Winner ________________________________

2. Name(s) of Property/Properties He/She/They Manage(s) ________________________________

3. Exact Name of the Category for Which He/She/They Were Chosen Winner (as it should appear on the certificate--for example, 2014 Pennsylvania Multi-Family Housing Site Manager of the Year for Elderly Housing)

4. Address to which the Certificate Should Be Sent  (This should be someone at the State Office, so that the State Director can sign the certificate. Please include State Director’s name.)

5. Date by Which You Need the Certificate ________________________________