



# 2014 Nomination Criteria and Guidelines for the Department of Veterans Affairs Green Routine Awards

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is pleased to announce the call for nominations for the 2014 Green Routine awards program. The Green Routine initiative, launched in fall 2009, encourages employees to adopt and promote conservation and sustainability throughout the Department. The Green Routine awards are designed to recognize VA employees who have developed or significantly contributed to grassroots efforts and programs, outside of their daily duties, to encourage green, sustainable practices at their workplace.

## Why the Green Routine Awards?

To keep the VA promise—to provide the highest quality care and services to our Veterans and their families—we must use our precious resources with great efficiency. To that end, Secretary Shinseki<sup>1</sup> has challenged VA employees to find ways to minimize waste. Efforts such as reducing energy and water consumption, purchasing greener products and services, increasing waste diversion (i.e., recycling), and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions not only protect VA's ability to serve Veterans; they also help VA meet Federal mandates for energy reduction and environmental protection.

## Who should apply?

Individuals or small groups (up to approximately 5 people) who have implemented projects that help institute green practices at one or more VA offices,<sup>2</sup> without direction from or requirement by a manager or supervisor, should apply for the Green Routine Awards.

Initiatives may be small-, medium-, or large-scale efforts that are not directly related to the nominees' required day-to-day job responsibilities. Efforts should encompass one or more of the following areas and may include other relevant sustainability areas:

- Energy Reduction
- Water Conservation
- Reduction in Petroleum-Based Fuel Usage
- Green Purchasing
- Recycling
- Pollution Prevention, and/or
- Implementation of the VA Green Routine Toolkit<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Secretary Shinseki Announces "Green Routine," [www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1792](http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1792).

<sup>2</sup> The term "office" is used in its most general form and includes any VA workplace. A VA hospital, hospital department, clinic, call center, cemetery, i.e., all types of VA facilities and locations where VA business operations are conducted, or benefits and services are delivered, would qualify under this definition.

<sup>3</sup> The Greening VA Working Group developed a Toolkit to help VA employees plan and implement actions in the workplace that can improve overall energy efficiency, and conserve resources. View it at [www.va.gov/GREENROUTINE/greeningvaco/](http://www.va.gov/GREENROUTINE/greeningvaco/).

## Submitting Nominations

### A. Complete the Nomination Form

observing the 500 word limit for the Project Summary. Describe the project and highlight how it meets the eligibility criteria and objectives. Include any unique qualities of the project, any environmental benefits, and any other potential benefits such as cost savings. Supporting photos and other documentation will be accepted and not counted toward the word limit.

### B. Objectives

Projects or initiatives will be evaluated based on the following objectives. Please **address one or more objectives** (as applicable) in the project summary. See page 3 for **Objectives Defined**.

- Duplicable (office-, region- or Department-wide)
- Innovative
- Directly or indirectly helps protect the natural environment
- Notable or potential cost-savings for VA
- Sustainable effort
- Promotion of activities beyond your office

### C. Submit the completed Nomination Form

and any supporting documents to [greenva@va.gov](mailto:greenva@va.gov) using subject line: **VA Green Routine Award Nomination** by 11:59 p.m. EDT on April 25, 2014.

See the **Glossary** on page 4 for definitions of these and other pertinent terms. An additional resource is the Greening Action Guide and Toolkit, found at [www.va.gov/greenroutine/greeningvaco](http://www.va.gov/greenroutine/greeningvaco).

## Eligibility Requirements

- A. Employees working for VA at the time of the nomination are eligible to receive a Green Routine award, with the exception of Senior Executive Service and equivalents.
- B. The 2014 Green Routine Awards will recognize achievements accomplished in FY 2012 or 2013. Please wait to nominate projects still in early development.
- C. Projects that won a Green Routine Award in a prior year are not eligible
- D. Projects must be conceived, developed, and implemented by the nominated employee(s). Nominations may not include top-down efforts or directives initiated or required by the employees' supervisor or manager.
- E. Activities that are required by or directly related to a nominee's day-to-day job responsibilities are not eligible.
- F. The nomination form must include an endorsement from a director or supervisor.
- G. An individual employee (or small group of employees) may self-nominate, or a supervisor or co-worker(s) may nominate a person or a small group of people working on a project.
- H. Applicants must be in good standing with the Department and may be subject to a security screening.

## Award Classifications

Nominees must classify themselves as Individual or a Small Group. The Green Routine Awards Committee will not accept nominations for the same project in both classifications.

**(A) Individual:** Individual awards will be presented to people who were directly responsible for the conception, development, implementation, and/or promotion of one or more grassroots, sustainable initiatives, projects, or programs that address pollution prevention, recycling, green purchasing, energy/water conservation, and/or reduction in petroleum

consumption or other applicable sustainability project at work.

### Sample eligible nominations\*

- A GEMS coordinator organizes weekly or monthly bike-to-work days within your office and concurrently tracks your office's reduced carbon footprint.
- A group of registered nurses create a recycling program for a frequently used, but not easily or often recycled non-hazardous waste materials (e.g., medical IV plastic tubing).
- An energy manager organizes a sustainability speaker series, coordinates efficiency goals to match lessons learned from the series, and promotes your office's successes.
- A clinical dietician initiates a food waste study and develops procedures that result in reduced processed food waste and packaging.
- See prior award winners featured at <http://www.va.gov/greenroutine/>

\* *Initiatives are not limited to these types of examples.*

### Sample ineligible nominations

- A recycling or GEMS coordinator organizes a new program to recycle usable computer equipment. *Required by the nominee's normal job duties.*
- A supervisor organizes a team of employees to design and develop a green office initiative. *Top-down effort—not grassroots.*
- A team of nurses develops a plan to make their hospital a greener workplace in 2014. *Project has not been implemented. Submit next year.*
- An energy manager or engineer implements low-cost/no-cost ways for a medical center to save energy. *Required by the nominee's normal job duties.*

**Small Group:** Small group awards will be presented to groups of two to five individuals who contributed as a team to the conception, development, implementation, and/or promotion of one or more grassroots, sustainable initiatives, projects, or programs that address pollution prevention, recycling, green purchasing, energy reduction, water conservation, and/or reduction in petroleum fuel consumption or any other applicable sustainability project at work. Multiple nominations for individuals or small groups will be accepted if each nominated project or effort has separate objectives, outcomes, or results that clearly warrant separate nominations.

### The Evaluation Process

The Awards Subcommittee of the Greening VA Working Group will evaluate nominations based on project eligibility and the award objectives. The quality of the nominations will determine the number of winners.

The decision of the evaluators shall be based solely on the information provided in the Nomination Form. Therefore, nominees should demonstrate a significant level of implementation to allow reviewers to assess the project's impact.

### Award Announcements

Green Routine award winners will be announced in conjunction with Earth Day 2014 activities.

### Evaluation Criteria

**(A) Duplicable:** Project is a model that, with leadership support, may be easily duplicated by other VA offices within the facility, regionally, or nationally across all VA Administrations, staff offices, and facilities.

**(B) Innovative:** Project may be a completely new idea, or may simply be unique to the particular office/facility – an idea that inspires others at that location. The idea/effort may not necessarily be a new concept, but there are unique, thoughtful qualities or elements that make it special and worthy of recognition.

**(C) Helps to Protect the Natural Environment:** Project must directly contribute to a greener, more sustainable VA by encompassing one or

more of the following areas: pollution prevention; recycling; green purchasing; energy reduction; water conservation; and/or reduction in petroleum-based fuels. Further, the project should encourage others to establish green practices and behaviors (such as turning off lights or equipment when not in use, walking or biking to work or meetings, printing fewer documents).

**(D) Cost Savings for VA:** Projects may save money for VA through reuse of materials, reduction in energy or water use, etc. For many grassroots projects, cost savings may not be apparent. Nomination summaries may describe any potential for cost savings, even if actual savings or estimates are not available. Applicants will not be penalized if savings data is not available or if cost savings is not applicable to the project.

**(E) Sustainable Effort:** While one-time projects are eligible, scoring will privilege periodic or ongoing efforts that will continue to reap environmental and/or cost benefits, inspire green practices, and/or yield positive publicity for the VA.

**(F) Promotion of Activities:** The individual/team has educated others (management, facility staff, other VA staff, and/or the general public) about the effort or about the conservation and sustainable practices demonstrated by the project.

### DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS

Nomination forms and accompanying documents or photos must be received by 11:59 p.m. EDT Wednesday, April 25, 2014. Submit nominations electronically to [greenva@va.gov](mailto:greenva@va.gov) with the subject: VA Green Routine Award Nomination.

**Questions:** Contact Ben Carlson, Green Management Program at [Benjamin.Carlson@va.gov](mailto:Benjamin.Carlson@va.gov)

## Glossary

**Energy reduction:** Projects or activities that use innovative energy conservation techniques or strategies, including renewable energy, to improve energy efficiency and/or reduce energy costs at the office/facility.

**Grassroots Efforts:** Projects or activities that are conceived, developed, and implemented by employees of their own accord, with no top-down direction from or requirement by a manager or supervisor. These efforts are undertaken entirely for the sake of a greener workplace—and not because the effort is required as part of day-to-day performance or job requirements.

**Green purchasing (or the purchase or supply of energy efficient or water conserving products):** Projects that specifying, acquiring, or supplying products that are energy efficient, water efficient, or associated with green power purchases. For more information:

<http://www.green.va.gov/environment/greenPurchasing.asp>

**Green Routine:** Initiative launched in fall 2009 organized by the Office of Asset Enterprise Management and the Greening VA Working Group and its subcommittees to promote sustainability to employees throughout VA. For more information: [www.va.gov/greenroutine](http://www.va.gov/greenroutine)

**Greening Action Guide and Toolkit:** The Greening VA Working Group and its subcommittees developed a Toolkit to help VA employees plan and implement actions that contribute to VA's overall energy efficiency and conserve resources. Please note: Some Toolkit action items will not be applicable or possible for some facilities or offices. For more information:

[www.va.gov/greenroutine/greeningvaco](http://www.va.gov/greenroutine/greeningvaco)

**OAEM:** VA's Office of Asset Enterprise Management; for more information: [www.va.gov/oaem](http://www.va.gov/oaem).

**Office:** The term "office" is used in its most general form and includes any VA workplace, e.g., VA hospital, hospital department, clinic, call center, cemetery (all types of VA facilities and locations where VA business operations are conducted or benefits and services are delivered).

**Pollution Prevention:** Projects or activities that emphasize source reduction of hazardous chemicals, gasses, trash, and recycling of products.

**Recycling:** Projects or activities that increase the volume of items recycled at the office or facility, or projects or activities that use abandoned "waste" materials to develop new products, reuses, or new recycling streams.

**Reduction in Petroleum Consumption:** Projects or activities that reduce consumption of petroleum fuel and/or increase use of non-petroleum-based fuel at the office/facility (or through staff commuting to the office/facility).

**Sustainable Practices:** Actions that contribute to a healthier indoor and outdoor environment, including using energy efficiently, protecting and conserving water, reducing use of petroleum fuels, and reducing the environmental impact of materials through waste reduction, recycling, and reuse.

**Water Conservation:** Projects or activities that use innovative water conservation techniques or strategies to improve water efficiency and/or reduce water costs at the office/facility.

