

**PPQ Outstanding Achievement Award
Submission Form**

Name, Address, Job Title and organization, and Phone Number of Nominee

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Brief Narrative of the Outstanding Achievement

In order to accomplish PPQ's mission of safeguarding American agriculture, our leadership team has established a variety of core values. The core values focus on items such as Resource Management, Innovative Solutions, and Leadership. The practices outlined in this document have ensured strong operations and created flexibility in meeting shifting needs and priorities in complex programs that frequently span numerous states. The actions have minimized the possibility of program disruption and ensured program managers have sufficient options to address changing priorities. Likewise, the diligent use of the following practices has demonstrated the leadership and commitment of the Agreements staff through continued competence, desire to achieve excellence, and refined business practices through quality improvement loops. This dedication has resulted in being noted as a model operation in Agency level reviews and reports.

The PPQ, Eastern Region Agreements Section supports over 275 agreements. This includes a broad sampling of Cooperative Agreements, Interagency Agreements, Reimbursable Agreements, Memoranda of Understanding and other Cooperative Mechanisms. Their responsibilities include the management of approximately 140 cooperative agreements that implement 250 specific state/project programs with funding of \$115 million. These agreements support many politically sensitive programs such as Citrus Canker, Asian Longhorned Beetle, Emerald Ash Borer, and Plum Pox Virus. This would also include the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) and various National Survey initiatives. The section personnel act as a key component in allowing PPQ to accomplish program mission and goals through Cooperators while building key working relationships with Stakeholders when PPQ has limited staffing or institutional expertise in responding to specific pest outbreaks.

These ongoing initiatives have not only benefited PPQ, Eastern Region but also created a positive image of APHIS as a whole. It has enhanced our reputation as professionals in addressing plant pest and disease outbreaks. The results have been both tangible and measurable in terms of overwhelmingly positive cooperator feedback. It has created our ability to meet cooperator expectations while pursuing PPQ strategic goals and objectives.

The agreements section has ensured increased effectiveness of operations by developing a broad range of tools. Some of these reports and resources are addressed within the context of Agency reports. Again, they singled out PPQ Eastern Region as being the sole administrative component area to maintain certain key tracking systems. These tracking systems included a variety of reports used to ensure timely submission of SF-269 “Financial Status Reports”, SF-270 “Request for Advance or Reimbursement”, financial plans, work plans, and other key documents.

In order to maximize the use and effectiveness of these cooperative mechanisms while ensuring that APHIS interests are met, the Agreement Section had maintained a large-scale training program. Over the past 3 fiscal years, this program has seen the staff reaching out to a wide audience and educating them in the appropriate use and management of agreements. This has included 173 PPQ employees who perform duties as State Plant Health Directors (SPHDs), Program Managers, Pest Survey Specialists, Office Managers, and other APHIS personnel. This was done while concurrently training our key cooperators in Eastern Region. This has included the training of 69 Cooperators who perform duties for State Government, Institutions of Higher Education and other key stakeholders.

To help qualify the success of the management of the Agreements Section in PPQ Eastern Region and their training issue we would refer to a recently concluded Agency wide review process of all Agreement activity in APHIS. The Cooperative Agreements Processing Improvement Teams (CAPIT) report relayed glowing praise of how PPQ Eastern Region manages not only the use of agreements, but also the on-going training initiatives of the section. They were the only agreements section in APHIS to be singled out as a model operation. The report included the following remarks:

“Centralized Agreement Processing: The Working Group should explore centralizing the processing of field agreements at the regional offices, *similar to what is being done in PPQ’s Eastern Region*. This office has streamlined the process by preparing the majority of the documents for all their agreements. This allows the ADODRs and their staffs to concentrate on the program side of the agreements and shifts the responsibility for the administrative and business part of the agreements to the Regional Office, since this is where the Agreements Specialist positions are housed.” [Emphasis added]

“Training and guidance are poor or inconsistent. At the workshop, training and guidance was identified as the area most in need of improvement. Survey results show that both APHIS employees and cooperators consider APHIS and cooperator training and guidance to be mostly poor or fair. Some focus group

interview *participants reported that PPQ's Eastern Regions that their training was done well.*" [Emphasis added]

"Shift agreement processing workload to regional staffs: All of the processing of agreements currently done at the state and area level should shift to the Agreements Specialists who work on the regional staffs. Any processing that is done at the Agreement Service Center (ASC) that is more appropriately done regionally should shift to the regional staffs too. ***PPQ's Eastern Region is a model for the others in APHIS to follow.*** Shifting the processing workload to the regional staffs in all of APHIS will allow the ADODRs and their staffs to concentrate on the program side of the agreements and allow them to focus their efforts on working with cooperators in managing the projects and measuring and reporting results." [Emphasis added]

The quotes from the CAPIT report help to qualify how unique the PPQ Eastern Region Agreements Section is among its peers in APHIS. They set the bar extraordinarily high for all agreements activity conducted in our Agency and are worthy of recognition. Their activities have better enable PPQ to creatively and flexibly respond to plant pest and disease outbreaks while fostering close ties with a broad range of key stakeholders.