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GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY AWARD CELEBRATES 10th ANNIVERSARY

Eleven Federal Agencies to Receive National Certificate of Excellence in Accountability Reporting (CEAR)

Washington, D.C.—Eleven federal agencies will be awarded the Association of Government Accountants' (AGA) 2007 Certificate of Excellence in Accountability Reporting (CEAR)— the highest number awarded since the program began— at a black-tie dinner and awards ceremony, set for 8 p.m. tonight at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

Since 1997, the program has shown steady progress toward achieving its aim of improving financial and program accountability by streamlining and improving the effectiveness of government reports.

The Fiscal Year 2006 recipients include: U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; U.S. Department of the Interior; U.S. Department of Labor; U.S. General Services Administration; U.S. Government Accountability Office; U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission; U.S. Patent and Trademark Office; U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission; U.S. Small Business Administration; and U.S. Social Security Administration.

Through the CEAR Program, AGA advises agencies on how to prepare integrated and user-friendly Performance and Accountability Reports (PARs) that clearly show what an agency accomplished with taxpayer dollars and the challenges that remain.

The CEAR Program was established in conjunction with the federal Chief Financial Officers Council and the U.S. Office of Management and Budget.

“High-quality PARs do more than provide a comprehensive understanding of an agency’s fiscal and programmatic accomplishments,” said Relmond Van Daniker, DBA, CPA, AGA’s executive director. “By providing readers the opportunity to assess financial stewardship and evaluate program performance, exceptional PARs help management rethink the way agencies do business.”

According to AGA CEAR Technical Consultant Harold I. Steinberg, CGFM, some interesting trends have been noted from the past 10 years: A record number of agencies, 21, participated this year, with four agencies seeking reviews for the first time. Steinberg said the agencies are doing a better job of communicating accomplishments and their reports reflect comments made by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) related to the Performance Assessment Rating Tool (PART). The reports are also more consistent in their organization and content, less dense, more informative and easier to prepare, as agencies are submitting their reports to OMB 45 days after the fiscal year has ended.

Agencies that participate in AGA’s CEAR Program submit their PAR to a five-member review team for an in-depth evaluation. These five individuals assess the report using the CEAR Reviewer Guidelines and then provide detailed recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the report. Agencies with reports considered excellent are awarded the Certificate of Excellence in Accountability Reporting.

Van Daniker concluded, “Our CEAR recipient federal agencies remind us today that this program is about honestly reporting back to U.S. taxpayers and saying, ‘This is what’s been done well, and this is where we’re going to need to improve in the years to come.’ Bringing citizens into the discussion about government accountability is what American government is all about.”

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The Association of Government Accountants is a 15,000-member professional Association that serves government accountability professionals by providing quality education, fostering professional development and certification, and supporting standards and research to advance government accountability. For more information about the Association, call 800.AGA.7211, or visit AGA’s website at www.agacgfm.org.