University of Louisville
Employee Suggestion Program
Suggestion Evaluation Guide

I. Introduction

PURPOSE

The overall goal of the University of Louisville’s Employee Suggestion Program (ESP) is to stimulate, recognize, and reward innovative, creative and problem-solving ideas by University employees.

The purpose of the ESP is to recognize and encourage the capacity of employees to exercise initiative and to develop suggestions above and beyond basic job requirements. Outstanding suggestions that identify specific problems and propose valid solutions will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the University through increased productivity, reduced costs, safer working conditions, or improved public services. An additional gain from such suggestions will be a climate that encourages open communication of ideas and maximizes employee talents.

Vital to the success of the ESP is the active participation of suggestion evaluators. By working together to ensure that all suggestions are given timely and thorough consideration, evaluators are providing a valuable service to the person making the suggestion and the University. They are facilitating prompt action on those suggestions that will be adopted, providing benefits to both the University and the employee. And, should a suggestion not be suitable for adoption, a prompt evaluation will be less of a disincentive to the person making the suggestion.

You have been asked to evaluate a suggestion because of your knowledge in a particular area. This evaluation guide has been developed to help you understand and complete the evaluation process. The Employee Relations office will be a resource to you if necessary. You may also need to contact the person making the suggestion for additional information.

Your role is important to the overall success of the Employee Suggestion Program. Please share your questions and ideas with the Employee Relations office at 852-6538.

II. Guide to Evaluation

WHAT HAPPENS TO A SUGGESTION?

The following actions describe the path followed by an effective suggestion:

1. Suggestion is submitted by suggester via miniform, or hard copy, to the Employee Relations office.
2. Suggestion is referred by Employee Relations to the appropriate department head for evaluation by qualified personnel.
3. Evaluator makes recommendation and returns form to Employee Relations.
4. If recommended for adoption, suggestion is then reviewed by the Employee Suggestion Program Committee for award determination.
5. ESP committee submits award determination to Employee Relations.
6. Award presentation by the Employee Relations office.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU RECEIVE A SUGGESTION TO EVALUATE:
1. Be thoroughly familiar with the program by studying this guide along with the ESP Administrative Manual, the suggestion form and the suggestion evaluation form.

2. Keep in mind the importance of a prompt resolution of the suggestion and handle it with high priority.

3. Look at the suggestion objectively and impartially and ask:

- Is the present condition, method or practice accurately described by the suggester?

- What is the problem being addressed? For example, is the suggester concerned about an overly cumbersome process, a safety hazard, duplicate forms, inadequate equipment?

- Has the suggester identified a potential solution such as eliminating duplicate steps in a process or modifying equipment to make it safer or more efficient?

- Is the suggester making a valid point even if the technical terms are absent or misapplied?

- Does the suggester make a logical case for projected savings and is there evidence of an effort to provide accurate calculations?

- Has the idea been previously presented or is a change being initiated or already in progress which would make the suggestion irrelevant or unnecessary?

- Would the implementation of this suggestion bring undesirable side effects which would significantly reduce the value of the suggestion?

4. Understand that the Employee Relations office, which has the ultimate responsibility for approving or disapproving the idea for an award, usually must base its decision solely on the evaluation and documentation provided by you. Although the evaluation may be concise, it should be complete and contain full and convincing proof of why the suggestion should be adopted or not adopted. It is not enough to simply state that you have recommended that the suggestion be adopted or not adopted because it . . .

- will not be implemented
- is not a new idea
- is impractical
- requires a law change
- is presently being developed or approved
- is a good idea
- shows a lot of thought
- saves money

5. As an evaluator, take a position one way or the other and support your position with documented evidence substantiating your reasons.
III. Examples of Cases

To illustrate how the program works in practice, three examples of cases follow:

CASE 1 - An Approval for a Tangible Award

Submitted by

Present condition: Various state institutions are presently equipped with tubular beds which are unsightly and very custodial in appearance. They are slated for replacement by modern units in order to "humanize the institutions."

Suggestion: To convert the existing units into modern type beds by cutting a section from the existing head and foot frames, welding end caps in place, and then attaching wooden panels as head and foot boards.

Savings: Cost of new beds is $106 each, based on lots of 100. Cost of implementing suggestion, $12 per bed for material and $13 for labor. Based on this, there is a savings of $81 per bed. At ABC Hospital, 750 beds would be converted for a savings of $60,750. Counting other institutions, an additional 1,250 beds could be converted for a total savings of $162,000.

Determinations During Evaluation

1. Is the idea consistent with departmental plans to "humanize the institution?"

It was found that this was consistent with departmental policy and that plans have already been made to replace the beds with more modern looking units.

2. Would the finished product be acceptable to the departmental administration?

Samples were developed and shown to the Commissioner’s Office, Board of Trustees, and medical staff, and all were satisfied with the final product.

3. Is the calculation of savings accurate?

The personnel director of ABC Hospital verified that 750 units were slated for conversion (240 units were due for immediate conversion and materials were purchased for the balance). Further, it was determined that there are approximately 3,500 units (not 2,000) throughout the State eligible for possible conversion.

Calculation of the award was based on the tangible savings which would accrue through implementation of the suggestion at ABC Hospital as follows:

Estimated Savings in:

- labor *D/N/A
- material *D/N/A
- equipment (750 beds @ $106 per unit) $79,500

4. Other

gross savings 1st year $79,500
estimated cost of adoption $18,750
4. What is the recommended award?

Cash awards for measurable savings are calculated at 10% of net savings during the first year of implementation up to a maximum of $5,000, plus 1% of any monies over $50,000.

Since the concept was approved and a net savings of $60,750 would be realized during the first year of implementation, the maximum award allowed under the program limits was recommended by the department head. The amount of the award was $5,000 plus 1% of the savings in excess of $50,000 ($60,750 - 50,000 = 10,750 \times 0.01 = $107.50). A total award of $5,107.50 was allowed.

5. Although the suggestion itself is one for which an award can be made, is the suggester personally eligible?

In this particular case, it was determined by the department that the suggester was eligible because:
- this suggestion was not one which he would be required to make in the line of duty
- the submission of the suggestion met the time frames of the Employee Suggestion Program
- the suggestion did not involve the performance of routine maintenance that was being neglected
- the suggestion did not involve something undergoing trial, development or experimentation
- the suggestion was implemented

Comments

1. In the evaluation of Case No. 1, all of the important issues are resolved and documented:
- the suggestion is an improvement which results in savings
- it was implemented partially with full implementation planned
- savings from modified units over new purchases were accurately shown with a cost breakdown
- suggester and suggestion met all eligibility criteria.

2. Without additional information, the ESP would be able to accept the suggestion and authorize payment of $5,107.50.

3. Once the idea was fully paid for, it was passed on to other institutions for their use. Samples, blueprints, and training were offered to each institution.

CASE 2 - A Disapproval

Submitted by the suggester

Present condition: Bills under consideration by the General Assembly are printed on 20 pound paper.
Suggestion: If these bills were printed on newsprint quality paper, considerable savings in paper costs would result. This would clearly support the current state fiscal policy of cost reduction and it is practical since it is already the normal practice in printing for the State Senate.

Savings: According to a rough estimate from the Bill Room, some 15 million sheets of paper per annum are used for this purpose. For this quantity, Central Paper Company quoted $3.30 per thousand for 20 pound bond and $1.65 per thousand for newsprint. Estimated savings per annum would be $24,750.

Determinations During Evaluation

1. Would the suggestion save the amount of money indicated by the suggester without producing undesirable side effects?

   - At face this value, this suggestion appears to be a good one worthy of consideration; it is not new or novel. All aspects of legislative printing, which is contracted annually and negotiated through the Division of Purchases and Supply, are subject to continuous review and study. Changes and improvements not obvious to a casual observer have been made in recent years. Even though many states operate their own plants for all state printing, the Commonwealth has not desired to curtail use of private enterprise to this extent. Paper costs, while important, represent a minor element in the overall costs of legislative printing.

   - Contrary to statements made by the suggester, legislative bills are printed on 16 pound not 20 pound stock at a current price of about $2.50 per 1,000 sheets (a sheet is 4 times the size of a bill page) or 3,500,000 sheets rather than 15,000,000. - The legislative printing contractor, at our request, made several test runs of printing bills on paper of newsprint quality. Static and folding machine problems were multiple, causing considerable paper loss. We also found that newsprint would present problems when stocking copies for distribution and filing.

   - The market situation indicates that a change in paper stock at this time would be risky, since all Canadian producers of newsprint pulp are on strike and a newsprint shortage is very likely. Daily newspapers are attempting to maintain twice as much inventory as normal to insure against delivery interruptions. The legislative printing contractor has firm commitments with two suppliers whom they have done business with for years. A change to newsprint suppliers would place them, as a new customer, on the bottom of the priority list.

2. Will the suggestion be implemented?

In view of the above findings, the department recommends that the suggestion be disapproved.

Comments

1. Based on information in the evaluation of Case No. 2, particularly with respect to the corrected unit cost and sheet size, a recalculation of potential savings was made as follows:

   Present method - $2.50/1000 X 3,500 = $8,750
   Proposed method - $1.65/1000 X 3,500 = $5,775
   Potential Savings $2,975

2. There are indeed undesirable side effects involved with printing and folding as well as an unfavorable market situation with respect to newsprint at the present time.

3. Weighing the reduced savings of $2,975 against the stated undesirable side effects, the agency decided not to adopt the change. The ESP concurred with the evaluation findings.
technologies and market conditions could indicate reexamining the issue in the future with the possibility of the suggestion being resubmitted.

5. If the suggestion was to be implemented and a savings of $2,975 realized, the cash award to the suggester would be $297.50 (10% of $2,975).

July 17, 1996