



EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION AWARD PROGRAM

OPERATING PROCEDURES

Section 1. Scope and Purpose

These guidelines set forth the operating procedures for administering the Employee Suggestion Award Program (ESAP). The program provides for cash or honorary awards for State employees who submit ideas that will reduce the cost or improve the quality of service of State government.

Section 2. Policy

- A. The Employee Suggestion Award Board shall recognize employees who propose procedures or ideas which, when put into practice, result in savings or improvements in State operations.
- B. Each agency head shall encourage eligible employees to participate in the Employee Suggestion Award Program.
- C. The Employee Suggestion Award Board, composed of the Commissioner of Human Resources, the Commissioner of Finance and Administration, the Commissioner of General Services, the Executive Director of the Fiscal Review Committee, and one member appointed by the Tennessee State Employees Association, shall administer the program on a statewide basis. The Board shall approve each cash or honorary award made to State employees pursuant to the provisions of Tennessee Code Annotated § 4-27-101 *et seq.*

Section 3. Eligibility

- A. Employee Eligibility: All current and retired employees of State government, except elected and appointed officials, are eligible to submit suggestions for cash awards under this program, provided they do not fall in any of the following categories.
 1. The four levels of management which are prevented from receiving cash awards, as defined by Tennessee Code Annotated § 4-27-104 are as follows:
 - a. Level I: Governor's staff, department commissioner or equivalent.
 - b. Level II: Assistant or Deputy Commissioner, Assistant to the Commissioner, major fiscal and administrative policy departmental staff or equivalent.
 - c. Level III: Director or Division Chief including the full line Division Chief to a statewide program. Includes Chief of Division supervising several line service units or equivalent ; or
 - d. Level IV: Assistant to Director or Division Chief, Section Chief or head of major departmental function or equivalent



These employees listed above, although ineligible for a monetary award by the provisions of this section, may be eligible for an honorary award at the discretion of the Board.

B. Suggestion Eligibility Criteria: Any suggestion submitted by an eligible employee will be reviewed by the Agency Evaluator and a recommendation made to the Agency Review Team unless the suggestion:

1. Duplicates a suggestion previously submitted to the agency;
2. Involves a personal grievance or complaint;
3. Recommends increased taxes or license fees, or involves proposed, pending or current legislation;
4. Concerns state employee wages, benefits or overall compensation;
5. Recommends a "study," "survey," or "review" with the course of action to be taken in accordance with the findings;
6. Proposes following existing policies or procedures;
7. Would correct a temporary problem, or one that management can document is in the process of being corrected;
8. Is the result of assigned or contracted audits, studies, surveys, reviews, or research;
9. Saves money for one governmental agency at the expense of another agency of the State of Tennessee or of its political subdivisions; or
10. Involves routine maintenance, repair or housekeeping.

Section 4. Group Suggestions

The amount of an award for a suggestion made by a group of employees shall be determined on the same basis as if the suggestion had been submitted by one employee, and the amount awarded shall be divided equally among those employees making the suggestion. Members of the group shall be identified by name at the time the suggestion is submitted.

Section 5. Time Limit on Award Consideration.

- A. An employee's ability to receive an award shall be based on employment status at the time the suggestion is submitted and shall be protected if:
1. The suggestion is adopted and/or implemented within two years from the date of receipt even though the employee may have separated from State government, unless dismissed for cause. The Employee Suggestion Award Board must be notified the suggestion was implemented.



2. An agency implements the suggestion within two years of the date of the original notification of non-adoption even though the employee may be separated from State government in good standing at the time of implementation. A declined suggestion will retain priority over all suggestions on the same subject received within two years from the date of declining the first suggestion. The Employee Suggestion Award Board must be notified the suggestion was implemented.
- B. Suggestions denied for award by the Employee Suggestion Award Board may be resubmitted once within a one-year period if accompanied by substantial additional information that would add merit to the original suggestion. If resubmission results in a second denial, the suggestion shall be deemed permanently denied and may not be resubmitted.
- Suggestions that are not resubmitted shall be deemed permanently denied after the passage of one year and will not be reconsidered by the Board.
- C. In the case of a deceased employee, the award shall be paid to the employee's estate.
- D. Ideas already adopted and/or implemented by management, as a result of the employee's suggestion must be filed with the Employee Suggestion Award Program no later than nine (9) months from initial acceptance.

Section 6. Payment of Awards

The maximum cash award for approved suggestions shall be limited to ten (10%) percent of the first year's estimated net savings, or \$10,000, whichever is less. Suggestions recommended for a cash award that have a first year's estimated savings of less than \$250 will be awarded \$25. The Employee Suggestion Award Board may, however, increase the maximum amount of the award for suggestions which result in extraordinary amounts of savings.

Any cash awards approved by the board shall be charged against the appropriation item or items to which estimated savings apply.