

Knox County Employee Suggestion Program

Section 1. Purpose

- (1) The Knox County Employee Suggestion Program is designed to encourage employees to submit ideas that will reduce the cost of operating County systems or improve the quality of County services.
- (2) The program provides benefits to the following constituencies:
 - a. The County, by providing innovation, efficiency, reduced costs, improved safety, and improved services;
 - b. Employees, by giving them recognition and cash awards for their creative ideas and making their work safer and more efficient;
 - c. The taxpayer, by providing better customer service and reducing costs.

Section 2. Criteria for Suggestions

- (1) In order for a suggestion to become eligible for an award, it should be likely to result in one or more of the following:
 - a. An identified savings in time or material.
 - b. Significant improvement in a process.
 - c. Increase in efficiency.
 - d. Improvement in working conditions or elimination of hazards.
 - e. Improvement in public service without increased cost.
- (2) Ineligible suggestions include, but are not limited to:
 - a. A solution to any problem which is within the suggester's assigned tasks, responsibilities, or regular job duties.
 - b. Suggestions which duplicate or are very similar to any suggestion previously received.
 - c. Suggestions pertaining to salary schedules, job classifications, benefits, and grievances.
 - d. Suggestions that reduce costs for one County department or office at the expense of another County department or office.
 - e. Suggestions which propose a study in which the actual recommendation is determined only after the completion of the study.
 - f. Suggestions which propose stricter enforcement of already existing rules, regulations, or policies.
 - g. Suggestions which do not offer specific solutions or detail a way to make the improvement.

- h. Suggestions which require legislative or judicial action.
- i. Suggestions concerning levying taxes.
- j. Suggestions for periodic or routine adjustments for which established procedures are already in place such as building or equipment maintenance.

Section 3. Employee Eligibility

- (1) All active employees of Knox County Government who work in departments under the supervision of the County Mayor are eligible to submit suggestions except elected and appointed officials.
- (2) Groups of employees may make suggestions as long as all members of the group sign the submission form. Monetary awards will be equally divided.

Section 4. Awards Committee

- (1) The membership of the Employee Suggestion Awards Committee will consist of the Sr. Director of Human Resources, who will serve as Chairperson; one additional employee of the Human Resources department, who will serve as the Suggestion Coordinator; the Sr. Director of Finance; the Director of Purchasing; and one employee appointed by the County Mayor.
- (2) The Suggestion Coordinator and the Mayor's appointment will serve a two-year term. Other members will serve as long as they hold the named position title.
- (3) Members of the Awards Committee may not vote on any suggestions or awards in which they have a conflict of interest.
- (4) The Awards Committee will meet in regular session monthly, provided there is business to conduct. A quorum shall consist of three members and decisions shall be made by majority vote.
- (5) The Suggestion Coordinator will receive suggestion forms and will keep meeting minutes and other records as needed.

Section 5. Evaluation of Suggestions

- (1) The Awards Committee will review all suggestions and will vote on them, provided that sufficient information is available. Suggestions requiring additional information will be returned.

- (2) All suggestions must be submitted on a Suggestion Filing Form and be signed by the suggester(s). Anonymous suggestions will not be considered.
- (3) When the Awards Committee finds that a suggestion meets the Criteria for Suggestions as defined in Section 2, it will forward the suggestion to the director of the relevant department who will coordinate a departmental review.
- (4) The departmental review will include evaluation of potential effectiveness, feasibility, projection of annual cost savings or revenue enhancement, and conformity to legal regulations or other relevant standards. At the conclusion of this review, a report and recommendation will be forwarded to the Awards Committee.
- (5) Suggestions that are determined to be feasible in the departmental review will be forwarded to the Finance Department to verify projected savings and/or revenue.
- (6) The Awards Committee will submit to the County Mayor all suggestions recommended by both the departmental review and the financial verification. The County Mayor will make the final decision about implementation.
- (7) When the County Mayor approves a suggestion for implementation, the Award Committee will determine the Initial Award (Section 6).
- (8) The Awards Committee may vote to not submit a suggestion to the County Mayor when it fails to meet the Criteria for Suggestions (Section 2), or is not recommended by both the departmental review and the financial verification. The Awards Committee will notify the suggester in writing and include the reason for not approving the suggestion.
- (9) The Awards Committee will review the cost savings information from a previously implemented suggestion and determine the amount of monetary award, if any.

Section 6. Payment of Awards

- (1) Initial Award: After voting to implement a suggestion likely to have a tangible benefit, the Awards Committee may award an individual one day off with pay. Teams submitting an accepted suggestion will each earn one day off with pay.
- (2) Savings Award: If the suggestion is adopted, the employee making the suggestion is eligible to receive up to 10% of the net savings realized in the first 12 months of adoption. The maximum Savings Award is \$1,000 for an individual and \$2,000 for a team.

- (3) Suggestions which have intangible benefits may also receive a Savings Award. The amount of award is determined by the impact of the suggestion and the amount of improvement it made. Factors include whether the suggestion impacted the entire County, several departments, or a single work area. The degree of improvement will be judged to be minor, moderate, or major. The maximum Savings Award for intangible benefits is \$1,000 for an individual and \$2,000 for a team. Implemented suggestions which have limited intangible savings may receive an award of one day off with pay. The Awards Committee will determine the amount of the award.
- (4) Awards will be made for suggestions that are modified by the implementing department so long as the suggestion was the source of the department's action.
- (5) Monetary awards are taxable income subject to all regular withholding rules.

Section 7. Time Limit

- (1) Former/Retired Employees: If the suggestion is adopted within two years of receipt and the employee making the suggestion is no longer employed, the Savings Award will be honored unless the employee was dismissed for cause.
- (2) Deceased Employees: Savings Awards will be paid to the estate of any employee who is deceased at the time of determination of the award.
- (3) Resubmitting Suggestions: Any submitted suggestion that is not approved for implementation may be resubmitted once within a one-year period provided that additional information is provided. If a suggestion is denied a second time, it is considered to be permanently denied.