



# ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Management, Executive Office  
400 Maryland Avenue, Washington, DC 20202

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*Title:* Employee Suggestion Program

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*Summary:* This directive sets forth the policies and procedures governing ED's Employee Suggestion Program. The Employee Suggestion Program is designed to encourage both headquarters and regional employees to submit ideas to improve ED's productivity, operations and quality of work life and ensure cost savings for ED.

*Pen and Ink Changes:* The following pen and ink changes have been made to correct the technical contact.

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1-13	Date	05/16/2003	04/22/2005
1	Superseding Information	Information described above	Information described above
1	Technical Contact	For technical questions concerning information found in this directive, please contact Simone Miranda on (202) 205-8511 or via e-mail.	For technical questions concerning information found in this directive, please contact Juliette Rizzo (202) 260-1491 or via e-mail at <a href="mailto:juliette.rizzo@ed.gov">juliette.rizzo@ed.gov</a> .



ADMINISTRATIVE  
COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## DEPARTMENTAL DIRECTIVE

OS:1-103

Page 1 of 13 (04/22/2005)

Distribution:  
All Department of Education Employees

Approved by:                     /s/ 05/16/2003                      
William J. Leidinger  
Assistant Secretary  
Office of Management

### Employee Suggestion Program

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For technical questions concerning information found in this directive, please contact Juliette Rizzo (202) 260-1491 or via e-mail at [juliette.rizzo@ed.gov](mailto:juliette.rizzo@ed.gov).

Supersedes directive OS:1-103 Employee Suggestion Program dated 5/16/2003.

## **I. Purpose**

This directive sets forth the policies and procedures governing the Department of Education's (ED) Employee Suggestion Program. The Employee Suggestion Program is designed to encourage both headquarters and regional employees to submit ideas to improve ED's productivity, operations and quality of work life and ensure cost savings for ED.

## **II. Authorization**

The Employee Suggestion Program is authorized by 5 U.S.C., 4302, 4501-4509; E.O. 11438 and 12828. Guidance is provided by 5 CFR Part 451.

## **III. Program Structure**

- A. The departmental suggestion coordinator (Coordinator) is located in the Office of the Secretary (OS), works for the Director of Internal Communications and will coordinate the day-to-day operations of the ED Employee Suggestion Program.
- B. There is established a departmental suggestion Evaluation Team (ET) overseen by the Director, Internal Communications, but run by the Program Coordinator. The Evaluation Team is composed of rotating members of the Internal Communications Team (ICT). The ICT is comprised of members from each Principal Office (PO) who have been designated to the team by the senior officer of their PO (members include career and political staff). The ET will be comprised of 6 members for terms of 12 months. The ET will rotate; the initial team will remain together for six months. Therefore, team members will rotate every two months one at a time. The Coordinator (the only non-voting member) and the Union representative will remain permanent members on the ET. The President of the National Council of Education Locals Number 252 of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFL-CIO) appoints the Union Representative for a two-year term. The ET will bring in program experts for decisions that require specific cost savings analysis on an as needed basis.
- C. For suggestions involving specific POs, the suggestion will be passed to the PO of the submitted suggestion for further evaluation and a decision will be determined at the PO level. Award payment for a PO specific suggestion is the responsibility of the approving PO. In a case where two POs are affected both POs will review individually. The ICT member from the PO in question will report back to the Evaluation Team with the status and final decision of the suggestion in question.

## **IV. Procedures**

- A. **Submission of Suggestions**

1. An employee or group of employees may submit a suggestion via email to the ED Employees Suggestion Program mailbox. All suggestions should be submitted using the Employee Suggestion Form (Exhibit A) to the ED Employee Suggestion Mailbox on email or via hard copy to the address listed on the ED Employee Suggestion Form. Headquarters and regional employees may obtain the suggestion form on ConnectED under News & Events, Office of Internal Communications, Employee Suggestion Program.
2. Those persons wishing to access this Directive and the ED Employee Suggestion Form in alternative format may do so by contacting the Coordinator. (Finalized Directive and Forms will be submitted to OCIO's Assistive Technology Team)
3. Employees who wish to remain anonymous must submit their suggestions via hard copy to the address listed on the ED Employee Suggestion Form.

#### **B. Receipt and Initial Screening of Suggestions**

1. The Coordinator gives a receipt date and assigns a number to each suggestion, and sends an email of acknowledgment to the suggester within one week.
2. The Coordinator screens each suggestion for completeness and appropriateness. An incomplete form will be returned to the suggester (if known) for additional information.
3. The Coordinator forwards all suggestions passing the initial screening to the Evaluation Team for review. The Coordinator removes all information identifying the suggester prior to review by the Evaluation Team. Accepted suggestions will be updated on ConnectED monthly. A current list of all suggestions and suggestion status (accepted, rejected, need more info) can be obtained from the Program Coordinator. At least annually, the Department will publish the names of employees via email whose ideas to improve ED's productivity, operations and quality of work life resulted in cost savings for the federal agency.
4. The Coordinator forwards ideas that affect programs not administered by ED to the Coordinator of the responsible Federal agency. When appropriate, the Coordinator forwards suggestions that have potential government-wide value to the Office of Personnel Management. The Evaluation Team forwards specific PO suggestions to the ICT PO member for a decision at the PO level.

#### **C. Suggestion Evaluation**

1. The Evaluation Team reviews each suggestion using the Employee Suggestion Evaluation Form (Evaluation Form), Exhibit B. There will be a two-week evaluation period. The Coordinator may grant extensions to the evaluation period, as needed especially in cases where more

information is needed or funding could be an issue. Evaluation Team meetings are held at the discretion of the Coordinator or at the request of Evaluation Team members to discuss follow-up action on suggestions and/or to review the evaluation process.

2. After a review of evaluation forms the Coordinator notifies the Evaluation Team of the intended disposition of a suggestion and asks for any final comments. At the direction of the Evaluation Team, the Coordinator then takes one of the following actions:
  - Approves the suggestion for implementation
  - Convenes a team to further evaluate the suggestion
  - Rejects the suggestion
  - Sends suggestion back to suggester for more information.

#### **D. Disposition of Suggestions**

1. If recommended for adoption by the Evaluation Team:
  - i. The Coordinator prepares a memorandum for the signature of the Director, ICT, (Approving Official) and arranges for a Certificate of Merit (Certificate). The memorandum describes the award and the expected time frame for implementation of the suggestion.
  - ii. Approved and implemented ED-wide suggestions will receive a Cash Award. Cash awards will be paid for adopted suggestions with tangible or equivalent intangible benefits of \$250 or more, based on the Cash Award Schedule, Exhibit D.
  - iii. Upon implementation, the suggestion coordinator will forward the approved suggestion award form (for ED-wide adopted suggestions) to the Executive Office of the awardee, (with a copy to the OS Executive Office). The Executive Office of the awardee will process the award through the personnel system. The award will initially be paid by the awardee's principal office. Once the award has been paid, the Executive Office of the awardee needs to contact their Budget Service analyst to inform them that the award has been paid. The Budget Service analyst will then prepare a budget chronology adjustment to transfer funds from the Office of the Secretary, who will provide the funding for the awards, to the principal office of the awardee.
  - iv. A copy of the suggestion and the signed Suggestion Cash Award Form are forwarded to the OM Human Resources Services and placed in the suggester's Employee Performance File (EPF). A certificate and the Approving Official's memorandum will be sent to the suggester. The suggester's supervisor will also be notified.
2. If recommended for rejection:

- i. The Coordinator notifies the suggester by memorandum and states the reason(s) for rejection, and provides any comments from the Evaluation Team.
- ii. If a suggester chooses to resubmit a rejected suggestion, he/she must address the issues in the rejection memorandum and include any new relevant information. For processing purposes, if a suggestion is resubmitted within 60 days after rejection, it will retain its original log number and date of receipt. A resubmitted suggestion will be evaluated according to the process and time table for new suggestions.

#### **E. Implementing Approved Suggestions**

1. The Coordinator prepares a memorandum for the Approving Official's signature notifying staff of suggestions to be implemented ED-wide. The Coordinator monitors the implementation schedule for ED-wide implemented suggestions. ICT Staff in the affected PO(s) monitors individual PO suggestions and keeps the Coordinator and the Director, ICT informed of progress. Notification of the accepted suggestion will also be sent to the employee's supervisor.
2. If a suggestion has not been fully implemented within 30 days after the agreed-upon date, the Director, ICT sends a memorandum to the responsible Principal Officer, requesting a written explanation for the delay. The Principal Officer's reply to the Director, ICT must include an estimate of the anticipated date of implementation. If implementation of an approved suggestion is no longer feasible, the Principal Officer must submit a written explanation to the Director, ICT, with a copy to the Coordinator. Delays due to budget constraints will not fall under the 30-day implementation deadline.
3. Postings on ConnectED will include status updates of suggestions accepted for implementation. In addition, email messages will be sent out ED-wide semi-annually to remind staff of the existence of the ED Employee Suggestion Program.
4. Payment of the suggestion award will occur when the award is implemented.

#### **F. Suggestions Within the Scope of an Employee's Job Responsibilities**

If an employee has the authority to implement his/her suggestion without the

employee's supervisor or if the suggestion involves changes that affect only the working relationship between the employee and his or her supervisor, then he/she is not entitled to a cash award through the Employee Suggestion Program.

#### **G. Awards**

1. Cash awards will be paid for Ed-wide adopted suggestions with tangible or equivalent intangible benefits of \$250 or more. The amount of the award is based on a percentage of savings for the government. Exhibit D details the Cash Award Schedule.
2. Awards will be made as soon as possible after an approved suggestion is implemented.
3. The Evaluation Team may recommend an award for a suggestion, which, although not adopted in the form submitted, resulted in a management improvement. In such instances, the improvement is assessed, and an award is given based on the extent of the suggestion's influence. The Director, ICT, determines the amount of the award on recommendation from the Evaluation Team.
4. When a suggestion results in an award less than \$250 then a "Time-Off from Duty Award" will be given. For full time employees, the minimum award is one workday; for part time employees, the minimum award is the number of hours equivalent to one workday based on the employee's schedule.
5. During Presidential election periods (June 1 of a Presidential election year, through January 20th of the following year), Schedule Cs, SES noncareer, and SES limited employees are not eligible for cash or time-off awards.

#### **V. Responsibilities**

- A. Suggestion Coordinator is responsible for:
  1. Coordinating the work of the Evaluation Team, keeping track of the suggestions and their status.
  2. Updating Ed Employee Suggestion Program information on ConnectEd.
  3. Communication liaison between the suggester and the Evaluation Team.
- B. Evaluation Team member is responsible for:

1. Participating in the evaluation team meetings for suggestions.
  2. Acting as the liaison between his/her PO and the Evaluation Team when a suggestion has been sent on to the PO for a decision.
- C. ICT member is responsible for acting as the liaison between Evaluation Team and PO when a suggestion has been sent on to the PO for a decision.
- D. ICT Director is responsible for overseeing the program with daily operations and coordination left to the responsibility of the program coordinator.
- E. Suggester is responsible for writing up the suggestion in complete form and sending it in to the ED Employee Suggestion Program.
- F. Principal Officer is responsible for any final decision on a suggestion relevant to his/her PO. The PO is also responsible for appointing a designee to carry out implementation.



## Exhibit A Employee Suggestion Form

Suggester's Name	Principal Office
	Phone

During the evaluation, all suggestions will be processed anonymously.

### Instructions:

After completing your suggestion, save as a file and email to “ED Employee Suggestion Program” or return hard copy to:  
 ED Employee Suggestion Program  
 400 Maryland Ave, SW, Room 7W214  
 Washington, DC 20202

Please use a separate page and answer the following:

1. What is the current problem, procedure, or working condition that your suggestion addresses?
2. How does your suggestion solve the problem, improve or streamline procedures or conditions?
3. What do you perceive are the advantages/benefits of implementing your suggestion? Are there any disadvantages?
4. How will the suggestion benefit the Department as a whole? How much money or time will this save the Department?

### CERTIFICATION:

1. By filing this suggestion, I understand I may be granted an award only if this suggestion is adopted by the Government in accordance with the procedures for the Department of Education Employee Suggestion Program. I also agree that the use of this suggestion by the United States shall not form the basis for a claim of any nature upon the United States by me or anyone else on my behalf.
2. ED employees who submit suggestions anonymously relinquish any claim to an award if the suggestion is implemented.

## Exhibit B Employee Suggestion Evaluation

Evaluator Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Office: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Bldg/Rm # \_\_\_\_\_

Final recommendation:

- Implement     
  Assemble a team for further evaluation     
  Reject

Please return to the Internal Communications Team, Suggestion Coordinator, FB-6, room 7W214.

Suggestion number:		Date received:	Date of final action:
Final action	Type of benefits	Estimated savings	Amount of award
<input type="checkbox"/> Adopted  <input type="checkbox"/> Not adopted	<input type="checkbox"/> Tangible  <input type="checkbox"/> Not tangible	\$ _____	\$ _____

### EVALUATION

1. Describe the benefits and/or advantages:

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2. To what extent is additional information or further analysis necessary to make a thoughtful evaluation of this suggestion? What information or analysis would you recommend?

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**Exhibit B (continued)**  
**Employee Suggestion Evaluation (continued)**

3. Are there any obstacles to implementing the suggestion? If yes, what are they?

- Yes    No

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**Recommendation**

Please check the appropriate response:

- Implement.
- Assemble a team for further evaluation.
- Reject. Why?
- Send back to suggester for additional information.

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Follow up procedures needed. Assign to ICT member for follow up:

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## Exhibit C

### Suggestion Cash Award Form

<b>Recipient:</b>	
Name: _____	_____
(Last)	(First)
	(MI)
Mailing Address: _____	
_____	
<b>Award Type and Amount:</b>	
(Please Check the Appropriate Box)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Spot Cash Award
<input type="checkbox"/>	Time Off Award _____ hours
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cash Award
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cost Savings Award _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Suggestion Award _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-monetary (Type) _____
Award criteria and justification requirements are on the reverse side of this form. This form and the Request for Personnel Action (SF-52) should be forwarded to the Servicing Personnel Office for processing.	
<b>Certifications:</b>	
<b>Recommending Official:</b>	
Signature: _____	Date: _____
Name: _____	
<b>Approving Official</b>	
Signature: _____	Date: _____
Name: _____	
<b>Awards Budget/Executive Officer</b>	
Signature: _____	Date: _____
Name: _____	
CAN Number: _____ Amount: _____	

## Exhibit D

### Cash Award Schedule

**A. Basis for Cash Awards**

1. Suggestions must have measurable dollar benefits of at least \$250 (tangible), and benefits of comparable value (intangible), or a combination of both to qualify for a cash award.
2. Cash awards for group suggestions will be determined as a single award and the amount shared equally by each individual.

**B. Cash Awards Based on Tangible Benefits**

1. When the benefits from an adopted suggestion can be assessed in monetary terms, the award is normally based on the estimated net savings obtained from the idea during the first full year of implementation.
2. Awards for tangible benefits (savings/benefits minus costs to implement) are based on the following scale:

Benefits to government	Maximum Award
Up to \$10,000	10 percent of benefits with a minimum of \$50
\$10,000-100,000	\$1000 for the first \$10,000 plus 3 percent of benefits over \$10,000
\$100,001 or more	\$3700 for the first \$100,000 plus 0.5 percent of benefits over \$100,000

**C. Cash Awards Based on Intangible Benefits**

1. A cash award may be made for a suggestion that does not lend itself to appraisal on the basis of monetary benefits. To qualify for a cash award, the assessed intangible benefits must be comparable, in value to the Government, with those based on tangible benefits. Tangible benefits are considered before intangible or before consideration is given to a combination of both tangible and intangible benefits.
2. Definition of terms in Intangible Benefits Scale:
  - a. *Moderate*: Change or modification of an operating principle or procedure which has moderate value sufficient to meet the minimum standard for a cash award; an improvement of rather limited value of an activity, program or service to the public.
  - b. *Substantial*: Substantial change or modification of an operating principle or procedure; an important improvement to the value of an operating principle or procedure; an important improvement to the value of an activity, program, or service to the public.
  - c. *High*: Complete revision of a basic principle or procedure; a highly significant improvement to the value of a major activity, or program, or service to the public.

**Exhibit D (continued)**  
Cash Award Schedule (continued)

- d. *Exceptional:* Initiation of a new principle of major procedure; a superior improvement to the quality of a critical activity, program, or service to the public.
- e. *General:* Affects functions, mission, or personnel of the entire Department, or is in the public interest throughout the Nation or beyond

<b>Degree of Benefit</b>	<b>Extent of Application—General</b>
Moderate	\$501-\$1000
Substantial	\$1001-\$2500
High	\$2501-\$5000
Exceptional	\$5001-\$10,000