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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING
RECLAMATION AND ENFORCEMENT

DIRECTIVES SYSTEM

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Subject: Employee Suggestion Program

Approval: Ted D. Christensen | Title: Director

1. Purpose. This directive provides a procedure by which employees may be recognized for contributing to the economic and efficient operation of the Government through the submission of suggestions.

2. Definition.

a. Employee Suggestion. An employee suggestion is a constructive idea (or invention) conceived by an employee or a group of employees that is submitted to management for evaluation and consideration for adoption. An employee suggestion may be designed to improve methods, equipment, or procedures; to reduce time or cost or operations; or to increase effectiveness. It may save materials, money, manpower, property or improve service to the public.

b. Cash Award. An award where the recipient receives monetary recognition, along with a certificate.

c. Agency. For purpose of this directive, the term "agency" refers to the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE).

d. Tangible Benefits. Contributions resulting in savings to the Government that can be measured.

e. Intangible Benefits. Contributions resulting in savings to the Government that cannot be measured.

3. Policy/Responsibilities/Procedures.

a. Policy. The Employee Suggestion Program is an organizational system for soliciting constructive ideas that will benefit the Agency and reward the employee originators. It provides an added incentive to demonstrate initiative and interest beyond normal job requirements because employees whose ideas are placed into effect may receive personal recognition and, when appropriate, cash awards. All employees are eligible to participate in the Employee Suggestion Program.

b. Responsibilities.

(1) Director has the overall responsibility for the OSMRE Employee Suggestion Program.

(d) Promoting the Program by implementing campaigns or other promotional ideas to encourage the submission of suggestions; and,

(e) Arranging award presentations.

(7) Employees share responsibility for improving Government operations and services. Employees may contribute to the operational effectiveness of OSMRE, the Department, and the Government by submitting beneficial ideas under this program.

c. Procedures.

(1) An employee must submit an original and one copy of his/her suggestion on DI Form 398, Employee Suggestion Form. The completed suggestion form should be submitted to the Incentive Awards Administrator in the Personnel Office.

(2) The Incentive Awards Administrator will review the form to ascertain whether it is a suggestion worthy of further evaluation, and if so, docket the suggestion and refer it for evaluation to the management official who has authority to adopt it (i.e., at Division level or higher). The employee will be advised of the status of the suggestion within five days of receipt in the Personnel Office.

(a) To be eligible, a suggestion must directly contribute to the efficiency or economy, or increase the effectiveness of Government programs or operations. The proposal must have measurable dollar benefits of at least $250 for the first year after adoption, or intangible benefits of comparable value, to be eligible for a cash award.

(b) A suggestion does not have to be new or unique as long as it is beneficial to agency or governmental operations. It may be adopted in its entirety or in part. Awards are based on benefits to the Government, either tangible or intangible, or a combination of the two resulting from implementation of the suggestion.

(c) A suggestion may be processed under the Employee Suggestion Program, if it is job related, but not if it actually falls within an employee's assigned job responsibilities. A contribution that is determined to be within an employee's job responsibilities, but so superior or meritorious as to warrant special recognition, may be considered for a performance or honor award.

(d) To be eligible, a suggestion must meet the following criteria:

1 Identify or define an existing problem; and

1 Tangible benefits must be established as a basis for an award whenever it is possible to do so. Benefits are considered tangible when it can be shown they have a measurable monetary value, and the documentation must be specific as to how the measurable benefits were calculated. The award usually is calculated on the basis of the actual or estimated net monetary benefits for the first full year of operation, i.e., implementing cost must be deducted from estimated savings. When substantial nonrecurring costs are involved in the implementation of a suggestion which will be useful for a number of years and the amount of the award on the basis of net first year benefits would be an inadequate reward, the award may be based on the average annual net benefits over a period of years not to exceed the reasonable life of the initial implementation. (Guidelines for determining tangible benefits may be found on Table 1.)

2 When no measurable monetary benefits can be substantiated or the extent of tangible benefits is considered of little significance in relation to the total benefits, the value of a suggestion should be measured in terms of intangible benefits. Good judgment must be the principle guide in setting values on suggestions which do not result in benefits having a measurable monetary value, and the documentation must describe in specific terms the benefits realized or expected to be realized. The following are important factors to be considered: does the idea directly contribute to the economy, efficiency, or directly increase the effectiveness in carrying out Government missions. Another factor is the extent of the suggestion or invention's application (see Tables 2a and 2b).

3 Some suggestions may result in both tangible and intangible benefits. In evaluating this type of contribution, the extent of benefits in each of the two categories will be determined separately by applying the requirements set forth in subparagraphs (a) and (b) above. The amount of award for intangible benefits will be added to the award for tangible benefits to determine the total amount of award.

(5) Upon receipt by the Incentive Awards Administrator of the completed evaluation of a suggestion, the suggestion will be transmitted to and reviewed by the Headquarters Incentive Awards Committee. If the suggestion is adopted, but the amount of the benefits is less than $250, a cash award may not be authorized, but an official Letter of Commendation should be given the suggester. The letter should clearly identify the contribution. It must also state that a copy must be filed in the employee's Official Personnel Folder. The Incentive Awards Administrator will prepare the letters for the Director's signature. If a cash award is warranted, it will be given according to the attached Tables.

4. Reporting Requirements. None

5. References

a. Department of the Interior - Departmental Manual, Part 370, DM 451.

b. FPM - Chapter 451.

c. OSMRE Incentive Awards Program Directive (PER 17).

6. Effective on Other Documents. Supersedes PER-15 dated April 2, 1984.

7. Effective Date. Upon Issuance.

8. Contact. Division of Personnel, Branch of Policy and Evaluation, FTS - 343-4656.

TABLE 2a

AWARDS FOR INTANGIBLE BENEFITS. When it is determined that the contribution of an employee or a group of employees merits a cash award, based solely or in part on intangible benefits, the amount of the award shall be determined by the extent of the application and the value of the benefit.

a. The extent of the application is defined as:

Limited	Affects functions, mission, or personnel of one office, facility, installation, or an organization element of a headquarters. Affects a small area of science or technology.
Extended	Affects functions, mission, or personnel of several offices, facilities, or installation. Affects an important area of science or technology.
Broad	Affects functions, mission, or personnel of an entire regional area or command. May be applicable to all of the independent agency or a large bureau. Affects a broad area of science or technology.
General	Affects functions, mission, or personnel of several regional areas or commands, or an entire department or large independent agency, or is in the public interest throughout the nation or beyond.

b. The value of the benefit is defined as:

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 a product, activity, program or service to the public.
Substantial	Change or modification of an operating principle or procedure; an important improvement to the value of a product, activity; program; or service to the public.
High	Complete revision of a basic principle or procedure; a highly significant improvement to the value of a product, activity, or program; or service to the public.

TABLE 2b

Awards for intangible benefits are granted on the basis of the following table:

VALUE OF BENEFITS	EXTENT OF APPLICATION Limited	Extended	Broad	General
Moderate	$ 25 - 100 1/	$ 100 - 250	$ 250 - 500	$ 500 - 1,000
Substantial	$100 - 250	$ 250 - 500	$ 500 - 1,000	$1,000 - 2,500
High Value	$250 - 500	$ 500 - 1,000	$1,000 - 2,500	$2,500 - 5,000
Exceptional	$500 -1,000	$1,000 - 2,500	$2,500 - 5,000	$5,000 -10,000 2/

1/ An award for tangible benefits can be granted only when the benefits reach or exceed $250. In determining cash awards for contributions with intangible results, the value to the Government must be comparable to those contributions receiving equivalent awards on the basis of tangible results.

2/ Awards in excess of $10,000 must be certified to the Office of Personnel Management for Approval.

Note: When a contribution has both tangible and intangible benefits, the amount of award is based on the total value of the contribution to the Government, i.e., a combination of the award amount based on tangible and the award amount based on intangible benefits.