

# Suggestion Incentive Program Policy

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*Effective Date: Adopted 3/90. Revised: 2/2010*

**§-I. PURPOSE** To encourage and solicit constructive suggestions for the improvement of operations and to recognize and reward, when appropriate and practical, all eligible employees whose suggestions are properly submitted and accepted.

## **§-II. SCOPE**

A. All employees of Cobb County excluding department heads and elected officers are eligible to participate and receive awards.

B. Suggestions from employees that pertain to offices of elected officials shall be admissible for eligibility provided the applicable elected official endorses the Suggestion Incentive Program.

C. Employees actively involved with the Suggestion Incentive Awards Committee are ineligible.

**§-III. POLICY** It is the policy of Cobb County to award incentives to employees who submit suggestions for more efficient and/or improved operations that are considered to be implementable by management staff. Suggestions are reviewed for awards based on the following procedures.

## **§-IV. PROCEDURES**

### **A. Suggestion Incentive Awards Committee**

#### **1. Composition of Employee Incentive Awards Committee**

The Committee members shall be appointed by the County Manager and shall be composed of a representative from the Human Resources department that shall serve as Administrator and one member from each of the following departments:

- a. Finance - Standing Member
- b. The Internal Audit Division
- c. Service Department Representative
- d. Service Department Representative
- e. Service Department Representative

f. Public Safety Department Representative

Members will serve staggered terms of 12 months. One half of the committee members are replaced every six months on January 1 and July 1 after serving a minimum of 12 months.

No two employees can serve from the same department at the same time. The committee members shall appoint a chairperson for the committee every twelve months.

**2. Authority and responsibility of the Suggestion Incentive Awards Committee**

The Committee will meet at a designated place and time. A quorum is required before the Committee can vote on awards. All decisions of the Committee are final. Additional information can be submitted for supplementary consideration. It will be the duty of the Committee to:

- a. Adopt rules governing its proceedings.
- b. Keep permanent and accurate records of all activities associated with the Employee Incentive Awards Program.
- c. Assure that each suggestion reviewed is thoroughly and fairly investigated; assist in the collection of additional information as appropriate for follow-up and clarification.
- d. Calculate and recommend the amount or nature of award and funding source, if applicable, based on the suggestions impact and/or cost analysis.
- e. Approve awards.
- f. Waive procedural rules in individual cases in the interest of fairness and equity.
- g. Report to the County Manager in a annual summary on the status of the program.

**B. Human Resources department Responsibilities**

The Human Resources department shall:

- 1. Promote the Suggestion Incentive Program.
- 2. Date stamp and keep a current log of all suggestions received.
- 3. Review incoming suggestions to ensure they are eligible under the Program's rules.
- 4. Promptly acknowledge all eligible suggestions to employee involved.

5. Refer eligible suggestions to the appropriate department(s) to obtain the best analysis of the suggestion and a recommended rating or dollar amount of savings.
6. Establish due date for prompt departmental evaluations and appropriate follow-up thereon.
7. Process evaluation results from departmental reviewing officials and forward them to the committee.
8. Take necessary action to insure the prompt payment (where available) for adopted suggestions.
9. Monitor the timely implementation of approved suggestions.
10. Insure the availability of forms for suggestions.
11. Schedule meetings and prepare agendas for the Suggestion/Incentive Awards Committee.

### **C. Eligibility of Suggestions**

1. Definition of Suggestion: The suggestion must concisely identify a problem or area in which productivity, efficiency or safety can be improved and must recommend a remedy for the problem or specific area cited without sacrificing quality.
2. Suggestions must be submitted only on the proper authorized form.
3. Suggestions pertaining to the following will be ineligible:
  - a. Opinions or suggestions which do not offer a specific solution or procedure for implementing the suggestion.
  - b. Improving or correcting conditions which exist only because established policy and procedures are not being followed.
  - c. Duplication of a suggestion previously submitted.
  - d. Eliminating, lowering, or raising fees or taxes levied by the county, city, state, or other governmental entity.
  - e. Suggestions that can and should be implemented within your normal job.
  - f. Matters which are the result of assigned or contracted audits, studies, surveys, reviews, or research.
  - g. Ideas already under consideration.
  - h. Suggestions submitted by an employee whose primary duties concern development or evaluation of cost-saving ideas of the department.

i. Newly implemented procedures are not open to suggestion for the first six months.

j. Personal grievances.

k. Salary schedules, job classifications, time and leave regulations, or fringe benefits.

l. Suggestions requiring legislative or court action other than by County ordinance.

m. Suggestions recommending use, purchase, lease, or rent of a specific product brand.

n. Suggestions that are not under the authority or responsibility of the County.

#### **D. Evaluation Process**

1. Employee completes the suggestion form.
2. Suggestion form is transmitted to the Human Resources department which will stamp the date and assign a number to each suggestion and acknowledge receipt.
3. One copy of the suggestion, without identification of the employee, will be sent to the appropriate departmental reviewing official(s).
4. Departmental reviewing official(s) will evaluate the suggestion and recommend whether the suggestion should be adopted.
5. Where applicable, departmental reviewing official(s) will estimate or confirm the probable cost and savings involved.
6. The Suggestion Incentive Awards Committee will review all department-endorsed suggestions and decide whether to deny, or affirm the adoption of the suggestion. Using established guidelines, the Committee will also determine the type and amount of award to be given. Each suggestion shall be acknowledged as received.
7. The decision of the Suggestion Incentive Awards Committee, favorable or otherwise, will be sent to the employee. Copies of approved (only) suggestions will also be furnished to the employee's department head and the department affected by the suggestion.

#### **E. Modification of Ideas**

An individual is entitled to an award consideration even though the suggestion may be adopted in a modified form based on departmental recommendations

#### **F. Duplicate Suggestions**

1. Suggestions will be reviewed by the Human Resources department to determine whether they are a duplicate of or similar to a suggestion which has already been submitted or adopted.
2. If duplicate suggestions are received, the one with the earlier date of receipt will be eligible for consideration, and all others ineligible.
3. If duplicate suggestions are received on the same date, both will be considered eligible, and if adopted, a split award on a percentage basis will be determined.

#### **G. Group Suggestions**

Group suggestions will be considered on the same basis as if the suggestion had been submitted by one employee, and the award will be divided equally among the employees in the group.

#### **H. Determination of Awards-Tangible Savings**

The monetary amount of all awards shall be based on the projected net savings (gross savings less any start-up and/or on-going program costs).

1. Tangible suggestions are ideas whose benefits can actually be measured in projected cost savings to the County.
2. Employees should realize that monetary awards represent a before tax dollar amount.
3. All monetary awards are considered taxable, and FICA, federal and state taxes will be withheld.
4. Cash awards for tangible suggestions shall be as follows:

10% of net savings with a cap of \$1,000 Award

Example: \$1,000 net savings = \$100 to EMPLOYEE!

#### **I. Determination of Awards-Intangible**

Intangible suggestions are ideas that may have an overall benefit but whose benefits cannot be measured in dollars. These suggestions may involve improvements in working conditions, changes in procedures, revision of forms, improvement in employee morale, or employee health and safety.

1. Employees who submit approved intangible suggestions will receive an award of benefit leave time. The amount of leave time will be based on the point system below that evaluates the value of the suggestion to Cobb County Government.

Points	Days of Leave
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151 - 200	2 days
101 - 150	1 day
51 - 100	1/2 day
50 or less	None

2. Employees who receive benefit leave time are presented with a certificate which states the amount of their award time. Benefit leave time should be arranged in advance with the supervisor's permission.

3. Employees with more than one suggestion accepted during any calendar year will qualify for bonus points which will be considered when determining the award.

4. In determining the value of intangible suggestions, the following criteria will be used as a guideline based on input from the impacted department(s).a. Degree of improvement in operations - forms, facilities and equipment

1. None ---- 0 points
2. Minor ---- 10 points
3. Moderate ---- 25 points
4. Major ---- 40 points

b. Degree of improvement in employee relations, working conditions, safety, service to public, public attitude

1. None ---- 0 points
2. Minor ---- 10 points
3. Moderate ---- 25 points
4. Major ---- 40 points

c. Extent of application

1. Single operations, office or work unit ---- 10 points
2. Several operations, office or work units ---- 20 points
3. Majority of departments ---- 30 points
4. County-wide ---- 40 points

d. Ingenuity of idea

1. Adaptation/application of an existing idea ---- 15 points
2. Innovation/original idea ---- 30 points

e. Cost of adoption (in relations to benefits)

1. Large ---- 10 points
2. Moderate ---- 20 points
3. Small ---- 30 points

f. Effort involved

1. Average substantiation --- 10 points
2. Considerable personal research ---- 20 points
3. In-depth analysis of idea and impact ---- 30 points

g. Bonus

Prior suggestion adopted year --- add 10 points

5. A Certificate of Merit will be given when a suggestion does not save money but has a positive effect.

**J. Payment of Awards**

Cash awards recommended by the Suggestion Incentive Awards Committee shall be subject to the approval of the County Manager, his designee, or in their absence, the Director of Human Resources who will approve all payment requisitions.

1. Cash awards approved by the Committee will be funded from the operating or budget account that will realize the cost savings from the approved suggestion.
2. The Finance Department shall have the authority to authorize a budget transfer from the applicable budget account once the award has been approved by the Committee for payment.

**K. Program Conditions**

1. Suggestions that have been adopted become the property of Cobb County, and the employee may make no claims against the County regardless of the use made of the suggestion by the County.
2. Absolutely no verbal or anonymous suggestions will be considered or accepted.
3. The decision of the Suggestion Incentive Awards Committee is final.
4. All awards, whether in cash or in benefit time are considered taxable income to employees. The appropriate amounts will be included on the employee's year-end tax statement.
5. No interest will be paid on award funds.

6. Cobb County reserves the right to modify or amend the rules, procedures, or guidelines of this incentive system at any time without prior notice. Furthermore, Cobb County reserves the right to terminate said incentive program at any time without prior notice.

7. If the award structure is changed for any reason, all suggestions being currently evaluated, pending, or as yet unpaid will be awarded according to the award structure at the time of the submission of the suggestion.

8. All suggestions will be evaluated without regard to the employee's race, religion, color, age, citizenship, national origin, sex, disability, or veteran status. In pursuit of this goal, the Awards Committee will not, under normal circumstances, be provided with information regarding the identity of the employee except the disclosure of the employing department.

9. Employee whose ideas are recognized as winners will be asked to agree to the use of their name, picture, amount and nature of the award for the purpose of publicity for the Employee Incentive Program.

10. Suggested changes or additions to the rules and regulations of the Suggestion Incentive Program shall be directed in writing to the Suggestion Incentive Awards Committee. Such suggestions will not be eligible for awards.