

CITY OF CHESAPEAKE, VIRGINIA

NUMBER: 2.37 (23.1.1)

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION

EFFECTIVE DATE: 02/10/04

**SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION PROGRAM**

SUPERCEDES: 08/20/02

I. PURPOSE

To improve the operations of our City government by encouraging employees to contribute constructive, creative and innovative ideas which improve the services we provide our customers, increase the effectiveness and efficiency of our operation, provide a safer working environment for our employees and result in better public relations.

II. OBJECTIVES

- To encourage City employees to develop and recommend valuable suggestions by recognizing their input and rewarding eligible suggestions with applicable awards.
- To provide a means by which all suggestions can be objectively evaluated for implementation and award eligibility.

III. DEFINITIONS

1. **Suggestion:** A new or original idea or new or updated application of an existing process or procedure. It must identify and address a specific problem or area for improvement and present a solution and actual benefits.
2. **Intangible suggestion:** Suggestion for which dollar savings cannot be calculated but which results in significant improvements in City operations (improvement in customer service, employee morale, safety, public relations, etc.)
3. **Tangible suggestion:** A suggestion resulting in measurable savings or increase in revenue.

IV. AWARD LEVELS

The Employee Suggestion Program shall be divided into two (2) separate levels. Level I is "Growing Ideas" and Level II is "City \$ense".

- A. "Growing Ideas" will represent an intangible suggestion that improves the overall quality of work life, provides a safer, healthier work environment, generates better public relations and enhanced customer service but does not necessarily generate quantifiable savings or income.
- B. "City \$ense" will represent a tangible suggestion that results in increased revenue or measurable savings.

V. ADMINISTRATION

The administration of the Employee Suggestion Program is the responsibility of the Department of Human Resources. The administrative duties include:

- Maintaining suggestion forms and submission procedures;
- Acknowledging receipt of suggestions and reviewing for eligibility;
- Notifying employees if additional information is needed;
- Notifying employees if a suggestion does not meet the eligibility criteria and providing the reason(s) why;
- Referring eligible suggestions to the applicable department(s) for review and validation of savings;
- Notifying employees of any delays in the reviewing process;
- Providing periodic status reports to all employees;
- Evaluating responses from the reviewing department(s) to ensure all pertinent information was received;
- Coordinating meetings of the Suggestion Review Committee;
- Notifying employees of the outcome of the departmental and Suggestion Review Committee decisions;
- Maintaining records on all suggestions received;
- Maintaining follow-up procedures to insure all suggestions are reviewed promptly and timely feedback is provided to employees;
- Forwarding all applicable information regarding a suggestion receiving an award to the employee's personnel file; and
- Preparing annual budget estimates for funding of the Program.

VI. SUGGESTION REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Suggestion Review Committee will consist of the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator from the Department of Human Resources, a representative from either the Budget or Finance Department, and two at large employees appointed by the City Manager. The at large employees appointed by the City Manager will serve a two-year term. This Committee will have full responsibility for the evaluation of all suggestions submitted for a "City Sense" award, analyzing the responses provided by the reviewing department, and determining the amount and type of award.

VII. EMPLOYEE ELIGIBILITY

All employees on the City payroll are eligible to submit suggestions under this policy, however, those employees who are not eligible to receive a suggestion award are:

- Elected officials, the City Manager, the Deputy City Manager, Department/Agency Heads and Executive Directors; and
- Employees who have been given a job assignment for correction or improvement of a particular service area.

Employees who submit suggestions and leave the City prior to the final decision of the Suggestion Review Committee will no longer be considered eligible for an award. Employees who leave the City after the Suggestion Review Committee determines a suggestion can be implemented will receive the monetary award based on the type of suggestion. Employees leaving the City of Chesapeake must provide a forwarding address to the Department of Human Resources to remain eligible for an award. Award eligibility is based on an employee's position at the time the suggestion was submitted.

VIII. SUGGESTION ELIGIBILITY

A. Eligible Suggestions

Eligible suggestions may include, but are not limited to:

- Improving methods and procedures to increase efficiency;
- Saving time, labor, space, material, or supplies;
- Improving administrative or operations techniques and practices;
- Improving tools and materials;
- Eliminating unnecessary procedures, records, and forms;
- Eliminating bottlenecks, accidents, delays, duplications, and waste;
- Improving public relations;
- Improving customer service to the public or internal customers;
- Improving safety, health, and fire hazards or working conditions; and
- New ideas related to the above.

B. Suggestions Not Eligible for Consideration

The following types of suggestions are not eligible for consideration:

- Those related to personal grievances or general complaints;
- Those proposing salary increases, job reclassification, liberalization of leave policies, and similar changes in compensation, classification, and benefit matters;
- Those changes and/or improvements already under consideration by management (Note: The responsible department must be able to document that the specific idea proposed in the suggestion has been given actual and serious consideration. If the employee's suggestion prompts reconsideration of a previously rejected idea and the idea is then implemented, the employee shall receive credit as if the suggestion were a new idea.);
- Those which are essentially duplicates of suggestions previously submitted by another employee at an earlier date within the past thirty-six (36) months;
- Those matters requiring legal adjudication or mandated by law;
- Those proposing stricter enforcement of already existing rules, regulations, policies or laws;
- Those requesting additional equipment of a common nature or for obvious replacements, repairs or maintenance;
- Those which call attention to the need for routine and/or established regularly scheduled routine office operations, (e.g. minor changes to existing forms, letterhead, filing systems, etc.) maintenance and repair work, unless it significantly improves operations;
- Those proposals to improve aesthetics (air conditioning, decorations, furniture, etc.) or proposals which call for routine or normal safety practices. (A suggestion which proposes a more effective or safer method of maintaining or repairing equipment or materials is eligible for consideration for an award);
- Those proposals to have a "survey", "study", or "review" done with a course of action to be taken in accordance with the findings;
- Those proposals which are developed as a result of a particular job assignment. (Ideas that are job related and originated by the employee(s) are eligible for consideration);
- Those proposed by employees serving on special committees on topics falling within the scope of the committee's assignment;
- Those which fall outside the authority or responsibility of the City in its internal operations (e.g. School Board issues, State rules and regulations, etc.);
- Those which call attention to a problem but do not propose a solution; and

- Those suggestions recognized under the City's Employee Recognition and Incentive Program.

IX. TEAM SUGGESTIONS

Team suggestions by two (2) or more eligible employees are permitted. Each employee must sign the suggestion form. The monetary award and days off with pay will be awarded individually to each employee based on the level of award.

X. PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING SUGGESTIONS

A. Processing Steps for "Growing Ideas":

1. The employee submits a completed suggestion form to the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator in the Department of Human Resources. The employee must select the appropriate category for which the suggestion shall be reviewed.
2. Within one (1) calendar week of receiving the completed suggestion form, the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator will determine the eligibility of the suggestion. If the suggestion is eligible, the employee will receive a letter with the assigned tracking number. If the suggestion is ineligible, the employee will receive a letter detailing the reason for ineligibility.
3. Within one (1) calendar week of receiving the completed suggestion form, the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator will forward eligible suggestions to the Department/Agency Head(s) where the suggestion could be implemented. The suggestion is accompanied by an evaluation form for use by the evaluator(s).
4. Within one (1) calendar week of receiving the suggestion, the Department Head will determine whether other departments shall be involved in the evaluation process and provide a response to the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator. The Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator will contact supplemental departments as necessary for their input. The Department Head will appoint a Department Evaluation Representative and other evaluators as necessary to review the suggestion.
5. Selected evaluators must return the completed evaluation form to the Department Evaluation Representative within two (2) calendar weeks from the date received.
6. The Department/Agency Head will indicate on the form whether or not he/she endorses the suggestion, whether or not he/she supports implementation of the suggestion along with justification and signs the form. Completed forms should be forwarded to the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator by the deadline provided on the memo. The Department Evaluation Representative will notify the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator if there is an expected delay in response.

7. The Department/Agency Head involved will place such adopted suggestions into effect within two (2) months, and will notify the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator once the suggestion has been implemented. The Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator will extend the implementation deadline on a case-by-case basis.

B. Processing Steps for “City Sense”:

1. The employee submits a completed suggestion form to the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator. The employee must select the appropriate category for which the suggestion shall be reviewed.
2. Within one (1) calendar week of receiving the completed suggestion form, the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator will determine the eligibility of the suggestion. If the suggestion is eligible, the employee will receive a letter with the assigned tracking number. If the suggestion is ineligible, the employee will receive a letter detailing the reason for ineligibility.
3. Within one (1) calendar week of receiving the completed suggestion form, the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator will forward eligible suggestions to the Department/Agency Head(s) where the suggestion could be implemented. The suggestion is accompanied by an evaluation form for use by the evaluator(s).
4. Within one (1) calendar week of receiving the suggestion, the Department Head will determine whether other departments shall be involved in the evaluation process and provide a response to the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator. The Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator will contact supplemental departments as necessary for their input. The Department Head will appoint a Department Evaluation Representative and other evaluators as necessary to review the suggestion.
5. Selected evaluators must return the completed evaluation form to the Department Evaluation Representative within two (2) calendar weeks from the date received.
6. The Department/Agency Head will indicate on the form whether or not he/she endorses the suggestion, whether or not he/she supports implementation of the suggestion along with justification and signs the form. Completed forms should be returned to the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator by the deadline provided on the memo. The Department Evaluation Representative will notify the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator if there is an expected delay in response.
7. The Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator will notify the employee and provide a progress update six (6) calendar weeks after the suggestion is forwarded to the Department Evaluation Representative. If there is a delay in receiving the recommendation from the Department Evaluation Representative, the Employee

Suggestion Program Coordinator will continue to provide status updates to the employee every two (2) weeks.

8. After the completed evaluation form(s) are returned, the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator places the suggestion on the agenda for the next Suggestion Review Committee meeting. Meetings will be held as needed based on the suggestions up for review. Prior to the meeting, the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator will send each Committee member a copy of the suggestion form and a copy of the departmental evaluation form.
9. At the meeting, the Suggestion Review Committee analyzes the submitted suggestions, responses provided by the reviewing department, determines the feasibility of the suggestion, and if appropriate, the level of award. The Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator also provides a quarterly report detailing the status of newly implemented suggestions to Committee Members and the City Manager.
10. With the approval of the City Manager, the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator notifies the employee and the respective Department/Agency Head of the Review Committee's decision on the matter. The Department/Agency Head involved will place such adopted suggestions into effect within three (3) months, and will notify the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator once the suggestion has been implemented. Exceptions to this deadline must be approved by the City Manager.

C. General Processing Steps:

1. Should a problem arise concerning a suggestion, the matter will be referred to the Suggestion Review Committee for final determination.
2. If the Suggestion Review Committee does not adopt the suggestion, the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator will provide a notice to the employee with an explanation as to why the suggestion could not be adopted.
3. The decision of the Suggestion Review Committee will be final and not subject to the City's Grievance Procedure or other appeal processes.

XI. DEPARTMENT EVALUATION REPRESENTATIVES

Each Department/Agency Head will be responsible for appointing an Evaluation Representative. The Department Evaluation Representative should have a thorough understanding of the daily operations in his/her respective department. The responsibilities of the Evaluation Representative will be to:

- A. Serve as the liaison for the department and the Suggestion Review Committee;
- B. Provide further information and/or documentation regarding an evaluation when necessary; and

- C. Receive suggestions that could be implemented by their department and oversee the evaluation process by:
1. Determining the most appropriate person(s) within their department to evaluate the suggestion,
 2. Ensuring that the evaluation is done thoroughly,
 3. Ensuring a recommendation is made by the evaluator(s) to adopt or not adopt the suggestion, and
 4. Returning the completed evaluation to the Employee Suggestion Program Coordinator within the given time frames, or providing a status update when more time is required.

XII. AWARDS

Awards for suggestions that have been endorsed and implemented can be provided for both “Growing Ideas” and “City \$ense” suggestions. Awards may be a combination of monetary payment and time off with pay. All monetary awards are subject to Federal and State taxes, which will be deducted from the award prior to payment. Employees whose suggestions are endorsed by a Department/Agency Head but can not be implemented will be recognized for his or her suggestion.

A. “Growing Ideas” Awards

Suggestions at this level include, but are not limited to those that improve the quality of work life, provide a safer, healthier work environment, create better public relations and enhanced customer service, but do not generate quantifiable savings or income.

The award for an implemented suggestion will be net \$50 and a day off with pay.

B. “City \$ense” Awards

Suggestions at this level must generate increased revenue or measurable savings for the City. Awards for implemented suggestions will include monetary compensation of net \$100 and up to five (5) days off with pay.

Approved suggestions will be evaluated based on a point for cost savings or increased revenue incurred during the first year of implementation to determine the number of days off with pay.

XIII. APPROVAL OF THE CITY MANAGER

All monetary awards require the approval of the City Manager before the Department of Finance can process the payment.

XIV. DUPLICATION AND REEVALUATION OF SUGGESTIONS

- A. In the event of duplication, the suggestion with the earliest date of receipt will receive preference.
- B. When an employee is notified that a suggestion is rejected, the employee may resubmit the idea for re-evaluation after twelve (12) months. However, for an idea to be re-evaluated, the employee must furnish additional information or evidence to show that conditions have changed sufficiently to warrant reconsideration of the idea. The Committee's determination on the sufficiency of such information or evidence to warrant reevaluation shall be final.

XV. PATENTABLE SUGGESTIONS

If a suggestion is submitted pursuant to this policy which is deemed by the City to be patentable, the employee eligible for the award will retain all rights or interest in the suggestion except for a royalty-free, non-exclusive license to use the suggestion which shall be retained by the City before a patent application may be filed, while the patent is pending, and/or after the patent is granted.

XVI. WAIVER OF RIGHTS AND INTEREST

The submission of a suggestion pursuant to this policy will constitute a waiver of any and all claims of rights or interest in the suggestion by the eligible employee, his/her heirs, or assigns against the City except provided in Section XV of this policy.