

ADMINISTRATIVE BULLETIN NO. 32

Issued May 16, 2008

SUBJECT: EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION AWARD PROGRAM

A. Overview

The Employee Suggestion Award Program of the County of Kern is designed to encourage employees to bring good ideas to the attention of management, and to reward employees for their contributions to operating County systems in an innovative, efficient manner.

The program provides benefits in the following ways, to:

- The County, by promoting innovation, efficiency, cost savings, safety, and improved services to our customers;
- Employees, by giving them recognition and cash awards for their good ideas, making their work safer and more efficient, and giving them an opportunity for creativity; and
- The taxpayer, by providing better customer service and reducing costs.

B. Why Do People Make Suggestions?

A typical person who makes suggestions (“Submitter”) is someone who works creatively and approaches his or her job in a proactive manner. Submitters may have a variety of reasons for submitting suggested ideas apart from the possibility of receiving a cash reward. For some people, receiving recognition is a stronger motivator than money. Others are motivated by the need to adapt to changes, eliminate inefficient or frustrating parts of the job, or keep work interesting and challenging.

C. The Program

Eligibility Rules

With the exceptions below, all employees of the County of Kern are eligible to nominate ideas to the program, including part-time, extra help, and probationary employees. Exceptions would be Employee Suggestion Award Committee members and staff, department or assistant department

heads, and most management or mid-management employees. In general, if the submitter would have the authority to implement the idea without obtaining approval from others, he or she would not be eligible to participate. Suggestions may be submitted that will produce significant improvements in current processes, if they are adjudged by Committee members to be “above and beyond” the normal scope of responsibility of the Submitter’s job. These awards are intended to improve processes, spark innovative practices, and motivate operational efficiencies.

A suggestion may be submitted by up to four employees as a joint suggestion, and if awarded will be equally pro-rated.

Eligible Suggestion Criteria

To be eligible, a suggestion must meet all of the following criteria:

- Describe a problem and its solution, and project benefits that may be gained;
- Be the first such suggestion officially received by the Committee’s staff;
- Be submitted by the originator of the idea;
- Be an idea that is not already under consideration by management.

Ineligible Suggestions

Any of the following will disqualify a suggestion for consideration for an award:

- Collective bargaining matters, labor relations grievances, or any meet and confer matters;
- Situations governed by State or federal safety regulations;
- Routine maintenance processes, unless they produce tangible efficiencies;
- Improvements due to errors that would normally be rectified under standard procedures;
- New facilities or new programs within the first six months of use;
- Improvements that are readily accessible to the general public (for example, technical processes found on the Internet).

The Employee Suggestion Award Committee is responsible for deciding whether a suggestion is eligible to be recommended to the Board of Supervisors for an award. Submitters will be notified if their ideas are approved or why they are not approved.

D. How to Submit a Suggestion

Information about the Employee Suggestion Award Program is available at www.co.kern.ca.us/cao/policy/ab-33.pdf. Questions may also be addressed to Suggestion Award staff at (661) 868-3198.

Prior to submitting a suggestion, it is recommended to review the eligibility rules to make sure the suggestion meets guidelines. Approval by supervisory or management staff of submitters is not a prerequisite to submitting ideas.

E. Types of Awards

Tangible Awards

Tangible awards are based on whether a suggestion will increase revenue or cost savings that can be measured monetarily in terms of labor, materials, services, equipment, etc. Such an award is calculated on the basis of 20% of the first year's demonstrated savings or revenue, up to a maximum award of \$10,000. The award will be issued when the monetary benefit has been realized, not less than a year after the suggestion has been implemented. When the Employee Suggestion Award Committee makes an award recommendation to the Board of Supervisors, it will include a recommendation for timing of the prize.

Intangible Awards

Intangible awards are granted for benefits that cannot be measured in dollars, such as improvements in safety, working conditions, morale, or customer service. They may be awarded instead of tangible awards when those are difficult to calculate (such as for a more efficient procedure that is governed by several variables). Intangible awards range from \$100 to \$1000, as determined by the Employee Suggestion Award Committee.

F. Application Evaluation Procedure

Staff to the Employee Suggestion Award Committee will send a copy of the suggestion (with the employee's name deleted to retain anonymity) to the head of the relevant department(s). Department heads determine which staff would be best qualified to evaluate merit of the suggestion. If a department does not consider it is in a position to make a determination, the nomination may be returned.

G. Employee Suggestion Award Committee

The Employee Suggestion Award Committee was formed at the direction of the Board of Supervisors, subsequent to negotiation with collective bargaining units. The Committee makes determinations about forms, rules, and procedures pertaining to the program. The Committee also makes recommendations to the Board about changes in award amounts or criteria. The Assistant County Administrative Officer, or his/her designee, chairs the Committee and provides support staff.

Composition of the Committee

- Assistant County Administrative Officer or designee;
- Two department heads, appointed by the County Administrative Officer;
- One management-level employee of the County appointed by the County Administrative Officer;
- The Employee Relations Officer or designee;
- Representatives from recognized collective bargaining units, not to exceed four.

The Committee will receive staff support from the County Administrative Office. This may include maintaining program records, logging in applications, sending requests for evaluation, scheduling Committee meetings, promoting the program to County employees, and answering procedural questions.

H. Committee Procedures

The Committee will meet quarterly (if applications have been received during that quarter) to review suggestions. The Committee makes determinations of which suggestions will be referred to the Board of Supervisors, including the type and amount of awards. This determination includes both eligibility of the submitter and the merit of the suggestion.

Committee members may require additional information prior to making a decision, and may require the submitter to attend a meeting to answer questions.

Date and Time Received	COUNTY OF KERN Employee Suggestion Award Application	Suggestion No. (For office use)
(SEE LAST PAGE FOR INSTRUCTIONS)		

1. Title of Suggestion:

2. Current procedure, method or situation:

3. Suggested change in procedure, method or situation:

4. Describe how suggested change would benefit Kern County (for example, detailed annual cost savings, efficiency, improved customer service, safety, employee morale, etc.):

5. Indicate if you prefer to have your suggestion reviewed by the Employee Suggestion Award Evaluation Committee anonymously: Yes No

Title of Suggestion (continued):

6. Name of Submitter:	7. Department/Division:
8. Job Title:	9. Work Phone #:
10. Home Address:	
11. City:	12. Home Phone #:

Signature* (REQUIRED): _____ Date: _____

6. Name of Submitter:	7. Department/Division:
8. Job Title:	9. Work Phone #:
10. Home Address:	
11. City:	12. Home Phone #:

Signature* (REQUIRED): _____ Date: _____

6. Name of Submitter:	7. Department/Division:
8. Job Title:	9. Work Phone #:
10. Home Address:	
11. City:	12. Home Phone #:

Signature* (REQUIRED): _____ Date: _____

6. Name of Submitter:	7. Department/Division:
8. Job Title:	9. Work Phone #:
10. Home Address:	
11. City:	12. Home Phone #:

Signature* (REQUIRED): _____ Date: _____

*Signature indicates that the County of Kern shall be entitled to implement the suggestion described above without paying monies, royalties or other consideration (except as provided by the Employee Suggestion Award Program Policy) to the Submitter, or his or her heirs or assignees.

EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION AWARD FORM INSTRUCTIONS

Explanation of Form Boxes

1. Descriptive title of suggestion.
 2. Describe the current procedure, method or situation, and how it is less effective than it could be.
 3. Describe changes proposed to above, including charts, drawings, costs, or positions as needed to permit complete evaluation of the suggestion.
 4. Describe how implementation of the suggestion would benefit the County of Kern. Summarize tangible monetary benefits (such as personnel costs, equipment or supply savings) which would accrue for the first year; or summarize intangible benefits (such as improved customer service, safety, employee morale, etc.).
 5. Checking "No" will allow members of the Employee Suggestion Award Committee to see the name(s) of those who submitted the suggestion.
- 6-12 Contact information on up to four Submitters.

Additional Information

- This form is available electronically on Countynet under Employee/Miscellaneous/Employee Suggestion Award Program. Expand boxes as necessary.
- Information regarding the number of employees, job classifications, and salaries may be obtained from the Personnel Department website.
- Information regarding the cost or quantities of items purchased may be obtained from the General Services Department.
- When preparing charts, diagrams or other visual aids, labels should be self-explanatory. Do not use acronyms unless they are initially spelled out in full.
- Attach additional pages if necessary. Applications are limited to 5 pages, including supplemental information. (Do not include instructions.)
- Upon completion of the form make a copy for your file.
- Questions may be addressed to the Employee Suggestion Award Coordinator at (661) 868-3198.
- Send an original signed copy of the complete application via County mail, or it post to:

Employee Suggestion Award Coordinator
County Administrative Office
1115 Truxtun Avenue, Fifth Floor
Bakersfield, CA 93301