

## **478-1-.22 Employee Suggestion Program.**

(1) **Introduction.** Employees are encouraged to submit suggestions for improving operations and efficiency through the Employee Suggestion Program (ESP) to assist the State fulfilling its commitment to serving the public effectively. Eligible employees whose suggestions are adopted may receive awards under the provisions of this Rule.

(a) For the purposes of this Rule, the following terms and definitions apply in addition to those in 478-1-02 (Terms and Definitions):

1. “Agency” means any agency as defined in O.C.G.A. § 45-20-2, any authority, or any public corporation, but does not include the Board of Regents and units of the University System of Georgia.

2. “Agency Coordinator” means the chair of an Agency Suggestion Committee.

3. “Agency Suggestion Committee” or “Committee” means the committee appointed by an agency to review suggestions submitted which pertain to the operation of that agency.

4. “Employee” means an employee of any agency as defined by O.C.G.A. § 45-20-2, or authority, or any public corporation, but shall not include employees of the Board of Regents or units of the University System of Georgia.

5. “Employees Suggestion Program” means the program developed by the Board.

6. “Suggestion Program Coordinator” means an employee of the Georgia Merit System or its successor agencies designated by the Commissioner.

(2) **Eligible Employees.** All employees may participate in the ESP, with the following exceptions: Members of the General Assembly; Agency Heads; Members of boards and commissions appointed by the Governor or the General Assembly; Members, justices, judges, officials, and officers of the judicial branch; Officers and officials elected by popular vote; Persons appointed to fill vacancies in elective offices; Employees of the Board of Regents; and Employees of units of the University System of Georgia.

(a) An agency may choose to exclude hourly, seasonal, temporary, and part-time employees from the ESP at its discretion.

(3) **How to Submit a Suggestion.** Suggestions may be submitted online through the Georgia Merit System or its successor agencies’ website. Alternatively, suggestions may be submitted to the Suggestion Program Coordinator by mail, e-mail, or in person. Verbal suggestions are not considered.

(a) Each suggestion should clearly and concisely identify the issue, propose a detailed solution to the issue, and explain the expected benefit to the state. Inventions, whether patentable or not, will also be considered.

(b) Group suggestions should be signed by all participating individuals. Awards for adopted group suggestions will be prorated.

(c) Suggestions relating to the following areas will not be considered:

1. Personal grievances;
2. Specific assigned duties or responsibilities of a particular employee;
3. Classification and/or pay of positions;
4. Matters recommended for study, review, or summary;
5. Matters that result from assigned or contracted audits, studies, surveys, reviews, or research;
6. Matters requiring the enactment of legislation by the General Assembly; and
7. Rules of the ESP.

(4) **Review Process.** Each agency should appoint three employees to serve as members of the Agency Suggestion Committee (the “Committee”), one of whom will be designated as the Agency Coordinator (chair).

(a) The Commissioner will designate an employee of the Georgia Merit System or its successor agencies as the Suggestion Program Coordinator. The Suggestion Program Coordinator shall review for eligibility each suggestion received and forward those that should be considered to the appropriate Agency Coordinator for evaluation.

(b) The Agency Coordinator should obtain internal feedback on the suggestion, including a determination of the amount of savings, if any, that would be realized by the implementation of the suggestion. Based on feedback provided, the Committee will evaluate the suggestion and provide a written recommendation regarding its adoption to the Suggestion Program Coordinator in the prescribed format within 45 days of receipt. The recommendation should explain in detail why the suggestion should or should not be adopted, and should include any supporting documentation and an estimate of the value of projected annual savings to be generated by adopting the suggestion.

(c) An agency may also appoint a suggestion committee for any institution or division within the agency in addition to an Agency Suggestion Committee. These committees will follow the same procedures set forth above but report their recommendations to the Agency Suggestion Committee instead of directly to the Suggestion Program Coordinator.

(d) Duplicate Suggestions. The Suggestion Program Coordinator will review each suggestion to determine whether it is a duplicate of, or is similar to, a previously submitted suggestion. When duplicate suggestions are received, the suggestion bearing the earliest date of receipt will be submitted for consideration. If duplicate suggestions are received on the same date, both will be considered, and if adopted, any award given will be split as determined by the State Personnel Board.

(e) Inter-Agency Suggestions. The Suggestion Program Coordinator may forward a suggestion to an agency that does not employ the originator of the suggestion, when appropriate.

(f) **Re-Evaluation of Suggestions Not Recommended for Adoption.** An employee may ask the Suggestion Program Coordinator to forward a suggestion to the appropriate agency for reevaluation if the Committee does not recommend adoption. Likewise, an agency may ask the Agency Coordinator to reevaluate a suggestion that was not recommended for adoption. Reevaluation may only be requested one time per suggestion.

(g) **Review by the Commissioner and Final Decision.** The Suggestion Program Coordinator will collect and provide the Commissioner with the written recommendations regarding employee suggestions. After reviewing the written recommendations, the Commissioner will make final recommendations to the State Personnel Board, which will make the final determination regarding any action to be taken.

(5) **Notification of Decision.** The Suggestion Program Coordinator is responsible for notifying the employee in writing of the decision, including any award to be received.

(6) **Awards for Adopted Suggestions.** The following factors will be considered by the State Personnel Board in making the final determination regarding an award:

(a) Nature of benefit;

(b) Degree of benefit;

(c) Extent of application (i.e., how many agencies and/or facilities adopt the suggestion);

(d) Originality and ingenuity of idea;

(e) Cost of adoption;

(f) Effort undertaken by the employee in formulating the suggestion; and

(g) Clarity and completeness of the suggestion.

(h) Suggestions for improving safety are given more weight in determining the amount, if any, of a cash award.

(7) **Cash Awards.**

(a) **Suggestions Resulting in Quantifiable Savings.** An employee whose suggestion is approved by the State Personnel Board and adopted and implemented by an agency that results in direct and measurable cash savings or cost avoidance will receive a cash award. The award will be equal to 10% of the first year's estimated net material and labor savings, with a minimum amount of \$10 and a maximum amount of \$5,000.

(b) **All Other Suggestions.** Other suggestions that are approved, adopted and implemented by an agency may result in improvements that cannot be measured (e.g., suggestions involving improvements in working conditions; changes in procedures or forms; or employee morale, health, or safety, etc.). These suggestions may be eligible for a maximum cash award of \$100.

(c) Payment of Award. A cash award is generally paid upon adoption of the suggestion and paid by the adopting agency or agencies within the fiscal year it is authorized for payment. Payment may be delayed up to six months if the savings resulting from implementation cannot be immediately determined.

1. In order to receive payment of a cash award, the individual must be a current employee of an agency, retired from service, or deceased at the time of implementation of the suggestion. In the case of a deceased employee or former employee, the award will be paid as if it were part of the employee's final compensation.

(d) Adoption of Modified Suggestions. An employee may be entitled to an award if a suggestion is adopted in a modified form. The State Personnel Board will determine whether a suggestion was adopted in a modified form and whether the employee making the suggestion should receive an award. The State Personnel Board's decision is final.

(e) Adoption of Rejected Suggestions. An employee may be entitled to an award if a suggestion was rejected but subsequently adopted within a year of the employee's receipt of the initial notification of non-adoption. For an individual to receive any award under these circumstances, the Commissioner must have been notified that the suggestion was implemented and the individual must be a current employee of an agency, retired from service, or deceased at the time of implementation of the suggestion. In the case of a deceased employee or former employee, the award will be paid as if it were part of the employee's final compensation.

(8) **Certificates of Commendation.** When the submitted suggestion results only in minimal savings or minor improvement, the employee may receive a certificate of commendation in lieu of a cash award. An employee receiving a cash award may also receive a certificate of commendation.

#### (9) **Rights of the Parties**

(a) Rights of the Submitting Employee. The right to receive a State Personnel Board suggestion award is the submitting employee's sole right under the Employee Suggestion Program.

(b) Rights of the State. An agency has the right to use a suggestion in any form or manner without making any payment, including royalties, other than an award determined by the State Personnel Board pursuant to the Employee Suggestion Program.

Authority O.C.G.A. Secs. 45-20-3, 45-20-3.1, 45-20-4. **History.** Original Rule entitled "Employee Relocation" adopted. F. July 31, 1985; eff. July 1, 1985, as specified by the Board. **Amended:** F. Jan. 22, 1988; eff. Nov. 12, 1987, as specified by the Board. **Amended:** R. 478-1-.0G repealed and renumbered R. 478-1-.22 of same title adopted. F. Nov. 16, 1992; eff. Sept. 21, 1992, as specified by the Board. **Amended:** F. Oct. 8, 1997; eff. Sept. 25, 1997, as specified by the Board. **Amended:** F. July 31, 2000; eff. July 14, 2000, as specified by the Board. **Repealed:** New Rule entitled "Employee Suggestion Program" adopted. F. Dec. 23, 2008; eff. Dec. 17, 2008, as specified by the Board.