

WASHINGTON COUNTY EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION PROGRAM

Program start date: January 2013 Program updated: July 2017

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for a County employee suggestion program operated by the Sustainability Program. The program will solicit ideas from employees in order to help improve the overall sustainability of County operations. The suggestion program is designed to reward employees for sustainable ideas that save the County money or improve efficiency of County operations. This program does not obligate the County to award any incentives and awards will be given at the discretion of the suggestion committee or the County Administrative Office.

SUGGESTION PROGRAM COMMITTEE

A suggestion committee will be made up of employees from various county departments to evaluate employee suggestions. The committee will determine the criteria for selecting top suggestions, review suggestions, and recommend awards. The committee coordinator will receive the employee suggestions, call meetings of the committee as needed, and maintain records of decisions made by the committee.

ELIGIBILITY FOR PARTICIPATION AND AWARDS

Regular and temporary County employees may participate in the program. Suggestion committee members, elected officials, and department heads can submit suggestions, however they are not eligible for awards.

SUGGESTION FORMAT

A suggestion program form will be available to employees in electronic and hard copy format. The form will include the program goals and evaluation criteria. Criteria will be weighted to give priority to projects that have the broadest impact and the most savings for the County. Criteria include, but are not limited to feasibility, scope of project impact, financial savings, time savings, and positive environmental impact. Applicants may submit new ideas not previously implemented at the County or ideas that have been implemented/piloted in their department but not extended County-wide.

Suggestions may be submitted via email, intranet, or hard copy on the suggestion program form. Submittals must describe the solution and how it can be accomplished; provide a brief narrative describing the present methods, practices, or problem; and include analysis of the anticipated savings that will result from implementing the suggestion. If savings are not anticipated, a statement of the improved services or benefits which will accrue from adoption of the suggestion must be included.

SUGGESTION ACCEPTABILITY

Suggestions considered acceptable are those which improve the sustainability of County government by improving the efficiency of County operations or saving the County money. This may include, but is not limited to:

- (a) Energy, water or fuel conservation;
- (b) Waste reduction or improved/increased recycling;
- (c) Environmentally-preferred purchasing; and/or
- (d) Air quality improvement or toxics reduction.

Suggestions will be considered in the order of the date by which they are officially received by the suggestion committee. Suggestions will be solicited twice a year by posting on HORIZONS, and will be

promoted by the Sustainability Program, the Sustainability Liaisons and the Energy Team via email and announcements at staff meetings.

RECOGNITION OF MERIT

The top suggestions that are feasible, environmentally-sound, and result in actual cost savings (or a short return on investment) to the County will be deemed eligible for award consideration. Suggestions which will result in cost-avoidance, intangible improvements such as benefits in safety, health, welfare, etc., or when savings cannot be calculated will receive recognition as determined by the committee. When a suggestion is submitted by more than one employee, any resulting award will be shared by the co-suggesters listed on the suggestion form. Employee teams or groups may submit an idea for consideration, or be nominated by another County employee or manager.

AWARDS

INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEE AWARDS:

Top award: Up to \$50 gift card to a local business

Honorable mention awards: Up to \$25 gift card to a local business

EMPLOYEE TEAM OR GROUP AWARDS:

Top award: Depending on team size, up to \$75 gift card for a shared meal from a local business

Note: This award will be redeemed and enjoyed by the group, rather than given to any one employee. Gift cards toward breakfast or lunch would not be considered taxable as they are for consumables, and they would be infrequent and de minimis.

The Suggestion Committee will determine the number and amount of the award(s) based on the scoring merit of suggestions received. Awards could be given to individuals and/or a team, depending on budgeted funds available.

All top suggestions may receive:

- A certificate of thanks and recognition for their idea;
- Publicity through a HORIZONS post and/or a press release (if desired); and/or
- Recognition from the County Administrator or a Commissioner.

Awards will be consistent and given in a timely manner. When possible, gift card awards given will support the mission of the program by promoting sustainable behaviors, practices, and/or businesses (such as businesses that promote sustainable resource use, active lifestyle, local economy, etc.). The award winner may be able to select from a few options of gift card types (ex. sporting goods store, grocery store, craft store, or local restaurant).

Awardees can choose to accept or decline gift card awards and public recognition. IRS regulations stipulate that gift cards with cash value given for the purpose of employee recognition are considered taxable.

PROGRAM BUDGET

The suggestion program will provide up to 10 awards within a fiscal year. The cost of the awards will be included in the Sustainability Program budget.