

Guidelines for the Development and Implementation of Agency Employee Recognition Plans

Introduction

Making a Difference for Delaware is a campaign to recognize and reward the dedication, talents, and contributions of state employees. State government has thousands of dedicated employees *Making a Difference for Delaware* every day. Recognition of their contributions affects how employees feel about their work, their commitment to state and agency goals, and the quality of services provided to the citizens of Delaware.

Agency managers have a responsibility to ensure that frequent, appropriate, and effective recognition is an integral part of agency operations. Each agency should promote employee recognition by developing initiatives to focus attention on the contributions of employees while fostering pride in state service and promoting excellence and commitment in achieving agency goals.

These initiatives should provide a variety of opportunities to recognize as many deserving employees as possible and highlight the accomplishments of those who have demonstrated exemplary performance. Employees include those in merit, casual seasonal, limited term and merit comparable positions. Contractual workers are not eligible for statewide awards, but agencies are encouraged to recognize them by working with the hiring agencies and using non-State funds.

Although an awards program provides a framework for employee recognition, agencies must also work to create a culture of commitment and excellence. This includes fostering and maintaining a sense of organizational identity, high standards of performance, continuous improvement, and pride in effort and accomplishment.

Recognition is an integral part of good management and should be incorporated into management training and into accountabilities for managers and supervisors.

Recognition Initiatives

Each agency should encourage the development of creative, frequent, and effective ways to recognize the contributions of employees. Everything from kudos or a thank-you, to agency-level formal awards should be encouraged. An agency's overall recognition activities should be designed so that all employees are eligible to receive some form of recognition. Praise and appreciation should be shared regularly and spontaneously, whenever opportunities arrive.

Leave with pay may be awarded to merit employees (casual seasonal employees are not eligible) for high-level recognition including Department Employee of the Quarter or Employee of the Year for a maximum of one (1) day per award. Leave with pay must be requested and approved in accordance with statewide leave policies and procedures.

Agencies should consider the availability of non-monetary recognition and awards from private groups and organizations. Civic groups, professional organizations, non-profit agencies and others often provide recognition for those involved in their activities.

Recognition initiatives and fundraising should not be confused with initiatives and funds raised for other purposes such as the annual State Employee Charitable Campaign (fund-raising drive benefiting non-profit organizations) or "Sunshine Clubs" (where funds are used to purchase items such as birthday/sympathy cards, flowers etc.). All initiatives and fundraising should directly relate to recognizing employees for their work as outlined in the Agency's Recognition Plan.

Award Expenditures

Agencies are authorized to use up to \$75.00 per employee per year on recognition event expenditures, including gifts, space rental, and food. Agencies must use existing funding for this purpose; no additional funding will be provided.

In addition to the \$75.00 per employee per year, agencies may use up to \$200 per year of available funds to purchase certificate paper, certificate frames, and plaques or trophies for Employees of the Year, Employees of the Quarter, and other high-level awards included in approved agency recognition plans.

Agencies may also conduct goods-for-service-type fundraising activities such as bake/soup sales, ice cream socials, silent auctions, etc. to support recognition events. Raffles and other games of chance are not permitted. So as not to interfere with the State Employees' Charitable Campaign, recognition fundraisers are limited to November through August.

There is no cap on the amount of funds an agency may raise, however agencies should avoid saving large amounts of funds and rolling them over to a new fiscal year. The purpose of this program is to spend money on deserving employees. Agencies should anticipate the amount they expect to spend each year, and when fundraising has yielded that amount, fundraising should end. Agencies should plan to spend the full amount raised each year.

Regardless of funding source, cash equivalents, including gift cards, may not be purchased to recognize employee for their work. According to [IRS Publication 15 B](#): "Cash and cash equivalent fringe benefits (for example, use of gift card, charge card, or credit card), no matter how little, are never excludable as a de minimis benefit...."

Tracking Expenditures

Expenditures should be coded in the First State Financials (FSF) system with only exception circumstances considered. Agencies are discouraged from using petty cash and outside accounts. Agencies with outside accounts should work to move them into FSF so that that expenditures can be consistently tracked. The appropriation for employee recognition is 20428.

If using an outside account:

- Obtain approval to use a State EIN and use one of the State's approved banks (refer to the Budget and Accounting Manual)
- Do NOT keep cash in an employee's office or other unsecured or unmonitored locations, even if locked up.

Agency Recognition Plans

Each agency shall develop a written plan, including any division plans, for approval by the Department of Human Resources. The plan should include a clear statement of agency commitment to recognition and accountabilities to ensure that supervisors and managers are carrying out their responsibilities.

Plans should include a description of:

- Recognition Event(s) planned for the agency and its divisions/sections, if applicable.
- Total estimated budget for all events and system for tracking funds.
- Types of non-monetary awards employees are eligible to receive.
- Award nomination criteria, procedures, and selection process.
- Click here to review a [sample recognition plan](#).

Agency Awards

Agencies are encouraged to develop formal agency-level award programs (e.g., Employee of the Quarter or Year, Distinguished Service Award, etc.). In setting up and maintaining an awards program, agencies shall:

- Designate a recognition coordinator to coordinate the development of the agency recognition plan and promote employee recognition activities. The coordinator is responsible for understanding the mission and goals of the agency, providing vision and guidance to managers, and generating enthusiasm and support from managers as well as from employees in general. The coordinator serves as the key contact person for employees within the agency and the liaison between the agency and the Department of Human Resources.
- Establish an awards selection committee, if the size of the agency permits. The selection committee should be diverse and representative of the agency and should include employees from a variety of classifications and pay grade ranges. Committee membership should rotate regularly and consideration should be given to all sections.
- Develop selection criteria and define the nomination process. Nominations should be encouraged from any employee, for any employee, with each nomination reviewed and verified by agency management to ensure the accurateness and appropriateness of the nomination. If the size and makeup of the agency warrants, division-level or facility awards can also be established and can serve as a first step in selecting those who will then become eligible for the agency award.

- Publicize and promote the awards program and award recipients to the fullest extent possible, making use of newsletters, agency websites, bulletin boards, etc.
- Ensure that all employees are eligible and that no particular employee or group is favored over another. Equal opportunity to be nominated for and receive awards should be provided to all employees.

Considerations

Recognition coordinators should communicate recognition plan information to employees at all levels within the agency and should:

- Solicit input from all levels of employees in the design of recognition initiatives.
- Provide instruction for supervisors in how to provide positive, effective recognition for employees.
- Assure agency-wide publication/promotion of all recognition activities.
- Provide a method for sections to report their activities.

Submission of Recognition Plans

When updates are made to either to an agency's plan or to the recognition guidelines, agencies shall submit updated recognition plans electronically to the Department of Human Resources, Statewide Recognition Coordinator. The purpose of the approval process is to assure consistency among plans, provide technical assistance, and to share information among agencies.

For more information contact:
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Making a Difference for Delaware

Statewide Recognition Program