

PART 2006 - MANAGEMENT

Subpart H - Employee Suggestion Program

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Sec.</u>		<u>Page</u>
2006.351	General.	1
2006.352	[Reserved]	1
2006.353	Policy.	1
2006.354	Coverage.	1
2006.355	Limitations.	1
2006.356	- 2006.365 [Reserved]	2
2006.366	Sending in suggestions.	2
2006.367	Processing suggestions.	5
2006.368	Review.	6
2006.369	- 2006.380 [Reserved]	7
2006.381	Records and reports.	8
2006.382	- 2006.400 [Reserved]	8

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PART 2006 - MANAGEMENT

Subpart H - Employee Suggestion Program

§2006.351 General.

This Instruction gives Agency policies, authorizations, and procedures for handling employee suggestions.

§2006.352 [Reserved]

§2006.353 Policy.

The Agency recognizes employees, individually or in groups, for suggestions which directly contribute to productivity and efficiency, in carrying out Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and Government programs.

§2006.354 Coverage.

Any employee can make a suggestion. Only employees with paid appointments can get awards for adopted suggestions. Employees can ask that their suggestion(s) be reconsidered again within 2 years after denial. A former employee is eligible for a period of 2 years from the last day the employee was on the Agency's roll to get an award for an adopted suggestion given while still employed by the agency.

(a) Awards can be given for adopted suggestions in or out of an employee's normal job requirements. A suggestion in an employee's job responsibility can be examined for an award only when there are benefits above normal expectations. Suggestions approved in whole or in part are eligible for award consideration.

(b) Higher level employees are expected to make suggestions that result in greater improvements and benefits than employees in lower grades.

§2006.355 Limitations.

Ideas on services or benefits to employees, working conditions, buildings and grounds, parking facilities, and housekeeping will be handled through normal administrative channels and not through the suggestion program. The following are examples of ideas which are excluded from the suggestion program:

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- (a) Proposals concerning:
 - (1) Vending machines, cafeteria services, rest room facilities, parking facilities, or holidays.
 - (2) Working conditions such as air conditioning, decorations, or furniture.
 - (3) Care of buildings, grounds, and parking lots; such as repairing, cleaning, painting, or adjusting.
 - (4) USDA clubs.
 - (5) Normal or routine safety practices such as normal protective devices, removal of obstructions, or installation of warning and traffic signs.
 - (6) Obvious errors in procedures, forms, and minor or editorial revisions of procedures.
 - (7) Minor or editorial revisions of forms, rearrangements, number of copies, use of snapout carbons, etc.
 - (8) Problems, projects, procedures, activities, and forms under study as a part of, or within the scope of, the employee's assigned responsibilities.
 - (9) Proposals which cost more to process than their possible value.
- (b) Any ideas excluded from the suggestion Program must be given to the employee's supervisor, who will see that there is an administrative decision and that the employee is informed of the result. Positive actions on the part of the employee, even though excluded under the Employee Suggestion Program, should be considered for recognition through the Program.
- (c) Suggestions sent in anonymously will not receive consideration.
- (d) Exceptions: Ideas which will give large energy savings will be looked at in the suggestion program.

§§2006.356 - 2006.365 [Reserved]

§2006.366 Sending in suggestions.

The procedures for sending in suggestions are as follows:

§2006.366 (Con.)

(a) Suggestions must be submitted in writing, signed by the suggester(s), on Form AD-287, "Employee Suggestion," in an original and one copy. If Form AD-287 is not available, other paper can be used if the suggester(s) clearly indicates on the paper that "This is an employee suggestion." This will show the difference between employee suggestions written in memorandum form and administrative recommendations. Suggestions will be sent through line management channels as provided in paragraph (c) of this section.

(b) When preparing a suggestion, the employee must:

- (1) State the problem.
- (2) Give details of the proposed solution.
- (3) Explain the advantages and estimated savings, when possible.
- (4) Include a summary of the suggestion stating specifically "what" is proposed. Any procedures or forms can be referred to by number in the summary.

(c) Suggestions will be sent through line management as follows:

- (1) State, District, and County Office employees will send suggestions through their supervisors to the State Director.
- (2) Finance Office employees will send in suggestions through their supervisors to the Assistant Administrator Accounting and Director, Finance Office.
- (3) National Office employees will send suggestions through their supervisors to the Personnel Division, Attention: Human Resources Programs Branch.

(d) Supervisors should encourage employees to submit suggestions. Employees are urged to discuss ideas with their supervisors. Supervisors and reviewing officials may be able to recommend changes which increase the possibility of the suggestion being adopted.

(e) As stated in paragraph (c) of this section, suggestions are sent through line management. In exceptional cases, an employee can submit a suggestion directly to the State Director, Assistant Administrator, Finance Office, or to the National Office. The employee must include a short explanation of the reasons for not sending the suggestion through line management.

(f) State Directors and the Assistant Administrator, Finance Office are encouraged to adopt employee suggestions which appear to have merit for their area of jurisdiction but may have a limited impact on the National level. This also allows for an evaluation period for a suggestion and a better basis on which to justify adoption on a National level. Copies of adopted State or Finance Office suggestions will be sent to the Mission Area Personnel Services Division (MAPSD) for informational purposes.

(g) When the State Director or the Assistant Administrator, Finance Office, believes that a suggestion which has been adopted at the local level will be beneficial nationwide, it should be sent to the National Office. Recognition should be given for suggestions adopted on a State basis. However, for suggestions sent to the National Office which will impact on the Agency, an award will not be granted until approved by the National Office.

(1) Prior to forwarding any employee suggestion to the National Office, it should be carefully reviewed and screened by the Administrative Officer. Suggestions which do not have merit will be rejected by the State Director or the Assistant Administrator, Finance Office, and will not be forwarded to the National Office.

(2) If a suggestion is considered a duplicate of one received at an earlier date which is still pending final action, the duplicate suggestion will be sent back to the employee with an explanation. Suggestions received in the Finance and State Offices should be screened to make sure duplicate suggestions are not sent to the National Office. The date an employee suggestion is received in the National Office, MAPSD, will be the submission date.

(3) Suggestions on operations which are National in scope or concern another Government Agency will be sent to the National Office for consideration. If it is outside the scope of Agency operations or authority to adopt and the suggestion has merit, it will be sent to the proper USDA office with a written evaluation of its merits. The evaluation will be made by the National Office person primarily concerned with the matter in the suggestion. Copies will be sent to the suggester and the State Director or Assistant Administrator, Finance Office.

§2006.367 Processing suggestions.

State, Finance, and National Offices will process suggestions as follows:

(a) A number will be assigned to each suggestion in consecutive order using the appropriate State, Finance, or National Office symbol. At the beginning of each new fiscal year (FY), suggestions will be renumbered, prefixed by the Office symbol and suffixed by the FY; for example, AL-1 (85), AL-2 (85) and will continue through the end of the FY. Each office will keep a running list of the numbers given to suggestions by that office. This record can be kept on a 5 x 8 inch card or in any either method. The record will show the number given to the suggestion, the suggester's name, the date received, and the date and type of final action taken.

(b) Form AD-287-3A, "Referral and Appraisal of Employee Suggestion," will be used to control each employee suggestion and will be completed by the appropriate State or Finance Office. Form AD-287-3A will be prepared in the same manner for suggestions which will impact only one jurisdictional area. For suggestions being forwarded to the National Office, the form will be completed as follows:

(1) Sections 1, 2, and 3 will be completed. If number 2 in Section 3 is checked, Section 4 should state the reason the suggestion has been recommended for adoption and signed by the appropriate official. However, if numbers 3 or 4 in Section 3 are checked, the suggestion should be rejected at the State or Finance Office level and should not be forwarded to the National Office.

(2) For those suggestions being forwarded to the National Office, the Acknowledgement copies and The Register of Employee Contribution will be removed prior to submission.

(c) On the reverse of Form AD-287, the evaluation of each Agency official, in the State or Finance Office, who is concerned with the matter in the suggestion should be indicated in one of the allotted spaces. If adoption is recommended and legal implications are involved, comments by the appropriate Regional Attorney should be obtained.

(d) Form AD-287-3A should be used to notify the employee when their suggestion has been adopted or rejected. For suggestions adopted or rejected by the National Office, the original copy of Form AD-287-3A with all comments and a cover memorandum signed by the Chief, Human Resources Programs Branch, will be returned to the State or Finance Office for notifying the employee of the action taken.

RD Instruction 2006-H
§2006.367 (Con.)

(e) For suggestions sent to the National Office, the Form AD-287-3A will accompany the Form AD-287. All blocks on the Form AD-287 must be properly completed prior to submission. If not properly completed or evaluated, both forms will be returned to the State or Finance Office without consideration. Prior to submitting a suggestion to the National Office for consideration, it should be properly evaluated. The evaluation should clearly state why the suggestion is being recommended for adoption. The National Office will not accept statements such as "Recommend Adoption" or "Recommend but lack authority to adopt," as an evaluation. Forms AD-287-3A and AD-287 will be sent to the Mission Area Personnel Services Division. A copy of Forms AD-287 and AD-287-3A will be retained in the State or Finance Office until notification is received from the National Office advising of its adoption or rejection.

(f) Adopted and rejected suggestions will be filed by FY.

§2006.368 Review.

The review and evaluation of employee suggestions are part of the regular duties of each supervisory official. Suggestions will be given fair and prompt evaluation to encourage employee participation and to obtain all possible benefits to the Government.

(a) In difficult cases, the suggestion can be reviewed by other persons at the Finance, State, or National Office level.

(b) Except in unusual circumstances, the following time limits apply in processing suggestions:

(1) Unless a suggestion has been postponed, final action should be completed within 6 months after it is submitted by the employee. See §2006.366(c) and (e) of this Instruction for sending in suggestions.

(2) State Directors and the Assistant Administrator, Finance Office, should review and forward, with their evaluations and recommendations, a suggestion requiring action by the National Office within 30 days after receipt of the suggestion.

§2006.368(b) (Con.)

(3) Officials in the National Office should act promptly on suggestions received for evaluation. The official should make evaluations and recommendations within 30 days after receipt of the suggestion. If the evaluator wants the suggestion referred to an official not listed on the routing sheet, or needs a postponement, the Mission Area Personnel Services Division must be notified so that a record can be kept of the location of the suggestion at all times.

(4) The employee will be notified when action on the suggestion is being postponed. It will be acted on as soon as the reason for postponement is resolved. For suggestions being considered by the National Office, the Mission Area Personnel Services Division will give a copy of the postponed suggestion to the proper Division Staff to examine at the proper time. If action cannot be completed on a postponed suggestion within 6 months, the Division Staff in which the suggestion is being considered will send a status report to the Mission Area Personnel Services Division so the employee can be advised within 5 working days of receipt of the report.

(5) Once an employee suggestion is rejected by the National Office, it will remain rejected, unless it is resubmitted for reconsideration within 2 years after the initial rejection.

(6) When a rejected suggestion is later implemented because of a change in policy, the employee will not be rewarded for that change unless the employee has resubmitted the suggestion as indicated in paragraph (b)(5) of this section.

(7) The Assistant Administrator Human Resources will designate a Suggestion Awards Coordinator. It will be the responsibility of the Coordinator to follow-up with the respective Division Staffs concerning their review of suggestions.

RD Instruction 2006-H

§§2006.369 - 2006.380 [Reserved]

§2006.381 Records and reports.

Each State Office, the Finance Office, and the National Office will keep a record, by fiscal year, of all suggestions received, adopted, and rejected. The records required by §2006.367 of this subpart should be used to compile the annual report on the Employee Suggestion Program.

§§2006.382 - 2006.400 [Reserved]

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