

Defense Logistics Agency Instruction



DLAI 7211
Effective March 14, 2008
Certified Current September 21, 2011
DLA Human Resources
Policy (J14)

Suggestion Program

References: Refer to Enclosure 1.

1. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this Instruction is to establish consistent Agency-wide authority and responsibilities for DLA's Suggestion Program. The Suggestion Program is a vehicle for employees to submit ideas that contribute to the economy, efficiency, and/or effectiveness of Government operations.

2. **APPLICABILITY:** This Instruction applies to all Headquarters DLA and DLA Primary Level Field Activities (PLFAs).

3. **POLICY:**

a. All suggestions must be in writing. Ideas formally communicated (not in writing) to management that are adopted must be documented by the individual originating the idea and submitted as a suggestion within 30 calendar days of the adoption.

(1) In submitting a suggestion, the suggester(s) must propose a specific course of action, rather than limiting the suggestion to a general or undefined need for improvement that is not already under consideration and would not otherwise be accomplished.

(2) The suggestion must be beyond the scope of assigned job responsibilities and performance standards of the suggester (or individual making the suggestion) to be eligible for an award unless it qualifies as defined below.

(3) Determination of whether a suggestion is within the scope of the suggester's normal job responsibility or exceeds the suggester's performance standards in accordance with the criteria in this DLA, sub-section 3p(2), is a proper management decision. In making such a determination, consideration will be given to the suggester's job description, standards of performance, organization and functional manuals, and other documents which may help in defining the normal expectation of performance.

b. Suggestions, similar to the following illustrative examples, are not eligible for cash awards as adopted suggestions as they do not generally contribute directly to the efficiency and economy of operations.

- (1) Identifying the need for routine maintenance of buildings and grounds;
 - (2) Complaint about, or proposed changes, in housekeeping practices;
 - (3) Recommendations that involve the need to enforce existing rules or regulations, or call attention to errors or alleged violations of regulations; and
 - (4) Proposals for employee benefits or services not directly related to productivity.
- c. DLA personnel who make suggestions concerning the improvement of materials or services purchased from a contractor may be considered for an award if the improvement results in benefits to the Government, as for example, a reduction in the cost of a product being purchased.
- d. Suggestions received from private citizens are not eligible for an award under this program. Suggestions may be accepted for evaluation if the person submitting the suggestion has been advised of award ineligibility and would still like their suggestion to be evaluated.
- e. Suggestion awards may be granted to former employees (who submitted a suggestion and the evaluation was not completed prior to them leaving the Agency) or all military members (active, reserve, and retired).
- f. Suggestion awards may also be granted to legal heirs or estates of deceased employees or military members for adopted suggestions made while they were a Government employee or on active duty.
- g. Suggester's acceptance of a cash award for an adopted suggestion constitutes an agreement that the use of the idea, method, or device by the Government does not create the basis of a claim of any nature against the Government by the suggester or his/her heirs.
- h. The decision to grant or not grant an award, or to adopt or not adopt a suggestion, is a management prerogative. Such decisions will not be formally reviewed under the terms in the DLAI Process Chapter, Administrative Grievance System, or any negotiated grievance procedures.
- i. Suggesters have proprietary rights to suggestions for 1 year following final action, at which time the rights automatically expire. The suggester must provide documentation to show that their suggestion was approved and when it was approved. The suggester will provide this documentation to the Activity Suggestion Program Coordinator.
- j. Suggestions which substantially duplicate suggestions currently under consideration or suggestions on which the 1 year proprietary period has not expired are not eligible for an award unless variations in the substance of the latter suggestion or other circumstances result in the reconsideration of the original suggestion and subsequent adoption. When this occurs, an administrative decision may be made as to the part the latter suggestion played in the adoption of the suggestion and the award may be divided between the suggesters.

k. When management action is taken to adopt an idea which duplicates the subject content or is similar to a suggestion currently being evaluated or still within the proprietary period, an award may be granted to the suggester only if there is evidence of some direct relationship between the management action and the suggestion.

l. A suggestion may be considered adopted and eligible for award when it is certified by a responsible official that the suggestion has been or will be put to use. In those instances where delays will be necessary in order to implement or determine the value of the idea, a nominal cash award may be paid when it is reasonably certain the value of the idea so warrants an award and that the suggestion will be implemented. The initial award will be considered as part of the total award. Adjustments to this initial award are authorized when the final determination of the value of the contribution is made.

m. If it is discovered that the suggestion cannot be implemented after approval and payment of a cash award, the suggester will keep the cash award. Management will explain to the suggester why their suggestion could not be fully implemented. Budget constraints are not a reason not to implement the suggestion after approval. The decision on whether to approve the suggestion, whether it can be implemented, and cost to implement and maintain need to be considered at the same time the evaluator is evaluating the suggestion.

n. An individual may request reconsideration of a suggestion that has not been adopted if new or additional information is presented that could change the previous evaluation.

(1) Requests for reconsideration should be made within 30 days after notification that the suggestion is disapproved and must be submitted through the same channels as the initial suggestion. Disagreement or dissatisfaction with the evaluation is not a legitimate basis for reconsideration. In such cases, no further requests for reconsideration of the same suggestion will be accepted. When asking for reconsideration, the suggester must provide the Activity Suggestion Coordinator with the original suggestion, evaluation, and new information/guidance, that would change the outcome of the first evaluation. The Activity Suggestion Coordinator will forward all this information to the subject matter expert for evaluation.

(2) Reconsideration may be requested also when it is believed that official action has been taken to implement all or a portion of the suggestion during the period for which proprietary rights have been granted. The request must cite the regulation, directive, or action that implemented the idea. If a causal relationship can be established between the suggestion and the official action taken, the suggestion may be considered for award.

o. Suggestions that are impractical may be disapproved at any level. Evaluators should not forward suggestions to higher echelons unless they are considered desirable and practical. Evaluators need to state why the suggestion is not practical, not just state that the decision is outside the jurisdiction of the referring activity.

p. In accordance with Department of Defense Manual 1400.25-M, cash awards may be granted for adopted suggestions that result in tangible monetary savings, intangible benefits, or a combination of both. If a suggester is granted an award for an adopted suggestion, the suggester's organization processes/pays the award.

(1) If a suggestion is submitted by two or more eligible persons, the total of the cash award will not exceed the amount authorized for an individual award.

(2) Heads of PLFAs may make an exception to the published award's tangible or intangible benefit charts for calculating tangible and intangible benefits when it is determined that a suggestion is partially within job requirements, but substantially exceeds standards of performance. In such instances, less than the full amount of the award may be granted. Specific reasons in support of the action will be included in the file.

(3) When a suggestion is approved by another organization, the benefiting organization shall share in the cost of the total award commensurate with the benefit. The suggester's organization will notify the benefiting organization(s) of the amount due and the benefiting organization(s) shall take prompt action to transfer the funds.

q. Cash awards for tangible monetary savings may be granted on the basis of actual or estimated savings, less offsetting costs of implementation, or the savings realized in the first full year of operation.

(1) If the evaluator approves a suggestion, the evaluator will determine costs associated with implementation (if applicable) and work hours saved by approving this suggestion. The evaluator will use labor costs in calculating costs of installation or man-hour savings based on actual costs, when available, or on a cost finding basis using average cost center labor rates. All labor rates will be computed on the basis of actual time worked priced at 129 percent of the base rate. The 29 percent acceleration rate covers standard leave and holiday costs, as well as other employee benefits. The amount of such savings normally will be calculated on the basis of estimated net monetary benefits for the first full year of operation following adoption, installation, or application of the particular suggestion. An improvement with a high installation cost may yield measurable savings beyond the first year. If so, the amount of such savings may be based on the average of net annual savings over a period of the first 3 to 5 years. This figure may not exceed either the reasonable life of the initial installation or the clearly predictable period of use, whichever is the shorter.

(2) The amount of cash awards will be determined according to Table 1 at <http://www.hr.dla.mil/downloads/awards/TangibleIntangibleCharts.pdf>.

(3) Awards for suggestions adopted by more than one activity will be computed based on the addition of savings of each successive level sustained to all those previously recorded.

r. Awards for intangible benefits are recommended on the basis of judgment rather than precise facts and sustainable calculations. Recommendations for awards will include justification based on the value of benefits and extent of application as explained in Table 2 at <http://www.hr.dla.mil/downloads/awards/TangibleIntangibleCharts.pdf>. This table will be used as a guide in determining the amount of cash awards for intangible benefits.

s. If an adopted suggestion with intangible benefits in a moderate-limited category (see intangible benefit chart for categories, (see paragraph r for link to benefits chart) does not compare favorably with a suggestion involving tangible benefits of at least \$250 (see tangible benefit chart for dollar amounts), no cash award is given. In such cases, a letter of appreciation/commendation or DLA Form 32, DLA Suggestion Award Certificate may be used.

t. An adopted suggestion may result in both tangible and intangible benefits. If the suggestion is based on both tangible and intangible benefits, the intangible benefits need only be recognized to the extent that the suggestion is not adequately recognized based on the tangible benefits realized.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. The DLA Human Resources Office is the office of primary interest for DLA civilian and military employees. The DLA Human Resources Office shall designate an Agency Suggestion Program Coordinator who coordinates with each Activity's Suggestion Program Coordinator.

b. Each coordinator is responsible for receiving suggestions from their Activity's employees. They will review those suggestions to make sure they meet suggestion guidelines.

c. If suggestion meets the guidelines, the coordinator will forward to an Activity Subject Matter Expert for evaluation. If suggestion has merit and the Activity has authority to approve, the Activity will approve.

d. If suggestion meets the guidelines, the coordinator will forward to an Activity Subject Matter Expert for evaluation. If suggestion has merit and the Activity does not have authority to approve, the Suggestion Coordinator will forward to the Agency Suggestion Program Coordinator in the DLA Human Resources Policy Office for evaluation.

5. PROCEDURES: Refer to Enclosure 2. Definitions are located at Enclosure 3.

6. EFFECTIVE DATE: This Instruction is effective immediately.

Director, DLA Enterprise Support
March 14, 2008

Deputy Director, Human Resources
September 21, 2011

3 Enclosures

Enclosure 1 – References
Enclosure 2 – Procedures
Enclosure 3 – Definitions

Enclosure 1
References

1. DLA One Book Chapter, Suggestion Program, March 14, 2008, superseded.
2. DLA Manual 1432.1, Suggestion Program, October 19, 1987
3. Department of Defense Manual 1400.25, Incentive Awards, December 1996
4. DLA Form 36, Suggestion Form
5. DLA Form 37, Evaluation Form

Enclosure 2
Procedures

a. The director/commander of each activity will assign the duties and responsibilities of the Activity Suggestion Program Coordinator position. The Agency Suggestion Program Coordinator will maintain a current list of all Activity Suggestion Program Coordinators. The Activity Suggestion Program Coordinator will assign the suggestion a number and check the suggestion against available records to determine whether it is a duplicate of a suggestion presently being considered or one on which the proprietary rights period has not expired prior to forwarding the suggestion for evaluation.

b. DLA civilians and military personnel will submit their suggestion/idea on a DLA Form 36, to their local Headquarters or PLFA Suggestion Program Coordinator.

(1) Suggestions covered by the above and ideas not eligible for processing as suggestions will be returned to the suggester with appropriate explanation.

(2) When a suggestion is accepted for processing, a memorandum is prepared for the Office of Primary Responsibility for evaluation. The memorandum will include a copy of the suggestion and DLA Form 37.

(3) The Office of Primary Responsibility will make a complete evaluation of the proposal and advise the Suggestion Program Coordinator of action taken.

(5) Full, fair, and prompt evaluation of all suggestions is essential. Where a suggestion can be acted upon locally, processing time normally should not exceed 45 calendar days.

(6) When suggestions must be referred to other agencies (outside DLA) for evaluation, 90 calendar days should be considered the normal processing time.

(7) When evaluation time exceeds these norms, follow-up action should be initiated by the Activity Suggestion Program Coordinator unless the evaluating office has provided an interim report to the Activity Suggestion Program Coordinator stating reasons for the delay. The suggester should be provided interim progress reports via email.

NOTE: If an activity has a suggestion for evaluation and it has been more than 60 days since receipt by the evaluator, the commander or director of that activity will be notified by the Agency Suggestion Program Coordinator of the situation causing the delay.

(8) If the suggestion has been or will be adopted, the evaluation report will include how and when the idea was, or will be, placed into operation and an estimate of annual benefits with an explanation of the method used in determining them.

NOTE: If the benefits to be derived are of an intangible nature, the value of benefits and extent of application with the rationale used in making the determination and the recommended amount of award should be included in the evaluation.

(9) If the suggestion is not recommended for adoption, specific reasons for disapproval should be provided.

NOTE: The fact that a suggestion conflicts with an existing regulation should not be considered sufficient reason for disapproval.

(10) Evaluators who find that a proposal has value, but that it cannot be implemented as suggested, should recommend limited changes if such changes permit adoption and result in benefits to the Government.

c. Where a suggestion has been adopted at the local level and wider application is recommended, the Office of Primary Responsibility will forward it, with the local evaluation supporting the idea, to the Activity Suggestion Coordinator to forward to the indicated higher echelon or Office of Primary Responsibility.

(1) When a suggestion is considered desirable and practical, but cannot be adopted locally, the Office of Primary Responsibility will forward it together with a complete evaluation to the Activity Suggestion Program Coordinator who will forward the package to the next higher Office of Primary Responsibility.

(2) No suggestions should be routinely forwarded to Headquarters DLA for evaluation. Only those suggestions that have been thoroughly evaluated at the activity's local level, and would adopt if it had the authority, should be forwarded. Suggestions that the activity's local level would not endorse for adoption, but from an Enterprise perspective might be a good idea, should be forwarded to Headquarters DLA as well.

d. When a suggestion is considered to have merit at Headquarters level or outside of DLA, the suggestion will be forwarded to the DLA Human Resources Policy Office. The DLA Human Resources Policy Office will forward the suggestion package to the appropriate Office of Primary Responsibility.

e. The amount of savings alone should not be used to determine eligibility for an award since, in many positions, the accomplishment of large savings often results from normal performance of duties.

f. When a suggestion has been adopted, the Activity Suggestion Program Coordinator will notify the suggester that their suggestion will be adopted. The notification will be in writing, stating that their suggestion will be adopted and when it will be adopted. If there is a delay in the adoption of the suggestion, the suggester will be notified in writing by the Activity Suggestion Program Coordinator.

g. Employees that are assigned to a detachment must submit their suggestion(s) to the Activity Suggestion Program Coordinator of his/her actual employing activity and not to the Activity Suggestion Program Coordinator of the detachment. If the suggestion will benefit both the detachment and the employing activity and it is approved, then both the detachment and the employing activity will share in the cost of the total award commensurate with the benefit. The suggester's organization will notify the benefiting organization(s) of the amount due and the benefiting organization(s) shall take prompt action to transfer the funds.

Enclosure 3
Definitions

1. Evaluator: The employee to whom a suggestion is referred for evaluation because, of his or her expertise in the subject matter of the suggestion and knowledge of related agency and state operations.
2. Subject Matter Expert: An employee who has the expertise and knowledge of the subject of the suggestion.
3. Office of Primary Responsibility: The organization that is responsible or owner of the subject of the suggestion being evaluated.
4. Agency Suggestion Program Coordinator: A DLA Human Resources representative that is responsible for facilitating and promoting the Employee Suggestion Program within the agency. In addition, this coordinator receives suggestions that require Headquarters evaluation.
5. Activity Suggestion Program Coordinator: An employee designated by the activity head to facilitate the Employee Suggestion Program for their activity. The coordinator forwards suggestions to an appropriate evaluator when they are received for evaluation.
6. Impractical: Unwise to put into effect or maintain in practice; not sensible or prudent with practical matters.