

Chapter 2. Program Responsibilities

2-1. Assistant Secretary for Administration. The Assistant Secretary for Administration is responsible to the Secretary for providing overall leadership and policy direction for the IDEAS Program. The Assistant Secretary, or the Deputy Assistant Secretary, will:

- a. Establish Departmental policy for the management of the IDEAS Program; and
- b. Be the final authority in resolving disputes and disagreements and in determining exceptions to policies, in accordance with applicable collective bargaining agreements.

2-2. Director, Office of Productivity and Management Improvements. The IDEAS Program is managed by the Director, Office of Productivity and Management Improvements (OPMI), in the Office of Administration in Headquarters. The Director will:

- a. Recommend Departmental policies and establish procedures for administering the program;
- b. Appoint a member of the OPMI staff to be the Departmental Ideas Officer, who manages the daily operations of the program, and hold the Departmental Ideas Officer accountable for operating a viable and active program;
- c. Monitor the administration of the IDEAS Program, taking action to solve problems as appropriate;
- d. Ensure that recognition ceremonies are held for Headquarters suggesters of adopted Ideas and Field employees who are to receive major IDEAS Program awards;
- e. Act as an advocate for Ideas which have both apparent merit and significant potential payoff, contacting appropriate Headquarters or Regional managers to encourage adoption;
- f. Publicize the program by issuing periodic memoranda, brochures, Staff Bulletins, etc., endorsing and promoting the program; and
- g. Provide management reports to top level Headquarters managers on a regular basis to inform them of the status of open Ideas for which they are responsible; and provide management reports to Regional Ideas Officers on a regular basis to keep them informed of the status of Ideas referred by them to Headquarters for evaluation.

2-3. Directors, Office of Administration (Regional Offices) Responsibility for managing the program in the Field

lies with the Directors, Office of Administration (DOAs), in each Regional Office. The DOAs will:

- a. Appoint a Regional Ideas Officer and hold the Officer accountable for administering an active program via performance standards;
- b. Monitor the operations of the IDEAS Program, taking action to solve problems;
- c. Work with the Director, OPMI, to recommend and refine policies and procedures, as appropriate;
- d. Ensure that recognition ceremonies are held for Regional employees, including employees in the Field Offices in the Region, who submit adopted suggestions;
and
- e. Provide management reports to top level Regional managers on a regular basis to inform them of the status of Ideas for which they are responsible.

2-4. Ideas Officers and staff. The Ideas Officers and staff are responsible for administering the program and for serving as catalysts for productivity improvement.

a. Definitions.

(1) Departmental Ideas Officer. One staff member in OPMI is designated as the Departmental Ideas Officer. The Departmental Ideas Officer is responsible for the daily operations of the program in Headquarters, for training and advising Regional Ideas Officers, and for taking action to recommend and implement Departmentwide improvements to the program.

(2) Regional Ideas Officers. In each Regional Office, the DOA designates a Regional Ideas Officer. The Regional Ideas Officers are charged with the responsibility for daily operations of the program in the Regions.

(3) Ideas Staff. Additional staff may be assigned to assist the Departmental Ideas Officer and the Regional Ideas Officers, depending on the workload. The DOAs may establish whatever staffing is needed to ensure the viability and integrity of the program, including designating Field Office Ideas staff.

b. Duties. The Ideas Officers and staff will:

(1) Advise suggesters on how to develop and write their Ideas to make them solidly credible;

(2) Screen incoming suggestions (see Chapter 5, Figure 2). Ensure that suggestions are complete - that they identify a specific problem or current situation, a specific solution or improvement, and estimated benefits;

(3) Process and track Ideas, making every effort to ensure that they are evaluated fairly and in a timely manner. Keep suggesters informed of the status of their Ideas. Elevate problems to higher management levels until they are resolved. Keep top level managers (and program Administrative Office managers in Headquarters) informed of the status of Ideas related to their areas;

(4) Identify appropriate Decision Officials, ensuring that Ideas are sent to those who have the sole or primary authority to implement them. In Headquarters, utilize the experience of the program Administrative Office managers to identify the appropriate Decision Officials, when necessary;

(5) When an Idea which is submitted to the Regional Ideas Officer:

- o Requires Headquarters approval, forward it immediately for evaluation;

- o Could be implemented within the Region, evaluate it there and then, if it is adopted and has the potential for broader applicability, forward it to the Departmental Ideas Officer for evaluation;

- o Is a computer-related suggestion, then evaluate it in the Region before sending it to Headquarters (see guidance in Chapter 4);

(6) For Ideas with potentially significant savings, work with Decision Officials (and, in Headquarters, with program Administrative Office managers) to encourage approval, to the extent possible;

(7) Determine job relatedness based on guidelines specified in Section 6.3 and Appendix H, Section 8;

(8) Analyze cost/benefit analyses for adopted Ideas to make sure they appear complete and reasonable and that the methodology for calculating savings is defensible. Refer adopted Ideas to the Inspector General in Headquarters or the Regional Inspector General for Audit for verification of cost/benefit when they are expected to save \$250,000 or more in the first year of implementation;

(9) Determine type and, when appropriate, amount of awards based on guidelines in Appendix G;

(10) Refer adopted Ideas with significant savings to the OPMI team handling the Department's Productivity Improvement Program (PIP) so they can decide whether or not to track the initiatives as part of the PIP;

(11) Publicize the program and take actions to promote participation; and

(12) Maintain and manage records of Ideas in accordance with requirements defined in Appendix H , Section 14.

2-5. Decision Officials. A Decision Official is a manager, normally an Office Director or higher, who has the full or primary authority to implement an Idea and who authorizes its adoption or rejection. A suggester cannot be the Decision Official for his/her own Idea.

Decision Officials will:

a. Establish procedures within their organizations to ensure that Ideas are evaluated fairly and thoroughly in a timely manner;

b. If an Idea has been routed inappropriately, notify the IDEAS Program staff immediately and, if possible, suggest to whom the Idea should be directed;

c. Give priority to Ideas that have potentially significant savings;

d. Evaluate Ideas either personally or by designating a subordinate manager or staff level employee to complete the evaluation;

e. Determine whether or not Ideas will be adopted:

(1) Ensure that any disagreements over adoption or rejection are resolved with other organizations that would be affected by or involved in implementation, including legal counsel and administrative support function managers;

(2) Ensure that first-year savings or the extent of the benefit of the Idea to the Government, on which the award will be based, are accurate; and

(3) Understand that adopting an Idea and signing the Evaluation Form (form HUD-20000B) constitutes agreement that they will make every effort to implement the Idea as quickly as possible.

f. Elevate Ideas for which higher level approval is needed to the appropriate manager in the program area, who will sign as the Decision Official;

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g. When adopting Ideas, indicate the anticipated implementation date on the Evaluation Form (HUD-20000B):

(1) When implementation requires coordination among several major organizations (e.g., program area, administrative support function, legal counsel, etc.), be sure that all managers involved are in agreement on the projected implementation date; and

(2) If the IDEAS Program staff request an implementation plan for a major adopted Idea, submit it within 30 days of adoption. Include primary tasks to be completed and milestones (see Appendix H); and

h. Notify the Ideas staff of any delays or changes to the planned implementation date promptly. Delays or changes may have an impact on productivity reports sent to the Office of Management and Budget and/or on final payment of cash awards. If an adopted Idea is not implemented in a timely manner, the IDEAS Program staff will take action to resolve the problem, including elevating the problem to a management level high enough to solve it.

2-6. Evaluators. The Evaluator is an employee in the Decision Official's organization who is assigned to analyze the feasibility and cost/benefit of the Idea and who recommends adoption or rejection to the Decision Official.

Evaluators will:

a. Contact the suggester to confirm and clarify facts important to fair and complete analysis;

b. Ensure that the Ideas staff receive copies of any additional information requested from the suggester;

c. Analyze the merits of the suggestion in terms of feasibility and cost/benefit of the proposed solution;

d. If implementation of the Idea requires action or agreement of other organizations, work with those organizations to determine feasibility and cost effectiveness;

e. Verify or correct the suggester's calculation of cost/benefit. Use the guidance in Appendix F to determine whether savings are tangible or intangible. If the

recommendation is to adopt the Idea, calculate estimated first-year savings; and

f. Complete all pertinent parts of the Evaluation Form, HUD-20000B (Appendix B), and present it to the Decision Official for signature. The evaluation must be objective, address the suggestion thoroughly, and clearly justify the recommendation to adopt or reject the Idea. It also must document the Evaluator's analysis of cost/benefit and, if the recommendation is to adopt and benefits are tangible, the estimated first-year savings.

2-7. Regional Administrators. The active support of Regional Administrators (RAs) is essential to the success of the IDEAS Program. RAs will:

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a. Demonstrate support of the IDEAS Program by issuing periodic memoranda and/or Staff Bulletins endorsing and promoting it; and

b. Monitor the viability and activity of the IDEAS Program in the Region, taking action to solve problems when necessary.

2-8. All Departmental managers. All managers have general responsibilities for the IDEAS Program.

a. Use the IDEAS Program as a valuable resource for initiatives for productivity improvement.

b. Encourage and work with employees who want to develop and submit an Idea. Permit them to use a reasonable amount of work time to do this.

c. Encourage employees who suggest productivity improvement initiatives informally to document them and submit them to the IDEAS Program.

2-9. Suggesters. Suggesters have an active role in all aspects of the processing and implementation of their Ideas. Specifically, a suggester is expected to:

a. Research the problem or improved situation and the proposed solution prior to submitting a suggestion. Seek the assistance of the managers involved, if necessary;

b. Be thorough, but concise, in writing the Idea. Make sure that both the problem or improved situation and the solution can be understood easily and that the merits are clear. Describe how the benefits were estimated. Seek guidance from the Ideas staff, if necessary;

c. Be available to the Ideas staff and to Decision Officials

and Evaluators who may want to get more information or to discuss the suggestion;

d. Promptly send any additional information about the Idea requested by the Decision Official or Evaluator directly to that person, and send a copy of that information to the Ideas Officer so the Idea file will be complete; and

e. Once a suggestion has been adopted, keep track of implementation to the degree possible and inform the Ideas Officer of any discrepancies from the implementation schedule. Though the Ideas staff will be tracking implementation, often suggesters have information about their Ideas before the Ideas staff become aware of it. If they have questions about the status of their Ideas during the implementation phase, suggesters are encouraged to contact the Ideas staff.

If, after a final determination to adopt or reject has been made, additional facts become available that may have an impact on the decision or the award amount, reconsideration may be requested by submitting the information, in writing, to the Ideas Officer.

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Suggesters retain reconsideration rights to their Ideas, whether adopted or rejected, for 2 years from the date of decision. If they request reconsideration of either the award amount (for adopted Ideas) or the decision (for rejected Ideas), their reconsideration periods will be 2 years from the date of the decision on those reconsideration requests.

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After the reconsideration period has expired, requests for reconsideration may not be honored. However, suggesters whose Ideas were rejected may resubmit their Ideas at the end of the 2-year reconsideration period. Their Ideas will be treated as if they are new, receiving a new evaluation and new 2-year reconsideration rights.

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