

Chapter 5. Ideas Processing Phase 1: Evaluation

5-1. Definition. There are two distinct phases in the IDEAS Program. Figure 1 shows the basic workflow of Ideas processing.

Phase I is the Evaluation Phase, in which the suggestion is reviewed to see if it is both feasible and cost effective and should, therefore, be adopted. Within Phase I, there are two primary Decision Points:

(1) Acceptance

(2) Evaluation

5-2. Decision Point 1: Acceptance. Figure 2 presents a decision table for determining whether or not a suggestion is eligible for acceptance as an Idea, in keeping with the policies outlined in Chapter 1, Section 1.4. The Ideas staff will determine if it is acceptable and, if so, refer it to the appropriate Decision Official for evaluation. Acceptance criteria for three special categories of Ideas need to be clarified:

a. Ideas already implemented. Suggestions that have been implemented are acceptable as long as implementation has occurred within the past 6 months and as long as the Decision Official credits the suggester with the idea that prompted the action.

b. Reconsideration of rejected Ideas. A suggester may request reconsideration of an Idea if there is: 1) additional evidence which will refute or overcome the reasons for rejection which were outlined in the evaluation, or 2) evidence which persuades the Ideas Officer that the evaluation was incomplete or inaccurate. Requests for reconsideration must be submitted within the 2-year reconsideration period.

c. Duplicates. Suggestions which meet the basic criteria for acceptance will be sent for evaluation, even if they duplicate rejected Ideas with reconsideration rights. The reason for this practice is that, as managers, priorities, and circumstances change, a suggestion may be perceived in a new light and may prompt management to act, even though the same concept was suggested before.

If a suggestion is adopted and another suggester with legitimate reconsideration rights to the suggestion comes forward both suggesters will be rewarded. Amounts of awards for each suggester will be handled on a case-by-case basis. In such instances, the Regional Director of Administration (for Regional adoptions) or the Director.

Office of Productivity and Management Improvements,
(for Headquarters adoptions) will decide what award
should be made.

5-3. Decision Point 2: Evaluation

a. Processing

(1) The Decision Official is given 30 calendar days to evaluate the feasibility and cost effectiveness of the Idea. Duties of the Decision Official are outlined in Chapter 2.

(2) If an Idea appears to be a good one but the evaluation will require more than 30 days, an extension of the 30 day deadline may be requested. Typically, such requests will be approved by the Ideas Officer if there is a real possibility that the Idea ultimately will be adopted.

(3) If a Decision Official evaluates an Idea and wants to adopt it but implementation will require a) action by another agency, b) regulatory changes, c) long-term study (more than 90 days) to determine whether or not the Idea is feasible, or d) if resources are not available at the time of the decision, the Decision Official should recommend a Tentative Rejection.

The suggester will be informed that, though the Idea remains under consideration, a decision to adopt cannot be made at the present time. The suggester will be given the standard 2-year reconsideration rights. If the suggestion is implemented within that period, the suggester can be rewarded. The Idea will no longer be considered "active," but the Ideas staff will monitor Ideas that have been tentatively rejected, periodically asking the Decision Officials for current status.

(4) Once the Idea is evaluated, the Decision Official determines whether or not to adopt it for implementation.

b. Other policies related to evaluation

(1) The type and amount of award that a suggester might receive has no bearing on the evaluation of the suggestion and should not be considered during that process. The focus of the evaluation should be on

determining whether the Idea, if implemented, will improve the productivity of operations or services.

(2) Evaluators should not be concerned with whether or not the suggestion is job related. Job relatedness is

critical only to determining the type and amount of award.

(3) Suggestions do not have to be new or original to be acceptable. If the Idea presents a procedure which prompts management to take action to implement a previously-considered concept, it should be rewarded.

(4) Ideas do not have to be adopted in full in order to be rewarded. It is important to note, however, that at least some part of the Idea, as proposed, must be adopted before a suggester can receive an award.

(5) If a suggestion is rejected based on the Decision Official's judgment that someone other than the suggester proposed it first, the burden is on management to prove that to be fact if the rejection is challenged.

(6) It is the responsibility of the Decision Official to determine how the Idea should be implemented and to

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complete implementation. However, if a suggester assists in the implementation of an Idea, the Decision Official or the suggester's supervisor may propose a performance award for the suggester (in addition to the award for the Idea).

(7) Ideas sent for reconsideration should be sent to a different Evaluator within the Decision Official's organization, if possible, to ensure a fair and objective review.

(8) Normally, awards will be presented only for Ideas that are adopted for mandatory use - not for optional use. The reason for this policy is that there is no way to determine the actual benefit of the Idea to the Government if implementation is optional. If a Decision Official believes there is good reason to make an exception to this policy, however, that case should be discussed with the Ideas Officer prior to completing the evaluation.

(9) Once a suggestion is adopted, it becomes the property of the Federal Government.