

KENTUCKY EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION SYSTEM

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In accordance with 18A.202 of the Kentucky Revised Statutes, the Personnel Cabinet administers work-related incentive programs for Kentucky state government. This includes the Kentucky Employee Suggestion System (ESS). This program rewards classified employees for suggestions which lead to an increase and/or improvement in the efficiency, economics, safety, morale and/or public relations of a state agency.

The primary purpose of work-related incentive programs is to find innovative ways to enhance the operations of government through employee involvement. By providing the opportunity for employee input and by giving employees ownership of the change process, they become empowered to take responsibility for not only an agency's day-to-day operations but also for its long-term strategic vision. In order to motivate employees to become agents of change, it is essential to have a mechanism in place to recognize and reward them for their contributions.

The previous suggestion system was predominantly a paper process from submission to approval of suggestions. This process was not "user-friendly" and was time consuming for everyone involved: the employee, the evaluator and the ESS coordinator.

The new Kentucky Employee Suggestion System makes it easier for employees to submit suggestions, evaluators to review suggestions, and ESS coordinators to process suggestions. We have seen an increase in participation since the implementation of the new on-line employee suggestion system. During 2005, thirty-one employees received awards totaling \$17,668; however, the total savings from their suggestions in the first year of implementation totaled \$447,778.

As printed in the February 9, 2005 issue of Government Technology, “The newly enhanced system puts Kentucky on top in recognizing and managing the ideas of employees.”

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1. Please provide a brief description of this program?

The previous Kentucky Employee Suggestion System (ESS) was predominantly a paper process from submission to approval. The process was not “user-friendly” and was time consuming for everyone involved. The Kentucky Personnel Cabinet developed a new system replacing the time-consuming paper process previously in place with a “user-friendly” paperless workflow process.

2. How long has this program been operational (month and year)?

The Personnel Cabinet launched the new Kentucky Employee Suggestion System on January 28, 2005.

3. Why was this program created?

It was imperative that we made the process of submitting a suggestion as “painless” as possible for employees. Employees should not have to think about how to submit a suggestion wondering about where to find the necessary forms or where to submit their suggestion. The current Kentucky Employee Suggestion System (ESS) makes it easier for employees to submit suggestions, evaluators to review suggestions, ESS coordinators to process suggestions, and agencies to implement suggestions through a totally paperless system. The success of the system also depends upon the timely recognition of each idea and the system’s

ability to track it from start to finish. Employees can access ESS through the Personnel Cabinet's website www.personnel.ky.gov.

4. Why is this program a new and creative method?

The newly enhanced system puts Kentucky on top in recognizing and managing the ideas of employees. The Kentucky Personnel Cabinet has revolutionized the traditional system. Employees can now submit suggestions the moment an idea occurs by utilizing a new online form. The form is simple, user-friendly and fast. In the past, entering a suggestion into the ESS system was very time consuming for the coordinators. Electronic submission and automatic entry of a suggestion now ensures timely processing and eliminates the possibility of losing a suggestion or creating the possibility for errors from re-keying.

5. What was the program's start up costs?

The cost to develop the new Kentucky Employee Suggestion System was \$52,000. This new system shares resources from other applications which were already available such as SQL Server, and Microsoft Outlook. Personnel information is pulled from resources in place, such as ClickHR, and populates information fields. ClickHR is an employee self service system designed for Kentucky state employees and is a web-based system using a web browser to provide instant access to personal information for state employees. One systems analyst works on a part-time basis for routine database maintenance. The Benefits Program Manager of the Kentucky Employee Suggestion System is responsible for administering the program including setting up users, granting

access, monitoring usage, etc. Both the systems analyst and the benefits program manager positions were already in place.

6. What are the program's operational costs?

The only costs for agencies are employee awards which range from \$100 to 10% of the first-year savings, up to a maximum of \$2,500. The agency where the suggester is employed issues the award check. The funds for payment come from the agency or agencies implementing the suggestion. Other agencies implementing the suggestion may reimburse the agency issuing the check for a proportionate share of the total award.

7. How is this program funded?

The funds for the new online, paperless suggestion system came from savings generated from the implementation of a suggestion.

8. Did this program originate in your state?

Yes, the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet partnered with Intelligent Document Management Solutions (IDMS), a Kentucky-based software development firm, to develop our current system.

9. Are you aware of similar programs in other states?

We are not aware of a suggestion system of this caliber in other states. We have received numerous inquiries about the Kentucky Employee Suggestion System from other states. Kentucky's enhanced system makes Kentucky the leader in recognizing, managing and rewarding the ideas of employees. The University of Kentucky also implemented an employee suggestion system patterned after the Kentucky Employee Suggestion System.

10. How do you measure the success of this program?

In previous years employees submitted approximately 300 suggestions each year. Since the launch of this new system the number of suggestions has increased to over 700, an increase of 133 percent. Making the process of submitting a suggestion as “user-friendly” as possible has resulted in an increased rate of participation, resulting in more efficiency in state government and more rewards for employees for their ideas.

11. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

Agency interest in promoting the Kentucky Employee Suggestion System has increased greatly. Additionally, employee interest has increased as shown by the greatly increased number of suggestions submitted. We are constantly seeking input from employees to improve how we do things, as we seek constant improvement.