

Chapter 1. Introduction

1-1. Program purpose. In HUD's ongoing efforts to improve productivity, employees' suggestions are one valuable source of initiatives. Employees should be encouraged and rewarded for suggesting ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Government operations and service to the public. That is the basic philosophy of the IDEAS Program. It provides employees a meaningful opportunity to participate in increasing and improving productivity at HUD.

1-1. Authority. There are two kinds of incentive awards authorized under Title 5 USC Chapter 45, Incentive Awards-- performance awards and suggestion awards. Performance awards are given for job-related acts or services, and suggestion awards are given for employees' ideas which yield improvements to operations and services. Awards for employee suggestions are further discussed in 5 CFR, Chapter 1, Part 451, Special Awards, and in the Federal Personnel Manual Chapter 451, Incentive Awards.

HUD's incentive awards program for employee suggestions is called the IDEAS (Improving Departmental Efficiency and Services) Program. It is open to all Government employees. The purpose of this handbook is to document the basic policies and procedures which are used to manage HUD's IDEAS Program. Additional guidance is available in the Federal Personnel Manual, Chapter 451.

Authority for managing the program, including authority to make exceptions to all the policies and procedures contained in this handbook, rests with the Assistant Secretary for Administration. Exceptions will be made in accordance with applicable collective bargaining agreements. The program is operated by the Office of Productivity and Management Improvements, under the Assistant Secretary for Administration.

1-3. Guiding principles

a. Managers should view HUD's IDEAS Program as an investment in HUD's future - a way to help make their operations more effective and efficient.

b. IDEAS Program Officers and staff, both in Headquarters and in the Field, should:

- (1) Work with suggesters to make sure their submissions are complete,

(2) Advocate adoption of suggestions with potentially high payoff, and

(3) Ensure that suggesters are rewarded meaningfully.

c. Managers throughout the Department should encourage program participation by:

(1) Letting their employees know that suggestions are valued and welcomed;

(2) Recognizing employees' contributions publicly; and

(3) Granting on-the-job time for employees to develop their suggestions and work with evaluators.

d. Employees are entitled to fair, objective, and timely evaluations of their suggestions.

e. Adopted suggestions should be implemented as quickly as possible so the Department can start reaping the benefits.

f. The IDEAS Program is not an entitlement program; it is a discretionary program. As such, it is up to management to make the final determination on:

(1) Whether or not a suggestion will be adopted; and

(2) How a suggester will be rewarded.

1-4. Definition of an Idea. An Idea is a written suggestion submitted by a Government employee that recommends a specific change in, or addition to, policies and/or procedures for Government operations and services which will result in improved efficiency, improved quality, or reduced costs.

All suggestions fitting this definition are eligible for consideration through the IDEAS Program, whether or not they are job related, because the objective of the program is to identify and implement improvements. Job relatedness is pertinent only to the type of award the suggester can receive for an adopted Idea. Adopted Ideas which are job related will not be eligible for monetary award, unless savings or benefits are substantial (see Federal Personnel Manual Chapter 451, Appendix D for guidance on determining "substantial benefits"). Suggestions will be considered job related if:

o They result from a specific assignment or specific management directive given to the suggester; or

- o The suggester can implement the Idea without the approval of anyone else (e.g., a manager suggests a change which he/she could implement him/herself).

The following kinds of suggestions are not eligible for consideration through the IDEAS Program:

Suggestions that present concepts for automation without offering specific solutions or methodology (see Chapter 4 for additional guidance); and

- o Suggestions dealing with increasing or changing employee benefits and entitlements such as hours of work, overtime, compensatory time, annual and sick leave, insurance, health benefits, and travel (per Federal Personnel Manual Chapter 451, Part 8-2b). However, suggestions recommending changes in procedures for processing the paperwork associated with these topics are acceptable.