

## **Reward & Recognition System**

### **Foreword**

FEMA's Reward and Recognition System recognizes employee performance, achievements, innovations and contributions toward meeting Agency goals and improving the efficiency, effectiveness, and economy of the Government. The system supports a climate in FEMA that values employees and facilitates a workplace that motivates, excites, encourages, stimulates, and rewards. The Reward and Recognition System is driven by a partnership between staff and managers and emphasizes employee participation in every aspect of the system from the design of awards to the nomination and review process. All employees, including supervisors and managers, share the responsibility of rewarding and recognizing achievements and contributions.

The FEMA Reward and Recognition System is founded on the following nine principles:

- (1) The Reward and Recognition System reflects the Agency's commitment to continually recognize the achievements of its employees through both monetary and nonmonetary awards. This commitment, and the acknowledgment that employees are FEMA's most valuable resource, ensures that the system's funding is fully considered when the Agency's budget and operating plan are submitted to Congress.
- (2) The system provides for rewarding and recognizing deserving employees. These include permanent and temporary employees (to the extent allowed under the law);
- (3) The criteria for receiving rewards are tied to the Agency's Strategic Plan (mission, goals, objectives and strategy) and the Agency's values;
- (4) Recognizing and rewarding employees' contributions and achievements are an integral part of FEMA's work ethic;
- (5) Recognizing significant accomplishments and quality performance is the responsibility of all employees- staff as well as management;
- (6) Peer involvement in the nomination and evaluation process is essential;
  
- (7) The system recognizes employee contributions in a fair, consistent and equitable manner;

(8) The Reward and Recognition System is separate from the Agency's Employee Performance System;

(9) Nonmonetary and monetary awards are equally important in recognizing employees, on an on-going basis, for their significant contributions toward meeting the goals of the organization as well as the Agency's goals.

To fulfill these principles, employees and managers at all levels are responsible for implementing the provisions and procedures outlined in this manual.

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James L. Witt  
Director

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### Foreword

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## General Information

**1-1. Purpose.** This manual establishes the policies and procedures for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Reward and Recognition System. The FEMA Reward and Recognition System has two purposes:

**a.** To appropriately recognize those individuals who contribute to the achievement of FEMA's Strategic Plan and exemplify the Agency's values by demonstrating quality work and exceeding job expectations.

**b.** To provide an effective avenue that encourages employees to recognize and reward their peers, supervisors, staff, and teams on a continuous, timely, and equitable basis.

**1-2. Applicability and Scope.** All FEMA employees are eligible for nonmonetary rewards. All employees, with the following exceptions, are also eligible for monetary awards under this Reward and Recognition System:

**a.** Presidential Appointees paid under the Executive Schedule;

**b.** Members of the Senior Executive Service; and

**c.** Temporary employees hired under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act [PL 93-288, as amended].

**d.** Schedule C employees, except in limited circumstances. (Contact OHRM for additional guidance).

**e.** Individuals and groups from outside of FEMA. However, these individuals may be eligible for a monetary suggestion award.

**1-3. Supersession.** This manual supersedes FEMA Manual 3600.1, Performance Management Plan/Superior Accomplishment Awards, dated September, 1987 and the interim Time Off Awards Guidance.

**1-4. Authority.** Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C), Chapter 43 and Chapter 45.

**1-5. References.** Title 5, Code of Federal Regulation (CFR), Parts 451 and 531.

**1-6. Policy.** FEMA is committed to maintaining a highly skilled workforce to achieve the organizational excellence necessary to guarantee quality service to the public. The Reward and Recognition System is designed to create an environment where employees actively and continually seek better ways to do their jobs and improve organizational performance, take great pride in their achievements and are recognized for their accomplishments, contributions and innovations in support of the Agency's goals and values.

**1-7. Responsibilities.**

**a. Employees are responsible for:**

(1) Recognizing the significant accomplishments and quality performance of peers in support of FEMA's Strategic Plan and Agency values; and

(2) Recommending deserving employees for recognition under the Reward and Recognition System.

**b. Supervisors are responsible for:**

(1) Developing nonmonetary award programs to recognize individual and group achievements within the work unit;

(2) Approving Time-Off awards up to 18 hours per award;

(3) Providing input to the Awards Review Team(s) on recommended Organization and Agency awards for their employees; and,

(4) Supporting the Employee Suggestion Program and recommending, or assisting in recommending, appropriate award amounts for adopted ideas.

**c. Associate Directors/Administrators/Regional Directors/Office Directors are responsible for:**

(1) Establishing Awards Review Teams for their organizations, ensuring a cross-section of member representation on the Team (recommended size is 5-9 depending on the size of the organization);

(2) Approving and presenting Organization Awards;

(3) Approving Time-Off awards for amounts over 18 hours up to the limit of 40 hours;

(4) Supporting the Employee Suggestion Program; and,

(5) Ensuring accurate financial record-keeping of funds allotted and expended on awards.

**d. The Director/Deputy Director or designee is responsible for:**

(1) Ensuring consistent application of the Reward and Recognition System, Agency-wide;

(2) Ensuring the System meets its stated objectives by rewarding employees based on the Agency's Strategic Plan and Values.

(3) Determining, on a fiscal year basis, and in consultation with the Office of Financial Management and the Office of Human Resources Management:

(a) The annual funding level for the Awards and the Employee Suggestion Programs;

(b) The maximum dollar amount an employee may receive in Organization Awards; and,

(c) The number of Quality Step Increases (QSI) that may be processed by each organization.

**e. Awards Review Teams are responsible for:**

(1) Reviewing nominations for Organization and Agency Awards;

(2) Ensuring consistency in recommending awards;

(3) Requesting additional information from first-level supervisors or others, as necessary, on individual nominations; and,

(4) Making recommendations to the head of the organization on the approval, disapproval, and modification of nominations of awards.

**f. Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) is responsible for:**

(1) Administering Reward and Recognition System, including Employee Suggestion Program;

(2) Providing technical advisory services to all employees, supervisors and managers concerning the System;

(3) Assisting work units in developing their own local awards;

(4) Providing System monitoring, oversight, and evaluation;

(5) Ensuring approved awards are properly and timely processed in accordance with Office of Personnel Management (OPM) instructions and Agency policies and procedures. Reports award data to OPM and maintain records necessary to report program activities as required; and,

(6) Coordinating the annual awards ceremony.

**g. Office of Financial Management (OFM) is responsible for:**

(1) Determining and allocating all available award amounts to organizations upon Congressional approval of the Agency's operating plan; and,

(2) Allocating the funds for the Employee Suggestion Program to OHRM for administration.

**h. Preparedness, Training and Exercises Directorate (PT) is responsible for:**

(1) Orienting and training supervisors, managers and employees on the new System; and,

(2) Conducting ongoing training to update skills for supervisors and employees.

**1-8. Definitions.**

**a. Nonmonetary Award.** An award presented at the work unit, organization, or Agency level that recognizes exceptional efforts and contributions made by employees or groups. The award does not convey money, but recipients generally receive certificates and may receive other incidental items such as mugs, caps, balloons, etc. This award is the foundation of the new Reward and Recognition system. This award is intended to immediately recognize employees for contributing to the Agency's Values and Strategic Plan.

**b. Monetary Award.** An award presented at the work unit or organization level that recognizes significant efforts and contributions made by employees or groups. The award comprises money and can be in the form of a Time-Off Award, Quality Step Increase, or specific dollar amount. An employee may not receive more than one monetary award (including Time-off Awards) in recognition of the same contribution or achievement.

**c. Time-Off Award.** An award that provides immediate recognition to one-time and short-term efforts that result in exceptional contributions, services, achievements or quality work. Award amounts can range from 4 hours to 40 hours. Immediate supervisors can approve awards up to 18 hours at the work unit level. The head of an organization can approve awards up to a maximum of 40 hours. (*see Appendix A*)

**d. Quality Step Increase.** A Quality Step Increase (QSI) provides appropriate incentives and recognition for excellence in performance by granting faster than normal step increases. To qualify for a QSI, GS/GM employees must be nominated by their supervisor, have a current performance rating of record of "Superior" and have not received a QSI within the previous 52 weeks. Wage Grade employees are not eligible for this award.

**e. Work Unit Awards.** Work Unit awards are both monetary (Time-Off Awards) and nonmonetary and are presented at the local work unit level. Awards in this category do not

require the approval of the organization's Awards Review Team. Depending on the size and location of the work unit, the local level might be a division, branch or team.

**f. Organization Award.** A monetary or nonmonetary award that recognizes significant performance in support of the Agency's Strategic Plan and furtherance of Agency values. The new Reward and Recognition system is de-linked from the new Employee Performance System. Organization awards recognize employee accomplishments throughout the year and are not tied to year-end performance ratings. These awards require review by the organization's Awards Review Team and final approval by the head of the organization.

**g. Agency Award.** A nonmonetary award that represents the highest form of reward and recognition within FEMA. It is usually presented at an annual awards ceremony and is presented as the Director's Award by the Director of FEMA. The award is given in recognition of extraordinary accomplishments or quality performance in support of FEMA's strategic plan and/or the Agency's values. Agency Awards are reviewed by each organization's Awards Review Team and require approval by the head of the organization before they are forwarded to the Director, FEMA.

**h. Suggestion Program Award.** A monetary or nonmonetary award that provides recognition for employees who submit recommendations for changes that lead to improved efficiency and effectiveness of Agency or Federal government operations. Monetary awards range from \$100 to \$2,500 depending on the value or benefit of the recommendation (i.e., suggestion). (*see Appendix B*)

**1-9. Forms Prescribed.** This manual prescribes the use of a single nomination form to nominate an employee or group for any of the Agency's monetary or nonmonetary awards, except for employee suggestions. The form, FEMA Form 30-63, Award Nomination Form, may be obtained through the Agency's Printing, Publications and Graphics Branch. Office of Personnel Management Optional Form 303 will continue to be used for employee suggestions and may also be obtained from the Agency's Printing, Publications and Graphics Branch.

**1-10. Evaluation of the Reward And Recognition System.** The Reward and Recognition System is evaluated annually to ensure that it is accomplishing its stated goals. Modifications are made as needed as part of a continuous improvement process.

## Chapter 2

### Criteria

**2-1. Core Criteria for Rewards and Recognition.** To qualify for any award under the Agency's Rewards and Recognition System, there are two criteria that must be met:

- a. The award must contribute to accomplishing FEMA's Strategic Plan; and,
- b. The award must further FEMA's values.

The *Strategic Plan* and *Agency Values* provide employees and organizations guidance necessary to carry out their daily responsibilities. The Strategic Plan provides programmatic direction as to "what" employees should be doing, while the Agency Values highlight "how" it should be done. *The Strategic Plan and Agency Values are equally important and emphasize FEMA's belief that how we do our job and treat one another is as important as achieving programmatic goals.*

(1) **Strategic Plan.** The Agency's Strategic Plan includes FEMA's vision, mission and strategic goals. Each strategic goal is supported by objectives and strategies that represent the types of accomplishments that will contribute to the achievement of the goals. The list of strategies is not exclusive. It is understood that employees and organizations contribute regularly to the achievement of the strategic goals and objectives through strategies not listed in the Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan is a multi-year document and is updated as needed.

(2) **Agency Values.** FEMA encourages its employees to strive for excellence by demonstrating in their daily work the following seven Agency values:

- a. *Quality Work* - Dedication to doing the best job possible.
- b. *Customer Service* - We value our internal and external customers, and strive to meet their expressed needs.
- c. *Creativity & Innovation* - New ideas and creativity are fundamental to continued growth, improvement and problem-solving.
- d. *Teamwork* - Every employee has something of value to contribute. By working cooperatively together, we can better achieve the Agency's mission and goals.

**e. *Continuous Improvement*** - Continuous development of personal/professional skills and program delivery is key to better serving our customers.

**f. *Public Stewardship*** - Commitment to prudent management of the taxpayers' money and dedication to providing the public with the highest quality service.

**g. *Diversity*** - FEMA's employees are its most valuable resource. The diversity of their backgrounds, experiences, and skills adds to their value.

## Chapter 3

### Types Of Awards

**3-1.** The system recognizes the specific contributions and achievements of individuals and groups at three levels, Work Unit, Organizational, and Agency. **Work Unit Awards (Divisions, Branches and Teams, where appropriate).** Work Unit awards are presented at the local work unit level and do not require the approval of the organization's Awards Review Team. They do, however, require approval by the employee's supervisor. Depending on the size and location of the work unit, the local level might be a division, branch or team. These awards are used to recognize in a timely fashion exceptional efforts and contributions made by employees and groups. Supervisors may substitute one of these awards for the other based upon the preference of the nominee, the availability of award money and other relevant factors. Work Unit Awards include:

**a. Nonmonetary Award.** Where appropriate, each work unit is responsible for developing its own nonmonetary awards to recognize individual and group achievements. These low cost awards form the foundation of the Agency's Reward and Recognition System. Employees and managers develop these awards together and use them on a day-to-day basis to reward and recognize each other's contributions. The FEMA library, the Office of Human Resources Management and each Regional Office and FEMA facility have copies of books on nonmonetary ways to award employees. Managers and staff are encouraged to utilize these resources in developing creative nonmonetary awards that reflect the needs of the work unit's culture.

**b. Time-Off Award.** The Time-Off Award provides immediate recognition to one-time and short-term efforts that result in exceptional contributions, service, achievements or quality work that otherwise might go unrecognized. The amount of a single Time-Off Award, at the work unit level, can range from 4 to 18 hours. (*see Appendix A*)

**(1) Nomination and Selection Process.** Any employee or group may nominate any other employee or group for a nonmonetary or Time-Off Award. The nominating employee or group submits a completed Award Nomination Form to the nominee's supervisor of record. The supervisor of record approves work unit nonmonetary Awards and Time-Off Awards up to 18 hours.

**3-2. Organization Awards (Staff Offices, Regional Offices, Administrations and Directorates).** Organization Awards are approved and presented by the directors of Staff Offices, Regional Offices, Administrations and Directorates. These awards recognize exceptional performance in support of the achievement of the Agency's Strategic Plan and furtherance of the Agency's values. They represent a significant individual or group accomplishment and are not routine. These awards are presented by the head of the organization in an appropriate ceremony. Organization Awards for FEMA employees include monetary, nonmonetary and time-off awards.

**a. Nonmonetary Award.** Where appropriate, each organization is responsible for developing its own nonmonetary awards to recognize individual and group achievements. Employees and managers develop these awards together and use them on a day-to-day basis to reward and recognize each other's contributions. Managers and staff are encouraged to utilize these resources in developing creative nonmonetary awards that reflect the needs of the organization's culture. Nonmonetary awards are created by each organization and paid for out of its award allocation.

**b. Monetary Award.** Each organization will receive its own allocation of award money from the OFM. The amount of the allocation is determined by the OFM and can only be used by the organization to recognize and reward employees. Employees may receive more than one award in a fiscal year, but may not exceed the overall dollar limit on Organization Awards. This limit is determined each fiscal year by the Director/Deputy Director or designee.

**c. Time-Off Award.** The Time-Off Award at the organizational level can range from 19 - 40 hours. It provides recognition to employees who have exhibited significant contributions, service, achievements and/or quality work. Any employee or group may nominate any other employee or group for a Time-Off Award. (*see Appendix A*)

**d. Nomination Process.** Any employee or group may nominate any other employee or group for an organizational monetary, nonmonetary, or time-off award. The nominating employee or group submits a completed Award Nomination Form to the nominee's supervisor of record. Within ten work days of receiving the nomination, the supervisor of record will attach any comments or recommendations to the nomination form and will forward it to the organization's Awards Review Team for appropriate review. Nominations may be made throughout the year. All employees and groups nominated for an Organization Award are informed of their nomination by the Awards Review Team.

**e. Selection Process.** An organization's Awards Review Team, chosen by the head of the organization, reviews all nominations on at least a quarterly basis. The team consists of at least five and no more than nine members. The members are from throughout the organization and represent a cross-section of the grades in the organization. A quorum is more than 50% of the number of members, and must be present in order to convene. The team reviews nominations for the organization for monetary, nonmonetary, and time-off awards. The proceeding are confidential. The team presents its recommendations to the head of the organization who makes the final decision. All approved nominations, excluding those for nonmonetary awards, are forwarded to OHRM for preparation of Notification of Personnel Action, Standard Form SF-50, where appropriate. There is no set number of awards that can be given annually, subject to budget constraints. Awards should be presented on a continuous basis throughout the year.

**3-3. Agency Awards.** Agency Awards are honorary and can only be bestowed by the Director. The highest form of reward and recognition within FEMA is the *Director's Award*. There are no separate categories of awards under the *Director's Award*. The award is given by the Director to individuals and groups that have clearly demonstrated extraordinary performance in support of the Agency's Strategic Plan and values. This award is held in high esteem and is presented at the Director's discretion.

The Director, from time to time, may also present awards to 1) individuals and organizations from outside the Agency that have made significant contributions to the field of emergency management, or to 2) FEMA employees for a specific act or achievement that does not fall within the Agency's Strategic Plan and values, such as, an act of heroism.

The *Director's Award* is honorary, nonmonetary, and at a minimum, includes a plaque or certificate detailing the specifics of the award. The *Director's Award* is usually presented at the Agency's Award Ceremony, but may be given at any time at the discretion of the Director.

**a. Nomination and Selection Process.** Any FEMA employee or group may nominate any other employee or group.

**(1) Internal Nominations.**

**a.** The nominating employee or group will submit a completed Award Nomination and Suggestion Form to the nominee's supervisor of record;

**b.** Within ten work days of receiving the nomination, the supervisor of record will attach any comments or recommendations to the nomination form and forward it to the organization's Awards Review Team;

**c.** Nominations are reviewed throughout the year by each organization's Awards Review Team;

**d.** The team presents its recommendations to the head of the organization who reviews and forwards the nomination to the Director;

**e.** The Director determines final approval or disapproval; and

**f.** All employees and groups nominated for a Director's Award will be informed of their nomination by the organization's Awards Review Team.

**(2) External Nominations.** Persons or groups external to the Agency who have exhibited extraordinary service in support of emergency management may be nominated for a Director's Award. Nominations are forwarded to the appropriate FEMA Staff Office, Directorate, Administration or Region for review by the head of the organization. The organization head forwards the nomination, with any comments and recommendations, to the Director, FEMA, for final approval or disapproval.

**3-4. Quality Step Increase.** A Quality Step Increase (QSI) recognizes and rewards superior performance by granting faster than normal step increases. A GS employee who receives a current performance rating of record of "Superior" and who has not received a QSI within the previous 52 weeks is eligible. This is the only award under this system that is linked to the Agency's performance rating system.

A QSI nomination may only be made by an employee's supervisor of record, and requires the concurrence of the employee's second level supervisor. The head of the organization is the approving official. The awarding of QSIs is subject to availability of appropriate funds which will be determined on an annual basis by the Director/Deputy Director or designee.

**3-5. Suggestion Program.** The Suggestion Program is in place to encourage participation throughout the Agency and to stimulate, recognize and reward ideas and innovations. The program allows every employee to participate in the Agency's continuous improvement process. Employees have the option to mail, fax, or e-mail their suggestions to the Office of Human Resources Management. All suggestions are logged and referred to the appropriate organization for review. Suggestions are reviewed and suggestors informed of the results within 45 days. When a suggestion is adopted, the reviewing organization recommends to the Office of Human Resources Management an award amount. The awards range from \$100 to \$2,500 depending on the value or benefit of the suggestion to the Agency or Federal Government. The awards are paid for out of Suggestion Program funds allocated semiannually to the Office of Human Resources Management.

The Agency Suggestion Program complements and does not replace local suggestion programs in organizations throughout the Agency. (*see Appendix B*)

**Appendix A****Summary of Time-Off Award Criteria**

**A-1. General.** This guidance establishes criteria and procedures for granting Time-Off Awards to employees of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). A Time-Off Award is granted to an employee in recognition of the employee's contribution to the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of operations related to the Agency's Strategic Plan and for exemplifying the Agency's values. A Time-Off Award is an excused absence granted to an employee without charge to leave or loss of pay.

**A-2. Criteria.** Time-Off Awards are intended to increase the productivity and creativity of FEMA employees by providing for timely recognition of their contributions. A Time-Off Award is appropriate to recognize an employee who has exceeded normal job requirements or has otherwise made significant contribution(s) to organizational or Agency programs, priorities, or projects, and exemplified the Agency's values. Examples of appropriate uses of Time-Off Awards include but are not limited to:

- a. Display of innovative or creative solutions to difficult problems resulting in paperwork reduction, streamlined procedures, or enhanced organizational performance;
- b. Improved quality of service to customers both within and outside the organization;
- c. Successful accomplishment of complex assignments in advance of target completion dates or with outcomes that surpass what was expected; and
- d. Performance of extra work assignments or projects in addition to regular workload to ensure that organizational goals and objectives are met.

**A-3. Award Amount Limits.**

- a. Full-time employees may be granted Time-Off Awards in amounts up to 40 hours for a single contribution and up to a total 80 hours during a leave year.
- b. A part-time employee, or employee with an uncommon tour of duty, may be granted Time-Off Awards in an amount up to the average number of hours of work in the employee's biweekly scheduled tour of duty during a leave year and up to a total of one-half of that amount for a single contribution. For example, a part-time employee whose work schedule is 24 hours per week, or 48 hours per pay period, may be granted a Time-Off Award up to 24 hours for a single contribution and up to 48 hours during a leave year.

**A-4. Relationship to Other Awards.** Time-Off Awards are used in concert with other FEMA awards but may not be used:

- a. In lieu of monetary awards for adopted employee suggestions or inventions;

- b. To recognize an employee for performing additional duties when the employee received a temporary promotion for performing such duties;
- c. To compensate an employee for perceived discrepancies or inadequacies in the pay system;
- d. As a farewell gift; or
- e. To recognize an employee for the same achievements or contributions for which the employee has already received or will receive a monetary or honorary award.

#### **A-5. Procedures.**

- a. Nominations for Time-Off Awards may be made by any employee or supervisor by completing a *FEMA Award Nomination Form, FEMA 30-63*. The employee making the nomination forwards the completed form to the nominee's supervisor of record for review and approval and a copy of the form to the nominee. Nominations should be prepared as soon as possible following the contribution to ensure timely recognition, generally within 90 days. Each nomination must include appropriate justification for the award.
- b. Award justifications must describe the employee's contribution(s), explain why the contribution(s) warrant(s) recognition, describe the tangible and/or intangible benefits, and explain how the recommended amount of time-off was determined. The attached guidance table should be used to determine the amount of time-off for a single contribution.
- c. Supervisors of record may approve Time-Off Awards up to a single award limit of 18 hours.
- d. A Time-Off Award in excess of 18 hours must be approved by the organization director (Associate Director, Regional Director, Administrator or Staff Office Director).
- e. All approved nomination forms must be forwarded to the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) for processing and record-keeping. Immediate supervisors forward a copy of approved Time-Off Awards to the timekeeper of employees for tracking accrued and used Time-Off Awards and for retention with time and attendance records.
- f. The OHRM prepares a Notification of Personnel Action, Standard Form (SF) 50, to document the Time-Off Award. The SF-50 is forwarded to the employee and a copy is placed in the employee's Official Personnel File.
- g. Individualized Time-Off Award certificates may be prepared and presented by the nominating office or by the FEMA organization in which the recipient works. In either case, the nominating employee should sign the certificate to be presented to the award recipient.

**h.** Time-Off Awards must be scheduled and used no later than one year from the effective date of the personnel action. Use of Time-Off Awards is subject to approval by the employee's immediate supervisor. Employees should submit requests to use Time-Off Awards in advance to allow supervisors adequate time to plan for office coverage. Supervisors will make every effort to honor requests to use awarded time-off.

**i.** Use of awarded time-off must be requested by completing SF-71, Application for Leave. Employees must indicate that the request is for awarded time-off by checking "Other" in Item 5 and specifying "Time-Off Award" in the space provided. Approved SF-71's are forwarded to the employee's timekeeper to be reported and retained with time and attendance records.

**j.** If an employee becomes physically incapacitated while using a Time-Off Award, the supervisor may grant sick leave in lieu of the award time for the period of incapacitation. In this instance, the balance of the awarded time-off could be used to extend the time-off, if approved, or be rescheduled at another time.

**k.** Awarded time off will be reported during the pay period in which it is used. Timekeepers will record the number of awarded time-off hours using Transaction Code (TC) 66 with a Prefix 61. Timekeepers, under the direction of supervisors, will be responsible for tracking awarded time-off accumulated and used in the remarks sections of FEMA Form 30-50, Time and Attendance Worksheet and PC-TARE. The amount of time-off used and reported on biweekly Time and Attendance Reports is deducted from an employee's Time-Off Award balance as maintained in the US Department of Agriculture's personnel/payroll system.

**l.** By regulation, Time-Off Awards may not be converted to cash payments under any circumstances. Employees who have been granted Time-Off Awards are responsible for using the time-off prior to separation or transfer to another agency. Failure to do so will result in forfeiture of the awarded time-off.

#### **A-6. Evaluation.**

**a.** The OHRM monitors the use of Time-Off Awards to ensure consistency, equity, and fairness.

**b.** Time-Off Awards are included in periodic reviews and assessments of the Agency's Reward and Recognition System.

#### **A-7. Information and Assistance.**

**a.** The OHRM provides advice and assistance on Time-Off Awards.

**b.** Additional information regarding Time-Off Awards is provided to employees and supervisors through training, reports, and a variety of media.

**A-8. Guidance For Time-Off Award Amounts****Single Contribution**

<b>VALUE OF CONTRIBUTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>AMOUNT OF AWARD</b>
<b>MODERATE</b>	<p>A contribution to a program, priority, project, or service that is of sufficient value to merit recognition.</p> <p>A beneficial change or modification of principles or practices that result in more efficient and effective operations.</p>	<b>4 to 10</b>
<b>SUBSTANTIAL</b>	<p>An important contribution to a program, priority, project, or service.</p> <p>A significant change or modification of principles or practices that result in more efficient and effective operations.</p>	<b>11 to 20</b>
<b>HIGH</b>	<p>A highly significant contribution to a program, priority, project, or service.</p> <p>Complete revision of principles or practices with considerable impact on efficiency and effectiveness of operations.</p>	<b>21 to 30</b>
<b>EXCEPTIONAL</b>	<p>A superior contribution to the quality of a program, priority, project, or service.</p> <p>Initiation of a new principle or major practice with significant impact on efficiency and effectiveness of operations.</p>	<b>31 to 40</b>

**Appendix B****Summary of Employee Suggestion Program**

**B-1. General.** The Employee Suggestion Program provides recognition and rewards employees for submitting recommendations for changes which lead to the efficiency, effectiveness, and improvement of Agency or Federal Government operations.

**B-2. Eligibility.** All FEMA employees, including temporary, are eligible to submit suggestions which they believe will increase the effectiveness of Agency or Federal Government operations. Temporary employees appointed under the Robert T. Stafford Act, are eligible to receive nonmonetary Suggestion Program awards only.

**B-3. Responsibilities.** All employees play a key role in the Agency's Suggestion Program. Employee participation throughout the Agency is a decisive factor in determining the success or failure of the program and the level of creativity and improvement which the program brings about.

**B-4. Managers.** As evaluators and approving officials, managers have specific responsibilities which include:

- a. Promoting and encouraging the use of the Suggestion Program as a means of improving efficiency, effectiveness, and job satisfaction throughout their organizational jurisdiction;
- b. Assisting employees, as appropriate, in developing and preparing suggestions in writing;
- c. Ensuring that suggestions forwarded to their organizations for evaluation are evaluated objectively within 45 days of receipt;
- d. Analyzing and validating the data submitted, or obtaining additional data necessary to evaluate the suggestion properly; and
- e. Recommending appropriate award amounts for adopted ideas.

**B-5. Employees.** Initiating suggestions are responsible for:

- a. Preparing a suggestion carefully on an Employee Suggestion Form, and forwarding it to the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) for referral to the appropriate organization(s) for review after screening for duplication or similarity;
- b. Providing clear factual statements and all the necessary supporting documents, in as much detail as possible, with regard to the current situation, and the recommended changes; and
- c. Providing an assessment of direct as well as indirect tangible and intangible benefits that may be realized by the Agency if the suggestion is adopted.

**B-6. Office of Human Resources Management** has the following responsibilities:

- a. Referring suggestions to appropriate organizations for review and evaluation;
- b. Monitoring the status of suggestions to ensure processing deadlines are met and informing the Director's Office of overdue organizational responses to suggestions;
- c. Advising and assisting supervisors, managers, and employees of concerns regarding suggestions;
- d. Notifying employees of the status and final action taken on their suggestions; and
- e. In the case where a suggestion is adopted, arranging for preparation of the award and its documentation for personnel records.

**B-7. Submission of Suggestions.** Suggestions must be prepared on an Employee Suggestion Form, (OPM Optional Form 303), and must be submitted to the Office of Human Resources Management by agency mail, electronic mail or fax. OHRM will acknowledge receipt of the suggestion in writing within 5 work days. The suggestor will be advised of actions being taken on the suggestion.

**B-8. Exclusions.** The following types of suggestions are ineligible for consideration:

- a. Suggestions which concern services and benefits to employees, such as vending machines, cafeteria services, restroom facilities, parking facilities, or holidays;
- b. Suggestions regarding working conditions, such as air conditioning, decorations, furniture, or mirrors (unless for safety);
- c. Suggestions concerning the routine work of taking care of buildings, grounds, and parking lots, such as repairing, cleaning, replacing, painting, or adjusting; and
- d. Suggestions which substantially duplicate an idea currently under consideration.

**B-9. Suggestions Versus Job Responsibility.**

- a. Employees may receive awards for adopted suggestions which concern matters either within or outside their job responsibilities. If within their job responsibilities, the contributions must clearly be in addition to duty requirements for their position.
- b. Some positions by definition require the contribution of ideas or improvements. Since the salaries of such employees already compensate them for their ideas, it would be inappropriate to give supplementary recognition by means of a cash award.

**B-10. Modification of Suggestions.** It is appropriate to grant an award for a suggestion which, though not adopted in the form originally submitted, was directly instrumental in motivating management's actions in effecting an improvement. If a suggestion has made such a contribution, the award amount reflects the value of the contribution.

**B-11. Group Suggestion Award.** When a group of employees makes a contribution, all employees contributing, including supervisors, may share in the award. The cash award may be in equal shares, or to each employee in proportion to his/her contribution. The award recommendation must include an explanation, in detail, of how the amount of award was derived and how the share of the award to be paid to each contributor was determined.

**B-12. Determining Amount of Award.** Monetary and nonmonetary awards are given for suggestions which are adopted. Monetary award amounts are based on tangible and intangible benefits in accordance with the attached guidance table. Monetary awards range from \$100 to \$2,500 depending on the value or benefit to the Agency or Federal Government. Nonmonetary awards are granted for suggestions submitted by temporary employees appointed under the Robert T. Stafford Act.

**B-13. Evaluation and Approval of Suggestions.** The organization with the primary responsibility over the suggestion subject matter evaluates the suggestion in accordance with the following:

a. Time frame:

(1) Within 45 days, when approval lies within a FEMA organizational segment; or

(2) Within 60 days, when approval lies within an organization outside of the Agency.

b. If adoption is recommended, the evaluator determines the amount of the award in accordance with the attached guidance table.

c. The Office of Human Resources Management notifies the suggesting employee of the action taken on the suggestion, arranges for preparation of a certificate, requests an award check, and places copies of appropriate documents in the employee's official personnel file.

**B-14. Criteria for Disapproval.** A suggestion may be disapproved if:

a. The implementing costs are greater than the benefits derived;

b. The suggestion identifies a problem, but does not propose a solution; or

c. The suggestion does not propose a change for the Agency or the Federal Government.

**B-15. Interagency Referrals.**

a. Suggestions by FEMA employees that may be of interest to other government agencies are referred to the appropriate agencies for consideration after first being reviewed by FEMA.

b. Upon approval, the Office of Human Resources Management makes arrangements with the adopting agency to transfer funds for payment to the suggesting employee. If the award is \$500 or less, FEMA will absorb the costs.

c. If a suggestion from another agency is referred to FEMA for evaluation, it will be processed in accordance with the procedures set forth in this manual for evaluating a FEMA employee suggestion.

**B-16. Inventions. Awards for Disclosure.**

a. An award of \$300 will be granted to an employee in all cases where a reported invention has been favorably evaluated by FEMA as having value to the Agency's mission.

b. Patent Award. When a patent application is filed by FEMA and the Federal Government either owns the invention or has a license, an additional award of \$500 will be provided to the employee upon notification that a patent has been issued (or notice of allowability in those instances when national security restrictions prevent issuance of a patent).

c. Additional Awards. Further recognition may be granted for inventions owned by the government, to the extent that they benefit the public or the government. For those inventions for which the government has a license, further recognition may be granted to the extent that the invention benefits the government.

**B-17. Guidance For Suggestion Program Monetary Awards**

<b>VALUE OF SUGGESTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>AMOUNT OF AWARD</b>
<b>MODERATE</b>	Change or modification of a principle, procedure, product, program, activity, or service which results in improved efficiency and effectiveness of operations in one or more Agency organizations.	<b>\$100</b>
<b>SUBSTANTIAL</b>	Substantial change or modification of a principle, procedure, product, program, activity, or service which results in improved efficiency and effectiveness of operations in one or more Agency organizations.	<b>\$500</b>
<b>HIGH</b>	Complete revision of a basic principle or procedure; a significant improvement to a product, program, activity, or service which results in improved efficiency and effectiveness of operations in one or more Agency organizations.	<b>\$1,000</b>
<b>EXCEPTIONAL</b>	Initiation of a new principle or procedure; a superior improvement to a critical product, activity, program, or service which results in improved efficiency and effectiveness of operations in the entire Agency.	<b>\$2,500</b>