

### **D.5.6.1 (Procedure) *Alamo Ideas* Suggestion Program**

Responsible Department: Human Resources and Organizational Development

Based on Board Policy: [D.5.6](#) – Employee Suggestion Plan Incentive Program

Approved: 8-19-10

Last Amended: 5-6-13

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#### **Purpose**

Alamo Colleges places a high value on the efforts of employees to continuously improve the performance of the College District. Each employee has the benefit of a unique perspective on College District operations and a unique opportunity to identify and act on potential improvements. Cultivating our ability to continuously improve is essential for our long-term success.

Toward this end the College District is pleased to provide *Alamo Ideas*, a Suggestion Program that encourages, supports, recognizes and rewards employees who engage in the improvement of financial performance, services to students and safety. Every member of the management team will promote employee participation, will fully and fairly evaluate suggestions, and promptly implement every suggestion that can improve College District performance.

*Alamo Ideas* is an important means by which we engage every member of our team in innovation, participation, collaboration and continuous improvement. It is an integral part of our culture, annual operating plan and budget, and our employee compensation and benefits plan.

#### **Definitions**

**Eligible Participant** - every active employee is eligible to participate in the Suggestion Program and receive awards, except those individuals designated as Ineligible Employees.

**Ineligible Employee** – Employees who operate the Suggestion Program are not eligible to participate as suggestors or implementers. Administrators and members of the Internal Audit department may be responsible for program promotion, suggestion evaluation and implementation but are not eligible to receive awards. Immediate family members of ineligible employees are not eligible to participate.

**Eligible Suggestion** - a suggestion is eligible for consideration and an award if implemented, as long as:

1. the suggestion is a new/original idea not previously submitted by another suggestor;
2. and, the suggestion is submitted to the *Alamo Ideas* Office on the official *Alamo Ideas* Suggestion Form;
3. and, the suggestor cannot implement the idea without the permission, approval or assistance of a supervisor or others;

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4. and, there is no evidence that the idea is already under active consideration (no activity documented within the past 90 days, exceptions will be evaluated on a case by case basis);
5. and, there is no evidence that the idea is already implemented or that implementation is actively underway (no implementation planning or actions within the past 90 days).
6. When a suggestion triggers an alternate action by the College District that generates increased revenue, cost savings or improved services to students or safety improvement, the results will be eligible as a “Trigger Action” idea attributable to the original suggestor(s).

When a suggestion generally meets the eligibility criteria, but nominal doubt may remain, the Program Administrator will, in the spirit of continuous improvement, err in favor of the suggestor and qualify the idea as eligible.

**Excluded Suggestions** – means suggestion categories that have been excluded from program eligibility by the College District. Suggestions about the following aspects of College District business are excluded from program consideration:

1. College District debt and capital financing, acquisitions and mergers or taxes;
2. College District marketing, promotion and advertising, including content, campaigns, slogans or collateral used to promote services and products;
3. employee compensation, job descriptions, position elimination, discipline and employment;
4. matters outside the control of the College District such as Federal and State regulations, vendor warranties, etc.;
5. matters that can be corrected by complying with existing policies, procedures and job assignments or correction of obvious errors unless the error or non-compliance has been significant and ongoing resulting in more than a \$5,000 loss or longer than six months duration;
6. suggestions that will provide personal gain (from means other than this program) to the suggestor or family members as a result of their associations and/or enterprises outside the College District;

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7. suggestions to solve normal start-up problems during the first six-months of the start-up of a new program, service, facility, software, hardware or other major College District undertaking;
8. suggestions that improve grant funded activities;
9. suggestions that are subjective or do not produce auditable results demonstrating financial improvement, safety improvement or improvement of services to students.

**Suggestor** – means the individual or team submitting the suggestion.

**Evaluator** – means the individual responsible for providing a initial evaluation of the feasibility of a suggestion. The program operations staff will identify one or more department heads to evaluate each suggestion, drawing from the pool of department heads having the most knowledge and responsibility for implementing the type of suggestion at hand.

**Implementer** – means the individual or team responsible for implementing an approved suggestion.

**Approval Classifications** – For award purposes, all approved and implemented suggestions are classified as one of the following types:

1. **Quantifiable** – means a suggestion that results in a monetary improvement for the College District that can reduce a specific budget item.
2. **Non-quantifiable** – means a suggestion that does not produce a quantifiable monetary savings or gain but does produce a measurable, auditable, improvement in College District safety or services to students at minimal cost.
3. **Trigger Action** – means a suggestion that triggers an alternate action by the College District that generates increased revenue, cost savings, services to students or safety improvement.

**Program Operations Staff** – means the HR/Organizational Development staff designated by the College District to operate and manage the Suggestion Program.

**Program Administrator** – means the Associate Vice Chancellor for Human Resources and Organizational Development, designated by the College District to provide administrative direction and oversight for the Suggestion Program and to the program operations staff.

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#### **Submitting Suggestions**

Suggestions will be submitted directly to the *Alamo Ideas* Office on an official *Alamo Ideas* Suggestion Form.

Management approval is not required to submit a suggestion. Employees are not required to submit suggestions to *Alamo Ideas* through their supervisors or Administrators.

Suggestions must be limited to one per form. Forms are widely available throughout the College District and at the *Alamo Ideas* Intranet Site.

Suggestion forms must be complete and signed. Anonymous suggestions will not be processed. Suggestions made by teams must be signed by all members of the team and all members of the team must be eligible to participate in the program.

The program operations staff will compare each newly submitted idea to those already on file and promptly notify the suggestor if the idea has already been submitted.

In the case of duplicate suggestions, the one bearing the earliest program receipt date will be accepted for consideration. Duplicate suggestions received on the same date will be combined, assigned one idea number and treated as a team suggestion. If the suggestion is implemented, the award will be divided equally among all suggestors.

All suggestions submitted become the sole and exclusive property of the Alamo Colleges, including any suggestions which may be subject to patents, copyrights or trademark protection.

The *Alamo Ideas* Suggestion Program is not intended to circumvent the normal way of doing business in the College District.

The program operations staff will routinely conduct information sessions and promotions for staff to promote staff participation and generate an ongoing flow of new suggestions.

Subject to the rules of suggestion eligibility, suggestions submitted to the Chancellor's Suggestion Box prior to the start-up of the *Alamo Ideas* Suggestion Plan will be designated as submissions to the *Alamo Ideas* Suggestion Plan. In these instances, the submission date will be the first day of *Alamo Ideas* program operation.

#### **Evaluating Suggestions**

Program operations staff will screen all incoming suggestions for completeness, duplication, eligibility and reasonableness. Suggestions that appear reasonable and eligible for consideration will be analyzed and routed immediately to the most suitable Evaluator(s.)

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Evaluators will provide a prompt, full and fair assessment of the probable feasibility of new suggestions within 30 days of receipt from the program operations staff. More time can be requested from program operations staff for complex suggestions.

Feasibility evaluations will be conducted on a “why not” basis, meaning all suggestions will be considered feasible and implementable unless proven otherwise.

Every suggestion is evidence of a suggestor’s efforts to contribute to the improvement of the College District. Every suggestor and suggestion will be treated with dignity and respect. When a suggestion is not feasible, the Evaluator and program operations staff will extend appreciation for the suggestion and encourage the suggestor to continue to suggest other innovations. Evaluators and participants are reminded that suggestors normally submit several suggestions before a feasible suggestion is produced.

Where feasible, evaluators should provide the pertinent facts, calculations and/or documents that support rejection of a suggestion. Rejections should be returned to Program operations staff within 30 days of receipt of the suggestion.

Suggestions rejected because the suggestion is already under consideration, or in the process of being implemented, should be supported with documentation, clear implementation plans and implementation dates that show activity within the past 90 days. If the suggestion is not implemented by the dates indicated, a re-evaluation of the suggestion for possible eligibility can be conducted by program operations staff.

If evaluators determine that the suggestion is feasible, an analysis of the suggestion will be conducted by program operations staff in concert with the suggestor(s) and the implementer(s.)

The Fiscal Affairs Department will conduct periodic random reviews of completed feasibility evaluations to verify that suggestions are being evaluated in a fair, full and impartial manner.

#### **Analyzing Suggestions**

The program operations staff is responsible for conducting or assisting Departments in the analysis of feasible suggestions. The implementer(s) will specify how much analysis assistance the program operations staff should provide.

The first step will be to document the primary implementer’s agreement that the idea and suggestor(s) are “eligible” (See Definitions.) Any uncertainties eligibility will be resolved before further analysis is undertaken.

Program operations staff is authorized to access whatever College District records and/or data is required to fully and fairly analyze a suggestion and/or determine eligibility.

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Program operations staff may call upon other College District analysts and subject matter experts for assistance to fully analyze and quantify the value of a suggestion.

Analysis will include reviews by the acquisitions and/or any department or committee normally required by College District procedures or that would normally be advised of/consulted on the matter if it were not a suggestion plan submission

The Fiscal Affairs Department will conduct periodic random evaluations of the quality and appropriateness of analysis to ensure a fair and accurate valuation of each suggestion.

#### **Suggestion Approval**

A final approval packet will be prepared by the program operations staff for each suggestion that has been fully analyzed and found feasible. The final approval packet will contain: a final detailed analysis of the suggestion; documentation pertinent to the analysis and future implementation; current year and annualized value by all affected Responsibility Centers; cost of doing business the old way and the new way; indication of the requirement for competitive bids, if any; identification of all Evaluators, suggestors and implementers with the dollar value of each individual's award; implementers projected implementation date; and, a copy of the original suggestion form.

Approval packages will be hand delivered to each approving party by a member of the program operations staff.

Approvers are responsible for promptly approved or rejected suggestions and returning the approval packages to the program operations staff. The entire approval process should not take more than 30 days.

Approval requires the signatures of the Program Administrator, all implementers and their President or Vice Chancellor. The nature of the suggestion and College District policies will determine other signature requirements.

Suggestions that involve purchases, purchased services, vendor changes and/or capital acquisitions will be routed to the Purchasing Director to indicate review, policy compliance and readiness to provide needed purchasing support.

A final review and approval will be conducted in turn by the Budget Director and the Program Administrator. Suggestions not approved/adopted must be promptly returned with facts, calculations and/or documents that support rejection.

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Suggestions not adopted will remain eligible for award consideration for a period of one year following the date of rejection. After one year, the suggestor must re-submit the idea as a new suggestion if the suggestor still believes the idea has merit.

#### **Implementing Suggestions**

When a suggestion is fully approved, the program operations staff will notify the suggestor(s) and implementer(s) responsible for implementing the suggestion. Implementers are required to provide an implementation target date based on the following guidelines.

1. Suggestions must be implemented within 30 days of notification unless implementation requires capital funds, bids, RFP's or Information Services intervention.
2. If bids or RFP's are necessary for implementation, specifications must be provided to Purchasing within three weeks of approval of the suggestion. Implementers will have 60 days from the resulting purchase order date to complete implementation. Time extensions may be requested from program operations staff for complex suggestions.
3. When a suggestion involves Information Technology Services support, the implementer must submit a work order immediately. Implementers are responsible for notifying program operations staff of the completion date supplied by Information Services. Full implementation of the suggestion is expected within 60 days of the completion date supplied by Information Services.
4. Program operations staff will monitor the implementation progress for each idea. Lack of progress without sufficient explanation will be reported to the responsible President/Vice Chancellor for resolution. Continued delays in implementation will be reported to the Chancellor.

Revenue producing suggestions valued over \$100,000 will be monitored by the Associate Vice Chancellor of Finance and Fiscal Services quarterly and results will be submit as a report to the Alamo Ideas Program Administrator verifying the revenue change/increase.

The program operations staff is responsible for documenting actual increases in revenue, savings and/or student satisfaction one-year following implementation. Outcomes data will be collected from the Implementing departments. The Implementation Manager(s) and program operations staff assigned to the idea will jointly confirm the actual results in writing.

Other College District Analysts may be called upon to assist in specialized analyses or provide more impartial evaluations.

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Implementation results will be reported to the Program Administrator, responsible President/Vice Chancellor and Chancellor. The fiscal impact of the program will be reported and reflected in the College District's financial performance.

Implementation and the actual realized value of implemented suggestions will be audited every two years by an internal and/or external auditor(s) selected by the Director of Fiscal Affairs.

#### **Awards**

Program operations staff will distribute awards to suggestor(s) and implementer(s) as soon as proof of implementation is received.

The suggestor(s) of an implemented suggestion will be awarded 10% of the first year's savings/revenue up to a maximum of \$10,000 per suggestion. When an award is made to a team of suggestors, the award will be divided equally among all members of the team.

Implementers of a suggestion will share an award equal to 2% of the projected first year's savings/revenue, up to a maximum of \$2000 for the entire group. The allocation of awards among implementers will be determined by the *Alamo Ideas* program operations staff and the Program Administrator, based on the role each implementer has or will play in the evaluation, analysis and implementation of the suggestion.

A \$50.00 award will be distributed to each suggestor and implementer of a non-quantifiable student service or safety improvement suggestion.

Suggestors and implementers must be actively employed, or on an approved leave-of-absence, on the day the awards are made. Suggestors and implementers who separate from the College District before an award is made automatically forfeit all claim to awards.

The Program Administrator may authorize an award to a suggestor that has separated from the College District in good standing and for good cause if it is found that approval or implementation of the suggestion has been delayed without good cause beyond the suggestor's separation date.

Failure to continue implementation of an approved suggestion may be reported to the Fiscal Affairs department for investigation.

#### **Taxes**

All awards are subject to taxes.

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#### **Accounting and Budget**

The College District's annual budget will include the projected value of cost saving and revenue enhancing suggestions that are likely to be approved after the start of the fiscal year. This value will be reflected in the budget as a negative amount at the District level.

After the start of a new budget year, as new suggestions are received, approved and implemented, the (negative) value of the newly implemented suggestions will be transferred to the college/department-level budgets that will realize fiscal performance improvements generated by the suggestions. The District Budget Director will direct the budget transfers. The resulting "*Alamo ideas* Suggestions" entries at the college/ department-level are evidence of effort to improve College District fiscal performance.

The Chancellor or Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration may opt to allocate the total expected budget impact on a pro-rated basis to Colleges and Vice Chancellors, with reallocation to implementing departments as ideas are approved. This method may be used to further incentivize participation and implementation of suggestions across all or the colleges and Vice Chancellors of the College District.

A three year life-span will be assumed when making long-term and multi-year impact projections (unless the suggestion will only produce a one-time savings.)

#### **Re-evaluation**

Suggestors who believe their suggestion was rejected unfairly or in error may appeal the decision or request a re-evaluation of the suggestion. Requests for re-evaluation must be submitted within thirty days of notification of rejection. Requests for re-evaluation must:

1. be submitted in writing to the Program Administrator and must clearly state the reason for the re-evaluation request;
2. include any documentation pertinent to the re-evaluation that is not already on file in the *Alamo Ideas* Office;
3. include any new information about the suggestion or financial impact that has changed since the time of the first evaluation.

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An *Alamo Ideas* program staff member will meet with the evaluator or approver who rejected the suggestion to determine the precise reason for rejection; review and any supporting documentation or facts; jointly re-assess the basis for rejection; review the information supplied by the suggestor and any new information available to the program operations staff, Evaluator or Approver. A course of action will be agreed upon and completed. The Program Office will promptly notify the suggestor of the outcome of this process. The outcome of this process is final unless program staff representative and evaluator/approver cannot reach consensus.

If consensus cannot be promptly achieved, a final decision will be jointly made by the responsible President/Vice Chancellor and the *Alamo Ideas* Program Administrator.

If consensus cannot be promptly achieved at this level, the Program Administrator will submit the question to the Chancellor who will make a final determination that may not be appealed.

Appeals regarding duplicate suggestions will be evaluated by the *Alamo Ideas* program operations staff or program administrator. The results of this evaluation will be final.

College District decisions and program rule interpretations are final.

Administration retains ultimate discretion to disapprove suggestions even when deemed feasible. Suggestions disapproved may be submitted for re-evaluation, but there shall be no right of appeal, nor may any legal action be filed seeking compensation for any suggestion disapproved on that basis.

#### **Accountabilities**

Management is accountable to promptly, fairly and fully evaluate and implement the feasible suggestions of staff.

The College District recognizes that some management discomfort may arise when improvement opportunities are suggested and must be acted upon. The College District encourages its managers to set this discomfort aside so that employees can be granted the fullest opportunity to contribute to the improvement of the College District and, so no improvement opportunities are lost.

College District reserves the right to amend or terminate the *Alamo Ideas* Suggestion Program at any time.

Questions regarding program rules and interpretations shall be directed to the *Alamo Ideas* Program Office.

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**Office of Primary Responsibility**

Associate Vice Chancellor of Human Resources and Organizational Development (*Alamo Ideas* Suggestion Program Administrator)