

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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## **GENERAL**

### **What is the Employee Suggestion Program?**

The Employee Suggestion Program (ESP) is used by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to solicit suggestions, proposals, or recommendations that have the potential to improve IRS functions. Adopted suggestions may be recognized with a cash award and/or time off. The ESP is a result of a joint effort between the IRS and the National Treasury Employees Union.

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### **Who is eligible to participate in the program?**

IRS employees (bargaining and non-bargaining unit) are eligible to participate in the ESP. Contractors are not eligible to submit suggestions but should share any ideas they have with their IRS management contact.

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### **Will the ESP consider suggestions that address any subject?**

No. Certain types of suggestions are not eligible for consideration (e.g., correcting typographical errors). Click [here](#) for a listing of the types of suggestions (exclusions) that will not be considered.

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### **What is a quality suggestion (i.e., what are the elements, [basic criteria](#) and exclusions of a suggestion?)**

A quality suggestion (a suggestion that meets the basic criteria) is a proposal or recommendation that has the three elements and falls outside the exclusions.

The three elements are:

1. Identifies a problem (current state)
2. Specifies a solution to the problem
3. Describes the projected benefits (tangible and/or intangible) to the IRS if the proposal is implemented (adopted)

In addition, the suggestion must fall outside the list of exclusions (this includes being a duplicate (a proposal that is currently under review, was closed within the past two years, or an idea already identified by a project or

program area). See the list of [exclusions](#) or types of suggestions that will not be considered.

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**When should suggestions be flagged by an evaluator, coordinator or Program Manager? And what is a potentially high impact case (also called high impact suggestion)?**

For information regarding flagging suggestions click [here](#).

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**Must cost data be included in the initial suggestion?**

No. Although cost savings do not have to be detailed, submitters should indicate what net benefits are projected to be derived if the suggestion is adopted. The net benefits can be tangible (e.g., space savings), intangible (e.g., increase morale), or a combination of both. For example, if the suggestion is projected to result in a reduction of required equipment, a statement saying this should be provided.

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**What are tangible benefits?**

For details regarding tangible benefits, click [here](#).

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**What are intangible benefits?**

For details regarding intangible benefits, click [here](#).

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**How can I determine the benefits?**

For information about determining the benefits, click [here](#).

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**What is the maximum amount of an award that can be granted?**

Based upon [Delegation Order 6-19](#), and as referenced in the [Award fact Sheet](#), IRS officials may approve suggestion awards up to \$25,000. Suggestion awards greater than \$25,000 must be submitted for approval to the Office of Personnel Management, through the Department of Treasury by the Human Capital Office. Awards of \$25,000 and above require the approval of the President of the United States and must be submitted through the Department of Treasury. In addition, there is an overall cap tied to the Executive Schedule Level I aggregate calendar year compensation limit. Click [here](#) to access more detailed information regarding the documentation and steps required for processing high dollar awards.

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**How is a suggestion submitted?**

Suggestions must be submitted in the [ESP System](#) where they will be routed to the appropriate area based on answers the submitter provides to the system. See [How to Properly Submit a Suggestion](#) for tips on how to help get the suggestion to the right area. If the area with the expertise is unknown, indicate this in the answers. In this case the system will route the suggestion to the coordinator within the submitter's business unit.

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**Who can be contacted regarding the status of a suggestion?**

Question should be directed to the person identified in the most recent email that the submitter received or to the submitter's coordinator. Click [here](#) to see a listing of the coordinators.

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**Can an adjustment (including addition) be made to an open suggestion that was already submitted?**

The ability to make adjustments in the system to an open suggestion is extremely limited, so it is critical that the proposal is complete prior to submitting it. If a change is necessary, contact the person currently assigned the suggestion or the submitter's coordinator.

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**When can a suggestion be [resubmitted](#)?**

There are two circumstances when the submitter can resubmit a suggestion previously closed. *Reconsideration* applies to a closed suggestion for which there is significant additional or new information. A *recalculation* applies to an adopted suggestion that has been implemented and the submitter wants the estimated tangible savings used to calculate the award amount re-evaluated to determine if the actual savings exceed the projected amount.

A resubmission must be resubmitted within two years after the original suggestion was closed. If the two year timeframe has passed, click [here](#) to see information regarding grievances.

When accessing the ESP system, there is a choice for resubmitting suggestions. Enter the number of the suggestion, then follow the instructions to submit the proposal for reconsideration.

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**Can a suggestion award amount be recalculated?**

After at least a year has passed since a suggestion was adopted (but not more than two years), you can ask that the award amount be recalculated. In order to have the award amount recalculated, resubmit the proposal through the Employee Suggestion Program system. Enter the number of the suggestion that

was adopted for which you want a review to be conducted. Follow the steps through submission.

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**Can the submitter recommend a person or area to review a suggestion?**

Most definitely!.If the submitter knows of someone or a group that is working on the subject discussed in the suggestion, include the name or group that you would like to review your proposal.

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**Can a team or group submit a suggestion?**

Yes, a suggestion can be submitted by a team or group effort. The names of each participant should be placed at the beginning of the suggestion. This action will draw the attention of the evaluator, so that each member is recognized. If the suggestion is adopted, any monetary reward is shared among the group or team members equally.

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**Can other programs be established to solicit ideas?**

Other programs or vehicles can be used to solicit ideas however it is not recommended unless ESP is not a suitable vehicle for the situation. ESP is the only program through which an employee can obtain monetary award for suggestions. If another program or vehicle is used to solicit ideas it must contain language that informs employees that in order for the ideas to be considered for monetary awards, the ideas must be submitted through the ESP.

Per an arbitration decision issued on May 31, 2008, the following narrative must be included in any separate solicitations of ideas:

“The Employee Suggestion Program is the only mechanism through which an employee can obtain monetary awards for suggestions above and beyond those made in the course of normal work duties that are adopted by management. If an employee submits a suggestion, or idea, in response to an organizational solicitation, that idea can be considered for a suggestion award **only if** the employee also submits the idea as a suggestion through the procedures of the Employee Suggestion Program. To submit a suggestion through the Employee Suggestion Program, the idea/suggestion must be formally submitted through the **ESP website** or on **Form 13380, “I Suggest”**.”

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**SYSTEM ACCESS**

**Is an OL5081 required to access the site?**

Submitters, evaluators and approving officials do not have to complete an OL5081 to access the site. However, Employee Suggestion Program

coordinators and program managers must prepare and submit the requests for access to the site through the OL5081 process. Prior to being issued a 5081, all [requirements](#) must be completed.

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**How is the ESP site accessed?**

An IRS employee that has a computer or access through the Campuses' kiosks (shared stations) can access the [ESP website](#).

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**How can a suggestion be submitted if there is not computer access?**

[Form 13380](#) – "I Suggest" may be submitted to the appropriate [ESP coordinator](#) or the submitter's first line manager.

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**TRAINING**

**What training is available for a submitter (also called author or suggestor)?**

To access the tutorial that is available for a submitter, click [here](#). Also, see the [ESP website](#). The website contains self help materials and recommended ELMS writing classes.

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**What training is available for an evaluator (all evaluators)?**

To access the tutorial that is available for an evaluator, click [here](#). Also, see the [ESP website](#) which contains self help materials.

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**What training is available for a coordinator (all coordinators)?**

For details regarding the training that a coordinators is required to take, see the list of [requirements](#). The [ESP website](#) contains all the materials for the required self help training.

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**What training is available for an ESP program manager?**

For details regarding the training that an ESP program manager is required to take, see the list of [requirements](#). The [ESP website](#) contains all the materials for the required self help training.

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**KEY CONTACTS AND THEIR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**What is the role of the submitter (also called the author or suggestor)?**

For information regarding the role of the submitter click [here](#).

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**What is the role of the managers (line managers of coordinators and line managers of evaluators)?**

For information regarding the role of the manager, click [here](#).

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**What is the role of the approving official?**

For information regarding the role of the approving official, click [here](#).

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**What is the role of the evaluator (also called the subject matter expert/SME)?**

For information regarding the role of the evaluator (also called the subject matter expert/SME), click [here](#).

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**What is the role of the primary evaluator (also called the lead evaluator or the lead subject matter expert/SME)?**

For information regarding the role of the primary evaluator (also called the lead evaluator or lead subject matter expert/SME), click [here](#).

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**What is difference between an evaluator and a primary evaluator?**

For information regarding the types of evaluators, click [here](#).

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**What is the role of the coordinator (also called the local coordinator)?**

For information regarding the role of the coordinator (also called the local coordinator), click [here](#).

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**What is the role of the key coordinator (also called Functional/Operating or Headquarters coordinator)?**

For information regarding the role of the key coordinator (also called Functional/Operating or Headquarters coordinator), click [here](#).

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**What is the difference between a coordinator and a key coordinator?**

For information regarding the role of a key coordinator and other coordinators, see their [roles and responsibilities](#).

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**What is the role of the business unit ESP Program Manager?**

For information regarding the role of the business unit ESP Program Manager, click [here](#).

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**What is the role of the Employee Suggestion Program Servicewide Program Manager and Office?**

For information regarding the role of the Employee Suggestion Program Servicewide Program Manager and Office, click [here](#).

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