Employee Recognition Handbook

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Introduction

The Employee Recognition Program Handbook has been prepared to assist University departments with the development and implementation of departmental recognition programs. The Handbook does not present a complete discussion of every detail needed to develop a program. Rather, it provides an overview of the program development process with step-by-step guidelines.

STEP 1: Form a Recognition Program Development Committee

STEP 2: Identify a Program Purpose

STEP 3: Define Award Themes & Selection Criteria

STEP 4: Define a Recognition Program Selection Committee

STEP 5: Determine Award Eligibility & Award Frequency

STEP 6: Select Types of Awards & Publicity

STEP 7: Establishing and Monitoring the Program

STEP 1: Form a Recognition Program Development Committee

It is beneficial to establish a recognition program development committee to guide program design. In most cases, managers and employees should share jointly in the development and administration of the program to ensure that the interests and preferences of all groups are represented and incorporated into the program. Many departments have an employee representative from each functional work unit serve on the committee to ensure equal representation. The recognition program development committee does not necessarily have to serve as the award selection committee.

The recognition program development committee must determine the components of the recognition program, ensure compliance with the University's recognition program policies, and coordinate with department administration to register the program with the University's Awards Registry through the Benefits Services Department in the Office of Human Resources.

The recognition program development committee may serve to develop a single recognition program or to develop all the department's or work unit's recognition programs. The work unit may create recognition program development committees on an ad hoc basis, or may establish them as standing committees. Items to consider when forming a standing recognition development committee are:

Establish term lengths for members on the committee. At least one member should stay on the committee across any two terms to ensure continuity and cross-training (ie, begin a "rolling" membership cycle to ensure a partial carryover of members each year). Set committee membership through election, appointment, or volunteerism and appoint a chair or co-chairs.

STEP 2: Identify a Program Purpose

Before a recognition committee can develop a program that effectively meets the needs and preferences of the department's employees, it must determine the program purpose. Ultimately, the goal is to develop a recognition program that is fair and flexible, that meets the needs of employees and that provides an opportunity to recognize and reward their efforts and accomplishments formally.

Factors to consider when developing the program purpose:

- Tailor the program to suit the needs of employees and to complement the type(s) of work done in the department.
- Tie the program to the mission of the department.
- Emphasize core skills and functions within the department (including those that may need strengthening) by incorporating them into the award categories. In this way, the program can facilitate performance improvement, increased productivity, and goal achievement for the department.
- Conducting an employee opinion survey can assist a recognition committee in identifying preferred types of awards, establishing nomination and selection procedures, and determining the frequency and method(s) of award presentation preferred by employees.

Other resources for recognition program development are:

- The University's "Departmental Recognition Program" policy, which includes requirements for program development and use of monetary and paid time off awards.
- Models of existing departmental recognition programs at the University, available through the University Awards Registry located on the Office of Human Resources website.
- Sample employee opinion survey questions (available from the Benefits Services Department).
- Publications about employee recognition. The Office of Human Resources has some printed materials available for loan to departments.

It is important to note that a formal recognition program does not take the place of informally appreciating or recognizing employees on a daily basis. A formal recognition program serves to supplement informal, day-to-day recognition of employees.

STEP 3: Define Award Themes & Selection Criteria

Identifying precise themes and criteria of achievement for an employee recognition program ensures that employees understand why an award has been given and provides goals toward which all employees can strive. Selection criteria and award themes must be communicated well in advance to all employees in a department.

Some example award themes are:

- Award for Excellence
- Customer Service Award
- Distinguished Service Award
- Employee/Team Player of the Month/Year Award
- Extra Mile Award
- Personal Achievement Award
- Workplace Safety Award

Numerous suggestions for selection criteria can be found in workplace management literature and from the Benefits Services Department. As mentioned in Step 2, an employee opinion survey can assist the Recognition Program Development Committee with identifying pertinent award themes and selection criteria. Awards should recognize excellence in performances as well as contributions to the department; that is, the recipient of the award not only performs all assigned duties with competence, but also goes above and beyond the job description.

The following list offers some examples of potential criteria or categories for recognition awards:

- Teamwork
- Technical Achievement
- Ambassadorship
- Creativity and Innovation
- Performance Excellence
- Leadership
- Commitment
- Flexibility
- "Beyond The Call of Duty"
- Educational Achievement
- Skills Improvement
- Heroism or Bravery

- Community Service
- Departmental Service
- University Service

STEP 4: Define a Recognition Program Selection Committee

The Recognition Program Development Committee must identify how the recognition program selection committee will be established. (The selection committee may or may not include the membership of the development committee.)

Factors to consider in defining a selection committee:

- Include employees from each work group/area to ensure diverse representation.
- Define an appointment period for membership -- for how many award cycles may an individual serve consecutively on the selection committee? It is often helpful to have at least one committee member serve on two consecutive award cycles to ensure some continuity of process.
- Set the final decision-making body for the award -- does the Selection Committee make the selection or does it forward a recommendation to management?
- Address the participation of past recipients -- some programs establish that the one or two most recent recipients of the award then serve on the selection committee for the next award cycle.
- Define voting procedures -- this may include the processes by which the nominations will be reviewed. Some committees may establish a numeric ranking system for evaluating nominations. (The Benefits Services Department can provide guidance in defining evaluation processes.)
- Ensure consistency in the voting/selection process.

STEP 5: Determine Award Eligibility & Award Frequency

After the Recognition Program Development Committee has determined the award theme(s) and categories, the next step is to select criteria that specifies who is eligible to receive an award. Each department should tailor eligibility criteria to its particular work environment. Some components to consider for eligibility include:

- Employment status: Is the award available only to permanent employees? Temporary employees? Full-time/part-time employees? SPA employees? EPA non-faculty employees?

- Length of service: Is there a minimum length of service that the employee must have with the State (or the University or the department) in order to be eligible for the award?
- Participation in the selection process: Can a member of the recognition program selection committee be nominated for the award? (If so, the employee must exclude him/herself from the selection of that particular award.)
- Frequency of receipt: How frequently can the same individual receive the same award?

When award eligibility criteria have been determined, the next task is to establish the frequency of awards. Factors to include in making this determination are:

- The available resources of the department
- The number of employees and number of other recognition programs available within the department
- The scale/significance of the award relative to the frequency of its nomination cycle.

Finally, the Development Committee must develop its formal nomination process. Nominations must be made in writing. The development of nomination processes should take the following under consideration:

- Is the nomination process anonymous or confidential? (i.e., must the nominators self-identify? Will the nominee be allowed to know who nominated him/her?)
- Who is eligible to submit a nomination? (Permanent employees? Temporary employees? SPA or EPA employees?) Can an employee self-nominate?
- What information is required on the nomination form? (Consult with the Benefits Services Department for examples of nomination forms.)
- Must nominations be submitted on hardcopy, or are electronic submissions possible?
- What details are necessary in order for the selection committee to make its choice?

STEP 6: Select Types of Awards & Publicity

Within University policy, the types of awards given to award recipients can range from the creative (e.g., departmental decorations, cards, balloons) to the conservative (e.g., a savings bond). Awards should be attuned to the department's resources and to the creativity and the preferences expressed by employees during the development of the award program. Many departments coordinate ceremonies, meetings, or special meals as forums for presenting awards.

- Event Tickets
- Gift Certificates
- Trophies/Plaques
- Monetary and Paid Leave Awards

NOTE: Cash and non-cash awards are considered employee income, and appropriate taxes will be deducted for any award amount given.

Public announcement of an award recipient is essential to giving employees appropriate recognition. Departmental newsletters and other University publications are valuable and cost-effective ways to market the award as well as to recognize the award recipient(s). Some departments display a plaque or trophy publicly while others, such as the campus libraries, put bookplates in books to honor their employees. Even a letter of certificate given personally to an employee by a supervisor or director can mean a great deal.

Suggestions for public notification and marketing include:

- Department website
- University Gazette
- Daily Tar Heel
- Departmental Annual Report
- Recognition at staff meeting
- Day of Appreciation (with decorations, etc.)
- Photo display with commentaries by fellow employees

NOTE: Per University policy, all employees who receive monetary or paid leave recognition awards from their departments must be nominated by their departments for the Chancellor's Award Program.

STEP 7: Establishing and Monitoring the Program

Once the Development Committee has completed its work and the recognition program is approved by department administration, the program must be registered with the University's Award Registry. The registration form is available on the Office of Human Resources website.

A departmental recognition program should be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis to assess its effectiveness and to obtain feedback and suggestions from employees for enhancements to the program, either by the Recognition Program Selection Committee or the Recognition Program Development Committee, in conjunction with departmental administrators. This is particularly important within the first year of the program's implementation to ensure that it is meeting the needs of the department or work unit.

All proposed changes should be approved by departmental administrators (if appropriate) and communicated to employees in a timely manner following approval. A copy of the modified written recognition program description must be forwarded to the Benefits Services Department to update the University's Awards Registry.