



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

**Food Safety
and Inspection
Service**

**FSIS Directive
4451.12**

Employee Suggestion Program

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE
WASHINGTON, DC

FSIS DIRECTIVE	4451.12	7/3/02
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EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION PROGRAM

PART ONE—BASIC PROVISIONS

I. PURPOSE

This directive provides policy and procedures for the Employee Suggestion Program. This Program provides employees with a method to:

- A. Submit ideas that may:
 - 1. Increase Agency efficiency.
 - 2. Improve customer service.
 - 3. Save time or money.
 - 4. Increase productivity.
 - 5. Enhance employee morale.
- B. Recognize employees for their ideas.

II. CANCELLATION

This directive cancels Part 3 of FSIS Directive 4451.1, dated 11/8/78.

III. REASON FOR ISSUANCE

This directive:

- A. Updates and provides policy and procedures for the Employee Suggestion Program.
- B. Establishes a National Review Board to review employee suggestions.

DISTRIBUTION:
All Offices

OPI:
HRD – Performance, Evaluation and
Recognition Branch

C. Clarifies responsibilities and procedures for submitting employee suggestions.

D. Introduces the “tiered” recognition process for the submission, evaluation, adoption, and the implementation of adopted suggestions.

IV. REFERENCES

FSIS Directive 4451.1, Incentive Awards Program
5 CFR 451.104, Awards

V. ABBREVIATIONS AND FORMS

The following are used in their shortened form:

HRD	Human Resources Division
NRB	National Review Board
OA	Office of the Administrator
PERB	Performance, Evaluation and Recognition Branch, HRD
SME	Subject Matter Expert

Form AD-287	Employee Suggestion Form
Form AD-287-2	Recommendation and Approval of Awards
FSIS Form 4451-9	Request for Recognition Items
FSIS Form 4451-10	Employee Suggestion Analysis

VI. POLICY

It is FSIS policy to initiate and maintain a comprehensive Employee Suggestion Program that:

- A. Encourages and rewards employees' creativity and ideas.
- B. Ensures that decisions do not reflect personal favoritism or patronage.
- C. Ensures that decisions made on suggestions are without regard to political or labor organization affiliation or non affiliation, race, age, gender, color, religion, family, parental or marital status, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or protected genetic information.

VI. DEFINITIONS

A. **Employee Suggestion.** An idea offered to contribute to the efficiency, economy, or other improvement of day-to-day Agency or other Government operations.

B. **National Review Board.** A Board comprised of a cross representation of subject matter experts from each of the Agency's program areas and OA staffs.

C. **Subject Matter Expert.** An Agency employee with a broad knowledge of a particular Program's or Staff's function (i.e., food safety, policy development, HACCP implementation, inspection and enforcement, procurement and supply, financial management, foodborne hazard surveillance, risk assessment, information resources management, emergency response, safety and health, etc.). The SME also has the authority to recommend adoption versus nonadoption of a suggestion. The SME may be a supervisor or nonsupervisory employee.

VIII. **RESPONSIBILITIES**

A. **Employees** may submit suggestions either electronically (via Exchange Mail System (Outlook)) or by completing FSIS Form AD-287. (See Part Two Paragraph IV. for submission instructions.) Employees must resubmit any suggestion to PERB when such suggestion is revised with the assistance of a SME.

B. **PERB** coordinates, facilitates, and provides oversight of the Employee Suggestion Program. PERB keeps employees up-to-date on the suggestion. PERB checks the Public Folder's "FSIS Suggestion" box for any new suggestions. PERB also processes suggestion awards. PERB forwards any suggestions that fall outside the scope of FSIS authority to the Department for further referral to the appropriate governing authority.

C. **Managers and supervisors** promote the suggestion program, encourage employees to participate, and on employee request, provide assistance in developing the suggestion.

D. **NRB** members review each suggestion and make appropriate recommendations for adoption. The NRB Chair:

1. Refers suggestions to an SME if a suggestion has potential for adoption but needs further development.
2. Recommends appropriate award recognition for suggestions that are adopted and for those suggestions that are adopted and implemented.

E. **SME's** initiate contact with the suggesting employee after notification from the NRB, when the suggestion requires further development. SME's and employees work together to further develop the suggestion. SME's have the authority to make recommendations on suggestions related to their Program's functional areas.

F. **Deputy Administrators and the Assistant Administrator for Communications** select and appoint SME's from their program or staff area to the NRB. Deputy Administrators or the Assistant Administrator for Communications issue the final decision on adopting suggestions and approving suggestion awards. If the employee suggestion proposes a change that affects the bargaining unit, the union is notified and provided the information necessary for negotiations as required by law.

PART TWO—SUBMISSION

I. ELIGIBILITY

A. **Eligible Suggestions.** Suggestions must contain constructive ideas or proposals that contribute to the efficiency, economy, or other improvement of Government operations or achieve a significant reduction in paperwork. Ideas for suggestions may:

1. Eliminate obsolete operations, duplications, or safety hazards.
2. Recommend improvements to internal methods or procedures.
3. Enhance productivity or employee morale.
4. Improve customer service.
5. Suggest techniques to save time, materials, labor, energy, or money.

B. **Ineligible Suggestions.** Include the following:

1. Allegations of misconduct.
2. Grievances.
3. Suggestions that fall within normal job responsibilities in which the employee has the authority to make changes.
4. Suggestions subject to articles in the bargaining agreement and are subject to the normal bargaining process.
5. Suggestions that are incomplete or indefinite, do not identify a specific problem or situation, or prescribe a feasible solution.

II. DUPLICATE SUGGESTIONS

A. **Identical or Similar Suggestions.** If two or more identical or similar suggestions are received, the first suggestion received in PERB receives first preference. If the suggestions arrive the same day, the suggestions are combined. If the suggestions are adopted, all are considered for award recognition.

B. **Electronic versus Hard Copy Suggestions.** Hard copy (Form AD-287) suggestions that are identical or similar to suggestions received electronically and arrive in PERB within 5 working days of the receipt of the electronic suggestions are considered a same day receipt.

III. **SUGGESTIONS FROM FORMER EMPLOYEES**

Suggestions from employees who leave the Agency before the suggestion is adopted receive the same consideration as employees remaining on the Agency rolls. (**NOTE:** Former employees no longer employed with the Federal Government are usually not eligible for cash awards.)

IV. **SUBMISSION**

Employees may submit suggestions either electronically or via Form AD-287 (hard copy). **NOTE:** Form AD-287 is available on the Exchange Mail System's (Outlook) Public Folder "Agency Issuances.") Employees are encouraged to work with their supervisor to help develop the suggestion. Working with the supervisor to develop a suggestion is not mandatory.

A. **Hard Copy (Form AD-287).**

1. Employees must use (hard copy) Form AD-287 to submit the suggestions when not using the electronic submission process. Complete and clearly document the proposal on Form AD-287. (See Attachment 2-1.)

2. Employees should keep a copy of the Form AD-287 for their records and forward the original copy with documentation to PERB at the following address:

EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION PROGRAM
USDA FSIS OM HRD PERB
ROOM 3817 SOUTH BUILDING
1400 INDEPENDENCE AVE SW
WASHINGTON DC 20250-3700

B. **Electronic Submission.** Employees may either e-mail or fax suggestions to PERB.

1. **Outlook Public Folder.** Employees may submit suggestions via e-mail.

a. Prepare the suggestion as a narrative document in Microsoft Word. When using Outlook (e-mail), there is no need to submit Form AD-287.

b. Include in the narrative the employee's name, organizational identity, date, telephone and fax numbers, and mailing address. Suggestions must contain this information to receive consideration. Also, include the information that is listed on Attachment 2-1, blocks 1 through 4.

c. Send the suggestion to: **"FSIS Suggestions."**

2. **Fax** the suggestion, Form AD-287, to PERB. The fax number is (202) 690-2773.

V. **SOLICITING IDEAS**

Occasionally, the Agency may request employees to submit ideas on a specific area of interest that would enhance organizational goals or supplement an Agency initiative. A Notice announcing the specifics and timeframes of the area for special emphasis will be sent to all employees. Employees whose ideas are selected for adoption will receive award recognition.

FORM AD-287- EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION FORM

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION FORM

**SOLUTIONS SAVE
SO \$UBMIT \$UGGESTIONS**
SUGGESTOR: Complete Items 1 thru 11.
Please print or type except for signature.

1. CURRENT SITUATION: (Describe the present procedure, condition, etc., in full detail.)

2. EXPLAIN YOUR SUGGESTION: INCLUDE SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE.

(If you need additional space, attach a separate sheet of paper.)

3. I BELIEVE MY SUGGESTION WILL:

- Increase Productivity Increase Service Improve Methods Reduce Costs
 Prevent Injuries & Illnesses Improve Quality Other (Identify): _____

4. IDENTIFY THE ADVANTAGES AND BENEFITS OF YOUR SUGGESTION INCLUDING THE MEASURABLE OR NONMEASURABLE SAVINGS THAT WOULD RESULT

The acceptance by me of an award for this suggestion shall constitute an agreement that the use of the suggestion by the United States shall not form the basis of a further claim of any nature upon the United States by me, my heirs, or assigns.

5. SUGGESTOR'S NAME: (Print or Type)	6. SIGNATURE	7. AGENCY	8. DATE
9. TELEPHONE/FAX:	10. OFFICE MAILING ADDRESS	11. E-MAIL ADDRESS	

SUGGESTION COORDINATOR (Complete Items 12, 13, 14, 15 AND 16A.)				
12. DATE SUGGESTION RECEIVED:	13. RECEIVED BY:	14. TITLE	15. SUGGESTION TRACKING NO.	
EVALUATING OFFICE (Complete Items 16B, C, D, AND E. Use the Evaluator's Checklist (on reverse) to assist you in evaluating the suggestion.)				
16A. EVALUATING OFFICE	B. RECOMMENDED ACTION (Attach Written Comments)	C. SIGNATURE OF EVALUATOR	D. TRACKING NO.	E. DATE
	<input type="checkbox"/> Adopt <input type="checkbox"/> Reject <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Adopt <input type="checkbox"/> Reject <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____			

SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR INSTRUCTIONS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

Designed on Delrina/FormFlow Software.

FORM AD-287 (7/97)

PART THREE—PROCESSING AND EVALUATION

I. PROCESSING SUGGESTIONS

Attachment 3-1 shows the sequential action steps for processing a suggestion.

A. Initial Receipt. PERB:

1. Logs suggestions into the suggestion database and assigns a tracking number. Sends employees written acknowledgement of the suggestion along with its tracking number.
2. Makes decision on eligible or ineligible suggestions.
3. Forwards eligible suggestions to NRB members for review before the board meeting. Coordinates and facilitates the NRB meeting.
4. Informs employee of the receipt and status of the suggestion.
5. Distributes copies of suggestions to NRB members for discussion and decision at the next NRB meeting.

B. Additional Development. NRB forwards the suggestion to SME when additional development is needed. The SME and the employee work together to further develop the suggestion.

C. Second Submission. PERB:

1. Distributes copies of revised suggestion to NRB members for discussion and decision at next NRB meeting.
2. Completes Form AD-287-2 for monetary recognition and attaches a copy of the suggestion along with the NRB's recommendation.
3. Prepares an appropriate certificate for presentation.
4. Orders all non-monetary recognition items after the suggestion is approved for adoption.

II. NATIONAL REVIEW BOARD

A. The NRB membership includes:

1. A maximum of two SME's from each of the Agency's Program areas.

2. One representative from the OA staff.

B. The NRB members shall annually elect one board member as Chair. The Chair conducts the meetings and signs referral memorandums. The Chair also signs the Form AD-287-2 as the recommending official.

C. A PERB representative coordinates and facilitates all NRB meetings.

D. The NRB meets monthly or as needed. No travel is authorized to attend NRB meetings. Field members will participate via telephone conference calls.

E. The NRB establishes guidelines for conducting meetings.

F. The NRB members must select a substitute, with the same knowledge and authority, to attend meeting(s) in their absence (see Part One, Subparagraph VII. C.).

G. The NRB members discuss the merits of each suggestion and determine whether it can be adopted or has potential for adoption after further development. If additional development is needed, the NRB contacts the appropriate SME to assist in developing the suggestion.

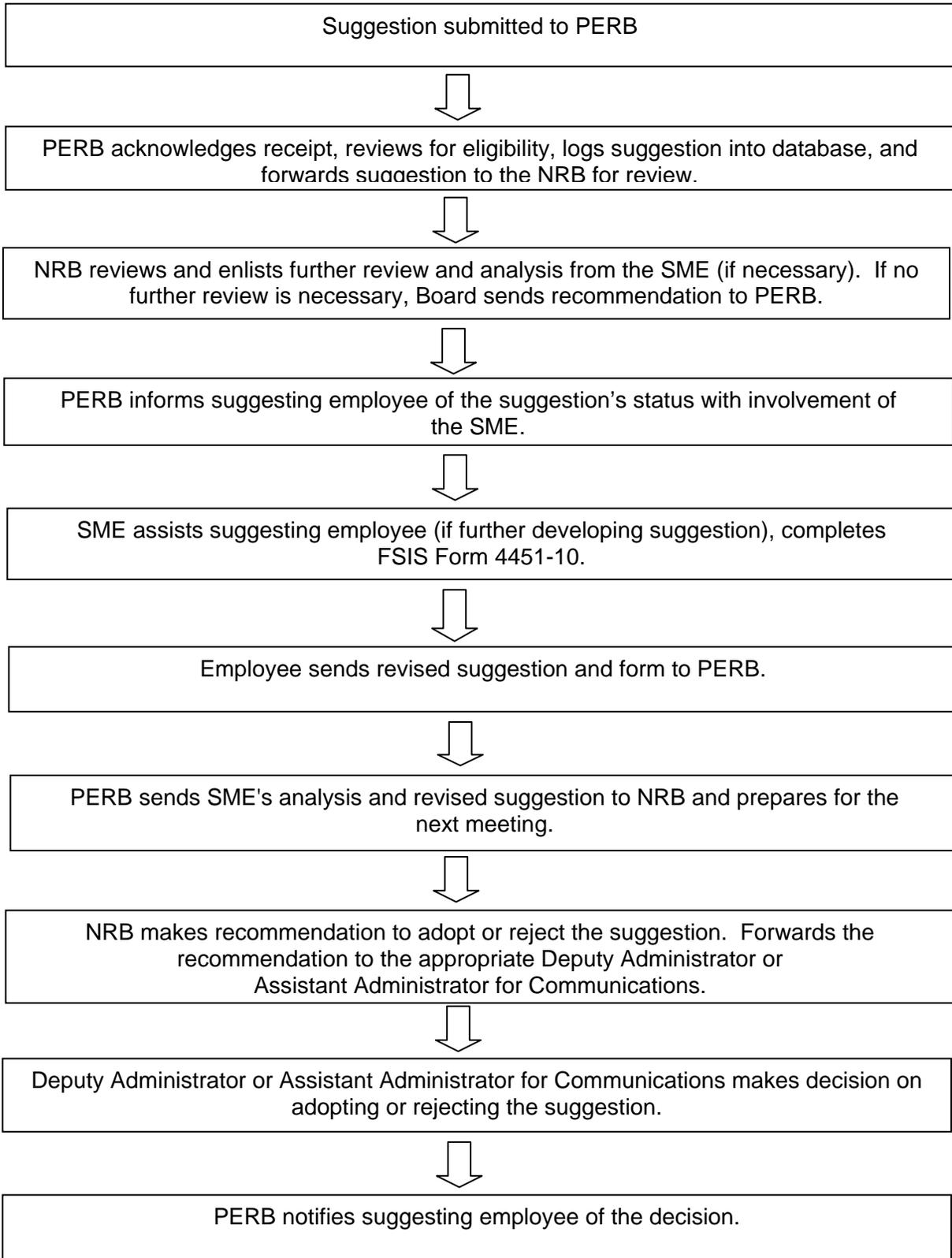
1. The SME receives a copy of the suggestion, an instructional letter from NRB, and FSIS Form 4451-10 (Attachment 3-2). (**NOTE:** FSIS Form 4451-10 is available on Outlook's Public Folder "Agency Issuances.") The SME contacts the suggesting employee to assist the employee in developing the suggestion.

2. The suggesting employee also receives an instructional letter pertaining to the suggestion.

3. Once the revisions are complete, the SME completes Form 4451-10 (Attachment 3-2) and returns it to PERB. The employee resubmits the revised suggestion to PERB.

H. The NRB reviews the SME's analysis and the revised suggestion. The board will recommend adoption or rejection to the appropriate Deputy Administrator. The Deputy Administrator consults with the Labor and Employee Relations Division if the suggestion affects the bargaining unit. The Deputy Administrator makes a final decision on the suggestion.

**SEQUENTIAL ACTION STEPS FOR PROCESSING
EMPLOYEE SUGGESTIONS**



FSIS FORM 4451-10, EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION ANALYSIS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION ANALYSIS <i>(To be Completed by Subject Matter Experts)</i>	1. SUGGESTION NUMBER:
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INSTRUCTIONS:

Please complete the evaluation with as many details as possible. Completion of this sheet will determine eligibility for award recognition as an evaluator. If you have any questions, please contact the employee suggestion program coordinator at (202) 720-7983. Return this sheet with any attachments. You may fax the information to (202) 690-2773 or send via mail to: The Employee Suggestion Program, USDA, FSIS, OM, HRD, PERB, Room 3817-South Bldg., Washington, DC 20250

2. SUBJECT OF SUGGESTION:

3. ANALYSIS *(If more space is needed, use a separate sheet):*

4. NAME OF SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT		5. NAME OF SUGGESTER	
6. DATE CONTACTED BY SUGGESTER	7. TOTAL TIME SPENT ON DEVELOPMENT	8. DATE OF COMPLETION	
9. SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT		10. DATE SIGNED	

11. NRB COMMENTS:

PART FOUR—PROGRAM PROVISIONS

I. RECOGNITION

A. Suggestions are eligible for an award, either monetary, nonmonetary, or both when adopted in part or in entirety.

B. Recognition for the suggestion program is a tiered process.

1. When PERB receives an employee suggestion that meets the criteria in Part Two, Subparagraph I. A., the employee receives an:

- a. Informal recognition item to acknowledge the effort to prepare and submit the suggestion.
- b. Additional award recognition if the suggestion is adopted.
- c. Expanded recognition once the adopted suggestion is implemented.

2. Significant contributions from SME's, supervisors, or managers may be eligible for award consideration if the suggestion they helped to develop is adopted.

a. SME's complete FSIS Form 4451-10 and submit the form to PERB when revision is complete.

b. Supervisors (or managers) may complete FSIS Form 4451-10 and submit the form to PERB after the revision is complete if they would like to receive award consideration.

3. Recognition is based on the amount of time spent and the complexity of work in developing the suggestion.

II. APPEALS

The decision to adopt a suggestion, or to grant an award, is not subject to grievance or appeal. Employees who disagree with the decision regarding the suggestion or the award determination may discuss the disagreement with the individual having authority to adopt the suggestion.

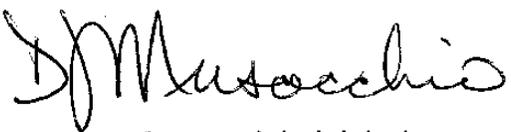
III. RECONSIDERATIONS

A. Employees may submit a written request for reconsideration if the decision is made not to adopt the suggestion. A request for reconsideration should include the reasons why reconsideration is warranted and additional information to support the request.

B. A suggestion that is not adopted, and later put into effect, is considered adopted if all of the following conditions are met:

1. The suggestion is implemented within two years after the date of the decision not to adopt, and

2. The employee requests reconsideration.


for Acting Deputy Administrator
Office of Management