Reward and Recognition

Good practice guide for South Australian Public Sector managers

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Government of South Australia

Office for the Public Sector

The Office for the Public Sector acknowledges the contribution of the following departments in developing this guide:

Attorney General's Department
Department for Education and Child Development
Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources
Department of State Development

Contents

Foreword

The South Australian Public Sector strives to be a high performing organisation, one that is recognised for a culture of performance excellence, innovation, collaboration and customer service that attracts, develops and retains a highly talented workforce.

Employees who feel valued, encouraged and appreciated for the work that they do are more likely to be engaged, contribute effectively, work innovatively and perform highly in their roles.

Ultimately, comprehensive recognition ensures the attraction and retention of a quality workforce that is adaptable to change and dedicated to achieving results.

The High Performance Framework (HPF) provides a systematic approach to organisational performance management and continuous improvement with an objective to ensure that the public sector is continually focused on improving its public value for the benefit of all South Australians. A strong recognition culture will encourage motivation in each agency workforce to meet community expectations around more responsive and efficient services, social outcomes and policy agendas. The HPF provides 6 core characteristics that are underpinned by a number of building blocks (BB). Public value can be assessed by defining each building block, how it is used and its effectiveness.

There are two distinct characteristics that align to Reward and Recognition:

- Characteristic 3 – Leadership – Direction, Alignment, Commitment.
  BB 3.1.2 – The organisation has defined a clear set of cultural values and behaviours, aligned to those of its partners and consistent with its public value proposition and mission.

- Characteristic 4 – Capability – People and Performance.
  BB 4.2.5 – Employees' development is aligned to strategic workforce plan of the organisation, along with reward and recognition programs.

The Public Sector Values and Behaviours Framework further underpins our work and contributes towards building a culture of appreciation where employees are recognised, encouraged and commended on their accomplishments and contributions. Rewards provide positive reinforcement and promote behaviour that is consistent with these values. This guide is based on best practice research and provides a range of ideas/principles for reward and recognition that can be adapted at agency level. It is designed to assist managers to recognise employees at all levels for their performance achievements and positive behaviours.

Introduction

What is Recognition?

Employee recognition acknowledges and honours the positive contributions a person makes to their team, organisation or community. This can include their unique contribution, expertise, character, efforts and dedication to their work or achieving results.

The High Performance Framework notes that high performing organisations effectively engage their workforce, and that a key way of engaging employees is through recognising high performance.

Employee recognition covers a number of areas, including:

- Personal Recognition

Individual expertise, unique talents and qualities of employees. Acknowledging positive behaviour can encourage it to happen again.

- Recognition of Work Practices

How work practices are performed, the demonstration of creativity, innovation and the continued improvement of work processes and practices.

- Recognition of Dedication to Work

The quality of employees' contribution to the overall objectives of the business unit or agency. Such recognition highlights the input of employees and the energy and efforts they invest.

- Recognition of Progress

Progress made on meaningful or longer-term projects.

- Recognition of Results

The end product and how the task has been completed. Acknowledgement is based on the efficiency, usefulness and quality of work that contributed to the end result.

Why is it Important?

Employee recognition provides the opportunity to acknowledge specific contributions or the value of expertise and experience of an employee or a team. Both formal and informal recognition should be approached in a fair and ethical manner.

Employee recognition is a return on an employee's effort, dedication and work achievements. It is governed by mutual respect and is expressed regularly through a host of simple gestures such as a sincere thank you, as well as symbolically through receiving an award where appropriate.

The sincerity of words and actions is what gives recognition its dignity and worth.

By recognising the efforts of employees you:

- support a culture of performance excellence;
- reinforce standards of conduct and behaviour;
- build employee engagement and promote job satisfaction;
- foster retention of quality employees;
- reduce stress and build an environment of trust;
- encourage greater creativity and innovation;
- foster a culture of appreciation that values employee contribution and effort; and
- promote ownership, involvement and interest in work.

Employee recognition can be both formal and informal. Both forms are appropriate in fostering a sense of pride and purpose, and in reinforcing that the efforts and the contributions of employees are appreciated.

At a State level recognition is underpinned by the Public Sector Values (PS Values). Additionally, the individual agency values, organisational priorities and individual preferences also influence how people are recognised.

The values are:

SERVICE
Proudly serve the community and Government of South Australia.

PROFESSIONALISM
Strive for excellence.

TRUST
Have confidence in the ability of others.

RESPECT
Value every individual.

COLLABORATION & ENGAGEMENT
Create solutions together.

HONESTY & INTEGRITY
Act truthfully, consistently and fairly.

COURAGE & TENACITY
Never give up.

SUSTAINABILITY
Work to get the best results for current and future generations of South Australians.

How is it done?

To ensure best practice, individual agency recognition strategies should align with departmental goals and priorities as well as South Australian Government and Commonwealth priorities. Agency practice should also be underpinned by the Public Sector Values and the High Performance Framework.

Employee reward and recognition is an organisational culture that can range from something as simple as a thank you, to something more formal like an award. It also covers everything in between. All employees can contribute to the recognition process, which should be a significant aspect of ongoing performance and development.

Implementation of reward and recognition programs that reflect employee values can enhance employee engagement and effectiveness. Best practice research has highlighted that reward and recognition within the public sector can be highly complex.

Core Principles

Before implementing reward and recognition strategies, managers should consider the following guiding principles:

ALIGNED

Best practice links reward and recognition programs to organisational culture and strategies, thereby encouraging employees to behave in a manner that aligns with and contributes to achieving strategic goals.

The Public Sector Values provide an underpinning platform on which to base reward and recognition across government.

IMMEDIATE

Reward and recognition are most effective when implemented soon after the accomplishment.

Managers should focus less on annual award ceremonies and place more emphasis on giving regular praise and consistent feedback.

FAIR

Reward and recognition has been shown to contribute more effectively to performance when based on clear expectations (Garbers & Konradt, 2013). Managers should base reward and recognition on clear performance standards to enhance perceived fairness amongst employees.

DYNAMIC

Keep it simple and clear. By revising reward and recognition strategies annually, they can be flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances.

TAILORED

Reward and recognition should reflect employee needs and desires (for example, a preference for immediate feedback rather than periodic acknowledgment) and approaches aimed at the individual or team level.
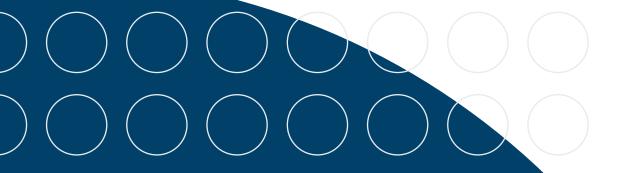
What does it look like?

WHEN YOU DID THIS ACTION > **THIS WAS THE POSITIVE IMPACT** > **I WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE OF THIS**

Myth Busters

MYTH: Remuneration is the best form of reward

The belief that remuneration (eg distributing cash bonuses or gift cards) is the best way to provide incentive to employees has often been popular with management. However, this approach is not always the best and only way to reward employees.

In the Public Sector, we are funded by the public purse and we need to look at innovative and alternative methods of reward. Research has shown that many employees in the Public Sector are more intrinsically motivated by a desire to obtain inner fulfilment and a sense of accomplishment in their work (Rainey, 2009). Government employees highly value recognition, often seeking positive evaluation and acknowledgement of a job well done over a salary increase (Milne, 2007).

The notion of increasing employee satisfaction through more intrinsic motivational methods of autonomy, master and purpose has obvious implications for public sector renumeration models (Pink, 2009).

MYTH: Reward and recognition requires budget allocation

Some of the high profile reward and recognition initiatives implemented by organisations can give the appearance that a large budget is required to administer a reward and recognition strategy, incorporating prestigious events, trophies, plaques and grants.

Embedding a culture of reward and recognition does not have to be costly. Some employees prefer the personal touch to public, high-profile and costly system-wide initiatives.

Many of the examples provided in the Tools for Managers to Use section have no budget implications. Options can include a simple 'thank you', an 'eThanks' or a letter of thanks from the Chief Executive.

MYTH: Recognition is a one-off 'event'

Awards are a great way to demonstrate organisational recognition of outstanding service, promote departmental or Public Sector Values and raise the profile of the work of your employees. Events like these can create long-lasting memories and stories to share (Kotter & Cohen, 2002).

However, the event alone should not form the extent of the reward and recognition program. Coaching, support, feedback, encouragement and recognition should be provided regularly through ongoing performance and development planning and conversation.

Tools for Managers to Use

WORKGROUP/LOCAL RECOGNITION EXAMPLES

RECOGNISING AND REWARDING EXCELLENT WORK

Reward	FREQUENCY				
	Spontaneous	Weekly	Monthly	6 Monthly	Annually
Recognise employee doing something really well.	O				
Say 'thank you' in person.	O				
Send an 'eThanks'.	O				
Write a note or an email to the employee thanking them for their efforts.	O				
Pass on positive feedback from clients and customers.	O				
Set up a noticeboard to display thank you emails, photos and progress towards goals.	O				
Provide flexible working arrangements (where appropriate). For example, allowing the employee to leave work early, support employee in social activities such as the Corporate Cup, working from home.	O			O	O
Advise senior managers of individual or team achievements at management meetings.		O			
Recognise the accomplishments of employees and teams at team/unit meetings publicly.			O		
Select the individual to attend 'higher level' meetings or represent the team at meetings.			O		
Organise an event morning/afternoon tea/ lunch/dinner to acknowledge and celebrate achievements.	O			O	
Reinforce appreciation for achievements during Performance, Review and Development meetings.				O	
Purchase a book that may have a professional development theme that can be signed with a personal message.					O
Run team meetings offsite.	O				

DEPARTMENTAL RECOGNITION EXAMPLES

ENCOURAGING GREAT WORK

Reward	FREQUENCY				
	Spontaneous	Weekly	Monthly	6 Monthly	Annually
Implement a staff idea or proposal.	O		O	O	
Seek an appropriate mentor or coach.	O			O	O
Provide greater access to information and increased opportunities for input and advice.	O		O	O	
Email or produce a formal minute to the Chief Executive or Executive Director, especially when acknowledging good performance and service delivery from outside of the work unit.	O				
Give additional responsibilities in a job or their role.	O			O	
Support attendance at conferences or other personal development opportunities over and above what would be considered normal for the employee's development purpose.	O			O	
Invite employee to coordinate and chair meetings.			O		O
Seek a formal letter of acknowledgement from the Chief Executive.					O
Provide the employee with acting opportunities.				O	O
Publish articles in email publications on the group's/team's performance.	O		O		
Provide staff with a service plaque for years of service.					O

WORKGROUP/LOCAL RECOGNITION EXAMPLES

Reward	FREQUENCY				
	Spontaneous	Weekly	Monthly	6 Monthly	Annually
Nominate employee for a Premier's Award (state-wide and interagency).					⭕
Nominate employee for Public Service Medal.				⭕	
Nominate employee for an external organisation award e.g. Science Excellence, Rural Solutions.					⭕
Select the employee to represent the organisation at a local business related event.	⭕				
Nominate employee for SA Great Awards.					⭕
Nominate employee for Australia Day Local Government Awards.					⭕
Nominate employee for Banksia Awards.					⭕
Nominate employee for any of the six Pride of Australia Awards.					⭕

Column label: CELEBRATING GREAT WORK

eThanks!

eThanks is the Public Sector's system for sending electronic thank you notes.

publicsector.sa.gov.au/people/ethanks/

Case Studies

1. A team manager becomes aware that two members of their team are approaching significant milestones in their length of service.

One is about to reach their five year anniversary of employment, and the other their 35 years of service. The manager decides to organise a team morning tea to celebrate both occasions. To differentiate between the significance of the two milestones, the manager organises two separate letters to be presented to the two employees at the morning tea.

The employee with five years' service receives a letter of appreciation from the Director of Human Resources, and the employee with 35 years' service receives a certificate of appreciation and accompanying letter from the Chief Executive.

2. Employee A is approaching the completion of a significant qualification that they have been working towards to complement their work in the public service.

They have been very open with their colleagues and manager about their progress in the qualification and are really excited to be completing their study. In a one-on-one professional development meeting with Employee B, the team manager becomes aware that they had also completed the same qualification, one year earlier. Employee B had been very private about their progress and completion of the qualification, and is generally a very reserved person.

The manager arranges for letters of congratulations for both employees to be signed by a senior member of the department. Having discussed both employees' personal preferences with them in private, she decides to present Employee A with their letter at the team meeting, just after presenting Employee B with theirs at their one-on-one meeting.

3. A team of employees have put in a significant effort in order to complete a large project within a tight deadline.

They have contributed extra hours and achieved a great result. Their managers reward the team with agreed time off in recognition of the extra time they have put in. Other employees from outside the team have also contributed to the effort, to ensure that everything was finished within the timeline.

To ensure that this group also feel valued, the manager arranges for individual 'eThanks' messages to go out to each employee. An email of appreciation is sent to the employees' line managers.

4. Two team members have both been working at a consistently high level over the course of a year.

They have both achieved above and beyond what was agreed in their annual performance targets. In recognition of this, their manager offers them the opportunity to take part in a significant, long term professional development opportunity.

One team member has young children and significant home responsibilities. Additional study at this time in their life could become more of a burden than a reward. In this case, the manager could give them the option of another form of recognition, relevant to their personal circumstances, such as agreed time off to spend with their family.

Checklist

The following checklist will help you to consider the context surrounding the provision of reward and recognition, to ensure that it has the maximum positive impact and value for both employee and agency performance.

Ensure that the level of the reward or recognition being offered is proportionate to the occasion, behaviour, act or achievement that is being rewarded. ✓

Is the recognition strategy consistent with the culture, strategy and values within your organisation, does it align with agency and government plans and complement the Public Sector Values? ✓

Will this reward or recognition impact on other employees? Were others involved who may feel undervalued if their efforts are not recognised? Did somebody else receive lesser recognition for a similar achievement? ✓

Will the recognition that you are providing mean something to the person receiving it? Some individuals may feel embarrassed by public recognition, for example, and prefer not to be recognised in front of colleagues. Others may not be at the right stage in their personal life to be able to commit to a significant professional development opportunity. Think about whether a meeting or group get together is the right forum for recognising your employees. Consider what the best reward would be for each individual and always seek their endorsement first. ✓

What are the resourcing impacts for the recognition that you would like to provide? For example, if you're planning a celebratory morning tea, will it require funding? If you're hoping to put an employee forward for the Public Service Medal, do you have the time to organise the application process? ✓

Always remember that funding for recognition activities will be coming from the public purse. Consider how the administration of your reward will appear to taxpayers and whether it can be easily justified. To help you gain perspective on the possible implications of your chosen activity, consider how you would feel if it was to be published in the media. ✓

Consider the more intrinsic methods of motivation such as autonomy, mastery and purpose as a reward. (Pink, 2009) ✓

Make sure that your reward or recognition process is transparent, so that it cannot be perceived by employees as favouritism. Make sure that you will be able to apply the same level of recognition for any colleagues who accomplish a similar achievement. Use clear performance standards to enhance perceived fairness amongst employees. ✓

Keep the Code of Ethics in mind to ensure that your reward or recognition can be upheld, in particular, against the Professional Conduct Standards (eg the use of government/public resources, conflicts of interest and acceptance of gifts and benefits). ✓

Don't forget, regular, spontaneous reward and recognition is important and is not a once off event. ✓

REWARD AND RECOGNITION FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGERS

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Who do I contact?

Your agency's Human Resources area will be able to assist with your enquiries.