



**PA Governor's Awards for Excellence
2009 Rooney Award Nomination**

Cover Sheet: **PA Governor's Awards for Excellence Recognition Program**

Category: Nomination for NASPE's Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award - Innovative State Human Resource Management Program

Program Title: Governor's Awards for Excellence
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Summary: PA Governor's Awards for Excellence

The annual Governor's Awards for Excellence (GAE) program recognizes and celebrates Commonwealth employees or groups of employees and their accomplishments that reflect initiative, leadership, and a strong commitment to service.

The GAE program highlights exceptional service or achievement that advances state government or promotes the good of the Commonwealth's citizenry, encourages excellence, identifies positive role models, and rewards employees for their distinguished accomplishments that exceed expectations.

Accomplishments may be on the job – connected to Commonwealth business, or off the job – through community service and volunteerism. Any employee or group of employees may nominate another employee or group. Only the most senior employees, such as agency heads, their deputies, and chief counsels cannot be nominated. Employees or groups cannot self-nominate. Nominees may include full- or part-time active, retired, separated, on leave without pay, or deceased employees, as long as the employee actively performed the duties described in the nomination during the calendar year preceding the nomination period.

In its third year, the GAE program both broadens and consolidates the scope of employee recognition in Pennsylvania state government. While 33 agencies continue to manage their own recognition programs, human resource managers acknowledged that many of these programs reflected specific organizational characteristics and were limited. The Governor's Awards for Excellence elevate recognition in a cross-agency program that begins with nominations from co-workers and culminates with recognition from the governor.

Nominations can, and are encouraged to, come from colleagues at any level. Nominations are submitted directly to agency human resource offices, which screen them for basic eligibility requirements, and then are endorsed by agency heads before being forwarded to the Governor's Office of Administration.

The program's success is measured by the number, nature, and quality of the nominations submitted and the associated publicity that the award recipients receive. Program nominations have increased each year, both in the number of nominations and the number of employees nominated. In one year, from 2008 to 2009, for instance, there was an increase from 69 nominations representing 182 employees to 83 separate nominations that cover 201 employees.

As the program continues to grow, more employees are nominating their colleagues, demonstrating that the program is perceived as important and valued by state employees at all levels.

In Pennsylvania state government, recognition counts – and the ever-increasing number of state employees who 'catch their co-workers doing something right' shows this program counts to them.

Narrative:

PA Governor's Awards for Excellence

1. Brief description of the program. The Governor's Awards for Excellence (GAE) are presented annually to recognize exemplary Commonwealth employees or groups of employees for accomplishments that reflect initiative, leadership, and a strong commitment to service.

The program recognizes exceptional employee service or achievement that advances state government or promotes the good of the Commonwealth's citizenry. The GAE program showcases these employees' exemplary accomplishments and successes, encourages excellence, identifies role models, and rewards their remarkable achievements.

Accomplishments may be connected to Commonwealth business or the community, such as volunteerism. Any employee or group of employees may nominate another employee or group for any significant achievement. The most senior employees, such as agency heads, their deputies, and chief counsels are not eligible to be nominated. Likewise, employees or groups of employees cannot self-nominate.

2. How long has this program been operational? The 2009 Governor's Awards for Excellence program is in its third year.

3. Why was this program created? Prior to the inception of the Governor's Awards for Excellence program, 33 Pennsylvania state government agencies hosted individual and varied employee recognition events. The Governor's Office sought to elevate and broaden recognition with a cross-agency program that begins with nominations from co-workers and culminates with recognition from the Governor.

4. Why is this program a new and creative method? Many recognition programs operate within specific agency environments with their distinct cultural and organizational characteristics; however, no enterprise-wide program existed. Likewise, nomination processes generally originate with an employee's supervisor and then includes successive levels of the organization. For the Governor's Awards for Excellence, nominations can, and are encouraged to, come from colleagues at any level – executive, senior, subordinate, or peer. Nominations are submitted directly to agency human resource offices, are screened for basic eligibility requirements, and then are forwarded to the agency head for endorsement. Some of the larger agencies use a pre-selection panel to decide upon their 'best of' nominations to forward on. Agencies are encouraged to, and generally do, use other internal means to recognize nominated employees who are not selected – so that peer recognition has a positive impact for recipients as well as finalists and non-selected nominees. Upon receipt of each nomination in the Office of Administration, the program's analysts review it for completeness and eligibility. After the due date has elapsed and all nominations have been reviewed and catalogued, the total package of nominations is forwarded to the nine-member nomination review committee, comprised of management and union representatives. That committee then selects three groups of nominees – finalists, undecided, and non-selected. The finalists and undecided are forwarded to the four-member selection committee for final determination. This committee is comprised of key members of the Governor's cabinet and the deputy secretary for human resources and management. This committee's

decisions are final. Following the final selections of award recipients, the program's analysts complete the necessary agency and employee notifications, publicity planning, and administrative functions, up to and including selecting the arrangements for the ceremony at the Governor's residence. While there is no limit to the number of award recipients that can be selected, only those deserving of recognition at the Governor's level are selected. Award recipients are invited to a ceremony and reception at the Governor's Residence during the first week in May - national Public Employee Recognition Week - where they are presented with an engraved rosewood plaque and gubernatorial proclamation and letter. In addition to the award recipients, their guests and nominators are invited to attend. Further, all agency heads, the Governor's executive staff, union officials, and photographers/press are included on the invitation list. Those employees who are finalists, but not selected to receive an award, are acknowledged through a signed certificate from the Governor. Likewise, all other nominees receive a letter from the Governor's Office acknowledging their nomination and thanking them for their valuable contributions to state government and its citizenry. Copies of correspondence for each group of nominees are filed in official employee history files.

5. What was the program's start up costs? Start-up costs were negligible and included only first-year operational costs. Two human resource analysts administer the program, along with administrative support.

6. What are the program's operational costs? Operational costs average \$4,000 annually. This includes printing programs, photographic documentation, a ceremony and reception at the Governor's Residence, engraved rosewood plaques for recipients, invitations and certificates, honoraria for musical accompanists, and related administrative supplies, etc.

7. How is this program funded? The GAE program is funded through annual budgetary processes. Program costs are shared by the Office of Administration Human Resources and Management and the Governor's Office.

8. Did this program originate in your state? Yes.

9. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If so, how does this program differ? Other states may have Governor's awards programs, but we are not aware of any that are designed as such and administered for the cost cited.

10. How do you measure the success of this program? In its third year, we measure the program's success by the number and nature of nominations and associated publicity. Program nominations have increased each year, both in the number of nominations received and the number of employees nominated as individuals and in groups. In its inaugural year, there were 67 nominations submitted. From 2008 to 2009, noting there was an increase in nominations from 69 to 83, which included 182 employees in 2008 and more than 200 in 2009. As the program continues to grow and improve, more employees are nominating colleagues is evidence the program is seen as important to employees at all levels. Recognition counts, and the ever-increasing number of state employees who 'catch their co-workers doing something right' shows this program counts to them.

11. How has this program grown and/or changed since its inception? The Pennsylvania Governor's Awards for Excellence is a dynamic, evolving program. Improvements to the program are made methodically and thoughtfully, borne out of an integrated after action review program and from anecdotal feedback and observations.

Two primary changes have occurred with the program since its inception: Publicity and categories. Publicity during the first year was light, with general announcements made to employees. The second year saw a significant increase in publicity, with marketing efforts by the Office of Administration's Communication Office in conjunction the Governor's Office and agency press officers. A *hometown news* form was created that second year and enabled staff to collect biographical and residential information and quotes from recipients for use in press releases. Dozens of news and feature articles appeared statewide.

Publicity prior to the nomination process was enhanced, using *In Common*, the state employee electronic newsletter, and broadcast messages from the Secretary of Administration to employees and agency heads. Additional messages were directed to human resource directors. An after action review was accompanied by a web-based survey of agency heads, human resource directors, members of the nomination review and selection committees, and nominators in an effort to identify program areas to be improved or sustained.

Beginning the second year, a collaborative effort began with the Pennsylvania Council for the Arts. In addition to the engraved plaque and gubernatorial proclamation and letter, all presented during the ceremony and reception with the Governor, each award recipient and a guest is invited to attend a cultural event that is closest to the award recipient's home. As a surprise, each recipient then is publicly acknowledged before the opening of the show.

Publicity for the GAE program was enhanced during the third year with *In Common* articles and informational briefs, and even more robust e-mail solicitation for nominations. Added to the *hometown news* form was information about the recipient's legislators, for added recognition for the award recipients.

As for award categories, during the first two years, the program included specific award categories. Between the first and second year, the Innovation and Initiative categories were combined. In the second year, the categories included: Community Service, Cost Savings (to include cost reductions, saving, and revenue enhancement), Customer Service, Heroism, Humanitarianism, Initiative/Innovation, Leadership, and Safety.

Following the second year, the after action review committee contemplated whether the categories were inclusive enough, or if they restricted recognition of other achievements that did not readily match with a specific category. The program then evolved to be open and based on guidelines. Nominations now are at-large with no pre-existing categories.

More program information may be located at: www.awards4excellence.state.pa.us.