

Reference No: E109/98/93; **Date:** 20/07/95

Circular 23/1995:- Civil Service Staff Suggestion Scheme - INPUT

A Dhuine Uasail,

1. I am directed by the Minister for Finance to inform you that, following the review, initiated last year, of the operation of the INPUT scheme, it has been decided to implement a number of changes and to relaunch the scheme. Details of how it will operate are set out in the Appendix to this letter; all existing circulars and instructions on the operation of the scheme are revoked from the date the revised scheme comes into effect - 1 July, 1995. Suggestions submitted prior to and still under consideration on that date will qualify for processing under the revised scheme.

2. The main purpose of the changes is to give greater autonomy to departments/offices in the administration of the scheme in their own areas, and to update the prizes and the basis for their award. It is felt also that a relaunch will help to revive the scheme and to regenerate interest in it across the Civil Service.

3. The cumulative savings achieved by the scheme over the past ten years - estimated at £3m - show clearly that it is a cost effective tool for harnessing latent talent of civil servants generally to make significant contributions to cost effectiveness and efficiency. It is important, therefore, that senior Management in departments should actively support the operation of the scheme by encouraging staff to make suggestions and rewarding adequately good suggestions.

[For Department read Department/Office throughout this Circular]
To/All Departments

Among the ways of showing support for the scheme would be the holding of prize-giving ceremonies at which top Management or a Minister would present the awards. The Department of Finance will contribute to this effort by organising prize-giving ceremonies for the bonus prizes provided for in the scheme.

4. If there are any queries about the operation of the Scheme they should be addressed to the Management Services Unit (Ms Breda Byrne), Department of Finance - telephone 6767571, Ext. 5025, (GTN 71095025)

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P. J. Moore
Assistant Secretary

Appendix to Circular 23/95

Instructions for implementation of the INPUT scheme

Purpose

1. The purpose of the INPUT Scheme is to facilitate and encourage the submission of suggestions by eligible civil servants (see paragraph 3 below) aimed at improving Civil Service operations.

Scope

2. Any suggestions whose implementation would improve the operations of a Government department, office or service are welcome e.g. suggestions aimed at increasing administrative efficiency, reducing costs, improving service to the public or increasing safety. Suggestions may be of a technical or non-technical nature but must be such that a decision to proceed with implementation can be taken by Management. Excluded from the scope of the scheme are suggestions concerning policy matters and suggestions requiring higher (e.g. Dail) approval unless they concern legislative anomalies or statutorily prescribed aspects of administration amenable to improvement.

Eligibility

3. All grades up to and including Principal Officer and their equivalents are eligible to submit suggestions. In the cases of Assistant Principals, Principals (and their equivalents) and staff carrying out management services type work, however, suggestions must concern work outside their immediate area of responsibility; suggestions which such officers might be expected to make in the course of their day-to-day work will not be eligible. Suggestions from groups of officers will not be excluded provided that the officers are below the grade of Higher Executive Officer but such suggestions will be treated, in relation to any prize awarded, as if submitted by an individual officer.

Administration of scheme

4. The parties to the administration of the scheme and their respective roles are set out below.

- (i) The Department of Finance is responsible for the central administration and coordination of the scheme - assisted, as necessary, by the Central INPUT Committee. Its role is as follows:
- determining the rules of the scheme including the upper and lower limits of prize money which may be awarded and revising them as necessary;
 - in conjunction with the departments concerned, considering and deciding on suggestions which have application in more than one department;
 - authorising, if appropriate, proposals from departments to award prizes in excess of the limits prescribed here
 - savings in excess of £75,000 would need to be involved;

- maintaining records in relation to departments generally of prize-winning suggestions, of prize winners and of the amount of awards including bonus prizes;
- general publicity relating to the scheme;
- providing secretarial services for and chairing the Central INPUT Committee;
- award of bonus prizes and organisation of presentation ceremony;
- preparation of an annual report on the operation of the scheme generally.

(ii) **Central INPUT Committee**

The Central INPUT Committee comprises representatives of the Departments of Finance, Social Welfare, Agriculture, Food and Forestry and the Office of the Revenue Commissioners and of two of the smaller departments. Representation by smaller departments will be on a rota basis. The Department of Finance chairs the Committee and provides the secretariat.

The role of the Central Committee is

to advise the Department of Finance on the operation of the scheme and on matters referred to it for advice;

to give guidance and advice to departmental INPUT committees on the operation of the scheme and problems raised by them;

to follow up any cases reported to it where a decision on a suggestions has not been taken within four months of submission;

to consider and decide on suggestions applicable to more than one department or dealing with issues of general relevance; and,

to select the winners of the bonus prizes (see Paragraph 15 below).

The Committee determines its own procedures.

(iii) **Line departments** Each line department has responsibility for the operation of the scheme in its own area. Functions include:

- deciding if the scheme should be extended to specialised services administered by the department;
- deciding whether to establish any additional category of prize to encourage suggestions on topics which might be of particular interest to the department;
- setting up machinery for the consideration of suggestions and for award of prizes - see (iv) below;
- maintenance of records of suggestions made and of decisions in relation thereto, including details of any prizes awarded;
- promotion of and departmental publicity in relation to the scheme;
- submission to the Department of Finance (by 30 June each year) of an annual report on the operation of the scheme within the department.

(iv) **Departmental INPUT Committee**

Each department should establish a departmental INPUT committee to assist with the administration of the scheme. The functions of the committee would be

to examine all suggestions submitted pertaining to the work of the department, including the recommendations of line management thereon, and to decide if a prize 1 should be awarded and the amount of the prize (within the limits specified in paragraph 13);
the committee may also recommend a prize in excess of the limits laid down but the approval of the Department of Finance will be required for such an award;
to follow up cases where line management's recommendations on a suggestion have not been received within two months of the date of submission;
to select and submit to the Central INPUT Committee any suggestion which, they feel, merits consideration for the award of a bonus prize.

Submission of Suggestions

5. Suggestions submitted should be set out clearly with as much information as is necessary to enable them to be understood and, where cost savings are envisaged, with adequate statistical or costs data to demonstrate the validity and viability of the suggestion. It should be borne in mind that any prize awarded will take into account both the extent of the research carried out and the presentation of the suggestion. Each suggestion submitted should be accompanied by a form, INPUT 1, available from the departmental INPUT Committee.

6. Suggestions from staff about the work of their own department should generally be submitted to the Secretary of the departmental Input committee. If they wish, however, officers are also entitled to submit their suggestions through their superior officer - in which event, they should also notify the secretary of the departmental INPUT committee that they have done so. Suggestions about the work of other departments and/or concerning issues of general relevance should be submitted directly to the Secretary to the Central Input Committee.

7. Officers have the right to ask that their names be withheld when their suggestions are being sent to line management for consideration. In these instances, only the Secretary of the relevant Input Committee will be aware of the suggester's name. In the event of the suggestion qualifying for an award, however, the name of the suggester will then have to be disclosed to enable the INPUT committee to make the award and for the purposes of any publicity in connection with the Scheme.

Consideration of Suggestions

8. On receipt of suggestions, the Secretary to the departmental INPUT committee will send a copy under form INPUT 2 to the relevant section/officer for examination including advice as to its feasibility, the validity of costings and whether the suggestion will be implemented. The Committee will make a decision on the suggestion, including the amount of any award to be made, as soon as possible, taking account of the views of line management.

9. The suggester will be told, as soon as possible, whether or not his/her suggestion is to be adopted. If the suggestion is not to be implemented, the officer will be told why. Decisions on whether to adopt suggestions should normally be taken within two months of submission. Where the examination of a suggestion takes longer, the suggester may raise the matter with either the

departmental or the Central committee which will follow up to ensure that there is no undue delay. If consideration is likely to be protracted, the line section concerned should furnish a written explanation of the reason and give the target date for a decision to be taken.

10. As indicated in paragraph 4, the departmental INPUT committee should follow up with line management cases where no recommendation or decision on a suggestion has been received within two months of submission.

11. It is exclusively a matter for line management to decide whether to implement a suggestion. Equally, the decision of the appropriate INPUT Committee on whether an award is merited and on the amount of any award is final and may not be appealed.

Departmental Prizes

12. Departments will be responsible for the payment of departmental awards. Unless the grade or post of the suggester precludes the making of an award, prizes should be paid for all suggestions which are accepted and implemented.

The minimum award payable is £50 and the maximum £2,000, or a total of £6,000 (over three years) - see 13.1 below - where sufficient recurring savings are achieved. Where a prize is awarded to a group of officers, the amount should be the same as if the suggestion were submitted by an individual officer.

13. Awards may be made in the following categories:

1. Suggestions which are implemented and result in a cash saving. The award should be calculated at 10% of the **net** annual savings (i.e. after any necessary deductions, e.g. of cost of implementation or of new equipment, etc.). Where the savings recur over a period of years, the amount of the award may be based on savings actually achieved in each of the three years following implementation, in which case it should be paid in annual instalments over three years subject to an annual maximum of £2,000 and an overall maximum of £6,000 over three years.

2. Suggestions which although implemented do not result in a cash saving but which yield mainly non-cash or preventive benefits e.g. improved service to the public, health and safety benefits or elimination of loopholes.

3. Good suggestions which, for some reason, cannot be implemented and suggestions, which, while they cannot be implemented, either highlight previously unknown anomalies or loopholes or point to the solution of some problem which is followed up.

4. Suggestions which are not suitable for implementation but which have been particularly well researched and presented or are already under examination outside of the Input Scheme. Awards will only be made in the latter category if the INPUT Committee is satisfied that the suggester did not have prior knowledge of such examination.

5. Suggestions in categories designated by the relevant Input Committee as being of particular interest to the department

14. In addition to any award made, a suitable note will be inserted in the personal file and appraisal records of any officer who makes a valuable suggestion.

Bonus Prizes

15. Bonus prizes of £1,000 each may also be paid by the Department of Finance for the best suggestion made in each of the following categories, provided the Central INPUT Committee consider that the quality of the suggestions nominated merits the making of such awards:

1. Suggestion producing most savings.
2. Best suggestion from an officer with less than three years service.
3. Best suggestion for improving service to the public.
4. Most imaginative suggestion for the use of technology.
5. A special prize to be awarded at the discretion of the Central INPUT Committee.

If a prize is not awarded in any category, the Central Committee has discretion to use the relevant funds to award a second bonus prize in other categories instead.

-34516. A further bonus prize may be awarded for the Best Overall Suggestion, chosen from among

the winners in the bonus prize categories. Bonus Prize Procedure

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17. Bonus prizes will be awarded on an annual basis. The Department of Finance will be I
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responsible for their payment. Departments/Offices will be asked by the Central Committee to j
nominate suggestions for consideration for bonus prizes. Only suggestions which have been fully
j evaluated and implemented and have already received a departmental award may be nominated.

Any

suggestions submitted for bonus prize should be summarised succinctly for the benefit of the
Central Committee. Form INPUT 3 should accompany all suggestions submitted for
consideration for award of
bonus prizes.

Selection of Bonus Prize winners

18. The winners of the bonus prizes will be selected by the Central INPUT Committee. The
decisions of the Committee will be final and will not be open to any appeal.

23/95 Taxation of departmental awards and bonus prizes 19. The Revenue practice governing tax
treatment of Staff Suggestion Scheme awards is as follows: A cash award made to an employee
under a Staff Suggestion Scheme is regarded as not liable to tax in his/her hands, provided that -
(a) the amount of the award is reasonable, in relation to the value of the suggestion made, and
(b) it is not part of the ordinary duties of the employee to make such suggestions. This practice is
currently the subject of a review by Revenue and may lead to the issue of a Statement of Practice
on the subject. Any such statement will be brought to the attention of departments.

Commencement of New Arrangements

20. The new minimum and maximum levels for prizes will apply to all awards made after 30
June, 1995. The first competition for bonus prizes under the revised scheme will take place in

1996 with a view to awarding any prizes in July 1996. Prize winning suggestions examined and implemented since April 1993 will be eligible for nomination for these bonus awards.

21. Copies of Forms INPUT 1, INPUT 2 and INPUT 3 are appended to this circular. Guidelines for departmental Input committees and details of information to be supplied to the Department of Finance in relation to winners of prizes, etc., will be made available to departments at a later stage.

Promotion of Scheme

22. To relaunch the scheme, a competition is being held to find an appropriate slogan and logo for INPUT in which all staff will be invited to participate. A special prize will be awarded to the winner. All information booklet for staff describing the operation of the scheme and how to go about making a suggestion will be distributed in the near future.

23. Departments should make every effort to promote the scheme in an imaginative way. Above all, Management support is essential to its success. Ways of publicising the scheme might include posting details of award winners, from time to time, on notice boards, circulating them via computer bulletin boards or including them in house journals. Staff associations might also be invited to give the scheme and awards maximum publicity in their magazines and items might be prepared for inclusion in the Public Sector Times.

SAMPLES OF FORMS

-INPUT 1

- INPUT 2

- INPUT 3

INPUT Suggestion

Name _____

Grade _____

Department _____

Address _____

Date of entry to the civil
service _____

Do you wish your suggestion to be examined without your name being revealed? Yes/No

Have you already submitted your suggestion to someone else for consideration? (e.g. Head of
Section)? Yes/NO

Summary of suggestion

INPUT Scheme Recommendation Form

Ref No

TO _____

The attached suggestion is for your early consideration. Please complete the questionnaire below and return it to me before _____

SUMMARY OF SUGGESTION _____

Can the suggestion be implemented? Yes/No

- If "yes"
- (i) Date of implementation
 - (ii) Nett savings per annum (after cost of implementation)
 - (iii) Review date for re-appraisal
 - (iv) Suggested award £ _____

If "No" (i) Reasons for not implementing the suggestion

(ii) Should an award be made? Yes/No

If an award is merited, give

(i) Reasons for recommending award

(ii) Suggested award £ _____

Signed _____

Date _____

Grade _____

Nomination for Bonus Prize

Name of officer _____

Grade _____

Department _____

Prize awarded by department £ _____

Bonus Prize Category for which nominated _____

Summary of suggestion

Savings achieved _____

Other benefits

