

Best Practices for Reward and Recognition Programs

Workplace Reward and Recognition (R&R) programs provide an avenue to enhance engagement, encourage high performance and increase overall job satisfaction within an organization. A comprehensive R&R program fosters a culture of appreciation, recognizes positive performance outcomes and aligns individuals' contributions with organizational goals.

Public health laboratories can use this guide to develop and implement an R&R program and establish best practices for effectively recognizing and rewarding employees.

Within this resource you'll find four categories of recognition: **Major Events and Milestones**, **Real-time Expressions of Appreciation**, **Laboratory-based Performance** and **Agency-based Performance**. Each has examples of the types of recognition you can employ and recommended methods by which to demonstrate appreciation.

Be Aware of Policy or Funding Restrictions

Before implementing any of the recommended activities, please consult your organization's policies and funding guidelines to ensure any reward mechanisms under consideration are allowed.

R&R in Action

To see examples of R&R program documents used within the public health laboratory community, members of the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) can visit the APHL Member Resource Center at www.aphl.org/MRC.

Please note that the MRC library is restricted to APHL Members, and you must be signed in to the website to access the resources.



Significant Events

Types of Recognition

Celebrate/recognize milestones and important events, such as:

- **Birthdays/births/deaths**
- **Work anniversaries**
- **Academic achievements** (certifications, advanced degrees)
- **Longevity/years of service** (5-yr, 10-yr, 15-yr, etc.)
- **Retirement** (20+ years)
- **Completion of a fellowship or internship**
- **Military service** (active duty)
- **New employees** (welcome to the community)
- **Promotions**
- **Community involvement/volunteerism**

Recommended Methods

- **Written Communication:** Message boards, newsletters, emails, thank you or personal notes
- **Verbal Communication:** In-person meetings (all staff, department, huddles, town hall), individual 1:1
- **Annual Celebrations:** public service recognition week, lab week
- **Items of Recognition:** Certificates, plaques, pins, recognition coins, gift cards, small gifts and baskets, flowers, food, etc., presented at in-person meetings or individually

Real-time Expressions of Appreciation

Types of Recognition

This casual, day-to-day recognition avenue provides unlimited opportunities to recognize individual or team performance through verbal, written or electronic personal notes.

Examples: Thank a Staff Member, Kudos, Shout Outs

Recommended Methods

- **Written Communication:** Message boards, newsletters, emails, thank you or personal notes
- **Verbal Communication:** In-person meetings (all staff, department, huddles, town hall), individual 1:1

Laboratory-based Performance

Types of Recognition

- **Exceptional Peer Award:** An individual demonstrating a characteristic, trait or value of the laboratory or a team within a laboratory.
- **Exceptional Performance Award:** An individual that went above and beyond, such as working extra hours, performing work that is out of scope, accomplishing a major hurdle including the successful completion of a project or study, or other significant positive impact on the laboratory.

Examples: Laboratory Superstar Policy, Above and Beyond Award

Recommended Methods

- **Written Communication:** Message boards, newsletters, emails, thank you or personal notes
- **Verbal Communication:** In-person meetings (all staff, department, huddles, town hall), individual 1:1
- **Annual Celebrations:** Public Service Recognition Week, Lab Week
- **Items of Recognition:** Certificates, plaques, pins, recognition coins, gift cards, small gifts and baskets, flowers, food, etc., presented at in-person meetings or individually
- **Other Reward:** Free parking for a month, reserved parking spot

Agency-based Performance

Types of Recognition

The following types of awards can all be implemented locally or statewide:

- **Excellence/Commitment to Service:** Recognize an individual or group of employees who exemplify the highest standards of excellence and commitment to service, who go above and beyond normal expectations. Examples include acts that significantly benefited the agency, brought honor or recognition, or had a significant positive impact on the state or local level.
- **Government Efficiency and Accountability:** Recognize innovative projects implemented by an individual or small group of employees that go above and beyond normal job responsibilities to increase the efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of state or local government. Examples include using continuous quality improvement tools to achieve excellent outcomes, developing innovative processes, establishing best practices or producing verifiable results that are sustainable, scalable and adaptable to other areas of government. Recipients serve as role models for others within and outside the organization.
- **Team Excellence Award:** Encourage teamwork by recognizing groups of employees for their efforts to use continuous quality improvement tools to excel in leadership, team dynamics and communication to produce superior customer service and tangible results.
- **Heroism:** Honor an individual employee's acts of heroism and courage.
- **Welcoming and Respectful Environment:** Recognize employees who work toward achieving a welcoming and supportive working environment.
- **Merit Award:** Recognize employees with outstanding creativity and innovation in process improvement or exceptional achievement in providing customer service. It can be agency- or departmental-level, and each level can have its own set of eligibility criteria.
- **Legacy Awards:** Recognize individual employees who exhibit specific traits or characteristics of an outstanding leader in a particular field of study. Often, legacy awards are named after that person.

Recommended Methods

These types of awards often come with formal mechanisms for application, review and celebration, including announcements through publications and press releases, and dedicated recognition events.

Mechanisms of reward may include:

- Monetary award
- Plaques and certificates
- Recognition coins
- Engraved memorabilia/award

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