

Guide to Creating a Recognition Program

Implementing New Incentives & Awards in your Unit

The following framework will help facilitate the process of developing a new recognition program in your unit. It includes the necessary elements to ensure compliance with the Institute and USG policy while providing creative freedom for the unit to support its goals. Once complete, the unit’s senior leadership, HR representative, and finance personnel should review.

Step 1: Specify the desired outcome and business purpose.

Before establishing a new incentives and award program, it's important to define clear objectives and the overarching purpose it will serve within the unit. Begin by identifying the specific outcomes you aim to achieve through your new recognition strategy. Consider both monetary and non-monetary approaches to recognition.

Whether it's boosting employee morale, enhancing productivity, championing innovation, or improving employee retention rates, articulating these desired results provides a solid foundation for designing a program tailored to meet the unique needs of your unit. Align your program objectives with the strategic goals of both your unit/college and the broader Institute. This initial step lays the groundwork for a focused and effective recognition program that resonates with employees and drives positive outcomes.

Step 2: Identify the funding source.

There are a few funding sources that may be appropriate for employee awards: Georgia Tech Foundation (GTF); Georgia Tech Research Corporation (GTRC); or Georgia Tech Applied Research Corporation (GTARC). It’s important to consult your unit or college’s senior leadership, HR representative, and finance personnel to ensure the allowability of the funding source, how to identify available funds and next steps. Not all GTF, GTRC, or GTARC are applicable. State funds are not allowable.

Step 3: Choose the type of award the employees will receive.

Incentive & Award Program Type	Policy Details
Goal-Based Incentive (GBI)	May be used by an awarding unit to reward an employee or team for meeting or exceeding predetermined, and objectively measurable criteria that are beyond and above the employee’s normal work requirements, addresses a critical strategic need and enhances the effective operation of the awarding unit.
Goal-Based Incentive – <i>Athletic Coaches and Administrators</i> (GBI)	May be used to provide coaches and key administrators within the athletic department the opportunity to receive

	a one-time lump sum payment based on annual team and academic performance.
Exceptional Performance Incentive (EPI)	An awarding unit may use this incentive program to recognize individual employees or teams who achieve exceptional levels of performance in one or more areas of strategic focus. Rewards are tied to the accomplishment of expected results which must be identified and communicated at the beginning of the performance plan cycle. Exceptional Performance incentives are merit-based, reflecting the employee or team’s performance as evaluated by the reviewing authority against established criteria.
Employee Suggestion Program (ESP)	Units may use this incentive program to recognize employees who provide a suggestion or idea to improve the awarding unit operations and/or efficiency. The suggestion or idea must be above and beyond the normal responsibilities of the job and implemented by a unit with a recorded outcome of improved effectiveness.
Extraordinary Service Acts or Achievements Program (EXSP)	Units may use this type of non-monetary reward program to recognize an employee or group of employees who go beyond the ordinary demands of the job in performing an extraordinary service, act, or achievement in the public interest and related to the awarding unit’s mission, vision, and goals.
Employee Service Recognition Programs	An awarding unit may develop programs to recognize employees for length of service and meritorious performance. Appropriate awards denoting various lengths of service are determined by the awarding unit.

For more information on implementing Critical Hiring Incentives or Critical Skills Incentives, visit our website: hr.gatech.edu/compensation/incentives-awards/

Step 4: Name the new incentive or award program.

When naming the incentive or awards program, consider factors such as the unit or college’s culture, values, goals, and intended audience. The name should be memorable, reflective of the program's purpose, and resonate with the target audience. A thoughtfully chosen name can enhance the program's visibility, engagement, and overall impact within the unit/college and beyond.

Step 5: Determine the eligibility criteria, award titles and descriptions, and selection process.

The FY25 Award Submission Form requires you to insert the eligibility criteria, predetermined standards, or achievement goals necessary for an employee to receive the award, and the evaluation criteria and review process for selection.

1. Begin by identifying the specific achievements, behaviors, or contributions that merit recognition within your unit or college. Think back to your business purpose and desired outcomes. Consider factors such as performance metrics, tenure, leadership qualities, teamwork, innovation, and adherence to the Institute or department values. This will become the basis of your award description.
2. Consider eligibility criteria. An example might be “all full-time staff who have been employed by Georgia Tech for at least 1 year and are in good standing with the department.” Below are some questions to consider when determining eligibility criteria:
 - Employee status: are temporary workers, part-time employees, or student workers eligible to be nominated? Is the award only for faculty or only for staff? Is it open to all employee classifications?
 - Length of service: is there a minimum length of service an employee must have with the department or Institute?
 - Can an employee win the same award more than once within a specified timeframe?
 - Are selection committee members eligible to be nominated and selected?
 - Are self-nominations allowed? Does a supervisor need to approve the nomination?
3. Determine the selection process. Establish clear evaluation criteria based on the objectives of each award, ensuring that they are objective, measurable, and relevant to the desired outcomes. Formalize a committee to define rating processes and procedures based on each criterion in the award description. Clarify who will make the final decision on the winning nominations.

Step 6: Submit your new incentive program to GTHR for approval.

Consult the GTHR Incentives & Awards [Website](#) for information on annual timelines for submission and approval. Direct specific questions or inquiries to [Mattie Hamilton](#) and [Robert Hampson](#). GTHR serves as the clearinghouse for all Georgia Tech awards and incentives before submitting the package to USG for approval each year.

Step 7: Utilize your resources. (Websites, Job Aids, Forms, oh my!)

- GTHR Incentives & Awards [Website](#) and Intake [Form](#)
- GT Awards & Prizes [Policy](#)
- GT Purchase of Gifts for Employee / Student [Policy](#)
- USG Incentive Compensation & Awards [Policy](#)

- Allowable Cost Matrix ([Controllers Website Link](#))

Step 8: Implement the program.

1. Formalize the awarding committee. Begin by identifying the key stakeholders who will be involved in the selection process, such as senior leadership, managers, employees, HR representatives, etc. Solicit committee membership from a diverse array of areas within your unit. For example: if you are designing a program on behalf of a division, solicit committee membership from each department. If you are designing a program on behalf of a college, solicit membership from each school. Ensure you have diverse perspectives at the table.
2. Define the nomination process:
 - Are nominations made online, or through another method? Which program will you use? Tip: Georgia Tech has a license with [InfoReady](#) to run seamless competitions with functionality to collect nominations and send to a committee for review.
 - Are nominations anonymous? Will the nominee receive a copy of their nomination or know they were nominated?
 - Who is eligible to submit a nomination? (Permanent employees? Temporary employees? Managers only?)
 - What information is needed to complete the nomination? Will you require a letter of support from someone other than the nominator?
3. What type of award will you give the recipients? Examples may include an award plaque, lapel pin, framed certificate, or monetary incentive. State funds may not be used for the purchase of awards unless the total dollar value of the award is of a de minimis nature, which is \$75 or less. If issuing award payments, refer to the GTHR Incentives and Awards Website for information on starting the process.

Step 9: Draft a communication plan.

What methods will be used to ensure that faculty and staff are aware of your new awards program, peer recognition opportunities, staff celebration event, etc.? Departmental email lists, digital signage, internal newsletters, and meeting announcements are all great ways to get the word out. Consult with your unit's communications partner to assist in developing a plan to launch and maintain communications for your program.

Step 10: Maintain and evaluate your incentive and awards program.

Ensure the ongoing relevance and effectiveness of your incentive and awards program by regularly revisiting its components. Conduct annual reviews of the awards offered, and the criteria used to evaluate nominees, ensuring they remain meaningful and aligned with your unit's goals. Empower a selection committee to assess proposed changes, vet their feasibility, and present recommendations to department leadership for

consideration. Establish clear roles and responsibilities for maintaining the program to ensure your efforts can positively impact employees for years to come.

Remember, a successful recognition program is not a one-time effort; it requires ongoing commitment and adaptability. Feel free to reach out to the GTHR Recognition Program Manager, [Mattie Hamilton](#), or GTHR Assistant Director of Financial Operations, [Robert Hampson](#), for further guidance. Best of luck in creating meaningful incentives, awards, or recognition programs in your unit!

References:

Inspiration for this document came from the University of Iowa's [Guide to Creating a Recognition Program](#), the University of Washington's [Develop a Recognition Program](#) resource, and Texas A&M University's [Employee Recognition Program Guidelines](#).