

**ADVISORY LETTER OF THE NEBRASKA  
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES  
DIVISION OF STATE PERSONNEL  
EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION PROGRAM  
  
FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2002**

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NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES  
DIVISION OF STATE PERSONNEL  
EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION PROGRAM

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# STATE OF NEBRASKA

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Mike McCrory, Director  
Department of Administrative Services  
Division of State Personnel  
P. O. Box 94905  
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Dear Mr. McCrory:

In accordance with Neb. Rev. Stat. Section 84-304 R.S.Supp., 2000 we have performed certain procedures related to the objectives enumerated below for the Nebraska Department of Administrative Services (DAS) - Division of State Personnel - Employee Recognition Program. We conducted those procedures in accordance with Statements on Standards for Consulting Services issued by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) Management Consulting Services Executive Committee.

The scope of the procedures included all State agencies, except for the University of Nebraska and the Nebraska State College System, for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2002. The objectives of the procedures were to:

1. Obtain the total number and type of employee recognition awards given by State agencies;
2. Document the State agencies' policies and procedures covering employee recognition programs to ensure they were consistent with guidelines set forth by DAS - Division of State Personnel and in compliance with Title 273 NAC 16.
3. Test selected State agency employees' monetary awards and other expenses related to the agencies' employee recognition programs to determine whether they were in accordance with State agency or DAS guidelines and were reasonable expenses of the agency.

We performed certain procedures we considered necessary to meet the objectives enumerated above. Those procedures consisted primarily of documenting the State agencies' policies covering employee recognition programs, obtaining an understanding of internal control procedures related to employee recognition programs in State agencies, and testing transactions.

Based on the procedures performed, we noted one of five agencies selected for testing following the Governor's Plan awarded an employee with an agency length of service award (**Comment Number 1**). We also noted one of five State agencies tested with an approved Agency Employee Recognition Plan exceeded the dollar limit specified in the plan for Achievement or Length of Service recognition (**Comment Number 2**). Additionally, two of twelve agencies with an approved plan did not have documentation on file to support expenses for food/refreshments served at a recognition event (**Comment Number 3**). For more information on our comments and recommendations see the Comments Section of this report.

We compiled the accompanying financial data on the schedules provided on pages 13 through 15 from the records of the State agencies involved in the DAS - Division of State Personnel - Employee Recognition Program. We have not audited the accompanying data and, accordingly, do not express an opinion or any other form of assurance on this data.

This advisory letter is intended for the information of the DAS – Division of State Personnel Employee Recognition Program; however, this advisory letter is a matter of public record and its distribution is not limited.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesy extended to our auditors.

*Pat Reding, CPA*

Assistant Deputy Auditor

August 29, 2002

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES  
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**BACKGROUND**

Since 1985, the State of Nebraska has sponsored the statewide recognition program, which is coordinated by the Nebraska Department of Administrative Services (DAS) - State Personnel Division, on behalf of the Governor's Office. The goal of this program, known as the Governor's Plan, is to show appreciation to State employees for their loyalty and professional excellence. The program focuses primarily on awarding both exceptional performers and career employees. Exceptional performers are recognized with an Employee of the Year Award or Supervisor/Manager of the Year Award, while career employees are honored with a Length of Service award.

The Employee of the Year program is a fundamental component of the recognition program. Each year, agencies select one non-management/non-supervisory employee per 500 from their agency whose job performance has exceeded the highest standards and contributed to the overall effectiveness of their agency. These outstanding employees are then honored at the Employee of the Year Award ceremony, which is held in the State Capitol Rotunda. To date, 775 State employees have received this honor.

In 1992, the State of Nebraska added the recognition of Supervisor/Manager of the Year. Agencies select one employee per 500 in the agency, who is either a supervisor or manager and whose performance exceeded the highest standards. These outstanding supervisor/managers are also honored at the Supervisor/Manager of the Year Award ceremony held in the State Capitol Rotunda. State agency participation in the Employee of the Year and Supervisor/Manager of the Year programs is optional.

The Length of Service awards are given to State employees who have been with the State for at least 10 years and every five years thereafter. The ceremony is kept separate from the Employee and Supervisor/Manager of the Year awards to emphasize the importance of the award. Each employee receives a standard gift, usually an embossed mug, from the State recognizing years of service. Agency participation in the Governor's Plan for the Length of Service awards is not optional, unlike the Employee and Supervisor/Manager of the Year awards.

DAS - State Personnel Division provides the guidelines for and approves the individual Employee Recognition policies of all classified State agencies. Classified agencies are defined as those which fall under the State Personnel System Rules and Regulations. Classified agencies may opt to develop customized, individual policies following DAS - Division of State Personnel guidelines or to stay with the basic Governor's Plan as outlined in Title 273 Nebraska Administrative Code (NAC), Chapter 16. The guidelines provide the maximum dollar amount that an agency may spend on food, monetary awards, and gifts per employee, per occasion. Non-classified agencies are outside the State Personnel System in accordance with Neb. Rev. Stat. Section 81-1316 R.S.Supp., 2000 and may choose to follow the State Personnel System Rules and Regulations or to write their own.

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**BACKGROUND**

(Concluded)

Any State agency, classified or non-classified, which has an individual plan may also choose to recognize employees for other career landmarks such as an education certification related to work (e.g. college degree or professional license), retirement, perfect attendance, or attitude.

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**PROCEDURES PERFORMED**

**GOVERNOR'S PLAN**

There are 29 State agencies that follow Title 273 NAC 16 regarding Employee Recognition, also known as the Governor's Plan. See **Schedule A** for a listing of State agencies following the Governor's Plan. This plan allows the agencies to recognize employees, with State funds, for length of State service, achievements (Employee/Manager of the Year), and the completion of education/certification programs.

Under the Governor's Plan, agencies are not allowed to provide food/refreshments with State funds. However, the Governor does host an annual reception recognizing those employees nominated by their agency for exemplary performance (Employee/Manager of the Year). The agency may also provide a one-time monetary award not to exceed:

- \$100 for monthly awards
- \$250 for quarterly awards
- \$250 for runner-up/nominee of annual awards
- \$500 for annual awards

We reviewed disbursements related to the employee recognition programs for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2002, for those agencies following the Governor's Plan. We noted the 29 agencies followed the Governor's Plan for employee recognition. We selected the following for testing:

1. Achievements (Employee/Manager of the Year)

Six of twenty-nine agencies chose to participate in the Governor's Achievement Recognition. These six agencies nominated nine employees to be recognized by the Governor for their exceptional performance. The recognition ceremony was held October 2001.

We tested monetary awards to eight employees and food expenses of five agencies to ensure proper compliance with Title 273 NAC 16-001.03, to ensure the monetary awards were properly considered as taxable income, and to ensure expenses related to employee recognition programs were properly coded in the Nebraska Accounting System (NAS).

2. Length of Service

Fourteen of twenty-nine agencies recognized 166 employees for length of service. We randomly selected five agencies for testing. These five agencies had ten employees recognized by the Governor for their length of service to the State.

We tested the length of service award for the ten employees and food expenses of the five agencies under the Governor's Plan to ensure proper compliance with Title 273 NAC 16-001.03 and to ensure the expenses were properly coded in NAS.

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**PROCEDURES PERFORMED**

3.     Retirement

Eight of twenty-nine agencies had 17 employees retire during fiscal year 2002. We reviewed seven of the eight agencies' food expenses to ensure that no food or refreshments were paid with State funds. These seven agencies had 16 employees retire during fiscal year 2002.

4.     Agencies Not Selected for Testing

An information request letter was sent to each of the 14 agencies not selected for testing. The letter requested the agency provide:

- The number of retirements the agency had during fiscal year 2002.
- Any "other" recognition awards besides length of service and achievements, such as certifications or good attitude.

As of August 29, 2002, the Auditor of Public Accounts had not received a response to the information request from the State Treasurer. The State Treasurer specifically indicated to the Auditor of Public Accounts that they would not respond to the information requested.

**INDIVIDUAL AGENCY PLANS**

There are 47 State agencies that have an approved Agency Employee Recognition Plan on file with DAS-State Personnel. See **Schedule B** for a listing of State agencies adopting their own plan. DAS-State Personnel established a set of Agency Employee Recognition Guidelines outlining the requirements for each category and any corresponding monetary limits. Non-Classified agencies are outside the State Personnel System, and may choose to follow the State Personnel System Rules and Regulations or establish their own.

The agency plan must address the requirements established by DAS before the plan will be approved. Once all the necessary information has been included in the plan the DAS-Personnel Director will approve the plan and notify the agency. Any modifications made to the plan must be submitted to DAS-State Personnel for approval.

As with the Governor's Plan, the agencies may recognize employees, with State funds, for length of State and agency service, achievements (Employee/Manager of the Year), and the completion of education/certification programs.

Agencies may provide food or refreshments with State funds for employee recognition events if it is documented in their approved plan. DAS has addressed the cost of food or refreshments for various recognition ceremonies within their guidelines.



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**PROCEDURES PERFORMED**

**INDIVIDUAL AGENCY PLANS (Concluded)**

We reviewed disbursements related to the employee recognition programs for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2002 for those agencies adopting their own Agency Employee Recognition Plans. We selected the following for testing:

1. Achievement (Employee/Manager of the Year)

Twenty-nine of forty-seven agencies nominated at least one employee for exemplary achievement. We selected six of the twenty-nine agencies participating in the achievement award presented by the Governor for testing. The six agencies tested recognized nineteen employees.

We tested monetary awards to employees and food expenses of the six agencies to ensure proper compliance with the agencies' plan/DAS' guidelines, to ensure the monetary awards were properly considered as taxable income, and to ensure expenses related to employee recognition programs were properly coded in NAS.

2. Length of Service

Thirty-four of forty-seven agencies recognized at least one employee for years of service. We randomly selected five of the agencies for testing. The five agencies tested recognized 122 employees for years of service during fiscal year 2002.

We tested the employee awards and food expenses of the five agencies to ensure proper compliance with the agencies' plan/DAS' guidelines and to ensure expenses related to employee recognition programs were properly coded in NAS.

3. Retirements

Twenty of forty-seven agencies had a total of 214 employees retire during fiscal year 2002. We randomly selected five of the twenty agencies for testing. These five agencies had 160 retirees.

We tested retirement awards to sixteen employees and food expenses of the five agencies to ensure proper compliance with the agencies' plan/DAS' guidelines and to ensure expenses related to employee recognition programs were properly coded in NAS.

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**PROCEDURES PERFORMED**

4.     Agencies Not Selected for Testing

An information request letter was sent to each of the 35 agencies not selected for testing. The letter requested the agency provide:

- The number of retirements the agency had during fiscal year 2002.
- Any “other” recognition awards besides length of service and achievements, such as certifications or good attitude.

As of August 29, 2002, the Auditor of Public Accounts (APA) had not received a response to the information request from the following two agencies.

- Governor’s Office\*
- Lieutenant Governor’s Office

\* The Governor’s Office specifically indicated to the APA that they would not respond to the information requested.

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**SUMMARY OF COMMENTS**

In performing the procedures related to the advisory service objectives enumerated in our advisory letter for Employee Recognition, we noted certain matters involving the internal control and other operational matters that are presented here. The comments and recommendations are intended to improve internal controls and to ensure compliance.

**Governor's Plan**

1. ***Length of Service:*** One of five agencies tested awarded an employee with an agency award for length of State service.

**Agency Plans**

2. ***Length of Service:*** One of five agencies tested did not comply with their plan regarding the maximum amount spent on a plaque for agency years of service.
3. ***No Supporting Documentation:*** Two of twelve agencies tested did not have an approved food request on file from DAS-State Personnel prior to the recognition event.

More detailed information on the above items is provided hereafter. It should be noted this advisory letter is critical in nature since it contains only our comments and recommendations on the areas noted for improvement.

Letters were furnished to the agencies to provide them an opportunity to respond to the comments and recommendations included in this advisory letter. All formal responses received have been incorporated into this advisory letter. Where no response has been included, the agency declined to respond. Responses have been objectively evaluated and recognized, as appropriate, in the advisory letter. Responses that indicate corrective action has been taken were not verified at this time.

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**COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**GOVERNOR'S PLAN**

**1. Length of Service**

Title 273 NAC 16 requires all employee recognition programs be approved by the DAS-Director of State Personnel. Agencies following the Governor's Plan will be included in the Governor's recognition of State employees for length of State service. If an agency chooses to recognize employees outside of the Governor's recognition an approved plan by the Department of Administrative Service (DAS)-Director of State Personnel should be on file.

One of five agencies tested, Board of Engineers and Architects, recognized an employee with a plaque for 30 years of State service. If the Board of Engineers and Architects chooses to recognize employees outside of the Governor's recognition, a plan approved by DAS-Director of State Personnel should be on file. Without an approved plan to support employee recognition activities, there is an increased risk of loss or misuse of State funds.

We recommend the Board submit an employee recognition plan to  
DAS-Director of State Personnel for approval for any employee  
recognition activities outside of the Governor's Plan.

**AGENCY PLANS**

**2. Length of Service**

The Department of Agriculture adopted an Employee Recognition Plan. The approved plan indicated the cost of each length of agency service award is based upon the years of service provided to the Department. Per the agency plan, at 30 years of agency service the cost of the plaque should not exceed \$50. Employees recognized for 15 years of agency service are recognized with a plaque not to exceed \$25.

The Department did not follow their own Employee Recognition Plan on file with DAS-Division of State Personnel. The cost of the length of agency service award exceeded the maximum agency plan amount for 8 of 14 employees tested.

Three employees were recognized for 30 years of agency service and the cost of the three awards exceeded the plan limit from \$1 to \$7. Five employees were recognized for 15 years of agency service and the cost of the awards exceeded the plan amount ranging from \$1 to \$5.

Without the proper controls over disbursements related to employee recognition there is an increased risk the agency will not follow limits set in their plan.

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**COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**AGENCY PLANS (Continued)**

**2. Length of Service (Concluded)**

We recommend the Department follow the current policies within its Employee Recognition Plan, or revise the plan to reflect the actual costs spent on the recognition awards and submit the revised plan to DAS-Division of State Personnel for approval.

**3. No Supporting Documentation**

Per DAS Employee Recognition Guidelines, food and refreshments may be authorized for various recognition ceremonies. For each event a request to serve food and refreshments should be submitted in writing and approved by DAS-Division of State Personnel on a case-by-case basis, prior to each event.

Two of twelve agencies selected for testing did not have approval on file from DAS-Division of State Personnel prior to the event.

- Property Assessment and Taxation did not request approval from DAS- Division of State Personnel for one recognition event where food was provided with State funds. The cost of the food provided at the event was \$110.
- The Department of Revenue did not have documentation on file to support a quarterly recognition in which \$256 of food was provided. The Department indicated they do not always keep the DAS-Division of State Personnel approvals authorizing the Department's food request on file. The Department also indicated on occasion they host the recognition event even though the requested approval had not been received.

There is an increased risk of loss of State funds when agencies do not comply with guidelines set forth by DAS-Division of State Personnel regarding employee recognition events.

We recommend the agencies follow the DAS-Division of State Personnel guidelines regarding food requests for employee recognition events and obtain and maintain the necessary approval prior to the event.

*Department of Revenue's Response: It is the Department's practice to electronically notify State Personnel each time we are making food purchases for each recognition program. When the Department does not receive a response, we interpret that to mean tacit approval. Additionally, the Department has a written recognition plan that is approved by State Personnel.*

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**COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**AGENCY PLANS (Concluded)**

**3. No Supporting Documentation (Concluded)**

*The plan establishes a recognition ceremony food limit of \$3 per employee for each recognition program. The Department invites approximately 400 employees to participate in each recognition program. Based on this limit, we could be requesting \$1,200 for each program. The food cost of the recognition program cited was \$256. The event was documented and receipts clearly show the money was expended for food. We are unable to discern what increased risk of loss of State funds there was in this situation. The approval process is a redundant step that adds no value.*

**Auditors' Response:** The DAS-Division of State Personnel employee recognition guidelines, effective June 1, 1999, indicate requests to serve food and refreshments must be approved by DAS-Division of State Personnel prior to each event taking place.

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES  
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**STATE AGENCIES ON GOVERNOR'S PLAN**  
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2002

Schedule A

Agency Name	Total # of Agency Employees	EOY/ SMOY Awards	Number of Retirements	Years of Service Awards	Certification Awards	Other Awards
Abstractors, Board of Examiners	7	0	0	0	0	0
Arts Council	12	0	0	1	0	0
Attorney General	95	2	0	9	0	0
Barber Examiners, Board of	5	0	0	0	0	0
Dairy Industry Development Board	0	0	0	0	0	0
Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Commission for the	12	0	0	0	0	0
Dry Bean Commission	0	0	0	0	0	0
Educational Lands and Funds, Board of	37	0	1	6	0	0
Electrical Board	16	1	0	2	0	0
Engineers and Architects, State Board of	13	0	0	2	0	0
Fire Marshal, State	62	2	1	10	0	0
Geologists, Board of	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grain Sorghum Development, Utilization and Marketing Board	2	0	0	1	0	0
Historical Society, State	105	0	3	11	0	0
Indian Affairs, Commission of	16	1	1	0	0	0
Land Surveyors, State Board of Examiners for	0	0	0	0	0	0
Landscape Architects, State Board of	0	0	0	0	0	0
Legislative Council	319	0	3	22	0	0
Oil and Gas Conservation Commission	12	0	0	3	0	0
Postsecondary Education, Coordinating Commission for	13	0	0	1	0	0
Public Advocacy, Commission on	10	0	0	0	0	0
Racing Commission, State	9	0	0	0	0	0
Railway Council	1	0	0	0	0	0
Rural Development Commission	6	2	0	0	0	0
Secretary of State	45	1	0	4	0	0
State Treasurer	18	0	NR	0	NR	NR
Supreme Court	1,006	0	6	92	0	0
Tax Equalization and Review Commission	8	0	1	0	0	0
Wheat Board Development, Utilization, and Marketing Board	3	0	1	2	0	0
	<u>1,832</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>166</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>

Note: EOY/SMOY and Years of Service data was taken from DAS-Division of State Personnel records. Retirement data was obtained from an Auditor of Public Accounts prepared Nebraska Employee Information System (NEIS) query. Total agency employee data was obtained from the Nebraska State Personnel 2001 Almanac.

EOY = Employee of the Year

SMOY = Supervisor/Manager of the Year

NR = Agency did not respond to employee information request.

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**STATE AGENCIES WITH INDIVIDUAL PLANS**  
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2002

Schedule B

<b>Agency Name</b>	<b>Total # of Agency Employees</b>	<b>EOY/ SMOY Awards</b>	<b>Number of Retirements</b>	<b>Years of Service Awards</b>	<b>Certification Awards</b>	<b>Other Awards</b>
Accountability and Disclosure Commission	16	0	0	0	0	0
Administrative Services, Department of	668	4	7	62	0	0
Aeronautics, Department of	29	2	0	4	0	0
Department of Agriculture	162	2	0	26	0	6
Auditor of Public Accounts	36	2	0	0	0	2
Banking and Finance, Department of	60	2	4	8	1	0
Blind and Visually Impaired, Commission for the	68	2	0	3	0	36
Brand Committee	118	0	1	6	0	0
Corn Development, Utilization, and Marketing Board	15	0	0	1	0	0
Correctional Services, Department of	1,691	8	17	106	0	n/a
Criminal Justice, Commission of Law Enforcement and	41	0	0	7	0	0
Economic Development, Department of	110	0	2	7	0	0
Education, State Department of	523	2	4	63	n/a	n/a
Educational Telecommunications Commission	80	0	1	6	0	0
Environmental Quality, Department of	210	2	2	18	0	61
Equal Opportunity Commission	49	2	1	4	0	41
Ethanol Board	11	1	0	0	0	1
Foster Care Review Board, State	35	0	0	1	0	0
Game and Parks Commission	952	2	8	51	0	0
Governor's Office	45	2	NR	2	NR	NR
Health and Human Services System, Department of	6,723	26	88	605	n/a	n/a
Industrial Relations, Commission of	8	0	1	0	0	0
Insurance, Department of	90	0	0	6	4	0
Investment Council	11	0	0	0	0	0
Labor, Department of	477	3	19	65	0	75
Library Commission	44	1	0	0	0	0
Lieutenant Governor's Office	2	0	NR	0	NR	NR
Liquor Control Commission	14	2	0	0	0	0

(Continued)



STATE AGENCIES WITH INDIVIDUAL PLANS  
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For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2002

Schedule B

<b>Agency Name</b>	<b>Total # of Agency Employees</b>	<b>EOY/ SMOY Awards</b>	<b>Number of Retirements</b>	<b>Years of Service Awards</b>	<b>Certification Awards</b>	<b>Other Awards</b>
Mexican American Commission	12	0	0	1	0	0
Military Department	157	2	0	10	0	0
Motor Vehicle Industry Licensing Board	17	0	0	1	0	0
Motor Vehicles, Department of	192	2	5	33	n/a	8
Natural Resources, Department of	158	2	1	16	0	0
Pardons, Board of	11	1	0	2	0	0
Power Review Board	7	0	0	0	0	0
Property Assessment & Taxation, Department of	84	2	2	7	0	12
Public Accountancy, State Board of	11	0	0	0	0	0
Public Service Commission	48	1	0	6	0	0
Real Estate Appraiser Board	7	0	0	0	0	0
Real Estate Commission, State	18	1	1	0	0	0
Public Employees Retirement Board	45	2	0	8	0	0
Revenue, Department of	429	2	3	34	0	n/a
Roads, Department of	2,313	10	33	247	0	108
State Patrol	673	4	14	72	0	189
Veterans' Affairs, Department of	12	1	0	2	0	0
Women, Nebraska Commission on the Status of	3	0	0	0	0	0
Workers' Compensation Court	48	0	0	3	0	0
	<u>16,533</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>214</u>	<u>1,493</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>539</u>

Source: EOY/SMOY and Years of Service data was taken from DAS-Division of State Personnel Records. Retirement information was obtained from an APA prepared NEIS SQ

EOY= Employee of the Year

SMOY=Supervisor/Manager of the Year

NR = Agency did not respond to employee information request.

n/a = Agency could not provide the number of awards given.

(Concluded)