

Performance Award Program Best Practices

Communication and Stakeholder Engagement

Constant communication with stakeholders is key to the success of performance award programs.

Common Challenges

1. Gaining stakeholder buy-in.
2. Ensuring the correct stakeholders receive/understand the correct message.
3. Maintaining communication with stakeholders throughout the implementation year.

Best Practices

General communication practices:

- Develop a communication plan to ensure that the goals and structure of the program is clear to all stakeholders at the beginning of the school year.
- Identify key actors who will be important at various points in time during implementation. Consider staff members that can advocate for the program in different meetings or communications.
- Assign a campus contact person for each campus in your plan. This person will serve as the program “expert” and should be positioned to answer questions related to program eligibility, performance measures, timelines, etc.
- Consider multiple communication avenues, from the district website to faculty presentations, newspaper articles to television commercials. Mention your program, its purpose, progress, and interim successes during any and every opportunity both internally and externally.

Program buy-in:

- Consider branding your program. Give it a name and a logo to show that the district is invested in the program and its goals. This can help garner support and demonstrate to teachers that the district is invested and determined to sustain the program.
- Design a “mission” for your program. Communicate this mission, based on district needs in terms of student achievement and educator quality. Communicate this mission and explain why your district structured the program as it did. In the end, it’s all about improving student success.

Communication to teachers and staff:

- Communicate the program goals and program structure at the beginning of the year in a formal manner. Districts may consider a meeting, presentation, mailing or electronic communication.
- Prepare a “Frequently Asked Questions” document to answer common questions related to your program.
- Make approved plan publicly available to teachers. Make information available in a timely manner and in various formats (e.g., electronically, packets sent home to parents, meeting minutes, brochures, presentation handouts, district website, etc.).

Performance Award Program Best Practices

- Prepare a one-page document that summarizes your plan in a simple and easy-to-read format.
- Prepare an “understanding form” that all teachers and staff will sign to ensure that they understand their performance measures and commit to participating in the program. This form should also include award eligibility requirements and information on tax/benefit deductions.
- Remind teachers and staff of program progress, performance measures, and documentation submission due dates.
- Set up forums for teacher feedback on program implementation and modification throughout the year.
- If problems occur, consider holding a meeting to answer staff questions and discuss modifications that staff members suggest for the subsequent implementation year.
- Anticipate possible plan misunderstandings over performance targets, instructional objectives, measurement systems, award amounts, eligible teachers and campus staff, etc. Prepare responses to these possible misunderstandings.

Communication to external stakeholders:

- Communicate the program goals and program structure at the beginning of the year in a formal manner. Districts may consider a meeting, presentation, mailing or electronic communication.
- Make approved plan publicly available to the community, parents, local businesses, and school board members. Make information available in a timely manner and in various formats (e.g., electronically, packets sent home to parents, meeting minutes, brochures, presentation handouts, district website, etc.).
- Prepare a one-page document that summarizes your plan in a simple and easy-to-read format.
- Work to gain community support for the program goals, explaining the importance of the program in addressing high-quality teacher recruitment, retention, and increased student achievement. Build relationships with the media and invite them to public meetings.
- Consider innovative ways to highlight your program, such as video spots on your local public access channel or features in the community newspaper.
- Engage, update, and inform all stakeholders frequently throughout the entire implementation year of program progress and direction.
- Anticipate possible plan misunderstandings over the program and prepare responses to these possible misunderstandings.

Performance Award Program Best Practices

Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Tools and Resources

To develop a communication plan:

Example of Communication Plan- South Carolina TIF Program

http://www.txeducatorawards.org/docs/Example_of_Communication_Plan-%20South_Carolina_TIF_Program.pdf

Effective Change Management and Communication Strategies

http://www.txeducatorawards.org/docs/Effective_Change%20Mgt_and_Communication_Strategies.pdf

D.A.T.E. Strategic Communication Plan

http://www.txeducatorawards.org/docs/D.A.T.E._Strategic_Communication_Plan.pdf

Sample Communication Plan for Districts

http://www.txeducatorawards.org/docs/Sample_Communication_Plan_for_Districts.pdf

To communicate your plan to stakeholders:

CECR Stakeholder Engagement Chapter

http://www.txeducatorawards.org/docs/CECR_Stakeholder_Engagement_Chapter.pdf

Stakeholder Engagement and Communication Presentation

http://www.txeducatorawards.org/docs/Stakeholder_Engagement_and_Communication_Presentation.pdf

To ensure teacher understanding of your program:

Sample teacher understanding forms

<http://www.txeducatorawards.org/implementation.html>

For additional information, please contact the Technical Assistance Center at
(512) 579-5050 or txeducatoraward@utsystem.edu.