

Airmen Powered by Innovation (API) Program

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The Airmen Powered by Innovation (API) Program provides Airman an avenue to submit ideas improving mission performance, saving resources, improving morale, and increasing safety. The API Program is operationally managed by Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force, Management, Management Improvement (SAF/MGM) and administratively managed by the Air Force Manpower Analysis Agency (AFMAA). The AFMAA API Operations Branch, also known as the API Cell, executes the API submission process. According to SAF/MGM, the program empowers Airmen to make every dollar count and is an engine for grassroots innovations across the Air Force.

Former Air Force Vice Chief of Staff, General Larry O. Spencer, spearheaded the Make Every Dollar Count (MEDC) initiative. The initial rollout of MEDC resulted in 13 Headquarters Air Force-level and 26 major command-sponsored initiatives cutting across multiple Air Force lines of business, including acquisition strategy, contract management, maintenance repair operations, and energy management. The API Program is the most widely recognized initiative and has received more than 9,900 ideas from Airmen since February 2014, with a current estimation of \$147 million in projected savings to the Air Force.

When the program kicked off in 2014, the API Cell would elevate validated ideas to Organizational Level Decision Makers (OLDMs) at MAJCOM and HQ AF two-digit levels. The OLDMs would review, evaluate, and have the option to disapprove or approve and implement idea submissions.

Beginning 9 February 2018, SAF/MGM modified the API process. Now all AF Active Duty, AF Reserve, and AF Civilians are eligible to submit ideas to the API Program. Air National Guard (Title 32) members can submit ideas if they impact the Total Force. After submission of an idea, the API Cell reviews each idea to ensure it is eligible. If so, the Cell adds the idea submission to the designated approving official's Principle Decision Maker (PDM) list. If the PDM does not approve the idea, it remains on the list

for future consideration. If the PDM approves it, the submitter receives a \$2,500 award as long as he or she meets the AFI 38-402 award eligibility requirements.

Here are a two examples of approved ideas which applied innovative thinking and Continuous Process Improvement. A submitter from Tinker AFB identified the need for a tool to accurately measure the spline tooth wear for the TF-33 Engine Starter Shaft after noticing the Technical Order (T.O.) only required a very subjective visual inspection. The submitter took the initiative to develop the NOGO Spline Teeth Gauge for the Engine Starter Shaft. The NOGO Spline Tooth Gauge ensured shaft assembly dimensions are within the mandated 5 percent permissible wear. The gauge also ensured an engine starter would not be identified as "F Condition - Unserviceable/Repairable" due to the unknown condition of the Spline Teeth wear. AFMC approved this idea and determined it has a projected savings of \$1,789,382.

Another submitter from Hurlburt Field noticed when a faulty landing gear switch was found on Single Bay Station or Ground Control Station, the T.O. required replacement of the entire Control Console Assembly (CCA) at a cost of \$40,256. The submitter recommended replacing just the faulty landing gear switch at a cost of \$64 instead of the entire CCA. The recommended change would also cut man hours by 75 percent, eliminating the operational checks required when replacing the entire CCA. AFMC approved this idea and determined a projected savings of \$602,880.

In summary, the streamlined submission process enables innovative ideas to get in front of decision makers with minimal layers of review. API submitters are encouraged, but not required, to seek assistance from the Manpower Offices to fully develop the idea before forwarding it for evaluation. If a submitter requests your assistance, please apply your process improvement skills to make the idea more easily understood by the MAJCOM and HAF evaluators. This ensure the idea receives a proper evaluation and is more likely to be approved and implemented.

To submit an idea to the API Program, go to the "Airman Powered by Innovation" AF Portal Page and click the "Submit Your Idea" link. If you have any questions, refer to AFI 38-402 or contact the API Cell by sending an email to the API Workflow (afpc.api.1@us.af.mil).