Recognition Grid [1]

Effective Date: July 24, 2026 ***DRAFT***

The following grid summarizes requirements for a recognition program (Recognition Program Authorization/RPA form), distribution reporting (Recognition Reporting/RR or Payment Reporting/PR forms), tax reportability (by Employee Services or Procurement Service Center), and other procedures related to distributing gifts, awards, rewards, or prizes. Specific requirements are determined by the type of item (cash, cash-like/gift card, or non-cash); by the value of the item; and by the recipients (employees and/or non-employees). Note:

- *After recognition program (Recognition Program Authorization, or RPA, form) approval, all eligible individuals must be notified about the program.*
- *A recognition program is not required for purchase of employee retirement gifts.*
- *A recognition program is not required to host a CU official function (staff appreciation or other event with food/beverage).*
- *If the individual value of the recognition item (cash, cash-like, non-cash) is greater than $2,000, approval by the appropriate officer – in addition to other required approvals noted in the grid – must be obtained.*
- *All Internal Revenue Code limitations and limits in effect at the time of the award will be considered before adjustments are made to the W-2 or 1099.*

Type of Award	Value	Requirements	For Employees	For Non-Employees
Cash	Any	RPA form/Program needed?	Recognition program (RPA form) approved by org unit, campus Human Resources Director, and appropriate officer	Recognition program (RPA form) approved by org unit and Org Fiscal Principal
		RR/PR form needed?	None	None (see Section H)
		Tax reporting?	Generally tax reportable on Employee's W-2; see Recognition Categories (Section B)	Tax reportable; PSC issues 1099-MISC if $2,000 or more in calendar year

Type of Award	Value	Requirements	For Employees	For Non-Employees
Cash-like (e.g., gift card)	>$100 individually or in aggregate during calendar year	Payment method?	Additional Pay Form processed by Employee Services in HCM	Payment Authorization form processed by Procurement Service Center in FIN
		RPA form/Program needed?	Recognition program (RPA form) approved by org unit, campus Human Resources Director, and appropriate officer	Recognition program (RPA form) approved by org unit and Org Fiscal Principal
		RR/PR form needed?	Recognition Reporting form sent to Employee Services	Payment Reporting form sent to PSC *if individual or aggregate payments exceed $700 in calendar year*
		Tax reporting?	Generally tax reportable on Employee's W-2	Tax reportable; PSC issues 1099-MISC if $2,000 or more in calendar year
Cash-like	up to $100 individually or in aggregate during calendar year	Payment method?	Any allowable procurement process, such as Procurement Card	Any allowable procurement process, such as Procurement Card
		RPA form/Program needed?	Recognition program approved by campus Human Resources Director and appropriate officer	None
		RR/PR form needed?	Recognition Reporting form sent to Employee Services	None

Type of Award	Value	Requirements	For Employees	For Non-Employees
		Tax reporting?	Generally tax reportable on Employee’s W-2	None
		Payment method?	Any allowable procurement process, such as Procurement Card	Any allowable procurement process, such as Procurement Card
Non-cash				
1. Awardee name is engraved on the award and the award item (plaque, trophy, or medal) is not made of precious metal or stone	Any	RPA form/Program needed?	None	None
		RR form needed?	None	None
		Tax reporting?	None	None
		Payment method?	Any allowable procurement process, such as Procurement Card	Any allowable procurement process, such as Procurement Card
2. Other types of non-cash awards, rewards, or prizes not listed in #1 above	>$100 individually or in aggregate per program during calendar year	RPA form/Program needed?	Recognition program approved by org unit, campus Human Resources Director, and appropriate officer	Recognition program approved by org unit and Org Fiscal Principal

Type of Award	Value	Requirements	For Employees	For Non-Employees
		RR/PR form needed?	Recognition Reporting form sent to Employee Services	Payment Reporting form sent to PSC *if individual or aggregate payments exceed $700 in calendar year*
		Tax reporting?	Generally tax reportable on Employee's W-2; see Recognition Categories	Tax reportable; PSC issues 1099-MISC if $2,000 or more in calendar year
		Payment method?	Any allowable procurement process, such as Procurement Card	Any allowable procurement process, such as Procurement Card
	up to $100 individually or in aggregate during calendar year and not associated with an annual employee evaluation program	RPA form/Program needed?	None	None
		RR/PR form needed?	None	None
		Tax reporting?	None	None
		Payment method?	Any allowable procurement process, such as Procurement Card	Any allowable procurement process, such as Procurement Card

Recognition Categories

Length of Service and Retirement – Length of Service recognition may be given to employees who have achieved benchmark anniversaries in their years of service to the University. Five years is the minimum length of service that can be recognized, and recognition may not take place more frequently than every five years. Retirement recognition may be given to employees who retire from the University, regardless of their length of service. Note: Employee length of service/retirement awards may not exceed $400; these awards are not tax reportable if the item is non-cash.

Staff Appreciation or Merit – Staff appreciation may be demonstrated through awards, rewards, or prizes. Merit recognition may be given to employees or students for excellence generally or specifically with regard to a certain project/initiative.

Safety – Safety recognition may be given to employees in front-line positions for acts intended to prevent adverse effects related to danger, risk, or injury. This type of award cannot be given to managers, administrators, or clerical employees, and no more than 10% of an org unit's total employees can be given a safety award during a particular calendar year. Note: Safety awards are not tax reportable if the award is $400 or less and non-cash.

Participation – Participation recognition may be given to employees, associates, students, or other individuals because of their involvement in a university activity, e.g., receiving a door prize for attending a university event, or receiving an award, reward, or prize for completing a university survey.Recognition Program Requirements

Cash Awards, Rewards, and Prizes

- Cash awards to employees are processed through Employee Services, in HCM, issuing the Additional Pay [2] form with earnings type of Award (AWR).
- Cash awards to non-employees are processed through the Procurement Service Center using the Payment Authorization (PA) form.

Recent Revisions

- Grid updated 1/1/2026: Changed IRS reporting threshold from $600 to $2,000. Updated CU internal reporting of cash-like/non-cash items to non-employees to be required over $700 (instead of over $100) and to use the Payment Reporting form (instead of the Recognition Reporting form).

Have a question or feedback?

For questions or feedback contact fss@cu.edu [3].

Groups audience:
Controller

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