

**BY ORDER OF THE
SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE**

AIR FORCE INSTRUCTION 38-402

9 FEBRUARY 2018

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Manpower and Organization

***AIRMEN POWERED BY INNOVATION
AND SUGGESTION PROGRAM***



COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY

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This publication implements Air Force Policy Directive 38-4, *Continuous Improvement and Airmen Powered by Innovation Program*. It provides guidance and procedures on the Airmen Powered by Innovation (API) program throughout the Air Force (AF). It applies to Airmen at all levels including the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard (ANG) members, except where noted otherwise. This publication may be supplemented at any level, but all supplements must be routed to the Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) listed above for coordination prior to certification and approval. Refer recommended changes and questions about this publication to the OPR listed above using the Air Force Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*; route AF Forms 847 from the field through the appropriate chain of command. The authorities to waive wing/unit level requirements in this publication are identified with a Tier (“T-0, T-1, T-2, T-3”) number following the compliance statement. See Air Force Instruction (DAFI) 33-360, *Publications and Forms Management*, Table 1.1 for a description of the authorities associated with the Tier numbers. Submit requests for waivers through the chain of command to the appropriate Tier waiver approval authority, or alternately, to the Publication OPR for non-tiered compliance items. Ensure all records created as a result of processes prescribed in this publication are maintained in accordance with AFI 33-322, *Records Management and Information Governance Program*, and disposed of in accordance with the Air Force Records Disposition Schedule (RDS) located in the Air Force Records Management System. The use of the name or mark of any specific manufacturer, commercial product, commodity, or service in this publication does not imply endorsement by the Air Force.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

This document is a revision of AFI 38-402, *Airmen Powered by Innovation and Suggestion Program*, dated 9 February 2018, through incorporation of General Memorandum, dated 7 February 2020 and must be reviewed in its entirety. This AFI prescribes new procedures for processing ideas at and below the MAJCOM level, replaces a provision for monetary awards with professional development opportunities, amends procedures on providing feedback to Innovators, and deletes the ANG (Title 32) Suggestion Program.

Chapter 1

PURPOSE

1.1. Purpose. This publication formalizes and provides guidance for the Airmen Powered by Innovation program. Specifically, it outlines procedures for submitting, evaluating and refining ideas, pitching ideas to Decision Makers (see [para 2.6](#)), implementing ideas, and ultimately getting ideas that scale across our Air Force.

1.2. Program Description. The Airmen Powered by Innovation program is the Air Force enterprise-wide innovation program that solicits suggestions/ideas from all Airmen which contribute to the efficiency, economy, or other improvement of operations or programs related to the armed forces. The Airmen Powered by Innovation program combines three legacy improvement programs: Innovative Development through Employee Awareness, Productivity Enhancing Capital Investment, and best practices. Resource saving innovative successes are critical to the Air Force's ability to operate in this fiscally constrained environment. Airmen Powered by Innovation is the foundation for empowering Airmen and is intended to be an engine for innovation across the Air Force.

1.3. (DELETED)

Chapter 2

AUTHORITIES, ROLES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1. Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force, Management (SAF/MG).

- 2.1.1. Oversees the Airmen Powered by Innovation Program.
- 2.1.2. Serves as the final decision authority for inquiries and professional development opportunities related to the Airmen Powered by Innovation Program.
- 2.1.3. Plans and programs for financial support of the program's supporting data system.
- 2.1.4. Approves guidance and proposed supplements for the Airmen Powered by Innovation Program.

2.2. (DELETED)

2.3. Director, Business Operations (SAF/MGB):

- 2.3.1. Manages and executes processing of professional development opportunities for approved ideas.
- 2.3.2. Establishes Airmen Powered by Innovation submission process.
- 2.3.3. Oversees the performance of the Airmen Powered by Innovation Cell through daily Operational Control.
- 2.3.4. Monitors program performance and elevates issues to SAF/MG.
- 2.3.5. Manages budget for program execution and innovation initiatives.
- 2.3.6. Manages strategic communication and key messaging of Airmen Powered by Innovation within the United States Air Force.
- 2.3.7. Markets the Airmen Powered by Innovation Program.
 - 2.3.7.1. Purchases promotional items that will contribute materially to increasing Airmen participation in the program. The promotional items purchased must be of low cost and have little or no intrinsic value (e.g. pens, mouse pads, lanyards). The promotional items must also contain or display contact information (i.e. website address, telephone number(s)) providing Airmen with the means to learn about and/or participate in the program.
 - 2.3.7.2. Ensures such promotional items are distributed at events intended to inform Airmen about the program.
 - 2.3.7.3. Uses the official Airmen Powered by Innovation logo.
 - 2.3.7.4. Publicizes contributions and program accomplishments through promotional videos, articles and web-based applications.
- 2.3.8. Develops and reports metrics on the program pursuant to SAF/MG direction.
- 2.3.9. (DELETED)

2.4. Air Force Manpower Analysis Agency (AFMAA). Supports program execution through Administration Control of the Airmen Powered by Innovation Cell.

2.5. Airmen Powered by Innovation Cell.

2.5.1. Executes the Airmen Powered by Innovation submission process.

2.5.2. Informs Innovators when submissions are not governed by Airmen Powered by Innovation program to the appropriate office of primary responsibility e.g., Technical Order Changes, Patents/Inventions, Price Challenges, Air National Guard Title 32 submissions affecting only the Air National Guard, etc.

2.5.3. Determines if submissions are ready for evaluation.

2.5.4. Determines the appropriate local Process Manager (PM) to notify and connect with the Innovator to prepare an innovation pitch or business case for the local decision maker (see [para 2.6](#)), to accomplish a decision brief and determine status of submissions.

2.5.5. Informs the local PM of new submissions requiring their review.

2.5.6. Tracks each submission through the processes outlined in [Figure 3.1](#)

2.5.7. Notifies SAF/MG and appropriate Master Process Officer (MPO) of submission that the Decision Maker identifies for possible replication throughout the Air Force.

2.5.8. Monitors process performance by tracking all ideas submitted.

2.5.9. Manages process flow by directing attention for action on any idea not showing progress after 30 calendar days.

2.5.10. Maintains all ideas submitted to Airmen Powered by Innovation and provides notifications concerning status updates.

2.5.11. **(DELETED)**

2.6. Decision Maker. A Decision Maker is the lowest-level commander with the authority to approve the way forward for the idea. A Decision Maker reviews idea submissions presented by Innovators and makes one of the following choices:

2.6.1. Continue to refine idea locally. This means the idea is not yet ready for decision but has potential. The Innovator and PM work together based on Decision Maker input.

2.6.2. Beta test and or implement locally only. Do not send for Higher Headquarters evaluation or replication. If implemented successfully and proven locally, forwarding for Higher Headquarters evaluation or replication is encouraged.

2.6.3. Implement locally and forward for Higher Headquarters evaluation or replication.

2.6.4. Do not implement locally at this time but forward for Higher Headquarters evaluation or replication.

2.6.5. Do not implement, archive the idea.

2.6.6. May recognize Airmen with non-monetary awards in accordance with local policy.

2.6.7. Takes appropriate actions to implement approved ideas.

2.6.8. Determines total projected benefits.

2.6.8.1. Manpower savings may not be considered in calculation of dollar savings with one exception:

2.6.8.1.1. A documented elimination of a manpower authorization (funded through the Future Years Defense Plan) from the Unit Manpower Document.

2.6.8.1.2. Eliminated manpower positions are returned to the owning Major Command to be redistributed to higher priority workload that has been recognized, but not funded (an unfunded manpower position). In those cases, use Air Force Instruction 65-503, *United States Air Force Cost and Planning Factors*, to determine the annual cost of the manpower authorization and use that cost figure in savings calculation.

2.7. Innovator (any Airman who submits an idea).

2.7.1. Submits ideas that improve operations or processes, provide cost savings, and improve morale to Airmen Powered by Innovation (<https://usaf.ideascalegov.com>). Submissions can be done as an individual or as a group of Airmen.

2.7.2. Connects with Innovation Consultant (see [para 2.8](#)) when seeking assistance from local leadership, subject matter experts, financial management analysts, or legal counsel to develop a sound, clear, concise, and supported idea presentation.

2.7.3. As requested by Innovation Consultant, Decision Maker or others, provides additional information to develop, refine and improve the quality of idea submission.

2.7.4. Teams with Innovation Consultant to develop a persuasive presentation to the appropriate Decision Maker at the soonest opportunity.

2.7.5. As required, lead, facilitate or assist in beta testing, trialing and or implementing their idea as directed by the Decision Maker.

2.7.6. Reports test results to Decision Maker and makes recommendations for implementation, changes in course of action, or potential replication across wings, MAJCOMS or functional communities.

2.8. Innovation Consultant (PM, MPO, Spark Cell leaders):

2.8.1. Guides and coaches Innovators through the ideation process outlined in [Figure 3.1](#)

2.8.2. Connects Innovators to the appropriate Subject Matter Experts (SME), OPRs, or other required resources, to develop problem or opportunity statements, break the problem down and clearly define the problem. Assists as needed in gathering pertinent data, setting Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely (SMART) goals. Mentors in discovering true root causes and in developing and evaluating countermeasures. Together, these tactics are the first five steps of the eight step Practical Problem Solving Model (PPSM) outlined in Air Force Instruction 38-401, *Continuous Process Improvement (CPI)* and constitute making the business case for Innovator's ideas.

2.8.3. Helps Innovators evaluate their idea objectively and determine the best course of action once research is performed and data is gathered.

2.8.4. Guides and coaches Innovators through pitch presentation and evaluation.

- 2.8.5. Provides just-in-time training to the Decision Maker to understand the decision to be made upon receiving the pitch made by the Innovator.
- 2.8.6. Ensures decision is updated in the ideation platform.
- 2.8.7. Coordinates with other PMs, MPOs, and/or Spark Cells as necessary.
- 2.8.8. Informs Higher Headquarters (HHQ) MPOs of ideas that could potentially impact other organizations, MAJCOMS or Functional Communities.
- 2.8.9. Assists with implementation as needed.
- 2.8.10. Assists with further test and implementation projects as needed when effort is scaled up to a higher level such as from squadron to wing, wing to MAJCOM, etc.
- 2.8.11. Shares lessons learned with Continuous Process Improvement and Innovation community.
- 2.8.12. Makes recommendations for replication to Decision Makers.

Chapter 3

API SUBMISSION PROCESS

3.1. Description. The Airmen Powered by Innovation process is comprised of 8 stages: Submission, Initial Review, Refine Your Idea, Make Your Pitch, Prototype, Implemented, Scale, and Archive. See [Figure 3.1](#) All submissions to the Airmen Powered by Innovation program through the new innovation platform (usaf.ideascale.gov.com) may be recognized in accordance with the updated recognition policy outlined in [Chapter 4](#)

3.1.1. Stage 1: Submission – Innovators answer questions and can attach documents to submit their idea.

3.1.2. Stage 2: Initial Review – The API Cell reviews the idea to determine if it is an original idea with a proposed solution to a problem. The API Cell also determines which innovation consultants (if required) are referred to the idea. If the submission does not meet the minimum criteria, it will be archived. If the submission meets the minimum criteria, but requires further development, it will move to the refine stage.

3.1.3. Stage 3: Refine Your Idea – The API Cell will connect Innovators and Innovation Consultants through IdeaScale to develop the idea through step 5 of PPSM. Innovation Consultants should help develop and refine the problem or opportunity statement, ensure there is supporting data, clearly defined SMART goals, distinct root causes, and strong countermeasures. This is the most challenging and critical stage of creating a successful innovation. Many times ideas are not fully developed and often are outside the scope of responsibility of the Innovator. Innovation consultants will need to facilitate connections to SME. **(T-1)** Innovators and innovation consultants should evaluate the results of their research and determine if the ideas should move to the next stage, if goals need to be realigned, or if the idea should be archived.

3.1.4. Stage 4: Make Your Pitch – The Innovator, with the help of one or more innovation consultants, develops a pitch. Key parts of a good pitch include presentation structure, clear definition, articulation of the problem and solution to include passion for the innovation. Innovators should bring enthusiasm and passion to drive the project and energize the pitch. Supervisors, First Sergeants and Superintendents should help the Innovator prepare their presentation as each commander has different preferences. Learn what the local decision maker needs in order to make a decision and focus on those issues. Innovators should present their idea to the commander. Consultants are encouraged to be present and support the Innovator.

3.1.5. Stage 5: Prototype – Ideas in this stage have been selected to test. As required, innovation consultants should help project leads develop an implementation plan, a minimum viable product and help connect the Innovator to resources that can help test. During testing, commanders should work with Innovator to determine if the idea is applicable to other wings, MAJCOMs or functional communities.

3.1.6. Stage 6: Implemented – Ideas in this stage have been successfully implemented. Results are recorded and standard work is developed to ensure the new process or product is formalized.

3.1.7. Stage 7: Scale – Ideas in this stage have the potential to be replicated to impact other wings, MAJCOMs or functional communities. Commander support is vital in this stage. If necessary, an Innovator will need to be connected with the correct programing offices, and will need to depend on the SMEs to see their idea implemented at the appropriate level.

3.1.8. Stage 8: Archive – Ideas in this stage have been archived and no action is being taken. During any stage of the ideation process an Innovator may decide the idea is not feasible or the return on investment is not worth further pursuit. Commanders may decide to archive the idea during the pitch and should explain why using the disposition form. The archive will be maintained so other Innovators can review lessons learned from other ideas.

3.2. (DELETED)

3.3. (DELETED)

3.3.1. (DELETED)

3.3.2. (DELETED)

3.3.2.1. (DELETED)

3.3.2.2. (DELETED)

3.3.2.3. (DELETED)

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3.3.2.5. (DELETED)

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3.3.3.1. (DELETED)

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3.3.4. (DELETED)

3.4. (DELETED)

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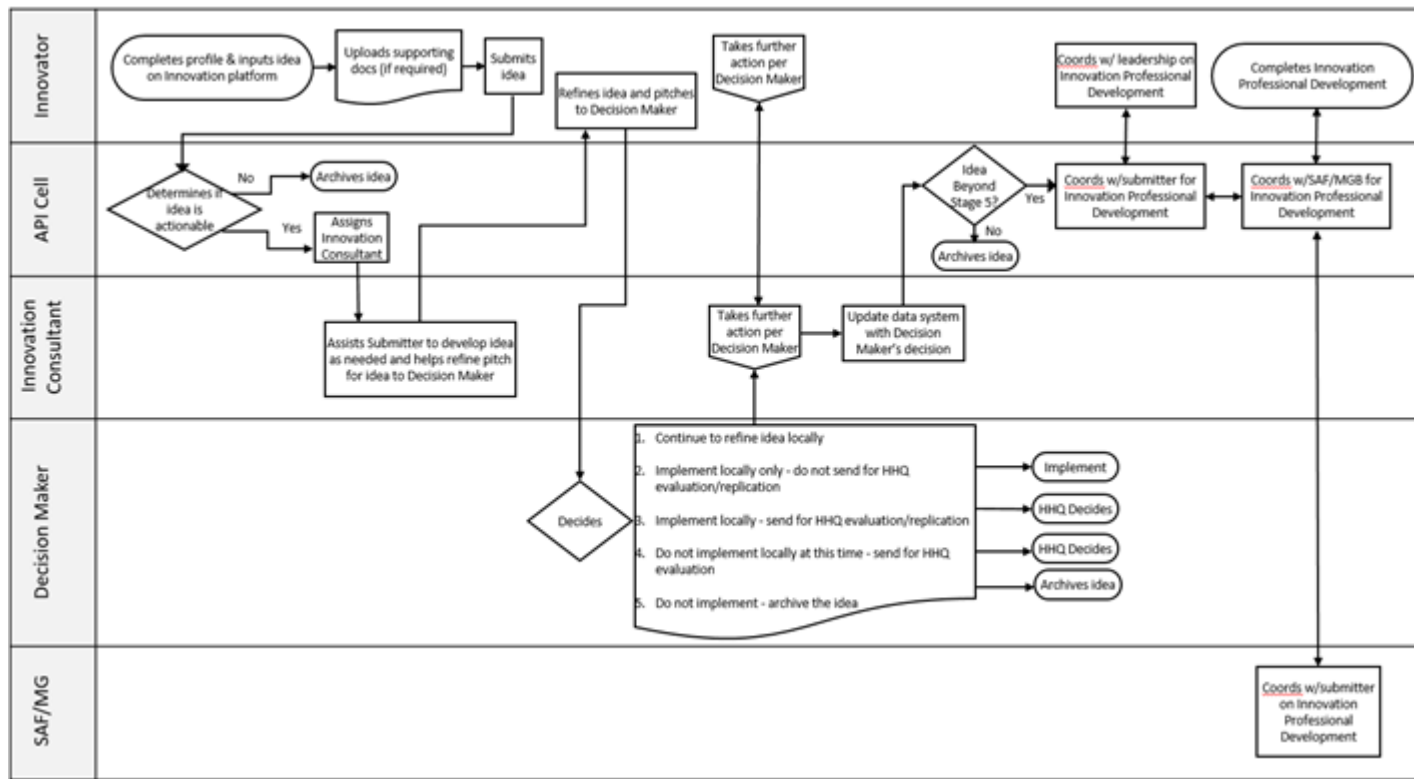
3.4.2. (DELETED)

3.4.3. (DELETED)

3.4.4. (DELETED)

3.5. (DELETED)

Figure 3.1. Airmen Powered by Innovation Process Flow.



Chapter 4

INNOVATOR RECOGNITION

4.1. Innovator Recognition. SAF/MG may recognize Airmen with professional development opportunities for submissions that move beyond Stage 4 and into Stages 5, 6, or 7. Professional development opportunities put Airmen with leading companies and academia geared at improving innovation skills by using cutting edge tools and techniques.

4.1.1. In the case of group submissions addressed in [paragraph 2.7.1](#), up to five eligible members of the submitting group will be afforded the development opportunity. Decision Makers approving the idea into the Prototyping Stage should identify those most responsible for originating and developing the submission.

4.1.2. Decision Makers have the option to recognize Airmen with non-monetary awards in accordance with local policy.

4.2. (DELETED)

4.3. (DELETED)

4.3.1. (DELETED)

4.3.2. (DELETED)

4.3.3. (DELETED)

4.3.4. (DELETED)

4.3.5. (DELETED)

4.4. (DELETED)

4.5. Responsibilities in the Recognition Process.

4.5.1. Airmen Powered by Innovation Cell:

4.5.1.1. Inform Innovators of professional development opportunities.

4.5.1.2. Innovator reviews professional development opportunities and coordinates dates with their leadership.

4.5.1.3. Innovator informs API Cell of professional development opportunity selection and provides information as required by the API Cell.

4.5.1.4. API Cell forwards information to SAF/MGB.

4.5.2. SAF/MGB:

4.5.2.1. Establishes and publishes a list of approved professional development opportunities.

4.5.2.2. Approves requests and reserves professional development opportunity for Innovator.

4.5.2.3. If necessary, captures information required to procure training through SAF/AAR's training procurement process (e.g., SF 182, *Request, Authorization, Agreement and Certification for Training Form*).

4.5.2.4. Coordinates travel with Innovator and accomplishes actions necessary to cross-org travelers in the Defense Travel System to use the Airmen Powered by Innovation fund cite.

4.5.2.5. Maintains historical audit register for payment auditability.

4.5.3. Secretary of the Air Force, Administrative Assistant; Resources Directorate:

4.5.3.1. Process training requests for military and civilians (SF-182) with appropriate lines of accounting to the Airmen Powered by Innovation program element. (T-1)

4.5.3.2. Establishes/monitors Miscellaneous Obligation/Reimbursement Document in the accounting system to ensure funds are available to cover payments.

4.5.3.3. Provides guidance and financial management support to SAF/MGB. (T-1)

Chapter 5 (DELETED)

RICHARD W. LOMBARDI
Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force,
Management and Deputy Chief Management
Officer

Attachment 1

GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

References

Air Force Instruction 33-360, *Publications and Forms Management*, 26 June 2020

Air Force Instruction 38-401, *Continuous Process Improvement (CPI)*, 23 August 2019

Air Force Instruction 65-503, *US Air Force Cost and Planning Factors*, 13 February 2018

Air Force Policy Directive 38-4, *Continuous Improvement and Airmen Powered by Innovation Program*, 23 August 2018

Department of Air Force Instruction 33-322, *Records Management and Information Governance Program*, 23 March 2020

Prescribed Forms

None

Adopted Forms

Air Force Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*

Standard Form 182, *Request, Authorization, Agreement and Certification for Training Form*

Abbreviations and Acronyms

API—Airmen Powered by Innovation

CPI—Continuous Process Improvement

MPO—Master Process Owner

MVP—Minimum Viable Product

PM—Process Manager

Terms

Airmen Powered by Innovation Cell—A small team of dedicated professionals who monitor all submissions into the Airmen Powered by Innovation program. They ensure every idea submitted is routinely worked at least once every 15 days and when there is no action on any idea beyond 45 days will take action to archive the submission.

Decision Maker—The lowest-level commander with authority to approve the way forward for an idea. A Decision Maker reviews idea submissions presented by Innovators and decides whether to: continue to refine the idea, implement locally and send to HHQ for evaluation or replication, implement locally and do not send to HHQ for evaluation or replication, do not implement locally and send to HHQ for evaluation or replication, or do not implement – archive the idea.

Innovator—Any Airman who submits an idea into the API program. They may also be referred to as a submitter or an ideator. They see a problem and come up with an innovative way of

eliminating the problem or they may see a new innovative methodology in the commercial world and submit an idea on how to leverage that methodology to improve the way the AF does business.

Innovation Consultant—Mentors Airmen through the ideation process. Typically these members have been through CPI training and have become certified in continuous process improvement facilitation. Others may have skills learned through the Manpower career field and or innovation consultant professional development.

Minimum Viable Product—Producing an innovative idea in the easiest, cheapest and least formal way possible to beta test or pilot the concept. It may be producing a simple item, a new service or modifying an existing process to evaluate and validate how the innovation performs. The goal is to develop the idea just enough to learn if the innovative concept shows merit before expending greater time or resources on it.

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Attachment 2 (DELETED)