



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
WASHINGTON, DC

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY

DAFI38-402\_DAFGM2023-01

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MEMORANDUM FOR DISTRIBUTION C  
MAJCOMs/FLDCOMs/FOAs/DRUs

FROM: SAF/MG  
1790 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington DC 20330-1790

SUBJECT: Department of the Air Force Guidance Memorandum (DAFGM) to Department of the Air Force Instruction (DAFI) 38-402, *Airmen Powered by Innovation and Suggestion Program*

By Order of the Secretary of the Air Force, this DAFGM immediately implements changes to Air Force Instruction (AFI) 38-402 change 1, *Airmen Powered by Innovation and Suggestion Program* dated 25 February 2021. Compliance with this Memorandum is mandatory. This publication applies to all civilian employees and uniformed members of the Regular Air Force, the Air Force Reserve, the Air National Guard, the United States Space Force, and those with a contractual obligation to abide by the terms of DAF issuances. To the extent its directions are inconsistent with other Air Force publications, the information herein prevails, in accordance with DAFI 90-160, *Publications and Forms Management*.

This Memorandum supports the overarching guidance or policy which drove this change. Changes include updated applicability, waiver authority and submissions, new roles, and responsibilities; clarification of oversight, governance, and decision processes; and simplified procedures for submitting and processing ideas.

This Memorandum becomes void after one year has elapsed from the date of this Memorandum, or upon incorporation by interim change to, or rewrite of DAFI 38-402, *Airmen Powered by Innovation and Suggestion Program*, whichever is earlier.

Richard W. Lombardi, SES  
Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force,  
Management and Deputy Chief Management Officer

Attachment:  
Guidance Changes

**Attachment 1**  
**Guidance Changes**

All references to Air Force (AF) changed to Department of the Air Force (DAF)

All references to Airmen changed to Airmen and Guardians

All references to Airmen Powered by Innovation (API) and Suggestion program changed to Department of the Air Force's Continuous Improvement and Innovation (CI<sup>2</sup>) and Suggestion program

All references to CPI changed to CI<sup>2</sup>

All references to AF Form 847 changed to DAF Form 847

All references to Air Force Instruction 33-360 changed to Department of the Air Force Instruction 90-160

1.1. Changed to read **Purpose**. This publication formalizes and provides guidance for use of the Guardians & Airmen Innovation Network (GAIN) platform(s) to support innovation activities and manage the CI<sup>2</sup> and suggestion program process. Specifically, it outlines a concept for submitting, evaluating, and refining ideas; pitching ideas to decision makers; implementing ideas, and ultimately scaling ideas when appropriate, across the Department of the Air Force.

1.2. Changed to read **Program Description**. The DAF Continuous Improvement and Innovation and Suggestion program is the Department of the Air Force's enterprise-wide innovation program that solicits suggestions/ideas from all Airmen and Guardians which contribute to the efficiency, economy, or other improvement of operations or programs related to the armed forces. The Guardians and Airmen Innovation Network is a single web address that provides access to the current applications used to solicit suggestions/ideas from all Airmen & Guardians, curate their development and manage them through deployment and scaling or a decision to terminate pursuit of the idea. Airmen and Guardians should access the applications to discuss ideas, submit or ingest ideas, and track progress through the evaluation process. Once ideas are submitted, the platform connects innovators with decision makers who consider and, if appropriate, deploy money- and time-saving ideas with a goal of advancing Air and Space Forces' capabilities in quantum leaps toward accomplishment and performance. The GAIN applications are intended to provide an engine for empowering Guardians & Airmen to achieve operations excellence for the Department of the Air Force.

2.1.1. Changed to read Oversees the Department of the Air Force's Continuous Improvement and Innovation (CI<sup>2</sup>) program and the deployment and operations of the Guardians and Airmen Innovation Network (GAIN).

2.1.3. Changed to read Plans and programs for financial support of the program's supporting data management application(s).

2.3. Changed to read Director, Enterprise Performance Management and Innovation:

2.3.3. Changed to read Oversees and exercises daily Operational Control of the Guardians and Airmen Innovation Network Management & Support Cell administratively housed in the Air Force Manpower Analysis Agency (AFMAA).

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2.3.4. Changed to read Manages the DAF Headquarters-level portfolio to ensure the forward progress of innovation ideas from concept and refinement through decision and implementation or decision to terminate pursuit of the idea. The Director ensures decision-quality data and information is presented to leaders for timely review of status and potential barriers to progress throughout an idea's development lifecycle to enable DAF, command, or organization leadership milestone decisions to continue idea development through deployment to the field, shelve the idea temporarily, or terminate pursuit of the idea altogether.

2.3.6. Changed to read Oversees strategic communication and key messaging of the Department of the Air Force Continuous Improvement and Innovation (CI<sup>2</sup>) capabilities.

2.3.9. (Added) Collects project and system data (e.g., *average project velocity, number of days in phase*); establishes/confirms metrics regarding idea timelines and ensures this information is made available to Major/Field or DRU Commanders, Headquarters 2-letter staff, and CI<sup>2</sup> designated personnel.

2.4. Changed to read Air Force Manpower Analysis Agency (AFMAA). Supports program execution through administrative control of Guardians and Airmen Innovation Network Management & Support Cell.

2.5. Changed to read Guardians and Airmen Innovation Network Management & Support Cell:

2.5.1. Changed to read Processes submissions made to the any topic Open Call and other CI<sup>2</sup> campaigns per SAF/MG direction; ensures status of ideas and phases is provided routinely to innovators, collaborators, coaches, and designated Major/Field or DRU Commanders, and DAF Headquarters 2-letter staff personnel.

2.5.2. Changed to read Inform Innovators when submissions are not governed by the CI<sup>2</sup> program and GAIN applications and refers them 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, functional campaign moderators.

2.5.3. Changed to read Serves as Moderator for GAIN's any topic Open Call campaign as outlined in 2.10. and as determined by the Campaign Owner.

2.5.5. Changed to read Informs the local Process Manager (PM) and Spark Cell (if applicable) and the owning command or HQ master process officer (MPO) and or designated innovation point of contact of new submissions requiring review.

2.5.6. Changed to read Tracks each submission through the process as outlined in Figure 3.1.

2.5.7. Changed to read Notifies SAF/MG and appropriate MPO or MAJ/FLDCOM's designated innovation lead of any submission that a Decision Maker identifies for possible replication at other locations.

2.5.8. Changed to read Monitors process performance by tracking all ideas submitted and confirms information is managed using the appropriate idea management application.

2.5.10. (DELETED)

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2.6. Changed to read Decision Maker. A Decision Maker is the lowest-level commander with the authority to approve development and implementation of an idea locally. A Decision Maker reviews idea submissions presented by Innovators and:

2.6.1. Changed to read Ensures development and evaluation work continues to refine ideas locally. This means the idea is not yet ready for decision but has potential. The decision maker ensures the Innovator and PM and or Spark Cell work together based on Decision Maker input and collaborates with supporting function team members (e.g., contracting, financial management, other subject matter experts), to ensure momentum toward a leadership decision to continue developing the idea through deployment, shelve the idea temporarily or terminate pursuit of the idea altogether.

2.6.1.1. (Added) Assists the innovator in clarifying an idea's value proposition with accurate assessments of the problem being solved and capture of how the idea is an improvement over existing or planned capability.

2.6.1.2. (Added) Elevates ideas to the MAJ/FLDCOM Continuous Improvement and Innovation team(s) for further evaluation, sponsorship to the proper functional and or lead command for the capability being improved for further evaluation. This effort should result in properly aligned people and resources to ensure the innovation does not stagnate in the development and evaluation processes.

2.6.2. (DELETED)

2.6.3. (DELETED)

2.6.4. (DELETED)

2.6.5. (DELETED)

2.6.6. Changed to read May recognize Airmen and Guardians with non-monetary awards in accordance with local policy.

2.6.7. Changed to read Reviews submissions presented and make decisions as required and defined by the campaign process.

2.6.8. Changed to read Directs, as appropriate, the continued refinement, implementation, submission to Higher Headquarters for further evaluation, or disapproval.

2.6.8.1. (DELETED)

2.6.8.1.1. (DELETED)

2.6.8.1.2. (DELETED)

2.6.9. (Added) Takes appropriate actions to implement approved ideas and nominate for scaling more broadly.

2.6.10. (Added) In the event the improvement/innovation equates to manpower or financial

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efficiencies; the owning unit may repurpose the efficiencies within the unit.

2.7. Changed to read Innovator (any Airman or Guardian who submits an idea) shall:

2.7.1. Changed to read Submit ideas that improve operations or processes, provide cost savings, or improve morale to GAIN at <https://gain.apps.dso.mil/>. Ideas can be submitted by an individual or a group of people.

2.8.2. Changed to read Connects Innovators to the appropriate Subject Matter Experts (SME) as defined in 2.7.2., AFWERX Spark Cells for transformational innovation, OPRs, Decision Maker, or other required resources.

2.8.6. Changed to read Confirm decisions, actions taken, and other relevant information are entered in the appropriate GAIN application to ensure appropriate notifications occur.

2.8.7. Changed to read Participates in POA&M review with SAF/MG and represents MAJ/FLDCOM commander or 2-Letter Directorate regarding POA&M execution.

2.8.9. Changed to read Executes the current POA&M to validate innovation has tangible benefit to DAF; any idea that has tangible and verified benefits should be executed in a timely manner and deployed as widely as possible.

2.8.11 Changed to read Shares lessons learned with Continuous Improvement and Innovation (CI<sup>2</sup>) community.

2.9. (Added) GAIN Campaign Owners:

2.9.1. (Added) Establish the campaign's submission process.

2.9.2. (Added) Oversee performance of the campaign through daily operational control.

2.9.3. (Added) Monitor campaign performance and elevate issues as required.

2.9.4. (Added) Manage the available budget for execution of initiatives approved in the campaign.

2.9.5. (Added) Manage strategic communication, key messaging, and marketing of the campaign; publicize, as appropriate, contributions and program accomplishments through promotional videos, articles, and web-based applications.

2.9.6. (Added) Manage and execute processing of awards, as appropriate, for approved innovation ideas.

2.9.7. (Added) Develop and report metrics for the campaign.

2.9.8. (Added) Serve as the primary point of contact with the GAIN Management & Support Cell for all decisions, requests, requirements, and overall coordination between the sponsor's team and the GAIN Management & Support Cell.

2.10. (Added) GAIN Campaign Moderator:

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- 2.10.1. (Added) Executes the campaign's submission process.
- 2.10.2. (Added) Determines if submissions are eligible for the campaign.
- 2.10.3. (Added) Tracks each submission through each step of the processes established for the campaign.
- 2.10.4. (Added) Maintains an active presence on the GAIN platform within the campaign and monitor process performance by tracking all ideas submitted.
- 2.10.5. (Added) Manages process flow by directing attention for action on any idea not showing progress.
- 2.10.6. (Added) Maintains all ideas submitted to the campaign and provides notifications concerning status updates.
- 2.11. (Added) Spark Cell:
  - 2.11.1. (Added) Sends updated organization chart and POC roster quarterly to SAF/MG to maintain a consolidated web-based portal point of contact listing to facilitate rapid connectivity.
  - 2.11.2. (Added) Coordinates with SAF/MG on ideas that may result in mission improvement, unit organization change requests to include the addition or reallocation of positions, and policy and governance or program changes.
- 2.12. (Added) Major/Field Commands, Direct Reporting Units, and DAF HQ 2-Letter Organizations and Field Operating Agencies.
  - 2.12.1. (Added) MAJ/FLDCOMs, DRUs, and DAF HQ 2-Letter Organizations and Field Operating Agencies will oversee accomplishment of the CI<sup>2</sup> and Suggestion program to ensure timely capture and validation of information related to ideas submitted for evaluation and, where appropriate, implementing idea-related program and process changes within their authorities. Specifically with respect to innovator idea management, organization leaders will develop processes and assign personnel to:
    - 2.12.1.1. (Added) Make recommendations for replication or scaling of ideas to Decision Makers. Review GAIN idea management applications at least monthly to identify:
      - 2.12.1.1.1. (Added) Ideas originating within the command for the command's benefit.
      - 2.12.1.1.2. (Added) Ideas, regardless of origin, that are designed to improve a mission set for which the command or functional lead is responsible.
      - 2.12.1.2. (Added) Acknowledge local decision maker idea escalations and connect the local team to one or more supporting point(s) of contact within the headquarters organization with direction for evaluating the concept for viability and potential for replication and scaling broadly.
      - 2.12.1.3. (Added) Rapidly confirm accuracy of the value proposition or business case data provided by the intrapreneur and local decision maker. Evaluate intra-command, inter-command, or cross-Department potential benefit of deploying or scaling the idea and ensure this information

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is captured in the appropriate GAIN application.

2.12.1.4. (Added) Ensure decision-quality data and information is available in the GAIN applications throughout an idea's development lifecycle, to enable DAF, command, or organization leadership milestone decisions to continue developing the idea through deployment, shelve the idea temporarily, or terminate pursuit of the idea altogether.

Chapter 3. Title changed to read GUARDIAN & AIRMAN INNOVATION NETWORK (GAIN) SUGGESTION SUBMISSION PROCESS.

3.1. The process for submitting and following an idea or suggestion through the innovation network and the follow-on decision cycle will vary based on multiple factors because it is a dynamic process involving multiple stages. Specific processing requirements and overview of the campaign stages are embedded in the software applications and may vary as the software evolves.

3.1.1. The process for submitting an idea or suggestion to the Open Call (any topic) campaign are identified on the GAIN platform at <https://gain.il4.afwerx.dso.mil/>. See Figure 3.1 for an overview of the Open Call process from initial submission to final action.

3.1.2. Airmen and Guardians desiring to participate by submitting an idea for consideration should follow the prompts that will guide them through the process the campaign owner established.

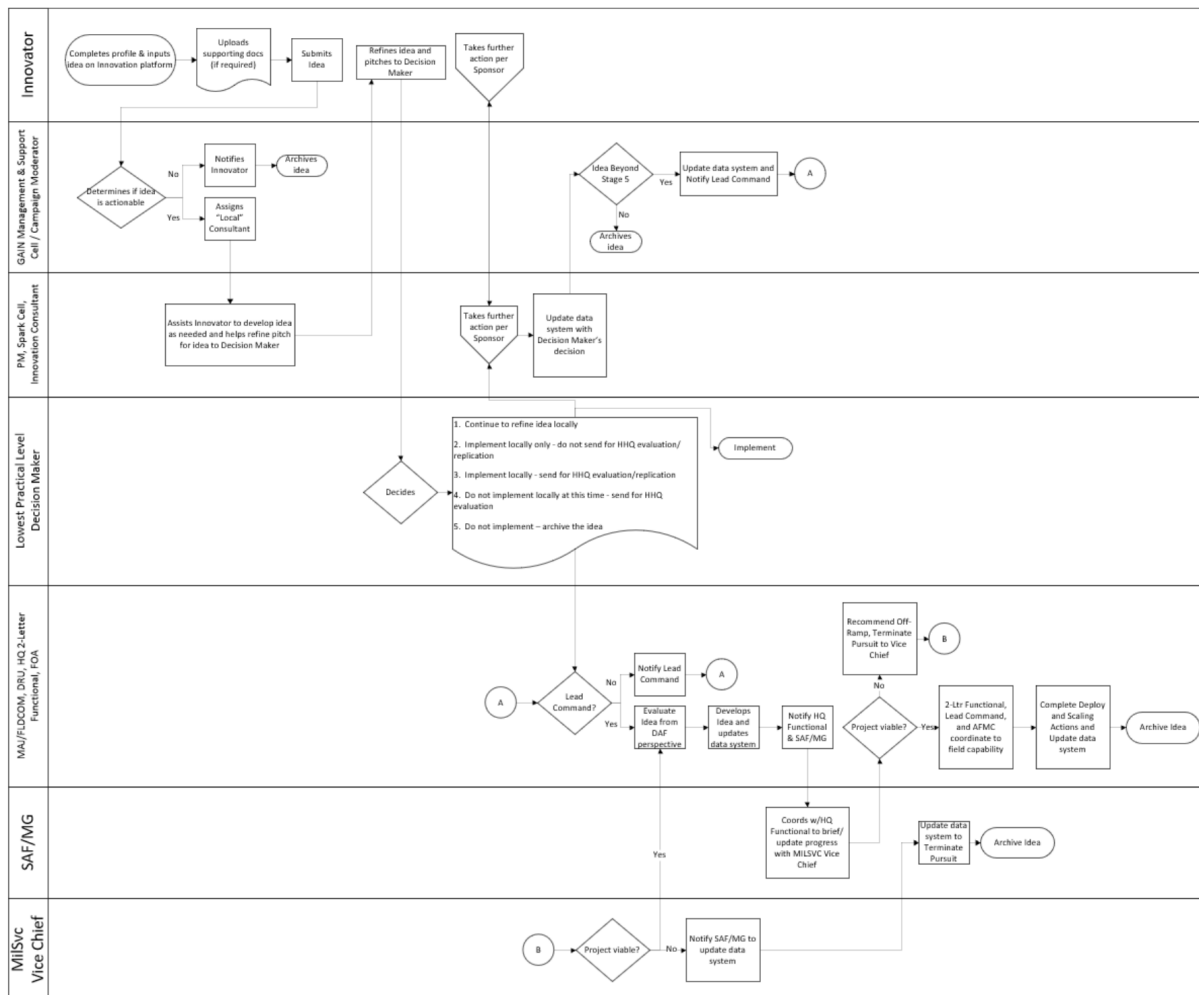
3.1.3.-3.1.8. (DELETED)

Figure 3.1. Changed to read Notional GAIN Open Call (any topic) Process Flow.

Figure 3.1. Replaced with new Figure 3.1. Notional GAIN Open Call (any topic) Process Flow.

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Figure 3.1. Notional GAIN Open Call (any topic) Process Flow



4.1. Changed to read Intrapreneur Recognition. SAF/MG may recognize Guardians and Airmen with professional development opportunities when their submissions are approved by a Decision Maker for implementation. Professional development opportunities may match Guardians and Airmen with leading companies and academia geared toward improving innovation skills through learning how to use cutting-edge CI<sup>2</sup> tactics, techniques, tools, and procedures.

4.1.1. Changed to read In the case of group submissions, up to five eligible members of the submitting group may be afforded the development opportunity. Decision Makers approving an idea for implementation should identify those most responsible for originating and developing the submission. Contractor team members are not eligible to participate in development opportunities.

4.2. Changed to read Awards. Over the history of this program, the Air Force has used non-monetary and monetary awards to recognize Airmen for successfully implemented idea submissions approved by Principal Decision Makers. Submissions approved on or after 25 February 2021 will be recognized under the award system outlined in Chapter 4 of this Department of the Air Force Instruction as amended by guidance memorandum. All submissions to the Airmen Powered by Innovation program prior to 25 February 2021 may receive an award based on the rules in effect at the time of the original submission. All cash awards are subject to applicable tax rules. SAF/MGB has final approval of the award type and amount.



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4.5.1. Changed to read Guardians and Airmen Innovation Network Management & Support Cell:

4.5.1.3. Changed to read Intrapreneur updates Guardians and Airmen Innovation Network Management & Support Cell of professional development opportunity selection and provides information as required by the Open Call Management and Support Cell.

4.5.1.4. Changed to read Guardians and Airmen Innovation Network Management & Support Cell forwards information to SAF/MG CI<sup>2</sup>.

4.5.2. Changed to read SAF/MG CI<sup>2</sup>:

4.5.2.4. Changed to read Coordinates travel with Innovator and accomplishes actions necessary to cross-org travelers in the Defense Travel System to use the appropriate fund cite.

4.5.3.3. Provides guidance and financial management support to SAF/MG CI<sup>2</sup>. (T-1)

Attachment 1 References updated.

DAF Instruction 90-160, Publications and Forms Management, 14 April 2022

DAF Instruction 38-401, Continuous Improvement, and Innovation (CI<sup>2</sup>), 10 March 2023

Attachment 1 Adopted Forms updated.

DAF Form 847, Recommendation for Change of Publication

Attachment 1 Abbreviations and Acronyms updated.

(Deleted) API—Airmen Powered by Innovation

(Added) CI<sup>2</sup>—Department of the Air Force Continuous Improvement and Innovation program

(Added) GAIN—Guardians & Airmen Innovation Network

Attachment 1 Terms updated

Airmen Powered by Innovation Cell reordered after Decision Maker and changed to read Guardians and Airmen Innovation Network Management & Support Cell—A small team of dedicated professionals who monitor all submissions into the GAIN Open Call any topic campaign and assist SAF/MG in managing the overall platform and capability. They ensure every idea submitted is routinely reviewed and worked on at least once every 30 days and, when there is no action on an idea beyond 45 days, take action to archive the submission and notify interested parties.

(Added) Innovation—Useful novelty. Also, an idea that, when implemented, results in significant positive change.

## **Attachment 1 Guidance Changes**

Innovator changed to read Innovator—Any Airman or Guardian who submits an idea into the CI<sup>2</sup> program. They may also be referred to as a submitter or an ideator. These people 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 or technology to improve the way the DAF does business.

(Added) Intrapreneur—More broadly than innovator, an intrapreneur seeks to continuously improve the way the DAF builds products or delivers services as a way of achieving better outcomes. Sometimes used interchangeably with Innovator.

(Added) GAIN Campaign Owners—Set policy and procedures for actions taken in their respective campaigns to ensure adequate oversight of campaign processing activities; SAF/MG is Campaign Owner of the GAIN Open Call any topic campaign.

(Added) GAIN Campaign Moderators—Perform actions necessary to ensure innovation ideas submitted to the GAIN platform are processed in an efficient and effective manner; constantly monitoring the campaign to address subsequent issues or questions.

Innovation Consultant changed to read Innovation Consultant—Mentors Airmen and Guardians through the ideation process. Typically, these members have been through CI<sup>2</sup> training and have become certified in CI<sup>2</sup> facilitation. Others may have skills learned through the Manpower career field and or innovation consultant professional development.

(Added) POA&M—Plan of Actions & Milestones. A notional roadmap developed for the innovator's/intrapreneur's support network that establishes the major developmental milestones to guide an idea's stakeholders through the journey from recording the idea in GAIN to deployment with sustained funding. It details resources required to accomplish the elements of the plan, milestones for meeting the tasks, and the target completion dates for the milestones.

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

**AIR FORCE INSTRUCTION 38-402**

**9 FEBRUARY 2018**

*Incorporating Change 1, 25 February 2021*

***Manpower and Organization***

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



**COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY**

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Certified by: SAF/MGM  
(Col Louise Shumate)

Supersedes: AFI38-402, 5 February 2014

Pages: 16

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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](http://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)**

##### **3.3.2.4. (DELETED)**

##### **3.3.2.5. (DELETED)**

#### **3.3.3. (DELETED)**

##### **3.3.3.1. (DELETED)**

##### **3.3.3.2. (DELETED)**

##### **3.3.3.3. (DELETED)**

##### **3.3.3.4. (DELETED)**

#### **3.3.4. (DELETED)**

### **3.4. (DELETED)**

#### **3.4.1. (DELETED)**

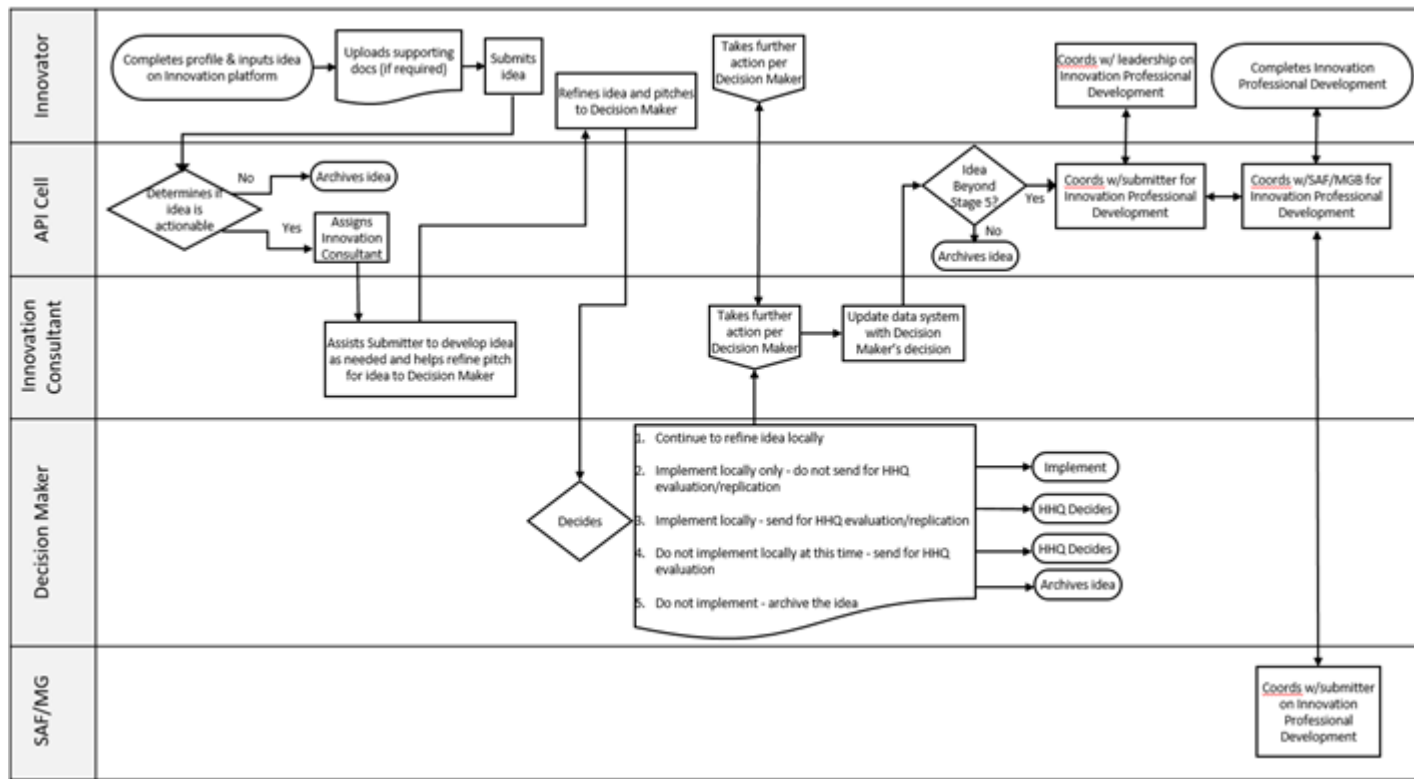
#### **3.4.2. (DELETED)**

#### **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)