

IPRA EXCEPTIONAL WORKPLACE AWARD

2026 AWARD CRITERIA



Use this guide to preview the questions included in the 2026 award application.

1. Your agency has a board-approved wellness policy.

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2. Your agency has a wellness committee and/or participates in wellness programs.

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3. Your agency promotes healthy eating options at meetings/gatherings.

4. Your agency offers an annual cultural or satisfaction wellness survey to its employees to continually meet their needs.

Explanation and Summary of Results Required

5. Your agency provides opportunities (such as walking club, agency sport leagues) or encourages participation in health observance days (such as Relay for Life or Great American Smokeout).

6. Your agency observes Global Employee Health & Fitness Month in May.

7. Your agency supports employee wellness checks, such as schedule flexibility for doctor appointments, wellness incentive programs, or onsite health screening events.

8. Does your agency have plans for future health and wellness initiatives at your agency?

List Examples

9. Your agency encourages attendance at health and wellness seminars.

List Examples

10. Your park and recreation agency insurance covers preventative care or offers a reimbursement program.

11. Your agency insurance provides information, support or incentives to quit smoking.

12. Current newspapers, professional periodicals, or online resources are available to staff.

13. Your agency supports continuing education.

Explanation Required

14. Staff are compensated/reimbursed for obtaining CEUs.

15. Staff are recognized for obtaining certifications.

16. Your agency pays for staff to attend at least one professional development class annually, or provides an opportunity internally.

17. Staff are encouraged to take active (mental & physical) breaks periodically during the workday.

18. Your agency encourages and supports the participation in clubs/social or volunteer networks outside of the workplace.

Explanation Required

19. In addition to IPRA, staff are active in community and/or professional organizations.

Explanation Required

20. Your agency volunteers for a cause or contributes to a cause.

21. Your agency utilizes its foundation or designates special funds to support those in need.

22. Staff organizes group activities (lunches, outings, activities) that includes a majority of departments.

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23. Staff participate in team building opportunities, with consideration for employees that work remotely.

List Examples

24. Your agency builds employee morale by birthday recognition, holiday parties, employee newsletters or emails congratulating them on work accomplishments.

25. Your agency has an environmental policy, or has received recognition for environmentally friendly practices.

26. Your agency recognizes achievements of environmental excellence and innovation of its employees.

27. Your agency has a recycling program, or practices 'reduce & reuse'.

28. Your agency provides staff with an ergonomically appropriate work environment.

29. Your agency provides a safe working environment and maintains records about occupational injuries & illnesses.

30. Your agency has a risk management program.

31. Your agency conducts trainings for employees so they know how to utilize given safety information. For example, active shooter, power tools, CPR, blood borne pathogens, etc.

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32. Your agency adheres to policies designed to maximize organizational integration, employee commitment, flexibility, and quality of work.

33. Your agency has an HR staff person or appointed employee with complete understanding of benefits package and contacts for external resources, as needed.

34. Staff receives HR information in staff orientation upon hire.

35. Your agency has access to an employee assistance program (EAP) where employees can go for assistance when they need it (drug/alcohol, legal, financial, etc.), and regularly promotes EAP services to employees.

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36. At least one staff person at your agency has attended a Mental Health First Aid training program.

37. Your agency offers work/life balance and/or other mental health-related workshops.

38. Supervisors show appreciation to staff – whether expressed verbally or written.

39. Schedule flexibility is considered to achieve a healthy work/life balance. Work from home or telecommuting policy is in place, or other supporting documentation is available detailing expectations and what is allowed.

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40. Your agency has a diversity and inclusion/multicultural statement included in board policy manual, bylaws or in agency mission/vision statement.

41. Staff are encouraged to report inappropriate behavior to HR/Supervisor/or other agency designee responsible for receiving such information.

42. Staff has opportunity to become further educated on Diversity, Education, Inclusion and Belonging.

43. Your agency has a committee dedicated to Diversity, Education, Inclusion and/or Belonging.

44. Why does your park and recreation agency deserve this award?