



CHAPTER 5

Ethics

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for ease of two-sided printing.

Confidential Financial Disclosure Information

1. Who Must File a Confidential Financial Disclosure Form (OGE-450 or OGE-450A)?

- If in a covered position, either designated by their position description or by a collateral duty (ADO, ADODR, CO, COR or COTR).
- If responsible for making financial decisions which may impact contractors or non-Federal interests that are regulated by the Department.
- If a warranted Purchase Card Holder (monthly purchase limit exceeding \$25,000).
- If a Special Government Employee (Collaborator, Consultant, or Panel Manager).

2. Why Must I File?

The duties and responsibilities of your position require you to file the Confidential Financial Disclosure Report to avoid involvement in a real or apparent conflict of interest. The purpose of this report is to assist employees and their agencies in avoiding conflicts between official duties and private financial interests or affiliations. The information you provide will only be used for legitimate purposes and will not be disclosed to any requesting person unless authorized by law. Please ensure that the information you provide is complete and accurate.

3. When Must I File?

Employees who file financial disclosure reports on an annual basis will be required to submit their reports by **February 15 of each year** unless your Agency grants you a filing extension.

NOTE: New Entrants (first-time filers) or Special Government Employees (Collaborators or Panel Managers) must file within 30 days of appointment.

4. What is the Reporting Period?

The reporting period will cover **January 1 through December 31** of the preceding year.

NOTE: New Entrants (first-time filers) or Special Government Employees (Collaborators or Panel Managers) report the required information for the 12 months preceding your filing of this form.

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5. What Forms Do I Use and Where Do I Find Them?

- a. For your convenience, a link to the ADOBE PDF versions of financial disclosure forms are listed below. If you previously submitted form OGE-450, Confidential Financial Disclosure Report, during the last 12 months and have no changes in position or in items listed on your most recent OGE-450, you have the option of completing the short form, OGE 450A, Confidential Certificate of No New Interests. Please complete the appropriate form, sign and date the form in ink, and submit to the REE Ethics Office **no later than February 15**.

Note: ARS employees should submit their confidential financial disclosure reports directly to the REE Ethics Office, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Room 3-1170C, Beltsville, MD 20705-5102.

- b. All financial disclosure filers must also receive prior approval before engaging in any non-Federal employment or activity. You must complete the form REE-101, Application for Approval to Engage in Non-Federal Employment or Activity, found at: www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/ethics/outside.htm and submit it to the Southern Plains Area Ethics Advisor. **Please** retain a photocopy of your completed form for your personal records. Should you have any questions regarding the completion of the OGE-450, please contact your appropriate Ethics Advisor or Ethics Assistant (<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/ETHICS/agency.htm>).
- c. **OGE 450 -- Confidential Financial Disclosure Report** -- to be used by anyone in a covered position, either designated by their position description or by a collateral duty (ADO, ADODR, CO, COR or COTR), or is responsible for making financial decisions which may impact contractors or non-Federal interests that are regulated by the Department, is a warranted Purchase Card Holder (monthly purchase limit exceeding \$25,000), or is a Special Government Employee (Collaborator, Consultant, or Panel Manager).

[Acrobat version](http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/ethics/files/OGE-450450.pdf) - <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/ethics/files/OGE-450450.pdf>

- d. **OGE 450A - Confidential Certificate of No New Interests** -- to be used only when there have been no changes from filing your last 450 with REE. This form may not be used by SGEs (Collaborators, Consultants, Experts, or Panel Managers) or by first time filers with REE.

[Acrobat Version](http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/ethics/files/oge-450A.pdf) - <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/ethics/files/oge-450A.pdf>

[MS Word Version](http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/ethics/files/OGE450A.doc) - <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/ethics/files/OGE450A.doc>

Ethics Training and General Information



The ETHICS SWEEPSTAKES module will test your general knowledge of Federal ethics laws and regulations through a challenging format that involves a bit of competitive instinct. You will become the jockey of "Ethical Conduct", a gallant steed pitted in a two-horse grudge race against its arch rival "Appearances." Lose or tie, and it counts as completion of one (1) module. Win by 9 lengths or less, and it counts as two (2) modules. Win by 10 lengths, and it counts as (3) modules and you are done for the year!

Disclaimer: The Ethics Sweepstakes module has audio. Turn on your speakers, but just barely. We don't want you falling out of your chair.

Those less fortunate will be required to complete two additional modules of their choice...

Click the link below and you are on your way to the race. Good luck!

The Office of Ethics Training Modules can be found at:
<http://www.usda-ethics.net/training/index.htm>



Fine print details:

Now for the routine...all Federal employees who file public or confidential financial disclosure reports are required to take (1) hour of ethics training annually, but we understand that it is not always convenient to attend classroom training. If you have received some form of classroom or equivalent ethics training throughout the current calendar year, your training record has been credited accordingly. If you were unable to attend training, and are subject to financial disclosure requirements, you must complete three (3) computer-based training modules by October 31, in order to satisfy the annual ethics training requirement.

We ask that you now take the time to complete your annual training requirement and do not delay. Information about completed training modules will be available both to the employee and to their Ethics Advisor. Please remember to choose the box that indicates you are a USDA employee upon completion of each module and to enter your social security number at the prompt to "certify" your training. This is a secured website located on the National Finance Center's network.

We believe that maintaining high Government ethics standards is essential to fostering the public's trust, and we are committed to training REE employees to be privy to the ethics regulations in order to prevent individuals from unintentionally violating them. That being said, training is training, and everybody has their own style. We welcome your comments on the modules. Please forward any comments or questions to us at reeethics@ars.usda.gov.

If you have any questions regarding fundraising, please contact the REE Ethics Office at reeethics@ars.usda.gov or call (301) 504-1467.

Your cooperation is appreciated.

Thank you.

SUE MUTCHLER,
REE Mission Area Ethics Advisor,
REE Ethics Website: <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/ethics>

Fundraising / Combined Federal Campaign (CFC)



The Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) kick-off begins around September 1 of each year. Also, local schools are busy fundraising for student activities. It's a good time to remember about fundraising in the federal workplace.



Private fundraising, even for the most altruistic community-oriented purposes, such as "band candy", Girl Scout cookies, or bargain coupon books cannot be permitted in official space or on government time. The only authorized workplace solicitation of government employees for a charitable contribution is the annual CFC. Likewise, the selling or delivery of items/products is not appropriate in the Federal workplace (e.g., Avon, Tupperware). Use of government equipment is expressly reserved for the conduct of official business.

The CFC is the only authorized solicitation of employees in the Federal workplace on behalf of charitable organizations [5 C.F.R. § 950.102(a)]. Federal agencies traditionally take a very active role in encouraging employee participation in the CFC. The challenge to meet participation goals often results in creative methods used by agencies to involve not only employees, but non-Federal entities, as well. At the same time, employee participation cannot be coerced, and efforts to involve non-Federal organizations must not violate other existing ethical rules. If you are actively involved in the CFC campaign, you are encouraged to read USDA Office of Ethics Issuance, 03-2, Combined Federal Campaign Activities, dated November 7, 2003: <http://www.usda-ethics.net/rules/fundraising.htm>

If you have any questions regarding fundraising, please contact the REE Ethics Office at reeethics@ars.usda.gov or call (301) 504-1467.

Thank you,

SUE MUTCHLER,
REE Mission Area Ethics Advisor