



OGE'S EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION AWARDS - 2010 WINNER'S CIRCLE FACT SHEET

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

DESCRIPTION

USDA developed several training products for new and career employees. Incoming political appointees attended a four-course ethics curriculum. The curriculum consists of one in-person, instructor-led course developed specifically for political appointees and three online courses available on the Department's website. Filers of the SF 278 were helped by the development of a sample new entrant 278. This electronic 278 form incorporated all of the reported items that the Department had ever encountered and broke the items down on Schedule A by categories such as investments, farming/ranching interests, law firm interests, company ownership interests, and noted links to related entries that must be on other schedules. Both new and career employees were provided with two new self-help tools for employees: "Can I Accept This Gift of Travel and Accommodations?" and "Political Appointee Gift Acceptance Under the Ethics Pledge."

PURPOSE

The ethics curriculum was created to quickly indoctrinate incoming political appointees to the cultural realities of Washington. The sample 278 was created to make the process more efficient for both filers and ethics specialists. Self-helps assist ethics advisors and employees work their way through some of the complicated issues that frequently arise in the Federal workplace.

PRODUCT ADAPTABILITY

Anyone can access USDA's website at <http://www.usda-ethics.net/> for its online ethics courses. The idea of a sample new entrant 278 can be used by any ethics program, tailoring the entries to those typically reported by its employees. The USDA sample new entrant 278 is located at <http://www.usda-ethics.net/financial-disclosure/index.htm>. Last, the self-help tools on USDA's website can be accessed at <http://www.usda-ethics.net/selfhelp/index.htm>.

CONTRIBUTORS

OGE recognizes the contributors at USDA (in alphabetical order): Susan Bellanca, John Berge, Sandra Dunham (on detail), Michael Edwards, Anette Gray, Jennifer Hepler, Samuel Liebert, Arlene McCarthy, Jeanette McDougal, Raymond Sheehan (retired), Natalie Rose, Andrew Tobin and Ryan Wolfe.

AGENCY CONTACT

Mike Edwards
Acting DAEO
(202) 720-2251
MikeM.Edwards@da.usda.gov