

ETHICS PROGRAM INSPECTION REPORT

Agency: Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR)

Report No.: 22-641

Date: September 29, 2022

Period Covered by Review: January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021

**UNITED STATES OFFICE OF
GOVERNMENT ETHICS**Preventing Conflicts of Interest
in the Executive Branch

1.0	AGENCY DATA		
	EMPLOYEES		
1.1	Number of full-time agency employees.	270	
1.2	Number of Presidentially appointed, Senate-confirmed (PAS) public financial disclosure reports required to be filed.	6	
1.3	Number of non-PAS public financial disclosure reports required to be filed.	79	
1.4	Number of confidential financial disclosure reports required to be filed.	186	
	ETHICS PROGRAM		
1.5	Title of Designated Agency Ethics Official (DAEO).	Chief Counsel for Administrative Law, Ethics Official, and Chief FOIA Officer	
1.6	Grade level of DAEO.	SL	
1.7	Title of Alternate DAEO (ADAEO).	Associate General Counsel	
1.8	Grade level of ADAEO.	GS-15	
1.9	Title of the primary, day-to-day ethics program administrator.	Chief Counsel for Administrative Law, Ethics Official, and Chief FOIA Officer Associate General Counsel	
1.10	Grade level of the primary, day-to-day ethics program administrator.	SL GS-15	
1.11	Current number of full-time ethics officials.	0	
1.12	Current number of part-time ethics officials.	3	
1.13	Number of reporting levels between the DAEO and the agency head.	2	
	COMMENTS		
	(1.9) The DAEO and ADAEO jointly administer the day-to-day activities of USTR's ethics program.		

2.0	LEADERSHIP			
	COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS	Yes	No	N/A
2.1	OGE has received an up-to-date designation from the agency head naming the DAEO. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.107(a).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2	OGE has received an up-to-date designation from the agency head naming the ADAEO. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.107(a).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	COMMENTS			
	None			

3.0	PUBLIC FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE (OGE Form 278e, OGE Form 278-T)			
	COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS	Yes	No	N/A
	The agency has written policies and procedures in place governing: <i>See</i> 5 U.S.C. app. IV, § 402(d)(1).			
3.1	• Collection of public financial disclosure reports.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2	• Review/evaluation of public financial disclosure reports.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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3.3	• Public availability of public financial disclosure reports.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.4	The agency can demonstrate that late filing fees are collected or, where appropriate, waivers are issued when public filers do not timely file financial disclosure reports.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3.5	Public financial disclosure reports are securely maintained. <i>See</i> OGE/GOVT-1.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.6	Public financial disclosure reports are retained in accordance with the retention requirements. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.603(g)(1).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.7	There is reasonable assurance that the lead human resources official or designee promptly (no later than 15 days after appointment) notifies the DAEO of all appointments to positions that require incumbents to file public financial disclosure reports. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.105(a)(1).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.8	There is reasonable assurance that the lead human resources official or designee promptly (no later than 15 days after termination) notified the DAEO of terminations of employees in positions that require incumbents to file public financial disclosure reports. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.105(a)(2).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DATA ANALYSIS		%		
3.9	Percentage of sampled non-PAS new entrant reports filed timely. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.201(b).	87%		
3.10	Percentage of sampled non-PAS annual reports filed timely. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.201(a).	80%		
3.11	Percentage of sampled non-PAS termination reports filed timely. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.201(e).	100%		
3.12	Percentage of sampled non-PAS public financial disclosure reports reviewed within 60 days of receipt. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.605(a).	97%		
3.13	Percentage of sampled non-PAS public financial disclosure reports certified within 60 days of receipt. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.605(a).	97%		
3.14	Percentage of sampled PAS annual reports filed timely. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.201(a).	N/A		
3.15	Percentage of sampled PAS termination reports filed timely. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.201(e).	100%		
3.16	Percentage of sampled PAS annual and termination reports reviewed within 60 days of receipt. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.605(a).	100%		
3.17	Percentage of sampled PAS annual and termination reports certified within 60 days of receipt. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.605(a).	100%		
COMMENTS				
<p>(3.4) No filers were subject to the late filing fee during the period covered by the inspection.</p> <p>(3.9) OGE examined the 27 new entrant reports required to be filed at USTR during the period covered by the inspection. All but four reports were filed timely. Of the four reports, two were filed 1 day after the due date, one was filed 2 days after the due date and one was filed 12 days after the due date.</p> <p>(3.10) OGE examined the 20 annual reports required to be filed at USTR during the period covered by the inspection. All but four reports were filed timely. Of the four reports, two were filed 1 day after the due date and two were filed 2 days after the due date.</p> <p>(3.14) No PAS annual reports were required to be filed during the period covered by the review.</p>				

4.0 CONFIDENTIAL FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS		Yes	No	N/A
The agency has written policies and procedures in place governing: <i>See 5 U.S.C app. IV, § 402(d)(1).</i>				
4.1	• Collection of confidential financial disclosure reports.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2	• Review/evaluation of confidential financial disclosure reports.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3	Confidential financial disclosure reports are securely maintained. <i>See OGE/GOVT-2.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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4.4	Confidential financial disclosure reports are retained in accordance with the retention requirements. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.604.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.5	The agency’s OGE-approved alternative confidential financial disclosure system complies with plans approved by OGE. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.905(a).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.6	There is reasonable assurance that the lead human resources official or designee promptly (no later than 15 days after appointment) notifies the DAEO of all appointments to positions that require incumbents to file confidential financial disclosure reports. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.105(a)(1).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DATA ANALYSIS		%		
4.7	Percentage of sampled confidential new entrant reports filed timely. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.903(b).	100%		
4.8	Percentage of sampled confidential annual reports filed timely. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.903(a).	55%		
4.9	Percentage of sampled reports reviewed within 60 days of receipt. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.605(a).	100%		
4.10	Percentage of sampled confidential financial disclosure reports certified within 60 days of receipt. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. §§ 2634.605(a) and 2634.909(a).	100%		
COMMENTS				
	(4.4) Ethics officials remain in remote work status as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have not had access to the confidential reports that were filed prior to pandemic using paper forms. (4.5) USTR does not have an OGE-approved alternative confidential financial disclosure system. (4.8) OGE examined 29 annual reports. Thirteen of the reports examined were filed after the filing due date. OGE, however, is not issuing a recommendation because 12 of those 13 reports were filed only one or two days after the due date. The remaining report was filed two weeks late.			

5.0	NOTICES TO PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYEES			
	COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS	Yes	No	N/A
	Written offers of employment for positions covered by the Standards of Conduct provide: <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.303.			
5.1	• A statement regarding the agency's commitment to government ethics.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.2	• Notice that the individual will be subject to the Standards of Conduct and the criminal conflict of interest statutes as an employee.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.3	• Contact information for an appropriate agency ethics office or an explanation of how to obtain additional information on applicable ethics requirements.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.4	• Where applicable, notice of the time frame for completing initial ethics training.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.5	• Where applicable, a statement regarding financial disclosure requirements and an explanation that new entrant reports must be filed within 30 days of appointment.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.6	The agency has established written procedures for issuing the notice to prospective employees. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.303(c).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.7	The agency's written procedures are reviewed by the DAEO each year. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.303(c).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.8	The agency can demonstrate that there is an effective process for ensuring all covered employees receive the required information with their written offer of employment. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.303.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
COMMENTS				
(5.6-5.7) The Executive Office of the President (EOP), Office of Administration-Human Resources (EOP/OA-HR) provides personnel services to EOP component agencies. This includes sending the required notices to prospective employees and new supervisors. However, while USTR ethics officials must rely on EOP/OA-HR to send the notices, the ethics officials remain responsible for ensuring that all ethics program requirements are met. This includes having written procedures explaining how EOP/OA-HR provides the notices. Written				

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procedures are critical for delineating responsibility and ensuring a program's continuity. EOP/OA-HR should share the relevant procedures with ethics officials.

OGE requested that USTR provide a copy of EOP/OA-HR's procedures. However, when USTR sought to collect the procedures from EOP/OA-HR, that office declined to provide them. OGE will follow-up with EOP/OA-HR and issue recommendations, if appropriate.

6.0 NOTICES TO NEW SUPERVISORS**COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS****Yes****No****N/A**

The agency must provide each employee upon initial appointment to a supervisory position with: *See 5 C.F.R. § 2638.306.*

6.1	• Contact information for the agency's ethics office.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.2	• The text of 5 C.F.R. § 2638.103.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.3	• A copy of, a hyperlink to, or the address of a Web site containing the Principles of Ethical Conduct.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.4	• Other information the DAEO deems necessary.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.5	The agency has established written procedures for supervisory ethics notices. <i>See 5 C.F.R. § 2638.306(d).</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.6	The agency's written procedures are reviewed by the DAEO each year. <i>See 5 C.F.R. § 2638.306(d).</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6.7	The agency can demonstrate that there is an effective process for ensuring that new supervisors receive the required information within one year of appointment. <i>See 5 C.F.R. § 2638.306(b).</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMENTS

(6.5, 6.6) EOP/OA-HR provides the required notices to new supervisors, as previously noted. *See OGE's notes to 5.6-5.7.*

7.0 INITIAL ETHICS TRAINING**COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS****Yes****No****N/A**

Each new employee of the agency subject to the Standards of Conduct must complete initial ethics training. *See 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304.*

7.1	The training presentation(s) addressed concepts related to conflicts of interest, impartiality, misuse of position and gifts. <i>See 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304(e)(1).</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.2	The agency provided new employees with either the following written materials or written instruction for accessing them: The summary of the Standards of Conduct distributed by the Office of Government Ethics or an equivalent summary prepared by the agency; provisions of any supplemental agency regulation that the DAEO determines to be relevant or a summary of those provisions; such other written materials as the DAEO determines should be included; instructions for contacting the agency's ethics officials. <i>See 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304(e)(2).</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.3	The agency has established written procedures for initial ethics training. <i>See 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304(f).</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.4	The agency's written procedures are reviewed by the DAEO each year. <i>See 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304(f).</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

DATA ANALYSIS**%**

7.5	Percentage of new employees who received initial ethics training. <i>See 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304.</i>	100%
7.6	Percentage of new employees who received initial ethics training within three months of appointment. <i>See 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304(b).</i>	97%

COMMENTS

(7.6) USTR's initial ethics training for new employees was less than 100% for meeting the three month deadline because two employees completed training on the Monday immediately following their due date, which was a Sunday.

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8.0 ANNUAL ETHICS TRAINING							
COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS				Yes	No	N/A	
	Each calendar year, public filers, confidential filers, and certain other employees must complete ethics training which meets specified requirements. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. §§ 2638.307 and 2638.308.						
8.1	The training presentation(s) addressed concepts related to financial conflicts of interest, impartiality, misuse of position and gifts. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. §§ 2638.307(e)(1) and 2638.308(f)(1).				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.2	The agency provided employees with either the following written materials or written instruction for accessing them: The summary of the Standards of Conduct distributed by the Office of Government Ethics or an equivalent summary prepared by the agency; provisions of any supplemental agency regulation that the DAEO determines to be relevant or a summary of those provisions; such other written materials as the DAEO determines should be included; instructions for contacting the agency's ethics officials. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304(e)(2).				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.3	The agency's annual ethics training complies with the formatting requirements for public filers, confidential filers, and certain other employees. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. §§ 2638.307(d) and 2638.308(e).				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.4	The agency's program for annual ethics training complies with the tracking requirements for public filers, confidential filers, and certain other employees. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. §§ 2638.307(f) and 2638.308(g).				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.5	The agency can demonstrate it has an effective process for ensuring covered public filers, other than those whose pay is set at Level I or Level II of the Executive Schedule, complete live annual ethics training at least once every two years. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.308(e)(2).				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DATA ANALYSIS					Training Format		
					Live	Interactive	
	Percentage of public filers who completed annual ethics training before the end of the calendar year. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.308(a).						
8.6	• Executive Schedule Level I and Level II. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.308(e)(1).				N/A		N/A
8.7	• Other PAS and Equivalent. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.308(e)(2).				N/A		N/A
8.8	• SES and Equivalent. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.308(e)(3).				N/A		100%
	Percentage of confidential filers and certain other employees who completed annual ethics training before the end of the calendar year. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.307(a)(d).						
8.9	• Employees required to file an annual confidential financial disclosure report. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.307(a)(1).				N/A		100%
8.10	• Employees appointed by the President. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.307(a)(2).				N/A		N/A
8.11	• Employees of the Executive Office of the President. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.307(a)(2).				N/A		N/A
8.12	• Contracting officers described in 41 U.S.C. § 2101. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.307(a)(3).				N/A		N/A
8.13	• Other employees designated by the head of the agency. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.307(a)(4).				N/A		N/A
COMMENTS							
(8.6) USTR does not employ any Executive Schedule Level I or Level II employees. (8.7) USTR did not have any PAS employees who were required to receive annual ethics training during the period covered by the inspection. During this period the agency had three newly confirmed PAS employees and three departures. (8.10-8.13) USTR does not have any employees in these categories who are not already accounted for at 8.9.							

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	COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENT	Yes	No	N/A
9.1	Based on a sample collected by OGE, guidance provided by agency ethics officials to employees appears to be consistent with applicable laws and regulations. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.104(c)(4).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	COMMENTS			
	None			

10.0 SPECIAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES (SGE) SERVING ON ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND BOARDS**Confidential Financial Disclosure**

10.1	Number of SGEs serving on Advisory Committees and Boards.	4
	DATA ANALYSIS	%
10.2	Percentage of sampled confidential new entrant reports filed timely. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.903(b).	N/A
10.3	Percentage of sampled reports reviewed within 60 days of receipt but not later than the SGE's first meeting. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.605(a).	N/A
10.4	Percentage of sampled reports certified within 60 days of receipt. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.605(a).	N/A

Ethics Training

	COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS	Yes	No	N/A
	Required ethics training must be provided to each SGE. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. §§ 2638.304 and 2638.307.			
10.5	The training presentation(s) addressed concepts related to conflicts of interest, impartiality, misuse of position and gifts. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304(e)(1).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.6	The agency provided employees with either the following written materials or written instruction for accessing them: The summary of the Standards of Conduct distributed by the Office of Government Ethics or an equivalent summary prepared by the agency; provisions of any supplemental agency regulation that the DAEO determines to be relevant or a summary of those provisions; such other written materials as the DAEO determines should be included; instructions for contacting the agency's ethics officials. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304(e)(2).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	DATA ANALYSIS	%		
10.7	Percentage of SGEs who received initial ethics training. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304.	N/A		
10.8	Percentage of SGEs who received initial ethics training timely. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304(b)(2).	N/A		
10.9	Percentage of SGEs who received annual ethics training. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.307(d)(2).	100%		
	COMMENTS			
	(10.2-10.4) OGE examined the four trade advisory committees that report to USTR. Two of the four committees have SGE members. Three members on the Trade and Environment Policy Advisory Committee and one member of the Trade Advisory Committee on Africa serve as SGEs. The agency determined that these SGE members play no role in formulating USTR policy and the duties of their positions make remote the possibility that they will be involved in a real or apparent conflict of interest and determined that they did not need to file financial disclosure reports.			