

ETHICS PROGRAM REVIEW FOLLOW-UP REPORT

Agency: U.S. Department of Commerce

Follow-up to OGE Report Number: 18-59 and 20-27F

Report No.: 22-05F

Date: November 22, 2021

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

As a result of its review of the Department of Commerce ethics program, the Office of Government Ethics (OGE) issued seven recommendations in its September 2018 plenary report. OGE conducted a follow-up review in May 2020 but was only able to close five of the seven recommendations at that time. OGE conducted a second follow-up review intermittently in May and June 2021. The results of our follow-up review are summarized below.

	Recommendation	Agency Action and OGE Finding	Status
3	Implement corrective action to improve the filing timeliness of new entrant confidential reports, particularly with regard to current employees who are assigned new duties or responsibilities throughout the year that trigger the confidential filing requirement.	<p>During this second follow-up review, ethics officials advised OGE that due to ongoing efforts and discussions with the Department's Human Resources (HR) offices, significant progress has been made to improve filing timeliness of new entrant confidential financial disclosure reports. According to ethics officials, they now request information from HR offices and follow-up with questions to obtain information needed to notify filers on a bi-weekly basis.</p> <p>According to ethics officials, HR offices are also notifying the Ethics Division of new hires and promotions before or at the same time employees are receiving their offer letters. Ethics officials said that this has created a tremendous improvement in the timeliness of new entrant report filing.</p> <p>Another improvement is the Ethics Division's implementation of an online electronic filing system (FDonline) which helps with the administration of the confidential financial disclosure program Department-wide.</p> <p>According to ethics officials, from January 1, 2021 to May 31, 2021, the Ethics Division was responsible for the review and certification of 564 new entrant confidential reports that were required to be filed department-wide.</p>	Closed

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		To evaluate Commerce's new entrant confidential financial disclosure process, OGE selected a sample of 40 of these reports to examine. Of the 40 new entrant confidential reports examined, 93% were filed timely while all were certified within 60 days of submission.	
7	Ensure that confidential reports filed by advisory committee members serving on the Board of Overseers and the Judges Panelist of the Malcolm Bridge National Quality Award are certified in a timely manner.	During the follow-up review, OGE examined a sample of 14 confidential financial disclosure reports filed in 2020 by SGE committee members serving on both the Board of Overseers and the Judges Panelist of the Malcolm Bridge National Quality Award. All confidential reports examined were certified timely.	Closed

Based on the results of OGE's follow-up review, both recommendations are now closed.