

Ethics Responsibilities of Human Resources Officials

US Department of Commerce regulations require that human resources provide prospective new employees and all new supervisor with the notices identified in 5 CFR, Part 2638.

Prospective Employee Notice of Ethical Obligations

The Department of Commerce (DOC) is committed to ensuring that all our employees act in a manner that embodies a position of trust and a high standard of ethical conduct. As an employee of the Department, you will be joining a workforce that is dedicated to accomplishing our mission while maintaining the trust of our Nation by strictly adhering to all government ethics standards. Your conduct will be subject to the ethics rules applicable to all Executive Branch employees and to the criminal conflict of interest statutes. These rules will assist you in maintaining your impartiality and acting in the public's interest as you carry out the responsibilities of your DOC position. If you have a concern at any time that a DOC assignment may involve one of your personal financial interests, promptly notify your supervisor and obtain ethics guidance from the appropriate Ethics Official before working on the assignment. You may find a summary of the Federal conflict of interest statutes, the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, and other ethics laws on the Ethics Office's web page: <https://ogc.commerce.gov/page/ethics-rules>.

You must further complete initial ethics training within 3 months of appointment

If the position requires the individual to file either a Public Financial Disclosure Report (OGE 278) or Confidential Financial Disclosure Report (OGE 450):

For employees required to file a Confidential Financial Disclosure Reports (OGE 450): Please note that the position you will hold requires you to file a confidential financial disclosure report and your report will be due within 30 days after starting your USPTO employment and annually thereafter as long as you occupy a position that requires financial disclosure reporting. The report collects certain personal financial information from you so that the Department can ensure your personal financial interests do not conflict with the performance of your official duties. For questions about the filing requirement, please contact Veronica Workie at 202-482-0389 or OGEform450 @doc.gov. If you have any general ethics questions, please contact the ethics office at 202-482-5384 or ethicsdivision@doc.gov.

For employees required to file a Public Financial Disclosure Reports (OGE 278): Please note that you are required to file a public financial disclosure report and your report will be due within 30 days after starting your USPTO employment and annually thereafter as long as you occupy a position that requires financial disclosure reporting. The report collects certain personal financial information from you so that the Department can ensure your personal financial interests do not conflict with the performance of your official duties.

For questions about the filing requirements, please contact Stephanie Dyer at 202-482-8043 or OGEform278@doc.gov. If you have any general ethics questions, please contact the ethics office at 202-482-5384 or ethicsdivision@doc.gov.

In addition, if you are a new supervisor, you are not only responsible for leadership in setting a tone of integrity and ethical conduct for your subordinate employees, but for personally ensuring that your subordinate employees are aware of their responsibilities under the government Standards of Conduct and know where to obtain ethics guidance if they have questions.

New Supervisors Notice of Ethical Obligations

Congratulations on your new supervisory position! As you assume this important role, we want to remind you of the Department's commitment to a strong ethical culture. The federal ethics regulations provide the following description of your new responsibilities:

Every supervisor in the executive branch has a heightened personal responsibility for advancing government ethics. It is imperative that supervisors serve as models of ethical behavior for subordinates. Supervisors have a responsibility to help ensure that subordinates are aware of their ethical obligations under the Standards of Conduct and that subordinates know how to contact agency ethics officials. Supervisors are also responsible for working with agency ethics officials to help resolve conflicts of interest and enforce government ethics laws and regulations, including those requiring certain employees to file financial disclosure reports and to complete required ethics training in a timely manner. In addition, supervisors are responsible, when requested, for assisting agency ethics officials in evaluating potential conflicts of interest and identifying positions subject to financial disclosure requirements.

5 C.F.R. § 2638.103.

As a supervisor, you become an integral part of the ethical culture. Awareness of and adherence to ethics principles and the Department's policies, in addition to ensuring the highest standards of honesty, integrity, and professionalism of our staff, is a vital part of your role. Your example will ensure transparency for your staff, boost confidence and morale, and contribute to a harmonious and effective workforce. Therefore, all Department supervisors are expected to ensure they and their subordinates meet the following minimum obligations of ethical conduct: comply with the ethics laws, standards, and guidelines; attend required ethics training; and provide accurate and timely financial disclosures, if applicable.

To refresh your understanding of the ethical values underlying Federal service, you should review the summary of the Principles of Ethical Conduct, Federal conflict of interest statutes, the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, and other ethics laws on the Ethics Office's web page: <https://ogc.commerce.gov/page/ethics-rules>.

You should retain this handout for use as a reference. If you need additional information, you may also visit the Ethics Office's web page at www.commerce.gov/ethics. If you have any general questions on applicable ethics requirements, please contact the ethics office at 202-482-5384 or ethicsdivision@doc.gov.