

DUPLICATE

Milestones and Accomplishments

1990-1999

The decade of the 1990's has been a time of great change in the executive branch ethics program. The statutory and regulatory framework of the ethics program was significantly modified by the directives of the Ethics Reform Act of 1989 and President Bush's Executive Order 12674 issued in April 1989. Over the course of the 1990's, OGE issued major regulations implementing these legislative and executive directives in the areas of standards of conduct, conflicting financial interests, public and confidential financial disclosure and ethics training. The ethics program continued to grow and mature as it incorporated these legal changes. By the end of the 1990's a deeply rooted legal and institutional framework had taken hold.

At the same time, changes in the world at large created new demands on OGE as the expert agency in the field of preventive measures to avoid conflicts of interest. A growing global awareness of the devastating effects of government corruption prompted requests for information and technical assistance by OGE. Also changes in the Government itself such as privatization, downsizing and contracting out in many cases resulted in closer working relationships with the private sector that raised new ethics concerns. OGE increased its participation in an ongoing dialogue with the private sector regarding government, organizational and professional ethics.

Finally, the reality of tighter constraints on resources meant that if the ethics program was to continue to improve, it would have to make smarter, more efficient use of the human and material resources available to it, including information technology. This meant sharing resources, developing new tools, and building a cohesive community of professional ethics practitioners.

The following are some milestones and accomplishments that reflect OGE's response to these internal and external forces of change in the 1990's.

* International Outreach. During the 90's there was a growing interest in preventive measures designed to deal with corruption and misconduct in governments around the world. In response to requests by U.S. Government agencies with foreign policy related programs, as well as requests by foreign countries and multinational organizations, OGE provided information and technical assistance. In a number of instances OGE provided consultation on design and implementation of ethics programs abroad. OGE participated in the drafting of the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption that was adopted by the Organization of American States in 1996. One catalyst for the development of the anti-

corruption convention was an International Conference on Ethics in Government held in Washington, DC in November of 1994. This pioneering conference, sponsored by OGE and the United States Information Agency, brought together over 80 representatives from 49 countries. OGE has also participated in the ethics working group at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in the development of various ethics initiatives.

* Private Sector Outreach. The 90's also witnessed an increase in close working relationships between the Federal Government and the private sector. In response, OGE increased its communications with companies and organizations that interact with, have an interest in, or do business with the Government. For example, OGE worked closely with the Defense Industry Initiative, the Conference Board, the Ethics Officer's Association, and the Council on Government Ethics Laws. OGE also made presentations to, or consulted with, individual corporations, as well as "good government" groups such as the Ethics Resource Center and the Council for Excellence in Government.

* A New Code of Conduct. OGE developed and promulgated a comprehensive code of conduct in response to the directive contained in President Bush's Executive Order 12674. The new Standards of Conduct became effective in 1993 and replaced an older set of standards that had not been significantly changed or updated since the 1960's. OGE worked with other executive branch agencies and the ethics community through the pre-publication phase of development, the comments on the proposed rule, the issuance of a final rule, and the supplementation of the executive branch-wide code by individual agency regulations.

* A New Regulation on Conflicting Financial Interests. OGE developed and published in 1996 a major regulation interpreting the basic conflict of interest law and providing for regulatory exemptions from that law in accordance with the provisions of the Ethics Reform Act of 1989. The regulation also set forth guidelines and requirements for the granting of individual waivers from the prohibition of the conflicts statute.

* A New Certificate of Divestiture Program. OGE developed a regulation and program to implement the certificate of divestiture provision of the Ethics Reform Act of 1989. The certificate of divestiture program has been an extremely valuable means for resolving conflicts in a manner that does not impose undue hardship on federal employees who are required to sell certain assets.

* A Uniform Confidential Financial Disclosure System. OGE developed and issued a regulation to establish a uniform system of confidential financial disclosure for executive branch employees to complement the public disclosure system as required by the Ethics Reform Act of 1989 and Executive Order 12674.

* A Rule Revising the Public Financial Disclosure System. OGE issued a regulation revising the public financial disclosure system in accordance with changes made by the Ethics Reform Act of 1989 and Executive Order 12574.

* A New Executive Branch-wide Training Program. OGE developed a regulation as required by Executive Order 12674 to implement new training requirements for agency training programs which reach every new employee that enters federal service and annually provide training for certain senior officials.

* A Reinstated Series of Annual Government Ethics Conferences. OGE reinstated an annual government ethics conference in 1991 after a six year hiatus in the 80's. Prompted in part by the wide-sweeping changes in the program made by the 1989 Reform Act and President Bush's executive order, the conference became an important vehicle for building a coherent community of professional ethics practitioners.

* A Growing Body of Interpretive Legal Opinion. OGE continued to develop a body of interpretive legal opinions that help deal with day to day legal issues. OGE made those opinions available on a timely basis, including publication on its web site with on-line search capability.

* An Expanded Agency Program Review Capability. During the 90's there were significant increases in program review staff resulting in more regular, efficient and helpful agency program reviews.

* An Expanded Use of Single Issue Audits. OGE made greater use of single issue audits and surveys to evaluate the ethics program in order to improve it.

* An Expanded Desk Officer System. A formal desk officer system was established in 1990 to improve communications with agency ethics officials. This system was strengthened throughout the 90's and the role of the desk officer was enhanced.

* Establishment of an Ethics Information Center. OGE established an Ethics Information Center in May 1994 to serve as a resource for ethics officers and training staff throughout the executive branch seeking material to meet their employee training needs.

* A Growing Collection of Training Materials and Ethics Resources and Tools for Practitioners. During the 90's, OGE greatly expanded its training materials, including videotapes, pamphlets, and a regularly updated Ethics CD-ROM. It also developed other tools for the program including a reviewer's guide for confidential financial disclosure published in 1993 and a reviewer's guide for

public financial disclosure published in 1994. Finally, OGE developed a number of forms for the ethics program, including the forms used for public and confidential financial disclosure.

* Establishment of an Internet Web Site. OGE introduced its Web site in 1996. Currently, in the latter part of 1999, the OGE site is averaging 100,000 monthly "hits" or visits.

* Agency Travel Acceptance Reports. OGE consulted with the General Services Administration in the development of a regulation to implement the executive branch-wide authority for agencies to accept payments from non-federal sources for certain travel expenses. OGE serves as the repository for the reports filed by agencies on their use of this authority.