

ETHICS PROGRAM INSPECTION REPORT

Agency: Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP)

Report No.: 22-631

Date: September 29, 2022

Period Covered by Review: January 1, 2021 through August 15, 2022

**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.	27
1.2	Number of Presidentially appointed, Senate-confirmed (PAS) public financial disclosure reports required to be filed.	1
1.3	Number of non-PAS public financial disclosure reports required to be filed.	8
1.4	Number of confidential financial disclosure reports required to be filed.	81
	ETHICS PROGRAM	
1.5	Title of Designated Agency Ethics Official (DAEO).	General Counsel
1.6	Grade level of DAEO.	SES
1.7	Title of Alternate DAEO (ADAEO).	Deputy General Counsel / Chief Operating Officer
1.8	Grade level of ADAEO.	SES
1.9	Title of the primary, day-to-day ethics program administrator.	Senior Counsel
1.10	Grade level of the primary, day-to-day ethics program administrator.	GS-15
1.11	Current number of full-time ethics officials.	1
1.12	Current number of part-time ethics officials.	3
1.13	Number of reporting levels between the DAEO and the agency head.	1
	COMMENTS	
	None.	

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"/>
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input 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"/>

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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).	100%		
3.10	Percentage of sampled non-PAS annual reports filed timely. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.201(a).	100%		
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).	100%		
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).	100%		
3.14	Percentage of sampled PAS annual reports filed timely. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.201(a).	NA		
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			
	3.6: OSTP retained several public financial disclosure reports beyond the six year retention period. Ethics officials cited employee turnover and issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic as causal factors. Ethics officials confirmed that all reports retained beyond the six year retention period have been destroyed.			

4.0	CONFIDENTIAL FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE			
	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).			
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</i> OGE/GOVT-2.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.4	Confidential financial disclosure reports are retained in accordance with the retention requirements. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.604.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input 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).	72%		

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4.8	Percentage of sampled confidential annual reports filed timely. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.903(a).	88%
4.9	Percentage of sampled reports reviewed within 60 days of receipt. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2634.605(a).	86%
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).	86%
COMMENTS		
<p>4.4: OSTP retained several confidential financial disclosure reports beyond the six year retention period. Ethics officials cited employee turnover and issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic as causal factors. Ethics officials confirmed that all reports retained beyond the six year retention period have been destroyed.</p> <p>4.5: OSTP does not have an OGE-approved alternative financial disclosure system.</p> <p>4.7: OGE examined the 18 new entrant confidential financial disclosure reports required to be filed during the period covered by the inspection. Five of these reports were submitted after the applicable due date.</p>		

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A statement regarding the agency's commitment to government ethics.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Where applicable, notice of the time frame for completing initial ethics training.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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				
<p>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 in paid positions. However, while OSTP ethics officials 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 procedures are critical for delineating responsibility and ensuring a program's continuity. EOP/OA-HR should share the relevant procedures with OSTP ethics officials.</p> <p>The OGE inspection team requested a point of contact within EOP/OA-HR. However, OSTP's ethics officials declined to provide the review team with contact information. OGE will follow-up with EOP/OA-HR and issue recommendations, if appropriate.</p>				

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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: <i>See</i> 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</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.306(d).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.6	The agency's written procedures are reviewed by the DAEO each year. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.306(d).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.306(b).	<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 in paid positions, as previously noted. <i>See</i> 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. <i>See</i> 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</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304(e)(1).	<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</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304(e)(2).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.3	The agency has established written procedures for initial ethics training. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304(f).	<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</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304(f).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	DATA ANALYSIS	%		
7.5	Percentage of new employees who received initial ethics training. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304.	93%		
7.6	Percentage of new employees who received initial ethics training within three months of appointment. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304(b).	93%		
	COMMENTS			
	<p>7.3: The Executive Office of the President (EOP), Office of Administration-Human Resources (EOP/OA-HR) provides personnel services to EOP component agencies. This includes providing ethics training. However, while OSTP ethics officials rely on EOP/OA-HR to provide ethics training, 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 initial ethics training. Written procedures are critical for delineating responsibility and ensuring a program’s continuity. EOP/OA-HR should share the relevant procedures with ethics officials.</p> <p>The OGE inspection team requested a point of contact within EOP/OA-HR. However, OSTP’s ethics officials declined to provide the review team with contact information. OGE will follow-up with EOP/OA-HR and issue recommendations, if appropriate.</p>			

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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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input 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).						
8.8	• SES and Equivalent. <i>See</i> 5 C.F.R. § 2638.308(e)(3).				0%	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).				0%	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).				0%	100%	
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							
8.1: The training was well-prepared, however, it did not adequately address the concept of misuse. 8.2: OSTP did not provide the Standards of Conduct or written instructions for accessing them during annual ethics training in 2021. 8.6: OSTP has no Schedule I or II positions. 8.10, 8.12, 8.13: OSTP has none of these positions.							

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None.

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

10.1 Number of SGEs 7

DATA ANALYSIS**%**10.2 Percentage of sampled confidential new entrant reports filed timely. *See* 5 C.F.R. § 2634.903(b).

50%

10.3 Percentage of sampled reports reviewed within 60 days of receipt but not later than the SGE's first meeting. *See* 5 C.F.R. § 2634.605(a).

0%

10.4 Percentage of sampled reports certified within 60 days of receipt. *See* 5 C.F.R. § 2634.605(a).

0%

Ethics Training**COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS****Yes****No****N/A**Required ethics training must be provided to each SGE. *See* 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. *See* 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304(e)(1).☒☐☐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. *See* 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304(e)(2).☒☐☐**DATA ANALYSIS****%**10.7 Percentage of SGEs who received initial ethics training. *See* 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304.

57%

10.8 Percentage of SGEs who received initial ethics training timely. *See* 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304(b)(2).

57%

10.9 Percentage of SGEs who received annual ethics training. *See* 5 C.F.R. § 2638.307(d)(2).

N/A

COMMENTS10.2 – 10.4: During the period covered by the inspection, OSTP had seven SGEs. Only two of the seven SGEs were required to file confidential financial disclosure reports in 2022. One report was not collected. The employee who failed to file a report is no longer with OSTP. The remaining SGE's report was certified more than 60 days after the submission.
10.7, 10.8, 10.9: Three out of the seven SGEs did not receive ethics training in 2021.

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ISSUES IDENTIFIED AND RESOLVED DURING THE INSPECTION

Element	ISSUE
3.6, 4.4	<p><u>ISSUE:</u> OSTP retained several public and confidential financial disclosure reports beyond the six year retention period. Ethics officials cited employee turnover and issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic as causal factors. Ethics officials confirmed that all reports retained beyond the six year retention period have been destroyed.</p> <p><u>AGENCY RESPONSE:</u></p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

#	Element	RECOMMENDATION	Compliance Due
1	4.7	<p><u>RECOMMENDATION:</u> Ensure that confidential financial disclosure reports are submitted timely.</p> <p><u>AGENCY RESPONSE:</u> Agree. OSTP has changed its SOP to require that 450s be submitted within an employee's first two weeks.</p>	
2	8.1, 8.2	<p><u>RECOMMENDATION:</u> Ensure that annual ethics training sufficiently covers all required concepts. In addition, ensure that OGE's Standards of Conduct or an equivalent version is provided as part of annual ethics training. OSTP must also provide documentation that illustrates the services provided by OA in conducting annual ethics training. Ensure that the documentation demonstrates a mutual understanding of responsibilities.</p> <p><u>AGENCY RESPONSE:</u> OSTP is currently revising its annual ethics training to cover the topic of misuse of position and to provide OGE's Standards of Conduct or an equivalent version.</p> <p>In response to the draft inspection report, OSTP provided OGE with documentation that illustrates the nominal services OA provides to OSTP to facilitate annual ethics training. OSTP has ensured that the documentation demonstrates a mutual understanding of OA's responsibilities.</p>	
3	10.7, 10.8	<p><u>RECOMMENDATION:</u> Ensure that all SGEs receive initial ethics training as required.</p> <p><u>AGENCY RESPONSE:</u> OSTP notes that this recommendation was based on a small sample size of 7 SGEs. OSTP understands the importance of all employees, including SGEs, receiving initial ethics training and will ensure all SGEs receive initial ethics training in the future.</p>	