

**United States Department of Agriculture  
Office of Ethics – Farm, Conservation, & Rural Programs Branch  
Guidance: Request for Prior Approval of Outside Activity / Employment**

**Definition of Employment 5 C.F.R. 8301.102(b):** “Employment” means any form of non-Federal employment or business relationship or activity involving the provision of personal services by the employee for direct, indirect, or deferred compensation other than reimbursement of actual and necessary expenses. It also includes, *irrespective of compensation*, the following outside activities. (1) Providing personal services as a consultant or professional, including service as a witness or as an attorney; and (2) Providing personal services to a *for-profit* entity as an officer, director, employee, agent, attorney, consultant, contractor, general partner, or trustee, which involves decision making or policymaking for the non-Federal entity, or the provision of advice or counsel.

**Compensated Positions Exempt from Completing Outside Employment Application (Examples are not all-inclusive)**

<b>Athletic Programs</b> (Coach, referee, sports instructor) <b>Bail Bondsman</b> <b>Civic Club Leader</b> (Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts) <b>Cashier /Stock Person</b> (Department stores, home improvement, supermarkets) <b>Day Laborer</b> (Farm-hand)	<b>Delivery Driver</b> <b>Desk Clerk</b> (Hotel, cashier, valet) <b>Distributor / Vendor /Sales Staff</b> (Juice bowl distributor, usher, Avon, Pampered Chef, Amway, travel & tours) <b>Food Service Industry</b> (Cook, server, bartender, fast food) <b>First Responders</b> (Fire & police departments, EMS)	<b>Lawn &amp; Garden Maintenance</b> (Gardener, landscaper) <b>Musician / Entertainment Venues</b> (Music teacher, concert staff, usher) <b>Novelty Acts / Adult Entertainment</b> (Exotic dancer, snake charmer, magician) <b>Radio - Television Broadcaster</b> <b>Religious Establishments</b> (Staff, ministry) <b>Sanitation Worker</b> <b>Tax Preparer</b>
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**Serving as a Trustee:** Prior approval for trustee positions is required if the position is either: 1) compensated; or 2) with a for-profit entity.

**Uncompensated positions with non-profit entities would not require prior approval under the regulation.** Examples follow:

- Nature Conservancy, non-profit, Board Member
- Friends of National Public Radio, non-profit, Treasurer

**Professional Services and the Scope of the Prior Approval Requirement:** 5 C.F.R. 8301.102(b)(1) requires prior approval for positions where an employee is providing personal services as a consultant or professional, regardless of whether the positions are compensated. The USDA Office of Ethics has interpreted “professional services” to mean those services that require a professional license (e.g. work as a physician, lawyer, Certified Public Accountant, real estate agent, appraiser, etc.). Examples follow:

- American Realtors Association, non-profit, President (real estate license required for position)
- National Association of Certified Public Accountants, non-profit, Treasurer (CPA license required for position)

**Recusal from Acting in Official Capacity Based on Outside Activity or Employment:**

Although your position may be “exempt” from the requirement to request prior approval; you are still responsible for recusing yourself from any duties related to outside activities or employment in your official capacity.

**Who Is Required to Complete this Form?**

- All FSA, NRCS, and RD Federal employees who file the **OGE Form 450** (except Special Government Employees).
- All FSA Federal employees not covered by provisions at 5 C.F.R. 8301.102 must submit Outside Employment Form in accordance with [5 C.F.R. 8301.103](#) before engaging in outside employment with or for persons who the FSA employee knows or reasonably should know is:
  - An FSA program participant or borrower; and
  - Directly affected by decisions made by the particular office in which the FSA employee serves.

**Outside Employment Prior Approval Process:**

**Employee:** Complete Parts I-III and electronically submit to your Immediate Supervisor. **Supervisor:** Complete Part IV and email to the Approving Official (see Agency-specific guidance for definition of Approving Official). **Approving Official:** Complete Part V and email to OE-Farm (directly or via your State Ethics Contact) for review and concurrence.

**All forms must be digitally signed and electronically submitted. No hard copies will be accepted.**

**Note:** *If a significant change in the nature of the outside employment or your official position occurs, a new request for prior approval of your outside activities or employment must be submitted*



If a written invitation was received for this activity, attach a copy. For activities involving teaching, speaking, or writing, provide a syllabus, outline, summary, synopsis, draft, or similar description of the content and subject matter involved in the course, speech, or written product (including, if available, a copy of the text of any speech) and the proposed text of any disclaimer that indicates *the views expressed do not necessarily represent the views of USDA or the United States*. **Check the applicable boxes** indicating that these materials are attached. If you are unable to provide this information or will be delayed in submitting the attachments, please explain below.

Written Invitation (includes e-mail)

Subject Matter of Activity

Text of Disclaimer

**Explain:**

**2. Outside Employer or Other Entity** - Identify the outside employer or entity and the nature of the entity's business for which the proposed activity will be performed. Provide the name and title of a contact person. In Items 3 and 4, provide address and contact information for the outside employer or entity.

OUTSIDE EMPLOYER OR ENTITY NAME AND NATURE OF BUSINESS

CONTACT PERSON

TITLE

**3. Outside Employer or Entity Address and Phone Number**

ADDRESS

Phone:

Fax:

E-mail:

**4. Location** - Indicate the City and State where the activity or service will be performed.

CITY:

STATE:

**5. Travel** - Indicate whether travel is involved, and if so, whether the transportation, lodging, meals, or per diem will be at your own expense or provided by the outside employer or entity in-kind or through reimbursement. Describe arrangements and provide estimated costs of items to be furnished or reimbursed by the outside employer or entity.

Yes:      At Own Expense      In-Kind or Reimbursed      Estimated Amount: \$

No

**Describe:**

**6. Time** - Provide details with respect to the duration of the activity. This request must be resubmitted for approval upon a significant change in the nature of the outside activity or in your official position.

**a. Period Covered** (*Duration of Activity*)

From:

To:

**b. Estimated Time Devoted to the Proposed Activity**

Hours per day

Days Per Week

Weeks Per Year

**c. Will work be performed entirely outside of your normal tour of duty?**

Yes      No (If "no," estimate the number of hours or days that you will be absent from work and indicate the type of leave to be requested.)

**7. Compensation**

Indicate whether the activity is compensated, and if so, answer the questions below.

Yes      No

**a. Method or Basis of Compensation** (Check all boxes that apply)

Fee    Honorarium    Retainer    Salary    Advance    Royalty    Stock    Stock Options    Other

Non-Travel Related Expenses (describe)

**b. Payor**

If any compensation will be received from a payor other than the employer or entity to which personal services will be provided, identify the payor and explain.

**c. Funding Source**

Indicate whether any compensation is derived from a USDA grant, contract, cooperative agreement, or other source of federal funding or if the services to be performed are related to an activity funded by USDA regardless of the specific source of the compensation.

Yes (If "yes," describe)      No

**d. Grantee, Contractor or Other Status**

For activities involving the provision of consultative or professional services (including teaching), indicate whether the client, employer, or other person on whose behalf the services are performed is receiving, or intends to seek, a USDA grant, contract, cooperative agreement, or other funding relationship.

Yes (If "yes," describe)      No

**Part III - OFFICIAL DUTY INFORMATION**

**1. Nature of Official Duties**

Describe the principle duties and responsibilities of your current position. *Attach a copy of your current position description.*

Position Description Attached

**2. Relationship of Official Duties to Outside Activity**

Do any of your official duties relate in any way to the proposed activity?

No, none of my official duties relate in any way to the proposed outside activity.

Yes, my official duties relate to the proposed activity in the following manner:

**Explain:**

**3. Effect of Official Duties on Outside Employer or Entity**

In performing your official duties, could either your actions or the matters upon which you may be called upon to work affect the interests of the employer or entity for which the proposed activity will be performed?

No, performance of my official duties will not have any effect upon the interests of the employer or entity.

Yes, performance of my official duties will have the following effect upon the interests of the employer or entity:

**Explain:**

**4. Assignments Involving Outside Employer or Entity**

Have you performed official duty assignments or had other official interactions that involved the employer or entity for which the proposed activity will be performed?

No, I have performed no such official duty assignments and have had no such other official interactions

Yes, I have either performed such official duty assignments or have had such other official interactions. These assignments and interactions are as follows [indicate approximate dates of assignments and interactions]:

**Explain:**

**5. Employee Certification**

I certify that I have read and understand the notice provided in **Part VII** and that the statements made and information provided on this form are complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that I am performing this activity in my personal capacity and that my participation is not derived from my Federal position, title or authority; does not entail official positions or policies of USDA; and will not occur on official time nor involve the expenditure of appropriated funds.

I acknowledge that, pursuant to [5 CFR 8301.102\(c\)](#), I must resubmit a request for prior approval upon a significant change in the nature of the outside activity or in my official position.

<b>EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE</b>	<b>DATE</b>
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**Part IV - SUPERVISOR REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION**

**1. Summary of Applicable Law**

As a supervisor, your obligation and the duty of the employee seeking the outside arrangement are first and foremost to USDA and the successful accomplishment of its mission. If the outside activity is approved, it is part of your supervisory responsibilities to monitor the employee's compliance with applicable ethics laws and regulations.

An outside activity conflicts with official duties if it is prohibited by statute or regulation; or it would require the employee's recusal from matters so central or critical to the performance of his or her official duties that the employee's ability to perform the duties of his or her position would be materially impaired. Such a recusal would likely be required where the outside activity involves an employer or entity that is regulated by, does business with, receives grants or other benefits from, or is otherwise substantially impacted by the programs, policies and operations of the employee's agency.

Consider the following when reviewing this request:

- Do the circumstances indicate that the invitation to engage in the activity was extended to the employee primarily because of their official position rather than inherent expertise on the particular subject matter? How was this expertise acquired?
- Was the invitation to engage in the activity extended to the employee, directly or indirectly, by a person or entity who has interests that may be affected substantially by the performance or nonperformance of the employee's official duties?
- Will the information conveyed through the activity draw substantially on ideas or official data that are nonpublic information?
- Does the subject matter relate to any matter(s) to which the employee is presently assigned or has been assigned during the previous one-year period; or to any ongoing or announced policy, program or operation of the agency?
- Is the employee being asked to apply previously published work to specific scenarios posed by a private entity? In this circumstance, it is important to consider whether the employee is continuing to conduct research in the same area as his or her published findings.

If you determine that the subject area of the activity is too closely related to the employee's official duty, and the activity is not appropriate as an outside activity, a separate analysis must be conducted before consideration should be given to whether or not the activity would be more appropriately performed as an official duty. You must conclude that the employee seeking approval to engage in the activity in their official capacity is the appropriate person to represent USDA with respect to that subject matter. It is part of USDA's mission to disseminate information; however, agencies must be careful not to give preferential treatment to one entity, allowing that entity to have an advantage because of the exclusive receipt of government information. Consult your Agency Ethics Official for additional guidance.

**2. Immediate Supervisor's Statement (MANDATORY)**

Describe the extent to which the employee's official duties are related to the proposed activity. If not related, explain:

[Empty text box for supervisor's statement]

**3. Recommendation**

The undersigned supervisor, identified in Part 1, Item 7, has reviewed the employee's responses, obtained additional information where appropriate, and recommends the following action:

**Recommend Approval**

If this box is checked, the supervisor understands that if the outside activity is approved, the employee may be disqualified from performing official duties that involve or affect any outside entity with which the employee has an outside employment, consulting, or similar relationship. If the activity constitutes employment or service as an officer, director, or trustee, or in another fiduciary role, the recusal obligation may extend not only to government matters that specifically involve or affect the outside entity, but to those matters that affect generally the industry or economic sector in which the outside entity operates. The supervisor understands that any work assignments involving specific or general matters from which the employee will be recused must be reassigned to another employee and are not so central or critical to the performance of the employee's official duties that the employee's ability to perform the duties of his or her position would be materially impaired.

**Recommend Disapproval**

If this box is checked, explain the reason(s) for disapproval in the space provided below.

<b>IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE</b>	<b>DATE</b>
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<b>Part V – APPROVING AGENCY OFFICIAL SIGNATURE</b>	
<b>1. Name of Approving Agency Official</b>	<b>2. Title of Approving Agency Official</b>
<b>APPROVING AGENCY OFFICIAL'S SIGNATURE</b>	<b>DATE</b>

**Part VI – USDA OFFICE OF ETHICS OFFICIAL REVIEW**

<b>1. Name of USDA Office of Ethics Official</b>	<b>2. Title of USDA Office of Ethics Official</b>
<b>3. Ethics Review</b> Review the employee’s answers and the supervisor’s recommendation. Indicate whether the activity can be approved or permission must be denied. Explain your reason(s) in the space below and describe any actions deemed necessary to ensure compliance with applicable ethics laws.  Request as described may be approved                      Request may be approved subject to conditions noted in Comments section Request as described must be denied                      Other disposition noted in Comments section	
<b>USDA OFFICE OF ETHICS OFFICIAL SIGNATURE</b>	<b>DATE</b>
<b>4. Comments</b>	

**Part VII – NOTICES**

APPROVAL OF AN OUTSIDE ACTIVITY DOES NOT RELEASE YOU FROM A CONTINUING LEGAL OBLIGATION TO DISQUALIFY YOURSELF FROM OFFICIAL ASSIGNMENTS AFFECTING YOUR OUTSIDE EMPLOYER OR THE ENTITY TO WHICH YOU ARE PROVIDING PERSONAL SERVICES. WHILE PERFORMING AN APPROVED OUTSIDE ACTIVITY, ANY ACTIONS TAKEN IN CONFLICT WITH APPLICABLE ETHICS LAWS MAY SUBJECT YOU TO CRIMINAL PROSECUTION OR DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS.

The Ethics in Government Act, 5 U.S.C. App. § 101, *et. seq.*, Executive Order 12674, as amended by Executive Order 12731, Sections 301 and 7301 of Title 5 of the U.S. Code, and Sections 2635.803 and 8301.101 - 102 of Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations authorize the collection of this information. The primary use of this information is to allow USDA supervisors and agency ethics officials to make necessary determinations concerning employee requests for prior approval of outside employment or activities in order to prevent a conflict of interest or other violations of the statutes, regulations, and executive orders governing employee conduct. The information is also requested for the purpose of evaluating ethics program administration, as well as the Department’s supplemental ethics regulations, to determine their continued adequacy and effectiveness in relation to current agency responsibilities and to ensure that prompt and effective action is taken to remedy violations or potential violations, or appearances thereof, of conflict of interest and related ethics provisions. Additionally, this information may be disclosed : (1) to a federal, state, or local law enforcement agency if the disclosing agency becomes aware of a violation or potential violation of law or regulation; (2) to a court or party in a court or federal administrative proceeding if the Government is a party or in order to comply with a subpoena; (3) to a source when necessary to obtain information relevant to a conflict of interest investigation or decision; (4) to the National Archives and Records Administration or the General Services Administration in records management inspections; (5) to the Office of Management and Budget during legislative coordination on private relief legislation; and (6) in response to a request for discovery or for the appearance of a witness in a judicial or administrative proceeding, if the information is relevant to the subject matter.