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§ 263.96 Conferences.

(a) *General.* The Board's staff may confer with a proposed respondent concerning allegations of misconduct or other grounds for censure, debarment or suspension, regardless of whether a proceeding for debarment or suspension has been instituted. If a conference results in a stipulation in connection with a proceeding in which the individual is the respondent, the stipulation may be entered in the record at the request of either party to the proceeding.

(b) *Resignation or voluntary suspension.* In order to avoid the institution of, or a decision in, a debarment or suspension proceeding, a person who practices before the Board may consent to suspension from practice. At the discretion of the Board, the individual may be suspended or debarred in accordance with the consent offered.

§ 263.97 Proceedings under this subpart.

Except as otherwise provided in this subpart, any hearing held under this subpart shall be held before an administrative law judge of the OFIA pursuant to procedures set forth in subparts A and B of this part. The Board shall appoint a person to represent the Board in the hearing. Any person having prior involvement in the matter which is the basis for the suspension or debarment proceeding shall be disqualified from representing the Board in the hearing. The hearing shall be closed to the public unless the Board, sua sponte or on the request of a party, otherwise directs. The administrative law judge shall refer a recommended decision to the Board, which shall issue the final decision and order. In its final decision and order, the Board may censure, debar or suspend an individual, or take such other disciplinary action as the Board deems appropriate.

§ 263.98 Effect of suspension, debarment or censure.

(a) *Debarment.* If the final order against the respondent is for debarment, the individual will not thereafter be permitted to practice before the Board unless otherwise permitted to do so by the Board pursuant to § 263.99 of this subpart.

(b) *Suspension.* If the final order against the respondent is for suspension, the individual will not thereafter be permitted to practice before the Board during the period of suspension.

(c) *Censure.* If the final order against the respondent is for censure, the individual may be permitted to practice before the Board, but such individual's future representations may be subject to conditions designed to promote high standards of conduct. If a written letter of censure is issued, a copy will be maintained in the Board's files.

(d) *Notice of debarment or suspension.* Upon the issuance of a final order for suspension or debarment, the Board shall give notice of the order to appropriate officers and employees of the Board, to interested departments and agencies of the Federal Government, and to the appropriate authorities of the State in which any debarred or suspended individual is or was licensed to practice.

§ 263.99 Petition for reinstatement.

The Board may entertain a petition for reinstatement from any person debarred from practice before the Board. The Board shall grant reinstatement only if the Board finds that the petitioner is likely to act in accordance with the regulations in this part, and that granting reinstatement would not be contrary to the public interest. Any request for reinstatement shall be limited to written submissions unless the Board, in its discretion, affords the petitioner an informal hearing.

Subpart G—Rules Regarding Claims Under the Equal Access to Justice Act

§ 263.100 Authority and scope.

This subpart implements the provisions of the Equal Access to Justice Act (5 U.S.C. 504) as they apply to formal adversary adjudications before the Board. The types of proceedings covered by this subpart are listed in §§ 263.1 and 263.50.

§ 263.101 Standards for awards.

A respondent in a covered proceeding that prevails on the merits of that proceeding against the Board, and that is

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eligible under this subpart as defined in § 263.103, may receive an award for fees and expenses incurred in the proceeding unless the position of the Board during the proceeding was substantially justified or special circumstances make an award unjust. The position of the Board includes, in addition to the position taken by the Board in the adversary proceeding, the action or failure to act by the Board upon which the adversary proceeding was based. An award will be reduced or denied if the applicant has unduly or unreasonably protracted the proceedings.

§ 263.102 Prevailing party.

Only an eligible applicant that prevailed on the merits of an adversary proceeding may qualify for an award under this subpart.

§ 263.103 Eligibility of applicants.

(a) *General rule.* To be eligible for an award under this subpart, an applicant must have been named as a party to the adjudicatory proceeding and show that it meets all other conditions of eligibility set forth in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section.

(b) *Types of eligible applicant.* An applicant is eligible for an award only if it meets at least one of the following descriptions:

(1) An individual with a net worth of not more than \$2 million at the time the adversary adjudication was initiated;

(2) Any sole owner of an unincorporated business, or any partnership, corporation, associations, unit of local government or organization, the net worth of which did not exceed \$7,000,000 and which did not have more than 500 employees at the time the adversary adjudication was initiated;

(3) A charitable or other tax-exempt organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C. 501(c)(3)) with not more than 500 employees at the time the adversary proceeding was initiated; or

(4) A cooperative association as defined in section 15(a) of the Agricultural Marketing Act (12 U.S.C. 1141j(a)) with not more than 500 employees at the time the adversary proceeding was initiated.

(c) *Factors to be considered.* In determining the eligibility of an applicant:

(1) An applicant who owns an unincorporated business shall be considered as an *individual* rather than a *sole owner of an unincorporated business* if the issues on which he or she prevailed are related to personal interests rather than to business interests.

(2) An applicant's net worth includes the value of any assets disposed of for the purpose of meeting an eligibility standard and excludes the value of any obligations incurred for this purpose. Transfers of assets or obligations incurred for less than reasonably equivalent value will be presumed to have been made for this purpose.

(3) The net worth of a financial institution shall be established by the net worth information reported in conformity with applicable instructions and guidelines on the financial institution's financial report to its supervisory agency for the last reporting date before the initiation of the adversary proceeding. A bank holding company's net worth will be considered on a consolidated basis even if the bank holding company is not required to file its regulatory reports to the Board on a consolidated basis.

(4) The employees of an applicant include all those persons who were regularly providing services for remuneration for the applicant, under its direction and control, on the date the adversary proceeding was initiated. Part-time employees are counted on a proportional basis.

(5) The net worth and number of employees of the applicant and all of its affiliates shall be aggregated to determine eligibility. As used in this subpart, *affiliates* are: Individuals, corporations, and entities that directly or indirectly or acting through one or more entities control at least 25% of the voting shares of the applicant, and corporations and entities of which the applicant directly or indirectly owns or controls at least 25% of the voting shares. The Board may determine, in light of the actual relationship among the affiliated entities, that aggregation with regard to one or more of the applicant's affiliates would be unjust and contrary to the purposes of this subpart and decline to aggregate the net