

## § 2610.302

### § 2610.302 Filing and service of documents.

Any application for an award or other pleading or document related to an application shall be filed and served on all parties to the proceeding in the same manner as other pleadings in the proceeding, except as provided in § 2610.202(b) for confidential financial information.

### § 2610.303 Answer to application.

(a) Within 30 days after service of an application, counsel representing the Office may file an answer to the application. Agency counsel may request an extension of time for filing. If agency counsel fails to contest or settle the application within the 30-day period, the adjudicative officer, upon a satisfactory showing of entitlement by the applicant, may make an award for the applicant's fees and other expenses under the Act.

(b) If agency counsel and the applicant believe that the issues in the fee application can be settled, they may jointly file a statement of their intent to negotiate a settlement. The filing of this statement shall extend the time for filing an answer for an additional 30 days, and further extensions may be granted for good cause by the adjudicative officer upon request by agency counsel and the applicant.

(c) The answer shall explain in detail any objections to the award requested and identify the facts relied on in support of agency counsel's position. If the answer is based on any alleged facts not already in the record of the proceeding, agency counsel shall include with the answer either supporting affidavits or a request for further proceedings under § 2610.307.

### § 2610.304 Reply.

Within 15 days after service of an answer, the applicant may file a reply. If the reply is based on any alleged facts not already in the record of the proceeding, the applicant shall include with the reply either supporting affidavits or a request for further proceedings under § 2610.307.

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### § 2610.305 Comments by other parties.

Any party to a proceeding other than the applicant and agency counsel may file comments on an application within 30 days after it is served, or on an answer within 15 days after it is served. A commenting party may not participate further in proceedings on the application unless the adjudicative officer determines that the public interest requires such participation in order to permit full exploration of matters raised in the comments.

### § 2610.306 Settlement.

The applicant and agency counsel may agree on a proposed settlement of the award before final action on the application, either in connection with a settlement of the underlying proceeding, or after the underlying proceeding has been concluded, in accordance with the settlement procedure applicable to the underlying procedure. If an eligible prevailing party and agency counsel agree on a proposed settlement of an award before an application has been filed, the application shall be filed with the proposed settlement.

### § 2610.307 Further proceedings.

(a) Ordinarily, the determination of an award will be made on the basis of the written record. However, on request of either the applicant or agency counsel, or on his or her own initiative, the adjudicative officer may order further proceedings, such as an informal conference, oral argument, additional written submissions or, as to issues other than substantial justification (such as the applicant's eligibility or substantiation of fees and expenses), pertinent discovery or an evidentiary hearing. Such further proceedings shall be held only when necessary for full and fair resolution of the issues arising from the application, and shall be conducted as promptly as possible. Whether or not the position of the Office was substantially justified shall be determined on the basis of the administrative record, as a whole, which is made in the adversary adjudication for which fees and other expenses are sought.

(b) A request that the adjudicative officer order further proceedings under this section shall specifically identify the information sought or the disputed

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issues and shall explain why the additional proceedings are necessary to resolve the issues.

### §2610.308 Decision.

The adjudicative officer shall issue an initial decision on the application within 30 days after completion of proceedings on the application. The decision shall include written findings and conclusions on the applicant's eligibility and status as a prevailing party, and an explanation of the reasons for any difference between the amount requested and the amount awarded. The decision shall also include, if at issue, findings on whether the Office's position was substantially justified, whether the applicant unduly protracted the proceedings, or whether special circumstances make an award unjust. If the applicant has sought an award against more than one agency, the decision shall allocate responsibility for payment of any award made among the agencies, and shall explain the reasons for the allocation made.

### §2610.309 Agency review.

Within 30 days after issuance of an initial decision under this part, either the applicant or agency counsel may seek review of the initial decision on the fee application, or the Director (or his or her designee) may decide to review the initial decision on his or her own initiative, in accordance with the Office's review or appeal procedures applicable to the underlying proceeding.

If neither the applicant nor agency counsel seeks review and the Director (or designee) does not take review on his or her own initiative, the initial decision on the application shall become a final decision of the Office of Government Ethics 30 days after it is issued. Whether to review a decision is a matter within the discretion of the Director (or his or her designee, if any). If review is taken, the Office will issue a final decision on the application or remand the application to the adjudicative officer for further proceedings.

### §2610.310 Judicial review.

Judicial review of final agency decisions on awards may be sought as provided in 5 U.S.C. 504(c)(2).

### §2610.311 Payment of award.

An applicant seeking payment of an award shall submit a copy of the Office's final decision granting the award, accompanied by a certification that the applicant will not seek review of the decision in the United States courts, to the Associate Director for Administration, Office of Government Ethics, Suite 500, 1201 New York Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20005-3917. The Office will pay the amount awarded to the applicant within 60 days, unless judicial review of the award or of the underlying decision of the adversary adjudication has been sought by the applicant, the Office, or any other party to the proceedings.