

a credit report and other financial information as provided in paragraph (g) of this section. Agencies should consider the applicable exemptions available to the debtor under state and Federal law in determining the Government's ability to enforce collection. Agencies also may consider uncertainty as to the price that collateral or other property will bring at a forced sale in determining the Government's ability to enforce collection. A compromise effected under this section should be for an amount that bears a reasonable relation to the amount that can be recovered by enforced collection procedures, with regard to the exemptions available to the debtor and the time that collection will take.

(d) If there is significant doubt concerning the Government's ability to prove its case in court for the full amount claimed, either because of the legal issues involved or because of a bona fide dispute as to the facts, then the amount accepted in compromise of such cases should fairly reflect the probabilities of successful prosecution to judgment, with due regard given to the availability of witnesses and other evidentiary support for the Government's claim. In determining the litigative risks involved, agencies should consider the probable amount of court costs and attorney fees pursuant to the Equal Access to Justice Act, 28 U.S.C. 2412, that may be imposed against the Government if it is unsuccessful in litigation.

(e) Agencies may compromise a debt if the cost of collecting the debt does not justify the enforced collection of the full amount. The amount accepted in compromise in such cases may reflect an appropriate discount for the administrative and litigative costs of collection, with consideration given to the time it will take to effect collection. Collection costs may be a substantial factor in the settlement of small debts. In determining whether the cost of collecting justifies enforced collection of the full amount, agencies should consider whether continued collection of the debt, regardless of cost, is necessary to further an enforcement principle, such as the Government's willingness to pursue aggressively defaulting and uncooperative debtors.

(f) Agencies generally should not accept compromises payable in installments. This is not an advantageous form of compromise in terms of time and administrative expense. If, however, payment of a compromise in installments is necessary, agencies should obtain a legally enforceable written agreement providing that, in the event of default, the full original principal balance of the debt prior to compromise, less sums paid thereon, is reinstated. Whenever possible, agencies also should obtain security for repayment in the manner set forth in part 901 of this chapter.

(g) To assess the merits of a compromise offer based in whole or in part on the debtor's inability to pay the full amount of a debt within a reasonable time, agencies should obtain a current financial statement from the debtor, executed under penalty of perjury, showing the debtor's assets, liabilities, income and expenses. Agencies also may obtain credit reports or other financial information to assess compromise offers. Agencies may use their own financial information form or may request suitable forms from the Department of Justice or the local United States Attorney's Office.

§ 902.3 Enforcement policy.

Pursuant to this part, agencies may compromise statutory penalties, forfeitures, or claims established as an aid to enforcement and to compel compliance, if the agency's enforcement policy in terms of deterrence and securing compliance, present and future, will be adequately served by the agency's acceptance of the sum to be agreed upon.

§ 902.4 Joint and several liability.

(a) When two or more debtors are jointly and severally liable, agencies should pursue collection activity against all debtors, as appropriate. Agencies should not attempt to allocate the burden of payment between the debtors but should proceed to liquidate the indebtedness as quickly as possible.

(b) Agencies should ensure that a compromise agreement with one debtor does not release the agency's claim against the remaining debtors. The