

§ 13.5

(1) Charitable or other tax-exempt organizations described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C. 501(c)(3)) with not more than 500 employees;

(2) Cooperative associations as defined in section 15(a) of the Agricultural Marketing Act (12 U.S.C. 1141j(a)) with not more than 500 employees;

(3) Individuals with a net worth of not more than \$2 million;

(4) Sole owners of unincorporated businesses if the owner has a net worth of not more than \$7 million, including both personal and business interests, and if the business has not more than 500 employees;

(5) All other partnerships, corporations, associations, local governmental units, and public and private organizations with a net worth of not more than \$7 million and with not more than 500 employees; and

(6) Where an award is sought on the basis stated in §13.5(c) of this part, small entities as defined in 5 U.S.C. 601.

(c) For the purpose of determining eligibility, the net worth and number of employees of an applicant is calculated as of the date the proceeding was initiated. The net worth of an applicant is determined by generally accepted accounting principles.

(d) Whether an applicant who owns an unincorporated business will be considered as an "individual" or a "sole owner of an unincorporated business" will be determined by whether the applicant's participation in the proceeding is related primarily to individual interests or to business interests.

(e) The employees of an applicant include all those persons regularly providing services for remuneration for the applicant, under the applicant's direction and control. Part-time employees shall be included on a proportional basis.

(f) The net worth and number of employees of the applicant and all of its affiliates shall be aggregated to determine eligibility. Any individual, corporation or other entity that directly or indirectly controls or owns a majority of the voting shares or other interest of the applicant, or any corporation or other entity of which the applicant directly or indirectly owns or controls

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a majority of the voting shares or other interest, will be considered an affiliate for purposes of this part, unless the adjudicative officer determines that such treatment would be unjust and contrary to the purposes of the Act in light of the actual relationship between the affiliated entities. In addition, the adjudicative officer may determine that financial relationships of the applicant other than those described in this paragraph constitute special circumstances that would make an award unjust.

(g) An applicant is not eligible if it appears from the facts and circumstances that it has participated in the proceedings only or primarily on behalf of other persons or entities that are ineligible.

[48 FR 45252, Oct. 4, 1983, as amended at 69 FR 2846, Jan. 21, 2004]

§ 13.5 Standards for awards.

(a) An award of fees and expenses may be made either on the basis that the Department's position in the proceeding was not substantially justified or on the basis that, in a proceeding to enforce compliance with a statutory or regulatory requirement, the Department's demand substantially exceeded the ultimate decision and was unreasonable when compared with that decision. These two bases are explained in greater detail in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section.

(b) *Awards where the Department's position was not substantially justified.* (1) Awards will be made on this basis only where the Department's position in the proceeding was not substantially justified. The Department's position includes, in addition to the position taken by the agency in the proceeding, the agency action or failure to act that was the basis for the proceeding. Whether the Department's position was substantially justified is to be determined on the basis of the administrative record as a whole. The fact that a party has prevailed in a proceeding does not create a presumption that the Department's position was not substantially justified. The burden of proof as to substantial justification is on the agency's litigating party, which may avoid an award by showing that

its position was reasonable in law and fact.

(2) When two or more matters are joined together for one hearing, each of which could have been heard separately (without regard to laws or rules fixing a jurisdictional minimum amount for claims), and an applicant has prevailed with respect to one or several of the matters, an eligible applicant may receive an award for expenses associated only with the matters on which it prevailed if the Department's position on those matters was not substantially justified.

(3) Awards for fees and expenses incurred before the date on which a proceeding was initiated will be made only if the applicant can demonstrate that they were reasonably incurred in preparation for the proceeding.

(4) Awards will be reduced or denied if the applicant has unduly or unreasonably protracted the proceeding or if other special circumstances make an award unjust.

(c) *Awards where the Department's demand was substantially excessive and unreasonable.* (1) Awards will be made on this basis only where the adversary adjudication arises from the Department's action to enforce a party's compliance with a statutory or regulatory requirement. An award may be made on this basis only if the Department's demand that led to the proceeding was substantially in excess of the ultimate decision in the proceeding, and that demand is unreasonable when compared with that decision, given all the facts and circumstances of the case.

(2) Any award made on this basis shall be limited to the fees and expenses that are primarily related to defending against the excessive nature of the demand. An award shall not include fees and expenses that are primarily related to defending against the merits of charges, or fees and expenses that are primarily related to defending against the portion of the demand that was not excessive, to the extent that these fees and expenses are distinguishable from the fees and expenses primarily related to defending against the excessive nature of the demand.

(3) Awards will be denied if the party has committed a willful violation of law or otherwise acted in bad faith, or

if special circumstances make an award unjust.

[48 FR 45252, Oct. 4, 1983, as amended at 69 FR 2846, Jan. 21, 2004]

§ 13.6 Allowable fees and expenses.

(a) Awards will be limited to the rates customarily charged by persons engaged in the business of acting as attorneys, agents and expert witnesses. If a party has already received, or is eligible to receive, reimbursement for any expenses under another statutory provision or another program allowing reimbursement, its award under these rules must be reduced by the amount the prevailing party has already received, or is eligible to receive, from the Federal government.

(b) An award for the fees of an attorney or agent may not exceed \$125.00 per hour, regardless of the actual rate charged by the attorney or agent. An award for the fees of an expert witness may not exceed the highest rate at which the Department pays expert witnesses, which is \$24.09 per hour, regardless of the actual rates charged by the witness. These limits apply only to fees; an award may include the reasonable expenses of the attorney, agent, or witness as a separate item, if the attorney, agent or witness ordinarily charges separately for such expenses.

(c) In determining the reasonableness of the fees sought for attorneys, agents or expert witnesses, the adjudicative officer must consider factors bearing on the request, which include, but are not limited to:

(1) If the attorney, agent or witness is in private practice, his or her customary fee for like services; if the attorney, agent or witness is an employee of the applicant, the fully allocated cost of service;

(2) The prevailing rate for similar services in the community in which the attorney, agent or witness ordinarily performs services;

(3) The time actually spent in the representation of the applicant;

(4) The time reasonably spent in light of the difficulty or complexity of the issues in the proceeding; and