



## 15th National Government Ethics Conference

March 14-16, 2007

Orlando, Florida

### Leadership Initiative

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#### Overview

Robert I. Cusick, Director of the Office Government Ethics (OGE), opened the 15th National Government Ethics Conference by discussing OGE's Leadership Initiative. The leadership theme is interwoven into all of the tracks of the Conference. Leadership support is a critical component of a successful agency ethics program. OGE is committed to raising the level of discourse between the leadership of executive branch agencies and the ethics community. Commitment and action by agency leadership is the keystone for ensuring the integrity of an agency's ethical culture and for fostering public confidence in the decision-making processes of government. Concrete actions by agency leadership in support of an agency's ethics program ensure that agency employees appreciate the importance of the ethics program, understand the responsibilities of Federal employees, and are held accountable for compliance with ethics laws and regulations. In brief, model ethics programs establish standards that reach beyond mere technical compliance requirements and promote transparency, accountability, and efficiency throughout the organization.

One of the main goals of the OGE Leadership Initiative is to provide agency leaders with suggestions for concrete actions that they can implement to fulfill their ethics responsibilities. To achieve this goal, OGE worked with several agencies to identify concrete actions that agency leaders may institute to promote an ethical culture and to support an agency's ethics program. In identifying these actions several sources were consulted, including: OGE ethics program reviews, OGE's Ethics Program Review Guidelines, meetings between the Director of OGE and leadership from other agencies, an OGE Leadership Study, OGE surveys, and research by non-governmental organizations. A particularly valuable contribution was made by a focus group consisting of agency ethics officials.

The concrete actions OGE identified are included in the conference materials. Not all of the actions are suited to every agency. Implementation and maintenance of an effective ethics program requires careful, ongoing assessment of the program and the development of agency-specific strategies. Also, while many of these actions are directed to agency heads, OGE recognizes that there are many levels of leadership; it is important that all levels of leadership work to achieve the goals of the Leadership Initiative.

The Leadership Initiative will continue with a series of working groups to be held after the conference in order to develop strategies for effectively engaging leadership and implementing effective, concrete leadership actions. These working groups will offer the ethics community an opportunity to contribute to the Leadership Initiative. If your agency is interested in participating, please indicate your agency's interest by emailing [specialprojects@oge.gov](mailto:specialprojects@oge.gov).

