

§ 148.23

request for further proceedings under § 148.26 of this part.

§ 148.23 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 adjudicatory proceeding, the applicant shall include with the reply either supporting affidavits or a request for further proceedings under § 148.26 of this part.

§ 148.24 Comments by other parties.

Any party to an adjudicatory proceeding other than the applicant and counsel for the Commission or for another relevant agency 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 Presiding Officer determines that the public interest requires such participation in order to permit full exploration of matters raised in the comments.

§ 148.25 Settlement.

The applicant may propose settlement of the award to the Commission before final action on the application, either in connection with a settlement of the adjudicatory proceeding, or after the adjudicatory proceeding has been concluded, in either case in accordance with § 10.108 of this chapter. If a prevailing party offers a proposed settlement of an award before an application has been filed, the application shall be filed with the proposed settlement.

§ 148.26 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 counsel for the Commission or for another relevant agency, or on his or her own initiative, the Presiding Officer may order further proceedings, such as an informal conference, oral argument, additional written submissions 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

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shall be conducted as promptly as possible. Whether or not the position of the Commission 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. No discovery and/or evidentiary proceedings shall be permitted into the question of whether the agency's position was substantially justified.

(b) A request that the Presiding Officer order further proceedings under this section shall specifically identify the information sought or the disputed issues and shall explain why additional proceedings are necessary to resolve the issues.

[46 FR 57671, Nov. 25, 1981, as amended at 51 FR 18881, May 23, 1986]

§ 148.27 Decision.

The Presiding Officer shall issue an initial decision on the application in accordance with the provisions of § 10.84 of this chapter. 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 Commission's position was substantially justified, whether the applicant unduly or unreasonably protracted the adjudicatory 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.

§ 148.28 Appeal to the Commission.

(a) Either the applicant or counsel for the Commission or for another relevant agency may appeal the initial decision on the fee application by complying with the requirements of this section. An appealing party shall serve upon opposing parties and shall file with the Proceedings Clerk a notice of appeal within fifteen (15) days after