

## § 960.5

## 39 CFR Ch. I (7-1-06 Edition)

in subpart B and must submit additional information to verify its eligibility upon order by the adjudicative officer.

(b) The types of eligible applicants are as follows:

(1) An individual with a net worth of not more than \$2 million;

(2) The sole owner of an unincorporated business who has a net worth of not more than \$7 million, including both personal and business interests, and not more than 500 employees;

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

(4) A cooperative association as defined in section 15(a) of the Agricultural Marketing Act (12 U.S.C. 1141j(a)) with not more than 500 employees; and

(5) Any other partnerships, corporation, association, unit of local government, or organization with a net worth of not more than \$7 million and not more than 500 employees.

(c) For the purposes of eligibility, the net worth and number of employees of an applicant shall be determined as of the date the proceeding was initiated, which in proceedings before the Board of Contract Appeals is the date the applicant files its appeal to the Board.

(d) An applicant who owns an unincorporated business will be considered as an "individual" rather than a "sole owner of an unincorporated business" if the issues on which the applicant prevails are related primarily to personal interests rather than to business interests.

(e) The employees of an applicant include all persons who regularly perform 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

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 that participates in a proceeding primarily on behalf of one or more other persons or entities that would be ineligible is not itself eligible for an award.

[46 FR 45945, Sept. 16, 1981, as amended at 52 FR 6798, Mar. 5, 1987]

### § 960.5 Standards for awards.

(a) A prevailing applicant may receive an award for fees and expenses incurred in connection with a proceeding, including expenses and fees incurred in filing for an award under the Act, or in a significant and discrete substantive portion of the proceeding, unless the position of the agency over which the applicant has prevailed was substantially justified. The position of the agency includes in addition to the position taken by the agency in the adversary adjudication, the action or failure to act by the agency upon which the adversary adjudication is based. The burden of proof that an award should not be made to an eligible prevailing applicant is on Postal Service counsel.

(b) An award will be reduced or denied if the applicant has unduly or unreasonably protracted the proceeding or if special circumstances make the award sought unjust.

[46 FR 45945, Sept. 16, 1981, as amended at 52 FR 6798, Mar. 5, 1987]

### § 960.6 Allowable fees and expenses.

(a) Awards will be based on rates customarily charged by persons engaged in the business of acting as attorneys, agents and expert witnesses, even if the services were made available without

## United States Postal Service

## § 960.9

charge or at a reduced rate to the applicant. Attorney fees may not be recovered by parties appearing *pro se* in postal proceedings.

(b) No award for the fee of an attorney or agent under these rules may exceed \$125.00 per hour, or such rate as prescribed by 5 U.S.C. 504. No award to compensate an expert witness may exceed the highest rate at which the Postal Service pays expert witnesses. However, an award may also include the reasonable expenses of the attorney, agent, or witness as a separate item, if the attorney, agent or witness ordinarily charges clients separately for such expenses.

(c) In determining the reasonableness of the fee sought for an attorney, agent or expert witness, the adjudicative officer shall consider the following:

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

(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

(5) Such other factors as may bear on the value of the services provided.

(d) The reasonable cost of any study, analysis, engineering report, test, project or similar matter prepared on behalf of a party may be awarded, to the extent that the charge for the service does not exceed the prevailing rate for similar services, and the study or other matter was necessary for preparation of the applicant's case.

[46 FR 45945, Sept. 16, 1981, as amended at 52 FR 6798, Mar. 5, 1987; 66 FR 55577, Nov. 2, 2001]

### § 960.7 Rulemaking on maximum rates for attorney fees.

(a) If warranted by an increase in the cost of living or by special circumstances (such as limited availability of attorneys qualified to handle certain types of proceedings), the Postal Service may adopt regulations providing that attorney fees may be awarded at a rate higher than \$125.00

per hour, or such rate as prescribed by 5 U.S.C. 504, in some or all of the types of proceedings covered by this part. The Postal Service will conduct any rulemaking proceedings for this purpose under the informal rulemaking procedures of the Administrative Procedure Act.

(b) Any person may request the Postal Service to initiate a rulemaking proceeding to increase the maximum rate for attorney fees. The request should identify the rate the person believes the Postal Service should establish and the types of proceedings in which the rate should be used. It should also explain fully the reasons why the higher rate is warranted. The Postal Service will respond to the request within 60 days after it is filed, by determining to initiate a rulemaking proceeding, denying the request, or taking other appropriate action.

[46 FR 45945, Sept. 16, 1981, as amended at 66 FR 55577, Nov. 2, 2001]

### § 960.8 Official authorized to take final action under the Act.

The Postal Service official who renders the final agency decision in a proceeding under § 952.26 or § 953.15, or the panel that renders the decision in an appeal before the Board of Contract Appeals under part 955 procedures, as the case may be, is authorized to take final action on matters pertaining to the Equal Access to Justice Act as applied to the proceeding.

[52 FR 6798, Mar. 5, 1987]

## Subpart B—Information Required From Applicants

### § 960.9 Contents of application.

(a) An application for an award of fees and expenses under the Act shall identify the applicant and the proceeding for which an award is sought. The application shall show that the applicant has prevailed and identify the position of the Postal Service in the proceeding that the applicant alleges was not substantially justified. Unless the applicant is an individual, the application shall also state the number of employees of the applicant and describe briefly the type and purpose of its organization or business.