

Summary: USGS Employee Found to Have a Financial Conflict of Interest

Report Date: February 11, 2021

Report Number: 16-0629

The OIG investigated an allegation of a financial conflict of interest involving a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) employee and a family member. The complaint alleged that the USGS employee assigned to a USGS unit at a State university submitted and managed multiple research work orders (RWOs) from the USGS from which the family member was paid as a co-principal. (RWOs are funding agreements between USGS and a cooperating university.)

We substantiated that the USGS employee's actions on the RWOs and the requisition regarding the family member constituted a financial conflict of interest. The employee submitted proposals for USGS RWOs at the State university where he was assigned, listing the family member as an employee in various roles under the agreements, and did so, in part, to ensure the family member's salary of over \$187,000. The family member also assisted the employee with the proposals, including developing budgets for payments.

The U.S. Attorney's office filed a civil false claims suit against the employee in lieu of criminal prosecution. The employee agreed to a settlement, which required the employee to pay \$50,000. The employee's family member is now employed at the State university with a salary paid by Federal and State grants. We have provided this report to the USGS Director for any action deemed appropriate.

