
Agency Summary

RHODE ISLAND ETHICS COMMISSION

Agency Mission

Ensure that public officials and employees adhere to the highest standards of ethical conduct, respect the public trust, avoid the appearance of impropriety, and not use their position for private gain or advantage. Respond efficiently and thoroughly to public inquiries regarding requirements of the Code of Ethics for public officials and employees. Thoroughly investigate complaints alleging violations of the provisions of the Code of Ethics in a timely manner. Expand the use of technology in all aspects of the Commission's operations and ensuring greater public access to information and more effective use of investigative and informational resources. Provide educational and informational seminars, programs and publications for public officials and employees and the public-at-large regarding codes of conduct for public servants and the workings of the Ethics Commission.

Agency Description

The Rhode Island Ethics Commission was created as an independent, non-partisan division of Rhode Island Government by the voters of Rhode Island through a 1986 amendment to the Rhode Island Constitution. The Commission's constitutional authority includes adopting a Code of Ethics that applies to all state and municipal elected officials, appointed officials and public employees in such areas that expressly include, but are not limited to, conflicts of interest, confidential information, use of position, contracts with government agencies and financial disclosure. Its constitutional authority also includes the investigation and enforcement of alleged violations of the Code of Ethics and the imposition of penalties for noncompliance.

The Ethics Commission administers and enforces a financial disclosure requirement for more than 4,000 public officials annually and makes such filings readily available for public inspection. It issues numerous written advisory opinions each year, maintains public contact with dozens of inquiring citizens each week, and provides regular training to state and municipal public officials and employees as to the requirements of the Code of Ethics.

The nine-member Ethics Commission is appointed by the Governor, with a majority of its members nominated by legislative leaders. The staff of the Ethics Commission is headed by an Executive Director/Chief Prosecutor, who is hired by the Commission. The Ethics Commission's operations are funded solely with state general revenues.

Statutory History

Article III, sections 7 and 8 of the Rhode Island Constitution were approved by the voters on November 4, 1986. Enacted in 1987, R.I. General Laws § 36-14 sets forth the legislative provisions of the Code of Ethics and defines the Ethics Commission's advisory, investigative and adjudicative procedures. Pursuant to its Constitutional authority, the Ethics Commission has adopted both substantive ethics laws and procedural regulations, which can be found in Title 520 of the Rhode Island Code of Regulations. A further amendment to Article III, Section 8 of the Rhode Island Constitution in 2016 clarified that members of the General Assembly are subject to the Code of Ethics and the jurisdiction of the Ethics Commission.

Budget

Rhode Island Ethics Commission

	2018 Actuals	2019 Actuals	2020 Enacted Budget	2020 Revised Budget	2021 Recommended
Expenditures by Program					
RI Ethics Commission	1,637,934	1,719,158	1,845,298	1,843,445	1,977,107
Total Expenditures	1,637,934	1,719,158	1,845,298	1,843,445	1,977,107
Expenditures by Object					
Salary And Benefits	1,416,731	1,475,217	1,572,002	1,568,860	1,592,555
Contract Professional Services	22,193	26,348	47,275	47,275	127,275
Operating Supplies And Expenses	195,686	210,786	218,195	219,484	248,451
Subtotal: Operating	1,634,610	1,712,352	1,837,472	1,835,619	1,968,281
Capital Purchases And Equipment	3,324	6,806	7,826	7,826	8,826
Subtotal: Other	3,324	6,806	7,826	7,826	8,826
Total Expenditures	1,637,934	1,719,158	1,845,298	1,843,445	1,977,107
Expenditures by Source of Funds					
General Revenue	1,637,934	1,719,158	1,845,298	1,843,445	1,977,107
Total Expenditures	1,637,934	1,719,158	1,845,298	1,843,445	1,977,107
FTE Authorization	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0

Performance Measures

Rhode Island Ethics Commission

Online Filing of Financial Disclosure

The Ethics Commission is Constitutionally mandated to adopt provisions relating to financial disclosure of public officials. Approximately 4,000 elected and appointed public officials, candidates for elective office, and some public employees file annual financial statements with the Ethics Commission. Such statements are available for public inspection. In 2012, the Commission implemented an online financial disclosure filing system, which benefits both the filer and the Commission through cost savings, ease of filing, and greater efficiency. Filers may choose either to file online or to continue filing a hard copy form. The figures below represent the percentage of financial disclosures submitted online. [Notes: Calendar year 2019 data is as of 8/6/2019. Missing values appear as zeros in the measure.]

<i>Frequency: Annual</i>	<i>Reporting Period: Calendar Year</i>				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Target	80.00%	85.00%	85.00%	86.00%	87.00%
Actual	82.30%	84.70%	86.00%	0.00%	

Ethics Education Training Attendance

The Ethics Commission is statutorily authorized to educate public officials, employees and citizens about the State Code of Ethics. This education occurs through the Commission's website and educational publications, as well as via a public contact system whereby one member of the Commission staff is always on call to speak with members of the public having questions or concerns. The primary method of education is seminars, trainings and workshops provided to public officials, employees and members of the public. Sessions vary in duration and content depending upon the needs and goals of the agency or group receiving training. The figures below represent the number of ethics education training attendees. [Note: Missing values appear as zeros in the measure.]

<i>Frequency: Annual</i>	<i>Reporting Period: State Fiscal Year</i>				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Target	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,800.00	1,800.00
Actual	1,479.00	1,930.00	1,890.00	0.00	

Timeliness of Response to Access to Public Records Act Requests

The Ethics Commission is the repository for various public documents filed by, and concerning, public officials and employees. Such documents include yearly financial statements, conflict of interest statements ("recusal forms"), advisory opinions and request letters and complaint materials. Public access to these documents is crucial to fostering and maintaining openness and accountability in public service. RI's Access to Public Records Act (APRA) requires that public documents be made available within 10 business days of a request, unless an extension is necessary. Because of the importance of honoring these requests in a timely fashion, the Ethics Commission has committed to completing the majority of requests within a single business day. Records are made available electronically in most cases to avoid any cost to the person making the request. The figures below represent the percentage of APRA requests completed within one business day. [Note: Missing values appear as zeros in the measure.]

<i>Frequency: Annual</i>	<i>Reporting Period: State Fiscal Year</i>				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Target	85.00%	85.00%	95.00%	95.00%	95.00%
Actual	95.00%	95.00%	98.00%	0.00%	

Personnel

Agency: Rhode Island Ethics Commission

RI Ethics Commission

		FY 2020		FY 2021	
		FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost
Unclassified					
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT	00816A	1.0	43,409	1.0	44,552
CHIEF OF THE OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS	00836A	1.0	114,660	1.0	115,215
COORDINATOR- SPECIAL PROJECTS	00827A	1.0	76,238	1.0	76,617
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/CHIEF PROSECUTOR	00845A	1.0	147,945	1.0	154,273
INVESTIGATOR I	00823A	1.0	61,938	1.0	62,246
RESEARCH AIDE	00810A	1.0	39,365	1.0	39,942
SENIOR CONFIDENTIAL INVESTIGATOR	00832A	1.0	88,330	1.0	88,770
SPECIAL PROJECTS COORDINATOR	00829A	1.0	78,682	1.0	79,073
STAFF ATTORNEY II	00830A	2.0	155,722	2.0	156,496
STAFF ATTORNEY IV	00834A	1.0	90,491	1.0	90,941
STAFF ATTORNEY V	00836A	1.0	106,640	1.0	107,171
Subtotal Unclassified		12.0	1,003,420	12.0	1,015,296
Subtotal		12.0	1,003,420	12.0	1,015,296
Total Salaries			1,003,420		1,015,296
Benefits					
FICA			76,106		76,904
Health Benefits			100,503		103,152
Payroll Accrual			5,851		5,936
Retiree Health			66,729		59,598
Retirement			276,615		291,565
Subtotal			525,804		537,155
Total Salaries and Benefits		12.0	1,529,224	12.0	1,552,451
Cost Per FTE Position			127,435		129,371
Statewide Benefit Assessment			39,636		40,104
Payroll Costs		12.0	1,568,860	12.0	1,592,555
Purchased Services					
Clerical and Temporary Services			5,000		5,000
Information Technology			6,000		6,000
Legal Services			36,000		116,000
Other Contracts			275		275
Subtotal			47,275		127,275
Total Personnel		12.0	1,616,135	12.0	1,719,830

Personnel

Agency: Rhode Island Ethics Commission

RI Ethics Commission

	FY 2020		FY 2021	
	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost
Distribution by Source of Funds				
General Revenue	12.0	1,616,135	12.0	1,719,830
Total All Funds	12.0	1,616,135	12.0	1,719,830
