



Form 656 Booklet

Offer in Compromise

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IRS contact information

If you want to see if you qualify for an offer before filling out the paperwork, you may use the Offer in Compromise Pre-Qualifier tool. The questionnaire format assists in gathering the information needed and provides instant feedback as to your eligibility based on the information you provided. The tool will also assist you in determining a preliminary offer amount for consideration of an acceptable offer. The Pre-Qualifier tool is located on our website at www.irs.gov.

If you have questions regarding qualifications for an offer in compromise, please call our toll-free number at 1-800-829-1040. You can get forms and publications by calling 1-800-TAX-FORM (1-800-829-3676), by visiting your local IRS office, or at www.irs.gov.

Taxpayer resources

The Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS) is an independent organization within the Internal Revenue Service that helps taxpayers and protects taxpayer rights. We help taxpayers whose problems with the IRS are causing financial difficulties, who've tried but haven't been able to resolve their problems with the IRS, or believe an IRS system or procedure isn't working as it should. And the service is free. Your local advocate's number is in your local directory and at taxpayeradvocate.irs.gov. You can also call us at 1-877-777-4778. For more information about TAS and your rights under the Taxpayer Bill of Rights, go to taxpayeradvocate.irs.gov. TAS is your voice at the IRS.

Low Income Taxpayer Clinics (LITCs) are independent from the IRS. LITCs serve individuals whose income is below a certain level and who need to resolve a tax problem with the IRS. LITCs provide professional representation before the IRS or in court on audits, appeals, tax collection disputes, and other issues for free or for a small fee. For more information and to find an LTC near you, see the LTC page at www.taxpayeradvocate.irs.gov/litcmap or IRS Publication 4134, Low Income Taxpayer Clinic List. This Publication is also available by calling the IRS toll-free at 1-800-829-3676 or visiting your local IRS office.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

What is an Offer?

An Offer in Compromise (offer) is an agreement between you (the taxpayer) and the IRS that settles a tax debt for less than the full amount owed. The offer program provides eligible taxpayers with a path toward paying off their tax debt and getting a fresh start. The ultimate goal is a compromise that suits the best interest of both the taxpayer and the IRS. To be considered, generally you must make an appropriate offer based on what the IRS considers your true ability to pay.

Submitting an application does not ensure that the IRS will accept your offer. It begins a process of evaluation and verification by the IRS, taking into consideration any special circumstances that might affect your ability to pay.

This booklet will lead you through a series of steps to help you calculate an appropriate offer based on your assets, income, expenses, and future earning potential. The application requires you to describe your financial situation in detail, so before you begin, make sure you have the necessary information and documentation.

Are You Eligible?

Before your offer can be considered, you must (1) file all tax returns you are legally required to file, (2) have received a bill for at least one tax debt included on your offer, (3) make all required estimated tax payments for the current year, and (4) make all required federal tax deposits for the current quarter if you are a business owner with employees. Your offer will be immediately returned without consideration if you have not filed all tax returns you are legally required to file.

Note: If it is determined you have not filed all tax returns any initial payment sent with your offer will be applied to your tax debt and your offer will be returned along with your application fee.

Bankruptcy

If you or your business is currently in an open bankruptcy proceeding, you are not eligible to apply for an offer. Any resolution of your outstanding tax debts generally must take place within the context of your bankruptcy proceeding.

If you are not sure of your bankruptcy status, contact the Centralized Insolvency Operation at 1-800-973-0424. Be prepared to provide your bankruptcy case number and/or Taxpayer Identification Number.

Can You Pay in Full?

Generally, the IRS will not accept an offer if you can pay your tax debt in full or through an installment agreement and/or equity in assets.

Note: Adjustments or exclusions, such as allowance of \$1,000 to a bank balance or \$3,450 against the value of a car, are only applied after it is determined that you cannot pay your tax debt in full.

Your Future Tax Refunds

The IRS will keep any refund, including interest, for tax periods extending through the calendar year that the IRS accepts the offer. For example, if your offer is accepted in 2016 and you file your 2016 Form 1040 on April 15, 2017 showing a refund, IRS will apply your refund to your tax debt. The refund is not considered as a payment toward your offer.

Doubt as to Liability

If you have a legitimate doubt that you owe part or all of the tax debt, complete and submit a **Form 656-L, Offer in Compromise (Doubt as to Liability)**. The Form 656-L is not included as part of this package. To request a Form 656-L, visit www.irs.gov or a local IRS office or call toll-free 1-800-TAX-FORM (1-800-829-3676).

Notice of Federal Tax Lien

A lien is a legal claim against all your current and future property. When you don't pay your first bill for taxes due, a lien is created by law and attaches to your property. A Notice of Federal Tax Lien (NFTL) provides public notice to creditors and is filed to establish priority of the IRS claim versus the claims of other creditors. The IRS may file an NFTL while your offer is being considered. However, an NFTL will usually not be filed until a final decision has been made on your offer.

Note: A Notice of Federal Tax Lien (NFTL) will not be filed on any individual shared responsibility payment under the Affordable Care Act.

Trust Fund Taxes

If your business owes trust fund taxes, responsible individuals may be held liable for the trust fund portion of the tax. Trust fund taxes are the money withheld from an employee's wages, such as income tax, Social Security, and Medicare taxes. You are not eligible to submit an offer unless the trust fund portion of the tax is paid or the Trust Fund Recovery Penalty determinations have been made on all potentially responsible individual(s). However, if you are submitting the offer as a victim of payroll service provider fraud or failure, the trust fund assessment discussed above is not required.

Your Rights as a Taxpayer

Each and every taxpayer has a set of fundamental rights they should be aware of when dealing with the IRS. Explore your rights and our obligations to protect them. For more information on your rights as a taxpayer, go to <http://www.irs.gov/Taxpayer-Bill-of-Rights>.

Other Important Facts

Penalties and interest will continue to accrue during consideration of your offer.

After you file your offer, you must continue to timely file and pay all required tax returns, estimated tax payments, and federal tax payments. Failure to meet your filing and payment responsibilities during consideration of your offer will result in your offer being returned. If your offer is accepted, you must continue to stay current with all tax filing and payment obligations through the fifth year after your offer is accepted (including any extensions).

Note: If you have filed your tax returns but you have not received a bill for at least one tax debt included on your offer, your offer may be returned.

An offer cannot be accepted for processing if the IRS has referred your case, or cases, involving all of the liabilities identified in the offer to the Department of Justice (DOJ). In addition, the IRS cannot compromise any restitution amount ordered by a court or a tax debt that has been reduced to judgment.

The law requires the IRS to make certain information from accepted offers available for public inspection and review. These public inspection files are located in designated IRS Area Offices.

The IRS may levy your assets up to the time that the IRS official signs and acknowledges your offer as pending. In addition, the IRS may keep any proceeds received from the levy. If your assets are levied after your offer is pending, immediately contact the IRS person whose name and phone number is listed on the levy.

If you currently have an approved installment agreement, you will not be required to make your installment agreement payments while your offer is being considered. If your offer is not accepted and you have not incurred any additional tax debt, your installment agreement with the IRS will be reinstated with no additional fee.

PAYING FOR YOUR OFFER

Application Fee

Offers require a \$186 application fee.

Exception: If you are an individual or are operating as a sole proprietor, or are a disregarded single member Limited Liability Company (LLC) taxed as a sole proprietor and your household gross income meets the Low Income Certification guidelines, you will not be required to send the application fee.

Note: You may be eligible to receive a refund of the application fee if the IRS either (1) accepts the offer to promote effective tax administration, or (2) accepts the offer based on doubt as to collectability and determines that collecting an amount greater than the amount offered would create an economic hardship. After the IRS processes your offer, the IRS will notify you if you are eligible to request a refund of the application fee.

Payment Options

You must select a payment option and include the payment with your offer. The amount of the initial payment and subsequent payments will depend on the total amount of your offer and which of the following payment options you choose:

Lump Sum Cash: This option requires 20% of the total offer amount to be paid with the offer and the remaining balance paid in 5 or fewer payments within 5 or fewer months of the date your offer is accepted.

Periodic Payment: This option requires the first payment to be paid with the offer and the remaining balance paid in monthly payments within 6 to 24 months, in accordance with your proposed offer terms.

Note: Under this option, you must continue to make monthly payments while the IRS is evaluating your offer. Failure to make these payments will cause your offer to be returned. There is no appeal. Total payments must equal the total offer amount.

Exception: If you are an individual, are operating as a sole proprietor, or are a disregarded single member LLC taxed as a sole proprietor, and your household income meets the Low Income Certification guidelines, you will not be required to send the initial payment or make the required monthly payments while your offer is being considered.

All payments sent in with your offer and made during consideration of the offer will be applied to your tax debt. The payments cannot be returned to you unless you pay more than the required payment and designate it as a deposit.

If you do not have sufficient cash to pay for your offer, you may need to consider borrowing money from a bank, friends, and/or family. Other options may include borrowing against or selling other assets.

Note: You may not pay your offer amount with an expected or current tax refund, money already paid, funds attached by any collection action, or anticipated benefits from a capital or net operating loss. If you are planning to use your retirement savings from an IRA or 401k plan, you may have future tax liabilities owed as a result. Contact the IRS or your tax advisor before taking this action.

HOW TO APPLY

Application Process

The application must include:

- **Form 656**, Offer in Compromise
- **Completed Form 433-A (OIC)**, Collection Information Statement for Wage Earners and Self-Employed Individuals, if applicable
- **Completed Form 433-B (OIC)**, Collection Information Statement for Businesses, if applicable
- **\$186 application fee**, unless you meet Low Income Certification
- **Initial offer payment**, unless you meet Low Income Certification

Note: Your offer(s) cannot be considered without the completed and signed Collection Information Statement(s), Form 433-A (OIC) and/or 433-B (OIC).

If You and Your Spouse Owe Joint and Separate Tax Debts

If you and your spouse have joint tax debt(s) and you and/or your spouse are also responsible for separate tax debt(s), you will each need to send in a separate Form 656. You will complete one Form 656 for yourself listing all your joint and any separate tax debts and your spouse will complete one Form 656 listing all his or her joint tax debt(s) plus any separate tax debt(s), for a total of two Forms 656.

If you and your spouse or ex-spouse have a joint tax debt and your spouse or ex-spouse does not want to be part of the offer, you on your own may submit a Form 656 to compromise your responsibility for the joint tax debt.

Each Form 656 will require the \$186 application fee and initial payment unless you are an individual, are operating as a sole proprietor, or are a disregarded single member LLC taxed as a sole proprietor, and meet the Low Income Certification guidelines.

If You Owe Individual and Business Tax Debt

If you have individual and business tax debt that you wish to compromise, you will need to send in two Forms 656. Complete one Form 656 for your individual tax debts and one Form 656 for your business tax debts. Each Form 656 will require the \$186 application fee and initial payment.

Note: A business is defined as a corporation, partnership, or any business that is operated as other than a sole-proprietorship. An individual's share of a partnership debt will not be compromised. The partnership must submit an offer based on the partnership's and partners' ability to pay.

If You Have Tax Debt From a Limited Liability Company (LLC)

Individuals or individuals operating as a disregarded single member LLC taxed as a sole proprietor, tax debts (including employment taxes) incurred before January 1, 2009 may be included on one Form 656. However, in those instances where an LLC incurred employment taxes after January 1, 2009 or excise taxes after January 1, 2008, two Forms 656 must be sent with a separate application fee and initial payment for each offer, even if the tax debts were reported under the same Tax Identification Number. One Form 656 will be for the individual tax debts while the second Form 656 will be for the LLC employment tax debts incurred after January 1, 2009 and excise tax debts after January 1, 2008.

COMPLETING THE APPLICATION PACKAGE

Step 1 – Gather Your Information

To calculate an offer amount, you will need to gather information about your financial situation, including cash, investments, available credit, assets, income, and debt.

You will also need to gather information about your average household's gross monthly income and expenses. The entire household includes all those in addition to yourself who contribute money to pay expenses relating to the household such as, rent, utilities, insurance, groceries, etc. This is necessary for the IRS to accurately evaluate your offer.

In general, the IRS will not consider expenses for tuition for private schools, college expenses, charitable contributions, and other unsecured debt payments as part of the expense calculation.

Step 2 – Fill out Form 433-A (OIC), Collection Information Statement for Wage Earners and Self-Employed Individuals

Fill out Form 433-A (OIC) if you are an individual wage earner and/or operate as a sole proprietor, a disregarded single member LLC taxed as a sole proprietor or are submitting an offer on behalf of a deceased individual. This will be used to calculate an appropriate offer amount based on your assets, income, expenses, and future earning potential. You will have the opportunity to provide a written explanation of any special circumstances that affect your financial situation.

**Step 3 – Fill out Form 433-B (OIC),
Collection Information Statement
for Businesses**

Fill out Form 433-B (OIC) if the business is a Corporation, Partnership, LLC classified as a corporation, single member LLC taxed as a corporation, or other multi-owner/multi-member LLC. This will be used to calculate an appropriate offer amount based on the business assets, income, expenses, and future earning potential. If the business has assets that are used to produce income (for example, a tow truck used in the business for towing vehicles), the business may be allowed to exclude equity in these assets.

**Step 4 – Attach Required
Documentation**

You will need to attach supporting documentation with Form(s) 433-A (OIC) and 433-B (OIC). A list of the documents required will be found at the end of each form. Include copies of all required attachments. **Do not send original documents.**

**Step 5 – Fill out Form 656, Offer
in Compromise**

Fill out Form 656. The Form 656 identifies the tax years and type of tax you would like to compromise. It also identifies your offer amount and the payment terms.

**Step 6 – Include Initial Payment
and \$186 Application Fee**

Include a personal check, cashier's check, or money order for your initial payment based on the payment option you selected (20% of the offer amount for a lump sum cash offer or the first month's payment for a periodic payment offer).

Include a separate personal check, cashier's check, or money order for the application fee (\$186).

Make both payments payable to the "United States Treasury." All payments must be made in U.S. dollars.

If you meet the Low Income Certification guidelines, the initial payment and application fee are not required.

**Step 7 – Mail the Application
Package**

Make a copy of your application package and keep it for your records.

Mail the application package to the appropriate IRS facility. See page 27, Application Checklist, for details.

Note: If you are working with an IRS employee, let him or her know you are sending or have sent an offer to compromise your tax debt(s).

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

**After You Mail Your Application
Continue to:**

Promptly reply to any requests for additional information within the time frame specified.

If you selected the Periodic Payment option, you must continue to make the payments during consideration of your offer, unless you meet the Low Income Certification. Failure to reply timely or make monthly payments may result in the return of your offer without appeal rights.

If your offer is accepted, you must continue to timely file all required tax returns and timely pay all estimated tax payments and federal tax payments that become due in the future. If you fail to timely file and timely pay any tax obligations that become due within the five years after your offer is accepted (including any extensions) your offer may be defaulted. If your offer is defaulted, you will be liable for the original tax debt, less payments made, and all accrued interest and penalties. An offer does not stop the accrual of interest and penalties. Please note that if your final payment is more than the agreed amount by \$50 or less the money will not be returned but will be applied to your tax debt. If your final payment is more than the agreed amount by more than \$50, your money will be returned to you.

In addition, your offer may be defaulted if you fail to promptly pay any tax debts assessed after acceptance of your offer for any tax years prior to acceptance that were not included in your original offer.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Review the entire application using the Application Checklist below. Include this checklist with your application.

Forms 433-A (OIC), 433-B (OIC), and 656

- ☐ Did you complete all fields and sign all forms?
- ☐ Did you make an offer amount that is equal to the offer amount calculated on the Form 433-A (OIC) or Form 433-B (OIC)? If not, did you describe the special circumstances that are leading you to offer less than the minimum in the "Explanation of Circumstances" Section 3 of Form 656, and did you provide supporting documentation of the special circumstances?
- ☐ Have you filed all required tax returns and received a bill or notice of balance due?
- ☐ Did you select a payment option on Form 656?
- ☐ Did you sign and attach the Form 433-A (OIC), if applicable?
- ☐ Did you sign and attach the Form 433-B (OIC), if applicable?
- ☐ Did you sign and attach the Form 656?
- ☐ If you are making an offer that includes business and individual tax debts, did you prepare a separate Form 656 package (including separate financial statements, supporting documentation, application fee, and initial payment)?

Supporting documentation and additional forms

- ☐ Did you include photocopies of all required supporting documentation?
- ☐ If you want a third party to represent you during the offer process, did you include a Form 2848 or Form 8821 unless one is already on file? Does it include the current tax year?
- ☐ Did you provide a letter of testamentary or other verification of person(s) authorized to act on behalf of the estate or deceased individual?

Payment

- ☐ Did you include a check or money order made payable to the "United States Treasury" for the initial payment? (Waived if you meet Low Income Certification guidelines—see Form 656.)
- ☐ Did you include a separate check or money order made payable to the "United States Treasury" for the \$186 application fee? (Waived if you meet Low Income Certification guidelines—see Form 656.)

Mail your application package to the appropriate IRS facility

Mail the Form 656, 433-A (OIC) and/or 433-B (OIC), and related financial document(s) to the appropriate IRS processing office for your state. You may wish to send it by Certified Mail so you have a record of the date it was mailed.

If you reside in:

AK, AL, AR, AZ, CO, FL, GA, HI, ID, KY, LA, MS, NC, NM,
NV, OK, OR, TN, TX, UT, WA, WI

CA, CT, DE, IA, IL, IN, KS, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MT,
ND, NE, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, SC, SD, VT, VA, WY,
WV; DC, PR, or a foreign address

Mail your application to:

Memphis IRS Center COIC Unit
P.O. Box 30803, AMC
Memphis, TN 38130-0803
1-866-790-7117

Brookhaven IRS Center COIC Unit
P.O. Box 9007
Holtsville, NY 11742-9007
1-866-611-6191

