

Information on Peer Reviews Conducted by NCSL/NLPES

Since 2006, NCSL/NLPES has performed peer reviews of legislative program evaluation/performance audit offices in the following states: Florida, Hawaii, Washington, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Utah.

NCSL/NLPES will also be performing a peer review in South Carolina in 2013. Some of these states have had multiple peer reviews performed by NCSL/NLPES.

The costs for an NCSL/NLPES peer review have ranged from approximately \$7,300 to \$19,000. The items that have a significant impact on the cost are the number of peer reviewers requested, airfares and hotel room rates. The size of peer review teams have ranged from three to five members. Peer review teams are typically comprised of directors from peer offices in other states and NCSL staff.

The onsite visit by the peer review team typically lasts approximately one week. During the review, the peer review team tries to determine whether the sample of reports selected for review, as well as the processes that underlie the reports, meet these criteria:

- 1) Work is professional, independent and objectively designed and executed.
- 2) Evidence is competent and reliable.
- 3) Conclusions are supported.
- 4) Products are fair and balanced.
- 5) Stakeholders and users of the office's products are satisfied with the quality of the work performed.
- 6) Staff is competent to perform work required.

The team also wants to verify that the office's work conforms with:

- (1) the specific standards to which the office adheres, such as Yellow Book standards; or
- (2) best practices in the field of performance auditing and evaluation, particularly in the areas of credibility, independence, objectivity, competence and reliability of the office and its work.

The standard format for final reports is:

- Cover pages
- Copy of the compliance letter
- Introduction (includes description of contracting process, short conclusion, purpose statement, history of office, description of methodology, etc.)
- Compliance section (main discussion of the review findings)
- Appendix A (listing of the reports reviewed)
- Appendix B (biographies of peer review team)
- Appendix C (general info about program evaluation offices)