



Scoping Statement

Overview

Boards and commissions fill a variety of roles in conjunction with Maine State Government, including professional licensing, regulation, policy recommendation, and advisory roles. To date OPEGA has identified 289 boards, commissions, committees, councils and other similar organizations (hereafter referred to jointly as "boards").

Each board generally has a clerk and a chair, and some may have an executive director. Board members are appointed as specified in statute usually by the Governor, the Legislature, or State Government agency heads. Depending on the board, members may be eligible for compensation and/or expense reimbursement for their participation in board activities.

The Legislature established 5 MRSA Chapter 379 to maintain an inventory of all such organizations and to help prevent their proliferation. Most of the State's boards are listed in Title 5, and are therefore required to report annually to the Secretary of State (SOS) on their activities and on the expense reimbursement and compensation paid to members for attendance at official board meetings. There are additional boards that are not included in Title 5 and therefore are not required to report their expenses (such as those created by Executive Order).

On January 31, 2007, the Secretary of State reported that board member compensation and expense reimbursements totaled \$232,069 \$270,416 respectively. These amounts do not include facility costs associated with meetings, costs associated with other board activities such as public hearings, or costs for state employee staffing of these boards. OPEGA estimates that the total cost associated with all of Maine's boards is actually much higher.

This review is currently in progress

2007

November ~ SR-CHSS-07

Performance Audit: Costs of State Boards, Councils, Committees and Commissions

A responsibility of Maine's Statewide Government and Associated Entities

Audit Question

What opportunities exist for General Fund cost savings associated with Maine's boards and commissions?

Discussion

OPEGA identified a number of potential concerns related to the costs of State boards and commissions. For example:

- Other State's performance audit offices have found costs associated with staffing boards and similar organizations can be unnecessarily high. Staffing costs can include costs associated with the board clerk's time and the time of any other state employees who must spend paid hours working on board activities or attending board meetings. In addition, there are administrative staff costs associated with monitoring and reporting the boards' activity data and managing board member appointments. With almost 300 active boards, these costs may add up.
- The large number of boards identified, 289 so far, indicates there's potential for some activities to be overlapping between boards or with other State agencies. The titles or purpose statements of some boards seem quite similar in nature.
- Meeting costs for such things as facility fees and refreshments are not currently reported to the Secretary of State under Title 5, but could make up a significant portion of total board expenses.
- Other states have identified potential savings by co-locating or otherwise consolidating the resources used to support a number of small boards.
- Boards and commissions currently have widely varied compensation and expense reimbursement available for members. Some pay no per diem or expenses at all, while others pay both expenses and \$100 per meeting. A few boards appear to allow per diem only for particular members under statute or to pay an annual rate of compensation.

The Government Oversight Committee has directed OPEGA to focus its current biennial workplan on opportunities to improve the State General Fund's position. In keeping with this direction we will conduct this audit with the objective of identifying as many savings opportunities as possible for presentation to the GOC during the next Legislative session. Other areas of concern identified will be considered as potential topics for future OPEGA performance audits.