

Legislative Audit Commission Policy on Program Evaluation Topic Selection

Background

Minnesota Statutes 3.971, subd. 7, authorizes the Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) to conduct program evaluations to “determine the degree to which the activities and programs entered into or funded by the state are accomplishing their goals and objectives.” Program evaluations include “a critical analysis of goals and objectives, measurement of program results and effectiveness, alternative means of achieving the same results, and efficiency in the allocation of resources.”

By statute, the Legislative Audit Commission (Commission) has the authority to select which topics OLA will evaluate:

“At the direction of the commission the legislative auditor may conduct program evaluations of any state department, board, commission, or agency and any metropolitan agency, board, or commission created under chapter 473; or any program or activity established or funded, in whole or in part, by the state.”

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to guide the Commission in selecting topics for program evaluations to be conducted by OLA.

Policy

1. OLA will provide the Commission information on the following criteria for consideration when selecting topics for OLA program evaluations:
 - **State Resources.** The extent of state government resources used to support the program, activity, or issue.
 - **State Control.** The state’s control or influence over the program, activity, or issue.
 - **Impact.** The breadth and depth of social and/or economic impacts related to the program, activity, or issue.
 - **Timeliness.** The extent to which an evaluation conducted at this time could be beneficial.
 - **Feasibility.** The availability of relevant information and OLA’s ability to answer the evaluation questions.
 - **Balance.** The balance of agencies, issues, and types of projects selected in the current and recent topic-selection processes.

2. The Commission will determine which topics would most benefit from an OLA evaluation, taking into consideration the selection criteria listed above, the extent to which a topic requires OLA's unique authority to access data of any classification, and OLA's expertise in multiple research methodologies.
3. The topics the Commission selects each year for evaluation must include:
 - a. At least one board, committee, council, authority, or advisory task force of the executive branch, as designated under *Minnesota Statutes* 15.012.
 - b. At least one follow-up to an OLA program evaluation that was completed at least five (5) years prior.