

State of Minnesota
Legislative Audit Commission

2025 Program Evaluation Topic Selection Process Proposals

The Legislative Audit Commission has typically directed the Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) to complete five to six mid- to large-scope program evaluations per year. The Commission selects these topics near the end of a legislative session, and OLA typically releases the evaluations late winter the following year. This cycle has some disadvantages, including that evaluations are often released mid-session, which can make acting quickly on recommendations difficult, efforts to most efficiently staff evaluations are complicated, and evaluations often cannot begin until well after issues are identified. The table below suggests changes to the typical topic selection cycle. If one of the proposed changes below is adopted, we recommend trying it for a period of two years and evaluating whether it is responsive to legislative needs.

| Process | Topic Selection Timeframe | Number of Topics Selected | Evaluation Scope | Evaluation Timeframe | Topic List | Legislative Survey |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|---|--|--|--|---|
| Current | 1 time per year, spring | 5 to 6 per year | Typically, large; provide significant background and answer several research questions | Approximately 10 months: April-February | Collect topics all year, request topics from legislators during session; start new list every year | Complete during legislative session |
| 1st Proposal | 2 times per year, spring and fall | 3 to 4 every six months | Variable; focus only on areas where OLA identifies that we can add value; narrow in some cases and broad in others | Variable; 6 months or less for narrowly scoped evaluations; 12 months or more for broadly scoped evaluations | Collect topics all year, request topics from legislators during session; maintain spring topics on fall list; start new list in spring | Complete during legislative session; use results to select topics in spring |
| 2nd Proposal | 1 time per year, spring | 7 to 8 per year Staff 5 to 6 initially; begin additional evaluations as time permits; adjust number of evaluations selected each year based on resources | Variable, focus only on areas where we can add value; narrow in some cases and broad in others | Variable; 6 months or less for narrowly scoped evaluations; 12 months or more for broadly scoped evaluations | Collect topics all year, request topics from legislators during session; start new list every spring | Complete during legislative session |