American Society of Civil Engineers

Program Manual for Peer Review for Public Agencies

Practices and Procedures

PROGRAM MANUAL FOR PEER REVIEW FOR PUBLIC AGENCIES
PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

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I. INTRODUCTION TO THE PEER REVIEW PROGRAM

A. Program Overview and Objective

The objective of ASCE's Public Agency Peer Review Program is to provide a public agency an unbiased means to review and improve the management and quality of their engineering services and thus better protect the public health, safety, and welfare with which they are entrusted. Public agency peer reviews are provided as a service of ASCE to contribute to the ongoing enhancement of leadership and management techniques in the public sector. Peer review is applicable to federal, state, and local government agencies or their subdivisions of any size, mission, discipline, responsibility, or location that provide an engineering product. It is intended to help an agency's leadership identify opportunities, uncover weaknesses, and focus on the future.

An ASCE peer review puts an outside team of top-level civil engineering managers into a public-sector agency to evaluate its program and operating procedures. ASCE peer reviewers analyze the critical challenges and opportunities of the organizations' structure, services, policies, procedures, and management practices, but do not evaluate the technical competence of your agency or its individuals. The program maintains the principles of volunteerism and confidentiality.

Public agencies continue to evolve, but often with diminishing resources. The investments needed to maintain and improve communities' infrastructure continue to increase well beyond available funding. To close the infrastructure gap, ASCE initiated a Grand Challenge[1] asking all civil engineers to join in the solution to:

- Significantly enhance the performance and value of infrastructure projects over their life cycles by 2025, and
- Foster the optimization of infrastructure investments for society.

To reach this goal, the profession must influence major policy changes and infrastructure funding levels, while challenging civil engineers to focus on innovation, rethink life cycle costs, and drive transformational change from planning to design to delivery. Public agencies will be a critical driver in this process, and through the peer review program ASCE aims to help them be equipped to meet the challenge.

B. Program Manual Overview

This manual is a training manual for reviewers, an aid to public agencies preparing to be reviewed, and a reference for reviewers conducting a review. The first five chapters of the manual discuss the peer review process and the roles of the agency, reviewers, and ASCE staff in preparing for and conducting a review. Each agency is different, and the program has flexibility to adapt to variations. The final eight chapters of this manual describe in detail the agency's functional areas of

[1] https://www.ascegrandchallenge.com

management that may be evaluated during the peer review program. Each chapter has been prepared to be applicable to agencies of any size. Reviews are customized to focus on areas of most importance to the agency while still including an overview of others. Supplementary information and forms typically used during reviews are included in the appendices.

C. Review Scope Overview

To assess an agency's objectives and policies, the peer review team first studies documents furnished by the agency which define the agency's management policies and structure and describe technical practice policies and procedures. The team also reviews surveys completed by agency staff to determine themes to explore during the visit. During their visit with the agency, the team conducts confidential employee interviews to assess if objectives and policies are clearly understood and are being uniformly implemented. The team tries to verify in the one-to-one interviews if the themes noted in the initial surveys are systemic, divisional, or singular.

When the review process is completed and before the team leaves the agency, they present an oral report to the Engineer/Director (E/D) of the agency or to his/her designee. At the E/D’s request a written report of the team’s perspective of the organization's strengths and opportunities will be provided.

Peer review is a professional review and is not to be confused with audits or investigations for regulatory purposes. Since the program is entirely voluntary, it is up to the E/D to decide who to share the report with and what action, if any, to take in response to the report. The ASCE peer review should not be used as a basis or justification for any disciplinary action or dismissal of employees. If any areas of concern are identified during the peer review process, it would be appropriate for the Engineer/Director (E/D) to follow up with a separate investigation and verification of any issues and to determine whether actions are warranted.

D. Confidentiality

ASCE seeks to protect the confidentiality of both the agency and the individuals who participate in the review process. This is accomplished in several ways.

- Peer reviewers return or destroy all physical and electronic documents that they receive from the agency for advance review and destroy their notes and work papers made during the review process.
- Peer reviewers sign a statement of nondisclosure, and a copy is provided to the agency.
- Recordings of interviews and oral reports are not permitted by reviewers, agency staff, or others.
- Advance questionnaires completed by agency staff are sent directly to reviewers or to an ASCE Administrator, and responses are not shared with

other agency staff or management. Questionnaire responses are destroyed after the review is complete.

- Responses to questionnaires help peer reviewers identify areas to explore further during the interview process. Individual responses are considered confidential and are not reported.
- Interviews are considered confidential and only summary information is reported, without designation of the source.
- Results of the review are not discussed with any other agency, parent agency, or anyone within the agency other than the E/D requesting the review unless the E/D chooses to do so.

E. History

The Executive Committee of the ASCE Board of Direction appointed an ad hoc steering committee to develop the concept of organizational peer review for public agencies in July 1986. This decision was prompted by ASCE's primary concern for improving the quality of life through design, operations, and construction practices.

In September 1986 a task committee was appointed and charged with developing a manual of procedures for conducting peer reviews of public agencies. In addition, the task committee was to train reviewers, conduct pilot reviews, evaluate the process, and make recommendations regarding further development of the peer review process and ASCE's involvement in such a program.

The task committee relied heavily upon the manual and information developed by the American Consulting Engineers Council (ACEC), which established a peer review program in 1985 after a previous program developed by the Association of Soil and Foundation Engineers (ASFE). The service and cooperation of both ACEC and ASFE in developing this manual was significant and is appreciated by ASCE.

In 1987, the pilot peer reviews were completed and the peer review process was evaluated and adopted for use by public agencies. In 1989, ASCE's Board of Direction established the Committee on Peer Review for Public Agencies (now the Public Agency Peer Review Committee). Since that time a growing concern for public agencies has been the increasing demand for efficiency and effectiveness of their services while at the same time having diminishing resources.

F. Definitions

<u>Administrator</u> is the ASCE staff member in charge of administrating the program.

<u>Agency</u> is any public agency or division thereof engaged in the practice of civil engineering and operations.

Committee is the Public Agency Peer Review Committee (a constituent committee of ASCE's Committee on Advancing the Profession) and is responsible for overseeing the peer review program for public agencies.

Engineer/Director (E/D) is the senior manager or the individual designated in responsible charge of engineering, construction, and/or maintenance operations for the agency (or division thereof) in connection with the peer review.

Panel of Peer Reviewers is a group of peer reviewers, representing various disciplines of civil engineering, who have been trained to conduct ASCE peer reviews.

Peer Review Team consists of members of the Panel of Peer Reviewers who have been selected to perform a peer review.

Peer Reviewer Candidate is a person who has been recommended or who has volunteered to become a member of the Panel of Peer Reviewers but has not yet undergone training.

Public/User is the final consumer of the facilities produced through the engineering services of the agency.

Reviewee is any public agency that requests a peer review.

Reviewer is an experienced and trained individual who has extensive knowledge of both managerial and technical requirements needed for proper functioning of an engineering operation in a public agency.

Team Leader is the leader of the Peer Review Team. The leader shall be a member of the Panel of Peer Reviewers, a licensed Professional Engineer, and shall have participated in at least one ASCE peer review.

II. AGENCY RESPONSIBLITIES AND PARTICIPATION

A. Introduction

An ASCE peer review of a public agency involves a substantial effort on the part of the agency being reviewed and the review team. The agency being reviewed can expect to benefit in proportion to its participation before and during the review. This chapter describes the effort required by the agency being reviewed.

Well in advance of the visit by the review team, the E/D of the agency should review the concept and scope of the peer review program, noting any particular policies and procedures which he/she wishes to have reviewed in depth. In general, it is best not to establish new policies and procedures just prior to the peer review because the employees will not have a chance to demonstrate understanding and compliance before the review. It is good to commit oral policies to writing before a peer review.

B. Requesting a Peer Review

Any E/D of a public agency may request a peer review by contacting the Administrator. Requests must come from the E/D of the agency to be reviewed. Requests from parent or other agencies for a review of another agency will not be considered. The Administrator, in turn, will send detailed information to the agency including a copy of this manual and a request form.

By signing and returning a completed request form (Appendix B1), the E/D provides basic information on the agency's size that enables the Administrator to provide a fee estimate for the review.

The following table relates the suggested number of days and reviewers required to the staff size of an agency. This table should be considered as a guideline, and not prescriptive. A smaller team or shorter site visit may be appropriate for a narrower scope of review. A peer review may also be more extensive and require more effort than the table indicates.

OFFICE SIZE / REVIEW EFFORT MATRIX.*

Number of Employees	Less Than 10	11 to 30	31 to 75	76 to 150	More than 150[2]
Number Of Reviewers	2	2	3	4	4 to 6+
Number of Days On-site By Reviewers	1	2	2.5	3	3 to 5+

*Notes:

1. The number of reviewers and length of review should be decided upon by the Engineer/Director, Administrator, and Team Leader based on type of agency, breadth of practice, and details of management.

2. Very large agencies could require multiple review teams and be more than 1 week in duration. The Administrator will work with the E/D to determine geographic impact of multiple locations.

Upon receipt of the signed request form, the Administrator with the help of the PAPRC will coordinate with the agency to determine the review effort and logistics of the site visit. For a more complex review, the effort level required for the review may not be finalized until a Team Leader has been approved and can assist. With the effort level determined, the review fee can be finalized and the review team formed. The agency is not obligated to the review until an agreement is executed between the agency and ASCE for the performance of the review.

Plan to allow at least 3 months between the start of the review coordination process and the review team's site visit. More time for coordination and preparation may be necessary, depending on the agency's procurement process and the complexity of the review effort or logistics.

C. Selection of Reviewers

After confirming the agency's intent to proceed with the review and selecting a target date for the site visit, the Administrator will contact potential reviewers and confirm the review schedule. The Administrator coordinates with the PAPRC to identify a

Team Leader and other review team members based on their review experience, areas of expertise, and availability. An agency may provide criteria for inclusion or exclusion in reviewer selection, e.g., "at least one geotechnical engineer," or "no one from my organization."

The Administrator will send a team recommendation to the E/D, including bios for team members. With the concurrence of the E/D, the team will be confirmed.

D. Peer Review Agreement

An agreement executed by the agency and ASCE establishes the fee and review scope. ASCE reimburses peer review team members for their travel, lodging, and meal expenses incurred. ASCE or the agency does not reimburse reviewers for their time, as this is considered a contribution to the profession.

The Administrator will send the agency a letter summarizing the peer review agreement for confirmation and signature by the agency's representative. The agreement letter will include details such as the dates of the site visit, names of peer review team members, fee amount, and other information regarding the scope and limitations of the review. If the agency's procurement process requires use of an agreement in a different format, such as the agency's own contract or purchase order forms, the agency must provide a blank copy of the required form to the Administrator as early in the review planning process as possible. A minimum of two additional weeks advance coordination time will be required to allow review by ASCE's general counsel.

E. Advance Submission of Documents

Each review team member will sign and send the Statement of Nondisclosure (Appendix B2) to the Administrator, who will provide copies to the E/D. After receiving these certifications and at least 30 days before the scheduled start of the site visit, the agency will submit one copy of each of the documents listed in Appendix C to the Administrator, who will provide them to each reviewer for examination before the site visit. If certain items on this list are not available, this should be indicated.

Gathering and preparing this material is the first benefit to the agency. The lack of existing material, or the necessity to prepare new documents should stimulate discussion on improvement of communication and understanding of practices and procedures.

F. Preparation of Employees

In advance of the review, the E/D should conduct one or more meetings with employees to set the stage for the review. It is important that the E/D exhibit strong support of the program and the benefits that will accrue to the agency. Only with such favorable presentation will the cooperation necessary for a successful review be achieved.

The E/D should describe the program to the employees so that everyone understands the process and what to expect. Each employee should be asked to be present and to cooperate during interviews by answering the reviewer's questions forthrightly without regard to whether the response is favorable or unfavorable to the agency or to the employee. The E/D should stress that all interviews will be confidential, with the reviewers transmitting to the E/D only a summary of interviews without citing the source of particular ideas or comments. Suggested statements the E/D may wish to make to staff are listed in Appendix D.

The efficiency and effectiveness of reviews are greatly enhanced by having selected staff members fill out a questionnaire in advance, which is submitted directly to the Administrator and reviewed only by the review team members. While this step is optional and done at the sole discretion of the E/D, these questionnaires provide important advance information to reviewers on staff opinions in key areas to be reviewed. The surveys may present themes that exist in the organization. These themes can then be explored in more detail during the face to face interviews. The E/D and Team Leader will discuss and determine which employees will be asked to fill out a questionnaire. The standard survey (Appendix B3) may be adapted as needed for the agency. The effectiveness of the peer review is most enhanced when the following occur:

1. Questionnaire responses are completed in detail and submitted directly to the Administrator at least 10 days prior to the peer review. A web survey is the preferred approach to automate the process. If the survey will be in paper format, the E/D should provide with each survey form a stamped envelope addressed to the Administrator or the email address of the Administrator, if the form is to be submitted electronically. The Administrator can provide the E/D with an electronic version of the survey that can more easily be completed and returned via email.

2. The survey should be sent to all of management and at least 50% of division managers and supervisors and 10% of each staff category, incorporating all employee levels. Agencies with up to 150 staff members may opt to send the questionnaire to all of them. The survey allows staff to participate in the review who are not interviewed during the site visit.

3. Findings from the questionnaire will be explored and possibly verified in interviews during the site visit.

G. Preparing for the Site Visit

Interviews with selected agency personnel serve several purposes. They may substantiate or contradict opinions derived from the advance information; they reveal the degree to which the agency's policies are understood and practiced; and they - provide insight into morale, job satisfaction, attainment of agency goals and objectives, and a perception of personnel administration.

The E/D drafts an interview list, and the Team Leader with the team's input requests any changes to be made to fill gaps where personnel classifications haven't been adequately represented. A cross section of the agency's personnel should be interviewed during the on-site visit. The Team Leader will discuss with the E/D/ whether individuals outside the agency should also be interviewed. This could include staff from other divisions of a parent agency or representatives of other organizations that regularly interact with the agency.

Once the interview list is complete, the agency is responsible for reserving interview rooms and scheduling individuals for time slots during the site visit. A few time slots may be left open toward the end of the schedule. This allows flexibility to accommodate schedule changes, second interviews, or addition of interviewees if needed. The agency must provide private offices or meeting rooms for the reviewers to use for their interviews and to meet with each other. This is important to preserve the confidentiality of conversations with interviewees and between review team members.

The E/D provides the interview schedule to the Team Leader during the week before the team's site visit. The form in Appendix B4 may help in scheduling the interviews.

H. Post-Review Action

The Administrator will invoice the agency for the fee agreed upon after the completion of the site visit if no written report has been requested. If a written report has been requested, the Administrator will include submit the invoice when the report is delivered. The agency is expected to pay the invoice within 30 days.

To increase the effectiveness of the program and the reviewers, the E/D of the reviewed agency is requested to critique the review. A copy of the feedback form (Appendix B5) and a link to allow the form to be completed via web survey will be included with the invoice. This will help the peer review committee to continue to refine the training, monitor reviewer quality, and adapt processes.

III. THE PANEL OF REVIEWERS

A. Introduction

The continuity of the program requires maintaining a diverse roster of qualified reviewers. All interested public agencies, whether reviewees or not, are encouraged to submit qualified candidates to the Administrator. Leaders of agencies that have been peer reviewed are encouraged to apply as candidates for reviewer training, as they are familiar with the review process and from their own experience understand its benefits to an agency.

Experienced reviewers report that the review process is a stimulating and educational experience for them as well as for the reviewee. Reviewers also have the satisfaction of helping their colleagues and the advancement of the profession.

B. Qualifications of Reviewers

A peer reviewer candidate should be an experienced, licensed professional who is or recently was a senior member of a public agency and is a current member of ASCE. Reviewers should have at least 15 years' experience in public agency engineering, construction, and/or operations – at least five of them in a management role. A reviewer must be able to obtain the necessary security clearance for those agencies requiring clearance. The reviewer should have made a significant contribution to the profession through involvement with professional societies or other civic or professional activities and have an interest in improving the quality of engineering management services.

Peer review candidates qualify for inclusion on the Panel of Peer Reviewers by participating in an approved peer review training program to strengthen their skills and to gain familiarity with the program. Approved training will be established from time to time by the Committee.

The Team Leader qualifies for that role by virtue of having participated in a previous peer review and by demonstrating interest in leading a review.

ASCE members interested in being reviewers should submit a current resume to the Administrator.

C. Training of Reviewers

Peer review training involves completion of training that focuses on:

1. Purposes of the ASCE peer review program.
2. Distinctive features of the ASCE program.
3. Preparation for and conducting the review.
4. Proper communications during the review.
5. Proper attitudes and reporting style.

Notification will be sent to all reviewers who complete the training course, letting them know that they are eligible for team assignments.

Team Leaders also provide on-the-job-training to help new reviewers be effective during reviews, and this is perhaps the most valuable training, and a major benefit from participation as a reviewer.

The Administrator maintains a list of qualified reviewers. The list has the reviewer's name, agency, address, discipline, experience, and qualifications. The Administrator and the Team Leader, in coordination with the E/D, use information from the list in selecting the peer review team. Reviewers are requested to update their profiles periodically.

D. Feedback from Reviews

The Committee is responsible for maintaining the quality of the peer reviews and the peer review program. Peer review Team Leaders and the E/D of the reviewed agency are asked to comment on the qualifications and effectiveness of the review team and the value of the review itself. Comments should address preparation, planning, and execution of the review, and communication between the team members and the reviewed agency. Appendices B5 and B6 are standard formats for these comments, which may be submitted by mail or electronically.

IV. CONDUCTING REVIEWS

A. Planning and Coordinating the Review

The Administrator will schedule at least one teleconference to allow reviewers to discuss the E/D's goals for the review, timeline for review activities, and details of the review. More complex reviews may require additional advance communication between the agency and reviewers.

B. Travel Arrangements

Review team members should not book flights or reserve hotel rooms that can't be cancelled without penalty until they receive notification from the Administrator that an agreement has been executed with the agency for the review.

The Administrator will send the team travel details and recommendations to help them plan their trips to the agency's site. This will include destination airport, hotel, and ground transportation details and recommendations. Reviewers are encouraged to stay at the recommended hotel, which will be selected based on cost, amenities, and convenience to the agency's location. Review team members are responsible for making their own flight and hotel reservations. They are encouraged to coordinate arrival and departure times with each other and are responsible for ensuring that these correspond to the site visit schedule.

C. Review of Advance Materials

The advance materials, described in Appendix C, will be sent to the Administrator electronically or in hard copy, or provided via a drop box, secure web folder, or other means by which access may be restricted to maintain confidentiality. Agencies are required to send advance materials at least 30 days prior to the scheduled review to allow the reviewers ample time to determine the policies and procedures which are presently in effect.

The agency is responsible for distributing a questionnaire to staff and responses are due to the Administrator 10 days prior to the site visit. Appendix B3 includes a typical questionnaire, although some modifications may be made at the suggestion of the E/D and concurrence of the Team Leader for more feedback on focus areas.

Each reviewer is responsible for reviewing the advance material and questionnaire responses and becoming familiar with them. Each reviewer should make notes of his/her reaction to the materials, noting their observations.

The Team Leader may find it beneficial to discuss these advance review documents with the rest of the reviewers by telephone prior to the site visit. In any event, the review team should meet the evening before the first day of the site visit to compare notes from the advance materials, prepare a list of appropriate subjects to be emphasized during the review, discuss their approach to the review, and formulate the items and themes to be discussed in the initial interview.

During that evening meeting, the Team Leader will establish the overall schedule and assign responsibilities, reminding the review team of techniques, the use of checklists, and the proposed report. A typical site visit schedule for a three-day review is shown in Appendix B4.

D. Initial Interview with the Engineer/Director

At the kick-off of the site visit, the team will hold a brief closed meeting with the E/D. At this time, the Team Leader should review the peer review process and the E/D's goals for the review, stress confidentiality requirements, and lead a discussion of initial observations or suggested additional focus areas based on the advance material. The E/D may then bring in and introduce his/her key assistants. The availability of key staff members during the visit will be confirmed at this time.

The Administrator will provide name badges for reviewers to wear at all times when at the agency's facilities. These will be shipped in advance of the site visit either to the Team Leader or to the E/D who will give them to the Team Leader during the kick-off meeting. The agency may also furnish identification to reviewers for security and access to their facilities.

E. Review of Policies

Reviewers will review both management and operation policies and procedures. Since the underlying aim of the program is to improve the quality of work produced by public agencies, it is important that the agency has clear-cut operational policies and that these policies are understood and followed by the staff. Additionally, the agency should be encouraged to utilize the latest technology that is appropriate to its mission.

The scope of the review encompasses the complete operation of the agency. Areas to be reviewed are covered in more detail in subsequent chapters of this manual. The depth of review for each of these areas will vary, based on the characteristic responsibilities of the agency and the goals of the E/D. The review team will seek to determine the existence of an agency policy or procedure and evaluate whether the personnel in the agency understand it. In general, the areas that most directly affect the quality of the agency's work will be reviewed in more depth than other subjects. In all cases, the questions can go deeper than indicated. Typically, a question about policy is followed by a question as to whether that policy is actually followed. That in turn could lead to other questions: "Why not?", "What policy is really followed?", "Why?" and so on.

F. Random Review of Records

The reviewers should ascertain the types of records that the agency maintains insofar as possible during their review of the advance information.

Because the time available for the review will limit the amount of correspondence, records, and files that can be reviewed, reviewers should make notes regarding the type of information to be requested for reference during the on-site visit.

All parties must realize that the agency's records are usually not its primary end product. Nevertheless, it also must be recognized that good practice requires both a series of good decisions, and a certain level of documentation of the reasons for those decisions and records of their implementation.

G. Employee Interviews

Typically, reviewers will conduct interviews individually and concurrently. However, more than one reviewer may be assigned to conduct certain interviews, such as members of the agency's senior leadership, elected officials, representatives of oversight agencies, or others outside of the agency. These details should be finalized before interviews begin, during the team's evening meeting before the site visit or the kick-off meeting with the E/D.
Team members should communicate with each other periodically during the day regarding their observations and emerging themes to explore further. This may be accomplished through short breaks, working lunches, or meetings after interviews have concluded for the day.

The Administrator will provide staff contact information, and the team should not hesitate to contact ASCE staff for guidance in the event of an unusual circumstance.

H. Exit Conference

The final step of the visit will be the closing oral report to the E/D, in some cases followed by an overview or summary report to key staff members invited by the E/D. If the E/D requests a summary report to other staff members, the team should remind the E/D that no recording of the presentation is allowed.

The oral report is based on the brief but intensive review. In preparation for this report, the team should organize notes made during the review, compiling points that are particularly favorable as well as those relating to opportunities for improvements. The written report outline shown in Appendix E may help the team compile its collective observations.

During the oral report, the reviewers will maintain an objective approach, carefully stating their comments and, at the same time, observing confidentiality. Every effort should be made by the review team to involve the E/D in the discussion of the findings to assure they are being properly communicated.

The team may elect to use PowerPoint to provide an outline of the findings to guide the discussion. In preparing the presentation, use an outline approach and list high level topics. Avoid written details and include those in the oral report. Provide a copy of the PowerPoint only if requested by the E/D and after review by the team and ASCE legal counsel. Otherwise, this is a working document that is discarded after the review.

I. Written Report

The E/D may request a written report during the early planning stages. If requested, the Team Leader will prepare a draft of the report with input from the other team members and forward a copy to the Administrator and the Committee for review. The written report should contain a summary of observations of strengths and opportunities made during the review and it should be organized using the outline in Appendix E. The Administrator will receive comments from the PAPRC and ASCE's general counsel and discuss them with the Team Leader. Once the report is finalized, it will be forwarded by the Administrator to the E/D along with a cover letter, invoice, and the post review feedback form.

J. Post Review Action

The Team Leader will complete and submit a post-review feedback form using Appendix B5 or the web survey link provided by the Administrator. Other team members are invited to also provide their feedback. With the E/D feedback, this will help the Committee to continue to refine training, monitor quality, and adapt processes.

All reviewers promptly compile their expenses, with appropriate documentation, and submit via ASCE's electronic reimbursement system. The Administrator will provide instructions for submission and any assistance needed.

The Team Leader will return name badges to the Administrator using the prepaid return envelope provided.

V. INTRODUCTION TO PEER REVIEW CONTENT

The peer review program has been designed to be applicable to all public agencies regardless of size, mission, discipline, responsibility, or location. The program recognizes and is based on certain principles that are fundamental for providing quality service in any engineering practice of public agencies.

Because every public agency is unique, the program has been made adaptable to as many variations in practice as possible. A potential reviewee should not decline the program simply because his or her responsibility does not require all of the elements discussed in this manual. Peer review can even be tailored to an individual operational function.

An important aspect of the ASCE peer review program is that it is based on voluntary efforts by agencies seeking to improve their operations and by reviewers who offer their experience. Within the framework of voluntary action for a worthy purpose, many modifications can be made to increase the benefits to all agencies. The specific scope of inquiry into each of the areas of concern described in the next eight chapters can be modified to fit an agency's situation.

VI. REVIEW OF ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT

A. Introduction

The objective of the review is to determine how effectively organizational goals are being accomplished. Determination of effectiveness will largely be accomplished by a "snapshot" assessment of community facilities and various interactions with staff members and community leaders. The initial review of an agency's management consists of a study by the review team of the material sent to them by the agency in advance of the visit. At the site, the reviewers obtain supplementary information and determine if the actual operation matches the policies, of if there are deficiencies in practice which would affect the quality of the product.

The word "management" implies that there is a purpose, a plan to achieve that purpose, an effort to guide operations in pursuit of the plan, and an organizational arrangement of people to facilitate this. All of these aspects are present in any agency. The differences may be in the degree of formality with which the elements of management are described and the measures that are taken to communicate them to all employees. The primary tenets imperative to the management and operation of public agencies are:

1. Organize all efforts around delivering quality to the customer;
2. Prioritize customer required products and services, continually measure performance against requirements, and provide frequent feedback to staff;
3. Stress prevention versus rework;
4. Emphasize teamwork at all levels;
5. Establish supervisory assistance for employees to empower and grow versus supervisory control;
6. Integrate continuing education;
7. Measure both work processes and results to see where problems lie;
8. Empower employees to solve these problems;
9. Continuously improve the system of production and services;
10. Create a balanced future with environmental stewardship, economic security, and social well-being.

The issues that the peer review team will address are divided into general categories applicable to all agencies. Fundamental questions are listed in boldfaced type, followed by optional questions in regular type.

B. Policies and Practices for Review

1. Purposes, Goals, and Priorities

   a. **Are the organization's mission, goals, objectives, and priorities defined in writing and are they clear when conflicts tend to develop?**

- Are the mission, goals, etc., accessible to all employees and consciously brought to their attention?
- Are the statements consistent with other documents and with the employees' general understanding?
- Are the mission, goals, etc. referred to when decisions are made so employees understand the connection?

b. Are short-range objectives regularly established and is progress monitored?

- Are short-range objectives well understood?
- What performance metrics are used? Are they periodically reviewed and updated?
- Is the plan documented and generally accessible?

c. Are long-range goals understood and is progress monitored?

- At management level?
- Throughout the chain of command?
- What performance metrics are used? Are they periodically reviewed and updated?

d. Are the objectives and goals reflected in the annual budgeting process?

2. Organizational Culture

a. Is there a commitment to continuously improve products and services to fully satisfy the customer on a life-cycle basis?

b. Is there an understanding of sustainability?

c. Are customer-required products and services clearly defined?

d. Is there a commitment to completely identify initial customer requirements prior to submission of proposals for solutions?

3. Organizational Structure

a. Is there a well understood organizational structure that defines reporting relationships and assigns responsibility to managers and other employees?

- Is the organizational structure documented?
- Are lines of supervision, reporting, responsibility, authority, and accountability clearly defined without conflicting requirements?

- If a matrix organizational system is used, are the organizational plans for different functions complete and well understood?
- Has the organizational structure been communicated to all employees?

b. **Has each employee been told what his or her job is and what is expected? If not, how did the employee find out?**

- Are there written job descriptions that are specific to each individual?
- Are there adequate procedures for periodic evaluation of employee performance, and to discuss planned advancement of professional and technical personnel?
- Does the evaluation process include contributions from co-workers and subordinates as well as managers?
- Is the structure for operations outside the office (field locations) adequately defined?
- Does the agency really operate as defined?

4. Communications

a. **Are communications among management personnel adequate?**

- Are communications between management and staff adequate?
- Is there reciprocal communication from staff to management?

b. **Is the administrative Management Information System (MIS) adequate? Do all employees have access to it?**

c. **Is data monitored in real time?**

5. Facilities and Equipment

a. **Are necessary offices and field equipment available, well maintained, regularly used, monitored, and accounted for?**

b. **Is the care of facilities and equipment assigned to certain persons? Do they know they are responsible?**

c. **Does office space appear neat? Does the appearance contribute to the agency's public image?**

d. **Are there guidelines for the periodic upgrade of office workspace for greater efficiency and quality of work?**

e. **What personnel are involved in this effort?**

f. **Does the office have adequate technical literature?**

g. **Is there adequate accessibility to general references and other technical resources?**

h. **Are staff members provided access to electronic and library data? Are they being used?**

i. **Is the equipment being used state-of-the-art? If not, how outdated is it?**

j. **What is the prevailing attitude by management toward upgrading facilities or equipment?**

k. **Does the staff know how to request new equipment or other resources?**

l. **Are there designated technical leaders who are responsible for monitoring new products, new developments in office practice, literature, etc.?**

6. Consultant Services

a. **How are consultants selected?**

- Does the agency have a written procedure for obtaining professional services?
- Is the selection of professional services based on qualifications? Is the policy followed?
- Do the proper personnel have input? Are both design and construction personnel involved?

b. **How are consultant contracts prepared?**

- Who prepares agreements and who has input? How are fees determined?
- Are standard contract formats used consistently?
- Are contracts straightforward and understood?
- Are risks assigned to the party best able to manage them?

c. **Do the scopes of work in contracts represent what is needed?**

d. **Are fee negotiations keyed to the scope of work and other conditions of service?**

- Does the agency have specially trained and experienced negotiating officers to balance scopes and other terms of a contract with the compensation?
- Is the project manager in charge of the negotiation of the scope and the fee?

- To what extent is the negotiation process influenced or controlled by procurement specialists?

e. How are consultant services evaluated?

f. Are construction difficulties considered, as well as product deliverability?

g. Is there an established procedure?

7. Construction Contracting Procedure

a. How are construction contracts awarded?

b. Is there a final technical review of documents before bid advertisement?

c. Is there a pre-bid conference with interested contractors?

d. How are bids reviewed prior to award?

e. Is there a pre-construction meeting with the low bidder?

VII. REVIEW OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT

A. Introduction

Peer review is applicable to most technical activities regardless of the field of engineering and the exact services that are to be performed. This part of the review focuses on those practices of project management that do not vary from one technical discipline to another – clarity of scope, thoroughness of work planning, structuring of project teams, communications, effective expediting, policies for formal review of design and plans, maintenance of records, coordination of construction phase services, project closeout activities, sustainability, etc.

In actual practice, activities that precede project production often slide into the production phase without a distinct break. Contract negotiation and project planning can be sequential or simultaneous. A peer review should likewise treat the project execution phase as having "soft edges," despite the sharp division of questions listed in Section B. following.

For purposes of this manual, all field services (from preliminary data gathering to inspection and services during construction) are considered part of this section on project management.

As with other areas of inquiry, the degree to which these facets of practice are formalized varies, often depending on the size of the organization, whether it functions primarily as a prime designer or as a manager of work done by consultants, and whether it engages in complete design and construction phase services or mostly oversees the work of consultants and contractors or renders advice. Agencies of every type and size, however, can be expected to have addressed certain managerial issues and to have established policies to cover these matters. In their most basic form, some of the policies may be oral or even implicit. On a tightly knit team, they may be disseminated simply by example. Whether they developed organically or by formal process, and whether they represent the best practice for the organization or not, some policies will be in effect and should be periodically reviewed.

As projects become larger or more complex, more people become involved. Project management, communications, and teamwork then assume greater importance. An increased emphasis on these leads to a more specific structuring of a project team and of the agency itself. While there may be some policies that remain unstated (with standard practice following examples set), normally there would be an emerging set of written standards to guide the agency's engineering operations.

The coordination of sophisticated or integrated projects requires a corresponding level of engineering management. As an increasing number of people and other resources are brought into play, the management challenges increase, and so must the formality of the agency. A peer review of an agency should consider the possibility that it might be either overly organized or too loosely controlled.

The suggestions for possible inquiry below are divided into general, fundamental questions and additional inquiries that apply to a more structured form. The fundamental questions are listed first in boldface type, followed by optional ones in regular type.

B. Policies and Practices for Review

1. Project Management Process

   a. **Is the process defined in writing? Is the process understood?**

   b. **Does it include consultant projects and those done in-house? Is there a commitment to continuously improve products and services to fully satisfy the customer on a sustainable life-cycle basis?**

   c. **Does the process define responsibilities? Authority?**

      - Is there a commitment to a quality planning process?
      - Does the process empower employees to solve problems?

   d. **Does the process continually measure performance against requirements?**

      - What process metrics are tracked?
      - What baselines or goals are used to evaluate performance?
      - Does the process continually measure performance against requirements?
      - Does the process emphasize teamwork?

   e. **Are work segments (data collection, preliminary design development, contract documents, etc.), regularly completed both on time and within budget?**

      - Does the process provide frequent feedback to all involved personnel?

   f. **Where does customer relationship begin?**

      - Who determines customers, stakeholders and their roles and when?
      - Is the design staff involved?
      - Are construction and operations/maintenance personnel involved?

2. Project Planning

a. Does the agency require that initial work plans be prepared in writing which establish time limits and costs that reflect the client's schedule and budgetary limitations?

- Does the work plan document objectives and concepts, cost limitations, space requirements, functional description, site data, code restrictions, time restrictions, and bidding/contracting procedures?
- For work to be performed by a consultant, is a detailed estimate developed that ties the effort required for adequate performance to the level of fee processed?
- For work to be accomplished in-house, is a comparable analysis prepared for use in controlling activities during execution?
- Is the work plan in a standard form for all projects?

b. Who prepares the initial work plan?

- When is the project manager selected?
- How is the project manager selected?

c. Who reviews work plans?

- Must approval be obtained before work is begun or contract negotiations are initiated?
- Do key project staff participate in determining project schedules, level and length of effort, and budgets?
- Are all project staff involved in early planning?
- Are all involved organizational managers informed of proposed project impact?

d. Does the agency always assign members to a project who are experienced, qualified in the areas required, and have adequate time to perform the project?

- Are staff assignments and workloads of individuals documented and available for review by senior managers?
- Are records of staff assignments kept current?
- Does the agency consider career development objectives of individuals in making project assignments?

e. **Are construction and/or operations and maintenance personnel involved?**

- Is a constructability review a part of the process and at what stages?
- Is a life cycle analysis and maintenance plan provided?

- What sustainable construction and maintenance options are included?

f. **How does the system process address design-build and other alternative project delivery options?**

3. Quality Control Procedures

a. **Are QC procedures defined?**

- By whom?
- In writing?
- Are milestone parameters defined?
- Are they followed?

b. **Are all concepts, report drafts, drawings, etc. formally checked for conformance with the standards at appropriate milestones?**

- Who presides in milestone reviews?
- How many project team members are involved?
- Are the qualifications of the quality control personnel well-defined and adequate for the roles?
- How are sign-offs at milestone reviews documented?
- Are copies of all design drawings signed by both designer and checker?
- Does the agency have a standard checklist available for each discipline and phase to aid in checking internal documentation and deliverables?
- Does the agency have a standard policy for marking, checking, and filing design drawings?

c. **Do checks assure that, where applicable, public/users' and the agency's standards have been used to the maximum extent and that directives have been followed?**

- Does the agency require that the checkers be identified early for each milestone review?
- Are contract estimates included in the checking process?
- Is the total project team involved in checks to insure separate discipline compatibility?
- Are constructability checks made of engineering decisions?

d. **Do the final deliverables, as well as any key intermediate products, receive an independent quality assurance review from someone other than the engineers on the project team?**

- Are the qualifications of the quality assurance person well-defined and adequate for the role?
- Do these quality assurance procedures include verification that

back-checking was done to make sure that the quality control corrections were completed?
- Are independent quality assurance reviews provided in adequate quantity, duration, and level in accordance with the agency's policies?
- Are there checklists or guidelines to help a quality assurance reviewer cover the right material and the right decisions?

e. Are oral presentations planned and checked as thoroughly as written or graphic deliverables are?

- Do schedules provide for review of oral reports?
- Are they practiced and critiqued by independent listeners?

4. Project Communication and Records

a. Does the agency emphasize the importance of accurate and well-documented communication?

- Are principles of communication and documentation taught to all employees?
- Are these principles practiced by top management to serve as examples?
- Are case histories of good and bad communications publicized to instruct in better communications and to remind everyone of the consequences?

b. Does the agency have a standard procedure for recording informal communications (telephone conversations, memos, meeting notes, etc.)?

- Does the agency require that all external communications be documented in proper format and be easily retrievable for project files?
- Does more than one individual on a project team communicate with the public/user or other stakeholders? If so, how are these communications recorded for the benefit of other team members?

c. Is a comprehensive Management Information System (MIS) used throughout a project's life to manage effort, personnel, schedule, and budget?

- Who has access to the MIS data?
- Are original and revised work plans filed for continuous review by management? By project team members?
- Are "percent complete" for various tasks identified at periodic intervals and "remaining effort to complete" re-estimated at specific milestones?
- Are all schedule, cost, and work changes documented and coordinated with affected parties' approval?

d. **Does the agency have a policy for document management of all project material?**

- How extensive is computerization of project records?
- Are in-progress and final documents kept readily available in standard locations and formats?
- Does the agency provide storage or archiving of project material in accordance with its policies?
- Are checks made to keep project files neat and orderly?
- Are there scheduled times for filing or archiving materials (at ends of phases, periodically, daily, etc.)?
- Is there adequate administrative assistance to help project managers keep project records?

e. **Does the agency have a policy with respect to keeping files in "active," "dormant," and "archival" categories?**

- Is there a policy on how long to keep each type of file?
- Is there periodic purging or retirement of filed material?
- Can stored or archives materials be easily located and retrieved, and is the most cost-effective system being used?

f. **Does the agency provide continuous feedback to project team members?**

5. Construction Phase Services

a. **Does the agency insist or at least recommend that construction observation be included in their scope of work?**

b. **Does the agency have a standard written procedure for bid document and addenda distribution, pre-bid conferences, addressing questions during the bidding period, and bid opening, all appropriate to the agency's practice?**

c. **Does the agency emphasize communications during the construction period?**

- Does the agency have standard forms for site visits and observations, daily logs, daily/weekly summaries, etc.?
- Does the agency have standard forms for test reports and policies established for the frequency of various tests to be made during construction?
- Are written minutes of monthly or other meetings filed regularly?
- Are all change orders and modifications to the contract documents performed timely, properly documented, distributed, and kept current?

d. Does the agency emphasize that construction phase communications conform to the contractual obligations/responsibilities for the project, and do senior personnel review communications to reinforce that emphasis?

- Are field representatives instructed how to handle common situations, and are there follow-up or supervisory visits to the field by senior staff to monitor the quality of field communications?
- Are there clear lines of responsibility and authority for the field personnel?
- Are field reports regularly and promptly reviewed by the project manager?
- Are field changes involving design changes referred to the design engineer for resolution or concurrence?
- Do the design engineers visit the project during construction to gain direct knowledge of the success and short-comings of their design plans?

e. Does the office have a standard practice for handling shop drawings or other submittals?

- Are procedures for reviewing, accepting and returning shop drawings clear?
- Does the agency use some form of submittal register to document submittal requirements and who will review and approve?
- Does the agency have a policy establishing who performs in-house review of submittals and the level of responsibility for each person or type of document?
- Are reviews by junior personnel monitored by senior engineers?
- Is a log kept showing dates of receipt, internal distribution, dates of sending out, and disposition of submittals?
- Are these logs reviewed periodically to determine timely compliance with office procedures?

f. Are communications with the public/user and the contractor frequent and open during the construction phase?

- Is there a public/user communication policy?
- Who responds to public/user complaints about construction activities?
- How is the adjacent public notified of impending construction?
- Is there a contractor communication policy?
- Are contractors' progress payments processed promptly?
- Are on-site progress meetings scheduled and held regularly, with meeting minutes prepared to identify progress, planned work, issues, and action items with what, who and when?
- Are field problems identified and resolved promptly and fairly?
- Are schedules kept current and distributed to all parties?
- Are there standard procedures for dealing with these activities?

- Are there policies as to when senior staff (both design and construction) are to be brought into a potential problem?

6. Project Acceptance and Closeout

   a. **Does the agency have a standard policy concerning what materials are retained, and how they are organized, at closeout of a project?**

      - Are files purged and prepared for long-term storage?
      - Are auxiliary files from other departments, field representatives, project offices, etc., collected, and merged with main files?

   b. **Does the agency have a standard policy of a closeout conference?**

      - Is the public/user asked to "sign off" on the project, i.e., is there a formal acceptance and transfer procedure?
      - Does a senior manager call on the public/user later to gauge satisfaction, to smooth any rough edges found and to learn for future similar projects?
      - Are operating manuals collected and provided to the operating/maintenance personnel; are special onsite instruction sessions held with operating/maintenance personnel for special equipment, etc.?
      - Is there a system for monitoring the project during the project warranty period to ensure any failures are timely identified and repaired?
      - Is there a detailed evaluation of how the assets provided meet the customer requirements?
      - Is this information shared with all project team members?
      - Is this procedure used to constantly improve the project management system?

   c. **Do staff members evaluate projects at their conclusion?**

      - Does the agency require a written post-mortem at the end of projects?
      - Is the distribution and filing of the report established?
      - Which staff members are part of the post-mortem evaluation?

   d. **Is there a process for periodic project evaluations between design and construction personnel?**

   e. **Is there a process for involvement of operations and maintenance personnel during the project duration?**

   f. **Is there a procedure for capturing lessons learned and feeding this information back into the new project development process?**

   g. **Are agency “customers” involved in the acceptance and close-out process?**

VIII. REVIEW OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

A. Introduction

Inherent to most agencies having a responsibility for public facilities is the added responsibility for emergency operations in connection with infrastructure failures or with natural and man-made disasters. This responsibility accrues as the public expects the responsible public agency to resolve failures and looks to a governmental entity for leadership during disaster situations that require a unified effort. In addition, the public expects that emergency response will be timely and that mitigation of the emergency situation will be performed to cause a minimum of inconvenience. Also, governmental entities by constitutional definition are responsible for the health, safety, and welfare of their citizenry.

To effectively discharge its responsibility in this area, a public agency must have a viable contingency plan which can be promptly and effectively implemented should the need arise. Such plan should be relatable to a variety of circumstances, establish the requisite authorities for action, delineate specific responsibilities, and clearly establish lines of communication.

In evaluating this aspect, the reviewers should look for a clear definition of the agency's role in emergency response situations and concentrate on the capability and capacity for responsive and responsible action. As each emergency will create its own particular circumstances, the plan should recognize the need for flexibility to cope with the situation. The fundamental questions for this topic are listed below in boldfaced type, with optional questions in regular type.

B. Policies and Practices for Review

1. Emergency Operations Plan – Agency and Parent Organization

    a. **How is the need for an emergency plan determined?**

    b. **Are plans in writing and formalized? By whom?**

    - How often are they reviewed/updated?
    - Are they comprehensive and up-to-date?

    c. **Is what triggers an emergency defined?**

    d. **Are the roles and responsibilities of the agency and agency personnel defined?**

    - **Are employees empowered to solve problems as they occur?**

    e. **Are copies of the plan readily available?**

2. Organization

   a. **Does the table of organization delineate clear lines of authority and responsibility?**

   b. **Is the table of organization up-to-date?**

      - Is there a Continuation of Operations Plan (COOP)? How is it communicated?

   c. **Are provisions made for updating the table?**

      - How often is it reviewed/updated?

   d. **Are assignments and responsibilities clearly assigned?**

      - Is teamwork emphasized at all levels?

   e. **Are technically competent individuals assigned to deal with the anticipated technical issues?**

      - Do all employees know about the plan and their role in it?

3. Communication

   a. **Does a viable communication system exist for dealing with various types of emergencies?**

   b. **Is it clear by whom and how responses to emergencies are to be triggered?**

      - Is a stipulated plan available for maintaining contact and coordination with requisite agencies, including names and phone numbers?
      - Are the names and phone numbers current?

   c. **Is a plan available for effective handling of public relations, including contact with the news media? Is it specific as to dealing with the media?**

4. Equipment and Materials

   a. **Are adequate equipment and materials available for responding to anticipated emergencies?**

   b. If not, is there a procedural system in place to obtain materials and equipment quickly from private suppliers?

- Does it include telephone numbers?
- Does it involve e-commerce?

c. Are Mutual Aid Agreements in place?

- Are the Agreements current?
- How often are the provisions of the Agreements exercised?

5. Training

   a. Are all employees briefed or trained on the contents of the emergency operations plan and their role in it? How often are they briefed and trained?

   b. Is the plan tested periodically? How recently was it tested?

   c. Is the plan compatible with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Incident Command System (ICS) and are employees trained to use this system?

IX. REVIEW OF TECHNICAL PRACTICE AND PROCEDURES

A. Introduction

Organizational technical capability, as distinguished from individual competence, is perhaps the first prerequisite that comes to mind for the success of an engineering organization. Organizational capability does not come easily, and it must be constantly maintained to keep up with rapid changes in technology. Peer review does not attempt to evaluate the level of technical competence of an agency or any of its personnel; however, the review does cover review of policies and procedures established and practiced by an agency to maintain its technical capability and application for sustainability. An agency's approach to this fundamental activity will be greatly affected by size, disciplines, and narrowness of specialization. As an agency becomes larger, more attention must be paid to the organization's efforts to become and remain technically capable. The following description of the peer review scope reflects these differences in agencies. The review team will modify its approach accordingly.

Often, managers in a public agency must delegate technical work to in-house staff and consultants. The responsibility for technical capability may become less of a personal matter and more of an organizational responsibility. As this occurs, the need for more formally established policies and practices emerges.

In general, larger organizations require a more formal structure for documenting and maintaining technical practices, which may be brought about either by natural inclination or by tight management. Natural inclination may be adequate in a relatively small agency office while tight management may be necessary in a large one. The peer review will be based on what the agency perceives its needs to be, based on its mission.

The suggestions given below for the possible scope of a peer review are divided into fundamental questions for all agencies and additional inquiries for those that are more structured. The fundamental questions are listed first in boldfaced type, followed by optional ones in regular type.

B. Policies and Practices for Review

1. Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC)

   a. Does the agency have a written QA policy?

   - Does it include both design and construction?
   - Does the QA statement encourage employees to solve problems?
   - Does the QA statement stress initial completeness versus rework? Are there documents that list the required analyses, documents for design and construction management?

b. **Is the QA policy understood throughout the organization? Are employees aware of the policy?**

c. **Are quality control provisions defined?**

- Does the agency have written tools for maintaining quality control, such as project management checklists, environmental review checklists, and discipline specific design checklists?
- Does the agency have QA/QC tools for in-house design? Review of consultant design? Does it have a written procedure that documents r in-house construction inspection practice?
- Do staff members understand their role in the QC process?

d. **Do the agency's QC provisions adequately cover design analysis?**

- How does the agency ensure that in-house assumptions and calculations checked?
- How does senior management review and approve project design criteria and analyses?
- How does the agency ensure that consultant assumptions and calculations checked?
- How are the results of computer programs verified for accuracy?
- Is a specific staff person responsible for checking project calculations and is the name of the checker identified on computation sheets?
- How are calculations stored? Are the calculations retrievable?
- Does the agency have a designated QC manager?

e. **Are there standards for estimates at various phases of design (what is included, level of contingency, appropriate use of allowances)? What is the process for verifying the accuracy of engineers' estimates by consultants, including quantities and unit costs and use of markups and costs for bonding, etc.?**

f. **Does the agency have written QC provisions for construction inspection?**

- Are testing and inspection procedures defined, documented and accessible to staff?
- How are testing and inspection consultants selected? If inspectors are hired by a contractor, how does the agency ensure that a neutral, third party is retained?

g. **Does the agency select design and construction consultants that are fully qualified, with licensed personnel, for its work? How?**

2. Professional Development

   a. **Does the agency have a formal program to encourage employee achievement and growth?**

   b. **How is the level of technical skills needed or attained by agency personnel documented?**

      - Does the agency have a systematic needs and skills survey procedure, conducted by senior technical managers? Is it up-to-date?
      - Are the required job skills listed in each employee’s performance plan?
      - Does the agency have written skill and educational requirements for all its job classes?

   c. **How does the agency encourage continuing education, on-the-job training, and self-study to develop employees' skills and knowledge in needed areas?**

      - Are these plans prepared annually with the employees and documented?
      - Are these plans addressed in personnel evaluations?
      - Does the agency provide time or resources for self-study?

   d. **Does the agency encourage participation in professional and technical societies and organizations?**

      - Is this reflected in job descriptions and performance rating processes?
      - Is membership in professional societies encouraged? Is funding provided for dues and for meeting attendance?
      - Are engineers encouraged to serve on committees and develop technical papers and presentations?
      - Do annual goals include involvement in and contribution to these societies?

   e. **Does the agency encourage development of writing and speaking skills?**

      - Are there prescribed steps or courses to be taken, with a schedule?
      - Does the agency have an active Toastmasters group or other opportunities for internal public speaking such as lunch time “brown bags” or project presentations at larger staff meetings?
      - Does the agency have a formal or informal program for staff to develop public speaking skills by supporting senior staff at public meetings?

   f. **Does the agency have a technical development program?**

      - Does the agency have an in-house training program? Is technical training provided?

- Does someone have a defined responsibility for the technical development of each employee? (either the supervisor or HR/Training coordinator)
- Are technical disciplines organized within the agency to document codes, standards, and the state of the art analysis methods? Does the agency continually assess and upgrade the technical level of all disciplines?
- Are the discipline organizations active? Do they actively meet? Are documents and standards kept up to date?
- Do annual goals for technical supervisors include the technical growth of employees for whom the supervisor is responsible?

g. How does the agency share new technical information?

- Is there a sharing of project experience within the appropriate staff? How often is information shared?
- Is continual project feedback provided to project team members?
- Are key engineers designated to advise the rest of the organization or discipline on developments in narrow specialties?
- Are in-house presentations held or are other oral or written communications used to spread information?
- Are technical reports, code updates, journals and other similar documents circulated and shared among technical staff?

h. Does the agency's management encourage personnel with the potential to become licensed?

- Is certification, or the capability of becoming certified, a recognized factor in hiring new technicians, secretaries, or others, or in promoting existing staff?
- Is licensure, or the capability of becoming licensed, a primary factor in hiring new personnel or in promoting existing staff?
- How does the agency recognize the attainment of licensure or certification?

3. Technical Information

a. Does the agency maintain a central library or electronic document management system, with technical literature organized for easy retrieval?

- Is this facility used for its intended purpose?
- Is the organization and search system well understood and followed?
- Are reference materials gravitating to "personal libraries" contrary to standard policy?
- Is adequate time dedicated to the establishment and maintenance of the technical library?
- What is the budget allotted for the library?

- Are references up-to-date?
- Are there plans to consolidate physical and electronic library and reference material if needed?

b. Does the agency have a technical information officer?

- What are the agency's policies or procedures regarding knowledge management?
- How is the internet or agency intranet utilized to share information?
- Does the agency have a centralized document management system that is accessible to staff? Are sensitive documents appropriately secured with passwords/restricted access?

4. Engineering Standards

a. Does the agency promote the development and use of standard design techniques?

- How are they documented (what is the basis for design aids or the reason for standard methods)?
- Are they used consistently on all projects by all staff?
- Are they easily accessible or fragmented? Does everyone have access
- How are they kept up-to-date?
- Is their use clearly understood?
- Do they include sustainability practices?
- How are new employees introduced to design standards?

b. Does the agency use standard details?

- Are standard details maintained and updated separately or are they copied from the last job?
- Has the agency developed the use of standard details to the maximum with an appropriate blend of applicable "systems drafting" techniques?

c. Is the use of standard details encouraged by a workable filing and retrieval system?

- Are they easily accessible or fragmented?
- Are details cataloged and annotated to allow accurate customizing?
- Are standard details available electronically in CADD and PDF format? Is there a process for managing changes and updates?

d. Are standard graphical practices well understood?

- Does the agency have written policies on basic standards for repetitive items (such as borders, titles, standard symbols, etc.) and for basic graphic elements (such as line weights, lettering styles, use of different media and reproduction techniques, etc.).

e. **Does the agency have a set of standard specifications?**

- How are the standard specifications kept up-to-date?
- How are standard specifications modified to be project specific?
- By whom?
- Are standard specifications stored on an intranet or easily accessible network drive for ease of retrieval and maintenance? Are there practices to maintain version control?
- Does the agency have a person or department designated as specialists in the administrative and legal portions of project specifications?

f. **Does the agency have a set of standard forms and procedures available for field personnel use when gathering data and/or providing services during construction?**

- Are the forms consistently used, accurately filled out, signed and filed?
- Does the agency hold seminars explaining the use of such standards?

g. **Are records of construction costs maintained, or is a standard method of estimating project costs available?**

- Is cost estimating the responsibility of a person or a department?
- Are cost data files and procedures arranged in databases for automated updating, retrieval, and reporting?
- Does the agency track bid results and compare them to the engineers' estimate?
- Is cost data tracked by facility type and available for others to use for making planning level estimates?

h. **Does the agency have a process for updating and keeping current engineering standards?**

- How does the agency develop a culture which promotes standardization but maintains an appropriate level of innovation?
- Does the process include frequent feedback to employees? Is there are process for sharing design information and discussing new technologies?

5. Information/Knowledge Management

a. **Does the agency recognize information management as a key strategy for increasing productivity and competitiveness?**

- How have electronic devices been integrated into the office's operations to improve productivity and quality? (Scanners, tablets, laptops, etc.)
- Is information electronically shared with agency customers and suppliers?

b. Does the agency make use of new technologies for completing and filing technical work?

- Are engineering calculations and reports prepared electronically? Are results checked? Are files properly archived for later use?
- Do employees have the appropriate computer hardware and software to perform their jobs and communicate effectively?
- How are programs maintained and updated and by whom?
- Does the agency maintain proof of licensing for software purchases? How is this managed?
- Does the agency have a system of random audits of computers to assure no pirated software (unauthorized and unpaid) exists on the agency computer?
- Is there a plan to coordinate software and hardware used among different departments or groups to ensure that there is consistency and compatibility between them? How are software contracts negotiated?

c. Are all computer programs in use documented adequately as to assumptions, methods of operation, and limitations?

- Who does programming and/or software selection?
- If a group administers selection and maintenance, are individual roles well understood?
- Are technical programs that were written in-house documented with complete programmer's notes, flow diagrams, statements of assumptions and limitations, etc.?

d. Is there someone designated to stay current with developments in automated equipment and procedures?

- Does the agency have a business plan for hardware and software updates?
- Does the agency have a business plan for keeping up with emerging technologies, evaluating them and recommending piloting?

e. How are computer files maintained to ensure reliable retrieval and version control?

- Does the agency have a policy for data backups (daily, offsite, assign person) and virus checks?
- Who can input and/or read data?
- Can unauthorized persons enter the system?

f. Is there a policy governing appropriate email use and how is it enforced?

g. Do computer and other information management system problems get prompt attention?

h. Does this public agency use maintenance management software to support its preventive and predictive maintenance programs?

i. Does this agency have an automated requisition/purchasing system?

j. Does this agency have a customer information management system that provides single point access to customer accounts, invoices, inquiries, complaints, and related information?

k. Does this public agency have a geographic-based information management system (GIS) that contains complete and up-to-date records of agency infrastructure and property? How is it kept up to date? Is the data available to all employees? The public?

l. How does the agency maintain up-to-date information, such as the latest engineering drawings, reports, and emergency procedures?

m. Are accurate maps and as built drawings readily available covering all agency properties, easements, rights-of-way, etc.?

n. Is information management training important at this public agency?

o. How does this agency improve the quality and timeliness of information available to employees to help them do their jobs efficiently and effectively?

p. Does the agency have a business plan for web page design, construction, and maintenance?

q. Does the agency use web-based technology to communicate with its customers and employees? (through internal and external home pages)

X. SUSTAINABILITY

A. Introduction

This chapter focuses on evaluating how the manager or team leader applies the principals of sustainability. As a management competency, managers are responsible to achieve community or organizational goals in a way that empowers people, promotes healthy ecosystems, and creates thriving and vibrant communities. Instead of viewing sustainability as being an abstract end goal, this chapter focuses on evaluating how agency managers are leading in a sustainable way.

The focus must be on creating a balanced future, taking into account the three things below:

- **Environmental Stewardship**. Supporting projects and programs that promote clean air, clean water, restore habitat and encourage healthy ecosystems.
- **Economic security.** Promoting the need for efficient long term focused solutions that stabilize rates to citizens and maximize use of limited financial resources.
- **Social well-being.** Encouraging meaningful citizen involvement and developing solutions/operations that meet the needs of people.

Fundamental questions are listed below in boldfaced type and optional ones in regular type.

B. Policies and Practices for Review

1. **Decision Making. How does the agency incorporate sustainable decision-making in the development of policies, programs, and projects?**

    a. Does it have a policy statement or clear mission, vision, and values that speak to the importance of sustainability?

    b. Does it have established and well understood sustainability principles for decision-making?

    c. Does it incorporate social, environmental, and economic aspects into solutions?

    d. Does it have a clear definition of sustainability?

    e. Does it stay knowledgeable of current sustainability practices in design and maintenance?

2. **Public Engagement. How does the agency effectively engage citizens in things that affect their lives?**

a. Does it get citizen input before decisions are made? If yes, how?

b. Does it use processes that encourage participation and are meaningful for citizens and are not just efficient for the agency?

c. Is it making efforts to build long-term relationships with citizens and stakeholders?

d. Does it communicate in an understandable way to its citizenry.?

3. **Employee Engagement. How does the agency engage employees in the delivery of progressive programs and services?**

   a. To what extent are employees encouraged to be innovative?

   b. Does the agency tolerate risk taking and reward it?

   c. Does the agency support failure and encourage learning?

   d. Does it have systems in place for after-action or "Lessons Learned" reviews when things go well and when they go bad?

4. **Performance Measures in Sustainability. How does the agency track performance and make meaningful performance improvements? Are they congruent with the performance measures of other departments within the agency? Some examples of performance measures may include, but are not limited to:**

   a. Does it track and manage energy consumption?

   b. Does it have a greenhouse gas reduction plan?

   c. Does it track waste and overall consumption and have plans to reduce waste and consumption?

   d. Does it have plans, programs and incentives for employees to reduce commute trips?

   e. Does it measure water consumption and water quality?

   f. Does it measure citizen satisfaction or ask citizens for feedback on how they are doing?

XI. REVIEW OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

A. Introduction

The benefit gained from a peer review of human resources policies and operations is dependent on the candor and cooperation of those interviewed. It is crucial, therefore, that the E/D discuss with staff the aims and importance of the peer review well in advance of the visit, listen to concerns, and reassure each potential interviewee that confidentiality will be maintained. Conversely, the reviewer must not appear critical or judgmental in posing questions and must convey a sympathetic and helpful demeanor during interviews.

The following questions concern personal and professional relationships. The reviewer should take into account the size of the agency, its responsibilities, scope of services offered, and range of clientele served.

Included in the following items to be reviewed are elements of dealing with any agency's most valuable asset – personnel. The retention and development of personnel (as well as compliance with laws) requires a certain amount of deliberate and structured effort. This effort can yield high dividends, and it is important that the practices be reviewed with this in mind.

The suggestions for the possible scope of review below are divided into fundamental questions in boldface type applicable to all agencies and additional inquiries in regular type for larger agencies that have a more structured form. It is also important to distinguish between those personnel policies that the E/D has control over, those it may influence, and those that lie beyond the influence of the agency office being reviewed.

B. Policies and Practices for Review

1. Recruiting and Orientation of Employees

   a. **Does the agency have a standard policy/practice for methods of recruiting new employees?**

      - Is the policy/practice written?
      - Has it been reviewed for compliance with all applicable regulations?
      - Does the policy strive to recruit potential candidates from the largest pool possible while being mindful of diversity and inclusion?
      - Do employees understand human resource policy and procedures? Are employees aware and do they have access to the policy and procedures? Are the policies and procedures posted on the agency's intranet site or HR bulletin board?

b. **Does the agency clearly advertise job openings to a wide pool of candidates? Does the hiring process support internal employee development, while ensuring adequate opportunities for all potentially qualified candidates?**

- Are openings announced to ALL employees? How is this done?

c. **Does the agency have an established practice for handling resumes, responding to unsolicited applications, and filing data from potential employees?**

- Does the agency have adequate procedures for reviewing resumes, interviewing, and negotiating with prospective employees?
- Are licenses, certifications, and degrees verified?
- Are references checked?
- Are recently hired employees asked for suggestions to improve the process?
- Are names replaced with numbers/letters prior to review by hiring personnel to avoid conscious and unconscious biases that may be initiated by an applicant's name (e.g. sex, race, nationality)?

d. **Does the agency have a clearly established written process in place for interviewing potential candidates?**

- Are interviews performed in a consistent manner, asking each candidate the same prescreened, HR approved, list of questions, and allowing for the same response time for each candidate to avoid conscious or unconscious bias during the interview process?
- Are HR representatives included in the interview process to ensure compliance with policy and regulations?
- Are the interview panel's members diverse and representative of the range of potential candidates?

e. **Do new employees get adequate orientation?**

- Are there written descriptions of benefits and a list of people to contact for assistance in different areas?
- Are job descriptions available for new employees?
- Are new employees given formal introductions to the agency's list of policies and procedures?
- Does the E/D also have responsibility for agency personnel policies and procedures? If not, where does this responsibility lie, and how are personnel issues coordinated?
- Are new employees oriented to the agency's facilities, such as a field trip?
- Are new employees given a copy of the company's Non-Discrimination/Anti-Harassment/Sexual Harassment Policies and

Complaint Procedures, and asked to sign a form confirming that they have read and understand the document?

2. Personnel Administration

   a. **Are there confidential files for individual personnel records, reflecting salary history, special accomplishments, licensure and certification, and similar information?**

      - Are personnel files current?
      - Are there standards for establishing and maintaining these files?
      - Is file access controlled and defined?
      - Are records of former employees properly handled?

   b. **Does the agency have an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) plan? Is it available to all employees in written form? Is it actually followed?**

      - Does the EEO plan consist of, as described by the U.S. Department of Justice, “a comprehensive document that analyzes a recipient's relevant labor market data, as well as the recipient's employment practices, to identify possible barriers to the participation of women and minorities in all levels of a recipient's workforce?”
      - Is its purpose to ensure opportunity for full and equal participation of men and women in the workplace, regardless of race, color, or national origin?

   c. **Are Diversity and Inclusion Plans required and if so, implemented?**

   d. **Are all accessibility requirements met for the facility?**

      - Have all employees with accessibility needs been consulted to ensure that the perspectives of the stakeholders are considered and all accommodations are met?

   e. **Are there established procedures for responding to inquiries about past employees?**

      - Does the agency need special provisions relating to personnel records, such as security clearances?
      - Are all such special requirements met?

   f. **Do individuals get adequate evaluation of their work?**

      - Is the employee's performance measured against stated job requirements?
      - Is the employee’s contribution as a team member considered?
      - Do all staff members receive a periodic performance interview?

- Can individuals get a written record of the interview discussion and conclusions/recommendations?
- Are performance evaluations a two-way discussion of appropriate topics?
- Do personal performance targets address agency (or office) goals and objectives for the performance period?
- Are employees given an opportunity to submit written accomplishments relative to performance goals?
- How is outstanding performance recognized or rewarded?
- Are employees given guidance on how to improve performance? How is marginal performance handled?
- Is there a procedure for employees to dispute a performance evaluation?

3. Teamwork

   a. Do people cooperate as a team, or do they each go their own way, with insufficient consideration for others and the team?

   b. Do both managers and those that they supervise have a common understanding of project goals and the steps necessary to complete a project?

   c. What contacts do employees have with their unit manager, division or department head, or discipline leader?

   d. Is the same person filling organizational positions at different hierarchical levels, such as having an individual cover multiple positions due staff or budget limitations?

   e. Are there numerous temporary appointments?

   f. Are temporary appointments held temporary too long?

   g. What elements of communication give staff members the greatest satisfaction, and what causes the greatest frustration?

4. Career Path Development

   a. Are there policies for the development of employees within the agency?

   - Are these policies available to and understood by potentially eligible employees?

   b. Is career development regularly discussed with employees?

   - Does the staff perceive the agency management as being committed to individual professional and career development of all staff members?

- What contacts do employees have with higher echelon management or with those who oversee employee career development programs?
- Do all supervisors perceive career development of their subordinates as part of their job?
- Do department organization, discipline, and individual goals and concerns receive appropriately balanced consideration?

c. Are efforts made to assign individuals to projects of various types, consistent with established career goals?

- Are projects fairly and equitably assigned to give all employees an opportunity for comparable development and growth?
- Are individuals ever assigned to projects "over their heads" without adequate technical assistance?
- Once assigned to a project, can an individual expect to participate until the end of the assigned portion?
- Are the past staff assignments and present workloads of individuals documented and available for review?
- Do employees feel that they get adequate direction and assistance from their project supervisors?
- Are individuals empowered to solve problems within their area of technical expertise?

d. Is the office staffed with individuals competent to lead persons with less experience to their career goals?

- Do the staff members have sufficient on-the-job experience within the entire project development cycle (planning, design, and construction) to allow them to convey this practical knowledge to younger engineers?
- Do supervisors assist employees to attain a high degree of achievement or do they attempt to control the employees?
- Are younger engineers encouraged to acquire field experience?
- Are there intern programs to let younger employees work with several experienced engineers or in several departments?
- Are supervisors rated based on their work to develop the professional competence of their team?

e. Is there satisfaction with career path progress among employees at all positions?

- To what level is career development encouraged?
- What is the personnel retention rate?
- Is advancement reasonably rapid?
- Are advancement opportunities fairly distributed?
- Are policies concerning promotion to responsible positions, understood, satisfactory, and followed?

f. **Does the agency provide training commensurate with career development?**

   - Technical training?
   - Managerial training?
   - Are training opportunities equitably available to all employees?

g. **Is participation in professional or technical organizations encouraged?**

   - Is financial support provided?
   - Is time for participation allowed?

5. Compensation and Benefits

a. **Are salaries reviewed on a regular basis?**

   - Does the agency maintain a structured salary schedule for positions?
   - Are there numerous exceptions to the schedule?
   - Does the agency seek current information on comparable salaries?
   - Are internal and external candidates informed about salary schedules?
   - Are salaries reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that comparably experienced employees receive comparable compensation? Is the data cleansed and available for employee review? Is there transparency in the process?
   - Does the agency's benefit package appear to be comparable to other similar agencies?
   - Are employees familiar with the benefit package?
   - Does the agency, or its personnel department, provide information on benefit packages, if requested?

b. **Are there parallel and equal compensation paths for technical and managerial paths?**

   - Are there limitations on the career potential of staff that pursue a technical vs. managerial path?
   - Are limitations periodically reviewed against private sector standards?

c. **What is the perception among employees concerning benefit administration?**

   - Is assistance available for making insurance claims or in connection with other benefits?

XII. REVIEW OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

A. Introduction

The review of an agency's accounting and financial control procedures by the peer review team focuses only on the management of available budgets or requirements, and not on the revenue sources and amounts.

In most public agencies, financial management and project information is computerized. Accurate and timely financial data is necessary for unit managers to know their performance relative to their annual appropriations. The proper reports on project costs can facilitate the preparation of new budget requests for the agency.

B. Policies and Practices for Review

The suggestions for possible scope of review below are divided into fundamental questions for all agencies and additional inquiries that apply to larger agencies that have a more structured form. The fundamental questions are listed first in boldface type, followed by optional topics in regular type.

1. Operating Budget Preparation

    a. **Is there a formal, established procedure for preparing and justifying budget requests?**

    - Who is involved in operating budget preparation?
    - Who reviews and approves the budget request?
    - Are original budget preparers involved in final reviews?
    - Is there a formally prescribed timeline for the entire process?

    b. Are managers furnished sufficient information to properly prepare a budget request?

    - Does the agency prepare budgets for each unit?
    - How are budgets prepared, reviewed, and approved?
    - Does the agency's accounting system report costs by department, activity, and project?
    - How are actual expenditures reconciled to budgets?

    c. Does the agency use program budgeting principles?

2. Overhead Rates and Audits

    a. Are overhead rates (i.e., costs of doing business) determined and used in financial management?

- Are rates studied for trends?
- Are these reports concise, complete, and easy to read?
- Are rates consistently computed at regular intervals?
- Are the rates compared to industry and other governmental statistics?
- Are rates compared to previous periods of the agency's history?
- Are there preplanned steps to take when ratios reach certain levels?

b. Is a detailed chart of overhead accounts used?

- Has an activity-based costing analysis been used to assign costs?

c. Are overhead accounts routinely budgeted and projected?

- Are there adequate written procedures to control overhead expenditures?
- Are overhead rates planned and controlled using industry and other governmental statistics?

3. Control and Accounting

a. Do procedures exist for identifying work completed and for capturing associated costs?

4. Management of Expenditures

a. Are expenditures budgeted in terms of fixed and discretionary items?

- Who has expenditure responsibility?

b. Are operating budgets monitored by using real time review?

- Are adequate actions taken if expenses exceed budgets?
- Are cost reports easy to use?
- Are cost reports reviewed by a manager or supervisor on a regularly sufficient basis?
- Are cost accounting policies and procedures written and available to all pertinent employees?

c. Is there a logical, timely, and easy way to follow an audit trail, providing for cross-checking and verification of all financial records?

5. Project Financial Control

a. Does the agency have a project control/job cost system?

- How is the project manager involved?
- Are unit managers well informed on the budgetary process?

- How are project team members involved?

b. Does the system reflect budgets as well as cost?

- How are budgets revised and by whom?
- Does it require a forecast-to-complete?
- Are forecasts-to-complete monitored for variations from budget?
- Are reports furnished to the managers in a timely enough manner so that they can evaluate progress relative to their estimates?

c. Are final job cost reports reviewed by senior management?

- Is commentary entered explaining extraordinary overruns and underruns for future benefit?

d. Are final job case reports reviewed by all project team members?

e. Is there a job cost history file for future use?

- Is there a budget/cost closeout for each project?

f. Does this agency keep an up-to-date inventory of its infrastructure and real property? Are any asset management systems being used?

g. How does the agency plan for funding long term operating and maintenance costs and infrastructure renewal investments?

h. Does this agency consider the life-cycle cost of a project as part of decision-making?

i. Does this agency make financial decisions based on long term financial planning? Are long-term utility and property tax rate projections considered when making investment and operational decisions?

XIII. REVIEW OF PUBLIC & INTERAGENCY RELATIONSHIPS

A. Introduction

An effective public relations program is necessary for all public agencies. The public has a right to have information that will allow them to evaluate and accept the work of public governmental agencies. Most of the projects involving public agencies require public support for funding, approval, and implementation.

Fundamental questions are listed below in boldfaced type and optional ones in regular type.

B. Policies and Practices for Review

1. Organization for Public Relations

   a. **Is it clear who has specific responsibilities for disseminating public information and who has authority for making public pronouncements?**

      - Is there a specific person who is responsible for planning and implementation of the agency's public relations activities?
      - Does that person effectively carry out those responsibilities?
      - Does the agency have an established procedure regarding the type and content of press releases allowable at the different managerial levels?

   b. **Does the agency have an established media communications training curriculum?**

      - Are technical people trained to make presentations before legislative and/or other bodies (i.e., public hearings, budget committees)?

2. Policies Concerning Definition of the agency's Practice

   a. **Is the agency's management actively involved in the agency's public relations?**

      - Does the agency have a written policy concerning the responsibilities of all management and other employees in a public relations program?
      - Does the agency encourage participation in civic activities and events?
      - Does the agency have a policy to volunteer its professional experience and expertise on code and building committees, licensing boards, etc.?
      - Does the agency have a specific policy to encourage preparation of technical papers, delivery of lectures, participation in engineering societies, and participation in awards competitions?

b. Does the agency maintain a file of photographs, project fact sheets, and other materials that can be incorporated into presentations on individual and agency involvement?

- Is it up-to-date?
- Is the filing system well-organized?
- Does the agency keep information on at least major projects in an organized file for easy retrieval?
- Is a summary of the agency's participation in professional society and civic activities available?

c. Does the agency participate in awards programs?

- Is a record of awards obtained kept and is it well organized for easy retrieval?
- Are awards publicized?

C. Relations with Other Agencies

Sometimes an agency is heavily influenced by the way in which it is administered by a larger governmental unit that acts as its controlling body. Likewise, its performance can depend to a large degree on the actions of other internal or external groups with which it must interact. Therefore, it is important for the peer review team to inquire about the relationship between the agency and other governmental units, especially for those activities within and under the control of the agency being reviewed.

1. Organizational Relationships

a. Is there an organizational chart showing the relationship of this agency to other agencies or units thereof?

- Is the chart clear? Does it define managerial, reporting, and coordinating responsibilities?
- Is the organizational chart historically stable or unstable?

b. Do interagency responsibilities correspond with actual authority granted by overall governmental head and with actual practice?

2. Cooperation with Legislative Bodies

a. Are responsibilities clear?

b. Does the agency provide training for legislative presentations?

c. Who handles presentations?

d. Are legislative presentations documented?

3. Cooperation Between This Agency and Other Agencies

   a. Does this agency carry out its responsibilities to other agencies? How is this monitored?

   - Do other agencies carry out their responsibilities to this agency?
   - Are relationships clear?

   b. Is there a detrimental competitive feeling between this agency and other agencies?

   - Are attempts made to identify and improve detrimental relations between other agencies?

D. Customer Relations

A public agency produces a constructed project or provides a service for a particular user. This user's satisfaction is paramount to the continued existence and growth of the agency. Therefore, a process must be in place which continually measures a customer's perception of the agency.

1. Organizational Relationships

   a. Is the user organization aware of the agency's policies related to quality performance?

   b. Does the user organization feel confident and comfortable that its needs will be addressed and resolved?

2. Public Relations Practices

   a. Does the agency periodically inform user organizations of its quality achievements?

   b. Is there adequate feedback provided by user organizations or service recipients, and is this incorporated into the agency's future dealings?

   c. Does the agency stress its desire to continually improve the quality of its system of production and services?

3. Are surveys performed of direct internal and external (citizens) customers after projects are completed?

APPENDIX A

CHECKLIST OF PEER REVIEW TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

The Administrator works with the E/D and Committee to identify the Team Leader and other review team members whose responsibilities are described below. The Team Leader is assisted from time to time by the Staff Administrator, who may perform some of the tasks on behalf of the Team Leader.

Responsibilities of the Team Leader are as follows:

Prior to Visit:

1. Contact the Engineer/Director to:

   a. review and confirm the E/D's goals for the peer review and any specific issues or topics that the E/D would like to focus on,
   b. discuss the interview process, including who will be interviewed, the interview schedule, and logistics of conducting the interviews,
   c. determine whether any of the items in the list of advance materials (Appendix C) are not applicable, and whether additional items that are not listed should be provided, and
   d. discuss whether the E/D would like to schedule an oral presentation of findings to other agency personnel after the post-review report to the E/D.

2. Submit a signed Statement of Nondisclosure.

3. At least two weeks prior to review, review advance material furnished by the agency for completeness and request additional information as deemed appropriate.

4. Communicate with other team members to confirm that they have received, signed, and returned the Statement of Nondisclosure (Appendix B2) and have received advance material from the agency (Appendix C). Guide the team in the careful study of the advance material. Ensure travel plans have been made to facilitate an evening meeting prior to the first day of a peer review visit and that departure plans allow ample time for an exit interview.

5. Develop preliminary interview assignments for review.

6. Request that the E/D designate a senior staff member to act as liaison to provide administrative assistance to the review team during the visit. Advise the E/D to have pertinent staff available on the day(s) of the review. Ensure that a conference room or office space will be available to facilitate confidential interviews with employees who do not work in private offices and that a space be provided for reviewers to use for confidential discussions concerning the review and their findings.

7. Schedule a team teleconference for the week before the site visit to allow final coordination and discussion of the team's preliminary review of advance documents and staff survey responses submitted by the agency.

At Start of Visit:

1. Meet with team members the night before the visit to discuss the review schedule and to assign responsibilities. Discuss materials submitted by the agency and identify potential areas to focus on during interviews. Instruct the review team concerning working papers, use of checklists, and documentation.

2. Conduct a brief overview of peer review principles and procedures with the team the day before interviews start, to supplement training of new reviewers and as a review for experienced reviewers.

During the Visit:

1. Lead discussion during the kickoff meeting with the E/D. During this meeting, the team should

    a. review objectives of the peer review program,
    b. discuss interview focus areas based on the E/D's goals and the team's review of advance materials,
    c. confirm the interview schedule and availability of interviewees scheduled,
    d. confirm the team's contact for administrative assistance during the site visit,
    e. request an overview of agency facilities, access requirements, interview logistics, and team workroom setup.

2. Periodically check the progress of team members to answer questions that may be raised and ensure adherence to the schedule. Reschedule activities as required.

3. Develop a list of items to be discussed during the closing conference with the E/D. Give special attention to items that indicate that corrective action or modification is desirable. Ensure the peer review objectives and requested areas of focus are addressed.

4. Develop, with other team members, an oral summary report. To provide a more structured and uniform appraisal of public agencies, it is recommended that the reviewers organize their oral report to the E/D like the written report outline in Appendix E. The evaluation should focus on strengths and opportunities found during the peer review. Key observations should normally be supported by information from more than one source, though the sources need not be divulged.

At Completion of Visit:

1. Hold conference with the E/D and communicate findings of review team.

2. Remind team members to submit their reimbursement requests to the Administrator and coordinate regarding preparation of the written report, if one has been requested.

Following the Visit:

1. Prepare the written report and submit it to the Administrator (preferably via e-mail).

2. Return or destroy all documents provided by the agency and all work papers and notes related to the peer review after the report of findings has been finalized and send confirmation to the Administrator that this has been completed.

3. Prepare itemized invoice of personal expenses. Each reviewer should submit their own to the Administrator for reimbursement.

4. Complete Appendix B5, "Peer Review Team Leader Post Review Feedback" and send to the Administrator.

Responsibilities of Team Members are as follows:

1. Participate in coordination teleconferences or phone conversations with the Team Leader.

2. Submit a signed Statement of Nondisclosure.

3. Review advance materials provided by the agency at least two weeks prior to the on-site interviews and request additional information as deemed appropriate.

4. Participate in on-site interviews.

5. Provide feedback and insight and assist in preparing the oral and written reports of findings.

6. Complete and submit to the Administrator an itemized list of personal expenses for reimbursement.

7. Return or destroy all documents provided by the agency and all work papers and notes related to the peer review after the report of findings has been finalized and send confirmation to the Administrator that this has been completed.

APPENDIX B

PEER REVIEW PROGRAM FORMS

ASCE PEER REVIEW PROGRAM FORM – B1

PUBLIC AGENCY PEER REVIEW REQUEST FORM

TO: Professional Practice Dept./ American Society of Civil Engineers
1801 Alexander Bell Drive
Reston, Virginia 20191-4400
Fax: 703-295-6132
professional@asce.org

We would like to have our agency reviewed at the following location(s):

____.

There are approximately ________people employed at this location.

Here is our agency's preferred schedule for the review. Those months we prefer are marked "P", those months marked with an "X" are unacceptable, and months left blank are acceptable, although not preferable.

Preference	Month	Year		Preference	Month	Year
	January				July	
	February				August	
	March				September	
	April				October	
	May				November	
	June				December	

Agency Name: ____

Address: ____

____

Telephone: ____

Engineer/Director

Name: ____

Signature: ____

Title & Date: ____

E-mail: ______________________________

ASCE PEER REVIEW PROGRAM FORM – B2

PEER REVIEWER STATEMENT OF NONDISCLOSURE

The undersigned recognizes that as part of the activities associated with the ASCE Peer Review of Public Agencies Program, he/she will have access to confidential information of

____

(Name of Agency to be reviewed)

The undersigned hereby agrees that he/she will neither copy nor disclose such information in whole or in part to anyone other than members of the review team and ASCE's Public Agency Peer Review Committee without the prior written consent of the above-named agency, and that documents related to the peer review, including advance materials, work papers, and notes, will be returned to the agency or destroyed.

By:

____

Signature of Reviewer

____

Name (Printed or Typed)

____

Date

Distribution: Copy to Engineer/Director
Copy to ASCE Peer Review Administrator
Copy to Peer Review Team Leader

ASCE PEER REVIEW PROGRAM FORM – B3

PUBLIC AGENCY PEER REVIEW ADVANCE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR AGENCY STAFF

To aid the effectiveness of the forthcoming peer view and its benefits to the agency, you are asked to complete this questionnaire and forward it directly without my review to the address (or fax number or email) at the end of the form. The reviewers will hold this questionnaire and any subsequent dialogue in strictest confidence. I ask you to be completely candid in all your answers. Thank you.

Agency:____________________ Agency Engineer/Director:____________________

For each of these aspects of the agency's operations, **please provide a rating you believe currently describes the status of each listed aspect of our organization. Also please give your impressions of the agency's strengths and opportunities for improvement, and any suggestions on how to bring about needed improvements.**

	Needs Attention		Neutral		Going Well
Organizational Structure	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

____

____

Project Management Systems					
• Project Management Processes	1	2	3	4	5
• Project Management Tools	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

____

____

Communication					
• Organization overall	1	2	3	4	5
• Your Division	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

____

____

Information					
• Technical Standards and Guidelines Availability	1	2	3	4	5
• General Information Sharing	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

____

____

<u>Emergency Management Procedures</u>	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

<u>Standard Operating Procedures</u>	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

<u>Computer Systems and Technology Tools</u>	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

<u>Employee Recruitment and Hiring Policies</u>	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

<u>Personnel Evaluation Procedures and Policies</u>	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

<u>Career Development Policies and Opportunities</u>	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

<u>Professional Skills Development Policies and Opportunities</u>	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

<u>Job-Related Training and Certifications</u>	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

<u>Compensation and Benefits</u>	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

<u>Employee Morale</u>	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

<u>Relations with Other Agencies</u>	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

<u>Relations with the Public</u>	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

<u>Other Areas (Please identify and comment on any not listed above.)</u>	1	2	3	4	5

In your opinion, what two specific actions would most improve the agency, or your division within the agency?

In your opinion, what two specific aspects of the agency or your division with the agency would you NOT change?

The following confidential information will not be released, and is requested only to provide context to your responses:

- Your Name: ____________________
- Your Division: ____________________
- Your Job Title: ____________________

<u>Please send the completed questionnaire to</u>

American Society of Civil Engineers
Professional & Educational Activities Department
Professional Practice Manager
1801 Alexander Bell Drive, Reston, VA 20191-4400
Fax: 877-442-7217 / E-mail: professional@asce.org

ASCE PEER REVIEW PROGRAM FORM – B4

SAMPLE ASCE PEER REVIEW SITE VISIT SCHEDULE TEMPLATE

Most interviews should be scheduled in 45 minutes intervals, allowing 30 minutes for staff interviews and 15 minutes to allow for overrun and transition. Interviews of people from oversight or partner agencies, senior agency staff, and certain other key people may be scheduled for a longer time – up to an hour each. Locations provided for all interviews should provide privacy to preserve the confidentiality of the conversations.

Some time blocks will be reserved for kickoff meeting, report development, and reporting. The team leader and Engineer/Director should coordinate in advance regarding the number of interviews to be conducted on the final day of the site visit and the time of the final report-out. A typical schedule for a 3-day review is shown below.

	Reviewer A	Reviewer B	Reviewer C
Interview Location:	Room ___________	Room __________	Room __________
Day 1			
8:30 am - 9:30 am	Review team meets with Director in Room _________________.		
9:30 am- 10:00 am	Prepare for interviews: Locate rooms, confirm interview schedule and any changes for the day, coordinate re. lunch order, brief break		
10:00 am - 10:45 am	1	2	3
10:45 am - 11:30 am	4	5	6
11:30 am - 12:15 pm	7	8	9
12:15 pm - 1:30 pm	Team lunch break in team work room.		
1:30 pm - 2:15 pm	10	11	12
2:15 pm - 3:00 pm	13	14	15
3:00 pm - 3:30 pm	Team break/meeting in team work room.		
3:30 pm - 4:15 pm	16	17	18
4:15 pm - 5:00 pm	19	20	21
6:00 pm	Team working dinner offsite		
Day 2			
8:00 am - 8:45 am	22	23	24
8:45 am - 9:30 am	25	26	27
9:30 am - 10:15 am	28	29	30
10:15 am - 10:45 am	Team break/meeting in team workroom.		
10:45 am - 11:30 am	31	32	33
11:30 am - 12:15 pm	34	35	36
12:15 pm - 1:30 pm	Team lunch break in team workroom.		
1:30 pm - 2:15 pm	37	38	39
2:15 pm - 3:00 pm	40	41	42
3:00 pm - 3:30 pm	Team break/meeting in team workroom.		
3:30 pm - 4:15 pm	43	44	45
4:15 pm - 5:00 pm	46	47	48
5:00	Team working dinner offsite		
Day 3			
8:00 am - 8:45 am	49	50	51
8:45 am - 9:30 am	52	53	54
9:30 am - noon	Team meeting to prepare oral report in team workroom.		
noon - 1:30 pm	Team lunch break - in workroom or off site.		
1:30 pm - 3:00 pm	Team meeting to prepare oral report in team workroom.		
3:00 pm - 4:00 pm	Team oral report to Director		

ASCE PEER REVIEW PROGRAM FORM – B5

PEER REVIEW TEAM LEADER POST REVIEW FEEDBACK

1. Were there new, unusual, or awkward situations in this review that you have not encountered on other reviews or had not been covered in reviewer training? _____No _____Yes. If so, how did you handle them and do you have advice for future teams that might encounter a similar situation? .

2. Did you discover or develop new techniques, methods, or questions that you can pass on to future reviewers? ____No ___Yes. If yes, please describe.

3. What other suggestions do you have for future reviewer training sessions?

4. ASCE looks to the peer review program for suggestions on subjects for future practice needs. Please describe in general terms (no names) what types of problems or opportunities for improvement you observed.

5. In the same vein as 4 above, describe things the agency does particularly well, i.e., techniques of practice that could benefit other agencies.

6. What did you learn from the review, i.e., did you also get something out of the process as a reviewer?

7. Would you like to do more reviews? ____No ____Yes

8. Please list anyone in the agency whom you recommend to be a peer reviewer in the future.

9. Would you be willing to contact the Engineer/Director of this agency in [6 months? 1 year?] to ask for feedback on whether there have been changes or benefits as a result of having had this review? ____No ____Yes

9. Comments on the review team or other aspects of the review not covered above:

____

Name of Agency Reviewed

____________________ ____________________

Team Leader Date

Thank you for your help. Please return to:

American Society of Civil Engineers
Professional & Educational Activities Department
Professional Practice Manager
Peer Review Program
1801 Alexander Bell Drive
Reston, VA 20191-4400
professional@asce.org
Fax: 877-442-7217

ASCE PEER REVIEW PROGRAM FORM – B6

POST REVIEW AGENCY FEEDBACK

(Confidential)

TO BE COMPLETED BY ENGINEER/DIRECTOR FOLLOWING A PEER REVIEW AND RETURNED TO:

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS
Professional & Educational Activities Department
Professional Practice Manager
Peer Review Program
1801 Alexander Bell Drive
Reston, VA 20191-4400
professional@asce.org
Fax: 877-442-7217

Engineer/Director: ___________________________

Agency: ___________________________________

Date: _____________________________________

1. The preparation of the necessary documents probably required a substantial commitment by you and your staff. Did you find the preparation of these documents of value to you? ____   To your agency? _____

2. Please give us any suggestions you have on how to make the advance document gathering and submission process better, or regarding elimination or addition of documents to the list of items to be provided.

3. Was the established schedule for the peer review followed reasonably well? ____Yes ____No   Let us know of any suggestions you have for improving a typical schedule.

4. Did the reviewers evaluate according to the criteria contained in the peer review manual? ____ If not, indicate any specific criteria not included.

5. Describe any additional criteria you would like to see added.

6. Did the reviewers include in their evaluation any additional criteria or focus areas that you requested? ____Yes ____No

7. Did the reviewers render a report that was well thought out, critical, to the point and helpful?_____ Please provide any suggestions you have regarding improvement of the oral report and/or written report.

8. How often do you think an agency should be reviewed? ____years

9. Would you like to be contacted in that number of years from now for a follow up peer review? ____Yes ____No

10. Was the time spent by the reviewers too long, too short, or just about right to provide an effective review?

11. List several significant items uncovered by the review team that you feel are of special importance to your agency. This information will be used only to provide direction to the ASCE Peer Review Committee for future training programs and areas of focus.

12. Do you feel the reviewers were competent and diplomatic?

13. Would you recommend these reviewers to others?

14. Any additional comments or suggestions?

15. Did you find the peer review beneficial to your agency?

16. May we quote any of your comments in future publicity?

17. Are you interested in becoming a peer reviewer and/or serving on the Public Agency Peer Review Committee?

18. Are there colleagues in other agencies that you recommend that ASCE contact regarding their interest in scheduling a peer review? (If yes, please provide their contact information.) May we mention that you suggested we contact them? ____Yes ____No

19. Would you be willing for others considering scheduling a peer review to talk directly with you about your experience with this peer review? ____Yes ____No

APPENDIX C

INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED TO PEER REVIEWERS IN ADVANCE OF VISIT

The following information is requested for peer review, as applicable for the agency, and will be forwarded to each member of the peer review team at least 30 days before the scheduled agency visit.

1. Mission, vision, goals, and objectives of the agency and any supporting items such as 5-year plans or strategies for achieving goals.
2. Description of agency hierarchy and relative position of the agency being reviewed within its overall governmental unit.
3. Organizational chart(s) listing names and positions of all personnel.
4. Resumes and description of duties (job descriptions) for managers and supervisors.
5. Description of agency's quality control and project management policies and procedures (e.g., contracting, review of contracts; checking, back-checking and correcting of designs, plans and shop drawings; proofreading of reports and correspondence, procedures for construction phase services, project flow charts, as applicable.)
6. Summary of licensure and/or educational requirements within organizational structure.
7. Introductory and/or training program for new personnel.
8. Statement of approximate per capita expenditures during past year for professional development and continuing education.
9. List of persons at or above supervisory level actively participating in professional organizations.
10. Index of technical standards and specifications used.
11. Index of Standard Operating Procedures and/or Operations & Maintenance Manuals.
12. Results of any recent employee or public satisfaction surveys.
13. Staff interview schedule.

All documents submitted will be returned to the agency or destroyed. Information submitted electronically will be deleted after the review.

It is understood that all agencies may not have certain information listed above in official written or electronic form. In such case, the agency should state concisely what the policies are understood to be and how that understanding was achieved, or why the documents are not needed. Lack of formal documentation in any of these areas should not be a deterrent to scheduling a peer review.

APPENDIX D

MESSAGE TO STAFF FROM ENGINEER/DIRECTOR

The Engineer/Director should develop a message to the staff, indicating that an ASCE Peer Review has been requested and describing the program, so that everyone understands what to expect. This message should be sent out by the Director to all staff in advance of the review. Points that should be covered include the following:

A. Employees should arrange their work schedules to be present during the review.

B. Employees should cooperate during the interviews and respond to reviewers' questions without regard to whether the response is favorable or unfavorable. Interviews will be considered confidential, with the reviewers transmitting to the Engineer/Director only a summary of interviews without designating the source.

C. The general topics of the review should be revealed to the staff.

D. The review will not analyze individual projects to ascertain the correctness of the engineering performed, nor will it attempt to examine the technical competence of any individual.

E. Practices and procedures of the agency that impact the development and maintenance of technical capability will be reviewed. Reviews will not address the technical competence of specific individuals.

F. A peer review should not be viewed as threatening. Comments will include a summary of both things that are working well and those that could be improved and are offered in a helpful way. We can judge whether the comments are applicable or not and plan to use them to improve our organization as a place to work and also the services that we provide to the public.

G. Below is an example of an email sent by the Director of an agency to all staff several weeks prior to the peer review:

> *As discussed in the last round of staff meetings, we will be conducting a Peer Review on [dates]. The Peer Review will be conducted by utility managers who are volunteering their time through the American Society of Civil Engineers. Over the course of [#] days they will conduct in-person interviews with some of our staff. The goal of the peer review is to help our agency identify opportunities, uncover weaknesses and focus on the future. The result will be a report outlining areas for improvement and areas where we are doing well.*
>
> *To aid in the effectiveness of the forthcoming peer view and its benefits to our agency, all staff are asked to complete the questionnaire at the link below. The reviewers will hold your responses to this questionnaire and any subsequent dialogue in strictest confidence. I ask you to be completely candid in all your answers. The goal is to identify areas where we can improve as well as areas where we are doing well. Please add comments as necessary to clarify your*

thoughts. This is your opportunity to give input into the future of this agency. Please submit the questionnaire by [date].

[Add survey link provided by Administrator here.]

Managers - Please ensure that every one of your staff is given the opportunity to fill out the questionnaire anonymously. The questionnaire does ask for a name at the bottom. If someone is uncomfortable with leaving their name, this can be left blank or staff can put their workgroup in the Name box and include their job title. The Peer Reviewers will keep their comments in strictest confidence.

APPENDIX E

TYPICAL REPORT OUTLINE

All peer review site visits conclude with an oral report by the review team to the E/D. If requested, a written summary report is provided approximately 6 weeks after the site visit. A typical written report outline is shown below, although individual reports may vary according to the findings of the review team. The oral report typically follows a similar format, but is more flexible since it is an interactive discussion with the E/D.

Areas of strength or to consider for improvement within the subject categories described in Chapters 6 through 13 are identified in the peer review reports. Direct solutions are not presented, although particularly during the oral report reviewers may offer observations of approaches they have utilized or encountered in similar agencies.

Typical Report Outline

General Introduction – A brief description of the initialization of the review and the purpose of an ASCE peer review.

The ASCE Peer Review Process – An outline of the components included in the review, such as materials reviewed, the work of the site visit, and reporting. Confidentiality of the review is confirmed.

Introduction to Findings – Any requested focus areas are noted, along with a reminder that progress and associated solutions will emerge from the organization, rather than be prescribed by the review team.

Agency Strengths – Reviewers make note of what is working well within the agency. Confirmation that a process is working as planned can be helpful to the E/D. Also, a benefit of serving as a volunteer peer reviewer is learning from others. The knowledge gained from each agency reviewed helps reviewers improve their own agencies and share best practices with others.

Opportunities for Improvement – Areas where the reviewers believe pursing solutions will lead to a stronger, better performing organization are identified. Organization of this section varies according to the findings of the team. Items may be suggested for near-term focus vs. long term; suggestions for initial focus or priority may be included; separate sections may be included for the E/D's requested focus areas; or items may be offered without characterization, allowing the E/D to determine priority based on his goals and available resources.

Influencers/Drivers for the Agency – Often the review team will note factors that are not entirely within the direct control of the agency, yet which could significantly influence the organization's performance. They may relate to events in the community or public perceptions. Oversight agencies, political environments, legislation, and outside funding sources are other examples of factors outside the direct control of the agency. They may be briefly addressed in the report if the team believes that the agency may have opportunities to benefit its staff or customers by evaluating those outside factors and finding ways to influence outcomes, mitigate impacts, or provide inputs.

Summary – Closing remarks often include thanks to groups or individuals who especially contributed to planning and preparation of the review or assistance during the site visit. A reminder of the limitations of the review, as a snapshot in time of the agency based on information provided to the review team, concludes the report.

Suggested resources – Often a list of suggested resources is attached to the report. The list may include resources thought to be of general interest to this agency as well as others more directly related to areas identified as opportunities for improvement. Many may be resources available from ASCE, but others may be available from other organizations or governmental entities.

APPENDIX F

TYPICAL GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS OF AGENCY PERSONNEL

The following questions are offered as suggestions for interviews with personnel of the agency being reviewed. All topics need not be covered in every interview.

Tips for successful interviews:

- Consider starting off with ice-breaker questions, such as how long have you worked here?
- Note that the review team is not there to directly address salary and benefit issues.
- Mention that the E/D will receive a report, but stress confidentiality of individual comments and information provided.
- Questions may be modified for individual employees depending on his or her role in the organization or based on responses from prior interviews.
- Questions may be modified based on themes that appear to be emerging during the course of the review. Information not corroborated from multiple sources will not be included in the final report.

---

1. Do you know why we are here?
2. Do you understand the confidentiality provisions?
3. What is the staff member's educational and experience background?
4. How does the employee perceive his or her job? Does it correspond with the job description? Are responsibilities clear? Is there confusing overlap of duties with others?
5. How good are communications among staff members and their supervisors, other members on the staff and management? How does communication occur? Is the staff kept informed about what it needs or wants to know?
6. How does the office really operate? Do people cooperate as a team, or do they go their own way without consideration for others? Are the right people doing the right things to produce the best service for the agency's public/users?
7. What gives the staff member the greatest satisfaction? What causes the most frustration?
8. What does the staff member think about the agency and his/her unit? What are its strengths? What are its areas of opportunity to improve?
9. What contacts does the staff member have with senior managers?

10. What are the individual's career objectives?

11. Does the staff member feel that he or she is improving skills at a reasonable pace? Are the training, guidance and counseling which he or she feels is needed being furnished? Is the staff member getting the experience and opportunities that he or she needs or wants?

12. Does the staff member feel that the agency supports and values his or her professional development? Are there opportunities to prepare for and attain professional registration or certification?

12. How does the staff member view the morale of the agency? How would or could you make it better?

13. What is needed to improve the agency as a place of employment? What is needed to improve the work that the agency produces?

14. Final question may be “have I not asked you a question that you wanted me to ask?”

APPENDIX G

MESSAGE TO THE AGENCY CONCERNING THE PEER REVIEW FINAL REPORT

The final report of a peer review is a composite result of intensive interview activities and analysis of documented procedures. There will be much to cover. Before discussing the findings, however, the peer review team and the Engineer/Director should pause to reflect on what the report does and does not represent. A summary of key points to remember is included here so that a detailed review of these points will not be needed during the time allotted for the discussion of the team's findings with the E/D at the end of the site visit. The officials of the agency reviewed are asked to remind themselves of these points as they hear and interpret the report.

The key points to remember:

1. A peer review is voluntary. The documents we reviewed may or may not be representative of your agency's practice. Likewise, certain individuals that we have talked with, whether they were suggested by you or chosen at random by us, may not be truly representative of your agency. Nevertheless, we have based our efforts on the information we have been provided and used our collective experience in evaluating it.

2. A peer review is confidential. You have had the opportunity to withhold from us any information that you may perceive to be overly sensitive. Likewise, we will maintain confidentiality. We shall also maintain confidentiality with respect to the sources of various observations that we will report to you. We have told your employees that we will treat their comments in a confidential manner, and we ask that you please not try to probe beyond what we wish to report concerning the source of a comment or suggestion. If requested by you, we will shortly forward to you a brief written report summarizing your organization's strengths and opportunities.

3. A peer review evaluates practices and procedures. We believe that a healthy agency must have definite policies in the eight areas of practice that the program identifies. We have tried to cover all eight of those areas adequately, but we may have concentrated on some more than others. In our review of your projects, we have not looked at the technical aspects. Where we have reviewed calculations, we have looked for a sense of orderliness in the designer's approach. We have not reviewed any calculations for their correctness; or attempted to confirm that the results of the calculations are reflected in the contract drawings or in the reports. Similarly, we have reviewed your documents only from the standpoint of apparent conformance with your policies as to work planning, production, and adherence to your quality control/quality assurance policies.

4. The ASCE peer review should not be used as a basis or justification for any disciplinary action or dismissal of employees. If any areas of concern are identified during the peer review process, it would be appropriate for the E/D to follow up with a separate investigation and verification of any issues and to determine whether actions are warranted.

5. A peer review is based on standards of practice. We have attempted to examine how well your agency is working, based on the policies you have established. We have provided peer reviewers experienced in public agency engineering management, but we have not attempted to evaluate your agency against a national or regional standard; in fact, there may be none for comparison. If we reference other agencies, other policies, or results of surveys, such references are only for your general information.

6. A peer review is limited to a few days. Therefore, we might not have been able to delve as deeply into many of the areas as we would have liked.

7. A peer review is low risk. This exercise was undertaken in an effort to serve you. Our comments are not intended to be critical but are offered in a helpful way in response to your request and you can use them as you wish.

APPENDIX H

REQUEST FOR ASCE REIMBURSEMENT OF PEER REVIEWER EXPENSES

ASCE uses an electronic system called eReimburse for travel reimbursement request submissions and processing of reimbursement payments. You will receive an email when the peer review event is set up in the system, asking you to accept the travel invitation. After the review is complete, you will receive a second email from the eReimburse system that includes a link to the form that you must fill out and attach receipts to request reimbursement. **Do not book any travel or accommodations until you receive authorization from the ASCE Administrator via a travel memo with hotel and transportation details.**

Actual expenses, not per diem reimbursement:

You will notice that you are authorized for “0” nights hotel stay. This is because a number of nights authorized is only used for those who will receive a per diem instead of being reimbursed for actual expenses. Your hotel expense should be entered as an “other” expense along with all of your other expenses except mileage or airfare, which have their own expense categories you should choose.

Regulations for reimbursement of expenses for official travel conducting Peer Reviews of Public Agencies have been established by the Board of Direction. To be eligible for reimbursement of travel expenses in whole or in part, authorization must be obtained in advance of the Peer Review according to established rules. All requests for reimbursement shall be made on the ASCE eReimburse system and accompanied by ticket stubs and receipts.

Transportation

The cost of transportation will be reimbursed in the actual amount expended for air, boat, or train travel, but not in excess of one-class or coach air fare for the most direct route. Travel must be booked at least two weeks in advance, unless approved by the ASCE Administrator, and only in the event of a delay in the agency executing the agreement for the Peer Review.

Mileage will be reimbursed for use of personal vehicles during the review at the federal travel rate established by IRS. If a rental car is authorized, all expenses associated with the rental and purchase of gas for the car will be reimbursed.

Expenses for Food and Lodging

Expenses for food and lodging incurred during the conduct of authorized Peer Reviews will be reimbursed on the basis of actual expense.

Miscellaneous Expenses

Reimbursement will be made for actual expenses for reasonable and customary expenses during the conduct of the Peer Review.

Inform the ASCE Administrator if the reviewed agency pays for review team expenses during the site visit, such as for meals. The review team will not be reimburse for expenses paid for by the agency, but the agency's fee invoice will be reduced by that amount.

Conditions

When all or part of a travel expense is covered from another source, such as by the employer of a reviewer, the request to ASCE will signify either that no reimbursement is requested, or that only part as stipulated is requested. All requests for reimbursement of travel expenses incurred in conducting a Peer Review must be submitted to the ASCE eReimburse system no later than 30 days after the Peer Review.