

Minutes
EVALUATION SUBCOMMITTEE
Legislative Audit Commission
May 6, 2021

Members Present:

Senator Mary Kiffmeyer
Senator Matt D. Klein
Senator Mark W. Koran
Representative Sondra Erickson
Representative Rick Hansen
Representative Tina Liebling

Senator Mary Kiffmeyer, Chair, called the Legislative Audit Commission (LAC) Evaluation Subcommittee to order at 8:01 a.m. Chair Kiffmeyer introduced Judy Randall, Deputy Legislative Auditor for the Office of the Legislative Auditor's (OLA's) Program Evaluation Division.

Ms. Randall said the meeting's agenda was to narrow the list of topics that had been submitted to OLA to 15 topics for further consideration. Program Evaluation staff will conduct preliminary research and develop background papers on the 15 topics selected. The Evaluation Subcommittee will then meet again during the week of May 17 to review the background papers and narrow the list from 15 topics to 10 topics. This will be followed by a survey of all legislators to determine their interest on those ten topics. The Evaluation Subcommittee will then meet one more time to reduce those ten topics to the final five topics, after which, the full Legislative Audit Commission will meet to approve those topics. James Nobles, Legislative Auditor, was then introduced, and thanked the Evaluation Subcommittee for their time and work on the selection process.

Chair Kiffmeyer asked Ms. Randall if there were any other items she would like to share with the subcommittee. Ms. Randall reviewed the six criteria LAC members typically consider when selecting program evaluation topics. Ms. Randall said that OLA was still in the process of finishing three reports and that the COVID-19 pandemic had changed the way OLA conducts some of its work. She added that it had been more difficult to reach agency staff and stakeholders, making the process to meet or get data more lengthy, and that these factors (among others) had slowed OLA's timeliness with this year's evaluations. Because OLA is still finishing evaluation reports, Ms. Randall asked the subcommittee members to consider looking at narrowly scoped topics that will still add value. Ms. Randall said that there were 88 topics suggested for OLA to evaluate this year, and that the task before the subcommittee was to narrow the list down to 15 topics.

Chair Kiffmeyer then told members that she proposed doing a "round robin" process for members to provide their suggestions.

Representative Hansen asked Ms. Randall if topics that might be more financially focused would be easier for OLA staff to access data, versus topics that may require more stakeholder input. Ms. Randall responded "possibly," but added that data are not always clean or easily understandable. She said that for topics requiring more qualitative work, OLA could use a sample or case study approach, which could allow OLA to generate information based on a smaller sample. Ultimately, she suggested that members consider topics with narrow questions.

Representative Liebling asked Chair Kiffmeyer for clarification on the "round robin" process. Further discussion took place as selections began and each subcommittee member gave the Chair one selection. This process was repeated three more times, resulting in a total of 22 topics picked. From the 22 topics,

each member then selected 2 topics, resulting in a list of 12 topics from the six members. Subcommittee members selected an additional 3 topics by consensus, to bring the total to 15 topics selected.

Chair Kiffmeyer asked Mr. Nobles if the topics that had been selected were scopeable, or if any of the topics were going to be difficult to scope. Mr. Nobles said that at the next meeting, a robust discussion would occur regarding the scope of the topics. Ms. Randall said she thought the subcommittee had done a good job of selecting topics that met the selection criteria; should be doable and valuable; and she thought, were scopeable.

Representative Hansen excused himself as he needed to chair a different committee.

Chair Kiffmeyer then read aloud and confirmed the selections that the subcommittee members had made. The final topics selected for further consideration were as follows:

1. Commerce Department's Real Estate and Insurance Enforcement Divisions
2. DHS Programs for Direct Care and Treatment
3. Discharges from Minnesota Security Hospital in St. Peter
4. Election Software
5. Emergency Medical Services Regulatory Board (EMSRB)
6. Energy Grid
7. Medical Emergency Ambulance Services
8. Minnesota Housing Finance Agency
9. MPCA Petroleum Remediation Program
10. Problem Gambling
11. School Nursing Services
12. The Achievement Gap
13. Trunk Highway Fund
14. Unemployment Insurance Fraud
15. Use of Force by State Patrol and DNR Conservation Officers

Senator Klein moved to authorize the list of 15 topics for OLA staff to research and draft background papers. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Kiffmeyer adjourned the meeting at 9:01 a.m.

Senator Mary Kiffmeyer, Chair
Evaluation Subcommittee

Maureen Garrahy, Recording Secretary