

A MODEL MECHANISM TO
EVALUATE THE PERFORMANCE & OBJECTIVES OF
LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSIONS, COMMITTEES
& TASK FORCES

Citizens Economy & Efficiency Commission
of Los Angeles County

March 1994

CITIZENS' ECONOMY AND EFFICIENCY COMMISSION



OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY

March 7, 1994

Honorable Board of Supervisors
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: A model mechanism to evaluate performances and objectives of
Commissions, Committees and Task Forces

Dear Supervisors,

On December 21, 1993 your Board directed the Economy and Efficiency Commission to develop a model mechanism to evaluate the performance and objectives of the Commissions, Committees and Task Forces defined under Chapter 1 and Chapter 4 of the Los Angeles County Committee Book.

The attached report presents the requested methodology. The evaluation form used in this methodology has been coordinated with the Audit Committee and has received their concurrence. In addition to the requested methodology, the Economy and Efficiency Commission has made ten recommendations on issues that this Commission feels will significantly improve the manner in which Commissions, Committees and Task Forces are created, structured and operate.

IT IS THEREFORE RESPECTFULLY REQUESTED THAT YOUR HONORABLE BOARD:

Adopt both the attached model for evaluating Commissions, Committees and Task Forces and the additional recommendations concerning the Commission structure within Los Angeles County.

Very truly yours,

Gunther W. Buerk
Chair

Attachment

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Each Commission Member

o:eval.bdl

Chair

Gunther W. Buerk

Vice-Chair

Betty Trotter

Commissioners

Fred P. Balderrama

Richards D. Barger

Judith Brennan

Jack Drown

David W. Farrar

John A. FitzRandolph

Louise Frankel

Dr. Alfred J. Freitag

Jonathan S. Fuhrman

John Grande

Chun Y. Lee

Carole Ojeda-

Kimbrough

Roman Padilla

Robert H. Philibosian

Daniel M. Shapiro

Randolph B. Stockwell

Julia E. Sylva

Executive Director

Bruce J. Staniforth

REPORT ON A MODEL MECHANISM TO EVALUATE THE PERFORMANCE AND OBJECTIVES OF COMMISSIONS, COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES

INTRODUCTION

On December 21, 1993, the Board of Supervisors requested that the Economy and Efficiency Commission develop a model mechanism to evaluate the performance and objectives of identified Commissions, Committees and Task Forces. It is the intent of the Board that the Audit Committee use this model in their evaluation of these organizations.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The focus of this report was placed upon developing the evaluation model requested by the Board. The format for accomplishing this direction is presented in Appendix A. It provides the means for an organization to conduct a self-evaluation. It also allows the Audit Committee to effectively review the critical elements of their operations. In addition to the evaluation methodology, the Commission presents ten recommendations that it feels will improve the total Commission, Committee and Task Force structure within Los Angeles County. Each of these recommendations is presented below:

1. Direct the Executive Officer/Office of Commission Services to develop a program to periodically brief all newly appointed commissioners on the County's structure, programs, legal responsibilities, budget, operations, commission system, and other relevant information (See E&E 1987 report).
2. Direct the Audit Committee to conduct an initial review of the Commission, Committee and Task Force structure within Los Angeles County to establish how well it is operating. Comparing and contrasting the organizations within this structure may be simplified by categorizing them into functional areas.
3. Direct the Audit Committee to review the mission statements of each Commission, Committee, and Task Force to ensure that it is clearly defined and reflects the objectives established for it by the Board.
4. Direct the Audit Committee to ensure that the organization's mission is consistent with those established for other Commissions, Committees and Task Forces.
5. Direct the Executive Officer of the Board to ensure that when nonmandatory Commissions, Committees, and Task Forces are created, that a termination date is included as a part of that action. (See 1986-87 Grand Jury Report)

6. Direct that Commissions, Committees and Task Forces not be permitted to extend "sunset" reviews, unless under extreme circumstances. In no case would such an extension be longer than six months from the original "sunset" review date.
7. When establishing task forces the assignments of time-targeted studies should be made to existing commissions and committees. (See 1986-87 Grand Jury Report)
8. Eliminate Commissions, Committees or Task Forces that have either been superseded by later Board actions or found to no longer have a viable mission. (See 1986-87 Grand Jury Report)
9. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to include in the budget the total costs, both direct and indirect, for Commissions, Committees and Task Forces. (See 1986-87 Grand Jury Report)
10. Direct the Audit Committee, during its evaluation to attend, unannounced, a meeting of each Commission, Committee and Task Force to be evaluated.

APPROACH

The Commission feels that the most effective model would be one that is simple, and yet comprehensive, in both its design and use. While accomplishing these objectives, the model should provide both the preparer and the reviewer with the capability to:

- a. Evaluate the relevancy of the organization within the current county environment,
- b. Evaluate the costs and accomplishments of the organization's efforts,
- c. Identify the results of the organization's accomplishments, and
- d. Present a plan for the achievement of future objectives.

Ease of use was a criterion used in the development of the evaluation format. It is necessary to consider this to assist Commissions, Committees, or Task Forces in the conduct of their self-evaluation, and the Audit Committee, in their review. The Commission feels it is important that the organization being reviewed be actively involved in the process. An approach with this design objective will ensure that the evaluated organization has the opportunity to present what it believes to be an accurate picture of its activities.

The model has been developed to measure the effectiveness (e.g., relevancy) and efficiency (e.g., how well it accomplishes its objectives) of an organization. An objective of this process is to significantly improve communications between the Commissions, Committees and Task Forces and the Board by establishing the means to:

- a. Establish a more effective and structured procedure through which the Commissions, Committees and Task Forces can express their accomplishments and/or concerns to the Board, and
- b. Develop a practical capability for the Board to establish additional and timely direction to its Commissions, Committees and Task Forces.

The critical elements for Audit Committee review are those that focus primarily on the organization's output (e.g., the products of a commission) and the outcome (e.g., the actions taken by the County as a direct result of a commission's products). Defining these elements is essential in determining the merit of an organization. It is also a major criterion used in establishing a valid cost/benefit relationship.

During the development of this evaluation model, the Commission had the opportunity to review past studies and recommendations on this topic. These included the 1989 report issued by the Economy and Efficiency Commission entitled, *Family Services in Los Angeles County Government*. It also included comments and recommendations presented in the *1986-87 Final Report of the Los Angeles County Grand Jury*. The Commission felt that some issues raised by these studies, although beyond the scope of the December 22, 1993 Board direction, merited restatement. This presentation has also made additional recommendations, as deemed appropriate, to further help the Board in the management of the Commission system. By including these recommendations the Commission hoped to broaden the scope of this issue for the Board. Considering this broader scope would enable the Board to have a more meaningful impact on the administration and operation of the Commission, Committee and Task Force structure within Los Angeles County.

BACKGROUND

The Economy and Efficiency Commission feels strongly that the Board should capitalize upon the ability of county government to seek citizen participation in its governance. Effective citizen participation can best be accomplished by ensuring that:

- a. Organizations do not work at cross-purposes,
- b. Organizations have a clear understanding of their purpose and goals, and
- c. Organizations should continue until their purpose has been achieved or until it is decided that the purpose is no longer feasible.

The Board of Supervisors can make the Commission structure more efficient and effective by revising the system it uses to create them. It would also be strengthened by assuring that commissioners understand the parameters within which they are expected to undertake their duties. Providing

information to commissioners upon their appointment concerning their roles and functions would be valuable in improving the effectiveness of the total commission structure.

It is recommended that the Board:

1. Direct the Executive Officer/Office of Commission Services develop a program to periodically brief all newly appointed commissioners on the County's structure, programs, legal responsibilities, budget, operations, commission system, and other relevant information (See E&E 1987 report)

MODEL

Following paragraphs present the individual sections of the evaluation format found in Attachment A. Each section includes the proposed objective(s) it seeks to accomplish.

Section 1. MISSION.

This section ensures that the Commission, Committee or Task Force being reviewed has a clearly defined, and Board ratified, mission statement. Attention must be given to the creation of the mission statement that reflects the unique nature of the organization's responsibilities. It should also establish whether the organization is being created for a limited time to fulfill a specified function or whether it has been created to assume ongoing responsibilities. Developing a clear and easily understood mission statement will define the Board's expectations. It establishes the organization's contract and, by definition, the criteria against which it will be evaluated. Having clear evaluation criteria will simplify the review process to be undertaken by the Audit Committee. These criteria will also affirm that the Audit Committee is recognized, by all of those involved, as being fair and objective.

It is within the context of the mission that the Commission, Committee or Task Force can undertake an in-depth self-evaluation of its function and operations. This evaluation then provides a basis for the Audit Committee review. The review should validate the continued relevancy of the assigned mission and the appropriateness of the organization within the total commission structure.

Both elements of the evaluation process would consider the following; the historical perspective within which the organization was established, the identification of changes in the mission statement, a consideration of the total commission or committee structure in order to eliminate overlapping responsibilities, and a justification for the continued existence of the organization. For example, the 1986-87 Grand Jury Report contended that overlapping responsibilities existed between the Commission on Historical Landmarks and Records and the Task Force to Preserve Historical Records.

The use of this section will ensure:

- a. An agreement between the organization and the Board on responsibilities,

- b. A basis for evaluating the continued relevancy of both the organization and its mission,
- c. A basis for identifying overlapping or inconsistent responsibilities, and
- d. An improved public appreciation for the efforts of the organization and the County.

It is recommended that the Board:

- 2. Direct the Audit Committee to conduct an initial review of the Commission, Committee and Task Force structure within Los Angeles County to establish how well it is operating. Comparing and contrasting the organizations within this structure may be simplified by categorizing them into functional areas.
- 3. Direct the Audit Committee to review the mission statements of each Commission, Committee, and Task Force to ensure that it is clearly defined and reflects the objectives established for it by the Board.
- 4. Direct the Audit Committee to ensure that the organization's mission is consistent with those established for other Commissions, Committees and Task Forces.
- 5. Direct the Executive Officer of the Board to ensure that when nonmandatory Commissions, Committees, and Task Forces are created that a termination date is included as a part of that action. (See 1986-87 Grand Jury Report)
- 6. Direct that Commissions, Committees and Task Forces not be permitted to extend "sunset" reviews, unless under extreme circumstances. In no case would such an extension be longer than six months from the original "sunset" review date.
- 7. When establishing task forces the assignments of time-targeted studies should be made to existing commissions and committees. (See 1986-87 Grand Jury Report)
- 8. Eliminate Commissions, Committees or Task Forces that have either been superseded by later Board actions or found to no longer have a viable mission. (See the 1986-87 Grand Jury Report)

Section 2. UTILIZATION OF RESOURCES.

Costs of resources used by the organization over the preceding evaluation period are identified in this section. Those to be considered would be direct costs, both budgeted and expended in the organization's operations. This encompasses areas of personnel, services and supplies, travel and a category for other. It would also include those indirect costs associated with the operation such as indirect personnel, overhead and/or other. In instances where no budget has been developed for a Commission, Committee or Task Force, direct and/or indirect costs would have to be developed to

account for its operation. Failure to identify these costs would make it difficult to arrive at a decision as to whether the resulting benefits are being achieved in the most effective manner possible. To further help in the development of this analysis and an understanding of the information being provided, the organization may include its top three expenditures. It is also possible that the analysis include expenditures by budget category as a percentage of total expenditures.

Beyond costs and under the category of Other Resources Used, the organization can identify those additional items necessary to accomplish their assigned mission. These include administrative requirements, the need for information, help from other people or organizations, access to decision makers, requisite authority, etc.

It is recommended that the Board:

9. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to include in the budget the total costs, both direct and indirect, for Commissions, Committees and Task Forces. (See 1986-87 Grand Jury Report)

Section 3. ACCOMPLISHMENTS (PRODUCTS) AND COMPLIANCE.

Since Commissions, Committees and Task Forces serve as advisory bodies, their accomplishments (product), will, for the most part, be recommendations for action. These recommendations are usually developed in a study or review of a situation. An evaluation of this product will identify what the County receives for its expenditures identified in section 2. The organization being evaluated will identify and substantiate its accomplishment or product. The Audit Committee, in turn, will evaluate the quality and appropriateness of the accomplishment or product.

Beyond tangible products, there are other requirements that must be understood and recognized in the evaluation. These include, compliance with administrative requirements, established frequency of meetings, resolving excessive absenteeism of members, compliance with duties of the office, etc. The product of a Commission's efforts may also be the identification of a problem or the initiation of a discussion by the appropriate individuals or agencies. Consideration of these outputs may be made by the Audit Committee during their evaluation.

Section 4. OUTCOMES AND RESULTS.

Perhaps the most critical section in the evaluation model addresses the question, "What has happened as a result of the study submitted or of the recommendations made?". Modern management theory and common sense recognize that a recommendation has little or no value unless someone takes action upon it, or seeks its application; i.e., the submission of a report does not affect a problem without action being taken. This section evaluates the effectiveness of a Commission, Committee or Task Force on that basis. It is also the most subjective element of the evaluation and a most difficult measurement to make. Although it is difficult, without this evaluation an organization could claim success without having made any difference. Without it, an organization could develop a temporary or "walkaway" attitude, or could develop a false sense of having accomplished something. This

section also considers the organization's effectiveness at generating broad agreement from within County management and bureaucracy. Any organization must recognize that to be effective it must be prepared to advocate its recommendations before decision makers.

Section 5. OBJECTIVES.

This section allows the organization to form and express its objectives for the upcoming evaluation period. It also enables the organization to identify policies, practices, systems and/or procedures where significant improvements need to be made with plans on how to achieve this improvement. With this information the organization can upgrade the quality of its administration, product or associated services.

EVALUATION PROCESS

The Audit Committee, in the conduct of its evaluation, should take the time to attend a Commission, Committee or Task Force meeting. Randomly attending a meeting, unannounced, will provide an excellent opportunity to evaluate both the objective (e.g., attendance, procedures, etc.) and subjective elements (e.g., understanding of issues by commissioners, how the organization addresses the issues, the effectiveness of the organization's approach, etc.) of the organization.

It is recommended that the Board:

10. Direct the Audit Committee, during its evaluation to attend, unannounced, a meeting of each Commission, Committee and Task Force to be evaluated.

CONCLUSION

The Economy and Efficiency Commission has presented in this report a model for use in the evaluation of Commissions, Committees and Task Forces. It has also presented ten recommendations on how to improve the commission structure within the county. In adopting this format and the recommendations made in this report, the Board will be able to more fully capitalize upon the strength of having citizen participation in local government decision making.

COMMISSIONS, COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES EVALUATION

Economy and Efficiency Commission

Point of Contact: Bruce J. Staniforth, Executive Director, Ext 41491

MISSION: The Mission of the Economy and Efficiency Commission is to examine any function of County government at the request of the Board of Supervisors, on its own initiative, or as suggested by others and adopted; and to submit recommendations to the Board directed toward improving local government economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Economy & Efficiency Commission Evaluation

January, 1994

Audit Committee Review

March, 1994

Section 1.	How does this mission remain relevant in the current County environment?

Section 2.	Identify the Commission use of resources over the past year.	
DIRECT	BUDGETED	ACTUAL
Personnel	\$	\$
Services and Supplies		
Travel		
Other		
Total Direct	\$	\$
INDIRECT		
Personnel		
Overhead		
Other		
Total Indirect	\$	\$
TOTAL COSTS	\$	\$
OTHER CONCERNS:		

Economy & Efficiency Commission Evaluation
January, 1994

Audit Committee Review
March, 1994

Section 3.	Identify the Commission's accomplishments (products) over the past year.
Section 4.	Identify the outcome (results) of the Commission's accomplishments over the past year.
Section 5.	What are the Commission's objectives for the upcoming year?