NLPES News

National Legislative Program Evaluation Society
Website: www.ncsl.org/programs/nlpes/

March 2007
Limited distribution; Route as necessary

Chair's Corner

Ken Levine (Texas)

My mom and grandmother used guilt trips all the time. I can still remember my grandmother telling us to eat everything on our plates because children in Europe were starving. I've been overweight ever since and massive starvation hasn't been a problem in Europe for some time. However, I guess it's in my blood to use a bit of a guilt trip now and again.

I see our profession in a similar way to law, accounting, engineering and other practices. For some of you, continuing education is required. For many, continuing education comes when you or your agency gets a chance to fit it in. If we are to excel at our jobs, we must stay sharp. That is what NLPES is all about--sharing skills and ideas. But like those other professions, it takes participation to make it work. The material below sets out three primary ways to participate.

Spread our knowledge face-to face

While we are not the American Bar Association, we are in a position to help each other learn and prosper. Take the fall training conference. The host state, panel presenters, and moderators volunteer their time to make the conference work. A conference that works provides opportunities for you to expand your knowledge base. Opportunities include learning new techniques, discovering common problems and solutions, improving skills, and other tools. However, every year we struggle to find people to share their experiences and knowledge with others. We need NLPES folks beyond the usual suspects (like me and the Executive Committee) to come up with ideas and volunteer for sessions that will have high value to our colleagues. Just call or email your ideas to me or Jan Yamane, the chair of the Fall Training Conference Subcommittee. The contact information is on the NLPES website.

But stop! This is where everyone just moves on and doesn't *really* consider volunteering themselves or their ideas. Okay, now apply a little guilt, and please *do* give it a second thought.

Spread our knowledge through the written word

The same logic is true for our NLPES newsletter. Our recent QoTM shows that people are generally satisfied with the newsletter. The newsletter is a great way to communicate ideas to colleagues that does not consume great amounts of time for the writer and certainly for the reader. While we don't have the capability at this time to publish a journal, we can publish a journal light. Again, success takes your participation. As you can see from this issue, we have returned to a full multi-article newsletter. To keep the newsletter as an effective learning tool, we need participation. I'm sure many of you dreamed of writing a professional journal article about an element of your profession. Well, maybe some of you have this dream. The newsletter gives you a chance to write, and to write about a topic that does not follow the standard audit report format. Think, my friends, and you will be rewarded with a fluid pen and much personal satisfaction.

Spread our knowledge through technology

Webcasts. Podcasts. Electronic discussion forums. Wikis. And the list goes on. If you or your office has

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used the above tools for training, particularly from the production end, we need you. As I type, we are developing a series of podcasts that should be introduced this spring. We are slowly catching up with the technology and are working on subject matter and presenters. But now we need some expertise to go boldly beyond the Podcast. If your office is, or has considered using video and recorded voice with PowerPoint for training, we would like to help you…and for you to help us. James Barber, chair of the Professional Development Opportunities Subcommittee is organizing the e-learning effort. NCSL's Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee (your colleagues that are members of other staff sections) is also working on e-learning and can team up with us to provide assistance. Ultimately, the goal is to use our combined resources to develop e-learning programs for legislative staff that are not able to travel to fall conferences or the Annual Meeting. Our years of experience shouldn't only be available to those who can afford to travel.

To bring us back to my grandmother and guilt trips, I have a series of questions. What have you done to help develop and improve your profession and the skills of your colleagues? Are you satisfied just doing your evaluation job, day in, day out? How have you given back? Is it time to start now? Where can you help? How would you like to participate?

Perhaps the time is now to ask management if you can direct a few of your hours to the profession. If you have experience with distance learning, we can use your help. If you can make time to evaluate the website or the newsletter and make recommendations as to how each can be more useful to NLPES members, we need your help. If you (and your organization) are interested in being elected to the Executive Committee, the nominations and elections are coming very soon.

As Abraham Lincoln said "I don't think much of a man who is not wiser today than he was yesterday" (with apologies for Abe's lack of gender neutrality). We can all help each other reach for wisdom.

NLPES Executive Committee Revises Awards Criteria

Joe Lawhon *(Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit)*

Awards. Almost every organization has them. You could earn a Boy Scout merit badge, win the Most Valuable Player award, or even win the Oscar. The hardest part in any awards effort is deciding what the judging criteria will be and who will be the winner. Welcome to the world of the NLPES Awards Subcommittee!

For the last couple of years, the NLPES Executive Committee and others have had ongoing discussions about the awards that NLPES gives out each year. Just to refresh your memory, NLPES has had the following awards:

- Excellence in Evaluation
- Excellence in Research Methods
- Certificate of Recognition of Impact
- Outstanding Achievement (given to an individual who has retired or left the field)

During 2006, the Executive Committee solicited input from NLPES members regarding the awards and how they could be restructured. Unfortunately, few members offered comments about the awards. Not easily deterred or discouraged, the Executive Committee met for a half-day workshop prior to the fall training conference in Park City, Utah, to discuss various aspects of the awards.

Following the Park City discussion, the Awards Subcommittee developed and refined new judging criteria for two of the four awards, which the Executive Committee adopted for this upcoming awards cycle. (The Executive Committee did not make any changes to the judging criteria for the Certificate of Recognition of Impact or Outstanding Achievement award. See the NLPES website for criteria for these two awards.) Although there are several general changes for the Excellence in Evaluation award, most applicants will not notice much of a difference in the criteria. The Executive Committee approved major changes for the Excellence in Research Methods award, including its name and the number of award winners (up to three annually rather than one). The Executive Committee also broadened the definition of "outstanding methodology" to include methods other than exemplary research methods or advanced statistical techniques.

The following is a summary of the new criteria for the Excellence in Evaluation and Outstanding Evaluation Methodology awards. More detailed information is located on the NLPES website.

Excellence in Evaluation

The Executive Committee will give this award to an office based upon the office's accomplishments for the most recent four-year period. Each application will be limited to a written narrative of no more than five pages. The application must contain a list of the reports and other work products that the office has generated during the four-year period. The judging criteria (and their relative weights) for this award include:

- *Making a positive impact (50%).* This criterion focuses on the significance of the work performed and how it positively affected state operations and policies.
- *Producing a notable body of work (30%).* This criterion focuses on the overall accomplishments in terms of reports issued, selection of audits, and noteworthy accomplishments of the office.
- *Furthering the field of legislative evaluation (20%).* This criterion focuses on the office's participation in NLPES activities, provision of training to other evaluation and audit offices, development of innovative methodologies, or other information-sharing activities.

The office that receives the Excellence in Evaluation award cannot apply again for two years and agrees to provide staff members to serve as judges for this award for the following two years.

Outstanding Evaluation Methodology (formerly Excellence in Research Methods)

The Executive Committee will give this award to a maximum of three offices that have demonstrated outstanding use of evaluation methodology in a report released during the application (calendar) year. The judging criteria (and their relative weights) for this award include:

- *Methodology usefulness/design (30%).* This criterion focuses on the appropriateness or applicability of the methodology to the evaluation's or audit's objectives.
- *Methodology application (30%).* This criterion focuses on the implementation of the methodology or how it was used in the project.
- *Evaluation results (20%).* This criterion focuses on the conclusions drawn from the work performed.
- *Impact (20%).* This criterion focuses on how the methodology contributed to recommendations, changes to a program, or positively affected state operations and policies.

The Executive Committee plans to use these new criteria for a year or two and then revisit them, if necessary. We encourage you to apply for one or more of the awards. Check the NLPES website for application deadlines. Remember, legislators love hearing the good news that their state's evaluation or audit office has been recognized by its peers as doing exemplary work.

NLPES Membership—We're Back

Dr. Gary VanLandingham *(Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability)*

One of the questions that can come to the mind when thinking about NLPES is, "Sometimes I feel alone in the universe, but am comforted knowing that there are others out there who also do oversight studies for their legislatures. How many kindred souls are we?" There hasn't been a lot of data available on this. NLPES conducted nationwide surveys in 2000 and 2004, and the results of these surveys were published in those year's editions of *Ensuring the Public Trust*, which are available on better websites everywhere (well, probably only on the NLPES website).

These surveys, however, were a source of some angst to the field. The 2004 survey had the depressing finding that there were fewer of us than in prior years. Due to the tough budget years that most states were experiencing that required substantial spending cuts, many oversight offices reported staffing reductions between fiscal years 2001 and 2004. The offices reported that they lost a net of forty-nine positions nationwide between fiscal years 2001 and 2004. Overall, these cuts represented about 5% of the offices' former staffing levels. Offices in four states also reported initiatives to eliminate them and/or merge their operations with other units.

Worry no more! A 2006 survey found that our offices have rebounded and have gained new positions that more than made up for the prior cuts. Nationwide, we gained eighty-six positions since 2004, and now have thirty-seven positions more than we had in 2001. While our colleagues in Ohio suffered the closure of their unit, Maine's Office of Program Evaluation and Policy Analysis began operations. Rumor has it that North Carolina is strongly considering starting up a legislative oversight office as well. Other offices reported that threats to their operations had been lifted, and they once again enjoyed the universal love and respect of their parent legislatures.

Full results of the 2006 survey will be reported in a new edition of *Ensuring the Public Trust.* Member offices will be asked to update their office profiles over the next couple of months as well. Stay tuned!

State Profile
Alaska Division of Legislative Audit

Alaska Facts Alaska covers over 660,000 square miles and has over 6,640 miles of coastline. It is nicknamed "The Last Frontier." Alaska is the home to Mount McKinley or Denali, the highest point in North America, and somewhere in excess of 100,000 glaciers. The current population is approximately 670,000. As a general rule, we do not live in igloos. The state bird is the Willow Ptarmigan; the state flower is the Forget Me Not; the state tree is the Sitka spruce; and, the state motto is "North to the Future."

History of Legislative Audit The Division of Legislative Audit was established by the Territorial Legislature with the passage of the Fiscal Procedures Act of 1955. The first Legislative Auditor was appointed January 1, 1956. The Division was staffed by the Legislative Auditor, one staff auditor, and an administrative assistant. The legislative auditor position was later embodied in the Alaska State Constitution to provide for an impartial, independent audit function.

Recent History of Legislative Audit The statutory framework that guides the Audit Division's operations has been amended several times, but has changed very little of the Audit Division's powers and duties. While the function has remained relatively unchanged, the scope of responsibilities has increased dramatically. The growth and complexity of state and federal government financial activity has presented continuing challenges to financial auditing. The complexity of special audit requests has increased; and, the sunset concept was introduced in 1977 resulting in program auditing for continued existence. The Division audits the basic financial statements of the State of Alaska and compliance with laws and regulations as required by the Federal Single Audit Act on an annual basis. Additionally, the Division performs sunset audits and a myriad of performance evaluations. All audits conducted by the Division are done in accordance with government auditing standards.

Staff 33 professional staff (primarily CPAs and aspiring CPAs) and 5 support staff

Offices Main office in Juneau (state capital) and branch office in Anchorage (Alaska's largest city)

Little Known Fact About the Current Legislative Auditor Originally came to Alaska to complete her education and pursue her dream job. Ended up here. Amazing, dreams really can come true.

Best Dream Assignment To get called upon to lead the audit of anything, as long as it takes you to remote Alaska during beautiful weather.

Most Dreaded Assignment Anyone for doing a state equipment fleet inventory this winter??

Most Challenging Audit Interview Soliciting input for an audit by interviewing a farmer, out in the middle of nowhere, with his loaded gun on the table.

Staff Leisure Activities Most wouldn't tell…but a few things we are said to enjoy include fishing, boating, skiing, hiking, and golfing in the midnight sun. And, of course, watching out for bears!

One Good Reason to Live in Alaska The Alaska Permanent Fund, which is the state's constitutionally protected asset pool resulting from a dedication of a portion of our mineral rents and royalties. The fund currently has a corpus of over $37 billion. The total annual payout is a statutorily prescribed portion of the fund's average annual realized earnings. It is expected that each resident of our great state will receive a check well in excess of $1,000 in next year's dividend payout.

They Love Us. Well, At Least Those Who Know We Exist Generally Love Us…

Dr. Gary VanLandingham *(Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability)*

As we all know, legislators and legislative staff are regularly deluged with policy information from a wide range of sources. This includes glossy publications from private think tanks, media stories, reports submitted by the executive branch, studies from legislative evaluation and auditing units, and materials provided by ever-helpful lobbyists. It is also generally acknowledged that the usefulness–and use–of this information is highly variable. Policy information from some sources is highly valued, while that provided by other sources is generally destined for the dusty shelf at best or immediate deposit into the recycling bin at worst.

What makes policy research from some sources valued within legislatures, and what are the most respected and used sources of this information? How does the information provided by NLPES offices stack up in this analysis? What about all the information provided by our friends in NCSL? These are important questions. We exist to provide information to our parent legislatures, and we would have an obvious problem if our work were not highly valued. The same goes for NCSL. So, to paraphrase the question from the musical *Fiddler on the Roof* --"Do they Love Us?"

To address these questions (and, I confess, to finish a dissertation), a nationwide survey of senior legislative staff was conducted between August 2005 and January 2006 regarding how policy research is used in the legislative process. The survey covered the factors that influence the use of policy research and the respondents' perceptions of the quality and usefulness of research produced by different sources. (If you'd like to read the completed dissertation (1) you really should get a life; and, (2) I'd be happy to send it to you. Part of its findings will be published in an edition of *New Directions in Evaluation* that is being edited by our own Rakesh Mohan and Dr. Kathleen Sullivan. Other parts will appear in better academic publications everywhere.)

Survey respondents

Survey responses were received from 320 legislative staff, representing forty-six states and Puerto Rico. About half of the respondents worked in committee or research positions, while about a fifth worked in leadership or appropriations positions. The remaining respondents worked in a variety of positions such as member and partisan office positions, legal and bill drafting positions, and other positions such as legislative administration. Over half had worked with their legislatures for over ten years, while another fifth had between five and ten years of experience. A quarter of the respondents had worked with their legislatures for between one and five years. Only 3% of the respondents had less than a year of experience with their legislature. Thus, the survey respondents represent some of our key stakeholders -- highly experienced legislative staff that works in key positions that regularly receive, judge, and use policy research. These are folks that we want to love us. Do they?

Factors Important to Legislative Use of Policy Research Studies

The first part of answering this question is to assess what characteristics these key stakeholders believe is important to legislative use of policy research products. Survey respondents indicated that four factors are particularly key in legislative use of policy research studies—(1) the clarity of the reports' findings and recommendations; (2) the timeliness of the studies; (3) the relevance of the studies to the legislature's information needs; and (4) the reputation of the office publishing the studies. Each of these factors was cited as "very important" by over 70% of the respondents. The relevance of the studies to legislative staff and the studies' methodological quality were cited as "very important" by about half of the respondents. The ability of state legislatures to provide direct input to the researchers doing the studies; the degree of conflict surrounding the studies' topic, findings, and recommendations; and the presence of advocates and detractors of the studies were viewed as at least somewhat important but not as critical by the respondents.

So far, so good. NLPES offices exist to provide highly credible and relevant information. We are generally very cognizant of deadlines, and pride ourselves in writing clear reports that communicate complex information to our busy legislative users (while complaining to each other on how hard that often is…).

Information Credibility

So, are NLPES offices among the highest ranked sources of policy research? Alas, not fully. Survey respondents indicated that our friends at NCSL were the single most credible source of policy research —NCSL was viewed as "very credible" by 70% of the survey respondents and at least somewhat credible by 92% of all respondents. The next most highly rated information sources were federal agencies, internal legislative studies by fiscal, substantive, and research committees, other national organizations such as the Council of State Governments. State auditors and legislative evaluation offices were viewed as "very credible" by about half of the respondents, better than external sources but lower than NCSL, other national organizations, and the feds. We did rank higher than executive branch agencies and governors' offices which were generally viewed as at least somewhat credible, and we were viewed much better than private think tanks, industry groups, partisan offices, and the media, which were generally viewed to be substantially less credible information sources.

A major reason for the somewhat disconcerting assessment of NLPES offices is that a relatively high percentage of respondents could not rate the credibility of our work. Approximately 16% of respondents could not rate the credibility of state auditors, and almost 30% of the respondents could not rate the credibility of legislative program evaluation offices. (If you are thinking "the reason for the high percentage of 'don't know' responses regarding NLPES offices is that these respondents must be from states that don't have program audit/evaluation office," it's not that easy. A separate question asked whether the respondents knew whether their state had an evaluation/program auditing office. There was a pretty high degree of confusion on that. Some respondents from states that have NLPES offices didn't know that the offices existed, while some respondents in states that did not have NLPES offices swore that these offices did exist and rated their work. As the marketing folks would say, we have a branding problem if our customers are not sure that we exist.)

Information Usefulness

Survey respondents' assessments of the usefulness of policy information produced by the various sources followed a similar pattern. NCSL was viewed as the most useful information source by the survey respondents—86% of survey respondents indicated that NCSL's information was either "highly useful" (51%) or "somewhat useful" (35%). Over half of respondents also viewed information by federal agencies, other national organizations, legislative committees, state auditors, program evaluation offices, executive branch agencies, the governor's office, the state auditor, and industry groups as either highly or somewhat useful. Less than half of respondents viewed information provided by partisan offices, private think tanks, and the media as highly or somewhat useful to their work. Again, however, relatively large proportions of the survey respondents could not rate the usefulness of NLPES offices' work–13% for state auditors and 25% for legislative program evaluation offices; much larger proportions of respondents could not rate our work compared to other research sources.

Conclusion

So what does this mean? Overall the results are good news for NCSL and a mixed bag for NLPES offices. NCSL is viewed as a highly credible and highly useful source of policy research for key legislative staff. Legislative auditors and evaluators are also highly valued, although we obviously need to do some work making sure that key leadership, appropriations, and committee staff are aware of our existence and research products. Other parts of my research examined the activities of NLPES offices across the nation in terms of their marketing and networking activities, and also examined the legislative staff stakeholders' perceptions on how our work is used. The short, short bottom line of that research is that marketing and networking matters. Ah, but that is the topic of future *NLPES News* articles…

A Checklist for Success as an Evaluator

Dr. Max Arinder *(Mississippi Joint Legislative PEER Committee)*

The following is a training session conducted for Mississippi PEER Committee staff by Dr. Max Arinder, PEER Executive Director, in 2003.

Project Planning/Scoping

Do you…

- Understand the project concept and operationalize all preliminary objectives?
- Have a strategy for background research?
- Use background knowledge to focus your scoping and planning efforts?
- Develop a plan for scoping?
- Complete scoping as a "hands-on" exercise?
- Identify and write research hypotheses for each objective and define the needed criteria?
- Identify appropriate data sources, by type, for each hypothesis?
- Propose appropriate research methods to test each hypothesis?
- Write clear, concise action-steps for each method proposed?
- Continually monitor the plan for relevancy and document the need for revisions?
- Re-write plans as necessary?

Project Administration/Management

Do you…

- Prepare time estimates for the project?
- Set priorities, schedules, and deadlines for project activities?
- Develop methods and procedures to complete the work on schedule?
- Continually monitor timelines and deadlines?
- Revise time estimates as knowledge is acquired?
- Coordinate with others in scheduling use of scarce project resources?
- Coordinate activities and procedures with other team members and with supervisors to assure timely accomplishment of assignments?
- Maintain project flexibility by adjusting to changing project demands?
- Plan and manage the project for closure?

Methods and Tools/Creativity

Do you…

- Accurately assess the form and content of available data?
- Choose methods and tools appropriate to the task?

- Develop and implement new procedures and methods to meet the changing circumstances of the review?
- Translate complex concepts into easily understood terms?

Problem Identification

Do you…

- Take responsibility for and make decisions within assigned authority?
- Take action in a timely manner to counteract any problems identified?
- Seek appropriate input from others when encountering issues that require actions beyond your authority?
- Refer problems to the appropriate level when necessary?

Data Collection/Documentation

Do you…

- Use good judgment in identifying, documenting, and eliminating unproductive/unnecessary work steps?
- Maintain an awareness of related developments in one's area of work (agency actions, news articles, federal actions, etc.)?
- Demonstrate evidence of an inquisitive, skeptical mind in the collection and documentation of evidential data?
- Demonstrate sensitivity to subject agency personnel and resources, avoiding too frequent or duplicate requests?
- Appropriately document the completion of all assignments and work steps?
- Assemble data and work papers in accord with established procedures?
- Use the most efficient work paper preparation techniques available?

Data Analysis/Finding Development

Do you…

- Obtain sufficient relevant facts before making decisions?
- Identify superordinate findings accurately, going beyond superficial exceptions and discrete errors?
- Demonstrate evidence of an evolving "project concept" which brings the findings together and provides a framework for telling the story of the review in a concise, well-informed manner?
- Address agency counterarguments in a clear, convincing manner (anticipating those counterarguments when possible)?
- Seek the opinion of experts and knowledgeable others relative to the appropriateness of both findings and recommendations?

Documentation/Archiving

Do you…

- Document to reflect an iterative process of analysis, problem identification, finding development, and refinement from the earliest stages of the project or assignment?
- Produce findings that contain all required elements, with each element being well defined and defensible?
- Produce a work paper archive in conformity to current procedural requirements?

Quality Control Review

Do you…

- Prepare for quality control reviews in keeping with the requirements of internal policies and procedures?
- Prepare for quality control reviews with a clear understanding of how your project may impact legislative action?
- Provide summary information that reflects a thorough, knowledgeable and substantive review of the work produced?
- Enter quality assurance reviews with sufficient information to allow a third party to ascertain the relevance and significance of highlighted review issues and the adequacy of data collection and analysis methods yielding those issues?
- Enter quality assurance reviews with sufficient information to demonstrate your concern for accuracy, clarity, depth of evidence, and scholarship in your project work?

Written Communication

Do you…

- Write report chapters and sections that are consistent with accepted standards for organization, style, and clarity?
- Develop demonstration charts, tables, and graphs that are free standing, contain few acronyms, and are interpreted for the reader?
- Conduct at least one self-edit designed to identify specific and constructive improvements in the draft?
- Edit your work in accord with accepted standards for grammatical construction?
- Complete your drafts in a timely manner, meeting all reasonable deadlines?

Briefings/Presentations

Do you…

- Appropriately introduce your briefing with an overview?
- Develop clear, concise briefing materials and handouts that summarize the report with little loss of impact?
- Speak and respond courteously and with knowledge to all questions posed?
- Organize and deliver your presentation in such a way as to inform the listener and impel action?
- Demonstrate good choice of information to be presented in your briefing?
- Use good tone and clarity of presentation in your briefing?
- Prepare audio-visual support appropriate to the anticipated physical, intellectual, and emotional climate of the briefing?
- Appropriately number and cross-reference all supporting materials used in your briefing?
- Demonstrate preparedness for report relevant questions?

Communication/Teamwork

Do you…

- Inform management concerning the proposed use of intrusive techniques such as mail surveys, calls to legislators, extensive records requests, etc.?
- Promote and maintain open channels of communication with all levels of staff?
- Respond in a timely manner to needs, questions and concerns?
- Communicate matters of interest regarding projects in an effective, timely, and accurate manner?
- Handle opposing ideas with tact and diplomacy, reaching agreement with minimal stress to all parties concerned?
- Demonstrate sensitivity to the feelings, efforts and ideas of others?
- Make a positive contribution to team morale and motivation?
- Make yourself accessible to others?
- Return all telephone calls promptly?

Technical Proficiency/Training

Do you…

- Quickly and accurately access problems in your area of expertise and apply that knowledge to help solve problems in a timely manner?
- Keep current with changes, updates or improvements in fields of interest or responsibility through self-study?
- Seek knowledge and growth in fields outside immediate area of expertise?

Organizational Commitment/Adaptability

Do you…

- Demonstrate a practical knowledge of agency policies and procedures?
- Convey a positive, professional image of the agency to others?
- Put forth extra effort when the need arises and work to meet schedule changes when they are required?
- Demonstrate both the willingness and the ability to expedite projects given immediate priority?
- Act immediately or in approved order of priority on assignments without having to be reminded or having to produce a “crisis” response?
- Provide sufficient post-report information to allow a defense of your work when you are not available for consultation (Summaries, lists of major concerns, methods sheets, etc.)?
- Comply with established leave practices?
- Show up on time for scheduled work?
- Fully participate in the decision making process within areas of responsibility?

Office Work Dull?

None of your colleagues appreciate your humor? Try a couple of these to spice things up. Points are awarded based on difficulty and creative execution.

a. Walk sideways to the photocopier. (5 points)
b. Run a lap around the office at top speed. (5 points)
c. Kneel in front of the water cooler and drink directly from the nozzle. (10 points)
d. Babble incoherently at a fellow employee then ask, “Did you get that, I don’t want to have to repeat it.” (10 points)
e. Walk into a very busy person’s office and turn the lights on and off 10 times. (25 points)
f. Carry your keyboard over to your colleague and ask “You wanna trade?” (25 points)
g. In a meeting slap your forehead repeatedly and mutter, “Shut up, all of you, just shut up!” (25 points)

A Leader Doesn't Have to be the Boss

Dana Knight *(Workplace Reporter and Columnist, Indianapolis Star)*

You may be a clerk in the mailroom or the freshly graduated new guy at the office. Managing, being the boss, overseeing others just isn't in your job description – and may never be. But that doesn't mean you can't be a leader. Leadership isn't about job titles or positions. It is a way of carrying yourself and a method of influencing others that can be learned. There are, after all, lots of bosses who are terrible leaders and plenty of leaders who aren't bosses at all. "The best leaders bring out the best in their co-workers and colleagues by having high expectations for themselves and consistently meeting those demands," says Theresa Farrington Rhodes, executive director of the Lacy Leadership Association, an Indianapolis-based organization designed to help build leadership skills in people looking to get involved in the nonprofit sector. "Inspire others and lead by example."

Take a look at these five ways to lead when you are not the boss.

- ***Believe you can lead.*** You may not hold that prestigious title, but you have to look in the mirror and realize your actions and behavior can be as influential as any mandate put out by a manager. What if you went into the boss's office and asked what you could do to help alleviate his work burden? What if you helped a co-worker with a project? What if you told the janitor about an opening for a better job? That is leadership. "It's influencing people above you, beside you and below you," says John Maxwell, author of "The 360-Degree Leader: Developing Your Influence from Anywhere in the Organization."

- ***Lead yourself first.*** If you cannot manage yourself, no one will value you as a leader. "Most people are very concerned about leading others and often forget about themselves," says Maxwell. What does it mean to lead yourself? It means being respected–behaving in a way that people admire. Remember that every move you make–thoughts, actions and words–contributes to whether you are respected. It means not griping about the job or gossiping in the office. It means being disciplined in work and being on time. "Being liked is good, but being respected is even better," says Rhodes.

- ***Put others first.*** "A leader gets up in the morning and says, "What can I do to make someone else better today?" says Maxwell. "A nonleader gets up and says, "What's for breakfast?" Making others look good, even if they are your "competitors" or peers who may be vying for that same promotion, in the end will help you out, he says. Making people feel good is also a trait of leadership. "Learn the names of the parking attendants, security guards, cleaning staff members, receptionists and the person who staffs the coffee shop in the lobby," says Rhodes. "Your reputation as a leader will be cemented on many different levels."

- ***Be a decision maker.*** This is possible even if you are not the boss. The worst kinds of employees are those who go into the boss's office and ask for ideas. "These workers become irritants," says Maxwell. You should be going to the boss with your own ideas and solutions to problems. "Sometimes being a leader means standing up and making yourself heard," says Rhodes. Come up with great ideas without being asked to. Gain a reputation as someone who can deal with challenges and conflicts. Take the initiative to make a decision without always having to ask the boss first.

- ***Be humble.*** Don't mistake leadership for power or arrogance. The greatest leaders have proved time and time again they are modest. Realize that you can lead and be influential while still showing humility. "Be self-sufficient enough and willing to make your own copies, operate the postage machine and send a fax," says Rhodes. Have a basic understanding of what all of your colleagues do and how they perform their jobs. Knowing how the entire operation works makes you more knowledgeable and also shows you could step in if needed.

Important Dates to Remember

Legislative Staff Management Institute: July 14-21, Sacramento, California
NCSL Annual Meeting: August 5-9, Boston, Massachusetts
NLPES Fall Training Conference: September 18-21, Charleston, West Virginia

Going Beyond the Traditional Role

Rakesh Mohan *(Idaho Office of Performance Evaluations)*

Have you ever wondered about these questions: What is our role as evaluators and performance auditors? Can we help bring about "good government"? Are policymakers listening to us? Do they REALLY consider our recommendations when they make big policy and budget decisions? Do we matter in the daily grind of running government? Do we help improve the life of the average citizen on the street?

Some of your colleagues suggest methods for impacting policy and budget decisions in *Promoting the Use of Government Evaluations in Policymaking*, the latest volume of *New Directions for Evaluation* (winter 2006, vol. 112). Dr. Kathleen Sullivan and I co-edited the volume. (Many of you probably remember Dr. Sullivan from her previous life as methodologist for Mississippi's Joint Legislative PEER Committee.)

In addition to the introductory Editors' Notes, the volume consists of eight chapters. These chapters showcase some of the best work of legislative evaluators and others working in policymaking environments. The following is a brief annotated table of contents of the volume.

Managing the Politics of Evaluation to Achieve Impact

In this chapter, the authors acknowledge that evaluations are inherently political and the politics of evaluation must be managed in order for the work to have impact. Evaluators need to consider the context in which an evaluation takes place and maximize both their independence from and responsiveness to stakeholders. (Authors: Rakesh Mohan and Dr. Kathleen Sullivan)

A Voice Crying in the Wilderness: Legislative Oversight Agencies' Efforts to Achieve Utilization

Based on his literature review of utilization-focused evaluation and using the results of his survey of state legislative evaluation offices, the author discusses strategies that can help evaluators and evaluation offices promote the use of their work. (Author: Gary VanLandingham, Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability)

Evaluators' Role in Facilitating the Convergence of Factors to Create Legislative Impact

Using a study of the Board of Medicine as an example, the author discusses how evaluators can facilitate the convergence of factors—even if some of the factors may be outside the direct control of evaluators—to impact the policy process. (Author: Hal Greer, Virginia Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission)

The Influence of Evaluators on State Medicaid Policies: Florida and South Carolina's Experience

The authors use a series of Medicaid studies conducted by their offices to illustrate how evaluators can make a difference at the state level on big policy issues such as Medicaid. (Authors: Yvonne Bigos, Jennifer Johnson, Rae Hendlin, and Steve Harkreader, Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability; and, Andrea Truitt, South Carolina Legislative Audit Council)

A Utilization-Focused Approach to Evaluation by a Performance Audit Agency

The authors discuss how they provided practical solutions to a long-term problem involving King County jails, as well as discuss their thoughts on the traditional notion of auditors that being responsive to stakeholders can jeopardize auditor independence. (Authors: Ron Perry, Bob Thomas, Elizabeth DuBois, and Rob McGowan, King County Auditor's Office, Seattle)

Using a Crystal Ball Instead of a Rear-View Mirror: Helping State Legislators Assess the Future Impacts of Major Federal Legislation

The authors describe the use of prospective evaluation methods in analyzing the likely impact of high-stakes public policies such as the No Child Left Behind Act. (Authors: Joel Alter and John Patterson, Minnesota Legislative Auditor's Office of Performance Evaluation)

Increasing Evaluation Use Among Policymakers Through Performance Measurement

The authors describe the symbiotic relationship between performance measurement and evaluation and how this relationship can be used to impact the policy process. (Authors: Rakesh Mohan, Minakshi Tikoo [Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the University of Connecticut], Stanley Capela [HeartShare, New York], and David Bernstein [Westat, Maryland])

The Evaluator's Role in Policy Development

The author takes us a step further in fulfilling our role as evaluators and auditors by suggesting that evaluators can effectively advocate for certain outcomes in the public policy arena. (Author: George Grob, Independent Consultant)

You can, of course, check out the volume from your local university library or purchase the volume from Jossey-Bass (www.josseybass.com). (Neither the editors or authors receive financial benefit from the sale of the volume.) As an alternative you may access the volume by joining the American Evaluation Association (AEA) for a very reasonable membership fee ($80). As a member, you will receive subscriptions to two journals, including *New Directions for Evaluation.* Members receive paper copies of the journals and access to the electronic version of current and previous volumes. For details about joining AEA and its membership benefits, please visit www.eval.org.

Hope you find the ideas and techniques discussed in the volume useful in increasing the impact of your evaluation work.

Managing Multiple Generations

Willow Jacobson *(University of North Carolina School of Business)*

Managers supervise employees ranging in age and interest from people who can't miss "American Idol" on television to those for whom the only real American idol is FDR. To get the most from this multi-generational workplace, it's important to begin by understanding some general traits that employees in different age groups tend to share.

Naturally, there are no sharp cut-offs between one group and another. Someone born on January 1, 1965, is no more likely to be technologically savvy than someone born on December 31, 1964. The exact years for the groupings vary, depending on the researcher, but the following is a commonly accepted version:

- Matures (born before 1945) are consistently characterized as people who are hardworking; conservative; loyal to the organization; recognize the importance of a job well done; patient; and are respectful of authority and rules.
- Baby Boomers (born between 1945 and 1964) are thought of as workaholics; ambitious; loyal to their careers; competitive; and optimistic.
- Generation Xers (1965-1977) tend to be independent and self-reliant; cynical and pessimistic; highly literate in technology; informal; and concerned about a balance between their work and their personal life.
- Members of Generation Y (born after 1977) are technologically savvy; confident and optimistic; team-oriented; likely to want structure in the workplace; happy with authorities to lead them; and socially conscious and civic-minded.

Working Together

It's not always easy to get these different groups to meld into a seamless team. Baby Boomers and Generation Y people tend to be interested in teamwork, while Generation Xers want to work independently. Matures and Boomers like to master a function, become an expert and own a specific part of the project, while Generation X and Y want to see a project through from start to finish.

A few tips:

- Both Generation X and even more so Generation Y are technologically savvy. They have been brought up with technology as the way they communicate, work and play. It's a mistake to forget that the two older groups aren't cut from the same cloth. Matures and Boomers need to be provided with training appropriate to a solid understanding of technology in order to work with their staff.
- Similarly, members of Generation X and Y should become accustomed to taking their tech talk down a step and avoid using technology as their only communication outlets with older generations.
- While Boomers and Matures value titles, money and promotions, Generation X places priority on personal development and work-life balance. As a result, when working with Generation X, managers should improve work-life practices, provide more challenging assignments with access to influential people and adopt alternative work-schedule policies. Remember, vacation time may be as important to Generation X as a promotion. These folks will quit their jobs in order to gain the balance they seek.
- Although Generation X and Y both bring with them some similar traits (technological savvy, informality in the workplace and ability to

control projects), there are also distinctions that can impact your organization. Managers should beware of thinking that all younger people are alike and lumping the skeptical, individualistic and authority-questioning Xers with the optimistic, feedback-focused, mentor-seeking Ys.

Office Happenings

Georgia

The Performance Audit Division of the Georgia Department of Audits welcomed Kelly Kuyrkendall to its ranks.

Florida

Dr. VanLandingham, I presume? Gary VanLandingham, OPPAGA executive director, recently received his Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration from the Askew School of Public Administration at Florida State University. Congratulations, Gary!

Minnesota

The Office of the Legislative Auditor recently hired three program evaluation staff: David Kirchner (Ph.D. from Washington University and a former political science professor); Nate Lassila (spent six years at OPPAGA and is finishing his Ph.D. at Florida State); and, Christina Connelly (now at GAO).

Mississippi

The Joint Legislative PEER Committee regretfully accepted the resignation of Kelly Kuyrkendall as an evaluator. See the Georgia entry for more details.

Texas

The Sunset Commission has hired (or re-hired) our former assistant director who has been in the private sector for the past fourteen years. Karl Spock joined the Sunset staff as of February 1, 2007. Karl will be serving as a Senior Policy Analyst and will work on several special projects. Some of you may be familiar with Karl's work through his assistance on the Sunset Licensing Model. We contracted with Karl to assist staff in developing the model, including setting up the database in which the model resides.

Wisconsin

Dean Swenson, who began his career with the Legislative Audit Bureau in 1994, has been promoted to the position of Assistant Program Evaluation Director.

Washington

Rob Krell retired from the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee as of the end of February

From the Editor

If your office is anything like the PEER office you are busy right now with your legislature's session. Hopefully, the many reports that we have all produced will assist our legislatures in enacting good public policy.

Beginning with the fall issue of the *NLPES News*, the majority of the articles in each edition will revolve around a theme. For example, one theme could be training and professional development. The articles would highlight training needs of evaluators and auditors and describe how member offices are meeting those needs. Here's where I need your help. I need some ideas as to possible themes that could be used for future newsletter editions. Please feel free to share those with me at the e-mail address below.

I want to echo Ken Levine's comments in his Chair's Corner article regarding your participation in NLPES. There's always a place in the society where you could contribute your professional skills and have a positive impact. Don't wait to be asked to do something—please volunteer.

James Barber

NLPES-NEWS is published three times a year by the National Legislative Program Evaluation Society, a staff section of the National Conference of State Legislatures. NLPES serves the professionals of state legislative agencies engaged in government program evaluation. The purposes of NLPES are:

- To promote the art and science of legislative program evaluation.
- To enhance professionalism and training in legislative program evaluation.
- To promote the exchange of ideas and information about legislative program evaluation.

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