



Office of the City Auditor Policies and Procedures

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Title: Selecting Quick Response
Projects

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I. Policy

When a special request project is proposed and submitted to the Information and Response Team, its acceptance by the Quick Response Team will be based upon established criteria that focus on project complexity and required turnaround time.

II. Purpose

This policy is designed to establish guidelines for selection, prioritization, and disposition of quick response projects. These guidelines are expected to promote consistency in handling of quick response requests.

III. Definitions

- A. **Special Request Project** - A project that results from a request made to OCA by members of the City Council and City Manager's Office. At times, special request projects may also originate from City departments and other teams within the Office of the City Auditor.
- B. **Quick Response Project** - A limited-scope special request project on a fast timeline handled within the Quick Response Team. These projects are primarily requested by the City Council.
- C. **Quick Response Team** - A team within the OCA's Information and Response Activity Team that is primarily responsible for conducting quick response projects.

IV. Procedures/Responsibilities

- A. Certain special request projects will be forwarded to the Assistant City Auditor (ACA) with primary responsibility for the Information and Response Activity.
 - a. The ACA will accept projects for the Quick Response Team based on criteria in the following categories:
 - 1. complexity of the request (objectives, scope, and methodology)
 - 2. purpose of the request
 - 3. availability of data
 - 4. requested turnaround for response
 - 5. source of the request

(For a more detailed listing of the criteria and the selection process that will be used, please see additional documentation in the Policy Resource File.)
 - b. If the ACA does not accept the request, ACA will propose prioritized options for responding to the request, which will be forward to the DCA.
- B. The Deputy City Auditor will be responsible for determining how to respond to those requests that do not meet the Quick Response Team's criteria.

Quick Response Selection Procedures

1. OCA receives a request for a special request project, ideally in written form. If not in written form, the ACA may need to follow up to get more specific information on the request. This communication is documented.
2. Within a week, the Quick Response team will meet to discuss the nature of the requests and make decisions concerning acceptance and priority. The following questions should be considered when making decisions on acceptance, although additional factors may need reviewing depending on the specific request:
 - a. ***If the problem involves fraud allegations or suspicions, forward request to City Auditor's Integrity Unit (CAIU).***
 - b. ***How many of the performance accountability objectives are covered?*** The fewer objectives, the easier it will be to facilitate a quick response. Multiple objectives may require an expanded-scope audit response instead of a quick response.
 - c. ***How many departments/programs does it involve?*** Due to the limited scope of a quick response project, generally only one department or program can be reviewed in a quick response manner. If multiple departments or programs are essential to review, the Quick Response team might consider opening multiple project files or referring the project to another team in the office.
 - d. ***How many locations are involved?*** Multiple locations may be feasible to review in a quick response manner if the locations are operated similarly and the same work is to be conducted at each location. Different objectives for different locations could be difficult to accomplish in a quick timeframe.
 - e. ***How many years prior are to be reviewed?*** Multiple years may not be difficult to review in a narrow timeframe if drastic organization or service changes have not been made in the program or department in those years. For instance, measures or the methods to collect those measures would have to be similar among years. Budget development and activity codes would have to be similar among years. In situations where significant changes have been made in the data and/or data collection, it may only be feasible to review one year.
 - f. ***What are the auditors expected to do?*** Quick response work will initially focus on requests that require a normative finding, with emphasis on criteria and condition. To establish cause and effect takes more in-depth work. Another aspect to this criterion (i.e., the normative finding) is whether the requestor expects the team to provide information or actually implement changes. Projects that require more direct assistance (developing policies, making management decisions) would be referred to the Assistance Team.

- g. **Who is the most appropriate person to talk to about this issue?** If the requestor can provide you with the name of an individual to talk to, a quick response is more feasible. Otherwise, much time may be spent interviewing multiple individuals to identify someone knowledgeable about the program you are reviewing.
 - h. **Does the data needed to perform the work exist?** This information will impact the time it will take to complete the request. Having data in existence and readily accessible is always preferable.
 - i. **How soon is the information needed?** Requested turnaround time should be considered in conjunction with the complexity of the objectives and the existence of data. In some cases, turnaround time may have to be negotiated. In instances where turnaround time is not negotiable, the request may have to be denied.
 - j. **Who is making the request?** Because OCA reports to the City council, requests from the Mayor and Council Members take precedence and priority.
3. The ACA should document project selection by addressing how the requested project does or does not meet the criteria stated above. One suggested format is a spreadsheet, which would present a clear picture of how the criteria did or did not apply to each request.
4. The ACA will notify the DCA (either through email or memo) of projects that have been selected and the priority of each project. If certain projects cannot be completed as intended or in the timeframe needed, the ACA will prioritize proposed options for dealing with the request and submit that proposal to the DCA
5. At least once a month, the ACA will meet with the DCA and CA to discuss the status of current projects and their results.