

Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability

The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) was established as a separate unit of the Florida Legislature under the Office of the Auditor General in 1994 by chapter 94-249, Laws of Florida, The “Government Performance and Accountability Act.” Prior to 1994, policy analysis was conducted by the program audit staff of the Office of the Auditor General. The office is established in section 11.51, Florida Statutes. The office is independent of the Auditor General as provided in section 11.51(2).

OPPAGA is under the oversight of the Joint Legislative Auditing Committee. OPPAGA examines agencies and programs to improve services and cut costs when directed by state law, the presiding officers, or the Joint Legislative Auditing Committee. The office is charged with establishing a schedule to examine state programs and is authorized to examine all entities and records as listed in section 11.45(3), Florida Statutes. These are the same entities that the Auditor General is authorized to investigate and audit. The office’s website can be found at <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/default.asp>.

OPPAGA also has responsibilities under The Florida Government Accountability Act (sections 11.901-11.920, Florida Statutes), which establishes a legislative process to determine if a public need exists for the continuation of a state agency and its advisory committees. Section 11.904 designates OPPAGA as the primary provider of research services to support the process. In addition, section 11.907 authorizes the Legislature to direct OPPAGA to review the agencies and advisory committees undergoing “sunset” review.

OPPAGA’s mission is to support the Florida Legislature by providing evaluative research and objective analyses to promote government accountability and the efficient and effective use of public resources.

Research conducted by OPPAGA is guided by *The Program Evaluation Standards, 2nd Edition*, which is issued by The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation and published by SAGE Publications.

The *Standards* are segregated into four categories: Utility, Feasibility, Propriety, and Accuracy. OPPAGA uses the *Standards* to ensure the quality, usefulness, and timeliness of all published products. See <http://www.eval.org/EvaluationDocuments/standards.html> for a summary of the *Standards*.

In addition to program reviews, the office provides research and technical assistance to legislators and legislative committees and provides follow-up reviews that assess whether agencies have resolved problems identified in earlier studies. The office also maintains the Florida Government Accountability Report, an electronic encyclopedia containing descriptive and evaluative information on all major state programs. It also provides the Florida Monitor Weekly, a weekly electronic newsletter of policy research of interest to Florida policymakers.

The office is organized with a director, deputy director, general counsel, and staff directors in charge of the various policy areas and support areas.

Head of the Department - Director:

Gary R. VanLandingham, Ph. D., vanlandingham.gary@oppaga.fl.gov
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The director of OPPAGA is appointed by a majority vote of the Joint Legislative Auditing Committee, subject to confirmation by a majority vote of both the Senate and the House of Representatives. At the time of appointment, the director must have had 10 years' experience in policy analysis and program evaluation. The reappointment of a director is subject to confirmation by a majority vote of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The director is required to take the oath of office required of all state officers under the Florida Constitution. The director is in charge of the office's operating budget and is authorized to hire and set compensation for the professional staff employed by the office.

The director manages OPPAGA's operations to ensure that the office's products meet the Legislature's information needs. This includes coordinating office-wide activities and resources; strategic planning; monitoring project progress; reviewing reports and related products; mentoring management staff; overseeing staff hiring, training, and evaluation; identifying and resolving organizational problems; and maintaining active liaison with the Legislature.

Dr. VanLandingham was nominated as OPPAGA's director by the Joint Legislative Auditing Committee and confirmed by the Legislature in 2005, after serving as interim director since July 2003. Prior to that date, he served as OPPAGA's deputy director for seven years. Before becoming deputy director, he served as lead analyst for OPPAGA's general government policy area. His areas of expertise include privatization, project management, strategic planning, and performance management. His evaluation experience also includes work in the Governor's Office, the former Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, and a school district.

He is currently serving as national staff vice-chair of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). He has also served as President of the Southeast Evaluation Association; as Chair of the National Legislative Program Evaluation Society, and staff vice-chair of the NCSL Assembly on State Issues. He has a Ph. D. in Public Administration and Policy from the Florida State University and is a certified internal auditor.

Deputy Director:

Kathy McGuire, mcguire.kathy@oppaga.fl.gov
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The deputy director assists the director in managing OPPAGA's operations to ensure that the office's products meet the Legislature's information needs. This includes coordinating office-wide activities and resources; strategic planning; monitoring project progress; reviewing reports and related products; mentoring management staff; overseeing staff evaluation; and identifying and resolving organizational problems.

Ms. McGuire became deputy director in February 2005. Prior to that date, she served as staff director for criminal justice. In that role she led teams reviewing programs relating to juvenile justice programs and the court system. Other recent projects focused on the Department of Corrections and PRIDE. For more than 15 years she has conducted and led a wide variety of program evaluations and policy analyses, including Violent Sexual Predators and the Statewide Law Enforcement Radio System. McGuire also assists with OPPAGA's staff training program and has attended the Legislative Staff Management Institute at the University of Minnesota.

General Counsel:

Jan Bush, bush.jan@oppaga.fl.gov
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The general counsel serves as the chief legal advisor for OPPAGA. The general counsel plans, organizes, and directs all legal activities involving OPPAGA; conducts highly technical, varied and complex legal research in connection with OPPAGA's functions; and serves as the liaison between OPPAGA and other entities. The general counsel advises OPPAGA's senior management on matters relating to the operation and management of the organization, including personnel issues.

Jan Bush has served as general counsel to OPPAGA since its creation in 1994. She works with legislators, legislative staff, and other OPPAGA constituents on issues that arise in *continued...Administrative Law Section Newsletter Volume XXIX, No. 3 • March 2008* the legislative process. An attorney for 27 years, Bush has worked in the legislative and executive branches of government and spent five years in private practice. Bush also attended the Legislative Staff Management Institute at the University of Minnesota in 1991.

The Office of General Counsel handles a wide variety of matters, including state and federal employment law, and other substantive and procedural legal issues. The office oversees the contracting process for OPPAGA and provides legal support and guidance to the director and staff on legal issues that arise during projects in all policy areas.

Number of Lawyers on Staff: 1

Economic Development, Environment, and Transportation Policy Area

Tom Roth, Staff Director, roth.tom@oppaga.fl.gov
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Mr. Roth serves as staff director for the Economic Development, Environment, and Transportation policy area. Since 1979, he has overseen many evaluations of state government support, employee benefit, economic development, environment, and transportation programs for OPPAGA and its predecessor. Most recently, he has overseen reviews of the Florida Black Business Investment Board, the Scripps Florida Funding Corporation, and state biotechnology initiatives.

The Economic Development, Environment, and Transportation policy group conducts reviews involving the following state agencies and boards: Agency for Workforce Innovation, Department of Community Affairs, Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, Department of Transportation, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade, and Economic Development, including public-private partnerships, such as Enterprise Florida and the Florida Commission on Tourism, and Water Management Districts.

Education Policy Area

Jane Fletcher, Staff Director, fletcher.jane@oppaga.fl.gov
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Jane Fletcher has been conducting and leading program evaluations and policy analyses for 24 years. Since 1991 she has served as staff director for the policy area dealing with Florida's K-20 education system.

This policy area reviews many different programs, including charter schools, workforce development, early education and child care, student transportation, exceptional student education, gifted programs, community colleges and the state university system and the state's education finance system. Recently the policy area has reviewed the state's remediation program, reviewed the state's higher education articulation policies and a reviewed K-12 teacher retention. Currently the policy group is reviewing the gifted program, a review of the Department of Lottery, and a continuing review of the state's higher education policies.

The education policy group conducts reviews involving the following state agencies and boards: Board of Governors, Community Colleges, Department of Education, K-20 education programs, Department of Lottery, School Districts, State Universities, and Workforce Education Programs.

Government Operations Policy Area

Kara Collins-Gomez, Staff Director, collins-gomez.kara@oppaga.fl.gov
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Kara Collins-Gomez serves as staff director for the Government Operations policy area. Since 1998, she has conducted and led program evaluations and policy analyses in a variety of areas, including children and family services, business and professional regulation, insurance regulation, and special district governance and administration. Collins-Gomez also assists with the maintenance of OPPAGA electronic products, such as the Florida Monitor Weekly and Florida Government Accountability Report and is a member of OPPAGA's external relations workgroup. In 2003, she received her Public Manager certification from Florida State University, and she attended the Legislative Staff Management Institute at the University of Minnesota in 2004.

The Government Operations policy group conducts reviews involving the following state agencies and boards: Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Department of Business and Professional Regulation, Department of Citrus, Department of Financial Services, Department of Management Services, Department of Military Affairs, Department of Revenue, Department of State, Public Service Commission, and State Board of Administration.

Health and Human Services Policy Area

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Becky Vickers became staff director for the Health and Human Services policy area in July 2004. For over 20 years she has conducted program evaluations and policy analyses in many policy areas, including government operations, transportation, and education.

The policy group is currently directing the health and human services policy area in reviews and reports dealing with issues such as adult protection, elder services, mental health, child protection, health care programs and regulation, developmental disabilities, and Medicaid.

The Health and Human Services policy group conducts reviews involving the following state agencies; Agency for Health Care Administration, Agency for Persons With Disabilities, Department of Children and Families, Department of Elder Affairs, Department of Health, and Department of Veterans Affairs.

Criminal Justice Policy Area

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Marti Harkness serves as Staff Director for Criminal Justice policy area. Since 1992 he has led numerous teams in reviewing programs throughout state government including corrections, health and human services and education. Harkness also assists with recruitment activities and has attended the Legislative Staff Management Institute at the University of Minnesota. He has served in numerous roles in the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), most recently as Staff Chair of the Standing Committees. He currently serves as a director on the Research and Committee Staff Section (RACSS) Executive Committee.

The Criminal Justice policy group conducts reviews involving the following state agencies, commissions, programs and constitutional offices: Capital Collateral Regional Councils, Correctional Medical Authority, Department of Corrections, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Legal Affairs (Office of Attorney General), Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Guardian Ad Litem Programs, Justice Administrative Commission, Parole Commission, PRIDE, Public Defenders, State Attorneys, and the State Courts System.

Hours of Operation:

8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
Monday-Friday

APA Interaction:

None.

Practice Tip:

OPPAGA encourages telephone communication to resolve questions or concerns that may arise during the course of a project. Although OPPAGA does not discuss ongoing projects with external parties until each report is final, persons representing project stakeholders are invited to call the General Counsel or the Staff Director for the policy area involved to inquire.