



GEOPROFESSIONAL
BUSINESS
ASSOCIATION

GUIDE FOR ACHIEVING QUALITY IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is the fourth edition of the Guide for Achieving Quality in Professional Practice (Guide). The first was developed in 1980 by an ASFE Council of Fellows task committee comprising Chair Harl P. Aldrich, Jr., Sc.D., P.E., Bramlette McClelland, D.Eng, P.E., William L. Shannon, P.E., and Eugene B. Waggoner, C.E.G.

A second Council of Fellows task committee chaired by John Hribar, Ph.D., P.E. prepared the second edition. Bramlette McClelland, D.Eng., P.E., William L. Shannon, P.E., and Eugene B. Waggoner, C.E.G. served on the task committee. ASFE's Peer Review Committee provided review and oversight.

The third edition of the Guide was prepared under the direction of Peer Review Committee Chair Robert C. Rabeler, P.E., with Jack K. Tuttle, P.E. serving as principal editor. The Committee as a whole served as reviewers.

This fourth edition of the Guide was prepared under the direction of Peer Review Committee Chair Richard E. Johnson, P.G., C.E.G., with Steven R. Thompson, P.E. serving as principal editor. The Committee as a whole served as reviewers.

INTRODUCTION

GBA has prepared this Guide for Member Firms. The Guide addresses nine business issues that comprise the Core Management Components (CMCs) of a GBA Peer Review (see Appendix A). These CMCs are:

- ❖ Image and Culture
- ❖ Business Management
- ❖ Financial Management
- ❖ Marketing and Business Development
- ❖ Project Management
- ❖ Health & Safety
- ❖ Human Resources Management
- ❖ Professional Development
- ❖ Facilities and Electronic Resources

Each of the nine CMCs is discussed below, accompanied by a series of suggested action items for consideration by firms in developing guidance, policies and procedures. GBA believes that establishing and applying appropriate written guidance, including enforceable policies and procedures, is essential to maintaining an effective consulting business practice.

Although firms benefit from the development and application of written policies and procedures, the nature and complexity of the policies and procedures, and the means used to disseminate and enforce them, should reflect the unique needs of any given firm. Regardless of a firm's size, service mix, structure, and/or business philosophy, policies and procedures need to be distributed to, and understood by, staff and management, and implemented consistently and effectively in daily practice. It is wise to remember that a procedure or policy not consistently followed or enforced, can be worse than having no procedure or policy at all. Consider issuing less rigid written "guidance" rather than policy and procedure if there is room for interpretation and variance in the actions addressed.

IMAGE AND CULTURE

A firm's image is the public's perception of it, and image can change overnight. Firms use advertising and public outreach to enhance their image as an employer, business partner, and corporate citizen. A firm's culture comprises the shared values, practices, and beliefs of its employees. While a firm's culture cannot be seen or touched, it is present in the actions, behaviors, and professionalism of its staff. From hiring practices to how people work, make decisions, resolve differences of opinions, and navigate change, the firm's culture defines the unwritten, but very real rules of behavior.

ACTION ITEM CONSIDERATIONS

Vision, Mission, Core Values, and Strategic Objectives

- ❖ Clearly and concisely state the firm's vision and mission.
- ❖ Identify and promote the core values to be applied in day to day conduct and achieving the firm's objectives.
- ❖ State the firm's strategic objectives
- ❖ State the firm's responsibilities to the public, clients, and employees.

Staff Engagement

Develop and implement a process for soliciting staff feedback

Community Involvement

Develop and implement guidance, policies, procedures and/or objectives regarding the firm's involvement in its community(ies).

Social Media Engagement

Develop and implement guidance, policies, procedures and/or objectives to advance the firm's social media profile.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

The care and thoroughness with which a firm builds its business organization and establishes its business practices strongly influence the quality of its professional services.

ACTION ITEM CONSIDERATIONS

Services and Projects Types

- ❖ Identify the services provided by the firm, the types of clients to which the services apply, and other factors that define the types of projects that the firm will accept to achieve its objectives. Be clear on limitations or client/project types that should not be considered.
- ❖ Present this information to clients.
- ❖ Present this information to employees with explanations of risk and value for each service and project type.

Organization

- ❖ Illustrate the firm's organizational structure in the form of an organization chart or other descriptive format to show the firm's structure to staff, its Board of Directors, and outside parties.
- ❖ Inform personnel of the organizational structure.
- ❖ Describe position responsibilities and relationships. Explain the role of each position including duties and criteria for success.
- ❖ Review and update the firm's organizational structure and position descriptions at least annually; more frequently if necessary to remain current.

Strategic Planning

- ❖ Identify the firm's strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats facing it. Apply that information when establishing the strategic plan.
- ❖ Commit the strategic plan to writing and communicate it to staff.
- ❖ Identify assigned roles for accomplishing specific objectives and provide regular updates on progress.
- ❖ Review the strategic plan at least annually to check the firm's progress relative to strategic goals and to evaluate any changes in the business climate. Revise, when necessary, its short-, mid-, and long-term objectives.

Ownership

- ❖ Develop policies and procedures (including a schedule) to effect smooth ownership transition. Note that for a first-generation ownership transfer this is likely a minimum two-year process for an external ownership transition and could be upwards of ten years for a completely internal transition.

- ❖ Develop eligibility criteria for new shareholders.
- ❖ Establish a method to consistently determine the firm's value to be used for new owner participation and buyout of existing owners.

Succession Planning

- ❖ Develop a succession plan to fill each key management position. Include sufficient time to identify, vet, and train future leaders. This is typically a multi-year process.
- ❖ Develop a contingency plan to fill each key management position in the event of its unanticipated vacancy.

Governance

- ❖ Implement appropriate oversight of management through the Board of Directors on behalf of the shareholders.
- ❖ Strengthen the independence of the Board of Directors by limiting the number of directors who are current members of the senior management team. Consider the addition of external directors.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Effective financial management is essential for the success of the firm.

ACTION ITEM CONSIDERATIONS

Budget Development

- ❖ Prepare an annual operations budget based on an established chart of accounts.
- ❖ Set budgets for revenue and expenses for each operating entity within the firm.

Financial Reporting

- ❖ Evaluate the firm's financial performance by comparing performance ratios to industry norms.
- ❖ Prepare financial statements at least quarterly to monitor performance in relation to established budgets.
- ❖ Monitor cash flow as well as profitability.
- ❖ Distribute financial statements to all parties with responsibility for meeting operational budgets. Consider implementation of an Open-Book culture so that all staff understand the financial statements.
- ❖ Track and report contracted and prospective future workload on a regular basis.

Project Costing

- ❖ Develop a system to report individual project costs in relation to budgets and percent completion on a time interval appropriate to the expected duration of most projects (many firms find the most desirable interval for project status reports to be one week).
- ❖ Improve payment cycles by establishing project billing cycles that consider clients' invoice payment cycles.
- ❖ Issue accurate and timely invoices that are consistent with the agreed-upon billing format and budget.
- ❖ Impress upon all parties responsible for project management the importance of timely review and delivery of prebilling reports to administrative staff.

Accounts Payable/Accounts Receivable

- ❖ Establish terms, conditions, and payment schedules with vendors for basic business needs and project-related services.
- ❖ Monitor aged accounts receivable and work-in-progress. Take follow-up actions as needed.
- ❖ Implement post-billing follow-up within two weeks of billing. Address any client questions about services provided and/or invoicing.
- ❖ Limit the authority for those who can initiate collections efforts outside of normal project manager or accounting personnel activities.

Data Management

- ❖ Establish procedures for back-up of financial data on a regular basis. Provide for the secure storage and retrieval of backed-up information and historic financial records.

MARKETING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Effective marketing and business development activities are needed to attract clients and projects on which the firm relies to achieve its objectives.

ACTION ITEM CONSIDERATIONS

Marketing Plan

- ❖ Establish a marketing and business development focus that is compatible with the firm's core values, vision, mission, and strategic plan.
- ❖ Prepare an annual marketing plan that identifies staff responsibilities and allotted budgets.
- ❖ Monitor performance to permit adjustment of efforts when needed.

Marketing Materials (Including Website and Social Media)

- ❖ Prepare and update, at least annually, personnel resumes that indicate individuals' capabilities and project experience.
- ❖ Establish staff responsibility for development and maintenance of marketing, business development, and public relations materials.
- ❖ Brand and format marketing materials appropriately for the media and intended audience.
- ❖ Make a specific person responsible for reviewing marketing materials to evaluate the accuracy of the information they convey.
- ❖ Avoid laudatory language or overstated claims that could create an implied, elevated standard of care and associated business liabilities.

Client Maintenance/Development

- ❖ Develop and maintain a readily accessible record of completed projects and client contacts.
- ❖ Identify key clients and assign staff responsible for maintaining and nurturing client relationships.
- ❖ Provide client relationship skills training and coaching to staff.
- ❖ Regularly obtain client feedback about the firm's performance.
- ❖ Set guidelines for follow-up and debriefing on lost projects and, on occasion, to ascertain the reasons for success, especially on high-profile or highly competitive projects.

Public Relations

- ❖ Establish procedures for the preparation, review, and client approval of project-related public relations materials.
- ❖ Designate a spokesperson who is trained to deal with the media in "crisis" situations.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The quality of a firm's services is determined by numerous factors including the technical competence of its personnel, its understanding of a client's needs, its effectiveness in communicating with the client and members of the project team, and its ability to manage each project.

ACTION ITEM CONSIDERATIONS

Contract Development and Management

- ❖ Establish guidelines, procedures and/or policies for acceptable contracts and for maintaining satisfactory relationships with clients including addressing situations where work may begin before contracts are executed.
- ❖ Establish a process for subcontractor contracts including documenting proof of insurance.
- ❖ Develop firm-wide information systems to monitor projects for compliance with the firm's contract guidelines.
- ❖ Provide to all project managers easily understood, unambiguous, standard provisions for written contracts.
- ❖ Develop a contract review check list to help project managers avoid unacceptable or undesirable provisions, such as those which allocate liability contrary to the firm's policy, create uninsurable risks, or result in warranties or indemnifications.
- ❖ Establish the limits of responsibility, authority, and accountability of various levels of staff for the performance of projects according to the terms of the contract.
- ❖ Establish procedures through which proposals, scopes of service, contracts, and other appropriate communications are used to enhance clients' awareness of the value added by service continuity; i.e., relying on the firm for both design and construction phase services.
- ❖ Develop and communicate to clients and project staff well-defined scopes of work. If not developed at the start of the project, assure well-defined scopes are developed as soon as possible and then fully communicated to client, staff and members of the project team.
- ❖ Establish and communicate project change order processes with client and project staff including communication, documentation and commitment to do no changes without prior documented approval.

Planning/Staffing

- ❖ Assure Project Manager's experience and training match with project risk and requirements.
- ❖ Conduct an objective assessment of risks at the beginning of a project and as circumstances may dictate during the project's execution.
- ❖ Create project planning, scheduling, budgeting, and personnel selection guidelines project managers

can apply to consider the size, duration, and scope of the project, and any special needs of the client.

- ❖ Identify a project's staffing requirements before making commitments to the client. Evaluate these requirements in relation to overall personnel requirements, available personnel, and the consequences of failing to perform.
- ❖ Vest project personnel assignment responsibility in the appropriate person or persons.
- ❖ Consider the extent of supervision required and the availability of those needed to provide it.
- ❖ Assign to a project only those personnel who have the education, training, and experience suitable for the project's requirements.
- ❖ Coordinate personnel assignments to provide continuity of staff on a project and to fulfill any contractual commitments to assign specific individuals or personnel of specified qualifications.
- ❖ Consider the need for continuity and rotation of assigned personnel in relation to efficient conduct of the services and the consequences of not meeting commitments to the client or compromising the quality of services provided.
- ❖ Maintain thorough records of personnel qualifications, training, and performance. Use those records to support assignment decisions.
- ❖ Establish guidance, policies and/or procedures for field personnel to follow when providing construction observation and testing services, reporting results, and communicating with representatives of the client, contractors, and other project participants.
- ❖ Establish guidelines for the supervision and quality oversight to be maintained by the project manager in the execution of construction-related services.

Communication/Documentation

- ❖ Create and communicate to all project managers guidelines for maintaining regular and timely communications on each project.
- ❖ Document efforts to communicate with to the client, to provide a clear understanding of the issues, and to provide guidance on how risks can be effectively managed and allocated.
- ❖ Establish procedures for thorough and consistent documentation of a project, from pre-engagement activities and communications through project completion.
- ❖ Establish guidelines, procedures and policies governing electronic communication and electronic file management.
- ❖ Require that working files identify and include client-furnished information and other data on which the project proposal was based.
- ❖ Require that project files communicate a reasonably complete chronological record of project activity through inclusion of planning documents, email and other forms of electronic communication, notes that memorialise oral communications, letters and memoranda, conference and meeting minutes, calculations, field and laboratory data, chain-of-custody of samples records, and progress reports.

- ❖ Require that all project information originating within the firm be identified as to project, date, and name(s) of person(s) originating and reviewing each work item.
- ❖ Understand and utilize your Company's project job costing system to manage and report project progress.
- ❖ Establish procedures and systems that effect timely monitoring of a project's budget and schedule compliance and means for instituting corrective action when needed.
- ❖ Require communications with the client and appropriate members of the project team as soon as unavoidable plan variances are recognized.
- ❖ Require that all externally generated project-related communications be date-stamped, and that acknowledgement of receipt be shown by initializing and dating (if different from the date received) each document.
- ❖ Establish guidelines for the form and content of physical and electronic materials maintained in a closed file, identify specific types of documents to be purged, and assign responsibility for closing an active file placing it in secure long-term storage.
- ❖ Close each project, including sample disposal, document return, and completion of final invoicing, in a timely manner.
- ❖ Establish procedures for maintaining the confidentiality of client information.
- ❖ Establish procedures for internal review of the issues involved before fulfilling legal obligations to report information to public agencies.
- ❖ Prohibit the voluntary release of proprietary information contained in a client's report, except when the principal-in-charge of the project agrees that failure to do so would clearly violate professional ethics or jeopardize public health, safety, or welfare.
- ❖ Issue no public announcements or news releases about a client's project except with the client's permission.

Invoicing and Collections

- ❖ Establish a clear understanding of billing procedures and payment requirements during pre-engagement negotiations.
- ❖ When processing invoices for issuance, maintain a thorough review procedure to avoid errors, inappropriate charges, or other mistakes that can delay processing and payment.
- ❖ Bill promptly on projects. Effect appropriate communication thereafter to facilitate collections.
- ❖ Quality Assurance/Quality Control
- ❖ Develop procedures, guidelines, and forms to help project personnel execute their services effectively and efficiently.

- ❖ Establish guidelines for the content, language, and format of formal and letter reports.
- ❖ Establish policies, procedures, and operational criteria for the effective supervision and quality assurance review of the services performed by employees at all levels.
- ❖ Establish policies requiring the timely, documented review and checking of technical data, calculations, drawings, specifications, reports, and other instruments of professional service before they are released to the client.
- ❖ Develop and use checklists for the review of drawings and reports.
- ❖ Subject reports and other deliverables to an independent quality assurance documented review by a senior person other than the project manager and staff involved in preparation of project deliverables.
- ❖ Establish a report review process that considers: the adequacy and appropriateness of the language used; the clarity of advice about project risks and uncertainties and report limitations; the report's ability to distinguish between fact and opinion; and consistency with the project's agreed-to scope and purpose.
- ❖ Require that risk management guidelines be observed in report preparation and in other appropriate activities.
- ❖ Identify situations for which consultation with others is appropriate. Establish procedures that encourage personnel to obtain such consultation to maintain an acceptable level of quality review.
- ❖ Designate in-house and external individuals who can provide consultation for specific topics or situations.
- ❖ Establish and make readily available to pertinent staff a database of outside consulting services available and the firm's policies for contracting for such services.
- ❖ Establish project reporting systems that facilitate monitoring of schedule and budget compliance on a timely basis consistent with the duration of the project.
- ❖ Designate "champions" to lead and monitor progress toward achievement of objectives, to keep the firm on track. Ensure that efforts are redirected if an objective becomes unattainable or inappropriate.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Strong health & safety (H&S) practices are fundamental to good business management, helping firms keep their employees safe, manage risk, and satisfy safety-conscious clients.

ACTION ITEM CONSIDERATIONS

Culture

- ❖ Demonstrate the commitment of top management to a robust, proactive safety program that seeks to eliminate hazards and prevent injuries. Provide the necessary financial support for the program to be effective.
- ❖ Develop H&S as a company value.
- ❖ Track the safety performance of the company with the same level of attention as other major business metrics (financial performance, business development, etc.).
- ❖ Give similar attention to the safety performance of the individual as to other major performance metrics (technical proficiency, project management proficiency, etc.) in annual performance reviews.

Leadership

- ❖ Assign responsibility for a firm-wide H&S program to a single individual, supported by additional personnel throughout the organization as appropriate for the size of the firm.
- ❖ Clearly articulate office managers' responsibilities for the H&S of staff in their office. Evaluate performance with respect to those responsibilities as part of an office manager's annual performance review.
- ❖ Clearly articulate project managers' responsibilities for the H&S of staff involved in their projects. Evaluate performance with respect to those responsibilities as part of a project manager's annual performance review.
- ❖ Include H&S as part of leadership development.

Metrics and Benchmarking

- ❖ Track the firm's performance using industry standard metrics including:
 - Experience Modification Rate (EMR)
 - Total Recordable Incident Rate (TRIR)
 - Days Away, Restricted and Transferred (DART)
- ❖ Benchmark the firm's performance against industry performance using the appropriate NAISC code (e.g. NAICS Code 541330 for Professional, Engineering and Technical Services; NAICS Code 541380 for Testing-Laboratory Services).

Training & Equipment

- ❖ Provide a mandatory safety orientation to all new employees within two weeks of start of employment.
- ❖ Provide first aid and CPR training for field staff (mandatory) and office staff (voluntary).
- ❖ Define requirements and deliver additional training appropriate to each employee's job responsibilities.
- ❖ Develop and maintain a medical monitoring program appropriate for the firm's project mix.
- ❖ Provide the personnel protection equipment and field instruments necessary to promote safe working conditions in the field.
- ❖ Provide well maintained company vehicles for appropriate uses.
- ❖ Provide driver safety guidance and training.

Meetings

- ❖ Start company meetings (of any kind) with a "safety moment".
- ❖ For field projects, conduct tailgate safety meetings at the beginning of every shift and every time the work changes.
- ❖ Conduct office safety meetings monthly or quarterly.

Health and Safety Plans (HASPs)

- ❖ Prepare work-specific HASPs for projects where work outside the office is required.
- ❖ Require project participants to read and sign off on HASPs.

Reporting

- ❖ Require reporting of "near misses" and use the information to identify safety hazards before they result in an incident, so you can improve your safety program by eliminating weaknesses.
- ❖ Require immediate reporting of any injury requiring more than first-aid treatment to a supervisor or higher-level manager, no matter when the injury occurs, so the manager can direct injured workers to an appropriate medical facility for treatment and arrange for drug and alcohol tests if necessary before they leave work.

Communication

- ❖ Issue a monthly health and safety newsletter to all employees.
- ❖ Post safety notices on bulletin boards, in restrooms, and in break areas; change them weekly or monthly.

Conditions of Employment

- ❖ Conduct pre-employment Motor Vehicle Record checks for all personnel.
- ❖ Conduct pre-employment drug screening for personnel.
- ❖ Depending on company needs and client requirements, conduct random drug screening of appropriate personnel.

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The staff of a professional services firm is the firm's principal asset. The ability to retain staff is influenced by the guidance, policies and procedures implemented to achieve a work environment and culture that is sensitive to employees' needs, and provides rewards for competence, professional growth, and loyalty.

ACTION ITEM CONSIDERATIONS

Laws and Regulations

- ❖ Appoint an equal employment opportunity officer and develop affirmative action plans as necessary.
- ❖ Document personnel employment and salary history, and information such as registration, training, performance reviews, physical examinations, and special accomplishments.
- ❖ Control access to personnel information, preserve confidentiality, and maintain personnel records for an appropriate period of time beyond termination or retirement.
- ❖ Monitor substance abuse policies and procedures and adopt such policies as are needed to meet client demands, regulatory requirements and health and safety objectives.

Policies and Procedures

- ❖ Develop guidance, policies and procedures to guide personnel in conducting the firm's activities. Document these guidance, policies and procedures in a manual.
- ❖ Provide access to and allow time for staff to review the firm's guidance, policies and procedures manual. Obtain written acknowledgement of their review and agreement to abide by the firm's policies and procedures.
- ❖ Assign responsibility for developing, issuing, reviewing, and updating guidance, policies and procedures, and for periodically assessing their compliance with legal requirements and the consistency and fairness with which they are applied throughout the firm.
- ❖ Establish a whistle blower policy providing support for employees who see something to say something without fear of retribution.

Position Descriptions

- ❖ Prepare descriptions of the positions in the firm, identifying the qualifications, responsibilities, and reporting relationships associated with each.
- ❖ In instances where discrete position descriptions are not appropriate, establish well-defined roles for such key functions as risk management, health and safety, marketing, human resources, public relations, and electronic resources.

Recruitment

- ❖ Assign recruitment responsibility and train recruiters.

- ❖ Identify staff needs, qualifications, and potential sources.
- ❖ Establish procedures for considering applicants.

Orientation

- ❖ Implement a process for onboarding new employees including orienting them to the firm's guidance, policies, procedures, leadership and culture.

Retention

- ❖ Ensure that managers discuss performance with subordinates at least annually. Mutually identify and agree on future performance targets and professional development goals.
- ❖ Work with staff to identify career path options, opportunities, and requirements for advancement.
- ❖ Establish procedures for assigning responsibilities that are consistent with an individual's capabilities and established career goals.
- ❖ Regularly review position descriptions and their respective salary ranges and benefits. Compare salaries and benefits with those offered by others in the area.
- ❖ Announce staff openings and permit current employees to apply.
- ❖ Monitor professional development activities.
- ❖ Conduct exit interviews. Maintain records of exit interviews, turnover rates, and other information needed to evaluate and improve human resources management.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Staff must be qualified to perform a firm's services and fulfill the technical and nontechnical responsibilities associated with a given position. Professional development activities should encourage staff to improve their professional competence and thereby achieve more responsibility in the firm.

ACTION ITEM CONSIDERATIONS

Continuing Education

- ❖ Make known guidelines, requirements, and opportunities for professional development and promotion.
- ❖ Establish responsibility and provide resources for developing, implementing, and monitoring a professional development program.
- ❖ Review and update training and development programs as needed to reflect the changing needs of the firm and staff.
- ❖ Disseminate information on current practice developments on a continuing basis.
- ❖ Training
- ❖ Provide job-specific, internal training programs to address the needs of the firm and staff.
- ❖ Provide appropriate training for persons designated as instructors.
- ❖ Encourage attendance at external programs designed to enhance specific capabilities needed by the firm.
- ❖ Evaluate training programs and instructors regularly as a basis for upgrading future training activities.
- ❖ Provide opportunities for an individual to accumulate work experience under different supervisors.

Professional Organizations

- ❖ Encourage, financially support, and document active participation in appropriate professional organizations.

Registration/Certification

- ❖ Encourage licensure and certification of professional staff and technical staff. Identify positions for which licensure or certification is necessary.

Risk Management

- ❖ Provide internal risk management training on a regular basis using GBA and similar training materials and programs, case histories related to the firm's practice, and information about laws and legal precedents that may affect the firm's practice.

FACILITIES AND ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

The work environment and electronic resources available to staff exert strong influence on employee engagement and efficiency as well as the quality of a firm's services.

CONSIDERATIONS

Work Space

- ❖ Establish uniform standards for office space and furniture allocations.
- ❖ Provide and maintain the laboratory and field-testing facilities required to support the firm's practice.
- ❖ Maintain operational procedures and facilities to meet regulatory requirements for handling, storing, and disposal of hazardous materials.
- ❖ Monitor the workplace for conformance with applicable government regulations.

Electronic Resources

- ❖ Establish firm-wide information management systems and infrastructure. Designate an individual or group to manage this infrastructure. Provide appropriate security against internal and external threats.
- ❖ Establish standards for computer hardware configurations based on employees' job responsibilities. Limit the number of hardware vendors to simplify computer configuration, deployment and maintenance.
- ❖ Establish standards for software configurations based on employees' job responsibilities and conduct regular audits for licensing compliance. Limit the number of software vendors to simplify computer configuration, deployment and maintenance.
- ❖ Set guidelines for business and personal use of company electronic facilities.
- ❖ Set guidelines for business and personal use of company e-mail and Internet services, both during and after business hours¹.
- ❖ Provide an electronic system for streamlined collection, storage, and retrieval of technical information and project records.
- ❖ Provide for daily backup of all electronic records (corporate, legal, financial, human resources, project-related, etc.) including off-site or cloud storage as appropriate.
- ❖ Protect confidential client information and the firm's proprietary data, among other important records. Provide off-site or cloud storage of duplicates as appropriate.

1. See GBA Practice Alert Number 21 for guidelines on policies for e-mail usage.

APPENDIX A – GBA PEER REVIEW

Peer Review is a uniquely effective means for assessing the adequacy of a firm's guidance, policies and procedures in the nine core management component areas. Peer Review evaluates the extent to which a firm's personnel understand and implement the guidance, policies and procedures as intended, considering the firm's size and the nature of its practice. Firms do not need full written documentation of their guidance, policies and procedures to derive value from Peer Review. Peer Review findings will indicate if the format and breadth of a firm's existing guidance, policies and procedures are sufficient for the firm's needs, if the guidance, policies and procedures are consistently implemented, and if changes would be worthwhile.

For more information about Peer Review, contact GBA by telephone (301/565-2733) or by e-mail (info@geoprofessional.org). Information is also available at the GBA website (www.geoprofessional.org).