GEOPROFESSIONAL BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

PEER REVIEW

REVIEWER'S GUIDE

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Introduction

Lauded by *Engineering News-Record* as one of the construction industry's most innovative developments of the past 125 years (per their featured article, October 1999), GBA's **Peer Review** gives Member Firms a genuinely unique opportunity to improve their business practices, internal and external communications, and overall risk management.

Peer Reviews are conducted to:

- evaluate the adequacy of a firm's policies and procedures;
- assess the effectiveness with which a firm implements its policies and procedures;
- evaluate staff's understanding of a firm's goals and objectives, policies and procedures; and,
- provide suggestions to strengthen a firm's practice and enhance the quality of its services.

Most firms will benefit by starting their **Peer Review** involvement with a Comprehensive Review; i.e., a **Peer Review** that considers all nine Core Management Components (CMCs). A Comprehensive Review often is appropriate for the firm's second Review as well, to measure the impact of change. Depending on circumstances, firms that have been Reviewed two or three times might want to create a Review scope that emphasizes selected CMCs. In other cases, another Comprehensive Review may be more appropriate, as when a firm has experienced significant staff expansion, geographic diversification, management or leadership changes, or changes in services.

GBA Peer Review User's Guide is the title of a general guide that the Peer Review Committee prepared for GBA Member Firms. Firms that wish to take advantage of **Peer Review** use the *GBA Peer Review User's Guide* as a reference. Almost all issues covered in *GBA Peer Review User's Guide* are covered in this guide as well. Members often have questions about the appendices to the *GBA Peer Review User's Guide* and, for that reason, they are included in this guide in the same order; i.e., Appendices A through H of this guide are essentially identical to Appendices A through H of *GBA Peer Review User's Guide*.

To help make it user-friendly, GBA designed **Peer Review** as a "come-as-you-are" activity. Reviewers are engaged to evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies and procedures, not to "bless" a firm because it has all its paperwork in place. If a firm has not prepared one document or another, so be it: Reviewers merely need a memo explaining the policy or procedure involved.

Using interviews and other means, Reviewers will determine how well targeted policies and procedures are understood and followed, and the extent to which change may be worthwhile.

Reviewers' Responsibilities: A Review Team consists of the Team Captain and, depending on the size of the Reviewed firm's staff and the number of its offices, one to three addition Team Members. This guide presents procedures the Team should follow. Appendix I defines the terms used.

A **Peer Review** begins when a Team Captain agrees to serve and then collaborates with the applicant firm's CEO to:

- identify written material for the Team's advance Review,
- gather and evaluate completed staff and client questionnaires,
- establish a Review scope,
- set the Review schedule and identify logistical support needs, and
- select Team Members.

Appendix J comprises a checklist of Team Captain responsibilities.

On-Site Review: Team Members review advance materials before departing for the on-site Review. On site, they interview staff, review files and other relevant materials, and participate in the exit conference. Immediately after the on-site Review, Team Members help prepare the written report that the Reviewed firm's CEO usually requests.

Virtual Review: Team Members review materials from the firm as well as the results of staff and client questionnaires before performing virtual interviews (using Zoom, MS Teams, or similar platforms). Following completion of the virtual interviews, the Team Members prepare a Peer Review report, which is submitted to the CEO in draft form. An exit conference is then scheduled to allow the Review Team to present the report and answer questions the firm may have. The report may then be modified (if needed), and the final signed report submitted to the firm.

Administration

GBA vests overall responsibility for *Peer Review* and its continued development in the Peer Review Committee. Among other activities it pursues, the Committee establishes Reviewer qualifications, develops and conducts Reviewer training sessions, and sets guidelines for *Peer Review* promotion.

A member of GBA staff serves as the *Peer Review* Administrator. Reporting to the Committee, the Administrator maintains records, prepares periodic reports, and helps firms start the process (see Appendix K).

Reviewer Training and Evaluation: The value of *Peer Review* is determined principally by the effectiveness of Reviewers. For that reason, participating firms' CEOs and Team Captains evaluate the performance of Team Members, using questionnaires (Appendixes H and L) issued by the Administrator within 30 days of an on-site Review. Completed questionnaires are returned to GBA and placed into the respective Reviewers' files, each of which also contains a *Peer Reviewer Background and Experience* form (Appendix M) maintained by the Administrator.

The Peer Review Committee holds periodic training sessions regarding the Peer Review process to ensure Reviewers are familiar with the current process and the tools available. GBA posts potential Team Members and Team Captains on the GBA website. Reviewer qualifications include an individual's experience (including previous Peer Reviews), GBA Peer Review training, their interest in performing Peer Reviews, and prior Peer Review evaluations. Reviewers become Team Captains with superior evaluations from the Team Captains and the CEOs of Peer Reviewed firms.

Ethics, Confidentiality, and Noncompete Considerations: Peer Reviewers—meaning the Team Captain and all Team Members—should come from firms that operate outside a participating firm's geographic marketing area (GMA) to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Any information learned or developed by a Peer Reviewer is confidential. *It may not be shared with anyone* except other Reviewers on the Team, solely for Review purposes. Trust is the foundation on which Peer Review is based. Reviewers are individually duty-bound to keep confidential information confidential.

Peer Reviewers shall not disclose to any third party or use for personal or business advantage any information gained from or personal opinions formed about the Reviewed firm, including its employees,

instruments of professional service, and clientele. For example, after a *Peer Review*, no Peer Reviewers and none of their firms should initiate recruitment of the participating firm's employees or marketing of the participating firm's clients in the participating firm's GMA. A written agreement requiring adherence to these conditions, such as the sample shown in Appendix G, can be executed by each Reviewer if the participating firm's CEO so prefers. Any Reviewer who is unable to commit to these requirements, whether or not in writing, must decline *Peer Review* participation.

Honorarium and Expenses (On-Site Reviews): Each Team Member receives an honorarium for each day spent on-site, plus an additional one-day honorarium that considers travel to and from the site, as well as various pre- and post-Review activities. The Team Captain receives an honorarium for each day spent on site, plus an additional three-day honorarium that considers travel and the time and talent required to plan and manage the Review and complete the written report that usually is required. The suggested honorarium is $2,000/day for Team Members with previous *Peer Review* experience, and $1,500/day honorarium for first-time Reviewers. Peer Reviewers are at liberty to charge a different fee.

The Reviewed firm is responsible for Reviewers' reasonable travel, hotel, and meal expenses. To avoid the carrying costs of these expenses, Reviewers may submit invoices as the expenses are incurred or may request payment of a retainer prior to the site visit.

Honorarium and Expenses (Virtual Reviews): Each Team Member receives an honorarium based on the number of virtual interviews. For each 6 virtual interviews, they receive one day of honorarium. They also receive an additional 2 days of honorarium for reviewing Peer Review documents, assisting with the report writing, participating in the exist conference, as well as various other Peer Review activities. The Team Captain receives an additional three-day honorarium for planning and managing the Peer Review.

Each Reviewer must submit an invoice to the participating firm, preferably by no later than two weeks after completing the Review. Appendix N contains a sample invoice form.

The Review

Each *Peer Review* should follow a consistent process that begins when the Administrator receives an application and responds quickly to the applicant firm's CEO with a list of qualified Team Captains. The CEO and the *Peer Review* Team Captain whom the CEO selects then confer about the issuance and collection of staff and client questionnaires. The Team Captain collects the questionnaires and prepares a summary of responses. The summary helps the Captain and CEO set the Review's scope and schedule.

Once they confirm the scope and schedule in writing, the Team Captain and CEO select Team Members. Each Member is sent advance Review materials at least two to three weeks before the on-site Review or virtual interviews.

For on-site Reviews, or "visitation," this typically takes from one to five days, depending on the size of the firm and the number of offices to be visited (Appendix O). On-site Review concludes with an exit conference, and usually is followed by a written report, unless the participating firm's CEO requests otherwise. Team Members help the Team Captain prepare the report, which the Captain issues within 30 days of on-site Review.

For virtual Reviews, interviews are performed (see Appendix O) using Zoom, MS Teams, or similar platforms. The offices/labs are viewed using similar virtual platforms. The written report is prepared and submitted in draft format to the firm's CEO, followed by an exit conference and completion of the final report. Each of the steps of *Peer Review* is described more specifically below.

Team Captain Selection: The applicant firm's CEO starts the process by selecting a Team Captain from the list maintained by GBA and posted on its website. CEOs are advised to select carefully. Even if they already know several Team Captains, they should speak with the CEOs of Reviewed firms to acquire comments and suggestions about qualified candidates. They should interview at least three candidates, evaluating the availability, interest, personality, business- management background, and relevant experience of each. They should also discuss honorarium issues.

Team Member Selection: Team Members usually are selected in consultation with the CEO. Team Captains should include the name of at least one new first-time Peer Reviewer with teams of three or more members. Team Captains are also responsible for mentoring and reviewing the first-time Peer Reviewer's work. The Team Captain is responsible for confirming each Team Member.

Scoping: A unique, tightly focused scope can be particularly beneficial for firms that have been through several *Peer Reviews*. By contrast, well-established firms that have not previously been Reviewed are usually best served by a Comprehensive *Peer Review* the first and second times. The first Review should yield insightful opinions about the completeness of a firm's policies and procedures, the effectiveness with which management communicates them, and the diligence with which staff implements them. The second Review, usually conducted about four years later, should help determine the efficacy of changes made.

Comprehensive *Peer Review* comprises an assessment of all nine Core Management Components (CMCs) described in Appendix F:

- Business Management,

- Facilities and Technical Resources,

- Human Resources Management,

- Professional Development,

- Project Management,

- Financial Management,

- Marketing Practices, and

- Electronic Resources Management.

- Image and Culture

Focused Peer Review: Although not as broad in scope as a *Peer Review*, some firms have found "Peer Review Lite" to be a valuable way to focus on a single issue or two that their peers in GBA have already encountered. This approach can be used by firms that are relatively small and still getting established in their marketplace or by firms of any size that desire input about just one or two primary area of business. The approach generally requires less preparation than a Comprehensive *Peer Review*. Contact GBA for more details.

Engagement Letter: The Team Captain should prepare an engagement letter to memorialize the scope, the Peer Review Team Members, and the schedule. The sample shown in Appendix Q indicates:

- CMCs to be reviewed,

- CMCs to be emphasized,

- specific operational problems to be considered,

- written materials to be provided (new materials should not be prepared, given that *Peer Review's* purpose is to gauge the effectiveness of existing policies and procedures),

- the offices to be reviewed,

- names and résumés of Team Members,

- draft schedule for the Review,

- estimated budget, and

- logistical requirements if an on-site review is planned (e.g., office facilities, support personnel, accommodations, and interoffice travel) and the party responsible for fulfilling them.

The CEO should confirm in writing receipt of the Team Captain's engagement letter. When the Peer Reviewed firm is insured by Terra Insurance Company, the firm's CEO must send a copy of the engagement letter to Terra. (Other insurance companies may have their own procedures that must be followed.)

Review Materials: *Peer Review* preparation should not be burdensome, because *Peer Review* is a "come-as-you-are" activity. Appendix F lists typical written materials that should be provided, when available. If the firm has not committed a given policy or procedure in writing, the Team Captain should encourage the CEO to prepare a brief memo describing the policy or procedure involved, so the Review team knows what it is. The purpose of *Peer Review* is to assess how effectively a firm is accomplishing its goals. The extent to which written and oral policies and procedures are understood and practiced will be evaluated through interviews.

Staff and Client Questionnaires: The Team Captain and CEO need to determine whom staff and client questionnaires (Appendixes D and E) should be sent. The staff and client questionnaires are completed using password-protected, secure, online questionnaires. The firm may choose to add its own questions to the standard *Peer Review* questions.

Staff questionnaires should be completed by at least one-and-one-half to two times the number of staff members who are expected to be interviewed. Some CEOs may prefer that all staff complete questionnaires so none feels left out. In either case, the Team Captain needs to tell the CEO to inform staff about the upcoming Peer Review and (if appropriate) to advise that not all who receive questionnaires will be interviewed. (The Team Captain should give the CEO a copy of the sample memorandum shown in Appendix P.) The CEO should determine the number of client questionnaires to issue based on the breadth of the firm's client base, and assuming a 50% to 60% return rate. Issuing at least 25 requests is suggested. Issuing 40 to 50 would be considered a reasonable maximum in most cases.

On-Site Reviews: During the scoping session, the CEO and Team Captain should discuss:

- the schedule of on-site Review activities,

- the Team's on-site office and logistical support needs,

- hotel reservations, and

- interoffice travel requirements (for a multiple office Review).

Staff interviews can be disruptive of normal office operations, so advanced interview scheduling can be particularly helpful. The Team Captain and CEO should start the interview scheduling process by determining how many people should be interviewed. Interviewees should represent all staff levels, so the Team can obtain a full view of the staff's perception of the firm. Most interviews should be scheduled to comprise about 45 minutes. As many as 60 minutes or more may be needed to interview senior members of staff. A Peer Reviewer should be able to interview five or six staff members each day while also attending to other activities.

The sample two-day Review schedule shown in Appendix R is provided for general guidance only. The particular activities associated with any given Review, and staff's availability for interviews, will effect the schedule.

The on-site Review begins the night before Reviewers visit a firm's office, when they assemble to discuss their assigned responsibilities and the activities planned for the balance of their stay. The meeting also creates social contact between the Reviewers, some of whom may not be well-acquainted with one another.

The Team begins its office visit by meeting with the CEO. Next, the CEO introduces the Team to key staff, leads a tour of the facilities, and confirms the schedule.

Most of the Team's time will be spent on interviews, reviewing pertinent files, and meeting periodically to discuss progress.

The input derived from CEO and staff interviews can be particularly instructive. The quality of that input is enhanced when the interviewees trust the Reviewers. Reviewers should:

- emphasize that their purpose is to help the firm improve,

- stress process confidentiality,

- note that they will not rely on a single opinion, and

- demonstrate that we hear and evaluate each individual's comments

Appendix S provides some interviewing tips; Appendix T lists sample interview questions. (Material provided in Appendix F can be helpful, too.) Reviewers should ask interviewees the same questions to maintain consistency of information. They should also take handwritten notes during each interview (with the concurrence of the interviewee) and prepare a summary immediately after they conclude interview.

Virtual Interviews: If the virtual interview option is selected, on-site logistics are deleted. Virtual interviews are performed using Zoom, MS Teams, or similar platforms. The interviews are scheduled after completion of the staff and client questionnaires, and after review of the firm's documents. The interviews are normally scheduled over a period of several weeks in order to avoid scheduling issues, and to allow plenty of time between interviews to review critical issues. This interview questioning is similar to on-site interviews.

On-Site Exit Oral Report: The importance of the oral report cannot be overstated. Key findings must be presented clearly, so the intent of the message is well-understood. (Appendix U provides suggestions for presenting findings about sensitive issues.) At least two critical issues need to be addressed:

1. Are the firm's quality control policies and procedures adequate for its size and the nature of its practice?

2. Is there an adequate level of completeness and consistency in the implementation of the firm's quality control policies and procedures?

The *Peer Review* Team should allow at least two hours to prepare for the exit conference and at least three hours to present its oral report. (In the case of larger firms, allowing four hours for the presentation may be wise.) *The exit conference may not be abbreviated because a Reviewer has to catch a plane.* The exit conference is far too important to be compromised.

The Review Team usually provides its oral report to the CEO and CEO-selected members of the firm's top management. Some CEOs prefer to video record the oral report, to share it with branch managers, among others. Whether or not the oral report is videotaped, the Review Team should ask to meet with the CEO privately, before the oral report, when sensitive issues are involved. (The Team Captain must consider this issue in planning.)

The Team Captain determines the format of the exit conference and decides who will report what. Those reporting must refrain from relating comments that can be attributed to a specific staff member.

The oral report should encourage dialogue. If it can be arranged, a dinner following the oral report provides an excellent opportunity for continued discussion under more relaxed conditions.

Written Report: The Team Captain needs to inform the CEO that a written report, which is optional, is subject to civil-procedure discovery proceedings. Nonetheless, a written report is almost always requested. It permits the Review Team to coalesce and communicate its observations and recommendations far more effectively.

Review-related documents and work papers in the possession of Peer Reviewers after completion of the Review, and any electronic or other memory media containing them, must be either returned to the participating firm's CEO or destroyed.

Team Members who review the written report *must* issue comments directly to the Team Captain and *must* destroy any copies of the draft or their comments, as well as any electronic or other memory media containing them.

The Team Captain issues the written report and keeps a copy to facilitate discussions with the participating firm's CEO. The Team Captain *must* destroy that copy, as well as any electronic or other memory media containing the report, 30 days after the report is submitted.

Virtual Exit Conference: For the virtual Review, the exit conference is normally completed following submittal of a draft written report, and after the firm's documents and Reviewers' comments are returned. This allows the firm some time to review the written feedback prior to the virtual exit conference so that the firm can generate questions for discussion. In some cases, the Peer Review team can bring outside specialists to a portion of the exit conference if their presence can help address specific issues.

Final Evaluations: The Team Captain should request that the CEO of the Reviewed firm, upon receipt of the final report, complete the "CEO Critique of Review Team" form (Appendix H) and mail it to GBA headquarters.

The Team Captain should complete the "Team Captain's Assessment of *Peer Review* Team Members" form (Appendix L) and mail it to GBA headquarters.

Equivalency *Peer Review*

GBA Equivalency *Peer Review* is a validation Review that GBA developed for large, multi-office firms that rely on internal *Peer Review*-type procedures. Although internal programs produce many benefits, they commonly lack some of the strengths inherent in a GBA *Peer Review*, particularly when:

- the corporate office is not reviewed, and

- reviewers do not address corporate/branch communication issues.

Equivalency Peer Review can strengthen an internal program by:

- considering the corporate office's conformance with firm policies and procedures,

- evaluating corporate/branch communication,

- providing a broader perspective on practice issues, and

- evaluating the effectiveness of internal reviews of branch offices by monitoring several.

A Team Captain and CEO develop an Equivalency *Peer Review* scope much as they would develop a conventional *Peer Review* scope. Scheduling can be more complex, however, because Review Team participation in branch office reviews may occur over several weeks or months. In those cases, the Team Captain or a Team Member may return to the corporate office to provide an oral report after the final branch office visit. The equivalency review may also be performed virtually, similar to the process described previously in this document.

The frequency of Equivalency *Peer Review* depends upon factors such as the results of previous evaluations, changes in firm leadership, or acquisition and merger activity. Equivalency *Peer Reviews* usually are performed about once every five years.

Other Review, Registration, and Certification Programs

American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) Programs

A2LA programs have been developed as review mechanisms for A2LA members to help them evaluate their laboratories for A2LA accreditation. The A2LA program considers:

- organization and management,
- quality system audit and review,
- personnel,
- accommodations and environment,
- equipment and reference materials,
- measurement, traceability, and calibration,
- test methods,
- handling of test items,
- records,
- certificates and reports,
- subcontracting,
- outside support and supplies, and
- complaints.

The methods used to consider these issues are similar to those used for an GBA Peer Review, except A2LA is more technically focused.

Details: www.a2la.org

International Standards Organization (ISO) 9000 Registrations

The ISO 9000 series (ISO 9001 through 9004) focuses on defining, developing, and maintaining a quality loop from the time a client's service need is recognized through follow-up with the client and supplier after the service is delivered. ISO 9000 registration indicates that a firm follows consistent communications and documentation protocol through the complete cycle of services to a client, but it does not focus on the quality of service that's delivered. By contrast, Peer Review examines the overall issues associated with effective business operations, leading to findings, conclusions, and recommendations that can help a firm improve.

Details: www.iso.org

American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) Peer Review Program

Participation in the AICPA Peer Review Program, on which GBA's is based, is a requirement for continuing AICPA membership. Any deficiencies noted in Peer Review Reports (which are available for other CPAs' review) must be corrected. However, a GBA firm is free to accept or reject any of the recommendations made by the Reviewers recommendations.

Peer Review Application

Firm Name _____

Address _____ Zip _____

Name of Peer Review Coordinator
(Should Be CEO, Senior Principal, or Branch Manager) _____

e-Mail Address _____

Telephone Number _____ Ext. _____

Facsimile Number _____

Website _____

☐   I need a copy of the Peer Review User's Guide.

☐   I need help understanding how Peer Review works.

☐   I need help selecting a Team Captain.

I have scheduled the Peer Review for: _____

My Team Captain will be: _____

Signed for the Firm: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Complete and return to:
GBA
info@geoprofessional.org
Tel.: (301)565-2733

Team Captain Selection

Begin your interview of a Team Captain candidate by discussing your firm's geographical marketing areas (GMAs) to ensure that your GMAs are remote enough from the candidates to prevent conflicts of interest. Next, provide a thumbnail sketch of your firm (including its size, age, number of offices, and range of technical services), describe your general expectations of *Peer Review*, and indicate when you would like the Review performed.

Assuming no conflict of interest exists, and the candidate is available, gain background information about the candidate by asking questions. Some samples:

1. Tell me about your career.

2. Tell me about your firm *(age, disciplines, size, branch offices, etc.).*

3. What is your role in the firm, especially as it relates to the nine Core Management Components? *(Responses usually will suggest other questions that will yield more information about the candidate's experience in those areas that concern you the most.)*

4. How many Review Teams have you served on? How many as Captain?

5. How many times has your firm been Reviewed?

6. What benefits has your firm derived from *Peer Review*?

7. How has participation as a Reviewer benefited you and your firm?

8. Describe the procedure you propose to follow in working with me to develop a Review scope that will address my expectations.

9. Please provide references to at least three CEOs of firms you have Reviewed.

At the end of the conversation, advise the candidate of your schedule for making a selection.

Staff Questionnaire

Professionalism: Image and Culture

Please rate your recent experience with the firm on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree)basis.

	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Our firm enhances our profession.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I make a difference here.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Our culture supports high-quality work and service.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People work extra hard to get a job done.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I respect the firm's leaders.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We help our community.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We want to be the best.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This firm is unique compared to competitors.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This firm is honest and ethical.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm has reasonable expectations of its employees.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm promotes a work/life balance.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This firm is on the cutting edge of technology.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This firm is committed to the environment and sustainability.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I enjoy the people I work with.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We add value to our clients' projects.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Management treats staff fairly at all levels.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Comments

Business Management

	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
We have a strategic plan or an annual business plan.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I know our mission and goals.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm is profit driven.											
The firm wants to grow.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I'm informed about company matters.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have a leadership-transition plan.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have an ownership-transition plan.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We're serious about loss prevention and risk management.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We're serious about safety.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Policies and procedures are clearly defined and understood.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Comments

Facilities and Technical Resources

	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I have the resources I need to do quality work.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Our office projects a professional image.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Our field staff has current equipment.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm is current with maintenance and calibration of lab and field equipment.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Comments

Professional Development

	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I receive appropriate training.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am encouraged to participate in professional societies.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am encouraged to contribute to the advancement of our profession.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am encouraged to contribute to my community.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Staff receives appropriate training and professional development.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I respect our senior staff.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm helps our profession.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Comments

Human Resources

	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The firm treats staff well.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm has clearly defined policies and procedures.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm is current with labor laws.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have regular and meaningful performance reviews.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I like my boss.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My salary is fair.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My benefits are fair (retirement, medical, vacation, other).	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am encouraged to grow professionally.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Comments

Project Management

	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I know how to set up a project.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm keeps excellent project records.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm maintains current project files.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm does well in assigning staff to projects.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have excellent professional staff.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have excellent field staff.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have excellent office staff.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We provide excellent designs and recommendations.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We provide practical and constructible recommendations.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Our deliverables look professional.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We make excellent presentations.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have credibility with regulatory agencies.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We are responsive to our clients.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We are effective with contract negotiations.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have good client relationships.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We are excellent problem solvers.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm has effective financial reporting procedures to track project progress and expenses.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm has useful and effective QC and QA procedures.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm has useful and effective health and safety plans for field work.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Comments

Financial Management

	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
We are financially strong.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm issues monthly P&L statements to appropriate staff.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm performs timely and accurate billing.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm performs timely collections.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Comments											

Marketing

	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I like our website.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We use social media.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We state our qualifications honestly.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have professional marketing materials.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have an effective marketing plan.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We know our target clients and markets.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have excellent communications with clients.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have a go/no go form for project pursuits.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have excellent marketing-staff support.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Comments											

Electronic Resources Management

	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I have the hardware and software I need.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have effective IT support.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We have appropriate policies for acquisition, maintenance, and use of hardware, software, e-mail, and Internet.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We maintain electronic data files, system security, and back-up procedures.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We subject e-mails to rigorous review.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm incorporates e-mail into project files.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Our firm only uses licensed software.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Comments

How do you differentiate the firm from its competitors?

_____

What should the firm stop doing?

_____

What should the firm continue doing?

_____

How could the firm be more profitable?

_____

What are the firm's major opportunities?

_____

Who are the firm's emerging leaders?

_____

How do you rate your firm's professional loss-prevention record? Why?

_____

Questionnaire Submitted By:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Office: _____

Department: _____

THANK YOU!

Client Questionnaire Cover Letter and Questionnaire

Questionnaire Cover Letter

[Firm letterhead]

[Month, Date, Year]

[Individual's Name]
[Name of Client Organization]
[Client Organization Address]

Dear [Title] [Name]:

[Firm Name] is undergoing an GBA *Peer Review* to improve our client service, and we need your feedback. You have been selected because we value our relationship and your feedback. This Peer Review is being performed by leaders in companies similar to ours. One very important step in the process is requesting feedback from our valued clients. The information provided will provide the Peer Reviewer information on our company and our strengths and weaknesses. This information will assist the Peer Reviewer in providing us with valuable recommendations on how we can improve.

Please be assured that your responses will be held in the strictest of confidence unless you want your information shared with us. Indicate your preference on the last page of the questionnaire. If you want your responses kept confidential, only the Peer Reviewer will see your responses, and will use it solely to develop trend data. However, if you agree to share your responses with us, we will be able to follow up on any issues that you may have. We ask that you be completely candid in your answers. If a question does not apply to you, please answer N/A.

A link to the questionnaire will be emailed to you in the near future. We would appreciate if you could fill out your questionnaire no later than **X**. If you can not complete the questionnaire for some reason, please contact me.

On behalf of [Firm name], we thank you in advance for your time and your candid response. If you have any questions or concerns pertaining to this process, please let me know.

Sincerely,

[Firm Name]
[CEO's Name]
[CEO's Title]

cc: [Peer Review Team Captain's Name]

Client Questionnaire

Professionalism: Image and Culture

	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I'm familiar with this firm.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm has an excellent image.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I respect the firm.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I respect the firm's staff.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm respects me as a client representative.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would recommend this firm to a colleague.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I plan to retain this firm again.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Staff attends professional meetings and contributes.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm contributes to the community.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm works well with clients and service providers.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Comments

Business Management

	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The firm has excellent leaders.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm has excellent management ability.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm focuses on safety.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The staff has the resources needed to serve me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Comments

Client Questionnaire

Facilities and Technical Resources

	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The firm has appropriate field equipment and technical resources.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm's offices project a professional image.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Comments											

Project Management

	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Project managers care about me and my project.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Project managers appropriately communicate with me and my team.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm assigns appropriate field staff to my projects.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I receive excellent presentations and deliverables.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This firm has credibility with regulatory agencies.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm is responsive.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm negotiates fair contracts.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Deliverables are on time.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Deliverables are within budget.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Comments											

Client Questionnaire

Financial Management

	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
This firm sends invoices in a timely manner.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm's invoices are accurate.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm provides value for its fees.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm meets budgets.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm responds promptly to invoicing questions.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The firm follows FAR rules.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Comments											

Marketing

	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I receive personal communication from people I know.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I like the firm's marketing material and website.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I see the firm on social media sites.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I receive appropriate marketing communications from the firm.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Our staff appropriately asks for additional work.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Our work product matches our marketing message.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Comments											

Client Questionnaire

Which office(s) do you work with?

_____

How many similar/competitive firms have you retained in the past few years?

_____

What are the firm's two or three principal strengths?

_____

What are the firm's two or three principal weaknesses?

_____

How could the firm improve its services to you?

_____

Confidentiality*

☐   Share my responses with the firm

☐   Keep my responses confidential

Questionnaire Submitted By: (Please provide this information for the Peer Reviewers. If you chose to keep your responses confidential, it will not be shared with the firm.)

Name: _____

Title: _____

Company: _____

THANK YOU!

Core Management Components

The GBA outlines the nine Core Management Components (CMCs) below, plus questions to assist in evaluation. When Comprehensive Peer Review is conducted, the Reviewers' report to the CEO could be organized in the order shown below, to provide a more structured and uniform appraisal. Otherwise, the report format should be established ahead of time by the Team Captain and the firm's CEO.

1. BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

- **Strategic Planning**

    a. Does the firm have a strategic plan?

    b. When was the strategic plan last updated?

    c. Is the strategic plan supported with an annual business plan that includes specific, measurable, and attainable goals?

    d. Does the firm monitor its strategic plan goals?

    e. Is the firm meeting the goals?

    f. Do employees know the firm's goals?

- **Ownership Structure**

    a. Does the firm have an ownership transition strategy and/or plan?

    b. Are rising stars involved in ownership?

- **Organizational Structure**

    a. Do employees understand the organization structure?

    b. Does the CEO delegate authority?

    c. Do leaders seek open/honest feedback?

    d. Is there a Loss Prevention Coordinator, Health & Safety Officer, EEO Officer, HR Manager, IT Manager?

    e. Does the firm have an Organization Chart?

- **Communications**

    a. Are firm communications between management and personnel adequate?

    b. Does the firm have a policy and procedure manual?

    c. Does the policy and procedure manual address topics of need to the firm?

    d. When was the policy and procedure manual last updated?

- **Ownership Transition**

    a. Does the firm identify and develop new owners?

    b. Does the firm have an ownership transition plan?

- **Leadership Transition**

    a. Does the firm identify and develop new leaders?

    b. Are the new leaders engaged?

- Response to Past Peer Reviews

    a. How has the firm responded to the recommendations from past Peer Reviews?

- **Loss Prevention**

    a. Who is responsible for handling loss prevention claims and training?

    b. How are lessons learned from loss experiences communicated within the firm?

2. FACILITIES AND TECHNICAL RESOURCES

    a. Does the firm's facility enhance its image?

    b. Are in-house technical resources adequate; e.g., library, laboratory equipment, personal computers, servers, and software?

    c. Are the firm's resources generally current or out-of-date/obsolete?

    d. Does the firm inventory major lab, field, safety, and office equipment?

    e. How does the firm handle and store hazardous materials and specialized geo-environmental equipment?

    f.   How does the firm securely store and retrieve historical records?

    g. Do employees receive personal protective equipment?

3. HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

- **General**

    a. Is there a designated HR manager?

    b. Who hires and fires employees?

    c. Do employees know who they report to?

    d. Does the firm have a formal new-hire initiation process to on-board new employees?

- **Recruitment**

    a. Why would someone want to work here?

    b. Does the firm have a written recruitment procedure?

    c. Does the firm do background checks prior to offer of employment letter?

- **Employment Laws and Regulations**

  a. Does the firm have a Personnel Manual? When was the manual last updated?

  b. Does the personnel manual have a signature page?

  c. Does the firm provide formal health and safety training?

  d. Does the firm have a written health and safety plan?

  e. Does the firm have a medical monitoring program?

  f. Are there Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action plans?

  g. Does the firm have a substance abuse screening/testing policy?

  h. Does the firm perform formal exit interviews of departing employees?

  i. Who handles former employee inquiries?

  j. Does the firm have a policy prohibiting employees from moonlighting?

  k. How does the firm handle independent contractors?

- **Employee Performance Reviews**

  a. Does the firm conduct regular formal employee reviews? (Do you ask for feedback?)

  b. Does the firm encourage the development of personal career path development plans?

  c. Do you have written disciplinary action notices? Are they current?

- **Personnel Records**

  a. Are employee personnel records stored in a secure location with limited access?

  b. Do personnel files document the employee's progress, training, discipline, registration, etc.?

- **Employee Retention**

  a. How does the firm actively communicate with employees?

  b. Does the firm routinely survey employees to determine their level of engagement?

  c. What is the overall level of morale in the firm?

  d. How does the firm benchmark salary/benefits?

  e. Are there any policies you should implement now?

4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Training**

  a. Is training formal or informal? Internal or external programs?

  b. Does the firm have an annual training budget?

  c. How does the firm encourage active participation in professional organizations and advancing the profession?

    d. How does the firm determine who receives training?

    e. Does the firm maintain records of who received training, the type of training and when the training took place (personnel file)?

    f. Are supervisors encouraged to give junior employees a variety of assignments to help them learn and diversify their capabilities?

    g. Does the firm have a formal mentor program? Does junior staff have access to more experienced staff?

    h. Does the firm discuss ethics or have formal training?

- **Registration/Certification Policies**

    a. Does the firm encourage employees to become registered/certified?

- **Policies and procedures for implementing GBA and other loss prevention materials and programs.**

    a. Do employees know where to get GBA and other loss prevention and risk management materials?

    b. Do appropriate personnel receive GBA training, e.g., , PM training, FOPP, webinars, etc.?

5. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- **Contracts**

    a. Do projects have a clear scope of services? Do project managers mutually develop scopes with clients?

    b. Are standard firm contracts available? Are they updated periodically to reflect current law and practice? Are they reviewed by legal counsel?

    c. Do project managers have written contracts with subs with adequate protection and proof of insurance?

    d. Do projects have written contracts?

    e. Who within the firm is responsible for reviewing contracts? Does the firm have a checklist of critical terms? Do project managers have access to legal help if required?

    f. Who has authority to sign contracts? Does staff know who is authorized to sign contracts?

    g. Is there a formal procedure for scope/fee changes? Do project managers ask for scope/fee adjustments in a timely manner?

    h. Does the firm include construction phase services in the proposal scope?

- **Personnel Management**

    a. Does the firm maintain a list of employees authorized to serve as project managers? Do they receive formal training before assuming the project manager role? Do they know their authority and have a written job description?

b. Are project managers respected within the firm?

c. Does the firm have a formal procedure for assigning personnel to projects?

d. Do project managers have access to good project and budget controls?

e. Do project managers encourage and teach ethical conduct?

f. Do project managers assign certified personnel to perform applicable lab and field tests? Is there a plan to keep appropriate personnel certified?

g. Do project managers have responsibility to review and balance employee workloads?

- **Communications**

   a. Do project managers keep clients informed about schedule/budget progress? Does the firm meet budgets and schedules?

   b. How do PM's communicate with PE's? Does it work?

   c. How does the firm handle client/project confidentiality requests?

- **Financial**

   a. Do project managers have active access to project financial information to adequately track project schedules and budgets?

   b. Is there a formal project review procedure to identify and handle projects that are over budget and/or behind schedule?

- **Quality**

   a. Does the firm have a formal Quality Control procedure for technical work and correspondences? Are templates and/or checklists available – with caveats?

   b. Who has responsibility for reviewing plans, calculations, and reports? Does the quality reviewer co-sign plans, reports and initial calculation reviews?

   c. Does the firm have report/documentation standards to assure reports are concise, thorough, and written to meet firm standards? Do the reports identify risks and limitations? Do they stay within the scope of services?

- **File Management**

   a. Does the firm have a project document and file management system? Does the system include a formal file retention/purge policy?

   b. Does the firm have a formal project file organization structure?

   c. Does the firm have an effective File retention/archive policy?

   d. Does the firm have a File Closure policy? Does it discuss what to do with draft reports, rough logs, letters, notes, etc.? What about files with construction services – does the firm combine office and field file documents and keep marked up plans?

   e. Does the firm have a written policy for filing/archiving electronic project records?

6. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- **General**

  a. Is the firm profitable enough to achieve firm goals for competitive salary, benefits, ownership transition, and firm investment?

  b. Does the firm prepare monthly or regular financial statements? Who receives the information?

  c. Does the firm prepare an annual budget? Does it include capital, revenue, and overhead projections?

  d. Does the firm use separate offices as profit centers? Does this create problems?

  e. Does the firm have standard, timely billing procedures? Do project managers review drafts?

  f. Does the firm have formal collections policies/procedures? Are project manager's involved in the collections process?

  g. How are the firm's financial records stored and retrieved?

  h. Are owners happy with the quality and frequency of financial information?

  i. Does the firm's financial management software provide timely, accurate, and pertinent information to manage projects and the firm?

  j. Does the firm educate owners about financial issues?

  k. Do project managers have the financial controls they need?

  l. Does the firm monitor and forecast backlog?

  m. Does the firm track and monitor proposal success rates?

  n. Does the firm monitor write-offs? Does the firm have a policy for approving write-offs?

7. MARKETING AND SALES

- **Marketing Plan**

  a. Do you have target markets? Target clients? Target projects?

  b. Do you have marketing personnel? Do they maintain a web site, social media, blogs, newsletters, etc.? Do you train them? Do you monitor marketing information for language that might oversell the firm and consistency with your culture/ideals?

  c. Do you check with clients/contract language before highlighting a project in a marketing piece?

  d. Do you keep résumés current?

  e. Do you solicit client feedback (surveys, etc.?)

- **Sales Plan**

  a. Is the marketing plan consistent with the sales plan? Do sales staff know your target clients, markets, services, and available resources? Do salesmen track target clients and projects over time?

b. Do professionals sell their own work? Does the firm help them balance selling and doing the work? Are these valuable people adequately rewarded?

c. Does the firm have professional sales staff? Do they set realistic client expectations? Do you monitor sales volume?

d. Do sales staff attend professional meetings, give talks, write papers, stay visible, talk to clients?

e. Does the firm have a Go, No-Go proposal response procedure?

f. Does the firm track proposal success rates?

8. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

a. Are your investments in this area adequate for where your firm is going?

b. Are you safe from cyber-attack?

c. Do you have a policy to acquire and maintain hardware and licensed software?

d. Do you inventory software?

e. Who's in charge of your IT? Do you support them with budget and staff?

f. How do you secure and back up files? Do you have limited access for some financial information?

g. Do you have guidelines for business and personal use of computers, internet, e-mail, etc.? Do you review outgoing e-mail content?

9. IMAGE AND CULTURE

a. What are your firm's strengths and weaknesses?

b. Why is your firm unique?

c. Are you happy here? Do you contribute?

d. Are you growing?

e. What is the firm's culture? Do you like it?

f. What is the firm's reputation?

g. Does the firm make the profession better?

h. Are you proud of the firm?

i. How does the firm treat employees? How does it treat clients? Others?

j. Do you trust leadership?

k. Is the firm honest and ethical?

Suggested Agreement for Service as a Peer Reviewer

I recognize that *Peer Review* is a singularly important service whose success depends upon the integrity of Peer Reviewers. In return for the professional, educational, and other benefits that service as a Peer Reviewer will bring to me personally, I confirm my awareness of professional *Peer Review* practices and, accordingly, I agree:

- to treat as confidential and not disclose to any third-party information gained or personal opinions formed by me about the participating firm during the course or as a consequence of *Peer Review*, including, without limitation, information or opinions about the firm's policies, methods of operation, instruments of service, employees, clientele, etc.;

- to abstain from the targeted recruitment of employees of the participating firm based upon information gained during *Peer Review*;

- to abstain from marketing the participating firm's clients in the firm's geographic marketing area based upon information gained during *Peer Review*;

- when serving as a *Peer Review* Team Member, to treat as confidential, not disclose or discuss with any third party, and destroy or return to the Team Captain any drafts of the written report and any memory media containing them, or

- when serving as a *Peer Review* Team Captain, to treat as confidential, not disclose or discuss with any third party, destroy all drafts of the written report, destroy all memory media containing any drafts of the written report and the final report, and destroy all except one copy of the written report immediately after submitting the original copy to the participating firm, and, 30 days thereafter, to destroy the sole copy in my possession, and

- in the case of uncertainty about proper procedure, to address the issue to the appropriate party within the participating firm (such as the CEO) and within GBA (such as the Chair of the Peer Review Committee, the President, or the Chair of the Council of Fellows).

Signed _____Date _____
       (Peer Reviewer)

CEO Critique of Review Team

Peer Review No._____

The value and success of **Peer Review** depend on the participation of effective Reviewers in an up-to-date Review process. Your firm has just completed a **Peer Review**. Please help us improve the quality of our process and Reviewer training. Just complete the following critique and return it to us promptly. Thank you!

Instructions:
This questionnaire is to be completed by the participating firm's or office's CEO. Most of the questions can be answered using brief comments or by checking the appropriate boxes. It should only take you a few minutes, but if you have strong feelings about certain issues, please expand your comments. Many of the questions can be answered on a 5 to 1 basis, 5 being a positive superlative and 1 being a negative superlative.

Note: GBA records indicate that the following individuals are being evaluated by this questionnaire:

Captain: _____

Team Member #1 _____ _____

Team Member #2 _____ _____

Team Member #3 _____ _____

This questionnaire was completed by: _____

CEO Critique of Review Team

Please rate your recent experience with the firm on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree) basis.

	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The scoping process was helpful.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I was able to mold the peer review process to fit my firm's unique situation.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Selecting my team captain was easy.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Selecting my other team member(s) was easy.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I spent a lot of time assembling documents for the peer review team.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It was valuable to prepare for the peer review.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The peer review experience was good for me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The peer review experience was good for our firm.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The peer review team conformed to our schedule.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The reviewers worked well together.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The reviewers did a good job evaluating our core management components.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The reviewers were courteous to our staff.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The reviewers communicated with our staff well.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The reviewers did a good job on the exit conference.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The reviewers did a nice job on their report.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The Captain did a good job.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The team members did a good job.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The on-site review time was about right.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The off-site review time was about right.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The staff surveys were helpful.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The client surveys were helpful.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Comments

1. What problems were not discussed during the *Peer Review*?

_____

2. What were the most beneficial aspects of *Peer Review*?

_____

3. Were there any significant negative aspects of *Peer Review*?

_____

4. What should be done to improve the *Peer Review* process before your next Review?

_____

5. What did this *Peer Review* mean to you and your firm?

_____

Can we use this quote in our promotion of the *Peer Review* process?

☐   Yes

☐   No

Complete and return to:

GBA

info@geoprofessional.org

Glossary of Terms

Some of the terms used are defined as follows.

- **Administrator:** GBA Staff.
- **Advance Review:** Review of documents and other materials by the *Peer Review* Team before traveling to the Review site.
- **Branch Office:** A principal office that is an extension of the headquarters office through branching, affiliation, or other means.
- **CEO:** The chief executive officer of a member firm or the manager of the office being reviewed.
- **Committee:** The GBA Peer Review Committee.
- **Comprehensive *Peer Review*:** A Review that gives about equal weight to each of the nine Core Management Components (CMCs).
- **Core Management Components (CMCs):** Professional service firms' nine strategically important management areas.
- **Firmwide *Peer Review*:** A procedure permitting the simultaneous Review of all offices of Participating Firms with more than one office. Firmwide *Peer Review* involves the Review of the firm's headquarters office plus all or a representative number (at least one-third) of the branch offices.
- **Office Review:** A review of a given office's facilities, materials, and staff attitudes and understandings.
- **Participant:** A participating firm or office.
- **Participating firm:** Any GBA Member Firm office that has undergone (within the past five years) or is undergoing *Peer Review* or, in the case of a multi-office firm, a Firmwide *Peer Review* or Equivalency **Peer Review**.
- ***Peer Review* Day:** Any day or appreciable portion of a day during which the Review Team visits a participating firm's office or is traveling between offices.
- ***Peer Review* Team:** The Team Captain and one or more Team Members selected to perform a Review.
- ***Peer Review* Team Captain:** The leader of a *Peer Review* Team. In order to become a Captain, an individual must have served as a *Peer Review* Team Member on at least three Reviews and have been recommended in reports evaluating past Review Team service.
- ***Peer Review* Team Member:** In order to serve as *Peer Review* Team Members, individuals must be registered and/or degreed professionals with at least ten years' experience, associated or formerly associated with an GBA Member Firm that has been Peer Reviewed. Reviewers must have extensive knowledge of the talents and techniques required to manage professional service firms effectively. They must have at least five years' office management experience and must have served as an officer, associate, or senior professional of a firm. Reviewers who have attended an GBA-sponsored or GBA-sanctioned Peer Reviewer Training Session at least once every three years will be on the GBA Reviewers List. Team members not on the GBA list may be selected so serve on the Review Team.
- **Peer Reviewer:** A *Peer Review* Team Captain or Team Member.
- **Principal Office:** A full-time business office rather than an office established solely to monitor one or two projects or otherwise serve on a temporary or ancillary basis.
- **Virtual Peer Review:** The *Peer Review* is performed remotely using video-conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Webex, Facetime, etc. This includes the interviews, office/laboratory visit, and the exit conference.

Team Captain's Checklist

A Team Captain becomes the Captain of a specific Review Team the moment the individual agrees to so serve for a particular Review. The following checklist is a list of a Team Captain's key responsibilities. Team Captains are encouraged to modify this checklist as experience suggests.

Before the Interviews

☐ Be sure the CEO has obtained a *Peer Review* number from the GBA office. Use that number on all Review correspondence.

☐ Initiate the scoping process by setting a date and time for it. If face-to-face, discuss honorarium and travel cost impacts for the scoping session.

☐ Confer with the CEO to determine the number of staff and client representatives who should be asked to complete questionnaires, whether to use hard-copy questionnaires or electronic; and the schedule for initiating the surveys and by when responses must be received.

☐ Once scope is agreed to, identify available written documentation of policies and procedures that will be provided to the Review Team before on-site Review.

☐ Identify any informal briefing memos needed to assess key practice issues not covered by written policies and procedures.

☐ Discuss the organization of the oral and written reports with the CEO.

☐ Establish Team size and set the duration and desired dates of the Interviews.

☐ Working with the CEO, identify the expertise and experience Team Members should possess, and the geographic locations of their practices.

☐ Coordinate the selection of Team Members and alternates with the CEO, being sure to include the name of a first-time Member candidate when the Team will comprise more than two Members.

☐ Identify the individual responsible for logistical support within the Participating Firm.

☐ Prepare an engagement letter in which you document the Review's scope and logistical support matters. If the participating firm is insured by Terra Insurance Company, remind the CEO to issue a copy of the engagement letter to Terra. Obtain the CEO's confirmation of understandings.

☐ Communicate with candidate Team Members to confirm their ability and willingness to serve. Provide a copy of the engagement letter to each and to the GBA *Peer Review* Administrator.

☐ Identify interview candidates based on their questionnaire responses. Achieve a balanced distribution of staff levels. Assign interviewees to rest of Team and provide copies of questionnaires.

☐ At least two weeks before interviews, advise the CEO of preferred interviewees and proposed interview dates and times.

☐ As required, make last-minute refinements to schedule to help minimize disruption of the Participating Firm's normal course of business without compromising the Review.

On-Site Review

- [ ] Set time and place for Team to assemble the evening before the office Review. Inform Team Members.

- [ ] Set time for the Team to meet with the CEO to kick off Review activities.

- [ ] With Team Members, meet other senior management personnel. Receive an orientation tour and briefing on office logistics.

- [ ] Each day, meet individually with Team Members to assess progress and the need for schedule revisions or specific arrangements based on findings to date.

- [ ] Conduct evening debriefing sessions over and following dinner to begin consolidation of findings and outlining oral report.

- [ ] On the evening before the last Review Day, lead Team in examining work completed to date for adequacy of scope coverage. Make adjustments in activities to fulfill the commitments made when the scope was developed.

- [ ] Assign reporting responsibilities to rest of Team for the exit conference. Typically, the Reviewer who makes an oral presentation about a scope item is also responsible for preparing the draft for that portion of the written report.

- [ ] Conduct exit conference with CEO and CEO's designated staff.

- [ ] Encourage the CEO to host an informal dinner with key staff.

- [ ] Assuming a written report is desired, inform Team Members about their assignments and schedule.

- [ ] Encourage the CEO to complete and mail the "CEO Critique of Review Team." with *Peer Review* number, and to use the promotional materials that GBA staff will provide.

Alternate for Virtual Review

- [ ] Set time for Team to meet prior to the interviews.

- [ ] Set time for the Team to meet with the CEO and other senior management personnel to kick off Review activities.

- [ ] Set up period meetings with Team Members to debrief, assess progress and determine the need for schedule revisions or specific arrangements based on findings to date.

- [ ] After completion of the interviews, schedule a meeting with Team Members to discuss feedback for the report.

- [ ] Assign reporting responsibilities to the Team for the report and exit conference. Prepare draft report and submit to the firm's CEO.

- [ ] Conduct virtual exit conference with CEO and CEO's designated staff.

- [ ] Encourage the CEO to complete and mail the "CEO Critique of Review Team." with *Peer Review* number, and to use the promotional materials that GBA staff will provide.

After Review

☐ Assuming a written report is desired, receive report drafts prepared by Team Members within one week (or according to a different schedule) and assemble the full report. If you prefer, send the full draft report to all Team Members for a final review before issuing it to the CEO.

☐ Return or destroy and/or delete all documents provided by the participating firm.

☐ Save a copy of the final report, if prepared. Destroy any hard copies of the draft report, any elements of the draft or final report, and any other copies of the final report, or delete them, or destroy any media (e.g., CD ROM, USB) to which they have been saved. Notify all Team Members to do likewise, and to return or destroy and/or delete all documents provided by the participating firm.

☐ Within three weeks after the on-site Review, submit and remind each Team Member to submit an invoice for the honorarium and expenses to the CEO or CEO's designee. All invoices should bear the *Peer Review* number.

☐ Thirty days after submitting a final report, if one has been prepared, call the CEO to inquire about any questions or the desire for more follow-up. Then destroy your one remaining copy of the final report.

☐ Complete "Team Captain's Assessment of Peer Review Team Members."

Sample Letter from the Administrator

[Date]

[Name and Title of CEO]
[FIRM NAME]
[Street Address]
[City, ST ZIP]

<div align="right">Re: <i>Peer Review</i> No._____</div>

Dear [Name]:

Congratulations on your decision to participate in ***Peer Review***. You are joining the ranks of many GBA Member Firms that have already reaped the benefits of ***Peer Review***.

A list of qualified Team Captains is posted on GBA's website (www.geoprofessional.org). If you have any difficulty accessing the list, let me know.

The ***Peer Review*** *User's Guide* is also available on the website. Please review it. It describes recommended procedures for selecting a Team Captain, which is an extremely important task. If you want more input, contact a member of the Peer Review Committee or a representative of a Member Firm that has been Peer Reviewed. Once you select your Team Captain, you two together will plan for the Review.

Note: We have assigned _____ as your ***Peer Review*** number. Please be sure to reference this number on all related correspondence.

I wish you success in your ***Peer Review***. I am confident you will find it beneficial. I also look forward to seeing you and others from your firm at the upcoming GBA meeting in [ ].

Sincerely,

GBA

[Name]
Peer Review Administrator

Captain's Assessment of Team Members

Peer Review No._____

Your Name: _____

Name of Peer Review Team Member: _____

Participating Firm: _____

Please complete and return this form to help GBA's Peer Review Committee monitor the performance of Peer Reviewers and identify training needs. Complete one form for each Team Member. Please provide explanation if the answer is "needs improvement."

Please rate your recent experience with the firm on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree)basis.

	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Familiar with Peer Review process.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Reviewed advance material.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Evaluated CMC's adequately.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Communicated well with staff.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Easy to work with.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Able to analyze findings and draw meaningful conclusions.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Good presenter at exit conference.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Good writer.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I recommend him/her for future peer reviews.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I recommend him/her as a peer review captain.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This team member needs improvement before future peer reviews (explain in comments).	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Comments											

Complete and return to: **GBA** / info@geoprofessional.org

Peer Reviewer Background and Experience Form

Name _____

Firm Name _____ Established _____

Address _____

_____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ Ext. _____

Fax _____

E-mail _____

Previous Firm (if significant)

_____

_____

_____

Professional Services Offered

	Current Firm	Previous Firm(s)	Comments
Geotechnical	☐	☐	_____
Drilling	☐	☐	_____
Materials Testing	☐	☐	_____
Environmental	☐	☐	_____
Phase I	☐	☐	_____
Phase II	☐	☐	_____
Phase III	☐	☐	_____
Brownfields	☐	☐	_____
Civil Engineering	☐	☐	_____
Environmental Science	☐	☐	_____
(Wetlands…)	☐	☐	_____

Other _____

_____

Your Position with This Firm _____

Summary of Key Responsibilities _____

____**Branch Offices** No ☐ Yes ☐ _____

_____
                            (How Many)

List Regions (Locations) and Sizes

_____ _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____

Areas of Personal Expertise
(Check all boxes that apply to your current position and business expertise.)

	I primarily do this	I primarily manage this	I supervise firm's activities	I am aware of activities	No significant experience
Business Management					
Facilities and Technical Resources					
Human Resources Management					
Professional Development					
Financial Management					
Project Management					
Marketing Practices					
Electronic Resources Management					
Image and Culture					

Peer Reviewer Training
GBA Training Session(s) Attended: _____

_____

Peer Review Experience

Has your current firm been Peer Reviewed?   Yes ☐   No ☐

How many times?_____   Most recent (date)_____

Brief Statement about Benefits of Being Reviewed _____

_____

_____

Peer Review*s* Completed (or see attached résumé)

Name of Firm Reviewed	Team Captain	Peer Reviewer	Year

Peer Reviewer Remuneration Request

Peer Review No._____

Your remuneration request should be submitted to the participating firm no later than two weeks after Review. Timely submission is *crucial*.

Name of Reviewer: _____

Reviewed Firm: _____

- Honorarium _____ days @ $ _____ per day = $_____

- Itemization of Expenses

  Travel to/from city (air, rail, etc.) $ _____

  Auto miles @ current IRS rate ($0._____)   _____

  Hotel   _____

  Meals   _____

  Other (specify) _____

  _____

  _____

  TOTAL $ _____

- Receipts must be attached. *All* expenses must be itemized and documented for IRS purposes.

Honorarium payable to: ☐ Firm   ☐ Self*   Expenses payable to: ☐ Firm   ☐ Self*

*Social Security Number _____

Address:_____

_____

Signature _____Date_____

Suggested Peer Review Staffing Requirements

Suggested Peer Review Staffing Requirements for On-Site Reviews

Number of Full-Time Employees in Each Office Being Reviewed	Minimum Number of Peer Reviewers	Suggested Number of Site Visitation Days
1 - 5	1	1
6 - 10	1	2
11 - 20	2	2
21 – 50	2 or 3	2 or 3
51 - 100	3	3
100 - 175	4	3 to 4
175+		TBD by CEO and Captain

Suggested Peer Review Staffing Requirements for Virtual Reviews

Number of Full-Time Employees in Each Office Being Reviewed	Minimum Number of Peer Reviewers	Suggested Number of Staff Interviews
1 - 5	1	5
6 - 10	1	5 to 7
11 - 20	1	8 to 12
21 – 50	1 or 2	12 to 16
51 - 100	2 or 3	20 to 30
100 - 175	3	30 to 40
175+		TBD by CEO and Captain

Sample Ceo Memorandum About On-Site *Peer Review*

To: All Staff
From: [Name], CEO
Date: XXXXX
Subject: GBA Peer Review

As many of you may know, [Firm Name] is preparing for our GBA **Peer Review**. Because this will be a new experience for many of you, I want to share with you what we expect to gain from the process.

The primary reasons for being Reviewed are: 1) to learn what we can do to improve our business practices to more effectively serve our clients, and 2) to meet the needs of our staff for professional growth and satisfaction with their place of employment.

To implement **Peer Review**, a team of principals from firms like ours will spend [X] days in this office and o[X] day in the [XXX] office. They will interview staff, examine typical project and report files, and gather other data to help them evaluate management's effectiveness in several key areas. Before leaving our office, the team will present an oral report to a group of our senior management, and then follow up with a written report within 30 days. I will share with all of you the results of the review and the recommendations of the Review Team.

The team will be selected from a list of qualified Peer Reviewers provided by GBA. All Reviewers will come from firms located outside of our geographic marketing area. Every Reviewer is duty-bound to adhere to a set of ethical requirements. All comments made to Peer Reviewers remain anonymous, so please be open and honest when communicating with a Peer Reviewer.

I will be working with the Team Captain to develop the appropriate level of review for the nine Core Management Components: Business Management, Facilities and Technical Resources, Human Resources Management, Professional Development, Project Management, Financial Management, Marketing Practices, Electronic Resources Management, and Image and Culture. To get the best possible picture of our effectiveness in these areas, we will create a review scope that considers the views of senior management, staff, and key clients.

Within the next two weeks we will email questionnaire requests to a preselected cross section of our staff, to get a balanced level of input. (Because of our size, it will not be practical for all staff to complete one.) If you receive a questionnaire, it's important that you complete it within three days and send it to the Team Captain to help us develop an effective scope. Your responses will be confidential. However, we will check with the Team Captain and follow up with reminder calls to those who have not responded.

We will also send questionnaires to a number of our clients to get their assessment of our services. These questionnaires will also go directly to the Team Captain.

When the **Peer Review** Team visits us, the Reviewers will select staff for interviews. Any information gained through these interviews will be kept confidential by the Review Team. For the Review process to yield the best results, you need to be forthright in your responses so we can learn where and how we can work to improve [Firm Name].

I know each one of you will extend a warm welcome to the Review Team. Thank you for your participation.

Sample Ceo Memorandum About Virtual *Peer Review*

To: All Staff
From: [Name], CEO
Date: XXXXX
Subject: GBA Peer Review

As many of you may know, [Firm Name] is preparing for our GBA Peer Review. Because this will be a new experience for many of you, I want to share with you what we expect to gain from the process.

The primary reasons for being Reviewed are: 1) to learn what we can do to improve our business practices to more effectively serve our clients, and 2) to meet the needs of our staff for professional growth and satisfaction with their place of employment.

To implement Peer Review, a team of principals from firms like ours will interview staff, examine typical project and report files, and gather other data to help them evaluate management's effectiveness in several key areas. They will prepare a written report followed by an exit conference to discuss the report. I will share with all of you the results of the review and the recommendations of the Review Team.

The team will be selected from a list of qualified Peer Reviewers provided by GBA. All Reviewers will come from firms located outside of our geographic marketing area. Every Reviewer is duty-bound to adhere to a set of ethical requirements. All comments made to Peer Reviewers remain anonymous, so please be open and honest when communicating with a Peer Reviewer.

I will be working with the Team Captain to develop the appropriate level of review for the nine Core Management Components: Business Management, Facilities and Technical Resources, Human Resources Management, Professional Development, Project Management, Financial Management, Marketing Practices, Electronic Resources Management, and Image and Culture. To get the best possible picture of our effectiveness in these areas, we will create a review scope that considers the views of senior management, staff, and key clients.

Within the next two weeks, I will email Questionnaire requests to a preselected cross section of our staff, to get a balanced level of input. (Because of our size, it will not be practical for all staff to complete one.) If you receive a questionnaire, it's important that you complete it within three days to help us develop an effective scope. Your responses will be confidential. However, we will check with the Team Captain and follow up with reminder calls to those who have not responded.

We will also send questionnaires to a number of our clients to get their assessment of our services. The responses to the client questionnaires will also go directly to the Team Captain.

Any information gained through these questionnaires and interviews will be kept confidential by the Review Team. For the Review process to yield the best results, you need to be forthright in your responses so we can learn where and how we can work to improve [Firm Name].

Thank you for your participation.

Sample Engagement Letter for On-Site Review

[Date]

[Name and Title of CEO]
[FIRM NAME]
[Street Address]
[City, ST ZIP]

Re: *Peer Review* No._____

Dear [Name]:

I'm pleased with the progress we've made in defining the scope of your upcoming *Peer Review*. Staff and client input has been valuable in helping us assess your key concerns, reflected in the scope, below. Please review the scope and let me know if I have missed any issues or if any areas lack the amount of emphasis you want.

With this letter I enclose a list of prospective Team Members selected to meet the general qualifications we discussed. Please select at least *[five]* candidates to fill the *[three]* positions so we will have fallback selections in case one or more are unable to participate. As we discussed, I will make the calls to enlist them once we have agreed on the order in which they should be contacted.

I am also attaching a proposed schedule for the on-site Review. This schedule is for the general guidance of the Review Team. We will adjust it to accommodate the availability of your staff, given inevitable work-schedule changes. I will ask Team Members to schedule their return travel to accommodate the dinner gathering following the exit conference that we discussed. This has proven to be time well spent in reviewing the Team's assessment of a firm.

We have discussed the pros and cons of a final written report and as you requested, we will prepare one and issue it within 30 days of the site visit.

We have targeted the Review dates for some time during the week beginning [*the day of week, month, date, year]*. It would be preferable to either start the review on Monday or complete it on Friday, so Team Members are not traveling on two workdays.

As for specifics of the scope, we will emphasize the following Core Management Components (CMCs): *[list by title]*.

If all of the CMCs are not to be given an in-depth evaluation, an assessment of the remaining

CMCs will be limited to a peripheral overview. Within the context of the Review, we will also address your developing plans for *[this might include such issues as management training and/or succession, ownership transfer, need for new directions in developing information systems technology within the firm, etc.]*.

The written documentation available for the primary areas of concern is well developed and, I believe, more than the Team will need to review in advance. Nonetheless, advance Review of several documents will be helpful. These include: *[list pertinent documents from the key items identified in Appendix F]*.

One area you asked us to stress is written documentation. Please help the Team by preparing a brief memo outlining the firm's procedures and how they are applied. With that memo in hand, we can assess whether your intended message is compatible with the understanding of your staff.

Team Members will make their own travel arrangements to and from your head office location, in *[city]*. We will be on-site for *[three]* days. All of us will require hotel reservations for *[four]* nights. Once the Team has been selected, I will advise you if any have to stay over for a *[fifth]* night. I understand that your administrative assistant, [name], will make these arrangements and send me details so I can pass the information on. We anticipate using taxis or ride-hailing services (Uber, Lyft, etc) for local travel because of the relative proximity of the hotels to your office.

Because this is a Firmwide Review, some of our Team will be traveling to your other [two] offices. As discussed, we will take day-trips, so no additional hotel reservations will be needed. Your assistant will make air travel arrangements for the *[two]* day-trips as soon as we identify the rest of the Team. Because I am not familiar with *[city]*, I will appreciate learning your opinions about nearby restaurants.

I've included a budget estimate for the Review on the attached Budget Worksheet. The estimate of expenses that we will incur for travel, lodging, and meals should be considered approximate. The estimate for Team Member honoraria should be reasonably accurate based on our agreed-upon site review schedule.

I believe this covers the logistical issues. I look forward to your comments on the scope and arrangements outlined above. I will initiate contacts to fill out the Team as soon as we agree that we have all bases covered.

I look forward to our visit. In the meantime, if you have any thoughts or questions on any aspect of **Peer Review**, please call or e-mail. And as a reminder, if your firm is insured by Terra Insurance Company, you need to send the company a copy of this letter. I am not familiar with the requirements of other insurers.

Sincerely,
[NAME OF FIRM]
[Name of Team Captain]
pc: Peer Review Administrator
      GBA

Sample Two-Day On-Site Review Schedule

The following sample schedule covers the activities that occur during a typical two-day *Peer Review*. *Each schedule should be specifically* structured for a Review so the Review Team's time is used effectively, while reducing disruption of a firm's operations.

Night before the Start of the Office Review

6:00PM-10:00PM   Review Team meets for dinner, reviews Office Review schedule. Captain assigns areas of responsibility to Team Member(s).

First Day of Office Review

8:00AM-8:30AM   Peer Reviewers meet with the CEO to discuss schedules, procedures, and special arrangements.

8:30AM-9:00AM   Peer Reviewers meet with the CEO and key staff members for introductions and briefings. Team Captain describes objectives and procedures of the Peer Review. CEO gives background information about the firm, its history, scope of services, organization, policies and procedures, accomplishments, and problems. Staff members describe their responsibilities. Discussion is encouraged.

9:00AM-9:30AM   Team receives a guided tour of office, laboratory, and other facilities.

9:30AM-Noon   Team conducts individual interviews with: the CEO; other principals and key staff members, including managers and supervisors; representative professional and technical employees; and representative office staff. (Suggested interview questions are listed in Appendix T.)

Noon-1:00PM   *Optional:* Peer Reviewers and senior staff lunch together. (Review Team may opt for a working lunch.)

1:00PM-1:30PM   Team continues individual interviews.

1:30PM-2:00PM   Peer Reviewers meet to exchange information and impressions gained to this point.

2:00PM-5:00PM   Reviewers continue interviews and begin review of reports, files, manuals, and other documents.

After 5:00PM   Peer Reviewers exchange information, noting areas where additional input is needed. They also plan activities for the following day and formulate preliminary *Peer Review* evaluations using Appendix F as a guideline.

Second Day of Office Review

8:00AM-11:00AM   Team continues to review project files, reports, proposals, purchase orders, manuals, and similar materials. Additional or follow-up interviews may be conducted.

11:00AM-2:00PM   Peer Reviewers (only) have a working lunch to discuss findings and organize their conclusions and recommendations for the oral report

2:30PM-5:30PM   The Review Team meets with the CEO to present its report of conclusions and recommendations. (With the concurrence of the Team Captain, the CEO may invite other key executives to attend all or some of this meeting.)

After 5:30PM   The Team Captain and possibly some of the Team Members should make every effort to stay for a casual dinner with the firm leaders. Members of GBA consistently rate the opportunity to network with their peers as one of the most valuable benefits of GBA.

Note: All members of the *Peer Review* Team should plan to remain at the office until at least 6:00PM and should arrange their travel itinerary accordingly.

After the Office Review

The Team Captain and Team Members usually prepare a written report, with each Team Member drafting an assigned section in a convenient electronic format. Drafts of sections prepared by Team Members are sent to the Team Captain according to the schedule set by the Team Captain. The Team Captain assembles the report and edits it for continuity and consistency. The report draft may, at the Captain's option, be sent to all Team Members for review and comment. In that case, Team Members would return suggested revisions to the Team Captain and destroy any hard-copy or electronic copies not returned to the Team Captain.

Team Captain incorporates comments and issues the final report to the CEO within the agreed-upon schedule.

The CEO should call the Team Captain within one week of receiving the report to confirm its receipt and, if the CEO so desires, to discuss findings, seek clarifications, and so on. If the CEO does not initiate any contact within two weeks the Team Captain should call the CEO.

Interviewing Tips for Peer Reviewers

Dr. Gary D'Angelo* presented the following tips at a **Peer Review** training session. We present them here to help GBA Peer Reviewers improve their information-gathering effectiveness when interviewing a participating firm's management and staff.

- Reduce misinterpretation by asking clarifying questions. Research has shown that the average level of misinterpretation in a conversation is about 25%. Try to remember this simple thought: "I know what I said, but what did you hear?"

- Establish accuracy by asking confirming questions, to gather the accurate data you need to develop effective recommendations.

- **Distinguish between *needs* and *opinions*.** "We need more thus-and-so around here" is not a statement of need; it's an opinion. Remember to ask, "What's not happening to make you say that?"

- **Learn how to help the interviewee trust you**, so you can get solid answers to somewhat intimate questions. Start by recognizing the level of risk taken in a conversation. That risk can be characterized on an ascending scale of 1 to 4, as follows:

  Level 1: Engaging in small talk, typified by light humor or questions like, "How's the weather?"

  Level 2: Gathering basic facts, using questions like, "How long have you worked here?"

  Level 3: Requesting opinions about likes or dislikes, or asking questions such as, "How would you increase profit?"

  Level 4: An intimate level where the interviewer seeks to expose hidden needs by asking, for example, "What kind of job do you think the CEO is doing?" Build trust (so you can get to Level 4) by:

    - holding the conversation in a private location in which the other person feels most comfortable,

    - explaining why you need to know the answers to the questions you are asking,

    - emphasizing that you understand sensitive issues may be revealed and that you will treat them confidentially and anonymously,

    - shutting your notebook as a nonverbal cue that it's safe for the interviewee to reveal intimate information, and

    - changing the venue of the conversation. (Have you ever noticed how much you learn when you walk someone to the door or elevator after an otherwise unproductive meeting?)

- **Learn to recognize nonverbal cadence**, a grouping of nonverbal characteristics (eye contact, voice pitch, posture, etc.) that is unique to each person and revealed during interviews. Establish a baseline by paying attention to your interviewee's nonverbal cadence when you ask low-risk questions. For example, if the interviewee maintains strong eye contact with you and leans forward when you ask low-risk questions, but then leans back and looks away from you when answering a high-risk question, the person's nonverbal cadence has changed, usually signifying increased risk or trust. What caused the change? What does it mean? Find out by asking.

- Keep asking clarifying and probing questions when you continue to receive generalized opinions (e.g., "We don't communicate enough around here") in response to questions that seek specificity. Asking for an example is usually a fast, productive technique.

- **Closed-end questions (answered by yes or no) can be effective** as long as you remember to ask why the person responded that way.

- **Prioritize the firm's needs** as you understand them. The firm will not be able to implement all of the *Peer Review* Team's recommendations. It should work on those that are most important or which need to be done quickly.

Sample Interview Inquiries

The following questions and other inquiries are suggested to develop information on a staff member's knowledge of the firm's approach to the nine Core Management Components. The questions should be tailored to the position and experience of each employee.

A. General Inquiries for All Personnel

1. Introduction (Low Risk)

1.1   Describe your education, experience, and career objectives.

1.2   What are your technical and managerial responsibilities?

1.3   Do you have an employee manual? Do you generally agree with the policies? How well are the policies implemented?

1.4   How is the firm organized? Who runs the show? Other key people?

1.5   To whom do you report? Are you supervising anyone?

1.6   How would you describe your compensation and benefit package?

1.7   Describe the firm's top three goals in order of importance.

1.8   Describe the loss prevention materials available to you. When and how do you use them?

1.9   What sort of loss prevention training have you had and does the firm practice what it preaches?

1.10   Describe the electronic resources available to you.

2. Details (Medium Risk)

2.1   What strengths exist in the firm that are not being capitalized upon?

2.2   What is your understanding of the reasons your firm is participating in *Peer Review* and why we are doing these interviews?

2.3   How much does the firm emphasize quality performance? How can quality be improved?

2.4   Describe how projects are managed.

2.5   Can you and others in the firm make decisions without checking with superiors? If so, what types?

2.6   Describe your firm's health and safety program and its medical monitoring program.

2.7   How often is your performance formally reviewed?

2.8   Describe the process of performance reviews.

2.9   What other feedback do you receive with respect to your performance?

2.10   How is staff selected to attend continuing-education/professional-development programs?

2.11   Is staff encouraged to write and publish technical papers? If so, what incentives are offered?

2.12 Describe your involvement with clients.

2.13 Describe your involvement with capital expenditures.

2.14 Describe who makes policy for the firm and who is asked to provide input into policy changes.

2.15 Do you know how the firm is doing financially? How is this communicated?

2.16 Describe your firm's marketing efforts.

2.17 Who hires staff?

2.18 How much staff turnover occurs? Describe your firm's employee retention practices. Why have recently departed employees left?

2.19 What is the organizational structure for planning, acquiring, and maintaining the firm's information systems infrastructure?

2.20 Describe the policies and practices used to maintain system security and integrity of data.

2.21 What does the firm do to verify corporate and individual staff compliance with software copyright laws?

2.22 What is your opinion of the firm's web site?

3. Probing (High Risk)

3.1 If something happened to the top dog, who would run the firm?

3.2 Describe how the firm encourages, identifies, recognizes, and rewards superior performance.

3.3 Describe how firm management reacts when mistakes are made.

3.4 How would you describe employee relations and morale?

3.5 How would you increase teamwork in the firm?

3.6 Describe how principals communicate with associates. How good is communication around here?

3.7 Whom do you consult with about important issues?

3.8 If you were the CEO, how would you improve the firm?

3.9 What are the most frustrating and satisfactory aspects of your job?

3.10 Would you advise a friend to join the firm?

3.11 What are your thoughts on the firm's leadership skills development program?

3.12 Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

B. Inquiries for Drilling Personnel

4.1 Is a manager or supervisor in charge of drilling operations, including contracting of all drilling activities, planning, and scheduling?

4.2 Are drillers trained and/or certified appropriately for the services they perform and for the geographic locations in which they perform their services; e.g. certified monitoring-well installers, water-well drillers, etc.?

4.3   Does the firm have clearly established procedures for safety equipment, health and safety plans, and job specifications? Do all drillers and supervisors understand these procedures?

4.4   Are personnel and equipment supplied with the proper safety equipment and devices for projects? Is everyone familiar with the function and operation of this equipment?

4.5   How is maintenance of equipment and spare parts inventory handled? Is it adequate?

4.6   What measures does the firm employ to limit its exposure for damages to buried utilities, landscaping, wetland area, and unauthorized entry onto project sites?

4.7   Has the firm established a safety-training program specifically for drillers and drill helpers?

4.8   Has the firm established a medical-monitoring procedure for drilling personnel?

4.9   Is the drill crew given proper and complete information? Do project engineers brief drillers about special problems the site may present? Do drillers receive specific site information?

4.10   Describe how the calibration of various pieces of testing equipment (SPT hammers, vane shear, cone penetrometers, etc.) is maintained.

4.11   What practices are followed to prevent the falsification of data?

4.12   If the firm uses subcontract drilling services, what does the firm do to verify the subcontracted firm has a subcontract agreement, adequate insurance, and a health and safety plan?

C. Questions for Laboratory Personnel

5.1   What is the laboratory's organizational structure?

5.2   How is work checked? Who prepares reports?

5.3   Who assigns and schedules work?

5.4   Does the lab participate in a reference sample program? Which one?

5.5   Is the lab accredited by COE, FAA, CCRL, AALA, NVLAP, AASHTO?

5.6   When and how are samples disposed?

5.7   When is equipment calibrated? By whom? To what standard?

5.8   Are other labs used to provide testing services the firm is not equipped to provide?

5.9   Is the annual budget for new lab equipment adequate?

5.10   What evidence is there that recent developments in laboratory testing equipment or methods are being investigated and integrated into the firm's business as appropriate?

5.11   What practices are followed to prevent the falsification of data?

5.12   If the firm uses subcontract laboratories, what does the firm do to verify the subcontracted firm has a subcontract agreement and proper insurance?

Tips for Constructive Criticism

Dr. Gary D'Angelo* presented the following suggestions at a GBA (previously ASFE) annual meeting.

- **Provide immediate, specific feedback,** and do it often. Don't use the school model of waiting until the job is over; that's too late. Give feedback early so your subordinate has time to change.

- **Give feedback in a positive, persuasive way**, because it will get much more response than feedback designed to create fear. Using a fear approach, you would say something like, "If you don't improve your report writing, the firm will lose its key clients, especially the shipping company." Using a persuasive approach, you'd cite a positive advantage and say, "If the firm improves its report writing, you'll gain a competitive advantage because your key clients have said they will hire only those firms that hand them clear, concise, and accurate reports. They don't want to have to do a lot of editing."

- **Recognize that most smart/successful people respond to nonconstructive criticism** by adopting a defensive posture and blaming someone else or an outside source (e.g., the client's staff), rather than focusing on themselves. Typically, they have succeeded most of their lives and don't like to think they have made a mistake or failed. To get through to these folks: focus on issues, not personalities; rely on persuasion, not fear; and communicate repeatedly until they catch on.

- **Connect your feedback or criticism to how it will help the firm** meet its priority goals. If the CEO can visualize how your comments will help achieve priorities, the CEO will listen and act.

- I**f possible, prioritize the feedback** to focus on urgent and important goals, rather than less important, less urgent goals.

- **Seek feedback** from the CEO during an exit conference, to help ensure the CEO understands your message.