

**Local Agency Formation Commission
of Colusa County**

**Local Procedural Guidelines
for Municipal Service Reviews**

LOCAL PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES:

Purpose and Objectives of Service Reviews

The purpose and objective of Municipal Service Reviews (MSR's) is to develop recommendations that will promote more efficient and higher quality service patterns, identify areas for service improvement, and assess the adequacy of service provision as it relates to determination of appropriate sphere boundaries. A MSR is based on a specific growth period and a realistic growth projection rate for that period keeping in mind local conditions and circumstances.

Approach and Scope

The Commission will review services comprehensively, on a service-by-service basis within logical sub-regions, given consistent and specific target growth periods and a realistic estimate of growth adopted for that period. Some studies will review multiple services, if the Commission deems such grouping appropriate. When appropriate, notwithstanding local conditions and circumstances, the Commission will follow the methodology developed by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research as provided in the Final Draft Service Review Guidelines. Where feasible, MSR's shall provide information comparing service levels and cost structure between the various agencies providing similar services within the study area to assist the Commission when it is considering which agency is best able to provide services.

Schedule for Completion of Studies

The Commission's goal is to comply with the provisions of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act by completing reviews of all services by the end of 2009. For completion, this date does not comply with the state mandated deadline of January 1, 2006. However, given the limited resources of local governments and staffing, earlier completion of the MSR's and Sphere of Influence updates is not realistically feasible. The Commission has adopted a schedule for the reviews. The schedule reflects the Commission's effort to balance various factors, such as the need to update particular Sphere Plans, consideration of major annexation proposals, opportunities for improved efficiency and governance, availability of staff and financial resources, community needs and demand for information, and other factors.

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The Commission will re-evaluate the schedule from time to time and may reposition studies to accommodate changes in the factors listed above. Typically this will be done as part of the Commission's annual work plan, which, according to LAFCO budgeting policy, shall occur prior to the preparation of the Proposed Budget in March or April of each year.

Conducting the Studies

The Commission will work with public and private service providers to obtain information to make statutorily required determinations and will actively seek opportunities to collaborate with service providers in this regard (e.g., by collecting data as service providers update their General Plans, Water Master Plans, and Capital Improvement Plans). However, LAFCO will not delegate responsibility or decision-making with respect to Service Reviews to affected agencies.

Assuming a sufficient budget appropriation, the Commission may utilize consultants to conduct the studies, particularly for services that involve complex infrastructure or in cases where the study might generate controversy and the impartiality of an outside consultant would be beneficial. The Commission may utilize its staff to conduct studies when staff resource levels are adequate to carry out the work.

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act places responsibility for the conduct and financing of these studies on LAFCO, and since the Act apportions the cost of LAFCO among the cities and the County, it is most appropriate to include the cost of conducting the studies in LAFCO's annual budget based on LAFCO's work plan. Funding for Sphere Updates and (or) service reviews, which are inconsistent with LAFCO's annual work plan, shall be borne by the applicant agency.

The Commission will adopt its written determinations resulting from each Service Review at a noticed public hearing. The affected public and private service providers shall be given a copy of the draft service review at least 30 days prior to the hearing and shall have opportunity to comment in writing and orally at the hearing.

Service Reviews and Sphere Updates

The purpose of Service Reviews is to support preparation and updating of Spheres of Influence, in accordance with the provisions of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act. Therefore, as appropriate, the Commission will coordinate Sphere of Influence updates with the Service Reviews.

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Service reviews will generally qualify for exemption from the California Environmental Quality Act as they do not directly result in any action. Recommendations resulting from Service Reviews will be considered for possible implementation as part of an agency's Sphere of Influence update or in conjunction with a change of organization that is subject to the CEQA process.

The Commission may consider minor sphere amendments exempt from the requirement to prepare a service review under the following circumstances: the agency's sphere has been updated within the last five years and complies with current sphere policy requirements, and the amendment will not require an update to the Master Service Element or the agency's Capital Improvement Plans.

Agencies with sphere plans that have not been updated may request the Commission waive its sphere policy compliance deadline for consideration of minor annexations. The Commission will only grant such a waiver where the Commission finds, based on substantial evidence in the record, that the annexation is of such a limited nature that the updating of the sphere and service review is not likely to significantly affect the Commission's decision