

EDC WARREN COUNTY

Assessment of the Effectiveness of Internal Financial Controls Policy

New Policy Adopted No.17 March 20, 2020

1. BACKGROUND:

Section 2800(1) (a) (9) and Section 2800(2) (a) (8) of Public Authorities Law and pursuant to NYS Public Authority Office recommended practice require all public authorities to complete an annual assessment of the effectiveness of their internal control structures and procedures.

2. INTENT:

The purpose of the EDC Warren County (EDC) system of internal control shall be to:

- a) Promote effective and efficient operations so as to help the EDC in carrying out its mission.
- b) Provide reasonable assurance that the EDC's assets are safeguarded against inappropriate or unauthorized use.
- c) Promote the accuracy and reliability of accounting data and financial reporting to ensure that transactions are executed in accordance with the EDC Board's authorization and that they are recorded properly in accounting records.
- d) Encourage adherence to the EDC Board's policies and procedures for conducting programs and operations.
- e) Ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

This system of internal control includes performing an annual assessment to identify potential weaknesses in policies or procedures and to implement corrective actions.

This assessment shall identify significant weaknesses in controls, recognize emerging or inherent risks, and enable early detection of existing or potential problems. If an internal control system is working effectively, the EDC Board will have a reasonable indication of the reliability of its operating practices and the accuracy of the information it uses to measure its activities and performance. Any deficiencies identified as a result of the assessment shall be addressed by the EDC Board.

3. EDC'S INTERNAL CONTROLS ASSESSMENT PLAN:

A. Define the EDC's Primary Functions:

1. Annually review the mission of the EDC and verify that its primary operating responsibilities, operations and functions will help fulfill its mission.
2. Annually evaluate the EDC's written mission statement to ensure that it clearly defines the EDC's purpose.
3. Define the EDC's objectives and ensure they are understood by EDC staff.
4. Review policies, procedures and guidelines to ensure that they guide EDC staff in the operations of the EDC and provide methods and procedures to assess the effectiveness of those functions.

B. Determine Risks:

1. Assess the internal and external risk exposure and associated vulnerability of each function of the EDC and assign a corresponding risk level (i.e., high, medium, or low).
2. If a risk is identified, the EDC Board shall determine how to best handle it by evaluating its significance, likelihood, and because
3. Based on the assigned risk levels, the EDC Board shall determine how frequently it will review the controls in place for each function.

C. Review Existing Internal Control Systems in Place:

1. The EDC Board and staff shall annually review and examine the policies and practices in place to ensure that those policies and practices are effective in addressing the risks that are relevant to the operation.

D. Assess the Extent to Which the Internal Control System is Effective:

1. The assessment of internal controls should be a structured and monitored process to identify and to report any weaknesses of the internal control structure to the EDC Board.
2. This process should determine if the existing control structure and procedures are adequate, to mitigate risk, minimize ineffectiveness and deter opportunities that could lead to the misappropriation of assets.
3. The assessment should provide the EDC Board with information as to whether the EDC's policies and operating practices were understood and were executed properly, and whether they are adequate to protect the organization from waste, abuse, misconduct, or inefficiency.
4. This assessment shall be completed through a combination of inquiry and observation, a review of documents and records and by replicating transactions to test the sufficiency of the control system.

E. Take Corrective Action:

1. When a weakness is identified, a corrective action plan should be developed, adopted by the EDC Board and then monitored by the EDC Board to ensure that the weakness is addressed.

4. INTERNAL CONTROL CERTIFICATION:

A. Section 2800(2) (a) (8) of the Public Authorities Law:

1. To satisfy the requirement of Section 2800(2) (a) (8) of Public Authorities Law, the EDC shall incorporate, either within its annual report or as a separate document, a statement explaining that the authority has conducted a formal, documented process to assess the effectiveness of its internal control structure and procedures, and indicate whether or not the internal controls are adequate.
2. This statement should eventually be posted to the EDC's website.
3. The statement shall state the following or equivalent:

The EDC Board of Directors will document and assess the EDC Warren County Internal Financial Control System for EDC's calendar year ending December 31, of each year and shall undertake determination as part of annual reporting requirements to NYS Authority Budget Office as to adequacy of the Corporation's internal controls- (i.e. adequate. No deficiencies or note deficiencies/with recommendations for corrective action.

4. The EDC shall retain documentation to support the assessment of its internal controls.
5. If the EDC finds any deficiencies with the internal controls over its functions or operations, additional documentation should be maintained to demonstrate that the EDC has adopted corrective action plans to address these weaknesses.

6. This documentation should be made available upon request to the EDC's independent auditor or to ABO compliance review staff.

B. Public Authorities Reporting Information System (PARIS):

1. As part of the PARIS Annual Report tab, the EDC will be required to indicate whether or not it has prepared this assessment and will provide the URL link to the statement, if available.

Adopted March 20, 2020

Authorities Budget Office Recommended Guidance



This Recommended Governance Practice bulletin on internal controls is intended for use by policymakers, and directors, officers and officials of public authorities. These bulletins are intended to delineate best practices and encourage their consideration and incorporation into the management and oversight of public authorities.

Subject: Assessment of the Effectiveness of Internal Controls

Provisions: Section 2800 (1)(a)(9) and Section 2800 (2)(a)(9) of Public Authorities Law require all public authorities to complete an annual assessment of the effectiveness of their internal control structures and procedures. Additionally, State authorities with a majority of the members appointed by the Governor must establish and maintain a system of internal control and a program of internal control review as provided in Title 8 of Public Authorities Law.

Objectives: The importance of an adequate system of internal control is to: (a) promote effective and efficient operations so as to help the authority carry out its mission; (b) provide reasonable, but not absolute, assurance that assets are safeguarded against inappropriate or unauthorized use; (c) promote the accuracy and reliability of accounting data and financial reporting to ensure transactions are executed in accordance with management's authorization and recorded properly in accounting records; (d) encourage adherence to management's policies and procedures for conducting programs and operations; and (e) ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Furthermore, a successful system of internal control includes performing an annual assessment to identify potential weaknesses in policies or procedures and to implement corrective actions.

For purposes of complying with the requirements of Section 2800, an internal control assessment is an annual evaluation performed by management to determine the effectiveness of its internal control system. This assessment should be sufficiently thorough so as to identify significant weaknesses in controls, recognize emerging or inherent risks, and to enable early detection of existing or potential problems. If an internal control system is working effectively, management will have a reasonable indication of the reliability of its operating practices and the accuracy of the information it is using to measure its activities and performance. Any deficiencies identified as a result of the assessment could be quickly addressed.

Recommended Practice:

As a recommended practice, the Authorities Budget Office has identified five major components of an internal control assessment.

A. Define the Authority's Major Business Functions

The first step is to articulate the mission of the authority and to determine its primary operating responsibilities, including various business units, operations and functions that have been put in place to achieve the goals of the authority. Every authority should have a written mission statement that clearly defines the purpose of the authority. The authority should also define its objectives and ensure they are understood by staff. Additional policies, procedures and guidelines should be in place to guide staff in the operations of each specific business function, communicate the objectives, and provide the methods and procedures used to assess the effectiveness of those functions.

B. Determine the Risks Associated with Its Operations

Management should assess the risk exposure and associated vulnerability of each function and assign a corresponding risk level (i.e. high, medium, or low). Risk can originate both internally and externally. Control activities should be tailored to the individual operation based on management's identification and evaluation of applicable risks.

Once a risk is identified, management must determine how to best handle it by evaluating its significance, likelihood, and cause. Based on the assigned risk levels, management should determine how frequently to review the controls in place for each function (i.e., high risk functions to be reviewed more frequently than lower risk functions).

C. Identify the Internal Control Systems In Place

Internal controls are the policies, practices, attitudes, guidelines and other actions adopted by the authority that, when followed, provide reasonable assurance that staff understand and properly carry out their responsibilities, that appropriate professional and ethical conduct is observed, and that the authority will honor its purpose and mission. Management and staff throughout the organization should understand and be aware of the policies and practices in place to ensure that the authority is effective and to address the risks that are relevant to the operation.

D. Assess the Extent to Which the Internal Control System Is Effective

The assessment of internal controls should be a structured and monitored process to identify and report any weaknesses of the internal control structure to the authority. This process should determine if the existing control structure and procedures are adequate, to then mitigate risk, minimize ineffectiveness and deter opportunities that could lead to the abuse of assets. The assessment should provide management with information as to whether the authority's

policies and operating practices were understood and executed properly, and whether they are adequate to protect the organization from waste, abuse, misconduct, or inefficiency. This assessment can be completed through a combination of inquiry and observation, a review of documents and records, or by replicating transactions to test the sufficiency of the control system.

E. Take Corrective Action

When a weakness is identified, a corrective action plan should be developed, adopted by the board, and monitored by management to ensure that the vulnerability is addressed.

Internal Control Assessment:

To satisfy the requirement of Sections 2800 (1) (a) (9) and 2800 (2)(a)(9) of Public Authorities Law, authorities should incorporate, either within their annual report or as a separate document, a statement explaining that the authority has conducted a formal, documented process to assess the effectiveness of their internal control structure and procedures, and indicating whether or not the internal controls are adequate. This statement should be posted to the authority's website. An example of this statement is provided below:

This statement certifies that the [Name of Authority] followed a process that assessed and documented the adequacy of its internal control structure and policies for the year ending [Month,Date,Year]. To the extent that deficiencies were identified, the authority has developed corrective action plans to reduce any corresponding risk.

The authority should retain this documentation. If the authority has found any deficiencies with the internal controls over its functions or operations, additional documentation should be maintained to demonstrate that the authority has adopted corrective action plans to address these weaknesses. This documentation should be made available upon request to the authority's independent auditor or to the Authorities Budget Office compliance review staff.

Public Authorities Reporting Information System (PARIS): As part of the PARIS Annual Report tab, state and local authorities will be required to indicate whether or not they have prepared this assessment and to provide the URL link to the statement.

Additional material that may be helpful in establishing and evaluating internal controls can be found on the Office of the New York State Comptroller's web site:

<http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/pubs/lmg/managementsresponsibility.pdf>

<http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/pubs/lmg/practiceinternalcontrols.pdf>