



Performance Highlights

Newsletter

Office of Performance Evaluations

July 2021

Mission

Promote confidence and accountability in state government through evaluation of programs and policies.

Joint Legislative Oversight Committee

Senators

Mark Harris, cochair
Dave Lent
Michelle Stennett
David Nelson

Representatives

Iana Rubel, cochair
Caroline Nilsson Troy
Paul Amador
Steve Berch

From the director

In February 2021, Margaret Campbell retired after more than 26 years of service with the Office of Performance Evaluations (OPE). She is one of the best professionals with whom I have had the honor and pleasure to work. During the past 18 years at OPE, she was my colleague, friend, and confidante. She helped me become a better director.



Margaret Campbell

Margaret had been with the office since its inception. She led many initiatives to improve administrative procedures and the quality of our work during her service. With her commitment, passion, and hard work, Margaret exemplified what public service is all about – continually striving to help government work better for the people it is entrusted to serve.

Her skills, guidance, and kind nature will be missed in the office. We celebrated Margaret's retirement with one of her favorite activities, a hike in the Boise foothills. We wish her all the best.

Sincerely,

Rakesh Mohan, Director
Office of Performance Evaluations



Casey Petti



Mackenzie Moss

Congratulations Casey and Mackenzie!

Since our last newsletter, two staff at OPE have received their Master of Public Administration degrees from Boise State University.

Serving the Legislature and citizens of Idaho for over 25 years

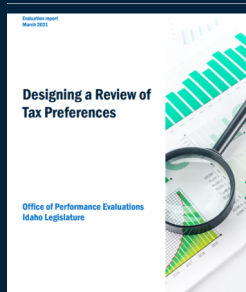
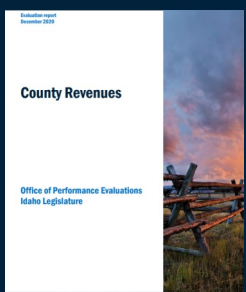
Sustained improvements in residential care program following our evaluation

In our 2018 report *Residential Care*, we evaluated teams in the Department of Health and Welfare that inspect assisted living and children’s residential care facilities and nursing homes. The report made 11 recommendations to ensure the inspection process was fair, effective, and efficient. We presented our most recent follow-up report to JLOC in February 2020 with an update from the administrator of the Division of Licensing and Certification. We found that the department had completed or made progress on nearly all of our recommendations. We appreciate the department’s open communication throughout the follow-up.

Identifying information gaps and providing recommendations for legislators as they navigate tax policy

After our 2019 report *Impact of State Mandates on County Governments*, JLOC members asked OPE to provide more information specifically on how counties raise revenue for public services. Our December 2020 report *County Revenues* detailed several trends in county revenue but also found that data limitations are an ongoing challenge for property tax analysis. Published county budget documents are not accessible in a timely manner, do not have uniformly reported revenue categories, and lack specificity. To promote transparency and generate useful information for policymakers, counties and other districts need more explicit direction from the Legislature about which data should be reported. The Legislature took steps toward addressing these issues by passing H 73 which created a uniform system of accounting for local governments.

Our April 2021 report *Designing a Review of Tax Preferences* found that Idaho has many tax preferences but little information about the extent to which they meet the Legislature’s goals. At least 166 credits, exemptions, and other tax preferences exist in Idaho’s income, property, and sales tax codes. We examined available information regarding tax preferences and identified gaps in knowledge. We found that while the Legislature systematically reviews direct spending each year, it has no process for reviewing tax preferences. We created a checklist for the Legislature to help design a tax preference review should it wish to pursue one.



Helping legislators track investment of critical state resources

We were asked to examine two programs aimed at helping Idahoans obtain education, certificates, or degrees needed for employment. Our June 2021 report *Investments in Postsecondary Education* found that state investments in Advanced Opportunities and Opportunity Scholarships have not been clearly linked to program outcomes. Policymakers are interested in knowing about program success, but the State Board of Education and the Department of Education have mainly tracked participation in programs and enrollment in postsecondary institutions. We recommended that the Legislature consider requiring both scholarship programs to expand their data collection and analysis to better link state investments to program results.

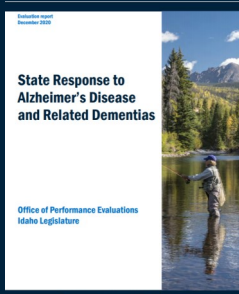
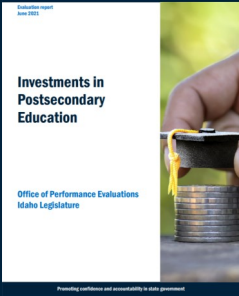
Taking steps toward improving service coordination with a dementia program

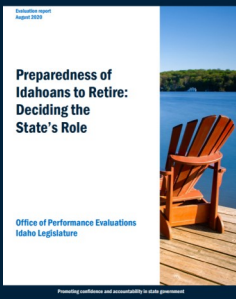
Our December 2020 report *State Response to Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias* found that Idaho has made little progress on the 2013 state plan to address dementia, which was approved by the Legislature. Although state agencies play an important role in helping Idahoans with dementia, we found that no entity is charged with executing or updating the plan. The lack of delegated responsibility created barriers to successful plan implementation. We found that neighboring states have fewer barriers to service coordination and stronger system-wide oversight. We also found that Idaho has lower dementia training standards for residential care staff than neighboring states.

Despite potential to reduce dementia prevalence and benefits of early diagnosis, Idaho does not have a public health response to dementia like it does other chronic diseases. In response to our report, Governor Little and the Division of Public Health created a program to develop prevention and early detection efforts and support coordination of existing services for Idahoans with dementia.

Supporting legislators as they explore new policy arenas

We are maintaining our commitment to being responsive to legislative needs. This year, legislators asked us to analyze two policy arenas that few states have explored. Our August 2020 report *Preparedness of Idahoans to Retire: Deciding the State's Role* examined efforts to improve private sector retirement savings through state-administered retirement accounts.





Since the office was founded, OPE has received 39 awards from staff sections of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

We found that 60 percent of Idahoans working in the private sector did not have access to a retirement plan through their employer in 2019. Workers who do not have sufficient savings see decreases in their standard of living and rely more on public benefits in retirement. Eleven states operate a state-facilitated Individual Retirement Account (IRA), provide a marketplace to select private retirement savings plans, or mandate that certain businesses offer retirement plans. Based on outcomes in other states, we estimated that if Idaho legislators decided to pursue a specific type of state-facilitated IRA, it would be revenue neutral in 12 years. However, there are several policy options the state could pursue. Idaho policymakers must first decide on the state's role in expanding workplace retirement.

We were also asked to look at expanding driving privileges in Idaho. Our January 2021 report *Driving Authority for Unauthorized Immigrants* found that by the end of 2021, 16 states are expected to offer driving authority to unauthorized immigrants. Studies show that unauthorized immigrants with access to a driver's license are more likely to hold a job and work more hours per week than those who do not have access. Evidence is insufficient to determine the extent to which driving authority affects automobile insurance and road safety. Our report lays out several policy decisions for legislators to consider. Should legislators wish to pursue driving authority for unauthorized immigrants, Idaho's cost to provide driving authority would be offset by revenue collected from program fees.

Award from the staff sections of the National Conference of State Legislatures

The report *Southwest Idaho Treatment Center* received the National Legislative Program Evaluation Society's 2020 Impact Award.

Sharing our work

Senate Commerce and Human Resources Committee

Presentation of findings from our evaluation *Preparedness of Idahoans to Retire: Deciding the State's Role* – Ryan Langrill

House Business Committee

Presentation of findings from our evaluation *Preparedness of Idahoans to Retire: Deciding the State's Role* – Ryan Langrill

Staff

Amanda Bartlett,
Principal Evaluator

Ryan Langrill,
Principal Evaluator

Lance McCleve,
Principal Evaluator

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Senior Evaluator

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Evaluator

Casey Petti,
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Madeline Gere,
Graduate Student
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Senate Health and Welfare Committee

Presentation of findings from our evaluation *State Response to Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias* – Sasha O'Connell

Dementia Capability Conference

Overview of OPE and the scope of our evaluation *State Response to Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias* – Sasha O'Connell

Idaho Caregiver Alliance Conference

Presentation of findings from our evaluation *State Response to Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias* – Sasha O'Connell

International EvalYouth Virtual Conference

Keynote presentation titled *Young and Emerging Evaluators: Agents for a More Equitable and Just World* – Rakesh Mohan

Arizona Evaluation Network Annual Conference

Keynote presentation titled *Trust and Transparency: Tools Greater than Power* – Rakesh Mohan

Upcoming evaluations

The Joint Legislative Oversight Committee (JLOC) received eight evaluation requests from 24 legislators and the Joint Millennium Fund Committee. In March 2021, the committee selected four requests for us to evaluate. We will release them during the 2022 legislative session:

Public K-12 Facilities

OPE will collect available information on the repair needs of school facilities, assess current funding mechanisms, and identify strategies used by other states to fund facility needs.

Volunteer Emergency Medical Service Responders

OPE will discuss the governance and funding of emergency medical services, assess the perceived shortage of volunteers, and identify best practices to improve recruitment and retention of volunteers.

Medicaid Provider Payments

OPE will evaluate current methodologies used to review provider payments and identify best practices for provider payment review.

Criminal Justice

OPE will provide information on the effectiveness of current approaches to post-incarceration transitions, funding of reentry programs, and prevention efforts.