



**Accreditation Open Forum**  
**July 22, 2025**  
**“Making the Most of Peer Reviews”**  
**Questions and Answers**

- Do we have to arrange peer reviews ourselves? How do we find a reviewer?
  - APWA staff coordinate and facilitate peer reviews, including recommending reviewers and scheduling. Agencies do not need to arrange this independently, but you can if your agency has trusted peers that you frequently work with. You may also ask within your APWA chapter if any accredited agencies would like to assist.
- How long should a typical peer review take?
  - Peer reviews usually take between one and two days, depending on the size of the agency and the number of chapters being reviewed. Preparation and documentation review may add time beforehand.
- Can you have a peer review without all chapters finished?
  - Yes, a peer review can be scheduled for completed chapters to provide early feedback and ensure the agency is on the right track. This can help identify gaps before the evaluation.
- Can your agency have a second peer review?
  - Yes, agencies can request a second peer review if significant updates or improvements are made after the first review.
- Are APWA evaluators critically analyzing policies or just checking for existence? Evaluators primarily verify that policies and procedures exist and are being followed.
  - They may provide general feedback, but do not perform a detailed critique of policy content.
- Should reviewers be from outside our region?
  - When choosing peer reviewers, location is not a limitation. APWA staff cannot assign evaluators from your state or chapter for formal evaluation, making those public works professionals an ideal option to serve as peer reviewers. Engaging local peers helps expand your agency’s network, encourages exchange of best practices, and may offer insights tailored to your region.
- Do peer reviewers have access to the online platform?
  - Yes, with your permission, peer reviewers are given access to your Self-Assessment Software portal.
- How much time on average do peer reviews take?
  - We recommend giving reviewers two to three weeks to complete their review, depending on the size of your agency and the number of chapters being assessed. Peer reviewers are typically active public works professionals who volunteer their time outside of their regular duties, balancing their own workloads while providing valuable guidance and feedback to help your agency strengthen its practices.

- How does accreditation promote culture change, innovation, and technology adoption?
  - Accreditation motivates agencies to standardize practices and embrace continuous improvement, creating a culture of innovation and active staff engagement. It sparks the adoption and review of policies and procedures, which can streamline operations and help agencies deliver services more efficiently and effectively.
- Can you request an in-person or virtual peer review?
  - Yes, agencies can request either in-person or virtual peer reviews. APWA staff work with the agency to determine the most practical format based on logistics and agency preference. While some regions have a higher concentration of accredited agencies, most reviews are conducted virtually due to the limited availability of nearby reviewers.
- Are there any challenges with accessing files due to security?
  - Occasionally, evaluators and peer reviewers encounter file access issues because of internal network or security settings, but all documents should be uploaded into the APWA Self-Assessment Software portal for both the peer review and the evaluation.
- Do you suggest hiring a consultant or using staff only?
  - Most agencies successfully manage the process using internal staff, which not only keeps costs down but also builds expertise, strengthens institutional knowledge, and fosters ownership of accreditation practices. Hiring a consultant is rarely needed and should only be considered if internal staff are unavailable or lack the capacity to manage the process effectively.