

Reference Call Summary for Augenblick, Palaich and Associates

Education Adequacy Consulting Services Proposal References:	Wyoming Legislature
Date of Contact	04/17/2019
Person Spoken To (including Title)	Matthew Willmarth, Senior School Finance Analyst Wyoming Legislative Service Office Mr. Willmarth is a non-partisan legislative staff member in the area of K-12 school finance.
1. Can you describe the project or work that APA has completed for you? Please describe the level of detail APA has provided in completing its work/project.	Wyoming is required to recalibrate their school funding every 5 years by law. He indicated that they had major recalibrations completed by Picus and Odden (P & O) in 2005, 2010, and 2015. Due to unforeseen funding issues, the Wyoming legislature decided to complete an additional recalibration in 2017, and they chose APA to complete the recalibration. APA was charged with looking at both actual K-12 education costs such as supplies and utilities, and also K-12 programs and subject areas. He indicated that P & O used a different approach to the recalibration work than did APA. P & O used an evidence based (EB) approach and APA used both the Professional Judgement (PJ) and Successful School District (SSD) approach. He said that some expected APA to recommend a lower cost model than did P & O, but APA's recommendations actually turned out to be higher. APA worked from June 2017 through January 2018. They held various meetings with staff members from School Districts (SD), the State Board of Education, the Department of Education (DOE), and the Wyoming Legislature. They prepared a comprehensive report and a Special Select Legislative Committee comprised of members from their Appropriations and Education Committees, directed their work. Data - He said APA used achievement data to identify successful SDs and visited those districts, and used actual expenditure data and salary data provided by the DOE and the School Facilities Agency to complete their analysis. The DOE set up a FTP (File Transfer Site) to provide DOE data to APA.
2. Was APA responsive, accessible and available to you throughout the term of the project/work?	Most definitely. He said Amanda Brown and Justin Silverstein were the primary APA staff working on their recalibration.
3. Are you satisfied with the work performed?	He said he thought so, and they did what they were asked to do. He said that P & O had a different "personality" than did APA. He said the difference was not bad, just different. He said they had a good relationship with APA and that APA was responsive to requests. He said it was hard to "pin down" APA on exact recommendations, or specific costs amounts. He said this may be due in part to the small number of students in WY, 93,000 students. APA's use of different modeling techniques such as "inverse exponential lines" did not work well for WY and for WY's small SDs. P & O provided more precise recommendations than did APA, for example, P & O provided specific recommendations regarding cost categories such as supplies and materials.
4. What are APA's strengths and conversely what are APA's weaknesses?	Strengths: - APA conduct themselves very professionally. They present well to Committees and SDs, and interact well with those involved in the study. - APA was willing to get assistance from other consultants if they didn't have the necessary expertise to address something their Committee was interested in exploring. He said APA found a consultant from Denver, RMC, to address an issue in which APA did not have sufficient expertise. Weaknesses: He cautioned that Arkansas should make sure that APA does not provide "canned" recommendations from reports prepared for other states. He said Arkansas should make sure APA fully explores all the possibilities to make sure they are meeting the State's needs.
5. Have you encountered any problems with APA, or had any contract or billing issues with APA?	No problems. Everything was fine. They attended the meetings and met the obligations of the contract with no problems.

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<p>6. Would you recommend APA to other entities for similar work? If you need additional services in the future, how likely are you to choose APA again?</p>	<p>Would you recommend APA: He said "sure, yes".</p> <p>Would you choose APA again: He said there are only a few entities that do this type of work, and that this would not be his decision to make. WY legislators would make the decision of who to contract with in the future for recalibration. He is not sure if the WY legislators would pick APA again or not. He did think that people enjoyed working with APA.</p>
<p>7. Are there any important questions I should have asked but didn't?</p>	<p>He asked for clarification about the type of work that Arkansas is seeking to have completed by APA. He then observed that with his experience with the WY recalibration studies prepared in 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2017 that we should not be surprised if APA recommends a higher funding amount than what is currently being provided. He was taken aback that APA's funding recommendation was higher than P & O's. He acknowledged that APA was using recent expenditure data upon which to base their recommendations. He encouraged in-depth conversations with APA, and recommended we not look only at Arkansas's SD expenditures, but rather that we consider expenditures of other states and high performing states, such as Massachusetts, as well. He said we should not let only Arkansas data drive the study.</p> <p>He further stated that salaries are the largest piece of school funding, and that WY looked at regional states (their competitive market) as they considered funding for salaries. He encouraged Arkansas to have an economist as part of the study to look at salaries and compensation, and look at the other states from which Arkansas is hiring its teachers.</p>