

## Bar Association Operational Survey FAQs

### *What is a Bar Association Operational Survey?*

A Bar Association Operational Survey (BAOS) is a confidential evaluation of all or part of a bar association's operations. The survey evaluates organizational performance and makes constructive recommendations for change. The evaluation is a three-pronged process: a review of relevant documents such as bylaws, governing body minutes, financial statements, policy manuals and member communications; telephone conference and individual interviews with the staff and volunteers of the association; and one to two days of on-site interviews. Each process is tailored to the needs of the particular organization.

### *What areas of a bar association's operations are evaluated?*

Typically, the following operational areas are examined:

- the organization's mission and goals;
- governance, including roles and relationships among board members, staff and other key volunteers and bar entities;
- financial planning, and resource use and allocation;
- administration of the bar, including staffing;
- membership value, as well as membership marketing efforts (recruitment/retention);
- use of committees and sections; and
- internal and external communications.

The bar association requesting the survey may choose to have some or all areas examined.

### *When should a bar consider having an operational survey?*

A bar association should consider having a BAOS when the leadership and the executive staff agree that the bar association needs a "check-up" or a set of fresh eyes to review how it conducts its business. Associations experiencing changes such as the retirement or hiring of a key staff member, or a bar association preparing for strategic planning often find the survey useful. It also may be beneficial when the association has experienced changes in its financial status or programs, or an increase or decrease in membership.

### *Who conducts the survey?*

Depending upon the scope of the survey, the Division for Bar Services arranges for either a single consultant or a team of volunteer bar executives and bar leaders with expertise and experience in bar management to conduct the survey. Members of the team reflect the size and character of the association requesting the review. A member of the survey team writes the final report.

### *What preparation is required in advance of the on-site visit?*

Initially, the association is asked to submit a statement summarizing the reasons for the survey to assist the team in focusing its evaluation. The association is expected to provide the survey team with copies of relevant association materials that will be reviewed in advance of the on-site visit. The association agrees to provide the materials in sufficient time for the consultants' thorough

## **BAOS FAQs, continued**

review (see sample timeline). A sample resource list can be provided upon request. Usually one or two conference calls are held in advance of the on-site visit with the bar's officers and executive director. Additionally, the team will work closely with the executive director to develop the on-site interview schedule, and will need the bar staff's assistance with contacting volunteers and scheduling their appointments.

### ***What happens during the on-site visit?***

Survey team members meet with the staff and volunteer leadership of the bar association. If the visit is scheduled in conjunction with a board meeting, the team will sit in on the board meeting. The interviews may be held individually or in groups, and the substantive areas of discussion are outlined in advance.

### ***Who receives copies of the final report?***

The final report typically consists of a narrative of team observations and recommendations, and attached reference material related to the recommendations proposed. Copies of the confidential final report are sent to the association's executive director, president and president-elect. Unless otherwise specified, the final report is submitted ten to twelve weeks after the conclusion of the on-site visit.

### ***What is the cost of an Operational Survey?***

The cost of the survey is based primarily on the bar association's budget size. The bar association being surveyed is also responsible for covering the travel expenses of team members including transportation, lodging and meals. A survey that includes evaluation of all areas (governance, administration, membership, communications and finance) is:

<b>Fee Range</b>	<b>Operating Budget</b>
\$1,000-\$1,500	\$500,000 and under
\$1,500-\$2,000	\$500,001 to \$1,000,000
\$2,000-\$2,500	\$1,000,001 to \$3,000,000
\$2,500-\$3,500	\$3,000,001 to \$6,000,000
\$3,500-\$4,500	\$6,000,001 to \$10,000,000
\$4,500-\$6,000	\$10,000,001 to \$15,000,000
\$6,000-\$10,000	\$15,000,001 and above

In addition to the service fee, the following expenses are reimbursable to the Division for Bar Services by the hiring organization: economy airfare, hotel accommodations, meals not otherwise provided during the visit, airport transfers and local transportation.

### ***How can I find out more about the Bar Association Operational Survey Program?***

Please contact Jennifer Lewin, Field Service Representative, ABA Division for Bar Services, at (312) 988-5361 or [lewinj@staff.abanet.org](mailto:lewinj@staff.abanet.org).