

# Panel Findings

- The following slides outline the key findings and short term recommendations of the Assessment Practices Panel.
- The findings and recommendations described in this presentation focus on short term measures that can be taken working within the current assessment practices system.
- The recommendations intend to promote a more Timely, Uniform and Fair (TUF) assessment process as defined by the panel's TUF key performance indicators.

# Current Assessment Practices

Finding	Impact on TUF	Key issues to address	Recommendations
<p>Current local assessor system is complex with multiple responsible entities, this results in variance in how the assessment process is carried out.</p>	<p>Multiple autonomous entities are responsible for carrying out the assessment process resulting in variance in how the assessment practice is carried out.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No clear process and standards for quality control in carrying out a uniform assessment process;</li> <li>• Reluctance of responsible (oversight) entities to step in and remedy issues;</li> <li>• Each organization employing assessors has different incentives/reward system;</li> <li>• Local control inherently conflicts with countywide uniformity;</li> <li>• Fragmentation of responsibilities over multiple independent entities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In remedying current system, recognize needs at each local assessment level (Township, City 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> class)</li> <li>• Establish shared quality/performance standards (integrating the TUF key performance indicators) that allow for an objective measurement of performance and can be communicated with the entity that hires the assessor as a performance standard.</li> <li>• Formalize performance standards in model contract between Twp and contract assessors and require a performance bond for contractor.</li> <li>• Create a new position to follow-up on the uniform execution of processes.</li> <li>• Build a coalition with the local townships to promote a universal approach to managing local contractors. Townships as the client are responsible for managing the performance of their local assessor.</li> </ul>

# Current Assessment Practices

Finding	Impact on TUF	Key issues to address	Recommendations
<p>Quality control is fragmented over 4 jurisdictions (DoR, Local Jurisdiction, County, Board of Assessors)</p>	<p>Quality control is fragmented over 4 jurisdictions with no clear process in place to remedy when problems arise.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reluctance of responsible (oversight) entities to step in and remedy issues;</li> <li>• Reasons may include, lack of resources to investigate and lack of political will.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document and have the responsible jurisdictions sign off on best practices, procedures and process steps as a shared standard to execute the assessment process;</li> <li>• Formalize performance standards (integrating the TUF key performance indicators) in a model contract.</li> <li>• Establish an arbitration panel when a jurisdiction or local assessor is not willing to address quality issues identified by the county.</li> <li>• Ask the County Board to encourage DoR to take its responsibility in addressing quality issues.</li> <li>• Ask the County Board members to play a pro-active role in addressing problems with jurisdictions in their district concerning the quality of the assessment process.</li> </ul>

# Current Assessment Practices

Finding	Impact on TUF	Key issues to address	Recommendations
<p>The County and local assessors are not effectively working as one team.</p>	<p>Disconnect results in gaps in information, standards and practices increasing potential for variances between jurisdictions and impacts all three elements of TUF</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an impression that there is an us and them mentality between the County staff and some of the local assessors.</li> <li>• Training, information sessions County are not mandatory for local assessors to attend, which can lead to differences in knowledge and practices;</li> <li>• County reduction in staffing levels limits ability to reach out to local assessors</li> <li>• No recourse by County if local assessor chooses not to interact</li> </ul>	<p>Implement measures that help the assessors operate more as a team through for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase frequency of assessor meetings and include participation in performance measures.</li> <li>• Increasing opportunities for cooperative training such as for example field interpretation training to promote uniformity and;</li> <li>• establish an apprentice/mentor system for new assessors to learn policy and procedures and working with technology.</li> <li>• Use available technology for training and information sharing</li> <li>• Establishing training and technology standards</li> </ul>

# Current Assessment Practices

Finding	Impact on TUF	Key issues to address	Recommendations
Insufficient quality of local assessments and adjustment boards can result in increased cost for county in tax court cases	Local jurisdictions shift cost of poor assessment practices to county, impacting fairness of system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inadequate assessments can result in tax court cases which require county resources while they could have been remedied at the local level.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Build a coalition with the local townships to promote a universal approach to managing local contractors. Townships as the client are responsible for managing the performance of their local assessor.</li><li>• Create a new position to follow-up on the uniform execution of processes (including the TUF key performance indicators).</li><li>• Ask the County Board members to play a pro-active role in addressing problems with jurisdictions in their district concerning the quality of the assessment process.</li></ul>

# Current Assessment Practices

Finding	Impact on TUF	Key issues to address	Recommendations
<p>The City of Duluth makes up approximately 40% of the taxable parcels in St. Louis County and with that has a big impact on the overall Timely, Uniform and Fair assessment process in the County when the quality of the assessment process is not in line with the County standards.</p> <p>The City of Duluth is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not on a quintile for residential assessments (currently 7 year cycle)</li> <li>• Commercial assessments are on a 15 year cycle in stead of county 10 year.</li> <li>• The city 's assessor's office is understaffed and DoR recommends that 3-4 commercial assessors are added</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The City of Duluth is not conducting timely assessments</li> <li>• The city's assessment process is not in line with the County quality standards (e.g. inspection cycle, conducting actual measurement of the property) impacting uniformity of the process</li> <li>• If the tax base of the City of Duluth is not up to par with the rest of the county, property outside the city may be overcharged resulting in unfairness of the system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The City of Duluth has to be on a quintile assessment cycle for residential properties as required by the DoR.</li> <li>• The City should reduce the commercial property assessment cycle from 15 to 10 years;</li> <li>• The City of Duluth should bring its assessment practices in line with the County quality standard.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The City of Duluth has to address its staffing levels. In particular staffing of commercial appraisers need to be increased in line with DoR minimum staffing ratio recommendations;</li> <li>• The City and County should review how assessments are carried out and bring practices in line with each other to promote more uniformity in the assessment process.</li> </ul>

# Funding of Assessment Process

Finding	Impact on TUF	Key issues to address	Recommendations
<p>There is an inequity in the assessment fee structure resulting in locally assessed jurisdictions paying more than county assessed unorganized townships. This impacts fairness of the distribution of the assessment cost.</p>	<p>This impacts fairness of the distribution of the assessment cost.</p>	<p>Unorganized townships assessed by county are subsidized by locally assessed jurisdictions because their assessment cost are paid for by the countywide levy. State Statute does not allow for charging unorganized townships additional fee to bring assessment cost in line with the other County property owners cost.</p>	<p>Consider introducing legislation allowing to levy unorganized townships for assessment cost in line with what property owners in the other jurisdictions are paying.</p>

# Technology

Finding	Impact on TUF	Key issues to address	Recommendations
<p>There is a gap between technology use/access by county and local/contract assessors</p>	<p>This has an impact on uniformity and ability to effectively work on systems</p>	<p>Drivers of this include access to bandwidth, system compatibility, and computer literacy of assessors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish minimum requirements regarding computer knowledge, connection speed and system requirements to prevent large technology gaps</li> <li>• Technology system of the countywide assessors team should be interfaced and up to par for all assessors (seamless interface between county, city and local assessors) as it relates to computer platform, field equipment and minimum standards for phone (including ability to take messages from consumers when in the field).</li> <li>• Develop a technology strategy, identifying options and appropriateness of technologies for countywide application.</li> <li>• CAMA system should be user friendly and evaluated whether this is the best system for St. Louis county.</li> </ul>

# Human Resource Management

Finding	Impact on TUF	Key issues to address	Recommendations
<p>An aging workforce will lead to attrition. How will this impact quality of the workforce? What opportunities does this pose to build a future quality workforce that is able to work within an increasingly technology based environment?</p>	<p>Quality assessor workforce impacts all three TUF principles</p>	<p>Aging workforce and recruitment of staff with right aptitudes, skills and training.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plan for an aging workforce to ensure a high quality assessment team is in place.</li><li>• Document appropriate skills and aptitudes for new assessors. Quality of incoming staff should be in line with countywide standard.</li></ul>