Reviewer’s report

Title: Do federal and state audits increase compliance with a grant program to improve municipal infrastructure (AUDIT study): study protocol for a randomized controlled trial

Version: 1 Date: 18 February 2013

Reviewer: Michael A Nelson

Reviewer’s report:

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Will the study design adequately test the hypothesis?
   Municipality selection in Stage 1: Criteria exclude states with large municipalities in terms of geographic size (e.g., Baja and Baja Sur, each with 5 municipalities, are excluded). It is obvious that this is required to generate a sufficient number of cases per state, but this may also limit the generalizability of the conclusions drawn from the analysis, even in the Mexican context. Adequately serving marginalized populations might be expected to be a particularly significant issue in the case of municipalities that span a large geographic area with significant remote and rural regions beyond the central city.

   Interference/spillover effects: Even for the states included in the analysis municipalities in Mexico vary substantially in geographic size and location within the state. Is the amount of “talking” among municipal officials in any given state also a function of the geographic distance between them, in addition to political party affiliation?

2. Are sufficient details provided to allow replication of the work or comparison with related analyses: if not, what is missing?
   This appears to be very well done.

3. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition: if not, in what ways?
   This appears to be very well done.

4. Is the writing acceptable?
   The writing is clear and understandable.

   Typographical Errors:
   1. Abstract, towards end of design section: “career” concerns…
   2. Acknowledgements: “early” drafts….

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.