PROJECT SUMMARY

QAPPs document how state and tribal recipients of U.S. EPA grants will properly collect, analyze, and use environmental information.

Through business process improvements, states, tribes, and EPA are working to streamline QAPP development and provide transparency and consistency in the review and approval process.

PROJECT LEADS

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RESOURCES

EPA *Qlik* Tool for QAPP Review + Approval Data

QUALITY ASSURANCE PROJECT PLAN (QAPP) PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

Improving timeliness, transparency, and consistency in the QAPP process.

Challenges

EPA provides grant funding to states and tribes to collect, produce, evaluate, and use environmental information under many environmental statutes (e.g., Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act). However, grantees must develop and receive EPA approval of technical documents, known as Quality Assurance (QA) Project Plans (QAPPs), prior to beginning work. QAPPs ensure activities are performed correctly and document quality-related procedures and key personnel. The challenge is that processes for reviewing and approving grantee QAPPs differ across EPA's ten regional offices.

Benefits

Through the E-Enterprise model, EPA, states, and tribes are using shared governance to improve the QAPP process and procedures and optimize technology support. These partners are working together to make the process more:

- Consistent
- Timely
- Transparent

Accomplishments

- **Improved Communications**: Developed and communicated broadly across EPA Regions a set of criteria and guidelines to improve direct communications between Regional Quality Assurance managers and grantees. Developed a list of reference documents needed to conduct scoping meetings.
- **Standardized Quality Term and Condition:** Worked to develop standardized QA requirements across EPA for implementation in Fiscal Year (FY) 22 that will bring about consistency in the language used in award documents.
- **Assessed and Provided QAPP Training:** Inventoried existing training, surveyed state and tribal training needs, and conducted a gap analysis to change future training delivery and scope. Improved available resources and worked to develop additional training where needed.
- **Collected Data and Metrics:** Collected data and tracked workflows to better understand the timing and need for rework in the QAPP review-approval process. Tracked the percent of tribal and state QAPPs that the EPA reviews and approves within 60 calendar days and set FY 20-22 targets. Also, tracked the backlog of unapproved QAPPs exceeding 120 days total time for EPA and grantees, with a goal of reducing the backlog to zero.
- **Developed Data Visualization Tool:** Developed a Qlik Tool Dashboard to display state, tribal, and regional QAPP review and approval data available on the EPA and Public Access Qlik site.
- **Connected Stakeholders and Disseminated Information:** Held a three-day virtual meeting in 2021 focused on Quality Assurance within EPA, states, and tribes

What's Next?

- **Develop Backlog Targets:** Monitor progress to reduce the backlog on unapproved QAPPs and ensure work can begin with the proper QAPP documentation.
- **Quality Management Plan (QMP) and QAPP Directives Revisions:** Begin to engage state and tribal technical personnel who write or review QMPs and QAPPs and obtain their input into the revisions of these most widely used Quality Directives (i.e., Standards and Guidance).
- **Hold Virtual Training Event in 2022:** Connect the QA Community with states and tribes. and provide learning opportunities.