

PROJECT SUMMARY

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

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

PROJECT LEADS

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RESOURCES

Contact your Regional QA Manager if you would like to receive additional information on QA activities.

QUALITY ASSURANCE PROJECT PLAN (QAPP) PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

Improving timeliness, transparency, and consistency in the QAPP process

CHALLENGE

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 used shared governance to improve the QAPP process and procedures and optimize technology support. These partners worked 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 QA 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 and made minor revisions in FY 23.
- **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 percentage of tribal and state QAPPs that EPA reviews and approves within 60 calendar days and set 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 Qlik site.
- **Connected Stakeholders and Disseminated Information:** Held virtual meetings and training events that focused on QA among EPA, states, and tribes and provided learning opportunities to the community.
- **Finalized the Quality Management Plan Standard:** Finalized the Quality Management Plan Standard with participation from states and tribes who write and review the plans. Conducted tribal consultation prior to release.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- The E-Enterprise project has concluded. EPA continues to move this work forward and to coordinate with states and tribes to improve QAPP processes.
- EPA is working to finalize the QAPP Standard with participation from states and tribes who write and review QAPPs, with a target release in 2023. Tribal consultation was conducted and concluded in January 2023. The QAPP guidance will follow with consultation planned in 2023.
- EPA will hold a virtual Quality Program meeting in 2023.