STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

ANNUAL QA PROCESSES: SELF-ASSESSMENTS, QAPP RECORD QUALITY CONTROL, & REPORTING

NEIWPCC

Effective 1/11/2023

Version 1.0

Approved by:

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DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION

Revised By	Date	Version	Summary of Changes
Emily Bialowas, QAPM	1/11/2023	1.0	Initial Version

This SOP will be reviewed annually.

January 11, 2023

I. Summary

This document contains information on the annual processes used to evaluate the function of NEIWPCC's Quality Program, verify records related to quality assurance project plans, and report to the Quality Management Steering Committee, NEIWPCC Commissioners, and EPA.

II. Definitions

QMP	Quality management plan. Overarching document that describes NEIWPCC's quality program.
QAPP	Quality assurance project plan (including all associated appendices, checklists, and forms)
Unique identifier	Alphanumeric label assigned to each QAPP submitted for NEIWPCC review and approval
NEIWPCC project manager (PM)	NEIWPCC staff person responsible for oversight of project in need of an approved QAPP
QAPP Tracker	Database used to track information and status of QAPP review and approval
QAPM	Quality assurance program manager (currently Emily Bialowas) is the point-of-contact for all quality assurance activities
Designee	Quality assurance program manager designee. An appropriately trained and certified staff person selected by the QAPM to review and approve a particular QAPP

III. Procedures

Self-Assessment Process

As described in the QMP, NEIWPCC's uses a self-assessment process to help ensure its Quality Program is functioning well and that issues are readily identified and rectified. The self-assessment process is conducted in two phases. The first phase uses the annual employee performance appraisal process to collect responses on a series of screening questions. The second phase uses an online form to collect additional information from a subset of employees, as defined by their responses to the phase one questions. The QAPM follows up with individual employees and their supervisors, as appropriate, to address issues identified through this process. Additionally, the self-assessment process provides valuable information to the QAPM on broader training needs and can influence the QAPM's actions over the coming year on efforts to improve the Quality Program.

Tracking of the self-assessment processes is typically completed using an excel workbook. The specific format and information in the workbook changes annually, as the QAPM better refines the processes and tools for the assessment.

Note that all steps in the procedure are undertaken by the QAPM, unless otherwise noted.

PHASE 1

Step 1

Confirm with the Human Resources Division (HR) the questions and procedure for collecting information from performance appraisals. Note that the timing of this step should occur in June or July in anticipation of upcoming annual performance appraisal process. These questions are not included on initial 6-month performance reviews. The following steps occur after performance appraisals (conducted in September).

Step 2

Coordinate with HR to get the data collected during performance appraisals.

Step 3

Complete an assessment of the responses to each question. Follow up with HR on any questions related to the data itself, including missing information or unexpected entries. For any staff that indicated a lack of awareness of the QMP or Quality Program overall, schedule and conduct a training to investigate their answers and provide information on the Quality Program.

PHASE 2

Step 1

Filter the data from HR to identify individuals who responded 'Yes' to the question related to participation or oversight of environmental data/information activities at NEIWPCC.

Step 2

Create second tab in tracking sheet for the effort and copy data in for individuals identified above.

Step 3

Using the previous year's Google form as a starting point, make any needed updates to the questions and content and update any dates where necessary.

Step 4

Request all individuals identified above complete the Google form via email. The email should contain a link to the form, instructions for completion, and information on the purpose of the assessment. Provide at least two weeks for completion and provide a reminder to any who have not completed the form about one week in advance of the deadline.

Step 5

Follow up with any staff and their supervisors from whom responses have not been received. The goal is a 100% response rate.

Step 6

Once all responses are received, download a copy of them from the Google form, and identify any responses that require follow up or corrective action.

Step 7

Complete follow ups or corrective actions and track progress in the tracking sheet and in the document containing the answers provided by staff.

NOTE: A summary of the self-assessment process should be included in the annual system status report and quality management plan review provided to EPA.

APPROVED QAPP COMPILATION AND DATA VALIDATION

At the close of each fiscal year, the QAPM compiles a report of the QAPPs that were approved over the previous year, performs quality control on the available data for each QAPP, and verifies that the appropriate records are filed in association with each QAPP. The QA receiver is often engaged in this process to provide support.

APPROVED QAPP REPORT

All data on NEIWPCC QAPP review and approval is contained in the QAPP Tracker database. Upon finalization of each approved QAPP, the fiscal year of review process completion is entered in the QAPP Tracker. This value provides a simple criterion on which to query the database.

Step 1
Make a copy of the previous year's QAPP query in the QAPP Tracker database and modify the expression to select QAPPs from the immediate past fiscal year.

Step 2
Make a copy of the previous year's QAPP report in the QAPP Tracker database and modify the data source to reflect the immediate past fiscal year.

Step 3
Review the resulting report and correct any entries in the database accordingly.

- Compare the number of QAPPs listed in the report to the number of QAPPs included in the appropriate Completed QAPPs folder on the Lowell office server. If there are fewer QAPPs on the report, identify the QAPPs that are missing and verify that the "Fiscal Year (Completed)" field is correctly filled out in the QAPP Tracker. If there are fewer QAPPs on the server, check the pending QAPPs folder in the case that the files were not moved.
- Review each entry in the report and validate all data provided. If any entries are not accurate (e.g., a project code was entered where a grant number should be), correct them in record for the QAPP. Communicate with the project manager as needed.

Step 4
Produce a PDF copy of the final QAPP report, showing all QAPPs approved during the previous fiscal year. File a copy of this report in the folder on the Lowell server associated with the year's annual system status report and QMP review.

APPROVED QAPP FILE VALIDATION

In concert with review of the data in the QAPP Tracker for plans approved within the previous fiscal year, the QAPM completes a quality control validation process on the files retained for each plan. This process can be delegated to the QA receiver.

Step 1
The file in the Completed QAPPs folder for each plan is verified to ensure all appropriate documents are retained and named in accordance with the file naming convention.

- Confirm the correct documents are included in the relevant folder. If any documents are missing, contact the reviewer for the QAPP to acquire the documents or provide clarification to why they are missing. Any clarifications should be added to the corresponding QAPP Tracker records in the 'Notes' field. While verifying documentation,

confirm that the appropriate fields in QAPP Tracker are completed. If any information is missing, again, contact the QAPP reviewer.

- Confirm all records in the QAPP folder are named in accordance with the file naming convention. The file naming convention is provided in an appendix to the "Review and Approval Process for NEIWPCC Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPS)" SOP. Correct any file names, as necessary.

PROJECT MANAGER ANNUAL QAPP REVIEW AND DATA VERIFICATION

Prior to FY 2020, project managers provided their input for their annual review of multi-year QAPPs as part of Phase 2 of the annual self-assessment process. During the review for FY 2020, this process was modified to link project managers' review of their multi-year QAPPs with a data verification process to ensure all data for open and recently closed QAPPs are correct.

The QAPM compiles information from the QAPP Tracker database on all QAPPs that are currently listed as open (i.e., their end date has not yet passed) or recently closed (i.e., their end date occurred in the previous fiscal year) and share that information with the project managers on each project for the validation effort. Using the same mechanism, each PM certifies their completion of any necessary annual reviews.

Step 1

Modify "Open and Recently Closed QAPPs FY[XX]" query for the previous year's validation process to reflect the current period of interest. Run the query and look at the results.

Step 2

Complete initial review of all QAPPs in the query, making any known corrections. Note that there should not be many corrections, as records will have been reviewed as part of the verification steps above in the current year or previous years.

Step 3

Identify any QAPPs with terminated staff listed as project manager and contact the appropriate division director(s) to determine the current project manager.

Step 4

Make any updates necessary to the QAPP tracker based on communication with division directors and rerun "Open and Recently Closed QAPPs FY[XX]" query.

Step 5

Export the results of the query to an Excel document and add formatting and additional columns based on the previous year's version. Make any improvements or adjustments as needed. Protect existing data from editing.

Step 6

Request input from all staff listed as PMs in the data, providing roughly two weeks for responses. The Excel doc can be hosted on OneDrive and shared with all PMs via a link in order to minimize versions. Instructions to project managers from the FY21 process are provided in Appendix A for reference.

Step 7

Resolve any questions or issues brought up by staff during their review or during review of the responses.

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Step 8

Update QAPP Tracker records accordingly. Note the origin of any updates/corrections in the 'Comments' field for each record. Note, updates can be delegated to the QA receiver.

ANNUAL SYSTEM STATUS REPORT & QMP REVIEW

As required by the NEIWPCC QMP, the QAPM must provide the QMSC with a System Status Report and QMP Review each year, sending a copy to appropriate EPA contacts. This report covers the previous fiscal year and is due by the end of the calendar year.

Step 1

The QAPM drafts the report, using the format of previous reports and integrating any updates or changes requested by the QMSC or EPA. The report contains information on activities undertaken over the previous year, including, field assessments, QAPPs reviewed and approved, and the self-assessment process. It also includes a review of the Quality Program, goals for the coming year, and a review of the QMP.

Step 2

The QAPM provides a draft copy of the report to the QMSC for review and as an opportunity to ask questions or make comments on the activities of the year or future plans.

Step 3

The QAPM makes any revisions necessary based on the feedback of the QMSC and creates a final, signed version of the report in PDF format, including all appendices.

Step 4

The QAPM distributes the final report to the QMSC and to appropriate EPA contacts.

APPENDIX A: QAPP ANNUAL REVIEW AND DATA VALIDATION INSTRUCTIONS DISTRIBUTED FOR FY 2021

Find your name in the 'NEIWPCC Project Manager' column (Column B) and identify the QAPPs for which you are listed as project manager. For each QAPP:

1. <u>Verify if the QAPP is closed or not (as of 12/31/2021)</u>. Indicate 'Yes' or 'No' in the dropdown menu in column K of the excel sheet.
    - o If the QAPP is closed, **STOP** and move on to the next QAPP in the list.
    - o If the QAPP is still open, move to step 2.
2. <u>Verify the end date</u> as listed in column J. If the date is incorrect, provide the new date in column L. If it is correct, make no changes. Move to step 3. Note: if the project is being completed by a contractor and the agreement has been amended in the last FY, the end date should correspond to the end date of the agreement. If this hasn't been captured, please make updates as appropriate.
3. <u>Verify the PM, JCC, Grant and/or project codes</u> in columns B, E-H. If changes are needed, please note them in column M.
4. <u>Indicate whether the QAPP is for a multi-year project</u> using the dropdown menu in column N.
    - o If the QAPP is <u>not</u> for a multi-year project, **STOP** and move to the next QAPP on the list
    - o If the QAPP is for a multi-year project, move to step 5.
5. <u>Perform annual review</u>
    - o Enter any information on changes to the project (scope, people, etc.) in column P. If the distribution list has already been updated with these changes, you can indicate that here (rather than listing changes)
    - o Indicate whether there have been any QA/QC non-conformances within the last FY in column R; if you indicate 'Yes' here, add details in column S.
    - o Once complete, indicate 'Yes' in column O to demonstrate that the annual review for that QAPP has been complete.