



# STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

## QUALITY ASSURANCE AWARENESS TRAINING

**NEIW PCC**

Effective 1/11/2023

Version 1.0

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Bialowas".

02/02/2023

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Emily Bialowas  
Quality Assurance Program Manager

Date

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan J. Sullivan".

02/02/2023

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Susan J. Sullivan  
Executive Director

Date

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Appendix A: New Employee QA Awareness Training Handout

**DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION**

Revised By	Date	Version	Summary of Changes
Emily Bialowas, QAPM	1/11/23	1.0	Original Version

This SOP will be reviewed annually.

## I. SUMMARY

This document was prepared to document the procedures NEIWPCC uses to train all its staff in awareness of its Quality Program and the principles of quality assurance and quality control. Note that this document does not pertain to more specific and in-depth training for those staff who are becoming certified as Quality Assurance Program Manager designees. There is a separate SOP for that process.

## II. DEFINITIONS

QMP	Quality management plan. Overarching document that describes NEIWPCC's quality program.
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
HR	Human Resources Division. Responsible for scheduling orientation sessions for all new hires.

## III. PROCEDURE

### NEW EMPLOYEE QA AWARENESS TRAINING

This process is initiated by the Human Resources (HR) division during scheduling of orientation sessions for new hires. This procedure begins once the initial QA training orientation session is scheduled by HR with the QAPM and the new hire. HR should provide a copy of the new hire's job description to the QAPM in advance of the scheduled training session. Multiple new employees may attend the same training session.

#### *Step 1*

Prior to the orientation session, the QAPM reviews the existing training materials (Appendix A) for the session and verify their accuracy. If needed, the QAPM updates the training materials or modifies them to improve their effectiveness. If updates are made to the training materials, the QAPM sends the updated version to HR for inclusion in future orientation packets.

#### *Step 2*

Whether in person or virtually, the QAPM brings a copy of the training materials and shares them with the trainee(s).

#### *Step 3*

The QAPM conducts the training. The objective of the training is for the trainee(s) to understand the overall structure of NEIWPCC's Quality Program and where they fit in, including any pertinent responsibilities. The QAPM also makes sure that the trainee(s) know where to find information about the Quality Program and the appropriate staff to contact with questions about QA. The specific content and focus of the training will vary between trainees and should be based on the specific responsibilities included in their job descriptions.

#### *Step 4*

During the training, the QAPM makes an assessment on whether the new employee is a potential candidate for QAPM designee training once they are eligible. If a trainee is a potential QAPM designee training candidate, the QAPM enters a new record in the “QAPM Designee Records” Access Database using the “Designee Summary” form, entering “No” in the “Active Designee” field, “Training Lead” in the “Inactive Reason” field, and the new hire’s start date in the “Hire Date” field. If the trainee is not a potential designee training candidate, the QAPM skips this step.

#### *Step 5*

Once the training is complete, the QAPM makes a note of the training in the appropriate log, such that it is captured and available when compiling quarterly and annual reporting.

### **ANNUAL ALL STAFF QA AWARENESS TRAINING**

As specified in our QMP, the QAPM is responsible for conducting training across the organization, including at the Annual All Staff Meeting (note that there is flexibility to provide such training through alternate means if necessary). Most commonly, training at the All Staff Meeting has taken the form of a thirty minute plenary presentation, though the specifics of the training and its format are at the discretion of the QAPM.

#### *Step 1*

The QAPM reviews previous All Staff Meeting training materials and considers staff feedback from them, which can be obtained from the HR department.

#### *Step 2*

Based on the current needs of staff (obtained through the self-assessment process and discussions with division directors and staff), the QAPM determines the most effective topics for training. External factors are also important to consider, such as updates to requirements from EPA.

#### *Step 3*

The QAPM develops content for the training, collaborating with other staff in the organization, as needed.

#### *Step 4*

The QAPM works with the All Staff Meeting Planning Chair and the Director of the Business Operations Division on the logistics for the training (time, location at the venue, any support needed, etc.).

#### *Step 5*

The QAPM completes the training at the Annual All Staff Meeting.

#### *Step 6*

Once the training is complete, the QAPM makes a note of the training in the appropriate log, such that it is captured and available when compiling quarterly and annual reporting.

## **APPENDIX A: NEW EMPLOYEE QA AWARENESS TRAINING HANDOUT**

## Overview of Quality Management System (QMS)

### **QMS: Quality Management System – Overview / History**

- NEIWPCC QMS program has been in place since 2001.
- It is designed to ensure NEIWPCC is collecting sound, defensible environmental data to support decision-making.
- NEIWPCC QA website: <http://neiwpc.org/our-programs/assessment-and-research/quality-management/>

### **QMP: Quality Management Plan**

- Provided with initial packet of NEIWPCC materials.
- Blueprint of our Quality Management System.
- Umbrella document, reflecting NEIWPCC QA/QC principles and policies.
- Re-authorized w/ EPA region 1 & 2 every 5 years (or sooner if needed).
- Currently the 5th iteration of QMP - approved in 2018. The next version of the QMP is currently under review with EPA for concurrence.
- Contains obligation to conduct annual system status review and report findings to EPA.

### **QAPPs: Quality Assurance Project Plans**

- Project-specific document
  - What, why, who, where, how much, how good is "good enough", when are we done, etc.
- Various routes of review and approval - depending on source of project funds
- Have a QAPP approval SOP (available on QA website)
- R5 checklist (available on QA website) utilized to evaluate "completeness" of draft QAPPs
- QAPP submission form (available on QA website) used to initiate the review process.

### **Guidance documents & Training opportunities**

- QAPP development guide (available on QA website)
- QAPP approval SOP for NEIWPCC Project Managers (available on QA website)
- Staff training via webinar – occur periodically
- QA awareness training conducted at every NEIWPCC All-Staff meeting.

### **Staff roles within the system**

- QAPM - Quality Assurance Program Manager – defined in QMP and QAPP development guide and approval SOP.
- Project Managers – defined in QMP and QAPP development guide and approval SOP.
- QA Designee – NEIWPCC staff authorized to review and approve draft QAPP's
- Annual performance evaluation & self-assessment questionnaire
- Immediate supervisor will help to get new employees familiar with NEIWPCC QMS requirements and responsibilities as they pertain to an individual's specific projects.

Quality Assurance Program Manager (currently Emily Bialowas [ebialowas@neiwpc.org](mailto:ebialowas@neiwpc.org) or 978-349-2052) can provide additional guidance and answer further questions – as necessary.

# Quality Management

Environmental decisions are only as good as the information upon which they are based, which means the quality of the data must be assured.



Quality Management Plans (QMPs) are mandated by EPA, and describe an organization's system for planning, implementing, documenting, and assessing data collection to ensure the quality of the information that is generated. This system applies to work done by the organization itself or a contractor hired by the organization to conduct a project.

Following EPA's directive, NEIWPCC's Quality Management Steering Committee developed a QMP that spells out our commitment to developing quality assurance project plans (QAPPs) for each project involving the collection of environmental data or the evaluation of environmental technology. These QAPPs carefully describe how the project's data collection activities will be planned, conducted, and reviewed throughout the life cycle of the project.

Our QMP even went beyond EPA requirements by pledging to create QAPPs for all environmental data projects, not just those supported by EPA funds.

In October 2018, NEIWPCC received a periodic Quality System Assessment from representatives of the EPA Region 1 Quality Assurance Unit. Their [cover letter and report](#) were received in November 2018. There were no non-conformances found during the assessment.

The [2022 Annual QA Status Report and Quality Management Plan Review](#) was submitted to EPA Regions 1 & 2 on December 22, 2022.

For more information, contact Emily Bialowas, NEIWPCC's Quality Assurance Program Manager, at [ebialowas@neiwpc.org](mailto:ebialowas@neiwpc.org).

## QUALITY MANAGEMENT LINKS

[NEIWPCC's QMP \(revised in 2018\)](#)

[NEIWPCC's QAPP Guide](#)

[QAPP Review & Approval SOP](#)

[QAPP Submission Form](#)

[QAPP Submission Form Guidance](#)

[R-5 Checklist for QAPP review](#)

[Secondary Data Project Checklist for QAPP review](#)

[Modeling Project Checklist for QAPP review](#)