

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the CD-ROM Quality Assurance (QA) Project Plan development tool. This CD contains a wealth of information designed to assist you in developing a QA project plan that meets EPA requirements for projects that involve surface or groundwater monitoring and/or the collection and analysis of water samples. For example, this tool could be used to assist in decision-making for the Clean Water 106 Program, provide data to support a demonstration project related to non-point source concerns, etc. While the information on this CD emphasizes water-related projects, it can also serve as guidance to prepare QA Project Plans for other types of projects.

Following this guidance will not necessarily guarantee that your QA Project Plan will be approved on its first submission to your EPA Regional QA Officer, but it should help to ensure that your document covers most of the material required. This should both reduce the number of review comments and the time it takes to have your plan approved. (Note: This tool does not address the topic of Quality Management Plans (QMPs). You should check with your Regional QA Manager concerning your region's requirements for QMPs.)

While the preparation and approval of a QA Project Plan is a requirement for EPA-funded projects involving environmental measurements, the development of a QA Project Plan offers much more than fulfilling this requirement. The structure of the QA Project Plan is designed to step you through the thought process of planning your project, as well as to provide a framework in which to document your plans.

The QA Project Plan structure (through its various sections) helps to focus and define some of the key project details and decisions - WHO is doing WHAT, WHERE are they are doing it, WHEN are they doing it, HOW are they are doing it, and WHY are they doing it. The QA Project Plan serves as a place to document those details and associated decisions so that everyone who will be working on the project is clear about the details and understands his or her individual roles in the data generation process. By taking the time to think through your project and make necessary decisions during the planning process, you will more likely to have a successful project and one that will be more cost effective in the use of your resources.

FORMAT OF CD-ROM:

The CD-ROM QA Project Plan tool is divided into an introduction and 6 modules. This current text serves as the introduction designed to provide a framework for the QA Project Plan development tool and to guide you through its contents. The individual modules include:

1. Guidance on Preparing a QA Project Plan
2. QA Project Plan Template
3. Model QA Project Plan
4. References and Links
5. Standard Operating Procedures
6. Selecting an Environmental Laboratory

The contents and purpose of these modules are summarized below. Additional details are provided at the beginning of each module.

Module 1. The module on "Guidance on Preparing a QA Project Plan" (or "the Guidance") provides a starting place for preparing your QA Project Plan. The Guidance provides a streamlined version of EPA's national QA documents (*EPA Requirements for Quality Assurance Project Plans*, EPA QA/R-5 and companion guidance *EPA Guidance for the Preparation of Quality Assurance Project Plans*, EPA QA/G-5) and represents a graded approach to QA Project Plan development for water quality monitoring projects. The Guidance follows the same basic organization structure as the Template and the Model QA Project Plan described, respectively, in Modules 2 and 3 below.

Module 2. The "QA Project Plan Template" (or "the Template") module provides a formatted outline (in Microsoft Word) to serve as a basis for documenting your QA Project Plan. Each section of the Template includes a very brief description of the information to include, while supplemental and more detailed information for each section is included in Module 1. The template also includes example tables, figures, and/or appendices providing optional ways to present some of your project information. It is not required that you use the Template or follow it exactly; instead, it is provided as a guide.

Module 3. The document provided as the "Model QA Project Plan" module is designed to provide perspective on what a completed QA Project Plan document might look like. While it is impossible to address all project scenarios, this model document is intended as an example to further assist you in understanding the basic requirements of a QA Project Plan. You may notice that the Model QA Project Plan follows the basic structure of the Guidance and Template included in Modules 1 and 2, while demonstrating flexibility in applying the structure to an example project.

Module 4. The module on "References and Links" provides a great deal of information that you may wish to explore and use while designing your project. Even if you are familiar with writing basic QA Project Plans, the content of this module may serve as an excellent resource for both QA and technical information. Most of the information is presented as PDF format documents, many of which are linked to the original web site from which the information was obtained. In some cases, the information available is from national sources (for example, the national US EPA QA web page), while other information has been developed by specific EPA Regions and other technical sources (such as USGS, various states, etc.).

Module 5. The module on "Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)" is a compilation of information, presented as PDF format documents, provided by various Regions and Tribes represented on the workgroup developing this CD-ROM tool. The SOPs may serve as a basis for developing those most pertinent for your program or project, especially if you are just getting started. Your organization is responsible for following its SOPs as written, so give this consideration when adapting someone else's SOP to fit the way your organization implements its environmental sampling and analysis program.

Module 6. The module on "Selecting an Environmental Laboratory" has been provided to assist you in choosing a laboratory to support your needs. Since some organizations may not have a lot of experience in selecting a laboratory, this information was provided to give you a starting point. The module describes a number of factors to be considered. How you choose to weigh the different factors presented will be dependent on your own individual circumstances.

Although this CD-ROM QA Project Plan tool has attempted to provide material that is widely acceptable and consistent with all Agency requirements, it cannot speak for all reviewers in all regions. If you have questions about policies in your region or would like additional guidance with your QA Project Plan, you should check with your Regional QA Manager. A list of Regional QA Managers can be found on the national QA web page at: www.epa.gov/quality. New guidance materials are constantly being created and training opportunities are being offered, so checking national and regional QA web pages on a regular basis is also a good idea.

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