



QATS PROGRAM  
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA



# QUALITY ASSURANCE TECHNICAL SUPPORT

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## CUSTOMERS

Under the Quality Assurance Technical Support (QATS) contract, APTIM provides quality assurance (QA) support to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Superfund Remediation and Technology Innovation (OSRTI) Analytical Services Branch (ASB). This includes support to ASB in their management of the EPA Contract Laboratory Program (CLP) and support to the 10 EPA Regions in assessing laboratory performance.

## PRODUCTS/SERVICES

The QATS Program products and services fall under five task areas:

### PERFORMANCE EVALUATION SAMPLES/REFERENCE MATERIALS (PES/RMS)

Single- and double-blind performance evaluation samples (PES) are developed for the CLP Proficiency Testing (PT) program, pre-contract award (PA-PES) evaluations, the EPA regions, and site-specific projects. The PES inventory includes organic volatiles, semi-volatiles, pesticides, (PCBs), inorganic metals, mercury, and cyanide in different matrices. Special order or site-specific PES include asbestos, perchlorate, volatile organics in air, 1,4-dioxane, chlorinated acid herbicides, organophosphorous pesticides, lead wipe, Perfluorinated Compounds (PFCs), and classical chemistry analyses. Inorganic reference materials (RM) are developed and distributed for use as the primary check materials in the EPA CLP Program. The QATS inventory currently includes 100,000+ PES RM materials bottled and ready for distribution. In addition to PES/RM products, the QATS Program develops and maintains scoring applications for evaluating PT and PA-PES studies, and a web-based scoring application for use by the EPA Regions.

### DATA AUDIT

Data package/electronic audits of data materials from CLP and non-CLP laboratories are performed to determine adherence to contractual requirements, verify integrity through electronic data file reprocessing, and support special investigative audits to evaluate suspected discrepancies. Other evaluations include verification of inorganic and organic method detection limits (MDL), and inter-element correction factors, as well as evaluation of laboratory quality assurance plans (QAPs), and standard operating procedures (SOPs). The QATS Program routinely provides data validation support for special projects, including asbestos data validation for the EPA Libby Superfund site and organic and inorganic data validation for the EPA Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO). We performed asbestos data validation of 49,000+ samples in support of two World Trade Center indoor air studies.

## ON-SITE AUDIT

The QATS Program provides support to ASB and the EPA regions by performing on-site audits of laboratories/project sites to determine adherence to contractual requirements, laboratory procedures, capacities, capabilities, and staffing. On-site audits include routine, non-routine, pre-award, and special investigative for organic and inorganic, dioxin, chlorinated biphenyl congeners, asbestos, and air parameters under protocols and standards including ISM02.4, SOM02.4, HRSM01.2, ASB01.0, and ISO 17025.

## METHODS DEVELOPMENT

The QATS Program routinely supports EPA method evaluations through the design, implementation, and reporting of single- and multi-laboratory studies. Recent multi-laboratory studies include studies in marine biota for two regional projects, three lead and arsenic bioavailability multi-laboratory studies to verify (NIST) solid reference materials, and the development of a method to determine mercury in compact fluorescent lamps. Other multi-laboratory studies supported by QATS have included 1,4-dioxane (purgeable vs extractable); deuterated monitoring compounds for (SOM) methods; pressurized fluid extraction, Soxtherm and solid phase extraction methods for semi-volatiles and pesticides; stability of VOCs-in-soil for temperature, containers, and preservatives; and Method 8261 (vacuum distillation). The QATS Program also recently developed a draft analytical asbestos SOW and Asbestos National Functional Guidelines for the EPA asbestos national laboratory program.

## LOGISTICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

APTIM provides operation, maintenance, health and safety, training, QA of the laboratory and facilities, preparation of monthly technical and financial reports, maintenance of the quality management system, and technical conference support. Since 2001, the QATS Program has prepared and presented 60+ papers and workshops at national EPA and quality conferences and published three journal articles on various technical, QA, and ISO 9000 topics.

## CUSTOMER BUY-IN

EPA customers outside the CLP can “buy-in” to the QATS contract to obtain support in any of the task areas. Recent examples include the GLNPO for data validation and (QAPP) evaluation support, the Office of Emergency Management for asbestos and chemical warfare support, Region 4 for Libby Asbestos data validation, Region 8 for Libby Asbestos QA support, Region 9 for Air Division technical systems audits, Region 10 for two separate method validation multi-laboratory studies for arsenic speciation in marine biota and explosives in marine biota, as well as the development of a Puget Sound sediment reference material. Other buy-in customers have included Region 2 for World Trade Center data validation support, Region 1 for asbestos and metals data validation support, the EPA Office of Air Quality and Planning and Standards for data and on-site laboratory audit support, EPA OSRTI for the management of three separate In-Vitro Bio-Accessibility Round Robin studies for the certification of a NIST, and a (USGS) solid reference material for lead and arsenic values.

## QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The QATS Quality Management System (QMS) is certified to the ISO 9001:2015 International Standard and has been certified to ISO 9000 since 2001. It was the first EPA contract organization with an ISO 9000 certified QMS. All QATS Program on-site auditors have professional training from the American Society of Quality (ASQ), and include four ASQ certified quality auditors, one certified manager of quality and organizational excellence, 13 trained ISO 9000 lead auditors, and one trained ISO 17025 lead auditor.

## FACILITY

The QATS Program facilities include a full service analytical laboratory dedicated to prepare, test, store, and distribute PES/RM materials as required by contract.

The facility features:

- ▶ 18,500 square feet of laboratory and office space
- ▶ PES/RM sample storage repository
- ▶ Asbestos sample storage repository
- ▶ Containment laboratory for handling highly hazardous materials
- ▶ Audit area for electronic and hard copy data audits
- ▶ Data materials storage
- ▶ 50 person conference room

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