

Region 4 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Laboratory Services and Applied Science Division Athens, Georgia	
Policy	
Title: LSASD Quality Policy	ID: LSASDPLCY-1000-R2
Issuing Authority: LSASD Deputy Director	
Effective Date: July 15th, 2024	Next Review Date: July 15th, 2028
Method Reference: N/A	Author: Desiree Smith

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the Quality Policy established for the U.S. EPA Region 4 Laboratory Services and Applied Science Division (LSASD). The Quality Policy supports LSASD's commitment to sound science and quality assurance (QA) practices intended to produce environmental data of known, documented, and appropriate quality to be used by its customers for decision making.

Scope/Application

This document addresses the Quality Policy for LSASD's quality management system, and managers and personnel directly or indirectly involved in data gathering to maintain conformance to technical and quality system requirements. The Quality Policy of the LSASD is aligned with the mission of the Agency.

Table of Contents

1. Policy	3
2. Definitions	5
3. Related Documents and Forms	5
4. References	6
5. Revision History	7

1. Policy

1.1 Mission Statement

The overall mission of LSASD is to provide sound science to its customers through superior environmental evaluation. To this end, LSASD provides scientific support of known and documented quality appropriate for the intended use of congressional mandates and initiatives, and partnerships with academia, State, local, and Tribal governments.

1.2 Ethics Statement

It is LSASD's policy that all business be conducted with integrity and in an ethical manner. It is the responsibility of each staff member and manager to hold to the highest ethical standard of professional conduct in the performance of all duties and to adhere to EPA's Scientific Integrity Policy (see References). All LSASD management and staff, including contractors conducting work on behalf of LSASD, are expected to review EPA's Scientific Integrity Policy on an annual basis.

1.3 Quality Policy Statement

LSASD is committed to sound science and QA practices that will produce environmental data and evaluations of known, documented, and appropriate quality to be used by its customers for decision making. The LSASD quality management system supports this commitment and is consistent with the requirements of EPA Directive CIO 2105.4: Environmental Information Quality Policy. The requirements of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 17025 standard (including a Forensic accreditation amplification) will be met for all accredited LSASD environmental work.

It is the policy of LSASD that all decisions made to protect human health and safeguard the environment shall be based on data of known and documented quality appropriate for its intended use to support the impact and sensitivity level of decisions required. LSASD's Quality Policy also includes a commitment by management that the quality system supporting effective environmental technology and the generation of data of known and documented quality appropriate for its intended use will be implemented as described in this policy. Adherence to the LSASD's Quality Policy is achieved by ensuring that adequate and acceptable planning, implementation, and assessment procedures are utilized throughout all phases of projects, studies, and/or tasks that require the generation of environmental data and/or use of environmental technology. LSASD's Quality Management Plan (QMP), operating procedures, and guidance documents, as well as internal and external assessments of LSASD, all support the

Division's efforts in planning, implementing, and assessing its environmental work. LSASD's QMP will adhere to applicable requirements prescribed in EPA's QMP Standard (CIO 2105-S-01.1). *(Note: LSASD's QMP also addresses all requirements of the EPA Region 4 QMP, which is managed by the Region 4 Quality Assurance Manager (RQAM).)*

Management and staff of LSASD shall assure that sufficient QA efforts are conducted by the data gathering components of the Division to produce environmental data and information that are scientifically valid and legally defensible, and that all work products are provided in a timely manner as agreed upon with the customer. The collection or production of environmental data of known and documented quality appropriate for its intended use is the responsibility of all LSASD staff who are directly or indirectly involved in the generation of data. The managers of LSASD are responsible for assuring that adequate resources, including personnel, and travel and extramural funds are available to implement the Division's quality program.

1.4 Quality Goals

The following are the goals of LSASD that serve to support the Divisional Quality Policy:

- The EPA data quality objectives (DQO) selection process (i.e., EPA QA/G-4), or a similar systematic planning process, shall be used to delineate the goals and objectives of projects and/or studies, as they relate to programmatic or regulatory requirements and needed environmental data quality, prior to the initiation of data collection activities. DQOs, or similar outputs from a systematic planning process, shall be documented in a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP), or equivalent project-level planning document. All LSASD QAPPs will adhere to applicable requirements prescribed in EPA's QAPP Standard (CIO 2105-S-02.1).
- Managers and staff of LSASD shall receive QA training appropriate for their responsibilities related to data collection, measurement, implementation of a procedure, or environmental technology (see LSASDPROC-1016, most recent version). Managers and staff are required to be familiar with LSASD's quality system documentation and control of records process and implement its QA policies and procedures in their work activities. LSASD field activities will comply with EPA's QA Field Activities Procedure (CIO 2105-P-02.1).
- Communication on QA issues and activities shall be maintained among the LSASD Management, RQAM, LSASD's Quality Assurance Coordinator (QAC), and LSASD staff. Reports of Field Services Branch (FSB) projects (e.g., water quality studies) issued to customers include QAPP and/or Sampling and Analysis Plan (SAP) deviations and/or limitations on the data recorded in the report, when applicable. Reports of Laboratory Services Branch (LSB) projects issued to customers include data quality issues in the form of qualification or narrative.

LSB reports do not, however, comment on limitations on data use with respect to intended use. The QAPP/SAP associated with a project's data are not submitted to LSB; thus, the data's intended use is not evaluated by LSB. Both FSB and LSB reports are reviewed by the appropriate Section Chief prior to release to the customer.

- Any person within or external to LSASD may identify and present a complaint, notice of nonconformance, or an opportunity for corrective action, preventive action, or improvement. Complaints and nonconforming work will be handled in accordance with LSASD's Complaint Resolution and Control of Nonconforming Work operating procedure (LSASDPROC-1006, most recent version). Corrective/preventive actions, risk assessments, and quality improvements will be handled in accordance with LSASD's Actions, Improvements, and Risk operating procedure (LSASDPROC-1005, most recent version).
- LSASD is committed to impartiality. All staff are expected to uphold impartiality as described in 5 CFR Part 2635 Subpart E.
- Internal and external assessments shall be performed to determine the effectiveness of the LSASD quality system, including the annual Management Review and Internal Audit (see LSASDPROC-1007 and LSASDPROC-1004, most recent version, respectively). LSASD's QAC, who is independent of LSASD's environmental work, is responsible for leading LSASD's annual Management Reviews and Internal Audits.
- QA processes will be designed in the most cost-effective manner without compromising data quality. Continuous improvement is a core value within the quality management system and will be pursued, evaluated and embraced on an ongoing basis. All staff are encouraged to identify areas for improvement within the quality system.

2. Definitions

None

3. Related Documents and Forms

U.S. EPA Environmental Information Quality Policy, CIO 2105.4, March 2024.

4. References

International Organization for Standardization/International Electrotechnical Commission (ISO/IEC), Standard 17025: General Requirements for the Competence of Testing and Calibration Laboratories, 3rd Edition, 2017-11.

International Organization for Standardization, ISO 9000: Quality Management Systems-Fundamentals and Vocabulary, Switzerland, 2015.

U.S. EPA Scientific Integrity Policy,
https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-12/scientific_integrity_policy_2012_accessible.pdf

U.S. EPA, Region 4, LSASD, LSB Laboratory Operations and Quality Assurance Manual, Athens, GA, LSBPROC-120, most recent version.

LSASD Operating Procedure for Annual LSASD Management Review, LSASDPROC-1007, most recent version.

LSASD, FSB, Operating Procedure for Project Planning, LSASDPROC-016, most recent version.

Guidance on Systematic Planning Using the Data Quality Objectives Process, EPA QA/G-4, EPA/240/B-06/001, February 2006.

LSASD Operating Procedure for Internal Audits, LSASDPROC-1004, most recent version.

LSASD Operating Procedure for Actions, Improvements, and Risk, LSASDPROC-1005, most recent version.

LSASD Operating Procedure for Complaint Resolution and Control of Nonconforming Work, LSASDPROC-1006, most recent version.

LSASD Operating Procedure for Onboarding New LSASD Employees, LSASDPROC-1016, most recent version.

U.S. EPA Region 4 Quality Management Plan, R4QMP-001-112020, November 2020.

LSASD Quality Management Plan, LSASDPLAN-1000, most recent version.

U.S. EPA Quality Management Plan Standard, CIO 2105-S-01.1, March 2024.

U.S. EPA Quality Assurance Project Plan Standard, CIO 2105-S-02.1, April 2024.

U.S. EPA QA Field Activities Procedure, CIO 2105-P-02.1, September 2022.

Revision History

This table shows changes to this controlled document over time. The most recent version is presented in the top row of the table. Previous versions of the document are maintained by the LSASD Quality Assurance Coordinator.

History	Effective Date
LSASDPLCY-1000-R2, <i>LSASD Quality Policy</i>, replaces LSASDPLCY-1000-R1 General: Added language throughout to implement EPA's Environmental Information Quality Policy. Updated references to EPA's Environmental Information Quality Policy throughout. Other minor editorial, grammar, and formatting edits completed throughout. Section 1.2: Included a statement referencing the expectation that annual EPA Scientific Integrity Policy reviews be completed by all LSASD staff and contractors, as needed (in response to the 2024 ISO Forensic accreditation assessment). Section 1.3: Included references to the Forensic Testing and Calibration AR 3125 accreditation requirements and EPA's QMP Standard. Added language referencing sources of LSASD's planning, implementation, and assessment information. Section 1.4: Included references to EPA's G-4, QAPP Standard, and QA Field Procedures documents. Included information related to field and lab reports (e.g., data quality limitations notice and report release to customers). Included references to relevant LSASD operating procedures and LSASD QAC tasks that support this quality policy. Sections 3 and 4: Included additional references. Updated other references, as needed.	July 15, 2024
LSASDPLCY-1000-R1, Quality Policy- Updated Division and Branch names due to Agency re-alignment. Updated document naming conventions. Replaced references to SHEM with Region 4 Laboratory Safety and Chemical Hygiene Plan. Replaced references to FQM/LQM with Divisional Quality Assurance Coordinator. Updated Section 1.1 with the current LSASD Mission Statement.	January 15, 2020
SES DPLCY-1000-R0, Quality Policy, Original Issue	October 1, 2017