Quality Directives Information Paper

Background

Responsibility for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Quality Program is within the Office of Mission Support (OMS), Office of Records, Administrative Systems and eDiscovery (ORASE), Enterprise Quality Management Division (EQMD). Through Authority 1-41, the EPA Administrator has delegated responsibility for the Quality Program to the Chief Information Officer (CIO) and Deputy Assistant Administrator (DAA) for Information Technology/Information Management (IT/IM). In turn, the Program is redelegated from the CIO/DAA for IT/IM to the ORASE and EQMD Directors and no further.

Quality Directives

The IT/IM Directives fall under the purview of the CIO/DAA for IT/IM. Of the 119 directives, six belong to the Quality Program and are referred to as the Quality Directives. The Quality Directives consist of the policy, procedures, standards, and guidance. Implementation occurs across 10 Regions, the National Program Offices, and the Office of Research and Development (ORD), with the goal of ensuring the quality of environmental information managed by the EPA. The Quality Directives are reviewed annually for administrative and minor changes. Also, there is a requirement to review/update/reissue or rescind the Quality Directives every five-years, which includes changes to content and the addition of new requirements using the Agency-wide directives review process.

The Quality Directives are consistent with the principles in the American Society for Quality/American National Standards InstituteE4:2014 (R:2019), *Quality management systems for environmental information and technology programs— Requirements with guidance for use*; and set the minimum requirements for the Quality Program. The Environmental Information Quality Policy establishes the Program requirements while the Environmental Information Quality Procedure provides implementation information. Next, the EPA Quality Assurance (QA) Field Activities Procedure and CIO Notification for Environmental Data Quality Issues Procedure provide details to ensure consistency in standard operating procedures for field activities and in notifying the CIO of data quality issues, respectively.

Standards provide technical details for implementation. The Quality Management Plan (QMP) Standard describes the processes and procedures of EPA organizations who have environmental information operations (EIO). The QA Project Plan (QAPP) Standard outlines how EIO are planned, executed, documented, and evaluated and provides comprehensive details for QA and Quality Control.

The Quality Directives align with the EPA Information Quality Guideline (IQG), which reflects the Agency's commitment to ensuring and maximizing the quality of information disseminated to the public and fulfills the Office of Management and Budget's government-wide policy. In addition, the IQG provide a mechanism for correction for disseminated information and outline the process for peer review and pre-dissemination review. EQMD manages the correction process, and the ORD manages the internal reviews.

Actions to Date

In June 2020, the Office of Inspector General Audit Report identified OMS update all Quality Directives. The Quality Policy, Procedure, QMP and QAPP Standards were updated between 2021 and 2024, and annual reviews of these four directives have resulted in reissuing these directives.

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