



Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) Requirements for Social Surveys Nonpoint Source Program (6/13/03)

According to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) agreement with the US Environmental Protection Agency, a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) is required whenever data is collected. QAPPs provide the framework for how data will be collected to achieve specific project objectives and describe the procedures to obtain data of known and adequate quality. The QAPP is prepared by the grantee or their consultant, and approved by the DEQ prior to data collection and analysis.

When an Information/Education (I/E) QAPP is needed:

In general, an I/E QAPP is required when social data is collected to evaluate knowledge, attitudes, perceptions or behavior by way of an interview, focus group or interactive survey. Specific examples of when I/E QAPPs are needed include gathering social data to:

1. Obtain baseline data from watershed residents on their perceptions of water quality, as well as how they get information and basic demographic info if used to develop a watershed plan or i/e strategy or evaluate the success of that plan or strategy.
2. Conduct a follow-up survey of residents to better pinpoint where residents think problem areas are in their watershed (or where they know of such problem areas), and to determine what they would be willing to do to improve or protect water quality.
3. Determine the overall benefit of the project Steering Committee using attendance records and meeting minutes or conducting interviews of the Committee members.
4. Conduct two-day focus groups to determine the direction a watershed project should take.

I/E QAPPs will NOT be needed when social data is being collected to:

1. Obtain information from a focus group or Steering Committee members halfway through a project to determine how well the plan development or implementation process is proceeding and/or to make any necessary mid-course corrections.
2. Determine whether 6th-8th grade teachers benefited from Enviroscope presentations and/or have any recommendations for improvement. Also, no QAPP is needed if the grantee just calls the teachers.
3. Include a survey at the end of a workshop to evaluate the effectiveness of the workshop.
4. Contact a few of the key stakeholders by phone to get their perceptions about water quality in the watershed and ask whether they would be willing to participate in a steering committee.

Below is the generally recommended outline for I/E QAPPs. To help develop your QAPP, consider using the “Evaluation Planning Worksheet for I/E Data.”

The I/E QAPP approval process:

Grantees should route all QAPPs through the DEQ Project Administrator (PA) for approval. The PA will forward the QAPP to Lansing staff for review. Written QAPP approval/denial will come from Lansing to the PA; the PA will then notify the grantee. It is highly recommended that grantees pull together the information in the outline above early on in the project, and discuss their QAPP outlines with the DEQ Project Administrator (PA).

Suggestions before you develop your QAPP:

First, make sure the social data you think you want to collect is consistent with the goals of your project and watershed plan, and, in particular, the evaluation goals of your project and watershed plan.

To learn about I/E surveys in general, get online at www.uwex.edu/ces and click on “Publications,” then “Program Development and Evaluation.” The document “Collecting Evaluation Data: Surveys” provides great background information on social surveys and will help you select the best survey for your project.

Armed with this information, fill out the Evaluation Planning Worksheet and use that worksheet to help develop your QAPP.

The Basic Elements of an I/E QAPP

Title page, including:

- The name of the survey.
- Project name.
- Tracking code.
- Grantee project manager and phone number.
- DEQ Project Administrator.
- Author and their organization.

Project Description/Purpose. (*Consider using the Description and Purpose portion of your EVALUATION PLANNING WORKSHEET*)

- Brief description of the project and its information, education or awareness goals. In lieu of writing a new summary, consider attaching the page(s) of your contract work plan to your QAPP.
- The purpose of the evaluation.
- A question-answer profile (which summarizes the overriding questions you are trying to answer. (See example at the end of the QAPP outline).
- Survey type (mail, phone, face-to-face, hand-out, electronic, etc.).

Project Organization

- The grantee and other partners.
- Organization or group conducting the evaluation and their qualifications.
- Who is doing what (or include as appropriate, below).

Description of Data Collection

- What information is being collected, including the proposed questions.
- The group or groups of people to be questioned.
- How the people within that group will be selected for questioning.
- Number of people to be questioned and how that number was determined.
- Information collection method(s):
 - How the survey will be distributed.
 - How responses will be collected/received.
 - Any follow-up that will be done to increase participation.
- Frequency of data collection.
- Time frame for the survey project.
- Whether the same methods will be used each time (if multiple surveys).
- Whether any advance notice materials or follow-up materials (reminder postcards, phone calls) will be used and purpose of the materials.
- Whether responses will be confidential or anonymous.
- Whether any qualifying questions will be asked to make sure the respondents are in the group you are targeting (e.g. "Are you a resident of X?" "Are you over 18 years old?")

Quality Control

- Indicate who will review the questions to ensure they are unbiased, clear and objective.
- For mail-out surveys, indicate whether any sub-sample of the population will be provided copies of the survey prior to mass-mailing to the entire population.

- Indicate who will review the cover letter or other introductory information.
- Indicate any contingency plan (if, for example, a low response rate)
- Indicate how a survey will be considered “valid” (for example if one member of a household fills in the “before” survey and a different member does the “after” survey, if a household only fills in the “before” survey and not the “after” survey; if a phone respondent is hesitant or distracted).
- Indicate who will review and make decisions regarding accepting, rejecting or qualifying the data.

Data Management, Analyses and Reporting Procedures (*Consider summarizing from your EVALUATION PLANNING WORKSHEET!*)

- How information will be tabulated and by whom.
- How information will be analyzed and by whom.
- How information will be interpreted and by whom.
- How non-responses will be addressed.
- How “outliers” and “other” comments will be addressed; how incomplete surveys will be dealt with.
- How results will be reported and to whom.
- How results will be distributed and used.
- Who will be overseeing data management and ensuring its consistency with the grant. (This is usually the grantee).
- How and where data will be stored.

Products. (*Consider using the Products portion of your EVALUATION PLANNING WORKSHEET!*)

- List all products that will result from this survey. At a minimum, this should include a copy of the approved QAPP, the actual survey(s), and a final report showing results. Because the DEQ Project Administrator can review and approve the draft report, grantees may want to submit a report outline prior to developing the report. For watershed planning projects, results may be included in the watershed plan, as opposed to a separate document.
- Note: original responses to each/every survey do not have to be submitted to the DEQ but must be held in the grantee’s office upon completion of the survey report.

References

- List any references used to develop the QAPP

Example question-answer profile:

The survey question will be designed to determine public awareness or misconceptions about:

- Connections between surface water and groundwater
- What a watershed is
- What storm water is
- The community’s level of concern about pollution – is it enough to change behavior
- Who is responsible for fixing the problem
- The finite supply of water