![vhb Meeting Agenda]

Meeting Agenda

Date:	November 16, 2021 3:00-4:00 PM	**Agenda Prepared By:**	Chelsea Glinka, Tom Ardito
Place:	Zoom Meeting		
Project No.:	72967.00	**Project Name:**	RAE/SNEP QAPP Technical Assistance: Conference Call with Grant Awardees to Review QAPP Requirements

Introductions

<u>Restore America's Estuaries (RAE)</u>

Restore America's Estuaries was selected by the EPA to manage the SNEP Grant Program for 2021. RAE will oversee fiscal and technical aspects of the grant project.

Contact: Tom Ardito, Director; tardito@estuaries.org

<u>Environmental Protection Agency</u>

EPA is funding the SNEP Program and will conduct the final review and approval of Project QAPPs.

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<u>VHB</u>

VHB's role is to simplify the QAPP-development process for awardees and provide quality control by reviewing the initial draft QAPPs against the EPA R05 Checklist for Review of QAPPs. VHB will coordinate with the awardees and the goal is to make the QAPP development a predictable and simple process.

Contact: Chelsea Glinka; cglinka@vhb.com

Overview of Southeast New England Program Watershed Grants

SNEP Watershed Grants target integrated approaches to water quality and ecosystem restoration. SNEP recognizes that clean water, healthy habitats, resilient ecosystems, and prosperous communities are closely interconnected, and that strong partnerships offer the most effective means of meeting Southeast New England's environmental challenges. SNEP grants target water pollution, habitat degradation, and other high-priority environmental issues, in order to foster sustainable coastal and watershed communities.

Any SNEP-funded projects that include primary or secondary data collection require the development of a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) as a condition of the grant.

What is a QAPP?

A QAPP is a document that describes:

- *Why* you are conducting the proposed project; briefly provide project background and issue(s) to be addressed;
- *How* you will address the issues outlined above. The Project should be broken down into specific tasks;
- *Who* is involved in the project; List project partner organizations and describe the specific roles of everyone involved in the project.
    - For the first three items, refer to your proposal
- Document how quality assurance and quality control will be applied to data collection and assessment to assure that the results obtained are of the type and quality needed and expected. Think about the steps that will be necessary for you to have confidence in the outcome of the project when it is completed (e.g. comparisons between before and after; maintenance and calibration of instruments, etc.)

The success of the project relies heavily on the quality of data (both primary and secondary) collected to inform the project. Any decisions, assessments, or actions that occur as a result of the project should be based on data with established QA/QC criteria.

Importantly, a QAPP is the first task that should be completed as part of your project. The QAPP essentially is the project "blueprint" that lays out how the project will be completed and should be referenced when addressing QA/QC issues, should they arise. QAPPs are meant to be "working documents" that are to be updated if new QAPP-worthy project components are added.

Why is a QAPP needed?

EPA policy is based on the national consensus standard, ANSI/ASQC E4-1994, *Specifications and Guidelines for Environmental Data Collection and Environmental Technology Programs*. Part B of this standard, *Collection and Evaluation of Environmental Data,* necessitates the development of project-specific QAPPs. Non-EPA organizations funded by the EPA via Assistance Agreement Programs (AAP) to carry out environmental data collection are required to develop a QAPP per 40 CFR 30, 31, and 35. The Southeast New England Watershed Grant Program (SNEP) is an AAP, therefore a QAPP is required as a condition of the funding.

What type of project requires a QAPP?

A QAPP is needed for any project that involves data collection and/or interpretation with a quantifiable element. This applies to projects that include:

1) Primary data collection: environmental data that is collected for the exclusive purpose of the proposed project such as water quality sampling, soil sampling, and any other direct field measurements; and

2) Secondary data collection: any project that will collect, compile, interpret, and/or otherwise use existing datasets for purposes other than which they were originally collected will need to develop a secondary data QAPP. This is necessary to establish data acceptability criteria and to identify limitations of existing data sets. If your project will use secondary data, then refer to the Secondary Data QAPP template. This QAPP template is based on the "basic/primary" QAPP template but has omitted sections that not relevant to the secondary data use (e.g. sampling methods and analytical methods from Section B).

How should a QAPP be structured?

Depending on the project, one or more of the following QAPP templates will apply:

- Basic/Primary Data Collection Template: This template follows the EPA requirements for QAPPs EPA QA/R-5 (March 2001)
- Secondary Data Collection Template: This template follows EPA New England QAPP Guidance for Environmental Projects Using Existing (Secondary) Data, Revision 2 (October 2009)
- Modeling Template: This is meant for projects that will be developing a new model. The modeling template is based on EPA Guidance for QAPPs for Modeling EPA QA/G-5M (2002). Projects that propose to use established models will use the Secondary Data Collection Template and should address why the model was selected, how the inputs were chosen, and how the outputs will be evaluated.

These reference documents and templates are included within the SharePoint contents (will follow up with a link to this is a separate email).

If a project spans several tasks you may incorporate them all into one comprehensive QAPP[1] or break them up into smaller task-specific QAPPs. The latter may be appropriate when tasks need to be prioritized according to projected timelines (e.g. projects that will require baseline sampling first).

Can I use existing QAPPs?

If a project has an existing QAPP (approved within the last five years)[2] and there have been very minor changes (e.g. funding, schedule) then an amendment to the existing QAPP is acceptable. Reference the RFA number of the existing QAPP that is being amended. If a project has an existing QAPP (approved within the last five years) and there are more extensive changes to the project (such as new team members, project locations, new tasks) then a new QAPP should be developed because it is preferable to have all project updates in one comprehensive document.

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[1] Projects that include both primary and secondary data collection may be combined into one QAPP under the Primary QAPP template.

[2] Generally speaking, QAPPs are approved for up to 5 years or the life of the project (so it can be a shorter time span if the Project is completed in under 5 years).

If you or a project partner have an existing QAPP that addresses a specific project task (e.g. water sampling) then you should still develop a new QAPP that is unique to your project. Relevant sections from the existing QAPP can be copied into your new project QAPP. Relevant standard operating procedures (SOPs) from existing QAPPs should be incorporated into the appendix section of your new project QAPP.

What if you are incorporating new/additional project activities that are not funded through the SNEP grant?

EPA QAPP requirements apply for data collection funded both by EPA *and* as part of any match to the funded project. If a grantee is going above and beyond the activities described in their funded project – including the match for those activities --- the QAPP requirement does not apply to the additional suite of efforts.

When is a QAPP NOT needed?

- Projects that have only qualitative components (e.g. outreach and education).
- Sometimes established SOPs may be sufficient if a proposed task is a routine activity for a project proponent – this should be discussed on a case by case basis.