

Purpose

In Washington State government, the term project quality assurance (QA) is used to describe the ongoing, independent assessment of project management processes and activities.

When used effectively, project QA services provide agency project Executive Sponsor ^[1], project teams, the State Chief Information Officer (CIO)/Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) and other oversight entities with valuable independent insight into how well project activities are going and where corrections might be needed. The greatest value of QA is realized when present at all stages of a project, from feasibility through implementation, to help anticipate problems before they occur and to ensure business value is realized.

This policy lays out the minimum requirements for independent project quality assurance. While the policy requires the use of qualified QA provider as described below, any project would benefit from the use of a project QA advisor.

Policy

1. Agencies shall hire (or otherwise obtain) and use an independent project QA ^[2] provider on all major projects ^[3].
2. Project budgets must plan for adequate and appropriate levels of QA over the life of the project. The budget amount for QA must be revisited and appropriately amended as the project progresses to ensure the original budget continues to be sufficient.
 - 2.1. Agencies are strongly encouraged to use QA during feasibility and procurement and contracting phases, including the procurement or hiring of key project staff.
 - 2.2. In all cases, the QA provider must be engaged prior to submission of the investment plan and must continue until project close-out activities are completed.
3. QA activities for all major projects ^[3] must be conducted using the minimum statement of work outlined in the Minimum Project Quality Assurance Activities Standard ^[4].
 - 3.1. The State CIO may recommend additional required QA activities based on individual project risks and will communicate these to the Executive Sponsor.
 - 3.2. Agencies may, at their discretion, identify additional activities to be performed in addition to the minimum set of activities.
4. QA services must be provided by practitioners with at least the qualifications outlined in the Minimum QA Qualifications Standard ^[5]. Agencies may add other qualifications as needed for their project.
5. Agencies shall not use the services of a QA Practitioner on any project where the QA Practitioner is, or has been used, on any non-QA activities for the same project.
6. Agencies will consult with the OCIO on all QA solicitations ^[6] regardless of type. This consultation must occur prior to publication, posting or recruitment.

- 6.1. A representative from the OCIO will be invited to participate in the QA selection process.
 - 6.1.1. If the OCIO does not respond to the invitation within five (5) days or if the OCIO declines the invitation, the agency is free to proceed without an OCIO representative.
- 6.2. The agency will make the final determination of the QA provider.
- 6.3. The agency must ensure that there is no real or perceived organizational conflict in their selection, including ensuring the existence of clear managerial independence between the QA provider, the Project Manager and the Executive Sponsor.
- 6.4. Based on the selection, the State CIO will evaluate whether there are additional risk factors that should be addressed as a condition of investment approval.
7. The QA Provider will develop a formal, baseline QA Plan [7] and present to the agency for approval within the first 30 days of the engagement. The QA plan will be updated as needed over the life of the project.
8. A readiness assessment [8], performed by a qualified QA provider, will be required prior to moving beyond the planning phase. The QA provider will independently deliver this assessment to the Executive Sponsor and the State CIO.
 - 8.1. The results of the readiness assessment must be available prior to the submittal of the investment plan.
 - 8.2. The investment plan should contain details about how findings, recommendations and risks from the readiness assessment have been or will be addressed or mitigated.
9. The QA Provider will independently deliver draft and final QA reports, including findings [9] and recommendations [10], to the project Executive Sponsor and to the State CIO or designee.
10. The QA Provider will make QA reports available to the project Steering Committee. The QA Provider will provide regular and routine briefings at the project Steering Committee meetings.
11. The QA Provider will independently post all QA reports on the State CIO's Project Dashboard website within 2 working days of delivery.
12. If required for the project, the QA Provider may also provide QA reports or briefings to other external oversight and/or authorizing entities.
13. Following the readiness assessment, QA reports will be delivered on at least a monthly basis.
 - 13.1. QA reports will be finalized and delivered within ten (10) working days following the end of the report period. This allows for prompt action on findings [11], recommendations [10], emerging issues and risks as well as timely visibility to the Executive Sponsor and Steering Committee.
14. Following the delivery of a QA report, the agency must provide a written response to each new QA finding, recommendation and/or risk and must provide current status information on all open QA findings or recommendations.
 - 14.1. The response should clearly outline the action(s) to be taken (including additional investigation or assessment needed to determine other action(s) to be taken), by which person(s) and by what date.
 - 14.2. The agency must post the response to the Project Dashboard within five (5) working days of delivery of the final QA report.

14.3. In all cases, the agency must have a finalized plan in place for each new finding and recommendation within thirty (30) calendar days of the delivery of the QA report.

Roles and Responsibilities

State CIO/OCIO Responsibilities

- Support agency requests for adequate QA funding as part of project decision packages.
- Review QA Provider solicitation materials and provide written feedback on these materials within five (5) working days or otherwise advise the agency to move ahead with planned activities.
- Participate in QA Provider selection process regardless of the acquisition or selection method when invited to do so. If the OCIO is unable to participate, the agency will be notified at the time the invitation is made.
- Receive and read QA reports, attend QA briefings and periodically consult with QA provider.
- Assess and routinely review the project quality assurance plans and performance to determine that level of quality assurance is appropriate to the project risk.
- Periodically assess the project budget to determine that adequate amounts for anticipated quality assurance services have been included in the budget.
- Routinely assess whether the agency is taking timely and appropriate action on findings, recommendations, risks and issues.
- Monitor posting of QA reports and agency response.

Agency Responsibilities

- Provide the OCIO with an opportunity to review and comment on QA solicitation materials. If the OCIO has not responded within five (5) working days, the agency may proceed with the solicitation.
- Invite the OCIO to participate on evaluation and/or interview panels to select a QA provider. If the OCIO has not responded to an invitation within five (5) working days, the agency may proceed without OCIO representation.
- Ensure that project budget identifies and allows for appropriate level of project QA over the life of the project. This must include when there are increased levels or duration of QA services than originally anticipated.
- Ensure the QA Provider has unencumbered access to project staff and information. The QA Provider must be able to access the information, people, documents or other resources needed to appropriately gauge project status and risks.
- Routinely talk with the QA provider to discuss emerging or escalating risks so that early and effective action can be taken to manage or mitigate.
- Prepare a written response to new QA findings and recommendations and provide status updates on any open QA finding or recommendation post to the OCIO Project Dashboard within timeline above.
- Regularly brief the Executive Sponsor and the Steering Committee on the status of actions and mitigations to address QA reported findings and recommendations.
- Incorporate QA findings, recommendations and risks into project risk and issue management processes in order to support an integrated view of risks and issues.
- Take actions as indicated by report and outlined in the agency response to QA reports.

Quality Assurance Provider Responsibilities

- Complete routine assessments and reports as outlined in contract or Service Level Agreement.
- Provide early visibility to project staff and the Executive Sponsor of emerging or escalating risks.
- Post all QA reports to the State CIO Project Dashboard in a timely manner.
- Meet with the Executive Sponsor and the OCIO on a routine basis to discuss the overall health of the project and emerging issues and risks. Routinely brief the Steering Committee on these same issues.
- Attend and present at Technology Service Board (TSB) or TSB subcommittee meetings or other external oversight briefings as invited.

Contact Information

Contact [OCIO Policy & Waiver Mailbox](#) ^[12] for additional information or to [request a waiver](#) ^[13].

Sunset Review Date:

January 31, 2018

Adoption Date:

January 19, 2016

Technology Services Board Approval Date:

March 15, 2016

REVISION HISTORY

Date	Action taken
March 15, 2016	Technology Services Board approved the policy with one change - the sunset review date was shortened to 24 months (January 2018 rather than January 2019) so that assessment of policy outcomes and performance measures supports continuous improvement of the policy.
January 19, 2016	Review revised policy and new standards at the TSB Policy/Portfolio Subcommittee on 1/14/16. Added policy statement 14.3 based on TSB subcommittee input. Revised policy and related standards adopted, pending approval of full TSB in March 2016.
October 2011	Policy reformatted for migration to Office of the Chief Information Officer. Combines QA Standard 305-S1 with QA Policy 305-P1 into one document.
April 2010	Policy adopted, superseding 303-R1

APPROVING AUTHORITY

/s/ Michael Cockrill

Chief Information Officer
Chair, Technology Services Board

Source URL: <https://ocio.wa.gov/policies/132-project-quality-assurance>

Links:

- [1] <https://ocio.wa.gov/definition-terms-used-ocio-policies-and-reports#ExecSponsor>
- [2] <https://ocio.wa.gov/definition-terms-used-ocio-policies-and-reports#IndQA>
- [3] <https://ocio.wa.gov/definition-terms-used-ocio-policies-and-reports#major>
- [4] <https://ocio.wa.gov/policies/standard-13230-minimum-project-quality-assurance-activities-standard>
- [5] <https://ocio.wa.gov/policies/minimum-qualifications-project-quality-assurance-providers>
- [6] <https://ocio.wa.gov/definition-terms-used-ocio-policies-and-reports#QAsolicit>
- [7] <https://ocio.wa.gov/definition-terms-used-ocio-policies-and-reports#QAplan>
- [8] <https://ocio.wa.gov/policies/minimum-project-quality-assurance-activities-standard-readiness-assessment>
- [9] <http://ocio.wa.gov/definition-terms-used-ocio-policies-and-reports#finding>
- [10] <https://ocio.wa.gov/definition-terms-used-ocio-policies-and-reports#recommend>
- [11] <https://ocio.wa.gov/definition-terms-used-ocio-policies-and-reports#finding>
- [12] <mailto:https://ocio.wa.gov/policies/132-project-quality-assurance?subject=Project%20QA%20Question%20or%20Waiver%20Request>
- [13] <https://ocio.wa.gov/policies/policy-103-technology-policy-standards-waiver-request>
- [14] <https://ocio.wa.gov/sites/default/files/QA%20FAQ%2020160504.docx>