



April 4, 2016

TO: Sponsors, Project Managers and QA Providers of Current Projects

FROM: /s/ Rob St. John
Deputy Director

SUBJECT: Quality Assurance Policy and Standards

A strong partnership with Quality Assurance (QA) during a project can be a powerful contributor to the success of a project. Projects that consider QA a trusted advisor, taking early action based on QA insight and recommendations, tend to fare better than those that don't.

Several months ago, interviews were held with the QA vendors providing services to current projects under Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) oversight. The interviews allowed the OCIO to get a sense of experience-based critical project success factors, how QA could be used more effectively on projects and other improvement areas.

The insight gained from these interviews was combined with information gathered from research, project lessons learned and input from the Technology Services Board (TSB). This knowledge supported the development of targeted improvement areas to increase likelihood of successful project outcomes. These target areas include:

- Engaged sponsorship
- Effective & timely governance
- Appropriately staffed project management
- Organizational readiness
- Quality procurement & vendor management
- Changing the QA conversation

With an eye on these targets, the existing Project Quality Assurance policy has been updated and upgraded. Following a review by agencies, the material was adopted in January and final approval of the revised policy and new standards by the TSB occurred March 15, 2016. The final policy and standards are posted and I encourage you to familiarize yourself with them.

- Policy 132: [Project Quality Assurance](#)
- Standard 132.10: [Minimum QA Provider Qualifications](#)
- Standard 132.20: [Minimum Project QA Activities - Readiness Assessment](#)
- Standard 132.30: [Minimum Project QA Activities](#)

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Agencies should review existing QA contracts or agreements (whether internal or external) to assess whether modification/amendment is needed to comply with the new policy and standards.

Attached is a document instructing existing projects on implementation of the new policy and standards. While this material provides general information, we know that specific projects may need individualized discussions and direction based on where they are in the project lifecycle. If your project is one of those projects, talk with your [Oversight Consultant](#) as soon as possible.

If you have other questions that aren't answered by this material, please don't hesitate to ask. Questions can be sent to the [OCIO Consultant Mailbox](#) or directly through your [Oversight Consultant](#).

We look forward to working with the project team and QA provider to support the successful conclusion of your project.

Attachment

Implementation of the Updated Quality Assurance Policy & Standards

Policy 132 – [Project Quality Assurance](#)

- All major projects must comply with the policy, including those who are still in the planning/investment plan process, beginning with the report month of March 2016.
- QA reports, agency action plans and action plan status reports must be posted on the dashboard within the timelines as described in policy.
 - If you do not currently have rights to post material on the Dashboard, please submit a request to the [OCIO Mailbox](#).
 - Internal reviews of reports and action plans must be prioritized if they are to be completed prior to the required posting dates.
- Steering Committee meeting agendas must regularly include a QA briefing.
- Project managers and sponsors should review project budgets to ensure adequate amounts have been identified for QA over the life of the project.
- The OCIO must be given the opportunity to review all postings (whether internal or external) or other acquisition materials for new QA resources and to participate in the hiring process. Once made available to the OCIO, the agency may proceed if the OCIO does not respond within five working days.
- Agencies must ensure independence of the QA provider.

Standard 132.10 – [Minimum QA Provider Qualifications](#)

- Projects with approved investment plans and an already hired QA provider (whether internal or external) will be assumed to meet this standard.
- All new QA providers, whether internal or external, must meet the minimum qualifications. This also applies when an existing QA resource is replaced for any reason – the replacement must meet the minimum qualifications. Note that agencies can increase the minimum requirements or add additional requirements based on the needs of the project. Additionally, the OCIO may recommend or require increased qualification needs if indicated.

Standard 132.20 – [Minimum Project QA Activities – Readiness Assessment](#)

- Projects with an already approved investment plan do not need to take any action.
- Projects with pending investment plans as of 3/15/16 will be evaluated on a case by case basis.
- All new major projects must comply with this standard prior to submission of the investment plan or ask for and be granted a waiver.

Standard 132.30: [Minimum Project QA Activities](#)

- All major projects are expected to comply with this standard. NOTE: This is the area most likely to require contract modification in order to align the SOW with the PMBOK knowledge area cited in the standard.

If your project is not in compliance with the policy/standards, please submit a [waiver request](#) as quickly as possible to the [OCIO Mailbox](#) describing the actions you will take to come into compliance.

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