Environmental Justice for New England
Investing in community-driven change

Screening Questions for Quality Assurance

This screening tool is for entities applying to the Thriving Communities Subgrants (TCS) program only. Applicants can use the following questions to help determine if their project may involve environmental information operations (EIO), and therefore, requires an EPA-approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). These responses will not be used for scoring or to determine eligibility of the applicants.

If applicants are selected for an award the Grantmakers may use these responses to determine next steps for regional quality assurance needs. Grantmakers may assist applicants selected to receive an award in the development of QAPP needs for their region. Final determination of QAPP approval must be through the EPA Regional Quality Assurance Manager.

"Environmental information operations" is a collective term for work performed to collect, produce, evaluate, or use environmental information (or data), and the design, construction, operation, or application of environmental technology in support of EPA's mission of protecting human health and the environment. If a project involves EIO to make or support environmental decisions, then a QAPP is required.

Below are a series of questions to help determine if a project involves EIO. Check Yes or No for each of the items provided below as it applies to your specific project. If you select YES for any of the below statements, then this may trigger the need for a QAPP. Adaptation of the QAPP must be in accordance with the EPA Quality Assurance Project Plan Standard. An approved QAPP must be in place prior to the subgrantees initiation of data collection activities. Thriving Communities Grantmakers are available to provide support for regional QA needs, navigation, preparation of materials, and guidance through the QAPP approval process in your region.

Check YES or NO to all questions. A "yes" response indicates that a QAPP is likely required. If you are unsure, please reach out to your Thriving Communities Grantmaker:

	YES	NO
The project will sample and analyze environmental media, such as air, groundwater, surface water, soil, sediment, building materials, or biota		

The project will measure environmental conditions, parameters, or processes, such as water quality parameters (temperature, pH, salinity, conductivity) and air quality parameters (particulate matter, gaseous concentrations)		
The project will collect, produce, or evaluate data/information from non-traditional media or sources, such as photographs, GIS or satellite imagery, sound monitors, and population surveys to make or inform environmental decisions		
The project will evaluate, analyze, or model existing data or information from databases, software applications, decision support tools, websites, existing literature, or other sources to make or inform environmental decisions		
The project will use existing data or information from databases, software applications, decision support tools, websites, existing literature, or other sources for purposes other than which it was originally collected or produced to make or inform environmental decisions		
The project will develop a model or software application to make or inform environmental decisions, or use an existing model or software application for decision-making		
The project will design or operate environmental technology that measure, remove, or prevent pollutants or contaminants from entering the environment, such as water or air filters, physical or chemical treatment, bioremediation, or soil vapor extraction systems.		

"Real World" Examples

Yes, QAPP likely needed:

- Using PurpleAir monitors to locate potential air quality "hot spots" in a municipality
- Surveying residents of a community in order to determine optimal location of stationary air monitors
- Conducting assessment of hazardous building materials (e.g., lead-based paint and asbestos) to determine whether abatement is needed
- Conducting in-situ monitoring of water quality parameters (e.g., temperature, turbidity, salinity, pH) to evaluate surface water quality
- Sampling and analyzing baseline and post-implementation water quality samples following installation of green infrastructure Best Management Practice (BMP)
- Comparing aerial satellite imagery of the same location over time to evaluate land use

impacts
- Evaluating utility and energy usage data and information to develop a Climate Action Plan to reduce GHG emissions

No, QAPP likely not needed:

- Developing and distributing environmental education material to inform the public on the risk of asthma due to poor air quality
- Providing environmental job training for occupations that reduce greenhouse gases and monitoring the number of attendees as a measure of success
- Compiling disaster preparedness information and resources to share with a community
- Providing outreach materials to inform the community about risks of illegal dumping in their community
- Surveying population to gauge their awareness of healthy home incentives and resources that are available to them
- Providing maps of local farmers' markets to residents to increase food access, and monitoring the number of farmers' market attendees over time.