

Subpart C – Quality Assurance

IN404.20 General

B. A state quality review is an in-depth review of all aspects of the operational, managerial, technical, programmatic, and partnership activities in a field office or other organizational unit below the State office such as an area office, field office, Resource Conservation and Development office, or Soil Survey office.

1. The Area Program Review (APR) and the Field Office Program Quality Review (FOPQR) will be used to meet the needs of the state to make in-depth reviews of offices below the State office under normal circumstances. These reviews will include area, field, conservation implementation team and RC&D offices.

i. The APR will be used to evaluate Area office oversight, operations, program implementation, and administrative and support activities.

ii. The FOPQR will be used to evaluate operations, adherence to policy, and program and technical implementation at offices below the Area office level. (i.e. Field Offices, RC&D Offices, and conservation implementation teams.)

2. Special in-depth reviews of specific functions, such as conservation programs, engineering, civil rights, operations, and etc. will be used when the need is identified by state review teams, or as requested or recommended by a Leadership Team member and approved by the State Conservationist.

4. Quality Assurance of the MLRA Office/Soil Survey program will be conducted bi-annually by the State Soil Scientist, and independently from the AQR, FOPQR, and APR activities within the state.

5. Civil Rights in Program Delivery reviews are addressed under GM 230, Part 405. These reviews are required in all offices once every 3-5 years and may be conducted as a part of the APR or FOPQR, or as an independent review.

C. An Annual Quality Review (Spot Check) is a review of a completed conservation practice or practice component that is used to evaluate the quality of conservation practice implementation.

1. The Annual Quality Review (AQR) will be used to evaluate conservation practice implementation, conservation plan development activities and compliance with planning policy, and conservation programs and contract development and implementation.

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IN404.22 Policy

A. State Quality Reviews (APR & FOPQR)

1. Annually, a minimum of ten percent of offices below the state office level including FO, CIT & RC&D offices will be reviewed. Offices are selected on a rotational basis.
 - i. Indiana will select at least a ten percent minimum of offices to be reviewed annually on a rotational basis.
 - ii. Indiana will select an area office for review annually on a rotational basis (NW, SE, SW, and NE).
 - iii. The Area Program Review and the Field Office Program Quality Review processes will be used to meet this requirement.
 - a) Offices required to be reviewed each year will be listed in the State's Quality Assurance Plan.
2. The offices selected for review, the review schedule, the team leaders, and the team members will be included in the State's Quality Assurance Plan.
 - i. State and Area team leaders and team members will be identified in the State Quality Assurance Plan and designated by position title.
3. The team leader will give the State Conservationist and the appropriate line officer(s) a written report of the findings and recommendations for corrective actions.
 - i. Team Leaders will submit reports from quality assurance teams on FOPQR reviews to the Assistant State Conservationist for Operations (OPS) within thirty days of the end of each review. The Team Leader will provide a copy of the report to the Area Conservationist. The ASTC OPS will compile results and provide them to the STC within one week after receiving the reports from the areas.
 - ii. Team members of the APR team will submit a report of their findings, recommendations, commendations, and corrective actions to the State Conservationist through the ASTC-Operations within five working days following the end of the review. A summary APR report will be developed by the ASTC-OPS within one week after receiving all of the review team member reports.
 - iii. All reports will include findings, recommendations, commendations, and action items to be completed as scheduled.
4. The office manager's supervisor and the office manager will prepare and agree to a plan for corrective action. The plan will include a schedule for completing corrective actions and submitting periodic reports.
 - i. FOPQR reports and corrective action plans will be completed within one week after the review is completed. The Area Conservationist and the office manager will develop the plan including a schedule for completing all required corrective actions.

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ii. For APR, the State Conservationist and the Area Conservationist will develop a corrective action plan within two weeks of receiving the final report from the ASTC-OPS. The entire plan will be implemented within one calendar year following the end of the review. The AC will report progress every 60 days until all items are corrected.

B. State Quality Assurance Plan

1. By September 30 of each year, the State Conservationist will develop a State Quality Assurance Plan for implementation in the coming fiscal year. The Plan will identify and address State quality assurance processes, quality control issues, and producer compliance activities.

i. The ASTC-OPS will prepare the State QA plan and submit it to the State Conservationist by September 15 for the following fiscal year.

ii. The State Conservationist will issue the list of practices by August 15 that will be reviewed the following fiscal year based on statewide priorities and numbers of practice installations.

iii. The Area Conservationist will submit a list of offices and personnel they intend to review during the following fiscal year based on the State Conservationist's list of practices to be reviewed.

iv. The ASTC-OPS will coordinate QA activities across the state in order to assign the number of practices to be reviewed proportionately to the number installed in each area in order to achieve the state required number of practice reviews.

v. Area Conservationists will submit their recommendations for FOPQR offices to be reviewed, with a proposed schedule, by August 15 to the ASTC-OPS. All offices will be reviewed on a rotational basis. The ASTC – OPS will incorporate the AC recommendations into the state QA plan.

a) All State QA team members will submit their final list of questions for the APR and FOPQR to the ASTC-OPS by August 31 for the following fiscal year to be included in the State QA Plan.

b) All procedures, questions, and forms to be used the following fiscal year will be included in the State QA Plan.

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2. By December 30 of each year, the State Conservationist will prepare a State Quality Assurance Report for the fiscal year that just ended and submit it to their respective Regional Assistant Chief and the Director, Operations Management and Oversight Division.

- i. Year end summary reports for QA activities at the field level will be submitted to the State Conservationist through the ASTC-OPS by November 15.
- ii. The ASTC-OPS will compile and summarize the reports and provide them to the State Conservationist by December 15 for submission to the national level.
- iii. The State Conservationist will hold a year end QA meeting during the months of November or December

C. Annual Quality Reviews (AQR - Spot Checks) of completed conservation practice installation in field offices

1. Spot checking will be conducted on a fiscal year basis. A spot check will be performed on a five percent representative sample of conservation practice installations within the state. Calculations will be rounded up to the next highest whole number. **The work of at least one third of all employees involved in applying conservation practices, and one third of all offices will be checked each year.**

Each area office will track what offices are reviewed each year, which employees are reviewed each year, and what practices are reviewed for each person and office checked.

- i. The work of each person (including Partnership employees performing planning and implementation of conservation practices) will be reviewed at least once in three years.
- ii. Each practice reviewed will also have the conservation plan and any related conservation contracts containing the practice reviewed as part of the spot check to assure completeness and accuracy of documentation

2. Indiana will follow the national policy found in General Manual Title 450 – Technology Part 407, Subpart C – Spot Checking. See this section for details on what, when, and how these reviews are to be completed.

3. Reporting spot check findings

- i. Indiana will follow the policy found in the General Manual Title 450 – Technology, Part 407, subpart C – Spot Checking for reporting content and frequency of reports.
- ii. If deficiencies are found, the Area Conservationist (or representative) and the Office Manager (DC, CIT Leader, Other) will prepare and agree to a plan for corrective actions. The plan will include a schedule for completing corrective actions and submitting periodic reports.

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a) On the final day of the spot check (AQR), the QA Team Leader and the office manager or District Conservationist (DC) will complete the report of findings, including recommendations, commendations, and actions items, and develop action completion dates for items needing corrective action. If action items and dates cannot be agreed upon between the team leader and the office manager or DC, the Area Conservationist will make the final decision on what is to be done and when.

D. Spot checks of conservation practice or practice components completed by Technical Service Providers

1. Spot checking will be conducted on a fiscal year basis. A spot check sample of each Technical Service Provider's work will be developed at the State level. A sample will be drawn from all practices installations or from conservation components completed within the State the preceding 12 months, as reported in the Performance Results System. The spot check sample may involve one or more individual field office.

i. The State Office (SO) will select work and coordinate the reviews each year with area staff. The area review team will conduct the review with state office staff assistance as requested or as identified by the State Resource Conservationist (SRC) or State Conservation Engineer (SCE). The SRC will coordinate QA activities for TSP with the AC or designee.

2. For the first 3 years after certification (excluding renewals) or recertification of the Technical Service provider, a spot check of at least 10% of the number of installations of a conservation practice or practice components with no more than five of any one practice or component of each TSP being checked.
3. After the first 3 years of certification on the TSP, a spot check will be performed on at least 5% of the conservation practices or components with no more than five of any one practice or practice component being checked per TSP.
4. The STC will ensure that the sample of an individual TSP's work is a representative cross section by geographic area, size of project, and complexity of projects.
5. The person performing the spot check may expand the sample as necessary to determine the scope of any problems or deficiencies. The expanded sample may be extended to include installations completed in previous years.
6. Actions will to be taken within 15 working days of completing the review of the work performed by each TSP.

i. Reports will be sent to the ASTC-OPS. The SRC (as State TSP Coordinator) will determine if further management or administrative actions will be taken in accordance with Technical Service Provide Policy, within 15 working days of the review.

ii. The ASTC-OPS will provide a summary report to the State Conservationist within 15 working days after receiving the review findings from the SRC.