Long Island Sound Study

A Partnership to Restore and Protect the Sound

Long Island Sound Study

Meet the QA Team
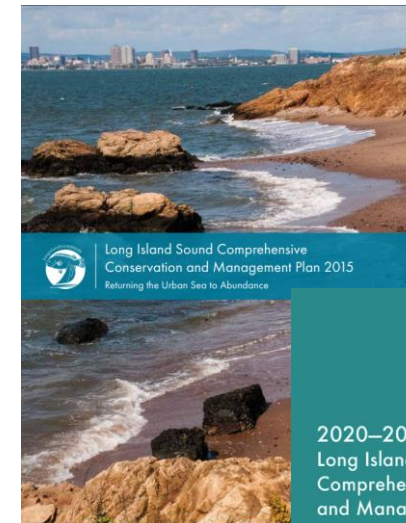
January 13, 2022

Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan

- Original 1994 CCMP was revised in 2015 and updated in 2020

- **Four major themes:**
  - Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds
  - Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife
  - Sustainable and Resilient Communities
  - Sound Science and Inclusive Management

- **To achieve the goals of each theme**
  - 20 Ecosystem Targets and Supporting Indicators
    - Set measurable targets of restoration by 2035
  - 136 Implementation Actions
    - Action plan to be updated every five years
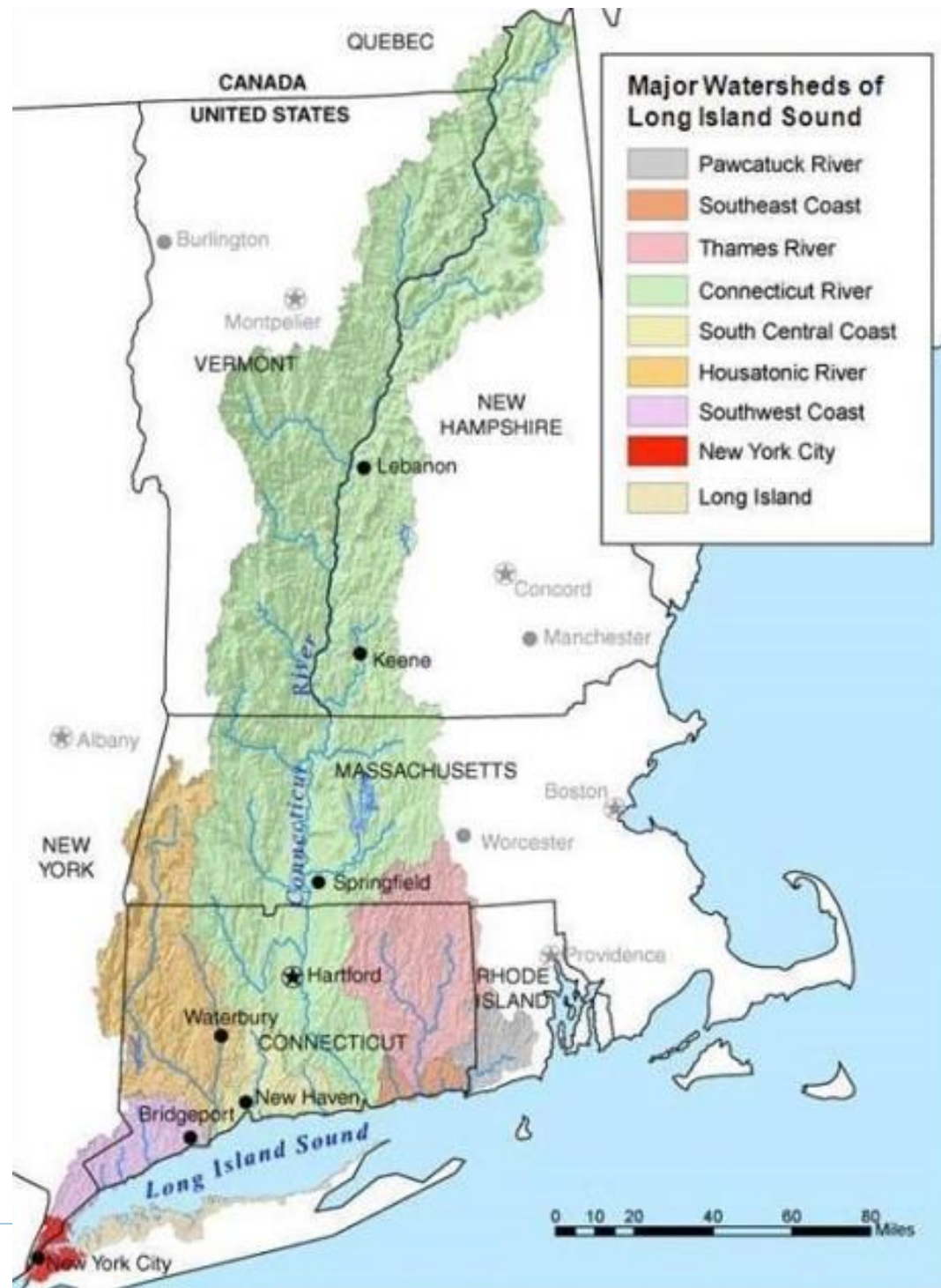
Long Island Sound Study

Long Island Sound Study
A Partnership to Restore and Protect the Sound

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Supriya Rao

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Meet the R1 QA Team

Jessica Iverson

Bryan Hogan

Lilly Simmons

Kristina Douglas

Nora Conlon

EPA & the Quality Program

EPA is subject to the **Environmental Information Quality Policy***
(CIO2105.1, March 2021)

*A directive consistent with national and international consensus standards

The policy affirms EPA's commitment to:

- Applying quality principles and practices to environmental information and technology

- Utilizing environmental information that is of known and documented quality, scientifically valid, legally defensible, and appropriate for the intended use

Quality Program: Scope

Environmental programs encompass **Environmental Information Operations** by or for EPA:

➢ **Environmental Information**
- Collected
- Produced
- Evaluated
- Used

➢ **Environmental Technology**
- Designed
- Constructed
- Operated
- Applied

Why is this important to you?

- Quality Policy applies to EPA and to **you** by extension through "extramural agreements"

grants, cooperative agreements, interagency agreements, contracts

EPA Quality Documents

Environmental Information Quality Procedure (CIO2105-P-01.1, March 2021)

- Details <u>Quality Policy</u> implementation
- Describes documentation requirements:
  - **Quality programs** → *Quality Management Plans (QMPs)*
  - **Environmental information operations** → *Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs)*

QMPs

- Both Region 1 & Region 2 have QMPs
- Both regions reserve QMP requirement to on-going assistance agreement recipients
  - **the states, interstates and select additional organizations.**

QAPPs for Projects

Environmental Information Operations aka environmental data collection activities

Key Requirements
- Use a systematic planning process
- Document in a QAPP
- QAPPs are tailored to the needs of the project
- Reviewed and approved by EPA before data collection begins

EPA Requirements/Guidance documents provide content details
- EPA QA/R-5 Requirements for QAPPs
- EPA QA/G-5 Guidance for QAPPs

Why do we require QAPPs?

Projects benefit from planning!

Ensures appropriate

- Samples
- Data sources
- Conditions
- Analyses
- Tools
- Models
- Condition indices

Evaluates whether there is

- enough data
- the right data

Describes how each data point will be evaluated for quality

Why do we require QAPPs?

- Capturing the plan in the QAPP provides communication between what the workplan says and how work will be accomplished

- It gets the project team and the EPA on the same page

- Makes you consider how your project decisions will be supported – Provides Confidence!

Remember:

It is <u>not</u> about the document. It is about the project outcomes that protect human health and the environment upon which life depends! It's really about **Long Island Sound**!

How to Get Your QAPP Reviewed

- **Follow your grant process**
- **Work with your funding organization**
- **Work with your project officer**
  - R1/R2? They will let you know

- **Key Elements**
  - Include planning in your schedule
  - Follow the guidance
  - Match workplan to the QAPP
  - Provide <u>enough</u> details
  - Think about your outcomes from the start

R1 & R2 EPA QAPP Roles

R1/R2 Project Officer (PO) is the primary contact for grant-related activities including QAPP

R1/R2 QA Reviewer (QAO) is responsible for quality assurance and technical review of QAPP

<u>Both</u> must approve QAPP before environmental information collection begins

EPA Region 2 has been evolving the internal review process

- Use Microsoft SharePoint to track all the review requests, timelines, reviewer, status
- Standardize QAPP process for all Assistance Agreements
- ELMS effort to achieve efficiency & gather data for national/regional reporting

QAPP EPA Tracking Metrics

Regional/National Metrics
- Goal $\leq$60 days to approval (total time in EPA hands)
- Goal $\leq$120 days to approval (total time in EPA and Grantee hands)

LSASD Metrics (Region 2)
- Goal $\leq$ 2 rounds of review prior to approval of the QAPP

Summary of Changes

- **EPA QAO's permitted to communicate directly with Assistance Agreement Recipients about QAPP Issues to meet the EPA QAPP Tracking Metrics**
Must copy PO on written communication
Must summarize verbal communication and share with PO

- **QAPPs approved by both EPA PO and EPA QAO**
Using the New form as documentation of approval
Usually, EPA QAO signs first and sends to EPA PO

Terms & Conditions

- Work with PO to determine time frame for QAPP submission
    - Timeframe based on project terms & conditions
    - QAPP must be approved prior to initiating data collection/use effort
    - Leave sufficient time for review/approval process

- PO works with grantee to build the timeline for the QAPP development in your workplan.

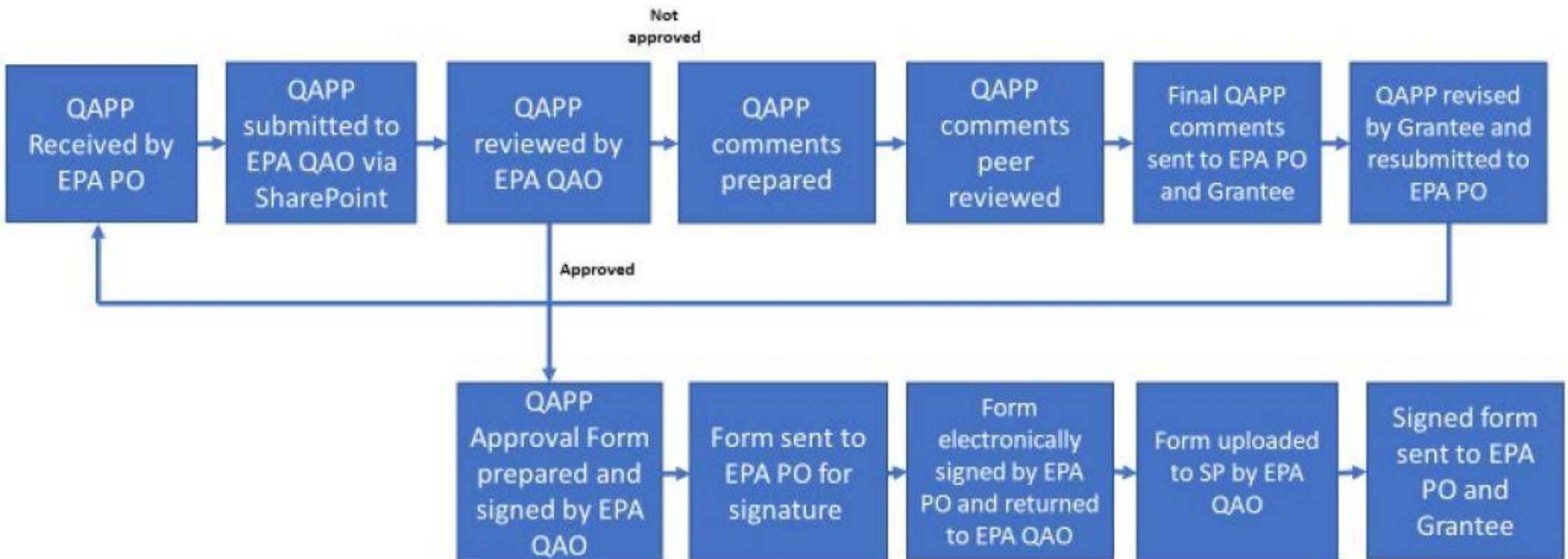- PO references specific Region 2 QAPP Guidance

QAPP Roles and Responsibilities

- Assistance Agreement Recipient/Subrecipient

- EPA Project Officer

- EPA QA Officer

QAPP Review and Approval Process Flow

QAPP Review and Approval Process for Non-Brownfields Grants

U.S. EPA REGION 2 - QUALITY ASSURANCE PROJECT PLAN APPROVAL FORM

PROJECT INFORMATION

Quality Assurance Officer: _____

Project Officer: _____

Title of Quality Assurance
Project Plan: _____

Assistance Agreement or
Contract #: _____

QA File Number: _____

REGIONAL QA MANAGER OR DELEGATED APPROVER

Approved ☐   Conditionally
                    Approved* ☐

* Conditional Approval may be provided when there are unresolved comments that do not impact the data collection or the quality of the data and where the project has a small window of opportunity to collect such data. Conditional Approval expires 30 days from the signature date. If updated quality documentation (QD) is not provided by the expiration date or another due date is not agreed upon by EPA, then the QD will be considered delinquent.

Comments:

Signature EPA QA Officer

Signature EPA PO or Project lead

REVIEW SUMMARY:
A review was conducted on the above referenced Quality Assurance Project Plan. The subject QAPP was reviewed for conformance with the *EPA Requirements for Quality Assurance Project Plans* (EPA QA/R-5), EPA/240/B-01/003, March 2001; USEPA Region 2 Guidance for the Development of QAPPs for Environmental Monitoring Projects, April 2004 and other EPA QAPP guidance documents as appropriate.

This approval form documents EPA's decision of approval or conditional approval* for the aforementioned QAPP. After the QAPP is approved by EPA via this approval form, obtain the required signatures from your organization on the QAPP Title/Signature page. Send the signed QAPP to the EPA Project Officer and others on the QAPP distribution list within the timeframe stipulated in the AA terms and conditions.

Assistance Agreement Recipient

- **Understand and accept the requirement to have an approved QAPP in place prior to the start of environmental data collection/use.**
- Acquire the knowledge and training necessary to develop a QAPP. Go to www.epa.gov/quality for EPA QAPP requirements and guidance. For additional assistance, request a planning meeting with EPA.
- Prepare a QAPP in accordance with the applicable EPA guidance.
- Submit a draft QAPP to the responsible EPA Project Officer in a timely fashion, in accordance with the Terms & Conditions of your Assistance Agreement (AA). Do not begin environmental sampling/monitoring before the QAPP is approved.
- Address EPA's comments and re-submit to the EPA Project Officer with a copy to the QAO, usually within 15 days.
- After the QAPP is approved by EPA via approval form, obtain required signatures from your organization. Send the signed QAPP to the EPA Project Officer and others on the QAPP distribution list within the timeframe stipulated in the AA terms and conditions.
- Ensure that the QAPP is implemented as approved.
- For multi-year projects, review QAPP annually and amend/revise. Consult EPA QA.
- Notify EPA and others on the distribution list when there are changes to the QAPP.

EPA Project Officer

- Liaison between the assistance agreement recipient (AAR), the EPA QAO and the EPA grants office.

- Assure that the AAR complies with the EPA policy regarding the need for an approved QAPP for environmental information, data collection/use projects.

- Submit the QAPP Review Request to the EPA QAPP review team via SharePoint within 2 days of receipt at LSASD-MAB QA Document Review Request for all program grants except brownfields and pollution prevention (P2) QAPPs.

- Review the draft QAPP concurrently to ascertain that it meets the requirements of the project's scope of work and the needs of the EPA program.

- Ensure the QAO's comments or questions are addressed by the AAR in a timely manner, usually within 15 days.

- Upon receipt of the QAPP approval form, electronically sign and return the form to the EPA QAO.

EPA QA Officer (QAO)

- Turn around review of the initial QAPP submittal within 30 days from the date the document is received by the EPA Project Officer.

- Provide comments that are relevant and clearly written.

- Ensure that the EPA QA supervisor has time to review the comments. Work with him/her to address any comments, concerns or edits.

- Send comments to the EPA Project Officer and to the AAR.

- Turn around the review of a revised QAPP within 13 days from EPA's receipt.

- Once ready for approval, notify the EPA Project Officer and the AAR to finalize and provide a clean final copy of the document to the Project Officer and QAO.

- QAO prepares and signs the QAPP approval form; sends it to the EPA Project Officer for electronic signature and return; then sends the signed approval form to all parties.

- Throughout the review and approval process, update the QAPP Process flow board and the Share Point tracking system. Upload the final version of the QAPP with completed approval form to SharePoint.

R2 MAB QA Contacts
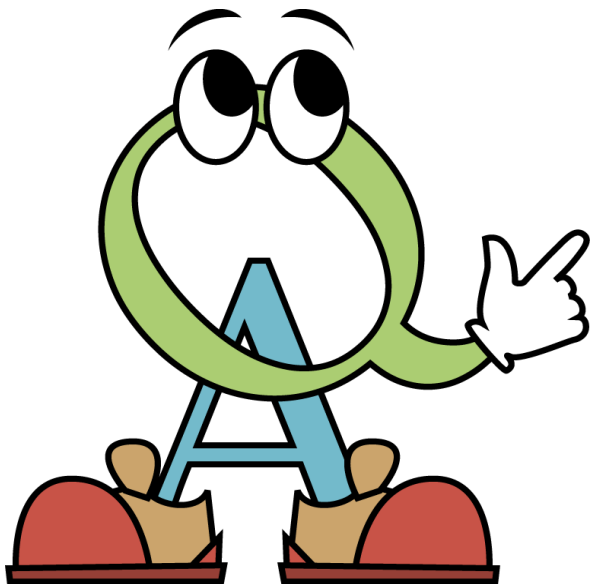
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EPA Region 1 QAPP Review & Approval Process

Quality Assurance Branch

R1 EPA QAPP Roles

R1 Project Officer is the primary contact for grant-related activities including QAPP

R1 QA Reviewer is responsible for quality assurance and technical review of QAPP

<u>Both</u> must approve QAPP before environmental information collection begins

R1 QAPP Submittal Process

Send the QAPP electronically **at least 60 days** before project begins

- To the project officer

- PO will forward to R1QAPPs@epa.gov

QA Branch Manager, Johanna Hunter, will assign a QA reviewer

- Expect email notification when reviewer is assigned

Expect up to **30 days** for the **first review.** Plan ahead!*
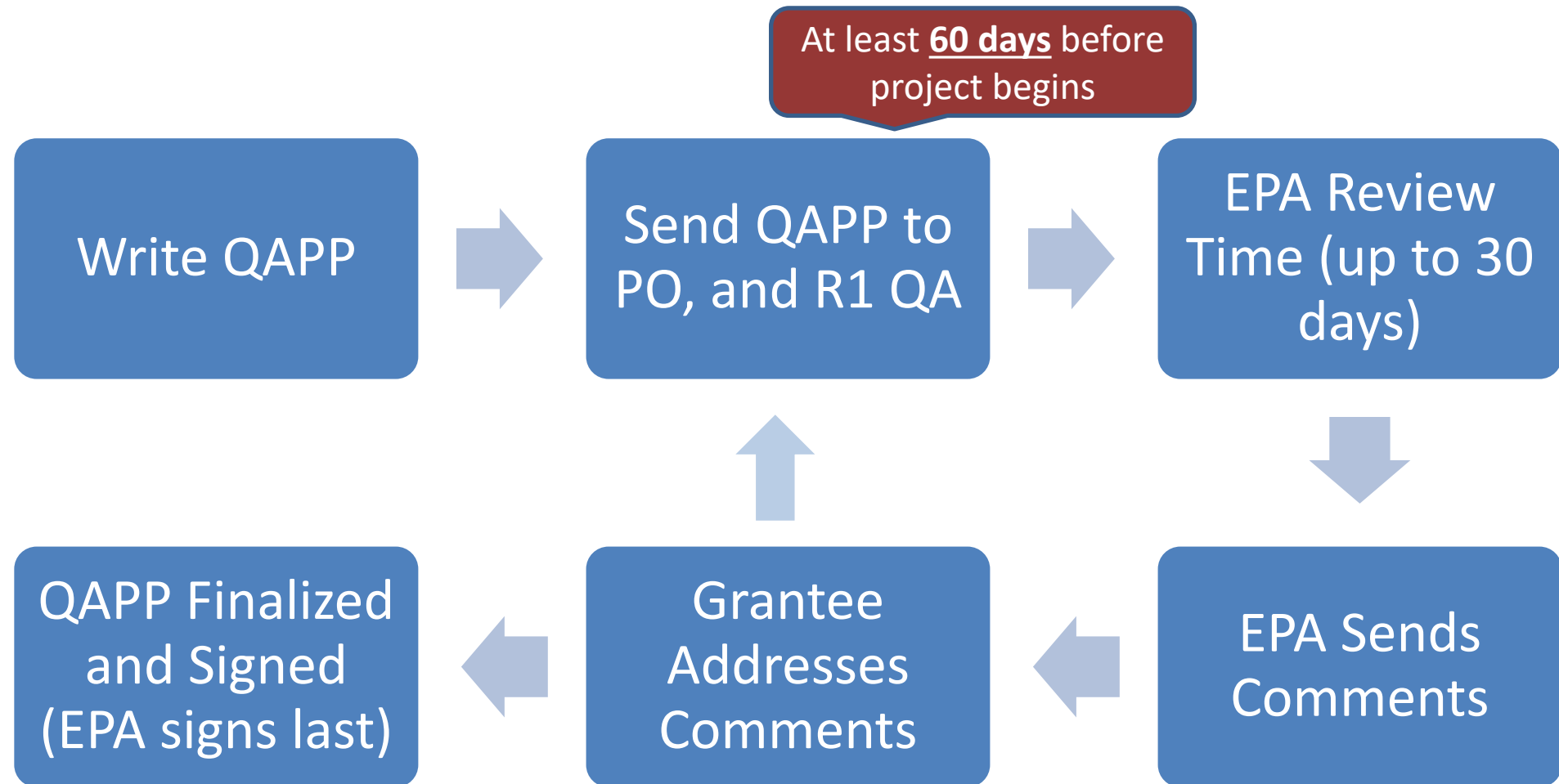
*QAPP <u>must</u> be approved prior to starting work on the project.

Funding at risk if work commences before QAPP approval.

R1 QAPP Submittal Process

At least **60 days** before project begins

Write QAPP →	**Send QAPP to PO, and R1 QA** → **EPA Review Time (up to 30 days)**

QAPP Finalized and Signed (EPA signs last) ← **Grantee Addresses Comments** ← **EPA Sends Comments**

* EPA funded activities involving the collection, generation, compilation, analysis, evaluation and use of environmental data will be identified in the grant agreement as needing a QAPP

R1 QA Team Contact Info

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*Contact will change to new QA Manager – expected late Spring 2022

R1 Resources

Contacts
- **R1QAPPS@epa.gov** (accesses QA manager)
- Assigned EPA QA Reviewer

Documents
- **EPA QA/R-5**
  - • EPA Requirements for Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs) 2001 (reissued without change 2006)
- **EPA QA/G-5**
  - • EPA Guidance for Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs) 2005

Links
- www.epa.gov/quality
- www.epa.gov/quality/R1
- https://www.epa.gov/quality/region-1-quality-systems-documents

And Now for Breakout Groups...