

## **Quality Control Protocol 8 - Quality Assessment Protocol for the Forest and Range Evaluation Program (FREP)**

(November 2008)

### **Introduction**

Every year, FREP conducts a program-wide quality assessment that results in an annual report card. Studies of best practices indicate that excellent organizations regularly conduct these types of assessments. It is variously known as a “Quality Business Assessment,” a “Fitness Test,” a “Quality Survey,” or an “Overall Client Satisfaction Survey.” The survey results help organizations in strategic planning, business operations planning, and overall quality improvement planning. For FREP, the results are incorporated into the annual work plan as an “improvement plan” that is monitored by the FREP Working Group, and summarized in the annual “year-in-review” report.

### **Quality Assessment and the National Quality Institute (NQI)**

The quality assessment questions are categorized according to FREP’s six strategic themes. Each question is carefully crafted to reflect the NQI quality drivers and criteria, as well as FREP business and technical issues.

The existing strategic themes are the result of an initial SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat) analysis and include the essence of the NQI’s quality drivers and criteria. This ensures that quality is built into the program at both a strategic level and an operational level. The annual assessment also forms part of the requirements for the NQI’s Progressive Excellence Program (PEP).

After the results of the quality assessment are rolled up into a Quality Assessment Report, the Quality Management Team decides whether to make an application to the PEP. Depending on the level of achievement, the program may receive an award for public sector excellence.

### **Timing**

A typical assessment starts with the formation of a team in November and ends with the release of a Quality Assessment Report in April. If a PEP application is sent to the NQI, activities may continue to June.

Activity	Time period
Quality Management Team establishes the assessment team	November
Review and draft questionnaire	December
Final questionnaire sign-off for distribution	January
Respond to survey	February to March
Quality Assessment Report	April
NQI PEP application	April and May
NQI site visit	June

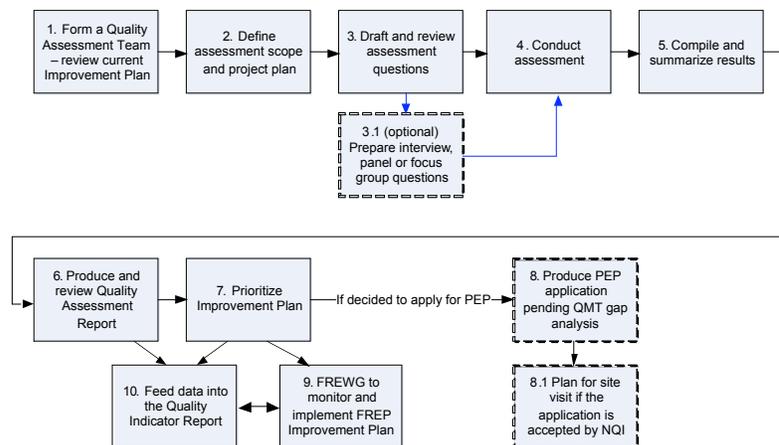
### Assessment Format

As the primary assessment instrument, a questionnaire is developed to include closed-ended questions and some open-ended questions. For consistency, some questions are continued yearly for trend analysis and reporting.

If issues arise from the assessment that require further investigation or require more understanding, the following tools are recommended:

- Face-to-face interviews
- Telephone interviews
- Focus groups and panel study

### Assessment Process Maps



### Quality Assessment, Quality Indicators, and Strategic Plan

Quality assessment questions are rated on a five-point scale, with one being “very dissatisfied” or “disagree completely,” three being “neutral,” and five being “most satisfied” or “agree completely.” “Don’t know” and “N/A” are also available as choices. When a person responds “don’t know,” it usually signals a communication opportunity to make the issue or the subject matter more visible. “N/A” simply means the question does not apply to the person. Given the wide range of roles in which FREP staff are involved (i.e., in different business areas, programs, and sometimes different organizations), all of

the questions will not be applicable; however, the assessment design strives for as few “N/A” responses as possible.

To accumulate trend data, the wording of key questions is maintained from year to year. Trend data forms an important part of the Quality Indicator Report (or FREP “Report Card”). This annual report summarizes the collected ratings. In the past, ratings have been collected for Continuous Improvement Session overall satisfaction, Resource Stewardship Monitoring training satisfaction, as well as for leadership, people focus, continuous improvement, and other strategic themes.

The Quality Indicator Report and the assessment’s qualitative comments help us to plan or to modify the existing strategic plan.

### **Quality Assessment and Improvement Plan**

Summary ratings and comments from the Quality Assessment are first categorized according to the applicable strategic theme. Then, the Quality Management Team and the FREP Working Group prioritize the suggestions, gaps, and action items, balancing available staff time, budget resources, and implementation time. All improvement plan items—whether high on the priority list or not—are tracked in the improvement plan database.

The Working Group assigns responsibilities and timelines to the prioritized improvement plan and its action items. The responsible person or group provides status updates to the Working Group on a monthly basis. The Working Group is responsible for the overall monitoring and implementation of the improvement plan.