

Oregon Forest Resources Institute Quality Information Policy

The Oregon Forest Resources Institute's (OFRI) mission is to *support and enhance Oregon's forest products industry by advancing public understanding of forests, forest management and forest products*. OFRI achieves this mission primarily by disseminating information on various aspects of forestry to various audiences.

It is the policy of the Oregon Forest Resources Institute that the information it disseminates is "Quality Information." Quality Information is defined in Federal Information Guidelines released in 2002 by the Office of Management and Budget as information that has utility, objectivity and integrity. Utility refers to the usefulness of the information to its intended users. Objectivity includes whether information is accurate, reliable and unbiased, and is being presented in an accurate, clear, complete and unbiased manner. Integrity refers to the protection of the information from being compromised through corruption or falsification. Through this Quality Information Policy, OFRI adopts the federal definition of Quality Information described above and outlines how quality information is produced by the agency.

The processes described in this Quality Information Policy show how OFRI generally produces educational materials for the public, K-12 teachers and students, and landowner audiences. Specific standards and internal processes for developing, reviewing and disseminating Quality Information for each of these audiences will be created as necessary.

The following policies are key elements of the Quality Information Process:

- Desk guides are being developed for each staff member or program.
- A public review process is being developed.
- A stakeholder checklist is being developed to identify the categories of stakeholders that will be sought in planning, reviewing and developing informational resources.

Quality Information Advocate

As part of developing the Quality Information Policy, OFRI has established the position of Quality Information Advocate, or QIA. The QIA will be an OFRI staff member who serves on the Project Steering Committee for all specific projects, whose main functions are to be an information resource for the OFRI Quality Information Policy and to advocate for following this policy. OFRI's manager of public outreach will commonly serve as the QIA, except in cases where he or she is the project lead and thus chairs the Project Steering Committee (PSC). It is important that the QIA is asked to focus primarily on the QIP for a designated project, and not have other responsibilities. The QIA for each project will be assigned by the executive director.

Duties of the OFRI **Quality Information Advocate** include:

- keeping the Quality Information Policy up to date
- advocating for OFRI's QIP
- advising project leaders on membership of Project Steering Committees
- serving on Project Steering Committees
- sharing and reviewing OFRI's QIP with members of Project Steering Committees, with an emphasis on the Quality Information Questions found in the QIP
- reviewing documents and manuscripts developed for the project, to evaluate if the QIP is being followed
- document the QIP process for the project

Quality Information Process

This Quality Information Process has been based on the steps for developing OFRI science reports, as documented in the Director of Forestry Desk Guide. Science reports represent one of the major information-gathering projects OFRI undertakes. It is essential that the information developed in these reports is Quality Information and seen by users as having utility, objectivity and integrity.

Not all projects OFRI undertakes are subject to the entire process outlined in the Quality Information Policy. Short educational media spots, social media posts, fact sheets and pamphlets cite information from more in-depth OFRI materials that have already been developed using the QIP and therefore do not need to also go through the same process. However, all OFRI materials should be held subject to the Quality Information Questions listed at the end of this policy.

The steps in OFRI's Quality Information Process include:

1. **Develop a proposal for the OFRI board** to approve funding and initiate the project. This proposal includes a description, an audience, a timeline, a budget and a list of partners. Developing these proposals is an iterative process that involves review and input by OFRI staff, board members and key partners. Note that board proposals are not developed for projects that have already been earmarked in the annual OFRI budget approved by the board.
2. **Develop a Project Steering Committee (PSC)** for the project. The PSC provides input on the project in several ways, including scope of work review, request for proposals (RFP) review, RFP dissemination, contract/agreement review, proposal review and contractor selection, report review and outreach dissemination. Membership of the PSC is based on the knowledge and diversity necessary to fully examine the topic and produce Quality Information. Members are commonly from OFRI's science partners, including Oregon State University and the Oregon Department of Forestry, but should also include individuals from other appropriate agencies, companies and organizations. OFRI's Stakeholder Checklist should be consulted in developing a broad-based PSC. OFRI's executive director is an *ex officio* member of all PSCs.

Project Steering Committees are generally composed of 6-12 members depending on the complexity and scope of the project. PSC members are invited by the project leader with input from the Quality Information Advocate and the Executive Director.

A Quality Information Advocate will be assigned to each PSC by the executive director. OFRI's Quality Information Policy will be shared with all members of the PSC by the QIA. At the first meeting of the PSC, the QIA will go over the QIP and make sure the steering committee is aware of, understands and agrees to follow OFRI's Quality Information Policy.

Selecting the PSC is critical in ensuring the information developed has utility, objectivity and integrity. Subject matter experts are identified and recruited for the PSC by the project leader with input from the Quality Information Advocate.

3. **Develop a scope of work** that clearly and completely identifies the steps for completing the project. This scope is developed iteratively with a subset of the PSC. This scope of work, along with the included timeline and possibly the budget, is included in any subsequent intergovernmental agreement or the

request for proposals, if deemed necessary for the project. The scope of work could be attached to a project production checklist for internal OFRI projects.

4. **Develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) and contract/agreement** for the project as appropriate, in conjunction with OFRI's senior manager of business operations.
5. **Select a contractor**, if necessary, by working with a proposal review committee (usually a subset of the PSC). Note that in cases where an academic institution such as Oregon State University, University of Oregon, University of Idaho or Portland State University are to be selected, there is not a formal RFP process; instead the agency works with the potential contractor and the PSC to finalize a scope of work and an intergovernmental agreement for the project.
6. **Develop an outline of the report** in conjunction with the PSC and the contractor/writer.
7. **Develop a complete bibliography** for the project as it develops.
8. **Have draft reports and the bibliography reviewed by the PSC**, reconciling comments and communicating the reconciled comments to the writing team.
9. **Subject the final draft report to OFRI's public review process**, if appropriate. The PSC and the subject matter experts on the PSC will be asked to help the Project Leader address comments received in the public review process and develop the final document.

Quality Information Questions

At all steps in the process, the following questions should be asked by writers and reviewers in order to ensure Quality Information is being developed and disseminated:

1. Do the PSC members and any additional reviewers represent a broad range of perspectives on the information OFRI is presenting? Are there important voices missing?
2. Does the information and the way it is presented have utility or usefulness for the intended audience(s)?
3. Is the information accurate, reliable and unbiased?
4. Is the information being presented in a manner that is accurate, clear, complete and unbiased?
5. Are the bibliography and cited sources complete? Are there any key sources missing?
6. Has the information been compromised through corruption or falsification?

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