



THE DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

October 3, 2024

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Managing the EPA's Public Queries and Official Correspondence

FROM: Janet G. McCabe 

TO: General Counsel
Assistant Administrators
Chief Financial Officer
Inspector General
Chief of Staff
Associate Administrators
Regional Administrators

Communicating with partners, stakeholders and the public is an important U.S. Environmental Protection Agency responsibility and part of our duty in serving the people of this country. Modern communications take many forms, and we need to be able to engage and respond appropriately regardless of how someone contacts us. During the past two years, the EPA has developed two essential communications tools to advance our conversation with the public: public queries and correspondence. This memorandum reviews their functions and capabilities and defines roles and responsibilities for their management and use within the Quill application.

Quill is a Microsoft PowerApps-based tool that seamlessly integrates with Outlook, SharePoint and Microsoft Office to provide users with capabilities never before available at the EPA.

Public Queries

Designed to improve responsiveness and messaging consistency, the public query tool is used for coordinating and managing responses to Contact Us page submissions from the public web, shared mailboxes and hotline calls. This will improve workflow and response coordination, allow for more consistent messaging, improve customer service and lead to greater transparency when interacting with the public.

Correspondence

Also designed to improve responsiveness and message collaboration, the correspondence tool is used for coordinating messaging and managing the workflow of internal and external agency correspondence. This will enhance the ability to seek input from multiple offices and subject matter experts, expedite the ability to finalize responses and ensure appropriate records management.

Responsibilities: National Program and Regional Offices

Beginning in spring 2025, all national program and regional offices are required, in most cases, to use Quill to process, manage and respond to public queries received via the public web, shared mailboxes or agency hotlines. Limited exceptions can be made with the approval of the Office of Public Affairs. The national programs and regions are expected to provide responses to public queries, as appropriate, as expeditiously as possible and need to adequately resource this function.

Also beginning in spring 2025, all national program and regional offices also are required to use Quill for processing internal and external correspondence, specifically letters and memorandums. The national programs and regions should discontinue use of any non-Quill based tracking systems for correspondence, including email routing of draft responses. The Office of the Executive Secretariat can assist in helping offices adapt Quill to their needs to most efficiently achieve their correspondence processing responsibilities. The national programs and regions are expected to provide responses to correspondence received from partners, stakeholders and the public, as appropriate, as expeditiously as possible and should adequately resource this function.

Responsibilities: Office of Public Affairs and Office of the Executive Secretariat

OPA and OEX manage and maintain public queries and correspondence in Quill and will work to ensure the application adapts to meet changing business process requirements and public needs or preferences. The offices are responsible for implementing and maintaining processes to increase agency transparency, accessibility and efficient workflow management. This includes development and implementation of any related policies or guidance that may be needed in the future.

OPA is responsible for ensuring that the public query tool in Quill supports transparency, accessibility and quality communication in public interactions. Over the past year, OPA has worked closely with a pilot group consisting of national program and regional offices to test features and ensure the public query tool fulfills the needs of the organization. Led by OPA, continued work will include promulgation of guidelines for effectively using the tool and provision of training opportunities so that staff are proficient in leveraging the tool's capabilities.

OEX is responsible for ensuring that Quill supports the agency's continuing dialogue with the public by maintaining a robust, feature-rich application that meets the needs and requirements of national programs and regional offices. This includes ensuring the availability of training for offices and individual employees and may include promulgation of guidelines for correspondence processing.

Our Ultimate Goal: Service to the Public

Responsive communication helps us to better serve the public. The more efficiently we can capture, route and track public queries and correspondence, the faster we can provide the public with the information it needs.

To learn more about the public query tool, check out the [About Using Quill for Public Queries](#) webpage, and for more information about Quill, visit the [Quill](#) webpage or contact quill.info@epa.gov.

cc: Administrator

Deputy Assistant Administrators

Deputy Regional Administrators

Public Affairs Directors

Communications Directors