

**United States Department of the Army
Quality of Information Program**

Quality of Information Guidelines

1. The quality guidelines apply to all types of information in a variety of media by Army activities and offices (i.e., reports, books, papers, maps, machine-readable material, audiovisual productions, CD-ROMs, web pages) intended for public dissemination. "Quality" is defined as the encompassing term, of which "utility," "objectivity," and "integrity" are the constituents. Army activities and offices will:

a. Strive to ensure and maximize the quality of the information disseminated to the public.

b. Adopt a basic standard of quality and take appropriate steps to incorporate information quality criteria into existing information dissemination practices. In addition to the criteria outlined below, the information dissemination practices will:

(1) Allow adequate time for reviews, consistent with the level of standards required for the type of information to be disseminated;

(2) Provide methodologies, origins of data, limitations of the information, whenever possible, as part of information dissemination; and

(3) Ensure the information fulfills the intentions stated and the conclusions are consistent with the evidence.

c. Review the quality of information before disseminating to ensure it complies with the standards set forth in OMB, DOD, and these guidelines.

d. Treat information quality as an integral part to every step in the development of information, including creation, collection, maintenance, and dissemination.

2. Army activities and offices will follow the criteria described below when developing, reviewing and disseminating information to the public.

a. Objectivity.

(1) Ensure the information is substantively accurate, reliable, and unbiased.

(2) Ensure the information is presented in an accurate, clear, complete, and unbiased manner.

(3) Identify the source of information so the public can assess whether the information is objective, to the extent possible, consistent with confidentiality protections.

b. Utility.

(1) Assess the usefulness of the information disseminated to intended users, including the public.

(2) When relevant for assessing the information's usefulness from the public's perspective, ensure transparency is addressed in the review of the information prior to dissemination.

(3) Ensure disseminated information is accessible to all persons pursuant to the requirements of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

c. Integrity.

(1) Protect digitally disseminated information from unauthorized access or revision to ensure the information is not compromised through corruption or falsification.

(2) Secure information resources by implementing the programs and policies required by the Government Information Security Reform Act.

(3) Maintain the integrity of confidential information and comply with statutory requirements to protect the information gathered and disseminated.

These include, but are not limited to: The Privacy Act of 1974, as amended; The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995; The Computer Security Act of 1987; The Freedom of Information Act; and OMB Circulars A-123, A-127, and A-130.

3. The quality criteria identified above comprise the general standards to follow in developing, reviewing, and disseminating information to the public. Guidelines, which focus largely on making the information useful to the public, are found below:

a. Comprehensive. The information should include all pertinent information to allow the public to understand the mission, activities, organization, strategic plan, performance plan, and performance accomplishments.

b. Current. Information should be timely and reflect the most current information available.

c. Sources Documented. Where appropriate, provide users with additional documentation or with method(s) to access supporting documentation by reference (i.e., citations) or by electronic means (i.e., "links").

d. Comply with applicable public laws, rules, regulations, and departmental directives, instructions and guidelines. All information should comply with policies and guidelines that govern dissemination of administrative materials to the public. The information also should comply with the requirements of applicable public laws, such as the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993.

e. Accessible. Make the information easily accessible to the public; make it available in media (i.e., print, electronic, visual, audio) appropriate to accomplish that objective.

f. Relevant. The information should provide value to its intended users and effectively address the purpose it is produced. Identify the intended audience and issues of concern to identify relevant topics of interest.

g. Presented Clearly. Assess the level of knowledge of the target audience and present the information appropriately. Present the information in a clear, complete manner so it is easily understandable. Keep language as simple as the subject permits.

4. The following guidelines pertain to statistical and financial information disseminated by Army activities and offices obtained from original data collections, administrative records, or compilations of data from primary sources, as well as estimates and forecasts derived from statistical models, expert prediction, or a combination of the two. The following information quality criteria comprise the quality standards to follow in developing, reviewing, and disseminating statistical and financial information to the public.

a. Design information collection, compilation, and creation activities based on sound statistical methods or generally accepted professional and industry standards.

b. Conduct sample surveys or other data collections using sound statistical, survey, and data collection methodologies that are consistent with generally accepted professional and industry standards.

c. Design information collection activities to minimize respondent burden balanced against the need and value of the information to be obtained.

d. Use the most reliable data and the most reliable data sources available.

e. Validate the data against other information where practicable.

f. When creating estimates or forecasts derived from existing data sources using models or other techniques:

(1) Use sound statistical methods that conform to accepted professional standards.

(2) Document models and other estimation or forecasting techniques to describe the data sources used and the methodologies and assumptions employed.

g. Use sound analytical techniques, maintain objectivity and professionalism, and present the data impartially in ways that are easy to understand.

h. Provide a clear explanation of data sources, methodologies used, and assumptions made.

i. Disseminate with a high degree of transparency about data and methods to facilitate its reproducibility by qualified third parties. Reproducibility means that the information is capable of being substantially reproduced, subject to an acceptable degree of imprecision.

j. With regard to original and supporting data ensure reproducibility for those particular types of data that can practicably be subjected to a reproducibility requirement according to commonly accepted statistical or financial standards, given ethical, feasibility, or confidentiality constraints.

k. With regard to analytic results, ensure sufficient transparency about data and methods that a qualified member of the public could undertake an independent reanalysis unless other compelling interests such as privacy, trade secrets, intellectual property, or other confidentiality protections preclude such a reanalysis.

l. Ensure products meet user needs by identifying the users of the information, staying informed of their information needs, and developing new statistical and financial information and/or data products to meet those needs.