



## 8.1 QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW (QAR)

Quality Assurance Review (QAR) is fundamental to managing a decentralized organization. Program success depends on central bureau Real Estate and regional staff continuously working to improve processes and services. The objective of any QAR is to ensure that established procedures are aiding staff in meeting project goals and to ensure that the quality of the processes and services are consistent and remain constant. Each regional office within the Division of Transportation System Development (DTSD) is responsible for upholding quality under the procedures of the Real Estate Program Manual (REPM). The Bureau of Technical Services-Real Estate (BTS-RE) takes the lead in establishing assurances and works in cooperation and conjunction with the regions to continuously improve upon processes and tools.

**Informal Real Estate (RE) QARs:** Informal RE QARs may consist of spot-checking regions at periodic or intermittent periods and/or at regular and recurring scheduled points before, in the middle of, or after a Real Estate acquisition process. The quality assurance review may focus on a specific functional process or multiple processes. An immediate follow-up meeting with appropriate regional management/staff should be held to discuss concerns, recognize outstanding areas and best practices, and to recommend specific actions for improvement, if needed.

**Formal Real Estate (RE) QARs:** A formal review of a specific functional area (or, areas) may be conducted during or after the acquisition phase. Such QARs will typically include written summary of the findings, a report to region, BTS-RE management, and to others, such as to the regional directors, division administrators, etc. as required or as necessary. This review should:

- Assess regional performance relating to the specific process being reviewed.
- Assist BTS-RE in determining whether current procedures are providing regions with effective tools to meet project and departmental goals.
- Identify regional innovations or best practices that could be exported to other areas.
- Identify training needs that regional Real Estate staff may require.
- Suggest changes in regional practices to improve quality and efficiency.

### 8.1.1 Title VI Compliance

It is the policy of WisDOT to ensure full compliance with [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. Title VI and related statutes require that no person in the United States shall on the grounds of race, color, sex or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

### 8.1.2 Basic Elements of a QAR

BTS-RE will give notice to regional Real Estate management and staff of the scheduled date(s) of the review, the projects and/or parcels that will be reviewed, and the expected timeline for reporting the results of the QAR. Regions should prepare for a QAR by gathering information.

The BTS-RE program and policy facilitator and their manager or supervisor, and in some cases, an FHWA representative or other state agency personnel, will determine the necessary scope and extent of the QAR. The scope may be statewide or region specific, and may include one or several projects within a region. The composition of a QAR may be simple, such as an informal check, up to and including a much broader and more formal review.

Basic elements of a successful QAR process will evolve, but may require and include:

- A team or individual to conduct QAR. For informal reviews, a central bureau BTS-RE program and policy facilitator may handle review independently. For more extensive or formal reviews, an FHWA officer, along with DTIM and/or DTSD regional staff as well as management may work in conjunction with a central bureau BTS-RE facilitator.
- Individuals and/or whole work units may be asked by the QAR facilitator(s) to respond to information requests, invited to make recommendations for improvement or correction, and summoned to develop and provide an action plan.
- Logs may be requested and used as a tool by the QAR facilitator(s) in conducting QARs. Worksheets and/or logs should be used by regional offices as on-going quality control tools.
- Looking at key elements specific to any functional area identified as critical or essential.
- Open lines of communication between all levels of staff and all offices.
- Regional offices should be given reasonable notification and clear purpose for a QAR, as well as a reasonable timeline to gather facts, report, and review results.
- Review for Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 compliance.
- Timely results and effective follow up to conclusion. Each formal QAR must conclude with a report of results to regional office(s) of problem areas or practices identified in review, a discussion of concerns, and recommendations regarding current practices, as well as suggestions for training or improvement ideas, if any.

### 8.1.3 Essential Elements of a QAR

The essential elements of a Real Estate QAR process, as outlined here, were drafted in cooperation with and collaboration between the Division of Transportation Investment Management (DTIM) and Division of Transportation Systems Development (DTSD). Tip: A good optional tool for regional staff to reference in working to ensure all steps are followed and complete prior to generating a Real Estate Payment Request (DT1630) is the Payment Request Checklist w/Supplement (RE1002). WisDOT Real Estate's delegation table is another everyday tool for staff to reference to ensure signature authority is appropriate. The points summarized below, are meant to represent the essential elements of QAR for each of these core functional real estate processes, and are subject to change, where necessary.

- For a nominal parcel process, these basic steps must be documented:
  1. All information, as required, including detailed diary notes, entered and complete in READS.
  2. Current Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) published brochure, entitled: 'The Rights of Landowners Under Wisconsin Eminent Domain Law' was given to owner(s) prior to negotiation and noted in parcel diary.
  3. Nominal Payment Parcel – 'Waiver of Appraisal' Recommendation and Approval (RE1897) filled out prior to owner contact.
  4. Nominal parcels were reasonably consistent with offers on project.

5. Offering prices were supported by sales and approved by regional management prior to negotiations, and Nominal Payment Parcel Report (RE1889) is in project folder.
  6. Sales studies were made with verified sales grouped by category, size, and type (with specific unit values concluded for each group).
- For a revision process, these basic steps must be documented:
    1. All information, as required, including detailed diary notes, entered and complete in READS.
    2. Increase was consistent with other revisions on project.
    3. Parcel file information gives an understandable, concise explanation of acquisition problem or situation that warranted an increase.
    4. Proper method was used (e.g., revised offer, administrative revision) to document and authorize an increase to original offering price.
    5. Revised offer or Administrative Revision (RE1592) is properly executed, checking that:
      - Amount and date approved is complete and calculations are accurate.
      - Comparison of damages analysis was detailed, complete, and accurate.
      - Form was appropriately signed/approved.
      - Narrative clearly explained basis for revision and justified increase.
      - Project ID, county, owner name, parcel number and percentage of increase are accurate and complete.
      - Property type, net size, acquired fee, interests and acquisition description was accurate, complete and matched the latest R/W plat statistics.
  - For a condemnation process, these basic steps must be documented:
    1. All information, as required, including detailed diary notes, entered and complete in READS.
    2. Appropriate contact was made and sufficient to meet intent of law for negotiations, with no evidence of coercion.
    3. Award of Damages (RE1584) was properly executed, served and recorded.
    4. Condemnations involving improvements were coordinated with regional relocation coordinator (e.g., improvements listed on JO and amount of award).
    5. For those parcels where original offering price was revised by the revised offer or administrative revision process, a revised letter was given to owner prior to issuance of Jurisdictional Offer (JO) (RE1786).
    6. JO accurately completed (e.g., JO at same amount as revised offer or administrative revision).
    7. JO was properly served on each party of interest.
    8. Notice of Lis Pendens (RE1547) (with JO and description attached) was filed with proper Register of Deeds office within 14 days of date on JO.
    9. Power of eminent domain was used appropriately (e.g., not for wetland mitigation sites).
  - For a litigation process, these basic steps must be documented:
    1. All information, as required, including detailed diary notes, entered and complete in READS.
    2. An initial case review meeting and a post litigation wrap-up conference were held.
    3. Appeal materials were promptly forwarded to Wisconsin Attorney General's office and other appropriate departmental offices, as necessary.
    4. Interest on any increase in award was accurately calculated by a regional litigation coordinator and paid.
    5. Judgment was properly filed in those cases where state prevailed.

6. Legal settlements were analyzed and approved by regional management.
  7. Litigation Report and Case Summary (RE1651) was completed and signed.
  8. Owner's expenses were reviewed/approved by a regional litigation coordinator and paid.
  9. Regional litigation file is complete and contains: litigation report, all stipulations, orders, dismissals, and other relevant support documentation.
  10. Working file, complete with necessary information, was prepared and forwarded to state's attorney in a timely manner.
- For a relocation process, these basic steps must be documented:
    1. All information, as required, including detailed diary notes, entered and complete in READS.
    2. Advisory services were offered and performed when needed.
    3. All notices were properly served and documented.
    4. All potential displacees were identified on relocation plan.
    5. Calculations for replacement payments were done correctly.
    6. Claims were received, processed, and paid on time.
  - For a land sales process, these basic steps must be documented:
    1. All information, as required, including detailed diary notes, entered and complete in READS.
    2. Applied proper credit to federally funded projects.
    3. Copy of revised plat submitted to BTS-RE.
    4. Developed and applied a marketing approach suitable to anticipated demand and value.
    5. Followed policy to value and market excess tracts.
    6. Followed regional policy and procedures when updating right of way plat.
    7. Identified marketable surplus tracts of reasonable size and shape on active and inactive improvement projects.
    8. Obtained all necessary approvals before surplus land is declared excess.
    9. Recorded all deeds.
    10. Routed Excess Land Sale Approval (RE2206) to appropriate individuals and offices.
    11. Submitted funds to the BTS-RE.

### 8.1.4 Reporting and Follow-up

For informal reviews, a verbal discussion, along with a brief written summary, based on the discussion and conclusion with the region, should be provided as documentation of a review. A more detailed executive summary report may be required for formal or broader scope QAR reviews.

Executive Summary Reports: Typically, a detailed written report is prepared directly to the audience of region where the QAR took place, and should describe specific problem areas that may have been found, as well as recognize good practices. A draft of the summary report should be provided to the region(s) within a reasonable period of the QAR and allow time, as well as opportunity and a format, for discussion and an agreeable plan for action prior to finalization. A formal executive summary report based on the QAR should include:

1. Purpose of review.
2. Scope of review (listing of projects and parcels reviewed).
3. Findings (including outstanding areas and areas of non-compliance with recommended action items for improvement).

4. Conclusion (could include a recommendation to consider a procedural change or identification of a training need).

Regional staff and central bureau BTS-RE staff will work to resolve any disagreements within a QAR report to ensure clarification and understanding. A broad scope executive summary report, sometimes involving multiple and/or all regions, may become necessary and must be prepared for sharing with a broader audience, such as to regional directors, division administrators, other state representatives, or to the FHWA. These expanded or broad-scope reports will include the same basic elements as a region-specific report, but with a broader focus and require wider discussion. For example:

- BTS-RE may make general and/or specific recommendations for improvement.
- Conclusion might identify procedures needing clarification, adjustment or change.
- Findings of problem areas might be shared, with some attempt to try and keep identity of the region, project and/or individuals confidential.
- Findings may recognize a region(s) for outstanding/best practices.
- Identify areas that may warrant additional training.
- Recommendations may include specific action items, a timeline and follow-up for improvement.

Regional Real Estate management should develop an action plan or plan of improvement, as appropriate, to address concerns and recommendations identified in a QAR report. The BTS-RE program and policy facilitator may:

- Discuss any recommendations for procedural revisions with their manager.
- Identify and coordinate necessary training needs. The BTS-RE program and policy facilitator might work to develop and present some additional training to region or otherwise coordinate with another training provider as needed.
- Track progress of regional improvement plans, and report progress to BTS-RE manager.