1. Q: Why is GIPSA implementing the Quality Management Program?

   A: The Quality Management Program is designed to introduce modern quality management principles into the official system. GIPSA believes implementation of the Quality Management Program offers some important benefits in terms of consistent quality verification and greater flexibility for official service providers (OSP) in managing their business and meeting their official duties. Moreover, it allows GIPSA to better utilize its resources as the Agency continues to consolidate its operations.

2. Q: Who is required to develop a Local Quality Manual?

   A: All official agencies and GIPSA field offices that provide official services on GIPSA's behalf are required to participate in the GIPSA Quality Management Program.

3. Q: Do the provisions of an agency's Quality Manual apply to all service points?

   A: Yes. However, in instances where the type of work is significantly different between service points within the same agency, there may be variations in the quality processes or additional requirements necessary.

4. *Q:* How will the Quality Management Program initiative affect the designation process?

   A: All official service providers now designated will need to put a working plan in place before being re-designated. All new applicants' for designations will have to submit a QMP as part of the application process.

5. Q: When is my Quality Manual due?

   A: You must provide your manual within three months from the time you are notified to do so. The scheduling of manual due dates will be based largely on designation termination dates. For States and private agencies applying to become an OSP, the Review Branch will require that proposed Quality Manuals be submitted as part of the application process for conformance with FGIS Directive 9181.81.

6. Q: How much detail is required for the eight documented core elements listed in the template?

   A: At a minimum the quality manual should address each of the elements listed in the template with enough description of the activity to denote who is responsible, when, where, how reviewed, and any documentation needed to demonstrate the process in under control.

7. Q: Is use of the Quality Manual template required in the development of a Local Quality Plan?

   A: At a minimum, the Plan should address the elements listed in the template, but the OSP's will still have discretion to develop their own plan.

8. Q: May I use another OSP's approved manual as the basis for designing mine?

   A: Yes, you may contact an OSP for that information, and they may share their manual; however, your manual must reflect the quality practices that are specific to your operation.

9. Q: What is a "desk audit?"

   A: A desk audit is a review of your manual to ensure that it conforms to FGIS Directive 9181.81, and the Quality Manual Template requirements.

10. Q: Who will perform the desk audit?

    A: Members of the Review Branch and the Compliance Director's office.

11. Q: How long will it take for Compliance to perform the desk audit of my Quality Manual?

    A: About two weeks, depending on how well the Quality Manual is structured and conforms to the template provided with Quality Management Program Directive FGIS 9181.81.

12. Q: If Compliance finds discrepancies in my Quality Manual during the desk audit and asks for corrections, how long will I have to make the changes and resubmit the manual for further review and approval?

    A: One to two weeks depending on the extent of the changes needed.

13. Q: What happens after my manual is approved?

    A: You will be expected to do your first annual audit on the performance of your local OSP quality program, and forward the results of that audit to Compliance within three months of approval. Changes to your manual may be made then, or at any time in the process. You must, however, inform Compliance of any written changes to the manual. The first Compliance audit will follow. For subsequent changes, depending on the scope of those changes, the compliance division may determine a new desk audit is required.

14. Q: Can the annual internal audit be performed just on specific programs each year, or do all programs and activities have to be audited every year?

    A: All processes should be audited once a year.

15. Q: How will GIPSA's on-site audit differ from the traditional triennial review process? And who will conduct the audits?

    A: GIPSA compliance division will conduct the audits. The on-site audit will focus on how well the OSPs are adhering to their stated quality manual requirements, and on the documentation and processes rather than individual results. The OPS internal audit results will also be utilized.

16. Q: Why does the Review Branch need to see the results of the internal audit?

    A: *The internal audit results will help the compliance auditors as they plan the scope of the on-site audit.*

17. Q: How much, if any, notice will you be giving me of a pending on-site audit?

    A: The notification will be the same, about two months prior.

18. Q: You say that future audits will be conducted on a one, two, or three year basis at the discretion of the Compliance Division and will depend on the performance of individual OSPs. Please elaborate.

    A: Available program funding and personnel resources will have some bearing on this. Other factors might include the extent of past problems or reoccurring findings, and the verifiability of and confidence in the OPS's internal audits.

19. Q: Under the QMP, does Compliance anticipate spending more, or less, time conducting its on-site audits of the OSPs?

    A: As we all get familiar with this new process, there may be little change in the time we spend on site. In the future, however, we anticipate being able to do more of the audit work in our offices (as a result of improved computer technologies), and spend less time on-site.

20. Q: Is there a chance that you might perform an unannounced on-site audit?

    A: Yes.

21. Q: Do we have to print hardcopies of our manuals?

    A: No, an electronic copy is sufficient and has the advantage of being easily changed if necessary. Remember to show the version number and date.

22. *Q:* Do the requirements of the Quality Management Program extend to services provided under the Agricultural Marketing Act, or to official service providers that perform only services under the Agricultural Marketing Act?

A: For the initial release of the QMP the focus will be on Private agencies, States and FGIS field offices. The AMA only providers will be included at a later date.