



BCSI

Social

Economic

Environmental

**Benefit Corporation
Standards Institute**

Accreditation Manual

Approved, 05032012

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. To outline established policies and procedures for BCSI accreditation of its Accredited Bodies and their BCSI Certification of compliant Benefit Corporations

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. Covers the BCSI Accreditation process from inquiry, through application, review and application acceptance, accreditation assessment, granting of accreditation, for information through application, issuance of accreditation, trademark usage, appeals process, ongoing Accredited Body oversight and dispute resolution.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1. **Accredited Body (AB)** – Firms that have been granted accredited status under BCSI program Certification Benefit Corporations
- 3.2. **Accredited Body Applicant (ABA)** – Applicant to BCSI's Accreditation program
- 3.3. **Accreditation Committee (AC)** – Oversight body of BCSI's accreditation process
- 3.4. **Appeal Panel** – Independent decision body for BCSI's appeal process
- 3.5. **Application Reviewer (AR)** – Staff member assigned to initial review of an accreditation applicant
- 3.6. **Assessment** – The evaluation process used to determine eligibility and qualification for accreditation by BCSI
- 3.7. **Assessor** - Staff member assigned to assessment review of an applicant's office and audit activities for accreditation
- 3.8. **Executive Director (ED)** – Chief Executive Officer of the corporation that reports directly to the Board
- 3.9. **Nonconformity (NC)** – A concern discovered during the assessment process that is, or appears to be, in nonconformance with BCSI accreditation criteria
- 3.10. **Observation** - An area of concern discovered during the assessment process that is currently conforming but may, if not properly addressed, result in nonconformance

4. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTATION

- 4.1. ISO 65 – 1996
- 4.2. Accreditation Application BCSI 0006 - 05032012
- 4.3. Accreditation Agreement BCSI 000 - 0 - 2012 (drafting underway)
- 4.4. Conflict of Interest Policy BCSI 0002 - 01272012
- 4.5. Dispute Resolution Policy BCSI 0003 - 05032012

5. ACCREDITATION PROCEDURE

- 5.1. The processes for accreditation shall follow the ISO 65 compliant procedures established herein from inquiry, through application and accreditation.

6. ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS

- 6.1. Requirements for accreditation are defined in the BCSI Accreditation Agreement.
- 6.2. BCSI shall inform Accredited Body (AB) of any changes to the accreditation requirements and or procedures at least three months prior to their implementation.
- 6.3. Where implementation dates are set by BCSI, they shall be set with regard to the time required by AB to make changes to their own management systems, if relevant.
- 6.4. AB shall comply with changed requirements within the timeframes indicated.
- 6.5. Conformity will be verified at the first scheduled re-assessment.

7. INQUIRY

- 7.1. Accreditation information shall be requested by phone, letter or e-mail.
- 7.2. Information shall be sent as appropriate.
- 7.3. Those interested in pursuing accreditation shall request an application packet.
- 7.4. Application packet shall contain:
 - 7.4.1. Application form, including Fee Schedule and Instructions
 - 7.4.2. Accreditation Manual
 - 7.4.3. Accreditation Agreement
 - 7.4.4. Other relevant documentation
- 7.5. Application package shall be sent within two weeks of request.

8. INITIAL ACCREDITATION APPLICATION REVIEW

- 8.1. When an application is received, the Executive Director (ED) shall assign it to an Application Reviewer (AR).
- 8.2. The AR shall confirm that:
 - 8.2.1. All data fields have been adequately and accurately completed.
 - 8.2.2. Application fee has been paid.
- 8.3. If application is incomplete or payment has not been received, the applicant shall be contacted by the AR.
- 8.4. Once an application is complete and payment has been received, it shall be recorded by AR.
- 8.5. Once logged, the AR shall review the application verifying that the applicant:
 - 8.5.1. Is a legal entity.

- 8.5.2. Conforms to requirements and that they are adequate.
 - 8.5.2.1. If further information is required, it shall be obtained from the applicant by the AR.
- 8.5.3. Has not identified any impediments to achieving accreditation.
- 8.6. If the application does not meet the above requirements, the AR shall present the application to the ED with recommendation for rejection.
 - 8.6.1. The ED shall review and if appropriate, approve the recommendation to reject before applicant is notified.
 - 8.6.2. Applicant may address the issues raised or withdraw its application.
 - 8.6.2.1. If withdrawn, application fee will not be reimbursed.
- 8.7. If the application is in compliance with the above requirements, the AR shall present the application to the ED for approval and signature, and:
 - 8.7.1. Applicant shall be informed that they have been accepted as an Accredited Body Applicant (ABA) and shall be sent a copy of the Accreditation Agreement with a request for signature.
 - 8.7.1.1. ABA can only be formally recognized once the Accreditation Agreement has been signed by both parties.
 - 8.7.2. ABA shall sign and return two copies of the contract including a statement that they are considered an ABA; however, not accredited.
 - 8.7.3. ED shall sign both copies and return one to the ABA.
- 8.8. Once the Accreditation Agreement has been signed by both parties:
 - 8.8.1. BCSI will make the name and contact details of the ABA approval publicly available, and:
 - 8.8.1.1. The ABA may make claims of applicant status and seek a non accredited client.
 - 8.8.1.2. BCSI shall take suitable measures to address any misleading references by an ABA regarding its accreditation status.

9. ASSESSOR APPOINTMENT

- 9.1. The ED shall ensure that for each ABA, an Assessor is appointed so that all aspects of the scope of assessment can be addressed.
- 9.2. A check on actual or potential conflicts of interest shall take place, specifically:
 - 9.2.1. A declaration of actual or potential conflicts of interest shall be made by an Assessor prior to accepting an appointment
 - 9.2.2. The ED shall review the Conflict of Interest Policy, and if any conflict is disclosed, shall:
 - 9.2.2.1. Appoint a new Assessor, or
 - 9.2.2.2. Specify the measures to be taken to address the declared conflict of interest.
 - 9.2.2.3. Notification shall be sent to the ABA, listing the Assessor and inviting objection on grounds of conflict of interest.

- 9.2.2.3.1. Should objection be received, it shall be referred back to the ED and the BCSI Board of Directors
- 9.2.3. All Assessors are required to comply with conflict of interest requirements and the BCSI Code of Conduct Policy..
- 9.3. The ED may clarify with the Assessor the scope and type of assessment to be performed.

10. ACCREDITATION ASSESSMENT

- 10.1. Assessment shall cover both office and field activities, and:
 - 10.1.1. Following an office assessment and closure of any major NC's, if any, the Assessor shall advise the ABA that they may advertise their status as an ABA and may contact customers for certification; however:
 - 10.1.1.1. Certification may not be issued until the assessment process is complete and accreditation has been granted.
 - 10.1.2. Field assessment shall be coordinated with the ABA; however:
 - 10.1.2.1. Only after initial office audit has been completed without any major nonconformity pending.
 - 10.1.2.2. Exceptions can only be granted by the ED.
- 10.2. Assessors shall act professionally in accordance with the following, and:
 - 10.2.1. May use checklists.
 - 10.2.2. Shall keep assessment notes, specific on evidence reviewed.
 - 10.2.3. May take photos, with prior agreement of the ABA, if necessary to maintain accurate records.
 - 10.2.4. Shall allocate sufficient time to hold a closing meeting with the ABA auditor
- 10.3. Nonconformities and observations shall be in conformance with the following:
 - 10.3.1. During all assessments, objective evidence shall be evaluated against the assessment criteria to generate the assessment findings, which may indicate either conformity, nonconformity or potential nonconformity.
 - 10.3.2. The assessment findings with supporting assessment evidence shall be recorded and graded as minor/major NCs or as observations.
 - 10.3.3. BCSI will raise every NC observed, no matter how small, and:
 - 10.3.3.1. According to its severity, shall be graded as a major or minor NC or an Observation in line with the following definitions:
 - 10.3.3.1.1. **Minor NC** - An isolated or sporadic lapse in the content or implementation of procedures or records which could reasonably lead to a systematic failure or significant deficiency of the system if not corrected.

- 10.3.3.1.2. **Major NC** - A systematic failure or significant deficiency - either as a single incident or a combination of a number of similar incidents - in part of the quality system, or the lack of implementation of such a part, governed by applicable standards.
 - 10.3.3.1.3. **Observation** - An area of concern, a process, document or activity that is currently conforming but may, if not improved, result in a nonconforming system, product or service.
- 10.4. For each NC identified, the following information shall be recorded:
- 10.4.1. Clear description.
 - 10.4.2. Objective evidence that lead to its identification.
 - 10.4.3. Section and reference clause of the standard or procedure that the NC is raised against.
 - 10.4.4. The grading of the NC.
 - 10.4.5. The timeline allowed for implementing corrective action and demonstrating conformity.
 - 10.4.6. The NC, Observation or any associated corrective action request should not include any instructive or consultative elements.
- 10.5. If Assessor finds an area where policy of either BCSI or the certification scheme lacks communication or is unclear, they shall write to the relevant person within the organization asking for the policy to be clarified.
- 10.5.1. The Assessment Report shall discuss these findings and note that clarification of policy has been sought.
- 10.6. At closing meeting the Assessor shall ensure that:
- 10.6.1. Any nonconformity is reviewed with the ABA auditor to ensure that the assessment evidence is accurate, and that identified nonconformities are understood.
 - 10.6.1.1. Every attempt should be made to resolve any diverging opinions concerning the assessment evidence and/or findings, with any unresolved points recorded.
 - 10.6.2. The ABA is informed that if it disagrees with a nonconformity and/or its grading in the final Assessment Report, the ABA may appeal such by following Appeal Procedure.
 - 10.6.3. The ABA is informed that as the Assessor is not the final decision maker, and:
 - 10.6.3.1. That further nonconformities may be identified and/or grading changed during peer review.
- 10.7. Multiple assessment activities may be combined into a single Assessment Report.

11. ACCREDITATION ASSESSMENT REPORT

- 11.1. A Findings Report shall be drafted by the Assessor within one (1) business day of the closing meeting and submitted to the ABA, and:
 - 11.1.1. The Assessor shall invite the ABA to comment and point out any error of fact within the report within five working days of its receipt, and:
 - 11.1.1.1. The Assessor shall take the comments into account in finalizing the Assessment report.
- 11.2. If no comments are received from the ABA, an Assessment Report shall be drafted by the Assessor.
- 11.3. The Assessor shall submit the draft Assessment Report to another qualified Assessor for peer review, and:
 - 11.3.1. The peer reviewer shall provide comments back to the Assessor within five working days.
 - 11.3.2. The Assessment Report shall be finalized within 30 days, and:
 - 11.3.2.1. Contain a clear conclusion and recommendation for the Accreditation Committee and/or ED.
 - 11.3.2.2. The recommendation shall be factual, clear and unambiguous.
- 11.4. Assessment Report shall contain:
 - 11.4.1. Copies of relevant Document Review, Finding Reports and Checklists.
 - 11.4.2. Clear conclusions on the performance of the ABA to give confidence in its competence.
 - 11.4.3. Clear recommendation on whether accreditation should be granted and any condition that may be recommended, including:
 - 11.4.3.1. Restrictions on geographic scope of activity.
 - 11.4.3.2. Limits on number of certificates that may be issued.
 - 11.4.3.3. Requirement to submit certification reports for review prior to making certification decisions.
 - 11.4.3.4. Requirement for more witnessing of auditors as new AB audit activities are undertaken.

12. CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

- 12.1. The Assessor shall evaluate the ABA or AB's corrective and/or preventive actions, and:
 - 12.1.1. Ensure the results are documented and provided to the ABA or AB.
- 12.2. Timelines to implement appropriate corrective action(s) and demonstrate conformity become effective after the assessment closing meeting, and:
 - 12.2.1. Shall be fully addressed and recorded by the Assessor.

- 12.2.2. Minor NCs shall be fully addressed and conformity demonstrated within a period up to six months.
- 12.2.3. Major NCs shall be fully addressed and conformity demonstrated within a period up to 3 months; however:
 - 12.2.3.1. In cases where the Assessor concludes that the major NC creates a risk to the integrity of the accreditation, the ABA or AB may be required to implement corrective action and demonstrate conformity immediately or within a period of less than 3 months.
 - 12.2.3.2. Extensions of timelines can only be granted by ED.
 - 12.2.3.3. ABA or AB may only appeal an NC within the first thirty days of receiving the Assessment Report.
 - 12.2.3.4. Observations do not have defined timelines for action; however, the ABA or AB should undertake the necessary action to prevent an NC being identified in future.
- 12.2.4. Corrective action shall be implemented within the specified timeline, and:
 - 12.2.4.1. Shall verify the effectiveness of the corrective action prior to providing evidence to demonstrate conformity.
 - 12.2.4.2. The Assessor shall be responsible for verifying that the corrective action was adequate to address the NC, and:
 - 12.2.4.2.1. Shall only close out the NCs when conformity is demonstrated.
 - 12.2.4.3. Upon closure of an NC, or OBs, the Assessment and Nonconformity Report(s) shall be updated.
- 12.3. Observations may, if not improved, result in nonconformity in the future.
- 12.4. If an ABA or AB does not implement satisfactory corrective action and demonstrate conformity within the required timeframe:
 - 12.4.1. The assessment report shall not be forwarded to the Accreditation Committee for decision on accreditation until conformity has been demonstrated.
 - 12.4.2. A Minor NC will be upgraded to a major NC as follows:
 - 12.4.2.1. The Assessor in consultation with the ED, may start suspension procedures
 - 12.4.2.2. Extensions of timelines can only be granted by the ED.

13. APPEAL PROCESS

- 13.1. Appeal by an ABA or AB against an application and/or accreditation decision may only be related to:
 - 13.1.1. Disagreement with nonconformity.
 - 13.1.2. Refusal by BCSI to accept its application for accreditation.
 - 13.1.3. Refusal to proceed with an accreditation assessment.

- 13.1.4. A decision to reduce, suspend or terminate accreditation, or any other action that impedes the attainment of accreditation status desired by the AB, or
- 13.1.5. A decision changing the scope of accreditation.
- 13.2. The grounds for an appeal are limited to:
 - 13.2.1. Documented evidence that BCSI has not followed its own procedures or certification scheme requirements for conducting accreditation assessments; or
 - 13.2.2. The fact that BCSI has incorrectly interpreted the requirements for accreditation.
- 13.3. Appeals shall be received within 30 days of the accreditation decision being received, and shall be submitted to the ED.
- 13.4. Appeal notification shall include the following elements:
 - 13.4.1. Be written in English and signed by the ABA or AB's legal representative.
 - 13.4.2. Specify the grounds on which the appeal is made.
 - 13.4.3. Be accompanied by relevant documented evidence.
 - 13.4.4. Indicate the steps, if any, that were taken to resolve the issue prior to lodging the appeal, and
 - 13.4.5. Contain an agreement to adhere to all terms and provisions of this BCSI procedure.
- 13.5. The ED or assigned delegate shall inform the appellant if the requirement elements are not present, and:
 - 13.5.1. Will only formally proceed with appeals that meet all the conditions indicated above.
- 13.6. The ED or assigned delegate shall formally acknowledge receipt of an appeal only once all conditions for appeal have been met.
- 13.7. An Appeals Panel shall be established by the ED to ensure independence and avoid any potential conflict of interest, and:
 - 13.7.1. The Appeals Panel may consist of just one person; however:
 - 13.7.1.1. Shall be independent and impartial experts, with no potential conflict of interest.
 - 13.7.1.2. Shall be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.
 - 13.7.1.3. The ABA or AB may object to Appeals Panel members only based on either lack of appropriate knowledge or potential conflict of interest, and:
 - 13.7.1.3.1. The ED shall evaluate such an objection and the objective evidence provided.
 - 13.7.1.4. The ED shall appoint the chair.

- 13.7.2. Once the Panel is established, the ABA or AB shall be informed of the names of the Appeals Panel members and shall be requested to confirm in writing their agreement with the composition of the Appeals Panel.
- 13.7.3. The Appeals Panel shall review the appeal and all the relevant documented evidence provided by the appellant and BCSI within sixty days of its appointment, and:
 - 13.7.3.1. Make and publish a decision within thirty days thereafter.
- 13.7.4. The Appeals Panel shall make one of the following decisions based on the relevant facts:
 - 13.7.4.1. Reject the appeal.
 - 13.7.4.2. Accept the appeal and revise the application or accreditation decision, and:
 - 13.7.4.2.1. Propose a new accreditation recommendation.
 - 13.7.4.3. Conclude that accreditation and/or certification requirements are unclear and refer the case back to BCSI Board.
- 13.7.5. The Appeals Panel shall make their conclusion in a written report with their decision clearly indicated in the conclusion.
- 13.7.6. The decision of the Appeals Panel shall be binding on all parties and no further appeal on the same matter shall be accepted.
- 13.7.7. Records of the appeal shall be kept and archived in the Appeals File.
 - 13.7.7.1. A copy of the final Appeals Panel report shall be published on the BCSI website.

14. GRANTING OF ACCREDITATION

- 14.1. The Chair of the Accreditation Committee shall communicate their recommendation in writing to the ED.
- 14.2. If BCSI grants accreditation, the ED shall:
 - 14.2.1. Review and sign the recommendation.
 - 14.2.2. Communicate a positive accreditation decision to the ABA and ensure they are added to the list of AB's which is available on the BCSI website.
 - 14.2.3. Provide a controlled accreditation certificate signed by the ED, and:
 - 14.2.3.1. Accreditation certificate shall be forwarded to the AB and a copy kept on record, and
 - 14.2.4. Integrate the AB into its communications network and mailing list.
- 14.3. If BCSI does not recommend accreditation, the ED shall:
 - 14.3.1. Communicate a negative accreditation decision to the ABA, providing appropriate justification and an indication of all the nonconformities that prevented accreditation and that need to be addressed.
 - 14.3.2. Inform the AB of its right to appeal as per BCSI Appeal Procedure.

- 14.4. After receiving written confirmation of their accredited status the ABA can make claims regarding its formal status as an AB.
- 14.5. BCSI shall take suitable measures to address any misleading references by an AB regarding its accreditation status or a misleading use of BCSI and / or its certification trademarks.

15. MONITORING OF ACCREDITED BODY

- 15.1. Shall include Regular Surveillance, Short Notice Assessments, and/or Compliance Audits as applicable, consisting of the following activities:
 - 15.1.1. Reviewing system documents and records to ensure compliance with requirements.
 - 15.1.2. Review AB certification reports and supporting audit records.
 - 15.1.3. Following-up on prior Nonconformities and Observations.
 - 15.1.4. Performing assessments of AB's Quality Management System, including staff interviews.
 - 15.1.5. Review of correspondence, communications and complaints.
 - 15.1.6. Seeking input of stakeholders where appropriate.
 - 15.1.7. Producing assessment reports as appropriate.

16. ACCREDITATION / CERTIFICATION LOGO USAGE

- 16.1. BCSI Accreditation and Certification logos are property of and owned by Benefit Corporation Standards Institute, Inc.
- 16.2. Usage of the logos requires a valid license agreement and is restricted to use by:
 - 16.2.1. BCSI, its Accredited Bodies and their Certified Bodies, and:
 - 16.2.1.1. Is not transferable to affiliate offices of such.
- 16.3. Usage is restricted to avoid misleading claims and uses which could diminish or damage BCSI's reputation, and:
 - 16.3.1. Licensee shall observe all directions given by BCSI as to color, size and representation of the BCSI Mark on promotional materials.
 - 16.3.2. The Mark shall not be altered in any way without written approval of BCSII
 - 16.3.3. The Mark can only used in the manner prescribed herein.
 - 16.3.4. The AB shall not allow other certification schemes to make reference to its BCSI accredited status as a credible guarantee to demonstrate competence to deliver certification services outside of the scope of its BCSI accreditation.
 - 16.3.5. The AB shall not use the logo in such a way as to create confusion regarding the scope of accreditation
 - 16.3.6. The AB shall not use the logo on any stationery, document and/or promotional material unless it relates in whole or in part to the scope of its BCSI Accreditation, and:

- 16.3.6.1. Where the logo only relates in part, the AB shall clearly identify in the same document the part to which the Mark applies.
- 16.3.7. The AB shall not use the logo in isolation of the logo of the AB.
- 16.3.8. BCSI reserves the right to take suitable action to address incorrect references to accreditation status or use of the BCSI logos not in conformity with this policy, such as requests for corrective action, withdrawal of accreditation, publication of the transgression and, if necessary, legal action.