

SBP Work Instruction  
Document: Certification  
Body Approval  
Procedure  
SBP/WID/001



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# 1 Scope

SBP/WID/001 provides a step-by-step description of the SBP approval process for Certification Bodies (CBs) identifying each of the workflows and the documents supporting each of the steps. The four stages in the process are as follows:

- Application;
- Desk review;
- Office assessment and witness assessment; and
- Approval evaluation.

Section 5 details the procedure for raising and dealing with assessment findings, in the event that the assessment evidence determines there is a non-conformity (NC) or potential non-conformity/observation (OBS) against the assessment criteria.

## 2 Application stage



### 2.1 Step 1: Receipt of application form

Application forms submitted to SBP shall be brought to the attention of the SBP Approvals Programme Manager. An application form submitted by a Certification Body (CB) shall be accompanied by proof that the CB meets the accreditation criteria, namely FSC or PEFC accreditation including technical and geographic scope. Proof may be in the form of:

- Current copies of FSC/PEFC accreditation certificates
- ISO 17065 accreditation certificate

Consult checklist: *CBAP01 SBP Application Review*

On receipt of requisite documentation SBP Communications and Information shall send the *SBP/CB Agreement* and the *SBP Trade Mark Licence Agreement* to the CB for signature.

The SBP Approvals Programme Manager designates an assessor and reviewer on a case-by-case basis for each stage of the application process.

### 2.2 Step 2: Review by SBP assessor

The designated assessor reviews the CB application and makes a recommendation to the SBP Chief Executive Officer. The SBP Chief Executive Officer makes a decision based on the recommendation and, if affirmative, counter signs the checklist *CBAP01 SBP Application Review*, *SBP/CB Agreement* and *SBP Trade Mark Licence Agreement*.

### 2.3 Step 3: Communication of the decision

#### 2.3.1 CB

The SBP Approvals Programme Manager shall inform the CB of the SBP Chief Executive Officer's decision. The following summarises the information that shall be provided to the applicant CB at this stage; a template letter is provided in Appendix 1.

If affirmative the CB is informed that it may refer to itself as an 'accepted applicant' and that it may describe itself in the public domain as follows:

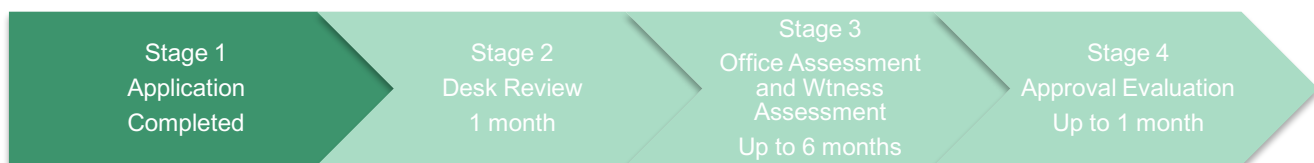
*“[Name of CB] has been accepted as an SBP applicant and is progressing towards SBP-approved status. The technical scope of the application is to cover SBP Standards [insert Standard numbers, e.g. 1 to 6], and the geographic scope is [define geographic scope, e.g. global, Canada and the USA, Latvia, Poland, Russia etc].*

*“As an SBP applicant [Name of CB] is able to audit Biomass Producers, but is not able to issue an SBP certificate until SBP-approved status is attained (which is not guaranteed). If, during the course of the SBP approval process, significant material concerns or findings are raised the Biomass Producer audit may need to be repeated.”*

The SBP Approvals Programme Manager shall send the following SBP Standards and General Management System checklists to the CB:

- *SBP-CHK-01-V1.0-Feedstock Compliance Standard*
- *SBP-CHK-02-V1.0-Verification of SBP-compliant Feedstock*
- *SBP-CHK-03-V1.0-Requirements for Certification Bodies*
- *SBP-CHK-04-V1.0-Chain of Custody*
- *SBP-CHK-05-V1.0-Collection and Communication of Data*
- *SBP-CHK-06-V1.0-Energy and Carbon Balance Calculation*
- *SBP-CHK-07-V1.0-General Management System*

An outline of the next steps along with guidance on timings shall be provided to the CB. It shall be noted that progress can only be made once the pre-conditions for progressing to the next stage have been met, for example, all relevant documents have been received by SBP, any major non-conformities closed out etc. Guidance on timings shall be provided as below, recognising that scheduling audits and assessments involves a number of parties and therefore the timings should be treated as guidance only.



### 2.3.2 AFDG

The Technical Director shall inform the SBP Assurance Framework Development Group (AFDG) of the SBP Chief Executive Officer’s decision.

### 2.3.3 Public domain

SBP Communications and Information shall list the CB on the SBP website as an ‘accepted applicant’.

### 3 Desk review stage



#### 3.1 Step 1: Review of Standards checklists

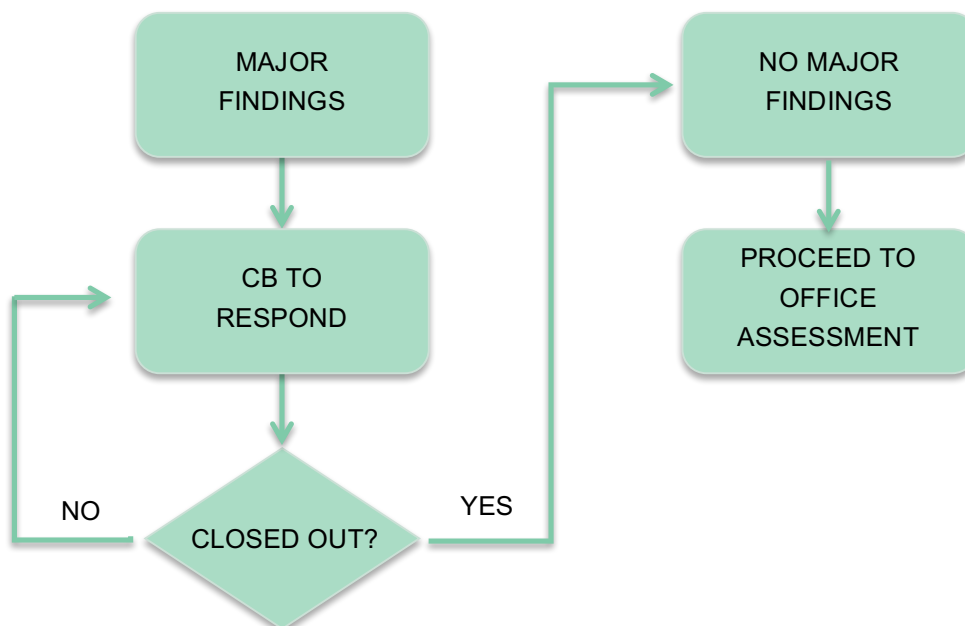
On receipt of the completed Standards checklists from the CB, the designated assessor shall review each of the documents and, if necessary, seek clarification on any issues arising directly with the CB. The assessor shall then prepare a report, *CBAP02 SBP Desk Review Assessment Report*, which shall include any findings (see section 5 for a detailed description of the findings assessment procedure) and a recommendation. The report shall then be submitted to the designated reviewer.

#### 3.2 Step 2: Technical review of report

The designated reviewer undertakes a technical review of the *CBAP02 SBP Desk Review Assessment Report*.

#### 3.3 Step 3: Report findings

Following the technical review, the SBP Approvals Programme Manager issues the report to the CB and the following process adopted. If there are no major findings, or any major findings are closed out, the CB proceeds to the next stage. See section 5 for a detailed description of the findings assessment procedure.





## 4 Office assessment and witness assessment



### 4.1 Step 1: Schedule office assessment and witness assessment

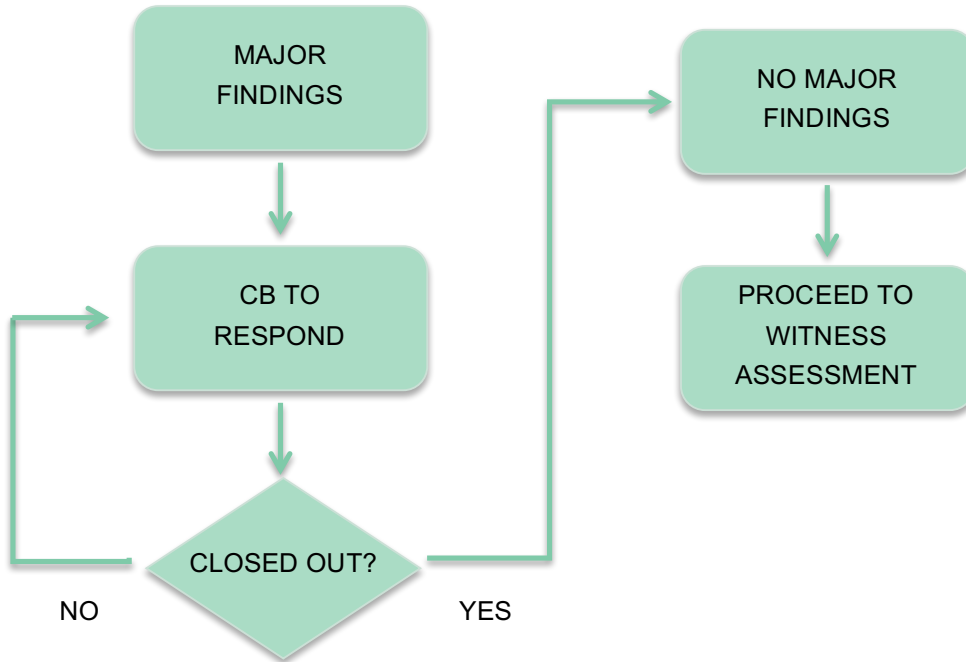
Following a satisfactory desk review report the CB shall progress to the office assessment and witness assessment. The SBP Approvals Programme Manager shall contact the CB to schedule the office assessment and witness assessment. The SBP Approvals Programme Manager shall also send the office assessment agenda, *CBAP03 SBP Office Assessment Agenda*, and witness assessment agenda, *CBAP04 SBP Witness Assessment Agenda*, to the CB.

In parallel, SBP Communications and Information shall notify SBP Stakeholders of the application for SBP certification.

### 4.2 Step 2: Conduct office assessment

The designated assessor shall conduct the office assessment and produce a summary of draft findings (see section 5 for a detailed description of the findings assessment procedure), *CBAP05 SBP Office Assessment Draft Findings Report*, within two (2) working days of the closing assessment meeting. The draft findings are presented to the CB for comment; the CB has five (5) working days to respond to any errors of fact within the summary of draft findings. The assessor shall prepare and complete the final report of findings and a recommendation, *CBAP06 SBP Office Assessment Report*, within thirty (30) days of the closing assessment meeting.

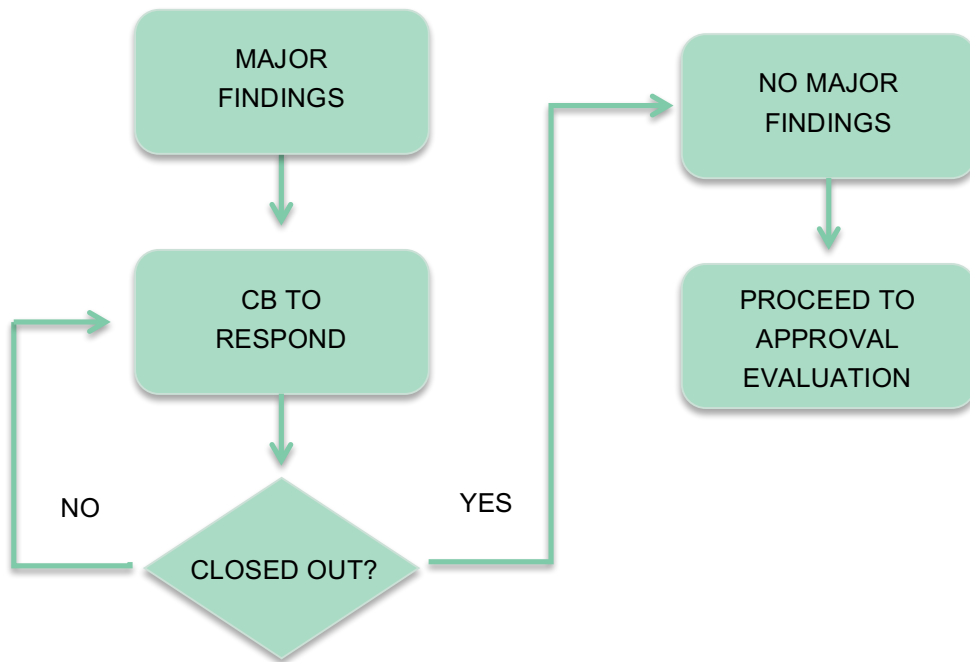
The designated reviewer conducts a technical review of *CBAP06 SBP Office Assessment Report*. Following the technical review, the SBP Approvals Programme Manager issues the report to the CB and the process below is adopted. If there are no major findings, or any major findings are closed out, the CB proceeds to the next stage. See section 5 for a detailed description of the findings assessment procedure.



### 4.3 Step 3: Conduct witness assessment

The designated assessor shall conduct the witness assessment and review the CB’s audit report. The assessor shall produce a summary of draft findings (see section 5 for a detailed description of the findings assessment procedure), *CBAP07 SBP Witness Assessment Draft Findings Report*, within two (2) working days of the closing assessment meeting; note that additional findings may be raised at any time, including after SBP reviews the CB’s final audit report. The draft findings are presented to the CB for comment; the CB has five (5) working days to respond to any errors of fact within the summary of draft findings. The assessor shall prepare and issue the final report of findings and a recommendation, *CBAP08 SBP Witness Assessment Report*, within thirty (30) days of receipt of the CB’s audit report.

The designated reviewer conducts a technical review of *CBAP08 SBP Witness Assessment Report*. Following the independent Technical Committee review the SBP Approvals Programme Manager issues the report to the CB and the following process adopted. See section 5 for a detailed description of the findings assessment procedure.



## 5 Assessment findings

### 5.1 Introduction

During assessments, the designated assessor verifies conformity to the SBP Framework's criteria, and the CB's own processes and procedures. If the assessment evidence determines that there is non-conformity (NC) or potential non-conformity/observation (OBS) against the assessment criteria, then it shall be raised and documented as presented below.

All assessment findings (both NCs and OBS) as well as the timeframe within which the CB must respond shall be presented to the CB at the closing meeting, or as presented below in the event of no closing meeting.

It should be noted that an assessment finding may be identified at any time from objective evidence gathered during the assessment, and/or through objective evidence obtained from a complaint received or other stakeholder comment.

### 5.2 Classification of assessment findings

An NC is a non-fulfilment of a requirement and may be classified according to its severity as either minor or major, for example:

An NC shall be considered **minor** if:

- a) it is a temporary lapse; and
- b) it is unusual/non-systematic; and
- c) the impacts are limited in their extent; and
- d) it does not result in a failure to achieve the objective of the relevant requirement.

An NC shall be considered **major** if:

- a) it continues over a long period of time; or
- b) it is repeated or systematic; or
- c) it affects more than one area and/or causes significant damage; or
- d) it is indicated by the absence or a breakdown of a system; or
- e) it is not corrected or adequately responded to by the CB once identified.

The cumulative impact of a number of minor NCs may represent a failure or breakdown of a system and thus constitute a major NC.

In the event where the designated assessor detects an area of concern, a process, document, or activity that is currently conforming that may, if not improved, result in a non-conforming system, product or service, then it may be recorded as an OBS.

If a total breakdown of a system is detected that constitutes a risk to the credibility of SBP, SBP shall immediately initiate the suspension process.

If a CB receives five (5) or more major NCs within one (1) assessment, SBP shall immediately initiate the suspension process.

## 5.3 Timelines for implementation of corrective action by CBs

### Potential non-conformity (OBS)

An OBS should be evaluated at the next appropriate assessment opportunity within a period of up to twelve (12) months, which may be extended to twenty-four (24) months at which time an OBS should either be closed or upgraded to a NC, if evidence of a NC is identified.

### Minor non-conformities (minor NCs)

In relation to NCs raised prior to a CB's approval, minor NCs identified shall be fully addressed and conformity demonstrated within a period up to twelve (12) months. The minor NCs identified shall be supported by the CB's root cause analysis and corrective action plans in order to be considered for recommendation to the independent Technical Committee. If the CB does not provide the required root cause analysis and corrective action plans within a period of twelve (12) months, the application will be withheld.

Minor NCs identified at surveillance assessments shall be fully addressed and conformity demonstrated within a period up to twelve (12) months. However, the CB may be required to determine the cause of the NC, implement corrective action and demonstrate conformity within a period of less than twelve (12) months if deemed appropriate.

### Major non-conformities (major NCs)

In relation to NCs raised prior to a CB's approval, major NCs identified shall be satisfactorily addressed in order to be considered for recommendation to the independent Technical Committee. If the CB does not satisfactorily address the major NC within a period of twelve (12) months, the application will be withheld.

Major NCs identified during surveillance assessments shall be fully addressed and conformity demonstrated within a period up to three (3) months. However, the CB may be required to determine the cause of the NC, implement corrective action and demonstrate conformity within a period of less than three (3) months if deemed appropriate.

### Suspension

Timelines for suspensions are immediate.

## Corrective action

Timelines for CBs to implement corrective action become effective after the Summary of Findings from either of the Desk Review, Office Assessment, Witness Assessment or Compliance Assessment Report has been sent to the CB.

Extensions of deadlines beyond twelve (12) months for minor NCs and three (3) months for major NCs may only be granted by the SBP Chief Executive Officer if there is a justified reason (for example, complexity of the issue, need for additional information or consultation, or onsite verification, etc). The application for an extension, including a justification, shall be submitted by the CB in writing to the SBP Chief Executive Officer.

## 5.4 Recording of assessment findings

For each assessment finding identified, the following information shall be recorded in the Summary of Findings from either of the Desk Review, Office Assessment, Witness Assessment or Compliance Assessment report:

- . a clear description of the finding;
- . the grading of the finding;
- . the assessment evidence to support the finding;
- . the specific normative reference;
- . a subject which provides a short synopsis of the description of the finding; and
- . the timelines for the CB to determine the cause of the NC and implement corrective action and demonstrate conformity.

## 5.5 Corrective action process

It is prudent to initiate the corrective action process immediately to allow sufficient time for:

- . the CB to determine the cause of the NC;
- . the CB to effectively implement corrective actions against NC(s) raised;
- . the CB to effectively implement preventative actions, if applicable;
- . the CB to verify effectiveness of the actions taken; and
- . the designated assessor to review the CB's response.

The CB must actively demonstrate compliance according to this procedure.

## 5.6 Review of CB action and closing NCs

A variety of methods may be used to close off NCs, including direct examination onsite and remotely. NCs shall be closed if the designated assessor is confident that action taken by the CB is effective in achieving conformity and avoiding recurrence. If the designated assessor is not confident that the action taken by the CB has resolved the NC, the NC cannot be closed and further action is to be initiated by the designated

assessor. Further action may include upgrading the NC, suspension recommendation, or onsite verification assessment scheduled.

Major NCs shall not be downgraded to minor NCs.

NCs can be followed up during an upcoming office assessment, if the assessment is carried out before the deadline of NCs, or within thirty (30) days after the deadline.

## 5.7 Consequences of a continuing non-conformity

If an approved CB does not effectively implement corrective action of a major NC and demonstrate conformity within the required timeframe, SBP shall immediately start the suspension process.

If an approved CB does not effectively implement corrective action of a minor NC and demonstrate conformity within the required time, the NC shall be upgraded to a major NC.

## 6 Approval evaluation



### 6.1 Step 1: Prepare approval evaluation report

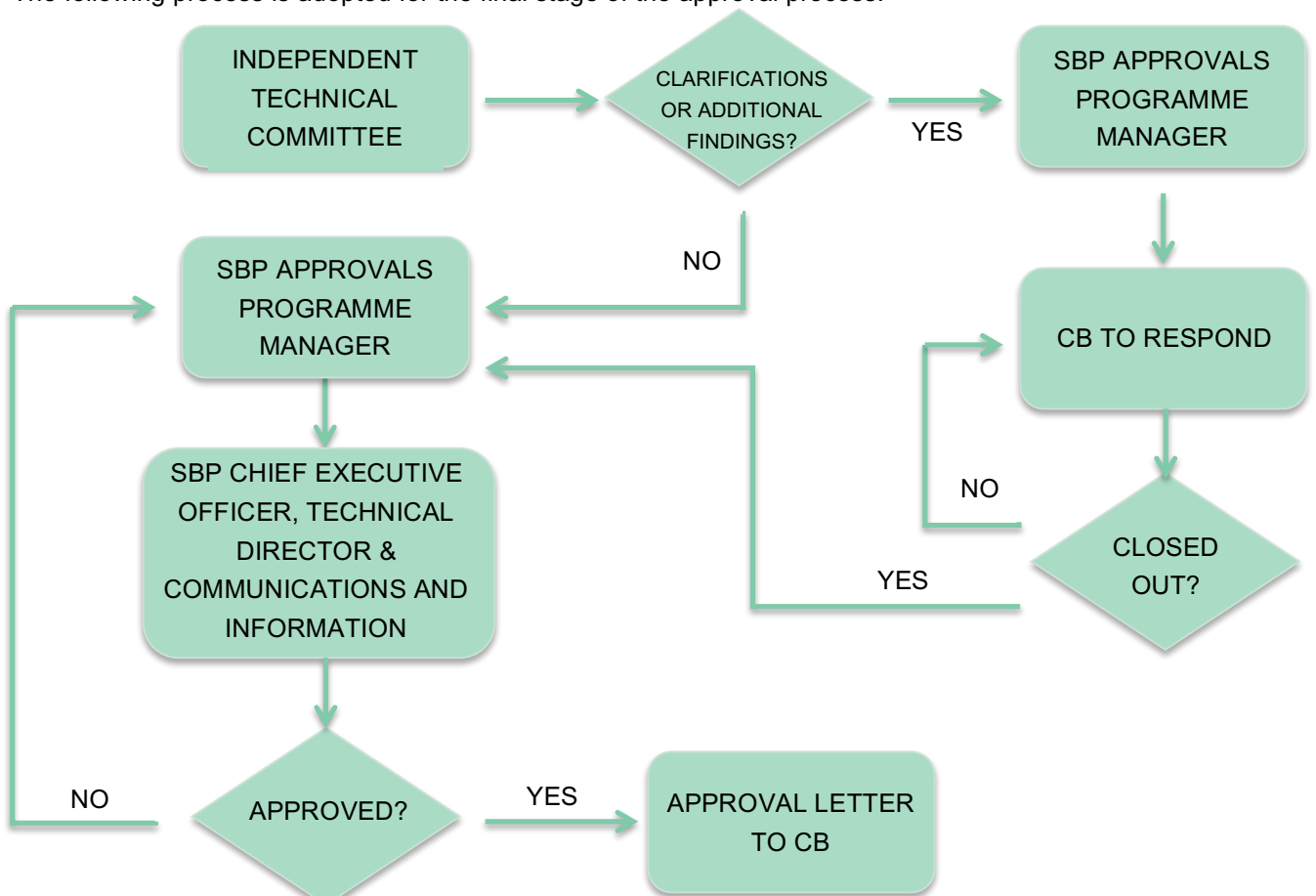
The SBP Approvals Programme Manager assigns those responsible for producing and reviewing the approval evaluation report, *CBAP09 SBP Approval Evaluation Report*. As soon as all the pre-conditions are met the approval evaluation report shall be prepared within thirty (30) days.

### 6.2 Step 2: Review of approval evaluation report

The report is then reviewed and the approval recommendation form, *CBAP10 SBP Approval Recommendation Report*, prepared and presented to the independent Technical Committee. The independent Technical Committee shall review the report and make its recommendation or request further information within ten (10) working days of receipt.

### 6.3 Step 3: Approval

The following process is adopted for the final stage of the approval process:





# Appendix 1: Template letter to applicant CB

Letter to applicant CB (text only)

[Date]

Dear [Name]

I am pleased to inform you that following a review of your application, [Name of CB] has been accepted as an SBP applicant. [Name of CB] may now refer to itself as an “accepted applicant” and may describe itself in the public domain as follows:

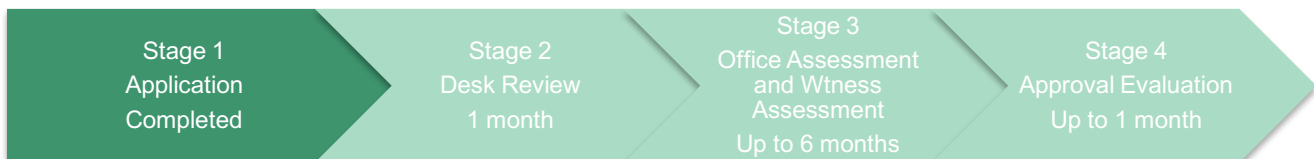
*“[Name of CB] has been accepted as an SBP applicant and is progressing towards SBP-approved status. The technical scope of the application is to cover SBP Standards [insert Standard numbers, e.g. 1 to 6], and the geographic scope is [define geographic scope, e.g. global, Canada and the USA, Latvia, Poland, Russia etc].*

*“As an SBP applicant [Name of CB] is able to audit Biomass Producers, but is not able to issue an SBP certificate until SBP-approved status is attained (which is not guaranteed). If, during the course of the SBP approval process, significant material concerns or findings are raised the Biomass Producer audit may need to be repeated.”*

The following SBP Standards and General Management System checklists are attached and should be completed at your earliest convenience:

- *SBP-CHK-01-V1.0-Feedstock Compliance Standard*
- *SBP-CHK-02-V1.0-Verification of SBP-compliant Feedstock*
- *SBP-CHK-03-V1.0-Requirements for Certification Bodies*
- *SBP-CHK-04-V1.0-Chain of Custody*
- *SBP-CHK-05-V1.0-Collection and Communication of Data*
- *SBP-CHK-06-V1.0-Energy and Carbon Balance Calculation*
- *SBP-CHK-07-V1.0-General Management System*

The remaining stages of the approvals process, along with guidance on timings, are outlined below. Please note progress to each of the stages can only be made once all the pre-conditions have been met, for example, all relevant documents have been received by SBP, any major non-conformities closed out etc. Timings should be treated as guidance only, recognising that scheduling of audits involves a number of parties.



I look forward to working through the approvals process with you, and if you have any queries about the process please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

SBP Approvals Programme Manager

## Appendix 2: Supporting documents

- *CBAP01 SBP Application Review v1.0*
- *CBAP02 SBP Desk Review Assessment Report v1.0*
- *CBAP03 SBP Office Assessment Agenda v1.0*
- *CBAP04 SBP Witness Assessment Agenda v1.0*
- *CBAP05 SBP Office Assessment Draft Findings Report v1.0*
- *CBAP06 SBP Office Assessment Report v1.0*
- *CBAP07 SBP Witness Assessment Draft Findings Report v1.0*
- *CBAP08 SBP Office Assessment Report v1.0*
- *CBAP09 SBP Approval Evaluation Report v1.0*
- *CBAP10 SBP Approval Recommendation Report v1.1*
- *SBP/CB Agreement v1*
- *SBP Trade Mark Licence Agreement v2*
- *SBP-CHK-01-V1.0-Feedstock Compliance Standard*
- *SBP-CHK-02-V1.0-Verification of SBP-compliant Feedstock*
- *SBP-CHK-03-V1.0-Requirements for Certification Bodies*
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- *SBP-CHK-06-V1.0-Energy and Carbon Balance Calculation*
- *SBP-CHK-07-V1.0-General Management System*