

SBP

Sustainable Biomass Partnership

SBP Framework Certification Body Approval Application Process



Version 1.0 May 2015

Adapted from Reference Source: *ASI Accreditation Procedure. ASI-PRO-20-101- Accreditation-V4.0*

For further information on the SBP Framework and to view the full set of documentation see
www.sustainablebiomasspartnership.org

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1 Purpose and scope

- 1.1 Within 12 months, SBP intends that Certification Bodies (CBs) offering SBP certification will be accredited by accreditation bodies. In the interim, SBP is offering an approval process.
- 1.2 This document sets out the SBP process that is to be followed for CBs to be permitted to offer SBP certification services.
- 1.3 There is currently no application cost for SBP approval, but SBP retains the right to charge a cost for application and other services including training and use of the SBP trade marks.
- 1.4 This procedure specifies the process to be followed by CBs. It also covers approval processes such as scope extension and reduction, suspension and withdrawal of approval, as well as transfer of approval.

2 General approval requirements

- 2.1 The requirements for approval are defined in the normative documents of the SBP certification scheme and SBP's approval requirements, including the SBP CB Approval Agreement.
- 2.2 SBP shall not rely solely upon the results of accreditation issued by accreditation bodies. SBP may consider the results of independent assessments of CB conformity against relevant standards, but shall not be bound by the findings of other accreditation bodies.

3 Generic application requirements

- 3.1 Information about the SBP application process, including the application form, is available from the SBP.
- 3.2 The applicant CB shall be a legal entity that performs conformity assessment services.
- 3.3 The applicant CB shall complete the application form in English and submit it to SBP. Application documents, as requested in the application form, should be in English. SBP does not accept application documents in other languages.
- 3.4 SBP shall screen the form and other relevant application documents for completeness. Incomplete application forms may be rejected.
- 3.5 The applicant CB shall not advertise their status as an “SBP applicant CB” before acceptance of the CB application has been confirmed by SBP.
- 3.6 SBP lists accepted applicant CBs on the SBP website.
- 3.7 The applicant CB shall not issue any certificates until approval has been granted and the approval certificate received (section 5).

4 Application stages

The application stages are as follows:

- Initial application and document review;
- CB scheme specific SBP procedures;
- Lead auditor and technical reviewer demonstration of technical competence;
- Witness assessment;
- Initial audit report review; and
- Decision by SBP Technical Committee.

4.1 Initial application and document review

- 4.1.1 The CB submits a completed application form to SBP. The CB is required to provide evidence that it meets the SBP requirements regarding existing accreditations. The CB shall also demonstrate that it has sufficient resources and competence to manage the certification program, and specifically the technical and geographical scopes applied for.
- 4.1.2 Upon receipt of the completed forms and corresponding documentation SBP shall assign the application to an SBP assessor who will conduct a review of the applicant CB's application. The CB may be required to respond to requests of clarification, information, etc. which may prolong the review.
- 4.1.3 The applicant CB shall respond to any requests for clarification, additional documents, information within the timeframes indicated by SBP. If the applicant CB does not respond to SBP within three months, SBP shall send a reminder. If the CB does not satisfactorily respond within 30 days, SBP shall withdraw the application.
- 4.1.4 Based on the application review conducted by SBP, the applicant CB shall be sent the findings of the assessment. SBP may request additional information.
- 4.1.5 When the document review is deemed complete by SBP, SBP will request that the CB submit its SBP specific scheme procedures to SBP.

4.2 CB scheme specific SBP procedures

- 4.2.1 The CB is required to submit procedures to SBP to demonstrate a competent understanding of SBP procedures and that the CB shall operate the SBP certification scheme in compliance with SBP's procedures.
- 4.2.2 Upon receipt of the completed forms and corresponding documentation SBP shall assign the application to an SBP assessor who will conduct a review of the applicant CB's application. The CB may be required to respond to requests of clarification, information, etc. which may prolong the review.
- 4.2.3 The applicant CB shall respond to any requests for clarification, additional documents, information, and nonconformities raised within the timeframes indicated by SBP. If the

applicant CB does not respond to SBP within three months, SBP shall send a reminder. If the CB does not satisfactorily respond within 30 days, SBP shall withdraw the application.

4.2.4 Based on the review of procedures conducted by SBP, the applicant CB shall be sent the findings of the assessment. SBP may request additional information.

4.2.5 When the review of procedures is deemed complete by SBP, SBP will plan a witness audit of the CB audit at a SBP certification applicant.

4.2.6 A witness assessment will be required for each technical scope applied for by the CB, namely Chain of Custody certification and Biomass Producer certification if this includes a Supply Base Evaluation.

4.3 Lead auditor and technical reviewer demonstration of technical competence

4.3.1 CBs will be required to demonstrate that each SBP approved lead auditor and SBP certification decision maker is competent. Competence will include demonstration of technical understanding of SBP requirements.

4.3.2 SBP shall require that SBP lead auditors and technical reviewers attend SBP approved training.

4.3.3 SBP shall determine the competence of SBP lead auditors and technical reviewers through successful completion of an SBP technical test.

4.3.4 SBP shall retain a list of approved lead auditors and technical reviewers. Only individuals on the SBP approved list may perform SBP lead auditor and technical reviewer roles.

4.3.5 SBP may require ongoing training in order to retain SBP approval for lead auditors and technical reviewers. Any changes in requirements will be communicated to CBs in a timely manner and SBP will provide adequate time for CBs to implement such requirements.

4.4 Witness assessment

4.4.1 The CB is required to demonstrate compliance with SBP requirements including competence in planning and performing audits. SBP will witness an initial certification audit in determining this compliance.

4.4.2 The CB will provide evidence that it meets the SBP requirements in planning and executing the audit, including audit plans, training records of auditors and other documents requested by SBP.

4.4.3 Based on the witness assessment conducted by SBP, the applicant CB shall be sent an assessment report including the findings of the assessment. The report may request additional information.

4.5 Initial audit report review

- 4.5.1 The CB shall submit the initial audit report from all audits performed as an SBP-approved CB (i.e. all initial audits performed prior to accreditation), before an SBP certificate may be issued by the CB.
- 4.5.2 With submission of the first initial audit report by the CB, SBP shall send the SBP/CB approval agreement to the CB which shall be printed in two copies, signed by the CB, and sent back to SBP for countersignature.
- 4.5.3 Upon receipt of the audit report SBP shall assign an SBP assessor who will conduct a review of the report. The CB may be required to respond to requests of clarification, information, etc. which may prolong the review.
- 4.5.4 The applicant CB shall respond to any requests for clarification, additional documents, information, and nonconformities raised within the timeframes indicated by SBP. If the applicant CB does not respond to SBP within three months, SBP shall send a reminder. If the CB does not satisfactorily respond within 30 days, SBP shall withdraw the application.
- 4.5.5 Based on the review of the audit report conducted by SBP, the applicant CB shall be sent an assessment report of the audit report including the findings of the assessment. The report may request additional information.

4.6 Decision by SBP Technical Committee

- 4.6.1 When the application process, including a satisfactory initial audit report, is deemed successfully completed by the SBP assessor, the SBP assessor will compile the assessment reports from the CB approval process and make an approval recommendation to the SBP Technical Committee.
- 4.6.2 SBP may determine that the approval process will be strengthened by peer review or input from technical experts with specific knowledge relevant to the audit process. In such cases, and at its sole discretion SBP, may engage experts or peer reviewers to provide a professional judgement of the CB audit report and any other relevant documentation in a report. The report will be provided to the Technical Committee. Technical experts and peer reviewers will be required to agree to non-disclosure requirements specified by SBP.
- 4.6.3 The SBP Technical Committee will make an approval decision for applicant CBs and for all applicant certificate holders.
- 4.6.4 The SBP Technical Committee will make an approval decision based on the recommendation from the SBP assessor, documents submitted by the CB and technical expert and peer reviews (if appropriate) and any other evidence that the Technical Committee may request.
- 4.6.5 The SBP Technical Committee decision shall be communicated to the SBP Executive Director (ED) for a final decision. If the Technical Committee or ED decides against

approval, SBP shall notify the CB in writing of the basis of the decision and any next steps on the part of the applicant.

- 4.6.6 SBP shall submit its approval decision to the CB after the submission of the approval decision by the Technical Committee.
- 4.6.7 CBs shall not issue a certificate to an applicant certificate holder until they receive confirmation from SBP of approval of the applicant certificate holder.

5 Granting of approval

- 5.1 When approval is granted to an applicant CB, SBP shall issue a certificate of approval including the geographic and technical scope, and allow use of the SBP trade mark, subject to agreement with any trade mark requirements specified by SBP.
- 5.2 The CB shall only carry out conformity assessment services within their approved geographic and technical scope. The CB shall also ensure that all certificate holder activities and sites are covered by the CB's geographic and technical scope.
- 5.3 SBP shall update the list of approved CBs on SBP's website.

6 General requirements for SBP witness assessments

- 6.1 The following requirements are applicable to all types of witness assessments.
- 6.2 The assessor or team leader, if the assessment will be conducted by a team, assigned to conduct the assessment will inform the CB about the type of the assessment and the identity of the SBP assessment team, including technical expert and requirements for interpretation if needed.
- 6.3 The CB may submit an objection in writing concerning any SBP assessment team member, specifying the justified reasons for the objection. SBP shall review the objection, and may propose another person to the assessment team if the objection is deemed justified.
- 6.4 The assessor may request details on logistical arrangements, and any other information required of the CB to carry out the assessment process. SBP plans to announce all witness assessments and initial on the SBP website.
- 6.5 For each assessment, the assessor shall:
 - 6.5.1 Send a summary of findings report to the CB;
 - 6.5.2 Invite the CB to point out any error of fact that may be contained in the summary of findings report;
 - 6.5.3 Address any errors of fact raised by the CB in the assessment report;
 - 6.5.4 Send the assessment report for SBP internal technical review and sign off; and
 - 6.5.5 Send the final assessment report to the CB.
- 6.6 SBP may publish assessment and approval reports or parts of it on the SBP website.
- 6.7 The CB shall have enforceable arrangements with affiliate offices, subcontractors, applicants and certificate holders to ensure SBP access to the premises of the aforementioned entities as well as access to confidential information.

7 Office assessment

- 7.1 SBP retains the right to conduct an onsite office assessment as part of the approval process, both at application stage and to maintain approval.

8 Surveillance

- 8.1 SBP retains the right to undertake surveillance assessments including document review, office assessment, witness assessments, spot audits of certification bodies and compliance audits of certificate holders.

9 Extension or reduction of approval scopes

- 9.1 The CB shall submit the approval application form indicating a proposed change in scope.
- 9.2 SBP shall appoint an assessor to review the application of extension of scope.
- 9.3 The extension of scope process will be based on the application process.
- 9.4 A CB may voluntarily reduce its approval for all or for parts of its scope of approval by notifying SBP. The consequences of a reduction in scope are similar as for a termination (see below).
- 9.5 CBs that voluntarily reduce their scope of approval may re-apply for the extension of the scope of approval at any time.
- 9.6 Changes in scope will be confirmed by the SBP Executive Director.

10 Suspension, withdrawal or termination

- 10.1 Any of the following reasons are considered grounds for suspension upon which the suspension process shall be immediately initiated:
- 10.1.1 Detection of a total breakdown of a system that constitutes a risk to the credibility of SBP;
 - 10.1.2 Inability or unwillingness to comply with requests for information, reports, and records that SBP deems necessary to determine continued conformity of a CB with approval requirements;
 - 10.1.3 Failure to comply with a request to undergo an SBP assessment; or
 - 10.1.4 Failure to meet a requirement for approval, including reduction in scope or suspensions of a relevant accreditation by another accreditation body.
- 10.2 Suspension of approval places restrictions on a CB's ability to continue to offer and provide approved certification. Suspension can be for the full scope of approval of the CB or for a part of the scope. The CB shall:
- 10.2.1 Not enter into new agreements for certification or perform initial certification services; and
 - 10.2.2 Continue to conduct surveillance audits for existing clients during the period of suspension.
- 10.3 Conduct of re-certification and/or completion of initial certification services started prior to, or planned to be undertaken after, the effective date of a suspension shall be subject to explicit written approval by SBP, where there are no requirements to cover this circumstance within the certification scheme requirements.
- 10.4 A suspended CB shall remain liable for all legal, financial, direct and contingent obligations.
- 10.5 Suspension and withdrawal of approval are initiated by formal action of the SBP Executive Director (ED) after receipt of a suspension or withdrawal decision by the SBP Technical Committee. The CB shall be informed of this decision, including:
- 10.5.1 The grounds for, and scope of the decision;
 - 10.5.2 The effective date of suspension or withdrawal;
 - 10.5.3 The associated limitations and restrictions to be observed by the CB;
 - 10.5.4 SBP's suspension/withdrawal report; and
 - 10.5.5 In the case of a suspension decision:
 - a) The suspension duration including the date by which the grounds for the suspension shall be addressed by the CB;

- b) The consequences of failing to fully address the grounds for the suspension within the suspension period; and
 - c) The measures SBP will follow to verify conformance in order to revoke the suspension.
- 10.6 Following suspension, SBP shall inform the relevant CB of the suspension decision including grounds for suspension. SBP reserves the right to make broader market notification of suspension when considered appropriate in SBP's sole discretion.
- 10.7 The period of suspension shall not exceed six months unless specifically authorised by the ED. Failure to demonstrate closing of all major nonconformities or to remedy the causes of suspension within the specified time period shall lead to withdrawal of approval.
- 10.8 Reasons for immediate withdrawal may include:
 - 10.8.1 Breach of the approval agreement;
 - 10.8.2 Discrediting or damaging the reputation of SBP and/or its associated organisations;
 - 10.8.3 Liquidation, or filing for bankruptcy or other actions leading to closure of the CB as an operating business; or
 - 10.8.4 Misrepresentation of information to show conformity of the CB with SBP or scheme requirements.
- 10.9 Both parties may terminate approval following provisions specified in the approval agreement.
- 10.10 Following withdrawal or termination of approval:
 - 10.10.1 The CB shall within five days inform all their subcontractors, affiliates, partners, and clients in writing of the withdrawal or termination of approval and its related implications;
 - 10.10.2 The CB shall provide SBP evidence of having contacted all subcontractors, affiliates, partners and clients within five days;
 - 10.10.3 The CB shall immediately cease making reference to its approved status;
 - 10.10.4 The CB shall immediately cease using the SBP trademark in any form;
 - 10.10.5 The CB shall return the approval certificate to SBP;
 - 10.10.6 Reports, records, files and documents in the possession of SBP of the CB shall remain the property of SBP.
- 10.11 SBP shall send a notification to all other accredited CBs and reserves the right to make broader market notification of withdrawal of approval when considered appropriate in SBP's sole discretion.

- 10.12 Certificates of a CB issued at time of withdrawal or termination may remain valid for a period of 90 days, subject to confirmation by SBP, following termination/withdrawal date to permit certificate holders to enter into an agreement with another accredited CB. The ED may choose to extend the transition period, during which SBP may act as the direct contact point for the certificate holder.
- 10.13 The lifting of suspension shall occur by formal action of the ED after receipt of a decision by the SBP Technical Committee.
- 10.14 SBP shall send a notification of the lifting of suspension to all other accredited CBs.
- 10.15 SBP shall make the necessary updates to its website.
- 10.16 Following withdrawal or termination, approval shall be granted only after the CB has again successfully completed both the application process and the initial approval process.
- 10.17 SBP may choose not to accept re-application of a CB that had its approval withdrawn, or a new entity staffed with personnel associated with a CB that had its approval withdrawn.
- 10.18 A record of suspensions and withdrawals of approval shall be maintained on the SBP website. The name and location of each CB whose approval has been suspended partially or entirely, or withdrawn shall be posted with the effective date(s) and explanation(s) of why the CB's approval has been suspended or withdrawn.

11 Transfer of approval

11.1 Transfer of approval to another CB is not permitted.