

Interested Parties Committee

1 Purpose

This document outlines the process of involving the Interested Parties Committee, where appropriate, on issues related to the Quality Assessment Division (QAD) accreditation activities.

2 Scope

The provisions of this document apply to the Interested Parties Committee.

3 References

The following referenced documents are used for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

QAD 1201 Form: *Standard Record Header*

QAD 1212 Procedure: *Control of Documents and Records*

4 Definitions

For the purposes of this document, the definitions outlined below apply.

4.1 Accreditation Body Category: a person from an organization who provides accreditation services.

4.2 Certification Body Category: a person from an organization who provides certification services. The certification body is not one accredited under the USDA ISO/IEC 17065 Program.

4.3 Federal/State Government Category: a person from the Federal or State Government who is involved in audit and/or accreditation services.

4.4 Industry Category: a person from the agricultural industry who provides a service to that industry, such as a consultant or an auditing firm.

4.5 Interested Parties: Persons with direct or indirect interest in the QAD's accreditation activities.

4.6 Producer/Processor Category: a person who represents the interests of the types of suppliers for organics. The person may be a crop producer, wild crop producer, livestock producer, or a handler/processor.

4.7 Stakeholders: Persons involved in or affected by a course of action related to the QAD's accreditation activities.

5 Responsibilities



- 5.1** The QAD Branch Chief is responsible for selecting members of the Committee.
- 5.2** The Quality Manager is responsible for ensuring the list of members is up-to-date.
- 5.3** The Program Manager and/or Quality Manager is responsible for involving the Committee.
- 5.4** The Program Manager is responsible for maintaining records of Committee comments.
- 5.5** The Committee is responsible for the following:
- a) Assisting the Division to identify, analyze, and document QAD relationships with related bodies to determine the potential conflict of interest, whether they arise from within the Division or from the activities of the related bodies.
 - b) Providing comment on the formulation of procedures and guidance documents relating to the QAD's accreditation activities that directly affect certification bodies and/or are related to any changes in requirements for accreditation.
 - c) Providing comment on proposed changes relating to the QAD's accreditation activities that directly affect certification bodies and/or are related to any changes in requirements for accreditation.
- 5.6** The Interested Parties Committee is not involved in decisions of accreditation or program approval.

6 Interested Parties Committee Members

- 6.1** Members of the Committee may not be from a certification body accredited by the QAD. The QAD requests comments directly from certification bodies, independent of the Interested Parties Committee.
- 6.2** Any interested party may ask to participate on the Committee, including those from a category not identified within 6.4.
- 6.3** Members are appointed by the Chief on the basis of ensuring a balanced representation of interested parties with no single party predominating. Total membership of the Committee is limited to ensure operational effectiveness.
- 6.4** Representation must be from the following categories, at a minimum: industry, federal/state government, accreditation bodies, certification bodies, and producer/processor.
- 6.5** Members are appointed for a term of three years and are eligible for reappointment for two additional terms.



6.6 When a member resigns before the end of his/her term and is replaced by a new member, the new member serves until the end of his/her predecessor's term of office. However, if it is for a period of one year or less, then it does not count toward the three-term limit.

6.7 Members may be removed by the Branch Chief on the basis of participation and/or lack of expertise that complements that of current membership.

6.8 Once appointed, members are placed in the table for *Interested Parties Committee* and can be found on the QAD server. Information for each member is included, as outlined in the table. The list is updated yearly to track term limits.

6.9 When a member reaches his/her term limit, resigns, or is removed, the table for Interested Parties Committee is updated.

7 General Requirements

7.1 The Program Manager requests the involvement of the Committee to identify, analyze, and document QAD relationships with related bodies to determine the potential conflict of interest, whether they arise from within the Division or from the activities of the related bodies.

7.2 The Program Manager requests comments from the Committee during the formulation of or proposed changes to procedures and guidance documents relating to the QAD's accreditation activities, including QAD 1000 Procedure, the specific Program procedures, and related guidance documents, where appropriate.

7.3 The Quality Manager requests comments from the Committee during the formulation of policies and procedures of the quality management system, where appropriate.

7.4 Requests for comments are made via email.

7.5 The comment period timeframe should be at least 30 days.

7.6 Comments may be received in any format, although written comments are preferred.

7.7 Comments are recorded using QAD 1201 Form. Comments from multiple members regarding the same subject should be maintained in the same record.

7.8 The Program Manager and/or Quality Manager review the comments and take them into account before deciding on the precise form and effective date of any changes.

8 Records


8.1 Records of comments are maintained in accordance with QAD 1212 Procedure.

8.2 Comment records are maintained on the QAD Server in the appropriate program folder.

8.3 The file name of each comment record consists of the following:

- a) IP Comments
- b) (Subject)
- c) The calendar date (MMDDYY) that the record was closed.

Example: IP Comments (QAD 1000 Procedure) 090119



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