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Quality Assurance For Certifying Industry Partners

Document: JIC-005

Approved: June 10, 2009

Joint
Industry
Committee

Acknowledgements

Members of the Joint Industry Committee are listed on the cover. They are acknowledged for their commitment to improving workplace health and safety in Saskatchewan, their dedication to the process of collaboration, and their valuable contributions in the development of this resource for building voluntary, effective safety management systems.

Preface

The Joint Industry Committee (JIC) is comprised of the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board, Ministry of Advanced Education Employment and Labour, Occupational Health and Safety and voluntary safety leaders representing a variety of industry rate codes. Through this committee, various industries voluntarily promote effective health and safety programs and certification standards with the expectation of increased industry and employer participation in these fields. Such increased industry and employer participation will lead to significant and sustained injury reduction for Saskatchewan employers and employees.

This document broadly describes the agreed-upon elements and sub-elements of an effective quality assurance process for a 3rd party quality assurance program in assessing Certifying Industry Partners (CIP). The purpose of this document is to provide framework elements and sub-elements for the development of a quality assurance program and its supporting auditing process between the Certifying Industry Partner and a 3rd party administrator.

NOTE:

- Supporting background information about safety programs can be referenced in documents JIC-002-1.1, JIC-002-1.2, JIC-002-1.3.
- Supporting background information about safety program audits can be referenced in documents JIC-002-2.1, JIC-002-2.2, JIC-002-2.3.
- Supporting background information about safety program certification and quality assurance can be referenced in document JIC-002-3.1.
- Detailed explanations with supporting information can be referenced in document JIC-002-3.2.
- Employers and employees should be aware of all pertinent health and safety legislation applicable to their operations. For example, a provincially regulated Saskatchewan employer should refer to the *Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993, Section 13* and the *Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 1996, Section 22*.

Elements of Effective Quality Assurance for Certifying Industry Partners

- A Objective & Scope
- B Auditor Skill Requirement
- C Auditor Non-Conformance
- D Auditee Non-Conformance
- E Audit Document Selection
- F Process Control for Audits
- G Audit Score
- H Audit Approvals
- I Audit & Certification Review Process
- J Certification Length
- K Temporary Certification
- L Equivalency & Reciprocity
- M Certification Maintenance
- N Change Management
- O System Complaints
- P Certifying Industry Partner

A 3rd party administrator recognizing certification issued by a Certified Industry Partner against the JIC's Framework of Standards will establish and maintain a certification quality assurance program of the above elements.

A – Objective & Scope

Introduction:

By first outlining the *Objectives and Scope* of the quality assurance process for CIPs, the 3rd party administrator can openly and transparently express the guidelines from which they will objectively assess and measure the CIP. This quality assurance process and development of a supporting auditing tool will confirm the CIP is executing all of the necessary requirements and standards set-out in the JIC documents in the operation of an effective certification program. An effective and consistent process will aid in the administration and ongoing improvement of the certification process in Saskatchewan and clearly outline what is expected of the CIP issuing certification.

Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Objectives and Scope*. The element of *Objectives and Scope* within the scope of a 3rd party quality assurance program will assess:

1. The policy, outlining that the CIP abides within the JIC framework of standards for programs, audits and certifications;
2. The commonly used terms contained within the certification program of the CIP; and
3. A defined method of administering the quality assurance program, including items such as audit reviews and use of audit protocol.

B – Auditor Skill Requirement

Introduction:

A value-added certification of a health and safety management program hinges on the objective findings of the audit. The quality assurance program will, therefore, need to assess and confirm the CIP is developing, supporting and maintaining the skill requirements of those conducting audits on behalf of the CIP.

Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Auditor Skill Requirement*. The element of *Auditor Skill Requirement* within a 3rd party quality assurance program will assess:

1. The process for training, certification, testing and selection of auditors and includes:
 - a. the industry accepted training to meet the knowledge requirements of the CIP including the requirement for practical demonstration of acquired knowledge; and
 - b. the selection and certification of auditors including training and other industry specific requirements;
2. The process to ensure the minimum requirements for audit knowledge related to audit standards, protocol, and the industry in which the audit will be conducted, including but not limited to report writing and interviewing skills, basic knowledge of industry practices and procedures, observation and analytical skills; and
3. The process to ensure the minimum requirement for experience, including any combination of practical and/or theoretical requirements are determined and maintained by the CIP.

C – Auditor Non-Conformance

Introduction:

As discussed previously, certification will hinge on the objective findings of the audit. Because of the importance of objective audits, the quality assurance program needs to assess how the CIP is effectively and objectively addressing issues of *Auditor Non-Conformity* within its certification process.

Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Auditor Non-Conformity*. The element of *Auditor Non-Conformity* within the 3rd party quality assurance program will assess:

1. The position and processes of the CIP relating to conflict of interest on the part of the auditor, including, but not limited to:
 - a. auditor inability to gain financially according to the audit findings;
 - b. auditor inability to audit programs they have developed; and
 - c. the confidentiality of audit findings;
2. The code of ethics for auditors that establishes a baseline for objectivity, fairness, and sound judgment of auditors;
3. The process used by the CIP to effectively address breaches of ethics including:
 - a. the requirements for reporting breaches of ethics including the requirements for reports in writing, supported by documentation and within an established time frame;
 - b. the investigation process used by the CIP that is based on potential severity;
 - c. the disciplinary actions used by the CIP; and
 - d. the follow up and notification to affected parties;

4. The process used by the CIP to effectively address appeals including items such as:
 - a. the prescribed method and the parties to receive an appeal;
 - b. the time frame of appeals for which auditors may file and/or respond;
 - c. the third party that will hear and review the appeal;
 - d. the notification to affected parties that an appeal has been filed; and
 - e. the notification to affected parties of the appeal results.

D – Auditee Non-Conformance

Introduction:

The auditee refers to the organization seeking certification. As organizations seek to obtain and maintain certification, the CIP will have a number of requirements and processes to address these issues. Within the 3rd party quality assurance program there is a need to assess and confirm the CIP has and is meeting its requirements and processes to support its auditees.

Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Auditee Non-Conformity*. The element of *Auditee Non-Conformity* within the 3rd party quality assurance program will assess:

1. The process that will initiate the review of the health and safety program;
2. The scope of the review including items such as:
 - a. the review for quality assurance of completed audits; and
 - b. the defined administrative process; and
3. The minimum requirements for acceptance of audits.

E – Audit Document Selection

Introduction:

While there are a variety of audit tools and criteria available, each audit tool is designed for a specific purpose, industry, or standard. The element of *Audit Document Selection* will enable the CIP to outline the audit tool(s) that are acceptable to the CIP for certification purposes. The 3rd party quality assurance program will require assessment and confirmation the audit document(s) meets the minimum requirements of the JIC.

Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Audit Document Selection*. The element of *Audit Document Selection* within the 3rd party quality assurance program will assess:

1. The requirement for the audit document(s) to meet the Joint Industry Committee's framework of standards for safety programs and audits; and
2. The requirement of the audit document to be recognized by the specific industry in which the certification is sought.

F – Process Control for Audits

Introduction:

Clear communication between the CIP and the organizations seeking certification is an important aspect of any certification program. Within the scope of the 3rd party quality assurance program it is required an assessment and confirmation of the CIP's processes is determined.

Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Process Control for Audits*. The element of *Process Control for Audits* within the 3rd party quality assurance program will assess:

1. The CIP's process to determine companies eligible for certification;
2. The adherence to the pre-requisites for certifying audits including the requirement to complete and pass a self-assessment;
3. The CIP's process to accept and schedule requests for audits;
4. The selection process for auditors, based on *Auditor Skill Requirement*;
5. The process for post-audit follow up including timelines and;
 - a. the process used for review that addresses both passed and failed audits;
 - b. the process used for contacting the auditee; and
 - c. the process used for following up with companies where there has been regulatory issues resulting in fines and convictions levied by the MAEEL.

G – Audit Score

Introduction:

Certification of health and safety programs seeks a quantified measurement of the health and safety program implementation and essentially assigns value. It is with this value that an organization can determine areas of priority for program improvements. When developing and issuing certification, CIPs will need to establish the requirements for *Audit Score*. The scoring can assist with a balanced approach to the evaluation. The element of *Audit Score* will ensure that all certification programs are using similar criteria. Within the 3rd party quality assurance process assessment and confirmation of this area is required to ensure consistency in audit scoring protocol across all certification programs.

Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Audit Score*.

The element of *Audit Score* within the 3rd party quality assurance program will assess that the CIP is awarding certification by applying a consistent auditing scoring system based on:

1. A minimum overall audit score of 80%;
2. A minimum score by element of 50%;
3. A minimum technique of weighting as;
 - a. 20% of total score for verification through documentation review;
 - b. 20% of total score for verification through observation; and
 - c. 20% of total score for verification through interview; and
4. The process for addressing certification audits that do not meet standards including, but not limited to, audit protocols, guidelines, and representative samples.

H – Audit Approvals

Introduction:

Establishing and clearly communicating how certifying audits are approved will enable companies seeking certification to understand the administrative nature and quality assurance processes of the CIP. The development of audit approval information is, therefore, a critical area of assessment and confirmation within the 3rd party quality assurance program to ensure the effectiveness of the processes and methods used to address this area for companies seeking certification.

Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Audit Approvals*. The element of *Audit Approvals* within the 3rd party quality assurance program will assess:

1. The process of how audit submissions are to be made to the CIP including who, where and when audits are to be submitted;
2. The process that addresses timelines for corrective action to improve the health and safety program, and limited scope audits; and
3. The process for review of completed audits including:
 - a. conformity to audit protocol and quality assurance;
 - b. parallels between both qualitative and quantitative measures;
 - c. identification of areas for improvement; and
 - d. parallels between scoring and auditor comments.

I – Audit & Certification Review Process

Introduction:

While many different mechanisms are put in place by the CIP to issue certification in a fair and objective manner, there can be issues around how the quality assurance is administered. The CIP needs to have an objective way to deal with the review of audits and certifications should the need arise. By doing so, the credibility of the certification will remain intact, as there will exist transparency in the review process. Within the scope of the 3rd party quality assurance program it is essential an assessment and confirmation of the effectiveness of the CIPs process is determined.

Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Audit and Certification Review Process*. The element of *Audit and Certification Review Process* within the 3rd party quality assurance program will assess:

1. The policies defining the roles and responsibilities of the members responsible for the review;
2. The policies and process for selection of members responsible for the review including the third party nature of the review and will include the inability of staff of the CIP to be included when they are involved in the dispute;
3. The policies defining requirement for submissions calling for review are to be in writing and supported by documentation; and
4. The process to disclose the results of findings to affected parties.

J – Certification Length

Introduction:

The length of the certification will vary due to a variety of reasons including company acquisitions, mergers, and equivalencies with outside certifications. What is important to both the company seeking certification and the CIP is that a clearly defined process exists on the part of the CIP that adequately addresses the different types of issues that can exist with issuance of certification. It is equally important that companies seeking certification can readily understand the standards set forth by the CIP. The element of *Certification Length* within the scope of a 3rd party quality assurance program must then be assessed.

Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Certification Length*.

The element of *Certification Length* within the 3rd party quality assurance program will assess:

1. The standards and practices for issuance of certification including its definition, the standard field audit time, report writing, and submission requirements;
2. The administration process for issuance;
3. The typical expiry date for certification including annual program review and annual audits with an external audit every three years in circumstances where reciprocity to other CIPs is desired;
4. Any special or out-of-province considerations for issuance including agreements between industries and provinces for auditing, standards, policy, sampling and issuing certifications;
5. The defined process of when audits are required outside the regular audit cycle including issues such as fatalities, regulatory issues and when the effectiveness of the management system is called into question;
6. The process used by the CIP to limit timelines of certification including items such as definitions, critical timelines, and audit cycle reviews;
7. The defined exemptions or exceptions that can be made to time frames and standards including the administrative processes used when mergers, acquisitions, new or expanded business units, and seasonal work changes could affect the accuracy of what the certification represents; and
8. The specified audit types and their purpose including external audits for certification/re-certification, internal audits for maintenance, and limited scope audits.

K – Temporary Certification

Introduction:

For some industries the ability to access work will be dependent on a company's ability to demonstrate certification. For companies with certification from another jurisdiction or CIP, their ability to gain access to work will be an important consideration for the CIP as certification should not unduly affect a company's ability to bid work. It is important, therefore, that the CIP clearly outlines its process for issuance of *Temporary Certification*. Within the scope of the 3rd party quality assurance program, assessment and confirmation that an effective process for the issuance of temporary certification exists is required.

Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Temporary Certification*. The element of *Temporary Certification* within the 3rd party quality assurance program will assess:

1. The process used by the CIP to receive requests for *Temporary Certification*, including the specific information requirements of the CIP;
2. The process used by the CIP to review the information received from the company seeking *Temporary Certification*;
3. A policy and process to determine the length for validity of *Temporary Certification* as determined by the industry;
4. The process for issuance of *Temporary Certification* considering issues such as required elements and compliance with provincial legislation;
5. The process for revoking *Temporary Certification*; and
6. A policy and process defining the circumstances under which extensions to temporary certifications are issued.

L – Equivalency & Reciprocity

Introduction:

Of equal importance to the ability to access work is the ability to keep or maintain it. In terms of certification, this may require a company's certification to be recognized by an outside agency. The element of *Equivalency and Reciprocity* recognizes the certification issued by other CIPs/Agencies while maintaining credibility within the CIP's certification program. Within the scope of the 3rd party quality assurance program, confirmation of an effective process should be assessed.

Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Equivalency and Reciprocity*. The element of *Equivalency and Reciprocity* within the 3rd party quality assurance program will assess:

1. The CIP's process to determine who they will accept requests from;
2. The process used to review other program certifications for such purpose;
3. A defined process and schedule to review and respond to organizations seeking this type of certification; and
4. The provision for written notification by the CIP.

M – Certification Maintenance

Introduction:

Certification of health and safety programs can be viewed as a method to engage within continuous improvement. It is not enough to develop and implement processes that meet standards and then abandon those processes once certification is achieved. *Certification Maintenance* can become a natural by-product of a company's desire to continue doing what is working and improving what isn't. There are several *Certification Maintenance* parameters the CIP will need to address and openly communicate within the scope of a 3rd party quality assurance program. Within the scope of the 3rd party quality assurance program the confirmation of the CIP's effective process to support continuous improvement is a required area of assessment.

Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Certification Maintenance*. The element of *Certification Maintenance* within the 3rd party quality assurance program will assess:

1. The policies defining the roles and responsibilities related to the CIP, the auditor and the auditee;
2. The administrative process of the CIP for companies seeking to demonstrate the maintenance of their company's certification;
3. The defined timelines required by the CIP on issues such as maintenance audits, field work and reports, and the timing of submissions for companies seeking to demonstrate the maintenance of their company's certification as per element of *Certification Length*; and
4. The administrative process of the CIP for companies seeking to obtain certification after expiry has occurred or certification has been revoked.

N – Change Management

Introduction:

The management of change can be complex without established parameters to effectively address a variety of issues regarding the issuance and quality of certification. By identifying and communicating the processes it has in place to manage change, the CIP certification program will be more accurate in representing valid certification. Within the scope of the 3rd party quality assurance program, confirmation of an effective process to address *Change Management* should be assessed.

Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Change Management*. The element of *Change Management* within the 3rd party quality assurance program will assess:

1. The process of the CIP for handling changes to:
 - a. the scope of operations for companies holding certification including, but not limited to, expanded operations, company name, management, and operating locations;
 - b. the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board rate codes; and
 - c. the company ownership; and
2. A process defining the responsibility of the company seeking or holding certification to notify the CIP of change that will affect the validity of their certification.

O – System Complaints

Introduction:

An open and transparent approach to the issuance, suspension, and revocation of certification is critical to building understanding and acceptance for all affected parties. Within the 3rd party quality assurance program, there needs to be an assessment to determine that the CIP has processes to address concerns and handle complaints about the certification processes. There is also a need for an objective and fair process to resolve situations that impact the credibility of certification.

Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *System Complaints*.

The element of *System Complaints* within the 3rd party quality assurance program will assess:

1. The process of the CIP for receiving complaints including required submission of supporting documents to the CIP;
2. The process of the CIP to investigate and resolve complaints including methods to investigate based on: severity of the complaint, prioritization and timelines, and determination of persons responsible to investigate complaints;
3. The defined results of investigation findings complete with recommendations made and communicated to affected parties; and
4. A policy defining the responsibility of the CIP to initiate the process when complaints have been received according to criteria.

P – Certifying Industry Partner

Introduction:

The Framework of Standards for Certification and Quality Assurance is a voluntary process. Members of the JIC believe that by reaching consensus on a framework of standards, different industries can tailor their standards to fit their unique needs while working within a similar intent and towards the common goal of reducing injuries and illness. The element, *Certifying Industry Partner* helps to establish processes that will ensure CIPs issuing certification are doing so with quality and objectivity as their foundation. Within the scope of a 3rd party quality assurance program this is a critical area of assessment.

Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Certifying Industry Partner*. The element of *Certifying Industry Partner* within the 3rd party quality assurance program will assess:

1. The not-for-profit nature of the CIP;
2. That the CIP represents an industry rate code;
3. The agreement by the CIP to abide within the JIC framework of standards for programs, audits, certification and quality assurance;
4. A signed Memorandum of Understanding between the CIP and the designated 3rd party administrator; and
5. Verification that the policy and standards of the CIP abides within the JIC framework of standards for programs, audits, certification and quality assurance.

Conclusion

Identified as the fundamental components of effective quality assurance related to certification, the above information provides the foundation for validation and management of health and safety, audit and certification programs for Saskatchewan.

The next steps will be to develop an audit tool supporting the framework elements and sub-elements identified. As a stakeholder, the JIC will play an active role in continually monitoring, evaluating, acting on and refining the framework of standards for health and safety programs, audits, certification and quality assurance. By doing so, the JIC will demonstrate its leadership and commitment to the progression of health and safety programs and certification programs in Saskatchewan.

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