

CERTIFIED ORGANIC ASSOCIATIONS OF BC



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# COABC ACCREDITATION BOARD

## Operating Manual

VERSION 1

# COABC Accreditation Board Operating Manual

VERSION 1

**Published by:**

***Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia***

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**This document replaces, in part, the one entitled 'Accreditation Board Quality Manual'.**

## Preamble

The Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia is the Administrator of the [Organic Certification Regulation](#) under the [Food and Agricultural Products Classification Act](#). The COABC works to maintain a credible set of organic production and processing standards. The COABC ensures compliance with the standards by administering the accreditation and auditing process (the British Columbia Certified Organic Program) in partnership with the [British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture \(BCMA\)](#).

The COABC Accreditation Board (AB) is an arms-length agency of the COABC. The purpose of the Accreditation Board is to fulfil the obligations for accreditation devolved to the COABC as administrator of the BC Organic Certification Regulation under the BC Food and Agricultural Products Classification Act.

The Accreditation Board also acts as a Conformity Verification Body for the [Canadian Food Inspection Agency \(CFIA\)](#) with respect to the [Canadian Organic Regime \(COR\)](#) and meets the requirements set out in ISO 17011. As a Conformity Verification Body for CFIA, the Accreditation Board recommends, assesses and monitors certifying bodies seeking accreditation under the COR.

## Forward

All COABC manuals and policies are available to all interested parties through the [COABC website](#). The following manuals replace versions published prior to February 2020.

Information in the [COABC Operating Manual](#) covers:

- An introduction to the COABC and the BC Certified Organic Program
- Scope, structure and main policies

Information in the [COABC Accreditation Board Operating Manual](#) covers:

- Scope, structure and main policies of the COABC Accreditation Board
- Quality System administered by the COABC Accreditation Board

Information in the [BCCOP Accreditation Manual](#) covers:

- Application, evaluation, criteria and procedures for BCCOP accreditation
- Information on rights and responsibilities of applicants, accredited CBs and the COABC

Information in the [COR Accreditation Manual](#) covers:

- Application, evaluation, criteria and procedures for accreditation under the COR
- Information on rights and responsibilities of applicants, accredited CBs and the COABC

Information in [BCCOP Operator's Manual](#) covers:

- Guidance with respect to production standards required under the BCCOP
- Standards which are not covered under the scope of the [Canadian Organic Standards](#)
- Rules for labelling organic product

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## Definitions

### **Accreditation**

Process by which a certification body is approved under the BCCOP or COR programs.

### **Accreditation Board (AB / COABC AB)**

An independent body appointed by the COABC to carry out accreditation activities.

### **Accreditation Board Director (AB Director)**

Person responsible for overall management of the AB and the COABC Accreditation Program.

### **Accreditation Certificate**

A document issued by the COABC Accreditation Board; used to confirm a certification body's accredited status.

### **Appeal**

A procedure whereby a certified operator or a member of the public requests a review of a certification decision. The appeal may also be filed against a Certification Body or by a CB against the COABC Accreditation Board.

### **Auditor**

The official appointed by the COABC AB to provide evaluations of the certification programs operated by CBs.

### **British Columbia Certified Organic Program (BCCOP)**

The program of accreditation and certification administered by the COABC using the *Organic Certification Regulation* under the *Food and Agricultural Products Classification Act (BC)*.

### **Board of Directors (BOD / COABC Board)**

The Board of Directors of the COABC, elected by the representatives of the members of the COABC at the Annual General Meeting of the COABC.

### **Canada Organic Regime (COR)**

The documented framework of standardization and control measures necessary for the implementation of the *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR), Part 13*. In practice, the COR refers to all parts of the national organic system that is managed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

### **Certificate**

The document (issued by the CB) that describes the organic status of an operator. May also be called the 'Certificate of Conformity'.

### **Certification**

The procedure by which a third party gives written assurance that a clearly identified process has been methodically assessed such that adequate confidence is provided that specific products conform to specific requirements.

### **Certification Body (CB)**

A society incorporated under the Society Act, one of whose functions is to provide a third-party certification process to its members. Within COABC membership this refers to bodies accredited by the COABC according to established criteria, procedures and requirements for administering a certification program in BC.

**Certification Committee**

A group of persons delegated by the membership of the CB who have the responsibility of assessing applications for certification.

**Certification Program**

A system operated by a CB with its own rules and procedures and management for carrying out certification.

**Certification Scope**

The parameters defining the certification granted including the product and product types certified, and where applicable the acreage and volumes.

**Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia (COABC)**

The administrator and delegated authority of the *Organic Certification Regulation* under the *Food and Agricultural Products Classification Act* (BC). A competent body for accreditation under ISO 17011 compliant standards.

**Complaint**

An objection to the policies, procedures, or performance of the certification body. A complaint may also be an objection to the performance or activities of a licensee lodged with the certification body by a third party.

**Conflict of Interest**

The situation where an individual's capacity for objectivity is put at risk by financial or personal interests in conflict with their interest in conducting fair and impartial inspection, certification or accreditation.

**Conformity Verification Body (CVB)**

An entity that shall meet the requirements set out in ISO/IEC 17011 to be able to enter into an agreement with the CFIA under subsection 14(1) of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency Act to assess, recommend the accreditation of and monitor the CB to the Canadian Organic Regime.

**Declaration of Interest**

A declaration of personal and/or commercial interests in the organic industry made by those involved in the certification or accreditation process to enable determination of an individual's objectivity.

**Evaluation**

Systematic assessment based on all relevant information obtained in order to make a decision. With reference to a certification decision this includes, but is not limited to, the inspection.

**Food and Agricultural Product Classification Act**

Act of the British Columbia legislature to which the COABC subscribes.

**International Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA)**

The body (recognized by the COABC) responsible for training and upgrading of verification officers under the BC Certified Organic Program. Information regarding the IOIA is available at [www.ioia.net](http://www.ioia.net)

**Inspection**

On-site visit to premises for the verification of compliance with standards.

**Inspector**

A person appointed by the BC Ministry of Agriculture, under the auspices of the *Food and Agricultural Products Classification Act* (BC). In extraordinary circumstances, the BC Ministry of Agriculture may appoint an inspector to monitor the British Columbia Certified Organic Program.

**Internal Audit**

A systematic periodic review and assessment of the performance of a program which ensures that internal procedures are carried out in compliance to standards.

**International Standards Organization (ISO)**

An international standard-setting body composed of representatives from various national standards organizations which publishes the standards which the COABC complies to (ISO 17011, ISO 17065, ISO 19011).

**Management Review**

A systematic periodic review and assessment of the objectives and overall performance of a program which identifies trends and areas for improvement.

**Membership of the COABC**

- a) The individual societies (certification bodies) that have applied and become accredited by the COABC.
- b) Associate members of the COABC.

**Membership of Certification Bodies**

Means the operations that have joined the certification body.

**Operator**

Any person, firm or organisation that produces, handles or processes with a view to subsequent marketing thereof, products referred to as BC Certified Organic in accordance with this standard. In general, the term operator refers to a person; the term operation refers to an entity.

**Operation**

A production or processing business or establishment.

**Organic**

A method of food production conforming to the standards described by the British Columbia Certified Organic Program provided by the COABC and amended from time to time.

**Processing**

Cooking, baking, heating, drying, mixing, grinding, churning, separating, extracting, cutting, fermenting, slaughtering, eviscerating, preserving, dehydrating, freezing, drying, sewing, or otherwise manufacturing, including packaging, canning, jarring, or otherwise enclosing in a container, other than normal post harvest packing of crops performed by producers.

**Quality System**

Documented procedures that are established, implemented, and periodically audited to assure that production, handling, management, certification, and other systems meet specified requirements and outcomes by following standardised protocols. The information contained in this document provides the Quality System for the British Columbia Certified Organic Program.

**Regulation**

*Organic Certification Regulation* under the *Food and Agricultural Products Classification (BC)*.

**Safe Food for Canadians Regulation**

Applies to food for human consumption that is imported, exported, or inter-provincially traded for commercial purposes.

**Third Party**

Meaning that the decision-maker has no direct financial interest in the affairs of the operator being certified, and no direct interest in the marketing of that operator's products.

**Verification Officer (VO)**

A person contracted by the certification body to gather information relating to a member's application for certification. A verification officer must be a member in good standing of the International Organic Inspectors Association.

**Witness Audit**

An operator inspection performed under normal certification body procedure in the presence of the COABC/BC Ministry of Agriculture evaluator.



## 1. Introduction

The manual describes the purpose of the Accreditation Board (AB) and outlines the Quality System in place to guarantee a high quality of work and continual improvement in line with the requirements of ISO 17011. Policies and procedures are regularly updated.

### 1.1. Purpose of the Accreditation Board

- 1) The purpose of the Accreditation Board is to fulfil the obligations for accreditation devolved to the COABC as administrator of the BC Organic Certification Regulation under the BC Food and Agricultural Products Classification Act.
- 2) The COABC Accreditation Board also acts as a Conformity Verification Body under the Canadian Organic Regime.

### 1.2. Organic Accreditation Programs

- 1) The COABC Accreditation Board is the administrator and delegated authority of the BC Certified Organic Program, as well as a Conformity Verification Body (CVB) under the COR. The CFIA is the authority and administrator for accreditation under the COR.

#### 1.2.1 BCCOP Accreditation

- 1) The BC Certified Organic Program is a program of accreditation and certification administered by the COABC under the Organic Certification Regulation under the Food and Agricultural Products Classification Act. The BCCOP Accreditation Program offers three accreditation schemes: BCCOP Regional, BCCOP Low-Risk and BCCOP Equivalent (for COR Accredited CBs only). A CB chooses to participate in one or more schemes depending on the market access required by the CBs clients or membership. The BC Certified Organic program is described in the manual titled "BCCOP Accreditation Manual".

#### 1.2.2 COR Surveillance

- 1) The COABC acts as a designated Conformity Verification Body (CVB) through an agreement with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) under the Canada Organic Regime (COR). COR accreditation allows CBs to market product outside of BC. The COR program is described in the manual titled "COR Accreditation Manual".

## 1.3. Legal Status

### 1.3.1 Legal Status of the COABC

- 1) The Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia is an incorporated society in British Columbia under the Society Act (BC). The COABC is the Administrator of the British Columbia Organic Certification Regulation under the Food and Agricultural Products Classification Act (BC). The Regulation requires the COABC to report to the BC Ministry of Agriculture (BCMA) and gives the BCMA the right to audit the COABC at any time. The final authority for the BC Certified Organic Program remains with the government of British Columbia.

### 1.3.2 Legal Status of the COABC Accreditation Board

- 1) The COABC Accreditation Board is an agency of the COABC. The authority (accreditation decisions under the BC Certified Organic Program) provided to the COABC Accreditation Board is documented in British Columbia law in the British Columbia Organic Certification Regulation.
- 2) The COABC has entered into a legal agreement with the CFIA to recommend for accreditation, provide assessment and monitoring of CBs operating in the Canada Organic Regime.

## 1.4. Finances & Liability

### 1.4.1 Insurance

- 1) The COABC Accreditation Board shall obtain liability insurance for all its Accreditation Board members, employees and when necessary, for contract evaluators.

### 1.4.2 Finances of the AB

- 1) As an independent appointed body of the COABC, the COABC finances the COABC Accreditation Board.
- 2) Upon approval from the COABC, the COABC Accreditation Board may set fees for services. Such fees must be based on a cost-recovery basis within the amount needed to maintain the operations of the COABC Accreditation Board.
- 3) The Accreditation Board has no authority to borrow money under its own name, or that of the COABC.

- **See Additional Policy:**  
PL450 Financing & Liability

## 2. Quality System

### 2.1. Purpose of Quality System

- 1) The Quality System administered by the COABC Accreditation Board follows the International Standard 17011: *Conformity assessment - Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies*.
- 2) This system ensures that processes, procedures and responsibilities are aligned with quality policies and COABC objectives and are in compliance with regulations.

### 2.2. COABC AB Operating Manual

- 1) This manual describes the Quality System for the COABC Accreditation Board. Related documents include the COABC Operating Manual and manuals for the BCCOP and COR Accreditation programs (see 'Forward').

### 2.2.1 Authority for the COABC AB Operating Manual

- 1) Authority is granted by COABC to the Director of the Accreditation Board to develop and maintain the AB Operating Manual.

### 2.2.2 Revisions

- 1) The COABC AB Operating Manual is revised by the AB Director in conjunction with the COABC Board of Directors and the COABC Accreditation Board. The minutes from the meetings of these boards provide direction for the development of new policies and procedures.

### 2.2.3 Distribution

- 1) The COABC AB Operating Manual is distributed to the COABC Board of Directors, the COABC Accreditation Board and all personnel. Updated versions are provided annually. It is available to any auditors of the BCCOP and COR Accreditation Programs. Copies are also available if requested by accredited or applicant CBs and to other interested parties at the discretion of COABC.

## 2.3. Quality Statement

- 1) The COABC Accreditation Board performs the vital task of accrediting and/or recommending accreditation for member certification bodies. This procedure is the crux of the British Columbia Certified Organics Program (BCCOP) and Canada Organic Regime (COR) programs and must be accomplished with the utmost regards to quality control. The policies and procedures outlined in the Quality Manual are adopted to guarantee a high level of quality and continual improvement.
- 2) The main purpose of the COABC Accreditation Board is to:
  - a) Grant accreditation under the BCCOP on behalf of the COABC and;
  - b) Recommend for accreditation under the COR to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) as per COABC's agreement with CFIA.

In order to protect the integrity of the BC Certified Organic Program and to maintain the requirements of CFIA to act as a CVB, the COABC Accreditation Board will adhere to the following principles:

- a) Confidentiality – where requested by applicants, approved by operational directives and allowed by law
  - b) Transparency – disclosure of all conflicts and potential and perceived conflicts of interest; all program(s) must be available for assessment by the public
  - c) Impartiality – all members shall act objectively and safeguard impartiality
  - d) Third party – Accreditation evaluations are not subject to influence; decisions on accreditation are made by persons different from those who carried out the evaluation (audit)
- 3) All COABC Accreditation Board members, employees and contractors/evaluators shall subscribe to these principles and all decision making, evaluations, internal audits, and management reviews and shall use them as reference objectives.

## 2.4. Authority for the Quality System

### 2.4.1. COABC Authority

- 1) The Board of Directors of the COABC appoints the COABC Accreditation Board. The Director of the COABC Accreditation Board shall be the person responsible for the implementation and maintenance of the Quality System(s). The Director will report to the COABC Board of Directors on all matters of review and improvement to the Quality System of the COABC Accreditation Board.

**2.4.2. AB Authority**

- 1) Authority for accreditation decisions is provided to the COABC Accreditation Board by the Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia under the approval of the BC Ministry of Agriculture.
  - **See Additional Policy:**  
PL464 Extending Activities policy
- 2) Accreditation decisions for the COR program reside with the CFIA. The COABC Accreditation Board acts as a CVB for the COR Program and has signed an agreement with CFIA.

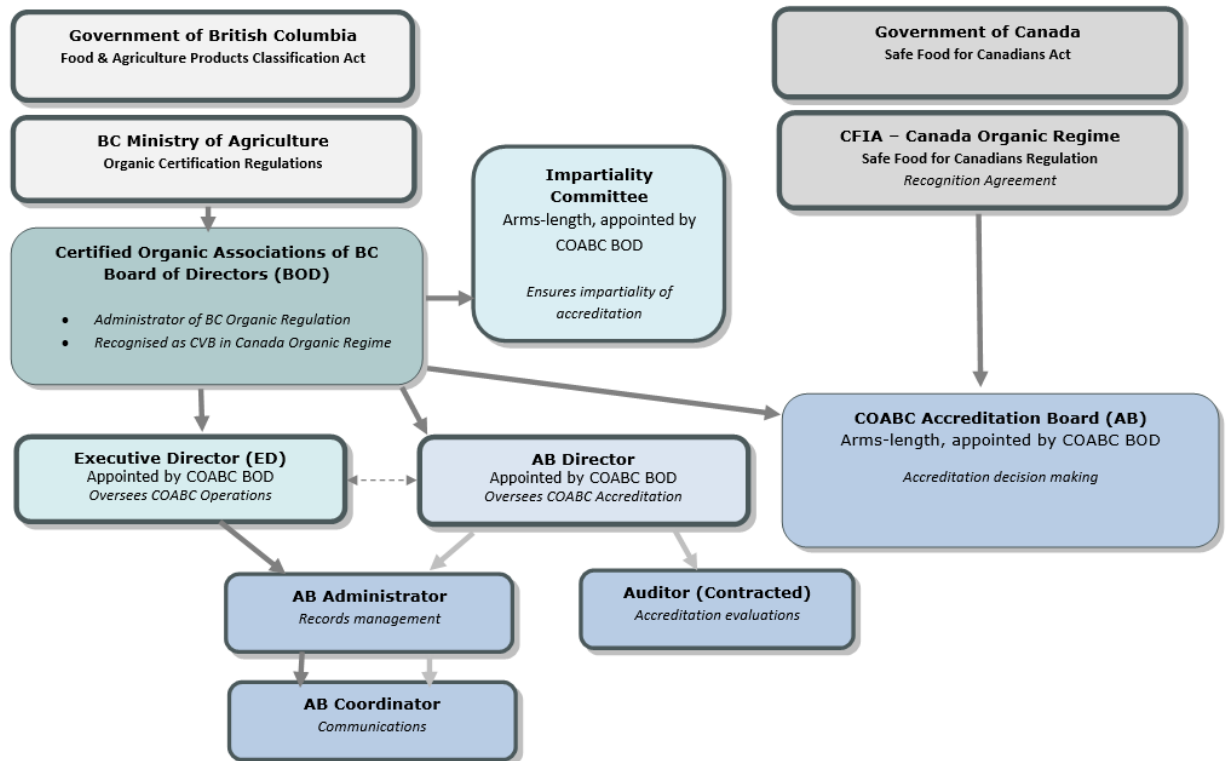
**2.4.3. AB Policy**

- 1) The COABC Board of Directors shall provide the policy for the COABC Accreditation Board via the COABC Operating Manual, the Accreditation Board Operating Manual, the Accreditation Board Quality Manual(s) and referenced documents. The COABC Accreditation Board is responsible to implement policy decisions as provided in this manual and the referenced documents.

**3. Accreditation Board Structure**

**3.1. Structure of the AB within the COABC**

**COABC Accreditation Board Organizational Chart**



**F42 AB Organizational Chart**

### 3.2. Requirement for Balanced Representation

- 1) The structure of the Accreditation Board must provide for a balanced representation of interests without any sector predominating. [Sectors include conformity assessment (certification & inspection), operators (producers and processors), beneficiaries (trade, consumers, environmentalists,) and regulators.

#### 3.2.1. AB Membership

- 1) The COABC Accreditation Board shall consist of:
  - a) The Director appointed by the COABC Board
  - b) One BC Certified Organic producer member appointed by the COABC Board;
  - c) One ex-officio member representing the BCMA;
  - d) One processor, handler or distributor representative appointed by the COABC Board;
  - e) One consumer/ environmental representative appointed by the COABC Board from nominations solicited from outside of BC certified organic program.

#### 3.2.2. Additional Members

- 1) There must always be at least five persons on the COABC Accreditation Board as detailed above. The COABC Board of Directors may appoint additional persons to sit as members of the Accreditation Board to ensure adequate stakeholder participation and to avoid undue influence by any interested parties.
- 2) The term of office for Accreditation Board members shall be three years with positions staggered to ensure continuity.

### 3.3. Competencies

- 1) COABC Accreditation Board members shall have competencies for their position. Competencies can be acquired through experience, education or a combination of both. Such competencies may include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - a) Knowledge and/or experience in organic production agriculture, farming and food systems;
  - b) Knowledge and/or experience in quality control systems;
  - c) Knowledge and/or experience in audit processes;
  - d) Knowledge and/or experience in administration/management;
  - e) Knowledge and/or experience with volunteer boards of incorporated societies;
  - f) Knowledge and/or experience in professions that require certification/accreditation.

#### 3.3.1. Training

- **See Additional Policy:**  
 PL520 Ensuring Quality Policy Understood  
 PL520 Procedure for Ensuring Quality Policy Understood  
 PL621B Training

#### 3.3.2. Performance Reviews

- **See Additional Policy:**  
 PL630B AB & Personnel Performance Reviews

### 3.3.3. AB Member Records

- 1) The AB Administrator will maintain a record of the members of the COABC Accreditation Board, and all subcontractors to the COABC Accreditation Board. This record will be kept up to date and will contain:
  - a) Name and address
  - b) Professional qualifications and affiliations
  - c) Performance appraisals (if any)

### 3.4. AB Director

- 1) The COABC BOD appoints the Director who may also have the responsibility to chair meetings of the Accreditation Board or the Accreditation Board may select a chair from among their number.
- 2) Duties of the Director:
  - a) To be responsible for the overall management of the Accreditation Board.
  - b) Development of policies relating to the Accreditation Board.
  - c) To supervise the development and implementation of the quality control system for the Accreditation Board and the management of its records and documents.
  - d) To arrange for assessments (evaluations) of applicant certification bodies according to criteria provided by the BC Certified Organic Program.
  - e) Organize meetings of the Accreditation Board; chair such meetings.
  - f) Ensure the AB Administrator and/or AB Personnel completes the correspondence required for the Accreditation Board to carry out its mandate. The AB Director may choose to undertake this correspondence themself.
  - g) Communicate directly with the treasurer of the COABC to ensure the financial solvency of the Accreditation Board.
  - h) Supervise all accreditation decisions.
  - i) Ensure that all committee members are supplied with all relevant technical information they may require.
  - j) Ensure AB members are familiar with accreditation procedures, legal requirements, and any other regulations pertinent to their position.

➤ **See Additional Policy:**  
PL613B AB Director Job Description

### 3.5. AB Personnel

- 1) The AB shall elect a Secretary from among their number or delegate the following administrative tasks to AB Personnel.
 

➤ **See Additional Policy:**  
PL610 Human Resources & Staff

#### 3.5.1. AB Administrator

- 1) Duties of the AB Administrator:
  - a) Keep minutes of all Board meetings and circulate these to the Accreditation Board.
  - b) Categorize and safeguard all documents required for the operation of the Accreditation Board.
  - c) The AB Administrator will implement the quality control system for the management of Accreditation Board minutes, files, and forms.

- d) The AB Administrator will ensure that files and correspondence are kept confidential and available only to current accreditation board members, staff, auditors and to inspectors appointed by the BCMA.
- e) Undertake correspondence on behalf of the Accreditation Board as directed by the AB Director.
- f) Ensure that the Accreditation Board records are retained for a minimum of five years or a later date stipulated by the COABC, BCMA or CFIA.

➤ **See Additional Procedure:**  
PR613C AB Admin Manual

### 3.5.2. AB Coordinator

- 1) Duties of the AB Coordinator
  - a) Assist the AB Administrator with completing daily administrative tasks of the AB
  - b) Undertake correspondence on behalf of the AB as directed by the AB Director and/or AB Administrator
  - c) Assist AB director to keep program documentation current in response to changes in regulation or COR directives
  - d) Ensure that files and correspondence are kept confidential

➤ **See Additional Procedure:**  
PR613C AB Admin Manual

## 3.6. Subcontracting

### 3.6.1 Auditors

- 1) The Accreditation Board may contract auditors to perform assessments (evaluations) of certification bodies.
- 2) Auditors for the COABC Accreditation process may be supplied by the BC Ministry of Agriculture.
- 3) Auditors assigned to provide onsite evaluations must have qualifications for their position. The expertise criteria for an auditor or audit team, may include but are not limited to:
  - a) Knowledge and understanding of the Accreditation Board's program (accreditation criteria and procedures)
  - b) Knowledge of production standards and generally accepted practices (practical experience in production, processing, inspection or certification management would be a major asset) relative to the designation for which the certification body has applied to be accredited
  - c) Professional training (or equivalent work experience) in certification;
  - d) Knowledge of evaluation methods including interviewing techniques and the ability to write reports
- 4) Auditors must have signed conflict of interest statements, confidentiality, and appropriate disclosure agreements on file with the Accreditation Board before assignment to provide service to a specific applicant.
- 5) The AB Director will ensure that a contract is in place with every auditor or with another organization that employs auditors contracted by the Accreditation Board.
- 6) The COABC Accreditation Board will take responsibility for work performed by subcontractors.
- 7) If a conclusion can't be determined by the auditor regarding a finding, the Accreditation Board should be consulted to clarify.

- 8) The Director will prepare an evaluation report on the performance of subcontracted auditors. This report will be made available to the COABC Accreditation Board for review - at least annually.

➤ **See Additional Policy & Procedure:**

- PL622 Evaluators policy
- PR622 Evaluators procedure

### **3.6.2 Technical Assistance**

- 1) The AB may at its discretion contract for or obtain extraordinary technical or legal assistance.

## **3.7. Accreditation Board Committees**

### **3.7.1. Dispute Resolution Committee**

- 1) The Accreditation Boards shall strike a Dispute Resolution Committee from among their number but may include other disinterested parties as they see fit.
- 2) The Dispute Resolution Committee will consist of no less than three members but may contain more than three.
- 3) The Dispute Resolution Committee must rule on matters arising from appeals to the COABC AB according to criteria found elsewhere in this document
- 4) The Dispute resolution Committee shall elect a chair from among their number

### **3.7.2. Internal Audit Review Committee**

- 1) The COABC AB shall strike an Internal Audit Review Committee from among their number
- 2) The Internal Audit Review Committee will consist of no less than two members but may contain more than two.
- 3) The Internal Audit Review Committee shall undertake the annual internal audit of the AB according to criteria found elsewhere in this document.
- 4) The Internal Audit Review Committee shall elect a chair from among their number. The chair shall be responsible to initiate the Internal Audit/Management Review process.

### **3.7.3. Impartiality Committee**

- 1) The Impartiality Committee shall be in place to safeguard impartiality of accreditation activities within the COABC.

➤ **See Additional Policy:**

- PL440 TOR IC

### **3.7.4. Other Committees**

- 1) The AB may strike other committees as it sees fit.



## 4. Accreditation Board Operations

- **See Additional Policy:**  
PL61A AB Terms of Reference & Meeting Policy

### 4.1. Responsibilities of the AB

- 1) The COABC Accreditation Board is responsible for all decisions relating to the granting, maintaining, extending, reducing suspending and withdrawing of British Columbia Certified Organic Accreditation.
- 2) The COABC Accreditation Board is responsible for making recommendations to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) relating to the granting, maintaining, suspending and cancelling of CFIA accreditation according to the Safe Food for Canadians Regulation (SFCR) part 13.

- **See Additional Policy:**  
PL820 Obligations of the AB

#### 4.1.1 Impartiality

- 1) The members of the COABC Accreditation Board must declare any conflict of interest between themselves and applicants, or members of the COABC. Board members must stand down from decisions that may put themselves in a conflict of interest. Board members must not provide consulting services to applicants for accreditation and must not have provided such services for the previous 24 months before assessing such applicants.
- 2) COABC Accreditation Board members are subject to all sections of the *Society Act* of British Columbia regarding conflict of interest. COABC Accreditation Board members may be removed from their position for contraventions of the *Society Act*.
- 3) COABC Accreditation Board members must sign a confidentiality agreement. Certification Body records and minutes of Accreditation Board meetings must remain confidential to the COABC Accreditation Board.

- **See Additional Policy & Procedure:**  
PL44 Impartiality and Conflict of Interest policy  
PR44 Impartiality and Conflict of Interest procedure

#### 4.1.2 Meetings

- 1) Meetings of the COABC Accreditation Board may be in person, through teleconference, or by any other method the COABC Accreditation Board may decide.

#### 4.1.3 Voting Rules

- 1) Decisions of the COABC Accreditation Board must be approved by a minimum vote of a unanimous decision minus one vote, the actual number determined by the number of members present. A quorum consists of four members.
- 2) The BC Ministry of Agriculture ex-officio appointee and/or the Accreditation Board Auditor do not have a vote on the Accreditation Board but may participate in the discussion.

## 4.2. Accreditation Decisions & Recommendations

### 4.2.1. List of policy and procedure explaining accreditation processes

- a) PR710-C COR & BCCOP Equivalent Accreditation Flowchart
- b) PR710-R BCCOP Regional Accreditation Flowchart
- c) PR76-R Regional DR Flowchart
- d) PR7116 Annual Renewal
- e) PR785 Non-Conformities

## 4.3. Annual Report to the COABC

- 1) The COABC Accreditation Board will provide an annual report to the COABC. The director will ensure the annual report contains the following information at a minimum:
  - a) Concise description of the activities of the COABC Accreditation Board
  - b) Details of any appeals or withdrawals of accreditation
  - c) List of approved subcontractors
  - d) Income and expense report and fees for services for the coming year

## 4.4. Annual Report to the CFIA

- 1) The COABC Accreditation Board will provide an annual report to the CFIA before the end of first quarter which includes the following information:
  - a) A list of all CBs under their supervision including those transferred from other CVBs with information concerning their corporate entity, name, business addresses; and a description of the certification services that the CBs undertake.
  - b) The number of CBs who have applied for assessment
  - c) Total number of surveillance audits
  - d) Total number of witness audits
  - e) Total number of verification audits
  - f) Total number of reassessment audits
  - g) Total number of complaints under COR
  - h) Total number of appeals under COR
  - i) Copy of the internal audit report

## 4.5. Internal Audit & Management Reviews

- **See Additional Policy & Procedure:**  
 PL578 Internal Audit & Management Review  
 PR556 Improving the Quality System

### 4.5.1. Responsibility for Internal Audits

- 1) The AB Director shall ensure that an internal audit process is put in place and that audits are initiated at least annually.

#### 4.5.2. Internal Audit Process

- 1) An Internal Audit shall be a review of the entire procedures of the COABC Accreditation Board. This will include the performance and activities of all personnel, including personnel on contract. The purpose of such a review shall be to ensure that the Quality System is performing effectively. Personnel affected by the audit shall be informed of the outcome of the audit. Records of all Internal Audit processes shall be retained by the COABC Accreditation Board for subsequent inspection by the COABC Board of Directors, BC Ministry of Agriculture, and external auditors as required.

#### 4.5.3. Management Review

- 1) A review of the management system shall take place annually to ensure the continuing adequacy and effectiveness of the accreditation program in satisfying requirements of the BC Certified Organic Program and Canada Organic Regime.

#### 4.6. Policy Development

- 1) The COABC Board of Directors shall determine the policy for the administration of the COABC Certified Organic Program and shall ensure the COABC Accreditation Board is immediately informed of any changes in policy. The Director of the COABC Accreditation Board shall be responsible to ensure that policy changes are implemented.
- 2) The AB Director will be responsible to maintain the Accreditation Board Operating Manual. The AB Operating Manual shall describe detailed procedures for the operation of the Accreditation/Surveillance Programs.

### 5. Accreditation Board Documents

- **See Additional Policy:**  
PL534 Document & Record Control

- 1) All Accreditation Board Documents are kept confidential and secured following policy 534.
- 2) The L534 Document Register is a master list of all AB documents including history, location and authority for revision, approval and distribution of every document. Documents are organized in the following categories:
  - a) **Reference Documents:** All manuals, policy, procedures, standards, acts etc.\*
  - b) **AB-HR:** All documents related to HR management of the AB and personnel
  - c) **CB Accreditation:** All documents related to CB accreditation process
  - d) **CFIA-CVB:** All documents related to CVB duties\*
  - e) **COABC Internal:** All internal COABC documents related to AB duties

\*Includes external documents not under COABC ownership which are required for reference and/or use by the AB

- 3) The following acronyms are used to specify type of document:
  - a) **PL:** Policy
  - b) **PR:** Procedure
  - c) **F:** Form
  - d) **FL:** Form Letter
  - e) **L:** List

### 5.1.1 Reference Documents

- 1) Certified Organic Associations of BC Operating Manual
- 2) BCCOP Accreditation Quality Manual
- 3) COR Accreditation Quality Manual
- 4) ISO 17065: Requirements for Certification Bodies
- 5) ISO 17011: Requirements for Accreditation Bodies
- 6) ISO 19011: Guidelines for auditing management systems
- 7) Canadian Food Inspection Agency: COR Operating Manual
- 8) Safe Food for Canadians Regulation (under the authority of the Canadian Agricultural Products Act)

### 5.1.2 AB Policies

- 1) PL44 Impartiality and Conflict of Interest
- 2) PL450 Financing and Insurance
- 3) PL463 Extending activities
- 4) PL534 Document and Record Control
- 5) PL556 Improving the Quality System
- 6) PL578 Internal Audit and Management Review
- 7) PL59A Complaints against COABC Accredited Certification Bodies and Certified Operators
- 8) PL59B Complaints against COABC
- 9) PL610 Human Resources
- 10) PL613A TOR Accreditation Board & Meeting policy
- 11) PL613B Director Job Description
- 12) PL621B Training
- 13) PL622 Auditors
- 14) PL630 Personnel Performance Reviews
- 15) PL700 Supplementary Accreditation Process and Procedures
- 16) PL710 Appeals against Accreditation Decisions - Dispute Resolution Process
- 17) PL820 Obligations of the COABC/COABC Accreditation Board

### 5.1.3 AB Procedures

- 1) PR44 Impartiality and Conflict of Interest Procedure
- 2) PR463 Extending Activities
- 3) PR520 Ensuring Quality Policy Understood, Implemented, and Maintained at all levels of the Accreditation Body
- 4) PR556 Improving the Quality System
- 5) PR59 Complaints Procedure for the Public
- 6) PR613C Administrative Procedures Manual
- 7) PR622 Evaluators Procedure
- 8) PR710 Appeals Procedure
- 9) PR712A-C Accreditation Procedures Flow Chart
- 10) PR7116 AB Procedures for Annual Reporting, Accreditation Renewal, and Suspension
- 11) PR785 Procedures and Terminology for Handling Non-conformities

### 5.1.4 Tracking Documents

- 1) F4344 HR Form Tracking
- 2) F641 AB & Staff Training Log
- 3) F400 CFIA Communications Tracking
- 4) F500 Accreditation Activities Tracking
- 5) F700B Accreditation Process Timeline
- 6) F7113 CB Audit Timeline

- 7) F7124 Complaints & Appeals Tracking
- 8) F714-C CB Audit Log COR
- 9) F714-R CB Audit Log Regional
- 10) L450 Current Fee Schedule
- 11) L534 Document Register
- 12) L641 List of COABC Accreditation Board members
- 13) L622 List of evaluators
- 14) L821-C List of Accredited Certification Bodies – COR Program
- 15) L821-R List of Accredited Certification Bodies – Regional

### 5.1.5 AB/HR Forms & Templates

- a) *AB Meetings*
  - 1) F79A AB Meeting Agenda Format
  - 2) F79B AB Meeting Minutes Format
  - 3) F79C AB Email Decisions Tracking Form
  - 4) F79D Email Meeting Decision Form
- b) *HR – AB & Personnel*
  - 1) F44 Confidentiality Agreement
  - 2) F44A Declaration of Interest Form
  - 3) F44B Declaration of Interest Renewal
  - 4) F520 Ensuring Quality Policy Understood
  - 5) FL613A AB Member Retirement Letter
  - 6) FL613B AB Member Welcome Letter
  - 7) F613A AB Administrator Contract
  - 8) F613B Contractor's Agreement
  - 9) F630 Annual Performance Review Planning Form
  - 10) F630A AB Director Performance Review
  - 11) F630B AB Personnel Performance Review
  - 12) F630C AB Member Performance Review
- c) *HR – Evaluators*
  - 1) F613C Evaluator Contract
  - 2) F613D Document Review Contract
  - 3) F622 Evaluator Performance Review

### 5.1.6 CB Accreditation Templates

- a) *Application*
  - 1) FL723 Application Acknowledgement
  - 2) F700 Accreditation Process Feedback
  - 3) FL712-R Regional Application Info
  - 4) F721-R Regional Application Form & Document Checklist
  - 5) FL792-R Initial Decision Letter Regional
  - 6) FL712-C COR Application Information
  - 7) F721-C COR Compliant Application Form & Document Checklist
  - 8) FL792-C Initial Decision Letter COR
- b) *Document Review*
  - 1) F54 CB Document List
  - 2) FL76 DR Request for Review
  - 3) F76-R Document Review Report Regional
  - 4) FL76-C Document Request for Review COR
  - 5) F76-C Document Review Report COR
- c) *Audits*
  - 1) F785 Non-Conformance Form
  - 2) F77-R Notice of Audit Regional

- 3) F78-R Regional Evaluation Visit Questionnaire
  - 4) F78-R Regional Evaluation Member Files Appendix A
  - 5) F770-R Evaluation Feedback/Audit Survey
  - 6) FL783B-R Regional Audit Decision Letter
  - 7) F783C-R COABC Audit Tracking Regional
  - 8) F750-C COR Audit Preparation Checklist
  - 9) F62-C Auditor Pre-Audit Checklist
  - 10) FL77-C Notice of Audit COR
  - 11) F77-C On-Site Audit Plan COR
  - 12) F78-C COR Initial & Re-Assessment Audit Visit Report
  - 13) F78B-C COR Surveillance Visit Report
  - 14) F770-C Evaluation Feedback/Audit Survey
  - 15) F783C-C Audit Tracking COR
  - 16) FL783B-C COR Initial Audit Decision Letter
  - 17) FL7115A-C COR Surveillance Audit Decision Letter
  - 18) FL7115B-C COR Re-Assessment Audit Decision Letter
  - 19) FL7115C-C COR Re-Assessment Audit Follow-Up Letter
  - 20) FL7115D-C COR Surveillance Audit Follow-Up Letter
  - 21) FL7115E-C COR Surveillance Activity Decision Letter
  - 22) FL7116A-C COR Surveillance Audit Final Letter
  - 23) FL7116B-C COR Re-Assessment Audit Final Letter
- d) *Annual Renewal*
- 1) F711B Quarterly Report Form
  - 2) FL711-R Annual Surveillance Letter-Regional
  - 3) F711-R Annual Surveillance Questionnaire-Regional
  - 4) FL794-R Annual Decision Letter Regional
  - 5) F794-R Regional Accreditation Certificate
  - 6) FL711-C Annual Surveillance Letter COR
  - 7) F711-C Annual Surveillance Questionnaire COR
  - 8) FL794-C Annual Decision Letter COR
  - 9) F794-C COR Accreditation Certificate
- e) *Agreements*
- 1) F810-R Regional Accreditation Agreement
  - 2) F810-C COR Compliant Accreditation Agreement
- f) *Misc*
- 1) F59 Complaints Register
  - 2) F710 Appeals Register
  - 3) F7116 Annual Review Decision Form
  - 4) F7116B Recommendations for AB Decision Form
  - 5) FL7833 Accreditation Symbol/Status Abuse Letter

### 5.1.7 COABC Internal Templates

- a) *Internal Audits*
- 1) F57 Internal Audit Checklist
  - 2) F57C Internal Audit Report
  - 3) F572 Internal Audit Plan
  - 4) F572B Internal Audit Opening Meeting
  - 5) F572C Internal Audit Closing Meeting
- b) *Management Reviews*
- 1) F582 Management Review Agenda