How the ICAC Accreditation Process Works

The ICAC is a largely volunteer-driven effort to provide affordable certification accreditation services to small to mid-sized not-for-profit organizations. With this in mind, we have created an affordable, common-sense driven, non-bureaucratic process to evaluate your industry credentials against international standards.

In July, 2012 the ISO/IEC released an updated standard (17024) entitled: *Conformity assessment — General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons*

In the months since, ICAC has revamped our assessment process to completely conform with with new standard. A number of substantive changes were made in the most recent version of the standard, so it is important that your program be evaluated against the most current norms.

ICAC's Accreditation Process:

Step 1: **Contact us and let's discuss if this program is right for your organization:**
The evaluation process is very comprehensive and will require a substantial investment of time (and some money) on the part of your organization and staff. So give us a call or send us an e-mail (info@icacnet.org) and we can discuss the particulars of your certification program(s). There is no charge for this initial discussion and no obligation to continue any further in the process.

Step 2: Complete the formal application.
If, after discussions, you decide the ICAC accreditation program is right for your organization, complete the formal application form (found on this website). This will get process started. There is an $800 non-refundable application fee required before we will begin to process your application. Upon receipt and approval of your application, the ICAC Board of Directors will assign an Accreditation Review Committee (ARC) to your organization.   A comprehensive program evaluation package will be sent to you, and the Chair of the ARC will contact you to more completely review the process and answer any questions you may have after you have had time to look over the package.

PLEASE NOTE: Unlike some accreditation bodies, ICAC does NOT require a separate application and evaluation for each certification program your organization may offer – provided the same administrative processes apply to all your submitted certification schemes. In other words, if your association offers multiple certifications in varied or related fields, but they are not separately incorporated, follow the same or similar development, oversight, quality control and administrative processes – then the single application and evaluation fee will cover the accreditation of all the programs on offer.

Submit required documentation.
As part of the certification review process, the ISO/IEC 17024 standard requires that certain documentation be in place. Your program evaluation package will walk you step-by-step through the process, letting you know what information and documentation we will need to adequately review your certification program(s).

At the time of submitting your documentation, a $2,200 assessment fee is required. Upon completion of the assessment, you will also be asked to pay for travel and accommodation expenses for the evaluation team (typically two people for one to two days).

Step 3: The Review Process
After our team has reviewed the submitted documentation (and all is in order and verified), representatives of the ARC will visit your site. During this site visit we will observe and verify that your certification operations meet or exceed industry norms. During this site visit we will meet with staff, verify processes, facilities, security and operational efficiency.

If any deficiencies or omissions in processes are observed, our team will make corrective recommendations. We also have a number of policy and procedure documents that we can provide that will not only bring your organization into compliance with industry norms, but will (hopefully) increase the quality of services you provide to your certification holders.

Assuming the ARC team finds that your certification program meets the ISO/IEC 17024 standard (after any corrective measures have been adopted), the team will make a recommendation of approval to the ICAC Board of Directors.

Accreditation of your Certification Program(s)
At the next meeting of the ICAC Board of Directors (generally held monthly), the Board will hear the recommendation of the ARC. Assuming all is in order and the ARC's recommendation is approved, the Board will issue a certificate of accreditation to your organization.

The initial Accreditation is valid for a period of five (5) years.

Step 4: Maintaining your Accreditation.
In order to maintain your accreditation through ICAC, your organization must remain a member in good standing within ICAC during the accreditation period. Organizational membership fees are $200 per year.

You will also be asked to provide volunteer assistance to the ICAC (after all, this is how we keep our fees so low). This may take the form of: service on the board of directors, service on ARC committee(s), review of documents, marketing assistance, etc. This is volunteer service after all, so is not a requirement, but is certainly appreciated.

Annual Surveillance Review: The ISO/IEC 17024 standard requires that there be an ongoing evaluation of the certification body.   Each year, all accredited organizations will be asked to fill out an accreditation surveillance form, designed to determine if any of the accredited certification schemes have undergone significant changes over the preceding 12-month period that may impact its compliance with industry norms.

In most cases, a review of the surveillance documentation is all that is required to maintain accreditation. This review is conducted as part of your annual membership.   Should the ICAC Board of Directors determine that changes of such a magnitude have occurred in your program that a site visit is required by the ARC, fees for such an onsite assessment will be negotiated.

After the first (months 12 – 24) and third year (months 36 – 48) of accreditation and , the ISO standards require that ICAC conduct an on-site visit to verify that your certification program(s) is still operating in compliance with ISO/IEC Standard 17024. This typically will require a visit by only one assessor for a period of one day. There is a $1,000 fee (plus travel expenses) for each of these surveillance inspections.

Step 5: Renewing your Accreditation

As stated earlier, your accreditation is valid for a period of 5 years. So at the end of this period, should you wish to continue to accredit your program through ICAC, your certification must undergo a comprehensive re-evaluation.

The re-evaluation process will be similar in every respect to your initial evaluation.   These is, however, no new application fee required. Once you have indicated a desire to submit to the re-evaluation process, the Board of Directors of ICAC will appoint an ARC and steps 3-6 of the ICAC accreditation process will repeat.

During the re-evaluation process, it is possible that the ISO/IEC standards may have changed.   It may be possible (depending on the timing) that the re-evaluation may be against standards that are different from your initial evaluation. You will have been kept informed of any standards changes through your ongoing membership in ICAC.

The cost of the re-evaluation is $2,000 (plus travel expenses).