

The background of the cover features a close-up photograph of vibrant green cannabis leaves on the left side. The right side of the cover is a solid dark blue-grey color, which is partially overlaid by a large, light green geometric shape resembling a stylized leaf or a series of connected hexagons. The main title is centered in the lower half of the cover.

Cannabis Safety & Quality

CSQ Certification Program Requirements

Version 2.0



CSQ Certification Program Requirements

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Part 1: CSQ Certification Program Overview

1.1. Introduction

With the exponential growth of the global cannabis markets, for both marijuana and hemp, and the continued availability of products containing cannabinoids in the mainstream marketplace, there is an immediate need for safety and quality standards. To help provide a roadmap for safety and quality in the cannabis and cannabinoid supply chain, ASI Global Standards has developed the CSQ Certification Program.

The CSQ Certification Program provides a voluntary and independent certification program for third-party auditing and certification to the CSQ Standards. The development of the CSQ Certification Program is based on ASTM, ISO, cGMP, HACCP, and other internationally recognized standards and best practices as well as applicable regulatory requirements.

The CSQ Certification Program is intended to provide standards and certification to the cannabis and cannabinoid supply chain from seed-to-sale, promoting safety and quality for the end consumer and stability and legitimacy for the industry.

When updates or changes to the CSQ Certification Program are necessary, changes shall be communicated to impacted stakeholders and made publicly available.

1.2. CSQ Ownership and Certification Program Management

The CSQ Certification Program is owned by ASI Global Standards, LLC at 500 NW Plaza, Suite 700 St. Ann, MO 63074. ASI Global Standards retains the ownership and copyright of all CSQ Certification Program related documents and holds the agreements for all involved Certification Bodies, Accreditation Bodies, and Training Organizations.

The day-to-day operations of the CSQ Certification Program are managed by the CSQ Certification Program Owner. To ensure transparency and obtain involvement from the cannabis industries, both marijuana and hemp, CSQ has established a Technical Advisory Committee which makes recommendations on various Certification Program documents.

Additional working groups of industry stakeholders will be established from time-to-time to develop new audit requirements or meet new industry standards based on various trends and innovations in the industry.

The CSQ Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is meant to make recommendations on numerous technical topics related to the CSQ Certification Program such as scope, guidance documents, audit requirements, and revisions. The TAC will be a representation of at least five (5) industry stakeholders with strong knowledge about either the cannabis industries (both marijuana and hemp), certification program management, certification, and/or accreditation.

The TAC allows various industry stakeholders to provide input on different technical documents and requirements. The TAC is also used to maintain impartiality on various CSQ Certification Program matters including complaints, appeals, disputes, or sanctions that cannot be resolved internally by the CSQ Certification Program Owner due to conflicts of interest.

The TAC is responsible for meeting at least once annually to review the entire CSQ Certification Program, including scope, audit requirements, and guidance documents. Subsequent meetings may be required on various topics throughout the year based on industry trends and/or revisions to key Certification Program documents.

TAC members are required to be present at the annual meeting and may not miss any subsequent meetings unless notification is provided to the CSQ Certification Program Owner at least seventy-two (72) hours in advance.

TAC members are selected by the CSQ Certification Program Owner via an online application process which includes the submission of the TAC Application Form. Members of the TAC will have their names and pictures posted on the CSQ Website. TAC members will serve on the committee for a term of one year for which they can be reappointed twice for a total of a 3-year term. TAC members may withdraw from their role at any time as long as it does not endanger the balance of the committee. If a member resigns from the committee during their term, then the position will be filled for the remainder of the term by another applicant selected by the CSQ Certification Program Owner.

Applications of potential TAC members will be assessed and approved by the CSQ Certification Program Owner against the following criteria:

- Knowledge and experience of the cannabis industries (both marijuana and hemp)

- Commitment to promote the CSQ Vision and Mission
- The level of representation of the applicable stakeholder group
- Any potential or current conflicts of interest

All members of the TAC will be required to maintain confidentiality about all information, documents, and decisions of the meetings unless expressly authorized on specific matters by the CSQ Certification Program Owner. Each member of the TAC shall confirm this by signing the TAC Confidentiality Agreement upon joining the committee.

1.3. Development of the CSQ Certification Program

The development and continuous improvement of the CSQ Certification Program is informed by industry trends and available international standards and regulations. The CSQ Certification Program is based on ASTM, ISO, cGMP, HACCP, and other internationally recognized standards and best practices as well as applicable international regulations. A complete list of references is outlined in Part 7: Appendices, Reference Documents.

1.4. Objective of the CSQ Certification Program

The objective of the CSQ Certification Program is to continuously ensure international safety and quality standards are established for businesses producing cannabinoid-containing product that will ultimately result in a certification that assures organizations are providing safe and quality products to consumers.

The specific CSQ Certification Program objectives are:

- To provide industry standards and best practices for organizations across the cannabis and cannabinoid product industry from seed-to-sale
- To establish and maintain an accurate and reliable database of certified licensed operations that have demonstrated conformance with the CSQ Certification Program
- To promote international recognition and acceptance of cannabis safety and quality standards
- To increase transparency throughout the cannabis and cannabinoid product supply chain

1.5. General Requirements for CSQ Audits

The CSQ Certification Program outlines the requirements to comply, assess, and certify management systems of licensed operations in the cannabis and cannabinoid product supply chain. Licensed operations shall develop, implement, and maintain the requirements outlined in the applicable CSQ Standards and will be audited by an accredited and licensed Certification Body to receive a valid certificate.

1.6. Language

In all cases the English version of the CSQ Certification Program is valid. Where the CSQ Certification Program has been translated to another language and there is any divergence, the English version shall prevail. Official translated versions of the CSQ Certification Program are available upon request.

1.7. Register of CSQ Certified Licensed Operations

The CSQ Certification Program Owner shall maintain a list of certified licensed operations that are made publicly available and accurate with up-to-date information on the status of certification.

This database of certified licensed operations will publicly display:

- Name of Licensed Operation
- Licensed Operation's Address (City, State/Province, Country ONLY)
- Scope of Certification
- Audit Date
- Certification Date
- Expiration Date
- Certification Number
- Status (Provisional, Certified, Suspended, or Withdrawn)
- Audit Score

1.8. CSQ Certification Program Scope

The CSQ Certification Program has been divided into CSQ Certification Program Requirements and the CSQ Standards. The CSQ Certification Program governs certification to each of the CSQ Standards and is supported by several addendums designed to expand the scope of the CSQ Certification Program. A list of available standards and addendums can be found on the CSQ Website.

1.8.1. CSQ Certification Program Requirements

The CSQ Certification Program Requirements outline the requirements for the implementation, management, and maintenance of the CSQ Certification Program, and requirements for the CSQ Certification Program Owner, Certification Bodies, Accreditation Bodies, Lead Auditors, Consultants, Technical Reviewers, and Licensed Operations.

The CSQ Certification Program Requirements include the following seven (7) parts:

- 1) CSQ Certification Program Overview
- 2) Requirements for Licensed Operations
- 3) Requirements for CSQ Certification Program Owner
- 4) Requirements for CSQ Certification Bodies
- 5) Requirements for CSQ Accreditation Bodies
- 6) Requirements for CSQ Auditors, Technical Reviewers, and Consultants
- 7) Appendixes

1.8.2. CSQ Standards

Each CSQ Standard covers a specific segment of the global cannabis and cannabinoid product supply chain and will include the following sections.

- Scope
- Level System
- Audit Duration
- Audit Requirements
- Appendixes

1.9. CSQ Certification Program Audit Requirements and Modules

The CSQ Certification Program is intended for the audit, certification, and registration of safety and quality management systems meeting the applicable CSQ Standards. The CSQ Standards are made up of five (5) individual modules comprising scope-specific audit requirements for each certification program and generally will incorporate the audit requirements and modules in Table 1. See each CSQ Standard for their specific audit requirements.

Table 1: CSQ Certification Program Audit Requirements and Modules

Module	Audit Requirements
Module 1	Requirements for All Licensed Operations
Module 2	Requirements for Current Industry Best Practices (Scope Dependent)
Module 3	Requirements for Cannabinoid Products and Processes
Module 4	Requirements for Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points
Module 5	Requirements for Advanced Cannabis Safety and Quality Management Systems

1.10. CSQ Certification Program Level System

The CSQ Certification Program has been divided into three (3) levels of conformance. Each level contains an increasing number of modules and corresponding audit requirements.

Table 2: CSQ Certification Program Level System

CSQ Level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
CSQ Audit Requirements	Module 1	Module 1	Module 1
	Module 2	Module 2	Module 2
	Module 3	Module 3	Module 3
		Module 4	Module 4
			Module 5

This approach allows licensed operations of various competency and sizes to get certified to the CSQ Certification Program and provides a roadmap for organizations to continuously improve their processes and achieve a best-in-class Cannabis Safety & Quality Management System. See each CSQ Standard for their specific leveling system. Reach out to your Certification Body to help assess which level is right for your company.

Part 2: Requirements for Licensed Operations

1. Preparing for Certification

1.1. Responsible Person for Certified Organizations

Licensed operations must designate, at minimum, one person responsible for managing and maintaining conformance with the applicable requirements of the CSQ Certification Program. The CSQ Certification Program requires that every licensed operation has a designated “CSQ Certification Program Manager” to oversee the development, implementation, review, and continuous improvement of the licensed operation’s cannabis safety and quality management system. If necessary, some licensed operations can choose to designate more than one CSQ Certification Program Manager to meet any shift and operational requirements.

Licensed operations should ensure all employees who are responsible for creating, implementing, and maintaining conformance with the applicable requirements of the CSQ Certification Program complete the “CSQ Certification Program Overview” training course, and shall ensure all CSQ Certification Program Managers complete the “CSQ Certification Program Overview” training course.

NOTE: The “CSQ Certification Program Overview” training course is an online training that can be accessed from the CSQ Website.

1.2. Documentation and Records

To achieve a CSQ Certification, all licensed operations must have documentation and records that show they meet the applicable CSQ Audit Requirements. It is recommended that a minimum of two months (60-days) of records be available before attempting certification.

Due to some local licensing requirements for licensed operations, an audit may be required before a licensed operation can begin operations. In these situations, the Certification Body may perform a CSQ Audit and issue a six (6) month provisional certificate as outlined in Part 2, Section 3. Subsection 3.7.

1.3. Pre-Assessments

A licensed operation may choose to conduct a Pre-Assessment or “Mock Audit” before an official audit is conducted by a CSQ licensed Certification Body. A Pre-Assessment audit is not mandatory, but it is strongly recommended to verify that the licensed operation meets the applicable CSQ Audit Requirements. Pre-Assessments can help a licensed operation identify any gaps in the licensed operation’s cannabis safety and quality management system so that corrective actions can be implemented before the official audit. Pre-Assessments may be conducted using internal resources or a CSQ licensed Certification Body.

1.4. Selecting and Changing Certification Bodies

Certification Bodies are licensed by the CSQ Certification Program Owner to conduct audits against the applicable CSQ Audit Requirements and issue corresponding certificates. All CSQ licensed Certification Bodies are required to be accredited to the international standard ISO/IEC 17065 and be subject to annual assessments of their certification activities by CSQ licensed Accreditation Bodies.

Any licensed operation that wishes to become certified to the CSQ Certification Program is always required to have an agreement with a CSQ licensed Certification Body in place which outlines the certification services provided. A current list of CSQ licensed Certification Bodies is available on the CSQ Website.

A licensed operation can change its Certification Body at any time as long as the licensed operation does not have any outstanding nonconformances and is not currently under surveillance or suspension.

2. Scope of Audit

2.1. Determining Audit Scope

The licensed operation and the Certification Body shall agree on the audit scope before the audit begins. The scope of the audit shall include:

- The agreed scope of certification
- The version of the CSQ Standard(s)
- The audit duration
- The designated CSQ Registered Auditor(s)
- The Certification Body’s fee structure

If a licensed operation's scope of certification changes after their certification audit due to adding new processes or product types, then the licensed operation must inform the Certification Body. The licensed operation can either wait to add the additional processes and/or products to the scope during the licensed operation's next certification audit or the licensed operation may request the Certification Body to complete an onsite scope extension audit. A scope extension audit does not affect the licensed operation's next certification date or expiry date.

Scope extension audits shall not be less than one (1) day and do not require an offsite document evaluation. Once the scope extension audit is completed, the Certification Body shall amend the licensed operation's information in the CSQ Database and update the licensed operation's certificate. If the Certification Body determines that the licensed operation's new processes or products do not meet applicable CSQ Audit Requirements, then additional audits or information may be required by the Certification Body.

2.2. Audit Duration

The Certification Body is responsible for providing the licensed operation with an estimate of the time it will take to complete the entire audit.

Audit times will fluctuate according to the size and scope of the licensed operation's business activities. Considerations that can impact the audit duration include:

- Size of facility
- Number of employees
- Number of product types/processes
- Scope of certification

The Certification Body must determine the duration of each audit based on the scope of certification, the risks, and the complexity of the processes involved. There are restrictions on the minimum amount of time allowed per audit. See Table 3: CSQ Certification Onsite Audit Duration and Announcement Schedule.

Table 3: CSQ Certification Onsite Audit Durations and Announcement Schedule

CSQ Level	Scheduling	Applicable Modules	Minimum Audit Time	Minimum Report Time
Level 1	Announced	Modules 1-3	1 day	0.5 day
Level 2	Announced	Modules 1-4	1.5 days	1 day
Level 3	Unannounced	Modules 1-5	2 days	1 day

NOTE: In addition to the above requirements, all Initial CSQ Certification Audits require a one (1) day Offsite Documentation Evaluation as outlined in Part 2, Section 3, Subsection 3.1.

2.3. Certification Cycle

To maintain the licensed operation's CSQ Certification, the licensed operation must maintain their CSQ Certification Cycle. There are three (3) types of CSQ Audits:

- Initial Certification Audit
- Recertification Audit
- Surveillance Audit

A licensed operation's certificate expires one (1) year and forty-five (45) days after the last day of their previous audit. Licensed operations shall receive recertification audits annually before their certificate expires.

If a licensed operation scores between 70-79 at a certification audit, then a surveillance audit must be completed as outlined in Part 2, Section 3, Subsection 3.8.

3. CSQ Certification Process

3.1. Audit Process

All Initial Certification Audits shall be conducted in three (3) parts:

1. Offsite Documentation Evaluation
2. Onsite Audit
 - a. Announced for CSQ Levels 1-2
 - b. Unannounced for CSQ Level 3
3. Offsite Report Writeup

All Recertification Audits shall be completed in two (2) parts:

1. Onsite Audit
2. Offsite Report Writeup

7.5.5 Offsite-Documentation-Evaluation

All Initial Certification Audits require a one (1) day offsite Documentation Evaluation conducted by a licensed CSQ Auditor selected by the Certification Body. The auditor is responsible for reviewing the company's cannabis safety and quality management system documentation to ensure:

- The licensed operation has an appropriately qualified CSQ Certification Program Manager.
- The licensed operation has all the necessary supporting documentation to effectively implement a successful cannabis safety and quality management system.
- The licensed operation's cannabis safety and quality management system applies to the scope of certification identified by the Certification Body.

The Documentation Evaluation shall not take place more than six (6) months prior to the onsite audit. The Certification Body shall notify the licensed operation of any nonconformances that may arise at the Documentation Evaluation that will need to be corrected before the onsite audit. Documentation Evaluations are not scored or rated, and corrective actions are not mandatory. However, nonconformances that are not addressed or do not satisfy the applicable CSQ Audit Requirements will count against the licensed operation's final audit score.

7.5.6 Onsite-Audit-~~E~~-Offsite-Report-Writeup

All Initial Certification and Recertification Audits require an Onsite Audit conducted by a licensed CSQ Auditor at the physical location of the requesting licensed operation. The Onsite Audit for CSQ Level 1-2 are conducted on an agreed date and time determined by both the licensed operation and the Certification Body.

The Initial Onsite Audit for CSQ Level 3 is conducted unannounced and shall occur no earlier than thirty (30) days nor later than sixty (60) days following the Documentation Evaluation.

The Onsite Audit shall review the entire facility, including the inside and outside of the licensed operation's building(s). The auditor is responsible for reviewing both the company's facility and documentation to ensure:

- The licensed operation's documentation matches the current processes and practices in place.
- The effectiveness of the licensed operation's cannabis safety and quality management system.
- The licensed operation is effectively mitigating all risks associated with product safety and quality.
- The licensed operation's commitment to the CSQ Certification Program.

NOTE: Nonconformances that arise from the Onsite Audit shall be completed according to Part 2, Section 3, Subsection 3.2.

After the completion of the Onsite Audit activities by the auditor, a report will be completed to document the audit and system conformance to the applicable CSQ Audit Requirements offsite. Adequate report writing time shall be allocated for the auditor to ensure a proper and detailed report is created.

3.2. Handling Nonconformances

Nonconformances identified during the CSQ Audit shall be accurately depicted in the audit report and shall completely describe the section of the CSQ Audit Requirements, specific finding, and justify the reason for the nonconformance. Nonconformance reports shall be presented to the licensed operation by the auditor during the closing meeting of the audit.

The documented audit evidence record shall be completed by the CSQ Auditor, reviewed by a CSQ Technical Reviewer, and provided to the licensed operation within seven (7) calendar days of the final day of the onsite audit.

All nonconformities from the onsite audit, both minor and major, must be addressed by the licensed operation and corrective actions submitted to the Certification Body for approval. Corrective actions must be approved by the Certification Body and closed out within thirty (30) calendar days of the closing meeting.

A final audit report and certificate, including completed and approved corrective actions, shall be made available to the licensed operation within forty-five (45) calendar days from the last day of the onsite audit.

Nonconformance extensions may be approved by the Certification Body if the licensed operation is unable to complete the corrective actions in the allotted timeframe for reasonable circumstances (e.g. if corrective actions require new equipment, construction work, etc.).

3.3. Obtaining and Maintaining Certification

To obtain and maintain a CSQ Certification, a licensed operation is required to:

- Receive a score of 70 or greater during any Certification Audit by a licensed Certification Body
- Ensure that no critical nonconformances are found during the audit
- Ensure that all major and minor nonconformances are corrected within the allotted time frame
- Maintain the CSQ Certification Cycle as identified in Part 2, Section 2, Subsection 2.3.

3.4. Unannounced Audits

All licensed operations are required to have an unannounced audit every three (3) years, and during a recertification audit to CSQ Level 3.

The date of the unannounced audit shall be determined by the Certification Body and shall be within plus or minus one (1) year and forty-five (45) calendar days of the previous year's audit date. If a licensed operation refuses to participate in an unannounced audit, the certificate shall be suspended by the Certification Body. Licensed operations may opt to have their unannounced audit sooner than the three (3) year requirement as long as the licensed operation has at least one (1) unannounced audit every three (3) years.

The licensed operation is responsible for establishing blackout dates with their Certification Body to prevent unannounced audits from occurring when the licensed operation is not operating. Blackout dates are to be determined by the licensed operation and Certification Body. Blackout dates shall be submitted not later than sixty (60) days before the unannounced audit window.

3.5. Extensions

Any licensed operation can request through their Certification Body an extension of their certificate beyond the expiration date for extreme circumstances (e.g. fire, weather, pandemics, war, etc.). The Certification Body shall conduct a risk assessment to ensure that any extension given to a licensed operation does not impact the safety or quality of the product they are producing. The Certification Body may require the licensed operation to complete additional remote or onsite activities to ensure product safety and quality is not jeopardized.

3.6. Seasonal Products

All certification audits shall only take place during the licensed operation's main operational season if applicable. Documentation for any other seasonal production shall be reviewed as part of the certification audit. If a licensed operation has any surveillance audit scheduled for outside of their season, the Certification Body can either:

- Conduct the audit before or after the designated season (depending on a risk assessment) to ensure the audit is done within that season; or
- The Certification Body can have the licensed operation run a “mock process” using similar products (e.g. using hops instead of cannabis flower for extraction, etc.)

3.7. Provisional Certificates

Due to some local licensing requirements for licensed operations, audits may be required before a licensed operation can begin operations. In these situations, where the licensed operation does not have proper records for review, the Certification Body shall conduct an audit against the applicable CSQ Audit Requirements as outlined in Part 2, Section 3, Subsection 3.1 and issue a provisional 6-month certificate.

An additional audit against the applicable CSQ Audit Requirements shall be conducted within forty-five (45) calendar days either side of the six (6) month anniversary of the last day of the previous audit. After a successful audit, the licensed operation shall be issued a new score and certificate which expires one (1) year and forty-five (45) calendar days after the last day of the audit.

3.8. Surveillance Audits

A surveillance audit is conducted when a licensed operation receives a score between 70-79 at a certification audit. The surveillance audit shall be conducted within forty-five (45) calendar days either side of the six (6) month anniversary of the last day of the previous certification audit. A new score is issued at the end of the surveillance audit, but the next certification audit date is not affected. If the licensed operation scores 79 or below on the surveillance audit, then they shall be suspended by their Certification Body as identified in Part 2, Section 4, Subsection 4.1.

The surveillance audit does not need to follow the audit duration outlined in Part 2, Section 2, Subsection 2.2. Additionally, the Certification Body may determine to do remote activities as opposed to an onsite audit. The Certification Body shall do a risk assessment to determine if remote activities are sufficient to verify the licensed operation's compliance with the CSQ Certification Program.

3.9. Audit Scoring

Deviations from the applicable CSQ Audit Requirements influences whether the licensed operation passes the certification audit. These deviations are classified into three different categories for nonconformances.

Minor: A deficiency in the cannabis safety and quality management system that is insufficient in meeting the applicable CSQ Audit Requirements and if not addressed may lead to a risk to product safety or quality.

Major: A deficiency in the cannabis safety and quality management system that is insufficient in meeting the applicable CSQ Audit Requirements and if not addressed will likely lead to a risk to product safety and quality.

Critical: Requirement has not been implemented AND is considered a significant risk to product safety and quality.

Based on the evidence collected by the CSQ Auditor during the certification audit, each applicable question of the CSQ Certification Audit is automatically scored in the final audit report. The automatic calculation subtracts the following points from the final audit score:

- -1 for a minor non-conformance
- -10 for a major non-conformance
- -100 (or automatic failure) for a critical non-conformance

The score is calculated for the certification audit as 100 – the Total Nonconformances. Licensed operations must score 70 or greater to have a certificate issued. Licensed operations that score between 70-79 shall be required to have a 6-month surveillance audit to maintain certification to the CSQ Certification Program.

Audit scoring is outlined in the template below:

Table 4: CSQ Certification Scoring and Certification Issuance

Score	Certification	Audit Frequency
80 – 100	Certificate Issued	Annual Certification Audit
70 – 79	Certificate Issued	6-Month Surveillance Audit
00 – 69	No Certificate Issued	6-Months Before Reapplying

3.10. Recalls, Voluntary Withdrawals, and Regulatory Warnings

In the event of a recall, voluntary withdrawal, or regulatory warning, the licensed operation shall notify their Certification Body within seventy-two (72) hours. If a licensed operation fails to notify their Certification Body within seventy-two (72) hours then the licensed operation shall be suspended according to Part 2, Section 4, Subsection 4.1.

3.11. Use of CSQ Logo, Level Insignia, and Markings

The CSQ Logo, Level Insignia, and Markings are owned by CSQ. All licensed operations certified to the CSQ Certification Program have the right to use the CSQ Logo, Level Insignia, and Markings for the duration of the licensed operation's certification. The licensed operation may use the CSQ Logo, Level Insignia, and Markings on marketing material, product displays, brochures, flyers, advertisements, press releases, company websites, internal documents, etc.

NOTE: The CSQ Logo, Level Insignia, and Markings cannot be used by licensed operations for their final product packaging. Guidelines for using the CSQ Logo, Level Insignia, and Markings are available upon request.

A licensed operation must immediately stop using the CSQ Logo, Level Insignia, and Markings if the licensed operation has been suspended or withdrawn by their Certification Body or upon expiration of their CSQ Certification.

4. Certification Suspension and Withdrawal

4.1. Suspension

The Certification Body shall suspend a licensed operation's CSQ certificate if a licensed operation:

- Fails to complete corrective actions in the timeframe set by Certification Body
- Fails to communicate recalls or regulatory warnings to the Certification Body or CSQ Certification Program Owner
- Fails to pay for their certification audit within the agreed timeline between the licensed operation and Certification Body
- Fails to permit a certification or surveillance audit
- Scores below 79 on a surveillance audit
- If the Certification Body at any time determines the licensed operation has failed to meet the CSQ Certification Program requirements

Any licensed operation that is suspended must respond with a corrective action plan within seventy-two (72) hours and must have that corrective action plan approved by the Certification Body within seven (7) calendar days from the original submission of the corrective action plan to the Certification Body. Once a corrective action plan has been accepted by the Certification Body then the suspension shall be lifted.

4.2. Withdrawal

The Certification Body shall withdraw the certificate from a licensed operation if:

- The licensed operation has been placed under suspension and has failed to submit an approved corrective action plan as defined by the Certification Body
- The licensed operation has received a critical finding during the certification audit
- The licensed operation has falsified records
- There is a failure to uphold the integrity of the CSQ Certification Program as determined by the Certification Body
- The licensed operation ceases operations or has significant changes to senior management (e.g. acquisition, reconstruction, merger, etc.) that directly affects the cannabis safety and quality management system
- The licensed operation no longer wishes to participate in the CSQ Certification Program

Upon withdrawal of a licensed operation's certification, a licensed operation must wait six (6) months from the last audit date to reapply for certification, unless a waiver is provided to the Certification Body by the CSQ Certification Program Owner.

5. Complaints, Appeals, and Disputes

5.1. Complaint Process

Complaints about a CSQ licensed Certification Body, Auditor, or Technical Reviewer shall be submitted to the licensed operation's Certification Body first before submitting complaints to the CSQ Certification Program Owner. When a complaint cannot be adequately resolved between the licensed operation and the Certification Body, the matter shall be referred to the CSQ Certification Program Owner and a formal complaint filed on the CSQ Website. The CSQ Certification Program Owner will investigate and respond to any complaints within seven (7) days from the date the complaint was submitted.

From time to time the Certification Body may receive a complaint about a licensed operation from a 3rd party (e.g. licensed operation's employee, supplier, retailer, consumer, etc.). Upon receiving a complaint, the Certification Body shall investigate to determine the validity, and any risks associated with the complaint. If a complaint about a licensed operation is submitted to the CSQ Certification Program Owner, the CSQ Certification Program Owner shall forward the complaint to the Certification Body for investigation and resolution.

If upon the investigation of a complaint it is concluded that there has been a failure of a licensed operation's cannabis safety and quality management system or any other condition not aligned with the CSQ Certification Program, the Certification Body shall suspend the licensed operation's certification according to Part 2, Section 4, Subsection 4.1.

5.2. Appeals and Disputes Process

Appeals or Disputes regarding decisions on the suspension and/or withdrawal of a licensed operation's certificate by a Certification Body shall not hinder the decision to suspend or withdraw the licensed operation's certificate. Appeals or disputes regarding nonconformances, suspensions, or withdrawals shall be submitted to the licensed operation's Certification Body first before submitting to the CSQ Certification Program Owner.

When an appeal or dispute cannot be adequately resolved between the licensed operation and the Certification Body, the matter shall be referred to the CSQ Certification Program Owner and a formal appeal or dispute filed on the CSQ Website. The CSQ Certification Program Owner will investigate and respond to any appeal or dispute within seven (7) days from the date the appeal or dispute was submitted.



Part 3: Requirements for CSQ Certification Program Owner

1. CSQ Integrity Program

The CSQ Certification Program Owner shall ensure the CSQ Certification Program's integrity is upheld through a CSQ Integrity Program. The CSQ Integrity Program will be reviewed and evaluated at a minimum annually by the CSQ Certification Program Owner. The CSQ Certification Program Owner shall maintain a policy of sanctions consisting of a system of written warnings and actions based on findings during the assessment of the CSQ Integrity Program.

The CSQ Integrity Program consists of the following elements:

- A program of KPI driven reviews for Certification Bodies including:
 - Audit Management
 - Auditor Report Quality
 - Auditor Management
 - Training
 - Communication
- Contracts with accredited and licensed Certification Bodies
- Registration of all qualified auditors under the CSQ Certification Program
- A program of onsite assessments and auditor witness assessments

2. Key Performance Indicators

To measure the performance of the CSQ Certification Program and reporting systems, five Key Performance Indicators (KPI) will be used to measure and improve the systems. The following areas will be measured according to the following guidelines:

2.1. Audit Management

- All audits must be conducted against the correct version of the CSQ Certification Program
- The audit team used for certification must have the required competency to conduct audits for the Certification Body to the CSQ Certification Program

- The Certification Body shall update the CSQ Database with all new audit reports and certificates issued within forty-five (45) days of the completed audit
- All audits must be followed up with the CSQ Customer Survey to gather feedback for continuous improvement of the audit process when the certificate is issued

2.2. Auditor Report Quality

- All audit report templates shall be pulled from the CSQ Database by the Certification Body to ensure up to date documentation is used for all CSQ Audits
- The entirety of the CSQ Audit Report is completed including each section summary and specific letter item with enough evidence as required by that section
- Each nonconformance has an appropriate response with enough evidence to support the finding
- Each question or section marked “Not Applicable” (“N/A”) or “Exempt” shall have a response stating why that question or section is “N/A” or “Exempt”
- Each compliant question has an appropriate response with evidence demonstrating how the licensed operation is compliant

2.3. Auditor Management

- The audit team used for certification must have the required competency to conduct audits for the Certification Body to the CSQ Certification Program
- All auditors must provide adequate documentation and/or experience to show the ability to conduct audits to the applicable CSQ Audit Requirements
- Auditors must keep annual certification up to date in the CSQ Database
- The auditor is responsible to complete required continuing education annually to ensure up-to-date understanding of the CSQ Audit Requirements and industry best practices

2.4. Training

- All training material developed by the CSQ Certification Program Owner will be posted on the CSQ Website
- Any communication affecting the implementation, interpretation, or usage of the CSQ Certification Program will be released directly onto the CSQ Website
- Any Certified Trainers and/or Training Programs for the CSQ Certification Program will be listed on the CSQ Website to ensure proper authorization

2.5. Communication

- All complaints, appeals, and disputes are responded to within seventy-two (72) hours by the Certification Body
- All recalls or regulatory warnings are communicated to the Certification Body and the CSQ Certification Program Owner within seventy-two (72) hours

3. Accreditation Requirements

All CSQ licensed Certification Bodies are required to be accredited to the international standard ISO/IEC 17065 and be subject to annual assessments of their certification activities by CSQ licensed Accreditation Bodies. This mandatory oversight document specifies the requirements that Certification Bodies shall observe when performing third-party certification of a licensed operation's cannabis safety and quality management system.

Once all accreditation and witness audits have been completed or validated and accreditation against the CSQ Certification Program has been achieved by the Certification Body, the Certification Body can conduct accredited CSQ Audits.

4. Witness and Follow-Up Audits

Accreditation Bodies will witness Certification Body auditors as part of the accreditation process when required.

The CSQ Certification Program Owner will conduct, at minimum, one (1) witness audit and one (1) follow-up audit of all approved Certification Bodies within two (2) years.

4.1. Witness Audits

A CSQ Certification Program Owner representative will shadow an audit being conducted by an approved Certification Body to the CSQ Certification Program.

4.2. Follow-Up Audits

A CSQ Certification Program Owner representative will conduct an audit on a licensed operation after the Certification Body has conducted an audit at that licensed operation when deemed necessary. Follow-up audits shall be scheduled no more than thirty (30) days after the last day of the certification audit.

5. Sanctions and Fines

The CSQ Certification Program Owner will issue a nonconformance to Certification Bodies for any breach of the CSQ Certification Program's requirements. Nonconformances issued to Certification Bodies will require a response with an appropriate corrective action and root cause analysis. Nonconformances shall be issued to Certification Bodies for the following reasons:

- Any discrepancies found during follow-up or witness audits
- Any discrepancies raised by the CSQ Integrity Program
- Any valid complaint raised by a licensed operation or 3rd party
- Feedback received from Accreditation Bodies
- Multiple certificate decisions given outside of the forty-five (45) day window
- Incorrect use of the CSQ Logo, Level Insignia, or Markings
- Any complaint, appeal, or dispute not handled properly
- Use of an auditor that does not meet the requirements outlined in Part 6: Requirements for CSQ Auditors, Consultants, and Technical Reviewers
- Any valid claim of impartiality, discrimination, or breach of confidentiality

Repeated nonconformances will be brought up to the CSQ Certification Program Owner for investigation and to determine appropriate sanctioning. Sanctions may include:

- Scope Limitation
- Fines

- Suspension
- Termination

The CSQ Certification Program Owner has the right to suspend, terminate, or limit the scope of the Certification Body's license agreement. Reasons could be, but not limited to:

- Accreditation not achieved within one (1) year
- Voluntary termination of the accreditation
- Not meeting the minimum number of ten (10) annual certification audits
- Non-payment of the licensing fee to CSQ Certification Program Owner
- Repetitive non-compliance with any CSQ Certification Program or applicable CSQ Audit Requirements
- Egregious violation with any CSQ Certification Program or applicable CSQ Audit Requirements

NOTE: The minimum number of annual certification audits does not apply to Certification Bodies in their first full calendar year of auditing against the CSQ Certification Program.

When a Certification Body's license is suspended by the CSQ Certification Program Owner, a determination will be made to assess the extent to which the Certification Body may continue or restart their auditing activities. The CSQ Certification Program Owner will publish suspensions on the CSQ Website, and any relevant Accreditation Body will be notified.

The CSQ Certification Program Owner will restore the suspended license when the Certification Body has demonstrated that the issue which resulted in the suspension has been resolved and the conditions for lifting the suspension have been met.

When a Certification Body's license is terminated by the CSQ Certification Program Owner, the Certification Body shall agree with the CSQ Certification Program Owner on the transfer of its certified locations following the requirements outlined in the license agreement. A Certification Body may reapply to audit against the CSQ Certification Program after six (6) months from the date of termination.

Part 4: Requirements for CSQ Certification Bodies

1. Certification Body Onboarding Process

1.1. Application and Approval Process

All Certification Bodies wishing to become accredited to the CSQ Certification Program must apply using the form available from the CSQ Website and submit it to info@CSQCertification.com for provisional approval. Upon provisional approval of a Certification Body's application, the Certification Body will need to sign the licensing agreement and pay the initial licensing fee. Additionally, Certification Bodies will have twelve (12) months from their provisional approval date to become accredited to ISO/IEC 17065. Certification Bodies will be approved based on the demand for audits and the CSQ Certification Program's need for new Certification Bodies.

1.2. Licensing Agreement

All Certification Bodies are required to have a signed license agreement with the CSQ Certification Program Owner containing a pre-defined scope of the Certification Body's certification capabilities to the CSQ Certification Program's Audit Requirements.

Upon receiving approval from the CSQ Certification Program Owner the Certification Body must pay an initial licensing fee for the license to audit against the CSQ Certification Program. The Certification Body will then be required to pay an annual fee based on the number of audits conducted under the CSQ Certification Program. This annual fee will be due at the end of the first quarter and will be calculated from the previous year's audit submission totals.

All Certification Bodies shall comply with the license agreement and the CSQ Integrity Program to maintain their status as a CSQ licensed Certification Body.

1.3. Accreditation Requirements

All Certification Bodies are required to be accredited to ISO/IEC 17065 by an approved Accreditation Body. If a Certification Body is already accredited to ISO/IEC 17065 through another Certification Program, then that Certification Body may be provisionally approved by the CSQ Certification Program Owner and will be able to issue up to ten (10) unaccredited certificates before final approval.

Once accreditation has been obtained, the Certification Body shall send a copy of the accreditation evidence to the CSQ Certification Program Owner for final approval. Only after accreditation to ISO/IEC 17065 and final approval by the CSQ Certification Program Owner will the Certification Body be allowed to place the CSQ Logo, Level Insignia, or Markings on their certificates.

Certification Bodies are required to be accredited to all CSQ Standards. A list of CSQ Standards is available from the CSQ Website.

1.4. Responsible Person for CSQ Certification Program Management

The Certification Body shall designate a person as responsible for managing the CSQ Certification Program and the relationship with the CSQ Certification Program Owner to maintain a consistent point of contact and create a two-way streamline of information.

This person shall be accountable for all aspects of implementing and maintaining the CSQ Certification Program. This person shall:

- Be fluent in English
- Have a designated back-up in case this person is temporarily unavailable
- Be a clear point of contact for all communication between the Certification Body and the CSQ Certification Program Owner
- Create a system to distribute all new information regarding the CSQ Certification Program to the appropriate Certification Body personnel and stakeholders promptly
- Be responsible for implementing and maintaining the CSQ Database
- Attend periodic Certification Body meetings as set forth by the CSQ Certification Program Owner

2. General Requirements

The international criteria for the accreditation of Certification Bodies that certify products (products, processes, and services) are detailed in ISO/IEC 17065. The following General Requirements are in addition to the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065.

2.1. Legal and Contractual Matters

2.1.1. Legal Responsibility

The Certification Body shall be a legal entity licensed by the CSQ Certification Program Owner and hold a valid ISO/IEC 17065 accreditation for the CSQ Certification Program before they can conduct accredited audits against the CSQ Certification Program.

2.1.2. Certification Agreement

The Certification Body shall have a legally enforceable agreement or contract between them and each licensed operation. Certification agreements shall include all the following information:

- The scope of the licensed operation's certification
- The regulatory agency responsible for that licensed operation's scope of products/processes
- The projected time to conduct and finalize the audit and the reporting requirements
- The Certification Body's payment and fee structure
- The requirements for the licensed operation to maintain its certification from year-to-year
- The requirements for the licensed operation to reproduce copies of certification documents in their entirety and without modifications
- The protocol for the correct use of the CSQ Logo, Level Insignia, and Markings and protocol for immediately removing the CSQ Logo, Level Insignia, and Markings once a licensed operation is withdrawn
- The protocol for alerting the Certification Body of any recall or regulatory warning within seventy-two (72) hours of receipt
- Any conditions under which the CSQ Certification is issued, withdrawn, or suspended
- The Certification Body's confidentiality agreement that includes how the information will only be shared with the CSQ Certification Program Owner, including information that will be publicly available on the CSQ

Website, or when required by law or applicable government authorities

- The licensed operations required cooperation when allowing witness assessments or follow-up audits by the Accreditation Body or the CSQ Certification Program Owner
- The protocol for handling all complaints, appeals, and disputes
- The protocol for licensed operations to notify the Certification Body whenever there is a significant change regarding any of the following:
 - Change in legal or organizational status of the company (e.g. new ownership, facility closure, etc.)
 - Addition of new product types that could affect certification
 - New or updated facility address
 - Change in the person responsible for managing conformance to the applicable audit requirements of the CSQ Certification Program

2.1.3. Use of CSQ Logo, Level Insignia, and Markings

Certification Bodies are responsible for ensuring all certified licensed operations are using the CSQ Logo, Level Insignia, and Markings according to the CSQ Certification Program's requirements. Certification Bodies are responsible for ensuring that their auditors evaluate the appropriate use of the CSQ Logo, Level Insignia, and Markings during each certification audit as part of the CSQ Certification Program.

2.2. Certification Body Sanctions and Termination

The CSQ Certification Program Owner will issue a nonconformance to Certification Bodies for any breach of the CSQ Certification Program's requirements. Nonconformances issued to Certification Bodies will require a response with an appropriate corrective action and root cause analysis. Nonconformances shall be issued to Certification Bodies for the following reasons:

- Any discrepancies found during follow-up or witness audits
- Any discrepancies raised by the CSQ Integrity Program
- Any valid complaint raised by a licensed operation or 3rd party
- Feedback received from Accreditation Bodies
- Multiple certificate decisions given outside of the forty-five (45) day window
- Incorrect use of the CSQ Logo, Level Insignia, or Markings
- Any complaint, appeal, or dispute not handled properly

- Use of an auditor that does not meet the requirements outlined in Part 6: Requirements for CSQ Auditors, Consultants, and Technical Reviewers
- Any valid claim of impartiality, discrimination, or breach of confidentiality

Repeated nonconformances will be brought up to the CSQ Certification Program Owner for investigation and to determine appropriate sanctioning. Sanctions may include:

- Scope Limitation
- Fines
- Suspension
- Termination

The CSQ Certification Program Owner has the right to suspend, terminate, or limit the scope of the Certification Body's license agreement. Reasons could be, but not limited to:

- Accreditation not achieved within one (1) year
- Voluntary termination of the accreditation
- Not meeting the minimum number of ten (10) annual certification audits
- Non-payment of the licensing fee to CSQ Certification Program Owner
- Repetitive non-compliance with any CSQ Certification Program or applicable CSQ Audit Requirements
- Egregious violation with any CSQ Certification Program or applicable CSQ Audit Requirements

NOTE: The minimum number of annual certification audits does not apply to Certification Bodies in their first full calendar year of auditing against the CSQ Certification Program.

When a Certification Body's license is suspended by the CSQ Certification Program Owner, a determination will be made to assess the extent to which the Certification Body may continue or restart their auditing activities. The CSQ Certification Program Owner will publish suspensions on the CSQ Website, and any relevant Accreditation Body will be notified.

The CSQ Certification Program Owner will restore the suspended license when the Certification Body has demonstrated that the issue which resulted in the suspension has been resolved and the conditions for lifting the suspension have been met.

When a Certification Body's license is terminated by the CSQ Certification Program Owner, the Certification Body shall agree with the CSQ Certification Program Owner on the transfer of its certified locations following the requirements outlined in the license agreement. A Certification Body may reapply to audit against the CSQ Certification Program after six (6) months from the date of termination.

2.3. Management of Impartiality

All certification activities shall be undertaken impartially and in accordance with ISO/IEC 17065. The Certification Body shall be responsible for the impartiality of its certification activities and shall not allow commercial, financial, or other pressures to compromise impartiality. The Certification Body shall not offer or provide management system consulting or internal auditing to its clients.

CSQ Auditors shall not provide certification activities for a licensed operation for which they have provided consulting activities within the past three (3) years.

CSQ Technical Reviewers and Certification Decision Makers shall not be used to review or make decisions for a licensed operation for which they have provided consulting activities within the past three (3) years. Consulting activities may include:

- Documentation creation or preparation
- Advising on how to improve any aspects of the safety and/or quality of the product or processes
- Delivering training

2.4. Liability and Financing

The Certification Body shall have the financial stability and resources required for its operations and have adequate insurance required to cover all liabilities arising from its operations.

2.5. Non-Discriminatory Conditions

The Certification Body shall not discriminate and shall make its services accessible to all applicants whose activities fall within the scope of its operations. Certification Bodies may decline to accept a licensed operations application or certification based on the following:

- Licensed operation has a history of recalls, regulatory warnings, or repeat nonconformances
- Licensed operation is participating in illegal activities or has falsified records
- Licensed operation is not licensed appropriately or operating in regulatory compliance
- Licensed operation owes a financial debt or has an outstanding balance with the Certification Body

2.6. Confidentiality

The Certification Body shall ensure that all information, documents, records, etc., apart from information that the licensed operation makes publicly available, are kept confidential between the Certification Body, the licensed operation, and the CSQ Certification Program Owner. Additionally, the Certification Body shall inform the licensed operation of what information will be made publicly available on the CSQ Website.

When the Certification Body is required by law or authorized by contractual arrangements to release confidential information, the licensed operations concerned shall, unless prohibited by law, be notified of the information provided.

2.7. Publicly Available Information

The Certification Body shall make publicly available all information about the certification process, including evaluation procedures, rules and procedures for granting, for maintaining, for extending or reducing the scope of, for suspending, for withdrawing, or for refusing certification. The Certification Body shall inform the licensed operation of what information will be made publicly available on the CSQ Website.

Information that will be made publicly available on the CSQ Website includes:

- Name of Licensed Operation
- Licensed Operation's Address (City, State/Province, Country ONLY)
- Scope of Certification
- Audit Date
- Certification Date
- Expiration Date
- Certification Number
- Status (Provisional, Certified, Suspended, or Withdrawn)
- Audit Score

3. Structure Requirements

The international criteria for the accreditation of Certification Bodies that certify products (products, processes, and services) are detailed in ISO/IEC 17065. The following Structure Requirements are in addition to the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065.

3.1. Organization Structure and Top Management

The organization and structure of the Certification Body shall be organized to ensure impartiality throughout the entire certification process.

3.2. Mechanism for Safeguarding Impartiality

The Certification Body shall have an Impartiality Committee that consists of, at minimum, three (3) individuals and is majority independent from the Certification Body personnel. The Impartiality Committee shall provide input on the following:

- Any decision related to safeguarding the impartiality of the Certification Body or certification activities
- Any dispute to an appeal for nonconformances, suspension, or withdrawal of a licensed operation
- Input on the Certification Body's risk assessment

Independent members of the impartiality committee may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Licensed operations certified by the Certification Body or other Certification Bodies
- Consumers
- Conformity Assessment Experts
- Representatives of Industry Trade Associations or Consumer Organizations
- Government Regulators
- Industry Professionals

4. Resource Requirements

The international criteria for the accreditation of Certification Bodies that certify products (products, processes, and services) are detailed in ISO/IEC 17065. The following Resource Requirements are in addition to the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065.

4.1. Certification Body Personnel

4.1.1. General

The Certification Body shall employ, or have access to, enough competent personnel to cover its operations related to the CSQ Certification Program management and audits. Personnel can include full-time employees and independent contractors.

When allocating the audit team, the Certification Body shall ensure the following:

- Auditors are always registered and approved to provide CSQ Audits based on the requirements outlined in Part 6: Requirements for CSQ Auditors, Consultants, and Technical Reviewers
- The Audit Team meets the competency requirements outlined in Part 6: Requirements for CSQ Auditors, Consultants, and Technical Reviewers
- Auditors do not perform more than three (3) consecutive certification audits at a specific licensed operation

New Auditors to the CSQ Certification Program shall have their first five (5) audits closely monitored by the Certification Body which includes being witnessed their first audit by a registered CSQ Auditor, Technical Reviewer, or CSQ Certification Program Owner.

Additionally, all auditors shall be witnessed by either a registered CSQ Auditor, Technical Reviewer, or CSQ Certification Program Owner, at minimum, once every three (3) years. Auditors that are witnessed as part of the Certification Bodies accreditation requirements or have been witnessed by another Certification Body shall count as meeting the witness requirements for new auditors if appropriate documentation and records are maintained.

NOTE: Certification Bodies may utilize witness assessment from alternative ISO/IEC 17065 accredited certification programs.

Technical Reviewers shall meet all the requirements outlined in Part 6: Requirements for CSQ Auditors, Consultants, and Technical Reviewers.

4.1.2. Contract with the Personnel

The Certification Body shall require all CSQ Auditors, Technical Reviewers, and Certification Decision Makers to sign a contract or agreement that requires them to disclose any conflict of interest that may currently exist or may arise during certification activities.

4.2. Resources for Evaluation

4.2.1. Internal Resources

The Certification Body shall have sufficient internal resources to meet the requirements of the CSQ Certification Program. Where external resources are needed, the Certification Body shall meet all applicable requirements of the CSQ Certification Program and ISO/IEC 17065.

4.2.2. External Resources (Outsourcing)

The CSQ Certification Program does not require Certification Bodies to outsource or use external resources. If the Certification Body outsources additional resources, they must meet the applicable requirements for:

- Testing – ISO/IEC 17025
- Inspecting – ISO/IEC 17020

5. Process Requirements

The international criteria for the accreditation of Certification Bodies that certify products (products, processes, and services) are detailed in ISO/IEC 17065. The following Process Requirements are in addition to the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065.

5.1. General Requirements

The Certification Body shall have full control over all certification activities related to the CSQ Certification Program. The Certification Body shall adhere to all the requirements outlined in the CSQ Certification Program.

5.2. Application

The Certification Body shall obtain all the necessary information from each licensed operation to accurately complete the entire certification process. The Certification Body shall have an agreement with each licensed operation that includes all the necessary information outlined in the CSQ Certification Program.

5.3. Application Review

The Certification Body shall conduct a review of all information obtained to ensure that information accurately reflects the scope of the audit and the Certification Body has the competency and resources to complete the entire certification process. Additionally, the Certification Body shall ensure that the licensed operation has a valid license to operate a legal cannabis (marijuana and/or hemp) operation and is not currently on the CSQ Withdrawn List on the CSQ Website.

5.4. Evaluation

The Certification Body shall have a plan for all evaluation activities. This plan shall allow for the necessary arrangements to complete a successful audit against the CSQ Certification Program. This includes adequate resources such as personnel, time allocated for auditing, and other necessary information or documentation.

Due to the nature of the cannabis industries (marijuana and hemp), local regulations vary from country to country, state to state, and city to city. It is the responsibility of the Certification Body to ensure that their CSQ Auditors and Technical Reviewers stay current with local regulations within their scope of work.

5.5. Review

The Certification Body shall review all information and results related to all evaluation activities. The person responsible for reviewing evaluation activities may also be the person responsible for certification decision, however, this person shall not be involved in the evaluation process.

The review shall include both a review of technical and grammatical matters. The technical review shall include a review of the following:

- The entirety of the CSQ Audit Report is completed with enough evidence as required by that section, or subsection, and specific letter item
- Each nonconformance has an appropriate response with enough evidence to support the finding
- Each question documented as “Not Applicable” (N/A), or “Exempt” shall have a response stating why that question is “N/A” or “Exempt”
- Each compliant question has an appropriate response with evidence demonstrating how the licensed operation is compliant

All Technical Reviewers shall be registered in the CSQ Database and meet the requirements for Technical Reviewers in Part 6: Requirements for CSQ Auditors, Consultants, and Technical Reviewers. The Certification Body shall ensure that the full audit report including nonconformances is available to the licensed operation within seven (7) calendar days from the last day of the onsite audit.

5.6. Certification Decision

The Certification Body shall be responsible for and shall retain authority for all certification decisions. The Certification Body shall assign at least one person responsible for making the certification decision. The person responsible for making the certification decision may be the same as the Technical Reviewer but shall not be a part of the evaluation process. The review and certification decision may be completed concurrently.

Certification shall only be granted to licensed operations that:

- Receive a score of 70 or greater
- Successfully close out all nonconformances and have corrective actions verified and accepted by the Certification Body in the allotted timeframe

NOTE: The Certification Body shall additionally consider the licensed operation's history of previous audits, complaints, recalls, and regulatory warnings when making the certification decision.

The Certification Body shall notify the licensed operation of a decision to either grant certification or not within forty-five (45) calendar days from the last date of the audit. The certificate shall be issued within five (5) calendar days of the certification decision. The Certification Body shall issue the certificate electronically in a format that cannot be easily modified (e.g. PDF). The Certification Body shall identify any reason(s) for the decision to not grant certification in writing to the licensed operation.

5.7. Certification Documentation

The Certification Body shall provide the licensed operation with a formal certificate that meets the following requirements:

- The name, address, website, and logo of the certification body
- The Certification Body's Accreditation Mark
- Signature of the person responsible for making the certification decision
- The date certification is granted and the expiration date of the certificate
- The name and address of the licensed operation
- The scope of certification including the CSQ Audit Requirements and product list
- The licensed operations unique certification number
- The audit score
- The official CSQ Logo, Level Insignia, and Markings (as applicable)

Additionally, the certificate shall follow all formatting requirements of the CSQ Certification Program.

5.8. Directory of Certified Products and Services

The Certification Body is responsible for providing accurate certificate information for each certified licensed operation to the CSQ Certification Program Owner. The information outlined in Part 1, Section 1, Subsection 1.7 will be made publicly available on the CSQ website.

5.9. Surveillance

The Certification Body shall conduct a surveillance audit when the licensed operation scores between 70-79 on a certification audit. The surveillance audit shall be conducted within forty-five (45) calendar days either side of the six (6) month anniversary of the last day of the previous certification audit. A new score is issued at the surveillance audit, but the next certification audit date is not affected. If the licensed operation scores 79 or below on the surveillance audit, then the Certification Body shall suspend the licensed operation according to Part 5, Section 5, Subsection 5.11.

The surveillance audit does not need to follow the audit duration outlined in Part 2, Section 2, Subsection 2.2, and does not require a Documentation Evaluation as defined in Part 2, Section 3, Subsection 3.1.1. Additionally, the Certification Body may determine to do remote activities as opposed to an onsite audit. The Certification Body shall do a risk assessment to determine if remote activities are sufficient to verify the licensed operation's compliance with the CSQ Certification Program. At minimum, the Certification Body shall conduct an in-depth review of the licensed operation's corrective actions implemented from the previous audit.

5.10. Changes Affecting Certification

When changes, revisions, or updates occur to the CSQ Certification Program that affect the licensed operation's certification, the Certification Body shall ensure these changes are communicated to each certified licensed operation. The Certification Body shall verify the implementation of the changes by each licensed operation at the licensed operation's next certification audit.

When significant changes are made by the licensed operation, (e.g. new ownership, new or additional processes or products, etc.) these changes must be communicated by the licensed operation to the Certification Body in a timely manner. The Certification Body shall reevaluate the licensed operation's certification and decide if additional actions must be taken to maintain certification.

Additional actions may include:

- A Scope Extension Audit
- Issuance of a revised certificate

5.11. Suspension and Withdrawal of Certification

The Certification Body shall suspend and withdraw licensed operation according to Part 2, Section 4.

Where a licensed operation's certificate is suspended or withdrawn, the Certification Body shall inform the licensed operation, in writing, the reason(s) for the suspension or withdrawal and the date the suspension or withdrawal goes into effect. The Certification Body shall also immediately amend the licensed operation's information of the CSQ website upon suspension or withdrawal.

Where a licensed operation's certificate is suspended, the Certification Body shall request for a detailed corrective action plan within seventy-two (72) hours from receiving notice of suspension. After the Certification Body receives a licensed operation's corrective action plan in response to a suspension, the Certification Body may need to perform additional activities to ensure the corrective action plan correctly mitigates the risk. Additional activities may include but are not limited to, an onsite audit to ensure the corrective actions have been implemented and effectively close out any nonconformances.

Where a licensed operation's certificate is withdrawn, the Certification Body shall inform the licensed operation in writing that they shall not represent themselves as holding a CSQ Certification or use the CSQ Logo, Level Insignia, or Markings as outlined in Part 2, Section 3, Subsection 3.11. A withdrawn licensed operation may go through the certification process again after six (6) months.

5.12. Records

The Certification Body shall retain all records related to the CSQ Certification Program for a minimum of five (5) years or as required by law, whichever is greater.

5.13. Complaints, Appeals, and Disputes

The Certification Body shall document, and provide to licensed operations, its procedure for handling and resolving complaints, appeals, or disputes made by a licensed operation.

Upon receipt of a complaint or appeal, the Certification Body shall confirm whether the complaint, appeal, or dispute relates to its certification activities for which it is responsible and if so, shall address it within seventy-two (72) hours.

The Certification Body shall give formal written notice of the outcome of all complaints, appeals, and disputes.

6. Management System Requirements

The international criteria for the accreditation of Certification Bodies that certify products (products, processes, and services) are detailed in ISO/IEC 17065. The following Management System Requirements are in addition to the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065.

6.1. Control of Documents

The Certification Body shall establish procedures to control both internal and external documents. The procedures shall define the controls needed for both electronic and paper documents.

6.2. Control of Records

The Certification Body shall establish procedures to control both electronic and paper records. The Certification Body shall maintain records according to Part 5, Section 5, Subsection 5.12.

6.3. Management Review

The Certification Body shall establish procedures to review the management of the entire CSQ Certification Program at least once annually. These reviews shall include a review of all inputs and outputs as described in ISO/IEC 17065.

6.4. Internal Audits

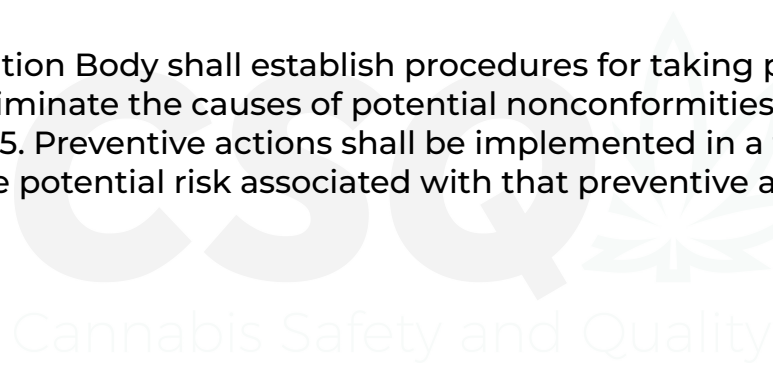
The Certification Body shall conduct, at minimum, an annual internal audit that fulfills the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065. The internal audit shall verify that a management system for the CSQ Certification Program is effectively implemented and maintained. Any nonconformances that arise from the internal audit shall be corrected in a timely manner based on the risk of the nonconformance.

6.5. Corrective Actions

The Certification Body shall establish procedures for the identification and management of nonconformities in its operations according to ISO/IEC 17065. Corrective actions shall be effectively implemented in a timely manner based on the risk of the nonconformance.

6.6. Preventive Actions

The Certification Body shall establish procedures for taking preventive actions to eliminate the causes of potential nonconformities according to ISO/IEC 17065. Preventive actions shall be implemented in a timely manner based on the potential risk associated with that preventive action.



Part 5: Requirements for CSQ Accreditation Bodies

1. Onboarding Process

1.1. General Requirements

All Accreditation Bodies that wish to accredit CSQ licensed Certification Bodies to ISO/IEC 17065 shall be members of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and signatories to the Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) for product certification with the CSQ Certification Program Owner.

The Accreditation Body shall establish a primary contact person for all communication between the CSQ Certification Program Owner and the Accreditation Body. The Accreditation Body shall notify the CSQ Certification Program Owner whenever there are changes in contact persons, ownership, legal status, IAF membership status, or any other relevant information involving the accreditation process or the agreement between the CSQ Certification Program Owner and the Accreditation Body.

The CSQ Certification Program Owner will conduct annual evaluations of each Accreditation Body to ensure the CSQ Certification Program's requirements are continuously being met. Any feedback from these evaluations will be shared with the Accreditation Body.

1.2. Application and Approval Process

All Accreditation Bodies that wish to accredit licensed Certification Bodies must complete the Accreditation Body Application Form available on the CSQ Website and submit it to info@CSQCertification.com. Accreditation Bodies will be approved based on their conformance with the CSQ Certification Program's requirements.

1.3. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

Upon approval of an Accreditation Body's application, a Memorandum of Understanding shall be agreed upon by both the CSQ Certification Program Owner and the Accreditation Body. This agreement shall lay out the terms and responsibilities of each party for the accreditation of CSQ licensed Certification Bodies.

2. Accreditation Process

2.1. General Requirements

The Accreditation Body shall verify that a Certification Body has a signed license agreement with the CSQ Certification Program Owner before beginning the accreditation process. The Accreditation Body shall inform the CSQ Certification Program Owner whenever the accreditation status of a CSQ licensed Certification Body changes.

The accreditation process is completed in two parts:

- Office Assessment
- Witness Audit(s)

The Accreditation Body's assessor or assessment team must meet the following requirements:

- Competence in ISO/IEC 17065
- Have taken the "CSQ Lead Auditor Training" course
- Have taken HACCP course recognized by the International HACCP Alliance

2.2. Scope of Accreditation

The Accreditation Body shall clearly define the scope of accreditation to the Certification Body before the accreditation process begins.

NOTE: All Certification Bodies are required to be accredited to all CSQ Standards as part of their scope of accreditation and license agreement with the CSQ Certification Program Owner.

The accreditation certificate shall clearly state:

- The scope of accreditation
- The initial date of accreditation
- The expiry date of accreditation
- Signature of an authorized agent
- Certification Body's name and address

2.3. Office Assessment

Both the initial accreditation process and each annual accreditation cycle shall include an assessment by the Accreditation Body at the Certification Body's headquarters or office where the CSQ Certification Program is managed.

During the office assessment, the Accreditation Body shall review, at minimum, ten percent (10 %) of the Certification Body's auditor files and, at minimum, five (5) or two percent (2 %) of completed audits, whichever is greater.

2.4. Witness Audits

The Accreditation Body shall conduct one (1) witness audit during each accreditation cycle. Where possible, the Accreditation Body shall not witness the same auditor as the previous accreditation cycle.



Part 6: Requirements for CSQ Auditors, Consultants, and Technical Reviewers

1. General Requirements Applicable to All CSQ Auditors, Consultants, and Technical Reviewers

1.1. Education

All registered CSQ Auditors, Consultants, and Technical Reviewers are required to have a university degree in a bioscience discipline or, at minimum, completed a bioscience higher education course or have equivalent in work experience. Examples of acceptable degree programs include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Microbiology
- Food Science
- Toxicology
- Organic Chemistry
- Epidemiology
- Agriculture
- Herbal Extraction
- Product Manufacturing

NOTE: Evidence of equivalent work experience in lieu of university degree or high education course shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and will require more than the minimum requirements online in Part 6, Section 1, Subsection 1.3.

1.2. Training

All registered CSQ Auditors, Consultants, and Technical Reviewers are required to have completed the following training:

- CSQ Lead Auditor course
- HACCP course (minimum 16 hours) recognized by the International HACCP Alliance
- Introduction to Cannabis Processing and Production course – required for prospective auditors, consultants, and technical reviewers with no experience in cannabis (marijuana and hemp)

NOTE: The CSQ Lead Auditor and Introduction to Cannabis Processing and Production training courses are online trainings that can be accessed from the CSQ Website.

1.3. Work Experience

All registered Auditors, Consultants, and Technical Reviewers are required to have:

- Minimum two (2) years of full-time work experience in quality assurance in either the cannabis (marijuana and/or hemp), food & beverage, dietary supplement, or pharmaceutical industries
- Minimum twenty (20) audits/projects in either the cannabis (marijuana and/or hemp), food & beverage, dietary supplement, or pharmaceutical industries

1.4. Application and Approval Process

All Auditors, Consultants, and Technical Reviewers intending to audit or provide technical reviewer or consulting services related to any CSQ Certification Program shall register with the CSQ Certification Program Owner and with their respective Certification Body. Registration can be done directly through the Certification Body or through the CSQ Website.

All Auditors, Consultants, and Technical Reviewers intending to audit or provide technical reviewer or consulting services related to any CSQ Certification Program shall submit the CSQ Auditors, Consultants, and Technical Reviewers Application Form found on the CSQ Website. All applicants shall ensure the following applicable documents are attached to their application:

- CSQ Lead Auditor Training Certificate
- Introduction to Cannabis Processing and Production Certificate (if applicable)
- HACCP Certificate
- Audit & Work Experience Log
- Current Resume
- Training & Education Records

A non-refundable registration fee is due upon submitting the application.

Each application will be reviewed by the Certification Body and CSQ Certification Program Owner for accuracy and verification of qualifications.

The Certification Body or CSQ Certification Program Owner may request additional information from the applicant as required. Upon successful review of the application, the applicant will receive an applicable CSQ Certificate.

1.5. Maintaining Registration

CSQ Auditor, Consultant, and Technical Reviewer registrations are good for one (1) year. Registrations expire one (1) year and forty-five (45) days after registration. Applicants are responsible for re-registering each year. A complete registry of approved and “blacklisted” CSQ Auditors, Consultants, and Technical Reviewers is available on the CSQ Website.

Auditors, Consultants, and Technical Reviewers can become “blacklisted” if:

- They receive multiple complaints that have been validated by the Certification Body or CSQ Certification Program Owner
- They falsify any record, corrective action, or audit report
- They perform an audit when a known conflict of interest exists
- They do not uphold the integrity of the CSQ Certification Program in any way determined by the CSQ Certification Program Owner

1.6. Expanding Scope

CSQ Auditors, Consultants, and Technical Reviewers that wish to expand their scopes to audit against or provide technical reviewer or consulting services on additional CSQ Standards may do so by submitting the CSQ Auditors, Consultants, and Technical Reviewers Application Form and relevant supporting documentation to demonstrate their experience related to the additional standard(s) they wish to apply. CSQ Auditors, Consultants, and Technical Reviewers may apply for additional standards at any time. Scope expansion can be done directly through the Certification Body or through the CSQ Website.

2. Additional Requirements of Auditors

2.1. Work Experience

All CSQ Auditors must apply for each specific CSQ Standard to audit against the applicable CSQ Audit Requirements. The requirements for each standard are as follows:

- A minimum two (2) years' work experience in the respective industries.
- Or a minimum of twenty (20) audits in the respective industries.
- Or a combination of both.

NOTE: Only second and third-party audits count towards this requirement. Internal audits will not be considered.

Table 5: Respective Industries and Products Associated with each CSQ Standard

CSQ Standard	Respective Industries
CSQ Cultivation	Agriculture and agricultural products, botanical materials, etc. (cannabis or food crops)
CSQ Extraction	Biochemical, herbal extracts, ingredient manufacturing, etc. (cannabis or food)
CSQ Manufacturing	Inhalable, ingestible, topical-use products, baking, confectionary, beverages, preserves, pet treats, etc. (cannabis or other)
CSQ Warehousing & Distribution	Food, beverage, agricultural product storage, handling, distribution, dry/frozen goods, etc. (cannabis or other)
CSQ Retail and Deli-Style Retail	Food, beverage, agricultural product storage, handling, sale, grocery, deli, fast-casual, etc. (cannabis or other)
CSQ Dietary Supplement & EU-GMP Addendums	Dietary supplements, active pharmaceutical ingredients, drug products, EudraLex, cGACPs, etc. (cannabis or other)

2.2. Maintaining Registration

All Auditors must re-register annually and submit the following evidence:

- At minimum, five (5) CSQ Certification or Surveillance Audits
- At minimum, sixteen (16) hours of professional development related to cannabis safety & quality. Examples of this include, but are not limited to:
 - Training Courses
 - Conferences and Seminars
 - Publications or Presentations
 - Relevant Committees and Working Groups



Part 7: Appendices

7.1. Reference Documents

The CSQ Certification Program is a safety and quality management system for legally licensed cannabis operations (marijuana and hemp) and has been developed based on the following regulations, standards, and guidance documents:

- Regulations:
 - United States, Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 21, Part 111 – Good Manufacturing Practices for Dietary Supplements
 - United States, Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 21, Part 112 – Good Manufacturing Practices for Produce
 - United States, Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 21, Part 117 – Good Manufacturing Practices and Hazard Analysis and Preventive Controls for Human Food
 - United States, Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 21, Part 120 – Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points
- Standards:
 - International Standards Organization (ISO)/International Exchange Commission (IEC) Standards
 - ISO 19011:2018, Guidelines for auditing management systems
 - ISO/IEC 17000:2004, Conformity assessment – Vocabulary and general principles
 - ISO/IEC 17011:2004, Conformity assessment – General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies
 - ISO/IEC 17020 for inspection
 - ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015, Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification
 - ISO/IEC 17065, Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services
- Guidance Documents:
 - American Herbal Products Association (AHPA), Good Agricultural and Collection Practices and Good Manufacturing Practices for Botanical Materials, May 2023 (Revised)

7.2. Terminology Related to the CSQ Certification Program

Hemp, n—refers to any *Cannabis* sativa plant or derived product meeting regulatory specifications of an authority having jurisdiction to be classified as hemp.

Marijuana, n—refers to any *Cannabis* sativa plant or derived product meeting regulatory specification of an authority having jurisdiction to be classified as marijuana.

Cannabis, n—refers to any *Cannabis* sativa plant or derived product regardless of regulatory classification.





CSQ

Cannabis Safety and Quality