



# Solar Stewardship Initiative Assessment Body and Assessor Approval

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### Version History

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1	November 2023	First version issued

### The Solar Stewardship Initiative

The Solar Stewardship Initiative (SSI) was created by Solar Power Europe and Solar Energy UK. It works with manufacturers, developers, installers, and purchasers across the global solar value chain to collaboratively foster responsible production, sourcing, and stewardship of materials. The SSI's mission is to enhance end-to-end transparency, sustainability, and environmental, social and governance performance across the solar supply chain. Businesses actively involved in the solar value chain can apply to join the SSI and get certified against the SSI Standard.

### About this document

The SSI Assessment Body and Assessor Approval procedure specifies the process that applies when:

- Approving Assessment Bodies that can carry assessments against the SSI Standard.
- Maintaining Assessment Body approval.
- Approving individual Assessors who are associated with approved Assessment Bodies based on the competency criteria outlined in this document.

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## 1. General

Approved Assessment Bodies (ABs) must demonstrate and always uphold principles of impartiality, independence and confidentiality. Only ABs that are approved by the SSI may sign contracts with SSI members making reference to offering SSI assessment activities. Approved ABs shall be understood as those published on the SSI website.

Only Assessors that are approved by the SSI may carry out assessments against the SSI Standard. Approved Assessors shall be understood as those being listed on the Assessor registry maintained by the SSI.

### 1. Assessment Body Approval Process

#### 2.1 Initial application and approval

Applications for approval must be submitted to the SSI Secretariat by completing the AB Application Form and providing the documentation listed on the form.

The SSI accepts applications for approval from ABs who are:

- A legal entity and
- Currently accredited to ISO 17065 or 17021 with a relevant scope by an accreditation body that is a member of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF.)

Or in exceptional cases,

- A legal entity and
- Can provide documented evidence, to be submitted to SSI, that demonstrates conformance with ISO 17065 or 17021. This evidence must demonstrate specifically that:
  - There is a mechanism to safeguard impartiality through a documented impartiality structure within the AB's operations.
  - Internal audits are carried out at least every 12 months to verify the fulfilment of applicable requirements and to evaluate if the management system is effectively implemented and maintained.
  - There are documented procedures for preventing, reviewing and determining timely and appropriate responses to any declarations of potential conflict of interest made.
- Commit to incorporating the SSI assurance program into its internal management system.

The SSI reserves the right to verify incorporation of the SSI assurance program as detailed above through an oversight verification assessment.

The SSI Secretariat will confirm approval of the AB application upon completion of the following:

- the review of the AB's application and associated documents is complete.
- A due diligence check of the AB has been conducted.
- A signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between SSI and the AB is in place.
- At least one lead Assessor has been approved by the SSI and has completed training on the SSI Standard and assurance system as provided by the SSI Secretariat or SSI's outsourced training provider (if applicable).
- The relevant oversight verification assessment is completed (if required), and the approval fee has been received.

Upon fulfilling the conditions listed above in 2.1, SSI will approve ABs for an initial period of three (3) years, after which a re-application may be necessary. The SSI may restrict the approval to a specific geographical scope.

#### 2.2 Maintaining approval

To maintain approval, ABs must:

- Incorporate the SSI requirements into their internal management system, including in internal audit programmes and management system reviews.
- Every six (6) months provide SSI with the details of any complaints received related to the SSI certification activities and the outcome of those complaints.

Prior to each assessment, ABs must provide the SSI Secretariat with:

- A draft assessment plan at least two (2) weeks before the start of the on-site assessment, to be reviewed by SSI.
- A list of stakeholders that will be informed of the assessment.
- Any identified AB and Assessor conflicts of interest in relation to the site/client and how these conflicts were addressed.

If an approved AB wishes to extend its geographical scope of approval than initially approved for, it must provide to the SSI Secretariat with:

- Evidence that it has access to sufficient resources to manage activities in the countries it seeks approval for (personnel, affiliated offices, adequate liability insurance, etc.)

## **2. Assessor Competency Criteria and Approval Process**

Applications for approval must be submitted to the SSI Secretariat by providing Assessors' CVs for review. If the competency criteria as detailed in this procedure are met, the Approved Assessor's details will be maintained on the SSI Auditor registry. Assessors may be required to complete training on the SSI Standard and assurance system.

Lead Assessor:

- University or college degree.
- 5+ years' auditing experience in the renewable energy sector or related industry.
- Knowledge of solar industry, value chain and related issues.
- Familiarity with the local context where site(s) are located.
- Experience doing on-site assessments in at least two (2) of the following areas: Management systems, health and safety assessments, greenhouse gas verifications/assessments, environmental impact assessments, social impact assessments, human rights impacts assessments, environmental monitoring.
- Management systems/auditing qualifications.

Assessor:

- University or college degree.
- 3+ years' auditing experience in the renewable energy sector or related industry
- Experience doing on-site assessments in either: Management systems, health and safety assessments, greenhouse gas verifications/assessments, environmental impact assessments, social impact assessments, environmental monitoring, internal audits.
- Management systems/auditing qualifications.

## **3. Oversight and Quality Control**

SSI, or an external appointed agent, reserves the right to request and review ABs' documentation at any time as it relates to the SSI assurance system for monitoring and quality control, particularly in case relevant information on potential non-compliances, or negative feedback is received. SSI, or an external appointed agent, also reserves the right to witness assessments onsite at any time during an AB's approval period.

Should deficiencies be identified by SSI during document reviews or oversight verification assessments (such as witness assessment), ABs must take necessary actions to address them within the timeframe specified to maintain their approved status.

## **4. Records**

The following records are maintained by SSI in relation to approved Assessors and ABs for the duration of the approval:

- Lead Assessor/Assessor CVs.
- Lead Assessor/Assessor training attendance.

- AB MoUs signed with Members.
- Assessor and AB approval status.
- Complaints or concerns raised by stakeholders about Assessors/ABs and any follow up or corrective actions identified.
- Results of witness assessments and any follow up or corrective actions identified.
- Implementation by Assessors/ABs of any follow up or corrective actions.

#### **5. Complaints & Appeals**

Complaints related to Assessor and AB approval are managed according to the SSI Complaints & Appeals Mechanism.