IREC

ASSESSOR MANUAL

BASED ON THE IREC STANDARDS 01023:2013 AND 01024:2013

IREC ASSESSOR MANUAL

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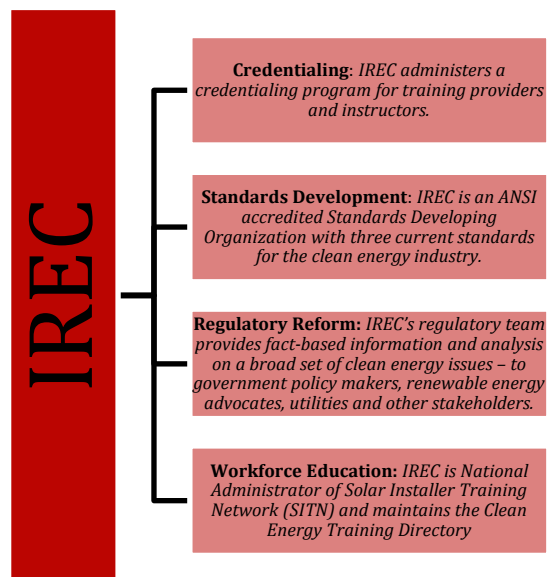
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About IREC

Congratulations! As an IREC Assessor, you are part of an exciting and well established organization. Although the bulk of this document pertains to the IREC Credentialing Program, we will take this opportunity to remind you about several aspects of the larger IREC organization.

As an Assessor, you will objectively evaluate organizations and individuals against a rigorous industry-vetted standard. We thank you. Your role is critical to success of the IREC Credentialing Program and to fulfilling IREC's vision:

> *Clean energy is critical to achieving a sustainable and economically strong future. IREC's work is paving our national clean energy path, as it has for more than three decades.*
>
> *Jane Weissman, IREC's Executive Director*

Sincerely,

Director of Credentialing Program
February 12, 2014

Manager of Assessor Training & Development

STANDARDS DEVELOPING ORGANIZATION

In 2013, IREC was accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) as a standards developing organization (SDO). This credential indicates that IREC's operating procedures for documenting consensus have been approved by ANSI. To date, IREC has independently developed three standards:

1. IREC Standard **14732**:2013. General Requirements for Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency Certificate Programs
2. IREC Standard **01023**:2013. General Requirements for the Accreditation of Clean Energy Technology Training
3. IREC Standard **01024**:2013. General Requirements for the Certification of Clean Energy Technology Instructors and Master Trainers

The development of IREC standards is SEPARATE from IREC's Credentialing Program, but the efforts are complementary and both contribute to IREC's goal of a high quality clean energy workforce.

Standards Development
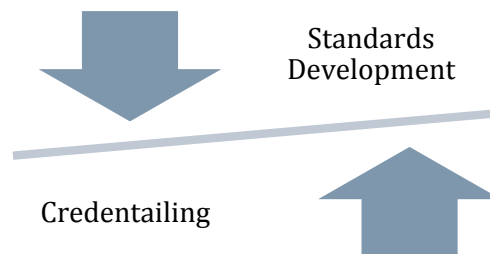
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CREDENTIALING PROGRAM

Assessors are part of the IREC Credentialing Program. IREC is committed to providing third-party assessment and qualification of clean energy training providers to consensus standards for the improvement of workforce preparation. The current standards against which we assess were developed by a team led by IREC in 2013. IREC Standard 01023 for organizations and IREC Standard 01024 for individuals represent the evolution of IREC ISPQ Standard 01022, and its predecessor 01021, originally developed in the 1990s. The standards are available for use internationally.

The objectives of the Standards are to:

- Provide training programs worldwide with a harmonized training content and delivery guide for the knowledge and skills competencies for the clean energy technology workforce;
- Increase the confidence level that industry, employers, consumers, financiers, and governments can have in the participating training programs and trainers by providing a globally accepted process of evaluation and surveillance (assessment and periodic re-evaluation) of training programs and trainers, and periodic re-evaluation of the standards;
- Encourage safety and the training of safe practices within the industry.

Note: In partnership with the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), IREC administers an accreditation program using IREC Standard 14732: General Requirements for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Certificate Programs. This Manual does NOT address the ANSI-IREC Program, but is solely applicable to the IREC Credentialing Program.

For this Program, assessment teams comprised of a subject matter expert in a relevant clean energy field are paired with an Assessor with experience in ANSI assessments, instructional design, pedagogy or standards setting, to perform assessments in accordance with ISO 17011. Using IREC Standard 14732, these Assessor teams evaluate clean energy training programs which issue certificates.

Although there are IREC assessors who also perform assessments for the ANSI-IREC program under the supervision of ANSI staff, the two programs are separate and distinct.

Credentialing Terminology

ACCREDITATION VS CERTIFICATION

An IREC credential is based on adherence to an IREC Standard. For the purposes of this document, we will use 'Standard' to mean either IREC Standard 01023, 01024 or both. IREC accreditation and certification provide an objective evaluation of the capabilities of training providers and trainers, respectively, to deliver clean energy technology knowledge and skills training, regardless of the source of the training (colleges, manufacturer's in-house training, private training programs, vocational education programs, apprenticeship training, etc.).

Accreditation: Third-party review and attestation of a <u>training provider's</u> conformance with an established standard. Accreditation is awarded for a fixed period of time and requires renewal.

Certification: Third-party review and attestation of an <u>individual's</u> conformance with an established standard. Certification is awarded for a fixed period of time and requires renewal.

Note: 'Certification' is different than 'certificate.' A certificate is a document awarded to an individual who meets and successfully completes the certificate program's requirements. There are no on-going requirements once you receive the certificate. An important distinction: Professional certification implies workplace competency and certificates are the result of learning (training and education).

JOB TASK ANALYSIS

Candidates for IREC accreditation as a Training Provider must demonstrate that the content of their course(s) meets the requirements of an IREC-accepted Job Task Analysis (JTA). A Job Task Analysis describes the skills and knowledge that a practitioner within a specific clean energy technology field must have in order to perform successfully on the job.

A JTA is developed by a committee of subject matter experts. IREC does not restrict the development of Job Task Analyses to any one organization. Rather, IREC will review and accept a JTA developed by a reputable education, training, and certifying organization where the JTA creation is consistent with the IREC guidelines as outlined in the <u>Candidate Handbook</u>.

For more information – see the guidance document on how to select or develop a JTA posted in the Key Docs section of the website. IREC-accepted JTAs are posted in the Key Docs section as well.

TERM OF CREDENTIAL

A credential is awarded for five years provided that the organization completes a maintenance report annually where they disclose any changes in the past year. There is a renewal fee due on the anniversary of the award as well. At the conclusion of the five year period, to renew the credential, the credential holder will submit a new application and undergo a complete assessment.
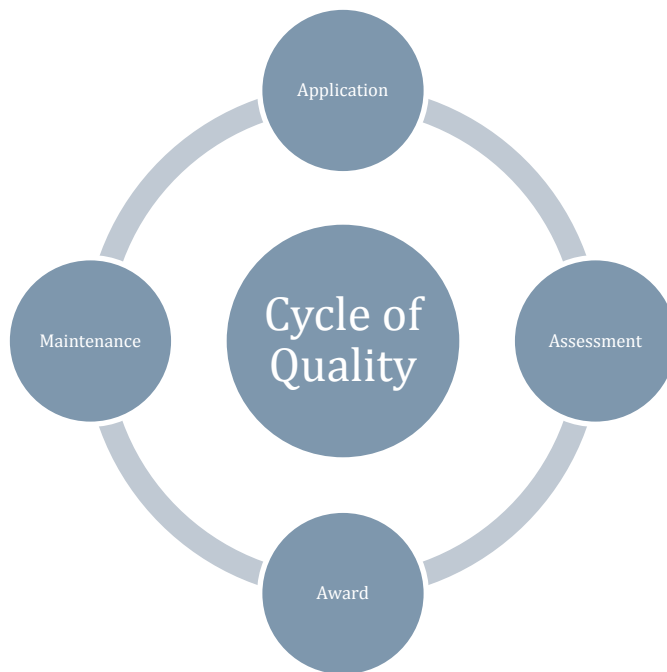
IREC Assessor Position

IREC Assessors are responsible for reviewing applications and verifying evidence of candidates for accreditation and certification. Assessors sign a contract wherein they agree to perform assessment services for IREC on an as-needed basis in conformance with IREC standards. Assessors agree to abide by the policies and procedures outlined in this manual. Assessors are trained on the assessment process and the IREC standards, and they undergo on-going training. Specific responsibilities and qualifications are detailed in an Assessor Job Description on the Assessor Resource website.

The Assessor begins with a review of the entire candidate application and verifies that the materials conform to the applicable standard. This review is called the Desk Assessment. In the case of candidates for Training Provider Accreditation, the Assessor performs an On-Site Assessment following the completion of the Desk Assessment.

Assessors work with candidates through a communication exchange called 'iteration' to assess whether the candidate meets all the requirements of the Standard before reporting and making a recommendation to the Award Committee. The Award Committee makes the final decision on award. The application, review, and award process is described in detail beginning with the Assessment Process Summary.

Prior to receiving an assessment, the Assessor completes an IREC New Assessor Training Course, about two hours in length. Assessor training will take place under the direction of IREC and is usually conducted remotely. Upon satisfactory completion of the Assessor Training, the candidate will become a Registered IREC Assessor, subject to the scope, limitations, and conditions noted in this manual.

Contract. The Assessor must sign a contract to adhere to requirements regarding positive representation of the IREC Program, the IREC Standards, confidentiality of applicant materials, and avoidance of conflicts of interest and consultation. S/he will agree to abide by all IREC Credentialing program policies and procedures listed in this manual.

Confidentiality. Assessors shall maintain and respect the confidentiality of private and otherwise sensitive information obtained in the course of business activities, unless the information is reasonably understood to pertain to unlawful activity; a court or governmental agency lawfully directs the release of the information; or, the failure to release such information would likely result in serious physical harm to the public.

Conflicts of Interest. Assessors shall avoid conduct that could cause a conflict of interest and assure that a real or perceived conflict of interest does not compromise legitimate interests of IREC, and does not influence or interfere with professional judgments. Assessors shall disclose to IREC significant circumstances that could be construed as a conflict of interest or an appearance of impropriety.

Before accepting each individual assignment, the Assessor will confirm that no conflict of interest exists, real or perceived, with the candidate. Examples of conflicts of interest are: Assessor or family member has worked or consulted for candidate; Assessor or family member works for a direct competitor of candidate; Assessor or family member trained by candidate; Assessor holds strong opinions about candidate; or Assessor holds a financial stake in the program.

Assignments. Once the Assessor has met the IREC qualifications and undergone required training, they become eligible to conduct assessments. IREC will assign an application to an Assessor with a preference for the Assessor's expertise, geographic location and availability.

Assessor Teams. If a candidate applies for more than two JTAs within a single application, IREC may assign a team of two Assessors. The assessment fee would be divided between them as outlined by IREC when the assignment is made.

> **The Assessor should stay familiar with the most current versions of**
>
> 1. **This Assessor Manual**
> 2. **IREC Standards 01023 and 01024**
> 3. **IREC Candidate Handbook**
> 4. **Job Task Analyses relevant to technical specialty**

ASSESSOR JOB DESCRIPTION & CONTRACT

Job Description and sample Contract are on the Assessor Resource website.

ASSESSOR RESOURCE WEBSITE

There is a password protected website that contains the most current versions of any reference documents available for assessors including: copies of quarterly training presentations, sample candidate communications, guidance documentation, travel policy, reimbursement forms, and assessor job description and contract.

CREDENTIALING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (CMS)

The Assessor will review the candidate's application, conduct iterations and complete the assessment forms in the web-based credentialing management system. This system allows candidates to complete applications and upload evidence; credential holders to complete annual maintenance reports; and assessors to access and review candidate application materials. IREC will assign a login and password to each new assessor. Link to User Guide for CMS.

MAINTAINING ELIGIBILITY AS A REGISTERED ASSESSOR/ POLICIES

To remain eligible to serve as an IREC Assessor, the Assessor must complete assigned projects accurately and within allotted timeframes, participate in regular Assessor training meetings, and adhere to all applicable Program policies.

Monthly Progress Reports. The Assessor will submit a brief update each month on the status of all active assessments. This update provides information to the IREC program, which may receive inquiries from candidate. It also serves as a reminder to the assessor to stay on track with the assessment.

Continuing Development. Assessors will actively participate in ongoing training at least quarterly. An Assessor who misses multiple training meetings may be subject to termination. In addition, at least once every three years, IREC may monitor Assessors' performance through a combination of on-site observations, feedback from candidates, and/or a review of Assessors' reports. IREC may make recommendations for performance improvements.

Breach of Ethics or Behavior. Assessors are required to observe IREC's policies and procedures for ethical behavior, as well as all policies and procedures contained in this Manual. Any breach of these policies may lead to the Assessor's status being rescinded.

Keeping Contact Info Current. If the Assessor changes employment, address, or other contact information, s/he should file a change in writing to IREC. Email is acceptable.

Non-Consultancy Statement.   The Assessor will not engage in consultancy with the candidate while conducting an assessment. The assessor will not accept an assignment for a candidate for whom s/he has provided consultative services in the past. (See conflict of interest policy)

Assessors should not "consult" with candidates about how they can succeed with their assessment. When candidates do not meet the requirements of the Standard, the Assessor should describe the situation using the specific format for writing nonconformities (see Writing Nonconformities).

Consultancy Guidelines.   If an Assessor would like to engage in independent consultancy with a candidate who may apply for accreditation or certification, the Assessor must reveal this relationship in writing to IREC. The Assessor must also communicate in writing to the candidate/client that his/her advice constitutes one interpretation of the IREC Standard and will not necessarily result in accreditation or certification award. An IREC Assessor who engages in consultancy activities will NOT be able to also assess those institutions, organizations, or individuals with whom s/he has consulted.

Assessor Resignation.   An Assessor may resign at any time by providing at least ten (10) business days' written notice to IREC specifying the effective date of termination in writing.

Assessor Termination.   The Assessor shall be duly qualified to perform the requested services, and if, in IREC's opinion, the Assessor fails or becomes unable to perform these services adequately, or if an assessment is terminated due to circumstances out of the Assessors' control, IREC may require the Assessor to stop providing services prior to the conclusion of an assessment. In such event, IREC shall pay the Assessor only for the services rendered up to the time IREC so notifies the Assessor.

Either party may terminate the contract agreement, in whole only, with at least ten (10) business days' written notice to the other party specifying the effective date of termination in writing.

Whistleblower Protection. If IREC personnel reasonably believe that some policy, practice, or activity of IREC is in violation of law, a written complaint may be filed by that employee with the IREC President/Chief Executive Officer.

It is the intent of IREC to adhere to all laws and regulations that apply to the organization, and the underlying purpose of this Policy is to support the organization's goal of legal compliance. The support of all IREC personnel is necessary to achieve compliance with various laws and regulations. An employee is protected from retaliation only if the employee brings the alleged unlawful activity, policy, or practice to the attention of the IREC President/Chief Executive Officer and provides IREC with a reasonable opportunity to investigate and correct the alleged unlawful activity. The protection described below is only available to employees that comply with this requirement.

IREC will not retaliate against personnel who, in good faith, have made a protest or raised a complaint against some practice of IREC, or of another individual or entity with whom IREC has or has had a business relationship, on the basis of a reasonable belief that the practice is in violation of law or a clear mandate of public policy.

IREC will not retaliate against an employee who discloses or threatens to disclose to a supervisor or a public body any activity, policy, or practice of IREC that the personnel reasonably believes is in violation of a law, or a rule, or regulation mandated pursuant to law or is in violation of a clear mandate or public policy concerning health, safety, welfare, or protection of the environment.

Assessor Guidance and Prevention of Internal Noncompliance.   This Manual acts as the main policy and procedure resource for Assessors. If questions arise, IREC is the authority on questions of policy and procedure. On questions of Standards, application of Standards, or guidance on recommending candidates for accreditation or certification, IREC will consult the relevant IREC committee.

Assessors have a responsibility to initiate actions which facilitate compliance with IREC policies and procedures. Concerns about noncompliance should be made known to IREC Management. IREC Management will review and document potential issues, and will make a determination or implement prevention action if necessary. All results will be reviewed and recorded.

FEES PAID TO ASSESSOR

Assessors are paid on a per assessment basis. In rare cases, Assessors may, with advance permission from IREC, be paid for additional time worked. Assessors will also file for reimbursement from IREC for travel-related expenses, using the Excel worksheet provided by IREC.. A copy of the IREC Travel Policy for Assessors and the Excel template are on the Assessor Resource website.

The table below shows the application fees for the IREC Credentialing Program, along with the portion earmarked for the Assessor. *Note that if more than one Assessor is assigned to an application, fees will be divided between the Assessors as designated by IREC and provided to the Assessment team in writing at the time the assignment is made.*

ASSESSOR FEES

DESCRIPTION	CANDIDATE FEE	FEE PAID TO ASSESSOR DESK ASSESSMENT	FEE PAID TO ASSESSOR ON-SITE ASSESSMENT
Training Provider Accreditation	$3,500 (plus $1000 for each additional JTA)	$1,400 (plus $350 for each additional JTA)	$700 (plus $350 for each additional JTA) plus travel reimbursement at cost
Master Trainer & Instructor Certification	$700 (plus $200 for each additional JTA)	$350 (plus $100 for each additional JTA)	N/A

* IREC reserves the right to review and adjust fees periodically

Examples

2 JTA Training Provider Assessment = $1,750 DA Fee + $1,050 OSA Fee (plus travel)

2 JTA Master Trainer Assessment = $450 DA Fee

Additional Time Reimbursement

If you feel that significant additional time will be required to adequately conduct either the Desk Assessment or the On-Site Assessment, please contact IREC prior to engaging in the additional work. Together, IREC and the Assessor will decide how to proceed, which may include authorizing additional hours for the Assessor. However, at this point, it is IREC's general policy not to add any additional fees to the schedule above.

Candidates may also be billed for document copy services. Assessors should inform IREC in advance if they would like reimbursement for copying any candidate materials.

In all cases, candidates do not reimburse Assessors directly. IREC will invoice the candidate and reimburse the Assessor accordingly.

ALLOWABLE TRAVEL COSTS

All travel should be conducted in accordance with IREC's Travel Policy for Assessors. The Assessor will use the Excel template provided by IREC to submit for travel reimbursement. Both documents are available on the Assessor Resource website.

INVOICING

Requests for reimbursement, along with receipts should be filed with the final assessment report. This should occur within three (3) weeks of the conclusion of the assessment.

Assessors are required to file two invoices: one invoice for their assessment fee, and a separate invoice for travel expenses, per the IREC Travel Policy for Assessors, following an On-Site Assessment. **The Assessor is required use the Excel template provided by IREC for travel reimbursement invoices.**

ASSESSMENT PROCESS RESPONSIBILITIES

Below are the Assessor's major responsibilities during the assessment.

1. Thoroughly review the candidate application and all supporting documentation in the online Credentialing Management System (CMS)
2. Take notes on the evidence supplied and prepare a request to candidate for information, if needed, in the Evidence & RFI Word document
3. Communicate with the candidate (in CMS) to request any additional documentation/ information
4. Submit the Desk Assessment Worksheet Form AND the Desk Assessment Report Form (in CMS) and obtain approval from IREC prior to making travel plans for the on-site visit (for Training Providers)
5. Plan and execute on-site assessment
6. Complete Closing Meeting Report, sign and have candidate sign
7. Upload Closing Meeting Report signature page and submit Closing Assessment Report Form
8. Submit 1) travel reimbursement invoice using Excel and 2) invoice for assessment fee
9. Present findings at Award Committee conference call, usually occurs monthly
10. Purge candidate information from personal files and destroy any paper documentation by shredding or otherwise rendering all documents illegible before sending them to a waste management site – ALL CANDIDATE INFORMATION MUST BE IN THE CMS

ASSESSOR FORMS IN CMS

Candidates cannot see Assessor Forms in CMS.

The Assessor is required to complete and submit the following forms:

Training Provider Assessment

1. Accreditation Desk Assessment Worksheet (DA Evidence & RFI WORD Doc template is here)
2. Accreditation Desk Assessment Report
3. Accreditation On-site Assessment Worksheet (OSA Prep WORD Doc template is here)
4. Accreditation Closing Report

Instructor/ Master Trainer Assessment

1. Certification Desk Assessment Worksheet
2. Certification Desk Assessment Report

GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSOR INTERACTION WITH CANDIDATES

To ensure that the assessments are as objective as possible, Assessors must follow defined procedures in their interactions with candidates.

IREC assessments conform as closely as possible to *International Standard ISO/IEC 17011: 2004 Conformity assessment -- General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies*. In this IREC Assessor Manual you will find key guidelines, taken from the ISO/IEC standard, which shall provide a common framework within which Assessors shall perform.

In the evaluation of candidates' applications and facilities, the Assessor must ensure that the assessment involves a systematic, independent, and documented process for obtaining assessment evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine

The Assessor must exhibit the following qualities:

- Objectivity
- Integrity
- Tact
- Confidentiality
- Flexibility
- Persistence
- Good communication skills

the extent to which assessment criteria are fulfilled.

Additional guidance for Assessor interaction with candidates is given in the policies below.

Use the IREC Standard

Assessors must verify that they have in their possession the same version of the IREC Standard(s) and Candidate Handbook that the candidate applying for the IREC credential used to put together their application. The latest versions are on the Key Docs page of the IREC website and the assessor resource page.

Use the IREC Forms to Guide the Assessment

Assessors are required to use the official IREC Assessment Forms in CMS to guide their Desk and On-Site Assessment procedures. They are composed in a way that will help the Assessor accurately review the applications and document evidence supplied.

Log Communication

Assessors should use Communications in CMS for all candidate contact. If an exchange is made outside of the CMS, the Assessor will add a communication with the content of exchange and upload documentation to the document repository when applicable. **THE ASSESSOR MUST ENSURE THAT ALL CANDIDATE DOCUMENTATION AND COMMUNICAITON ENDS UP IN THE CANDIDATE'S RECORD IN CMS PRIOR TO THE CONCLUSION OF THE ASSESSMENT.**

Request Communication in Writing

Assessors should conduct the bulk of interactions with candidates through a written medium (CMS communication). This will enable Assessors to have a written record available should questions arise. It will also allow Assessors and candidates both to take the time they need to thoughtfully respond to questions. Pay particular attention to the tone that your words can take in an email. Through email, you do more than just requesting additional information (after they have completed a HUGE time consuming application), you manage a relationship remotely.

That being said, a phone call may be a more effective tool for some communications. For example, an introductory phone call is a great way to set the tone for the assessment; it makes the assessor more human than simply an email address. In some cases a phone call during the assessment can help clarify complicated requests for information in email exchanges. If phone calls become frequent or problematic, the Assessor should remind the candidate of their preference for written

communication. **THE ASSESSOR WILL LOG ALL DETAILS OF PHONE CONTACT IN A CMS COMMUNICATION.**

Communications Guidelines

- ✓ **Be clear and concise**
- ✓ **Refer to the standard**
- ✓ **Make observations based on evidence**
- ✓ **Check spelling and grammar**
- ✓ **Use the standard to maintain your objectivity by verifying the situation and writing nonconformities, if they exist**
- ✓ **Be careful not to give the impression of final authority. The Award Committee makes the final decision**

Taking Copies, Photos, or Recordings

In addition to completing the Assessor Forms and logging communications in CMS, Assessors may use whatever technologies are most helpful to record the results of an assessment. This may include judicious use of tape or digital sound recorders to capture pertinent conversations, photography to capture images of pertinent facilities or files, and photocopying any relevant documents that come to light during the On-Site Assessment. All information, however captured, must be handled with confidentiality.

Assessors should use courtesy and discretion when using technology to record information during an assessment and should always obtain the permission of the responsible person before recording any information. Be sure to document that you requested and received permission, but there is no formal release required for items or information obtained for confidential assessment use only. Copies, photos and recordings should be made part of the candidate record (Documenbt Repository) in CMS.

A candidate may refuse at any time to allow recording, photographing, photocopying, or similar duplication, and these technologies should not be used without permission. There may be cases

where the Assessor feels that refusal is an unnecessary hindrance to the On-Site Assessment process. These cases should be noted in the Closing Assessment Report Form.

Confidentiality & Disposal of Files

The Assessor will have access to the candidate's record in CMS while the assessment remains open. All documentation must be included in the record, including: notes in Assessor forms, all communications, any supplemental documentation, and documentation obtained during site visit. Following the closure of the candidacy/ award, the Assessor will no longer have access to the candidate record. Be sure to copy into a communication or upload any candidate interactions from your personal email or files prior to the Award Committee meeting. **ONCE YOU ARE CERTAIN ALL INFORMATION IS IN THE CMS, YOU ARE REQUIRED TO PURGE CANDIDATE INTERACTIONS AND DOCUMENTATION FROM YOUR COMPUTER AND DESTROY ANY PAPER DOCUMENTATION BY SHREDDING OR OTHERWISE RENDERING ALL DOCUMENTS ILLEGIBLE BEFORE SENDING THEM TO A WASTE MANAGEMENT SITE.**

Write Nonconformities Using the Proper Format

In evaluating the candidate, it is possible that the Assessor will identify deficiencies or inconsistencies that do not allow the Assessor to confirm compliance with specific requirements of the Standard. These deficiencies or inconsistencies are called "nonconformities." The Assessor will need to write out and each nonconformity and review them with the candidate as part of concluding an assessment.

There is a specific format required for writing nonconformities, and each nonconformity that the Assessor identifies during an assessment requires that a nonconformity be written with a minimum of text but including the following information:

a. The number of the standard item (e.g., Requirement 5.3);
b. Identification of the standard's title (e.g., IREC 01023: 2013 or other Standard #);
c. The text (or an abbreviation of the relevant portion of the text) of the standard item;
d. Description of the deficiency/nonconformity;
e. Statement of why this deficiency is not in compliance with the standard item.

a Example:

Requirement 5.3 Confidentiality, IREC Standard 01023:2013 states that the candidate "shall make provisions for the confidentiality of information. Such information includes, but is not limited to, any personally identifiable information for students, applicants and training-related personnel." The candidate has a policy in place, but this policy does not address training-related personnel.

b   c   d   e

Note that the written nonconformity tells the candidate exactly which part of the IREC Standard was violated and describes briefly how, without advising the candidate on how to correct the problem. It should be clear to candidates, upon reading nonconformities, what action(s) they might take to rectify the nonconformity. The Assessor should not spell it out either in writing or verbally, as this can lead to misunderstandings and disrupt the objectivity of the assessment.

Do Not Provide Consulting or Guidance

Assessors should never offer to rewrite candidate policies, help redesign programs or facilities, nor any other type of consulting. There are two reasons for this requirement. First, the final decision about the candidate's award is in the hands of the Award Committee, not the Assessor. Therefore an Assessor can never guarantee a candidate an outcome and should carefully avoid giving false promises or the impression of final authority. Second, if the Assessor advises a candidate on improving his or her application or facilities rather than strictly verifying the state of affairs and writing nonconformities, this destroys the objectivity of the assessment.

Avoid Contentious Exchanges

Assessor communications with candidates are to be professional at all times. This includes email and phone discussions, in addition to face-to-face meetings during the On-Site Assessment. If acrimony or unethical exchanges of information sabotage Assessor-candidate relations, the Assessor may be required to recuse him or herself from the particular assessment. If the Assessor decides to step down from an assessment, this should immediately be communicated to IREC who will make a decision about how to proceed.

Non-Discrimination and Impartiality

IREC is dedicated to the principles of equal opportunity and equal access to its programs and services. IREC does not discriminate against any individual on the basis of religion, gender, ethnic background, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, or other reason prohibited by law. Policies and procedures are non-discriminatory and shall be administered in a non-discriminatory way. All IREC personnel will act objectively and shall be free from any undue commercial, financial and other pressures that could compromise impartiality. In addition, IREC awards credentials without regard to an applicant's membership or non-membership in any organization, association or other group.

In the assessment, the Assessor collects objective evidence sufficient to permit an informed judgment about the whether the candidate meets the requirements of the Standard. In this context, objective evidence is defined as:

- Evidence that exists
- Evidence that is not influenced by personal bias
- Evidence that may be stated or documented
- Evidence that may be based on observation
- Evidence that may be quantitative or qualitative
- Evidence that can be verified

Evidence of Candidate Dishonesty or Lack of Integrity

IREC must be assured that any program or individual that seeks candidate status for accreditation or certification, or renewal of accreditation or certification, conducts its affairs with acceptable standards of honesty and integrity. If an Assessor should find reasonable evidence that the information provided by a candidate is substantially inaccurate or misleading, the Assessor should not confront a candidate regarding evidence of inaccuracy or the possible implications of dishonesty. Instead, an Assessor who has reasonable cause to suspect that a candidate has been less than completely honest in completing an application or renewal materials should immediately conclude the Assessment, record the evidence on the Desk Assessment Report Form, and submit the Form, with the required cover letter, in CMS.

Summary – Assessment Process for Assessors

ACCREDITATION ASSESSMENT PROCESS

1. Introduce yourself to the candidate to begin the process. A phone call is nice. (Log in CMS)
2. Download Word Doc: Evidence Worksheet & Request for Information from DA Worksheet FORM
3. Complete iteration with candidate; confirm and note evidence for each requirement
4. Upload Evidence Worksheet Word doc into Accreditation Desk Assessment Worksheet FORM and submit
5. Complete and submit Desk Assessment Report FORM
6. Receive approval from IREC to schedule On-site assessment (OSA) *[IREC provides approval based on review of the submitted DA Worksheet FORM and DA Report FORM]*
7. Download Word Docs: 1) OSA Prep Worksheet and 2) Closing Meeting Report from OSA Worksheet FORM and use to prepare for visit
8. Conduct On-site assessment
9. Complete, sign and have candidate sign Closing Meeting Report when reviewed during closing meeting
10. Upload completed OSA Prep Worksheet Word doc in On-site Assessment Worksheet FORM
11. Complete Closing Report FORM and upload Closing Meeting Report and scanned signature pages
12. Ensure all candidate documentation and communications are in CMS
13. Attend Award Committee meeting and present findings
14. Purge any candidate files from personal records and destroy any paper documentation per confidentiality and disposal policy.

CERTIFICATION ASSESSMENT PROCESS

1. Introduce yourself to the candidate to begin the process. A phone call is nice. (Log in CMS)
2. Download Certification Evidence & Request for Information Word Doc from Certification DA Worksheet FORM
3. Complete iteration and upload Evidence & RFI Word doc into Certification Desk Assessment Worksheet FORM
4. Complete Certification DA Report FORM
5. Receive approval from IREC to go to Award Committee *[IREC provides approval based on review of the submitted Certification DA Worksheet FORM and Certification DA Report FORM]*
6. Attend Award Committee meeting and present findings
7. Purge any candidate files from personal records and destroy any paper documentation per confidentiality and disposal policy

Desk Assessment (DA)

The bulk of the Assessor's time is spent on the review of the application materials and iteration with the candidate to document conformance with the standard. This document review can be spread over several weeks to several months. Every effort must be made by the candidate to provide requested documentation prior to the conclusion of this portion of the assessment. The Assessor concludes the desk assessment when they are satisfied that they have evidence that the candidate meets each requirement of the standard. There should be no known nonconformities prior to submitting the desk assessment report for approval to go on-site, *unless a known nonconformity can only be cleared by review of materials or program elements onsite.*

> *The Assessor should aim to complete the review of the entire application and compile and send to candidate a request for information (Evidence & RFI Word Document) WITHIN FOUR WEEKS of beginning the assessment.*

TRIANGULATION

For each requirement, look at the evidence provided in that section of the application and also look for corroborating evidence in other related sections of the application. Ideally, identify three pieces of evidence that support each requirement – this is the 'triangulation' of evidence. Triangulation will include evidence obtained during the on-site visit when you are able interview personnel and students as well as make your own first hand observations.

DON'T OVER-ASSESS

Ask specific questions which are related to the standard to learn more about the candidate. One caveat – don't over-assess. Identify whether the candidate has presented evidence which meets the requirement; if not, make a specific request for documentation or information that is needed. It is important to accept and note the evidence supplied to meet a requirement and refrain from letting additional fact-finding questions (good to know info rather than must-know) from slowing assessment proceedings.

DESK ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET FORM

The Desk Assessment Worksheet FORM is a place to upload your completed Evidence & Request for Information (RFI) Word document used for note taking and tracking additional information collected from the candidate.

Evidence & Request for Information WORD DOCUMENT

The main purpose of this document is to **track the evidence** supplied by the candidate to meet each requirement. For every requirement, you will enter a concise summary of the evidence provided by the candidate. Summarizing the evidence in one worksheet serves two purposes: 1) it gives a snapshot to IREC of the evidence provided; 2) it is refresher for the Assessor in the case of a lengthy assessment.

Second, this document is as a tool to communicate to the candidate the remaining information you need in order to complete the desk assessment. While it may seem overwhelming at first (the accreditation Evidence & RFI Word doc is at least 25 pages), it is beneficial for the candidate to see everything requested of them at one time so that they can group their work accordingly. Additionally, because you have noted what evidence they have supplied or made a specific request, hopefully they will supply fresh evidence appropriate for your request rather than repeatedly submitting documentation that doesn't meet the requirement.

The most current template for the Word document can be downloaded from the Desk Assessment Worksheet FORM.

Example of Evidence & RFI Worksheet Word doc

IREC 01023 Requirement Number and Description	Requirement MET DATE	Evidence *Please include a brief description of the evidence provided that meets the requirement. Specify document names, page numbers, etc*	Issues needing clarification or additional documentation *Questions from assessor*	Candidate Response	Additional Iteration *If needed, this column can be used for responses to additional iterations.*
			Date of Assessor Questions: 2/1/14/2014	Date of response from Candidate: xx/yy/2014	
feedback about all aspects of the training.					
6.6.2. Linkages with Industry: The training provider shall maintain active linkages with the subject industry. These linkages shall ensure that industry job and performance requirements are addressed and information about new technologies is sought regularly and is accurately included in the curriculum.	NO	List of local manufacturers	1) What other types of stakeholders, beside manufacturers, do you maintain linkages with? 2) Provide examples of information acquired through these linkages that has been included in the curriculum		
6.6.3. Training Feedback: The training provider shall use feedback from stakeholders for organizational and instructor performance evaluation — as well as delivery, maintenance, and improvement of the curriculum.	1/29/14	Procedure "Improvement Process" p. 24 of Training Manual.	None		

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

While the primary source of evidence is the application, the Assessor will obtain significant supplementary evidence through iteration. It is essential to be systematic, clear and specific with your requests for additional evidence using the Evidence & RFI Word document.

EVALUATING CANDIDATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Assessor will examine numerous policies and procedures. Evidence should show that the policy or procedure exists and is understood and implemented at the training program level.

Policy: a principle used as a guide to decision making under a given set of circumstances.

- Describe the rules that establish what will or will not be done.
- Can range from broad philosophies to specific rules.
- Are usually expressed in standard sentence and paragraph format.
- Include WHAT the rule is, WHEN it applies and WHO it covers.

Procedure: a particular way of accomplishing something. It should be designed as a series of steps to be followed as a consistent and repetitive approach to accomplish an end result.

- Describe the critical steps undertaken to achieve policy intent.
- Succinct, factual and to the point. Often expressed using lists.
- Include HOW to achieve the necessary results.

DESK ASSESSMENT REPORT FORM

The DA Report FORM contains a summary of your findings after completion of the desk assessment. You will include a recommendation for IREC approval on how to proceed. This form must be submitted at the conclusion of the desk assessment prior to obtaining approval to schedule the on-site visit.

Confirm Course Names

In the DA Report FORM for the Training Provider, confirm the name of the courses for which accreditation is sought. In the course of the desk assessment, you may have learned that the course names are different than on the original application. If this is the case, include why the organization has changed the names. (For example, has content changed? Marketing reasons? Etc.)

Nonconformities

Although every effort should be made to ensure that nonconformities are addressed by the candidate prior to the conclusion of the desk assessment, there may be cases where a nonconformity exists which can only be cleared by review of materials or program elements onsite. This should be documented in the DA Report Form. Please be specific when describing why the deficiency is not in compliance with the standard.

The DA Worksheet Form, along with the DA Report form are a place to gather and summarize your information and make recommendations for IREC and the award committee.

Note: There are separate desk assessment worksheet forms and report forms in CMS for Certification (Master Trainer/ Instructor) and Accreditation (Training Provider).
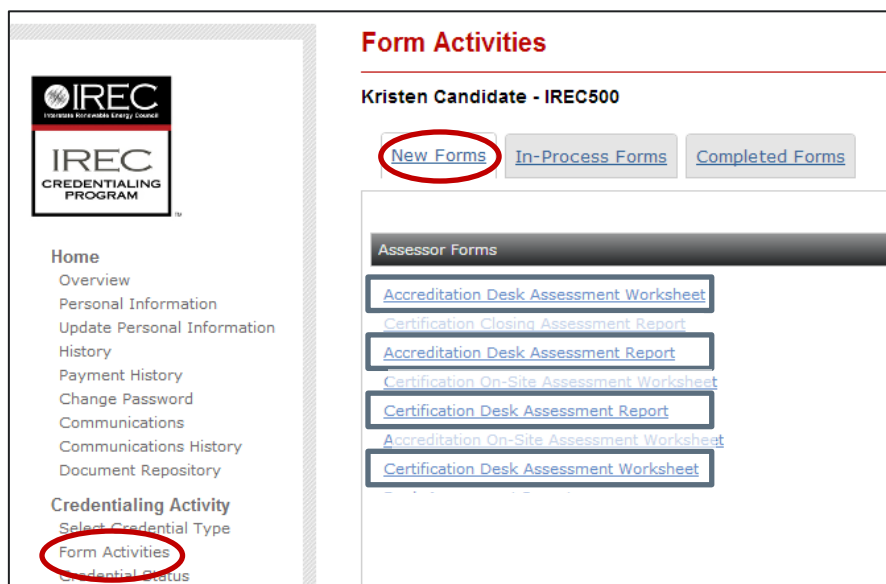
CANDIDACY EXTENSION

The official term of IREC candidacy is one year, but assessments can be completed more quickly, or in rare cases exceed the year term. In some cases the candidate may ask for an extension beyond the one year term of candidacy. In those cases, the Assessor will instruct the candidate to contact IREC directly to request the extension. This extension is usually granted provided that the candidate has been and continues to be responsive and makes every effort to provide the necessary information to allow the Assessor to complete the assessment.

Evaluating Instructor Experience

IREC certification as Instructor or Master Trainer indicates a breadth and depth of experience that the individual brings with them wherever they teach*. **Affiliation with an IREC Accredited Training Provider is not required in order to apply for or maintain certification.** The instructor must teach topics from one or more IREC-accepted job task analyses, but is not required to show that they cover all topics of a JTA.

Multiple Pathways to Certification

IREC recognizes that individuals working in the clean energy technology industry bring a considerable diversity in education and experience to the training arena. Therefore the experience requirements set forth in IREC Standard 01024 should allow candidates to demonstrate compliance through multiple pathways. In other words, you may see a field installer turned classroom instructor; or someone who has been in the classroom most of their professional life who then gets some hands-on experience; or something entirely different. The important aspect is the combination of education and experience that produces and effective instructor.

THIRD PARTY DOCUMENTATION

The candidate must supply evidence for each requirement. This evidence must be verified by a source other than the candidate. We call this third party verification. For example, classroom hours taught should be verified by the employer, whether by letterhead, phone call or other method. The candidate will supply copies of current licenses, certifications, etc., as well as certificates of completion, transcripts, and diplomas.

Hours of Documented Experience

A candidate for instructor or master trainer certification must provide documentation of contact hours of actual teaching, educational and practical experience. Specific requirements are described in Section 8 of IREC Standard 01024.

- IREC Certified Master Trainer: minimum **3850 contact hours**
- IREC Certified Instructor: minimum **2380 contact hours**

The table below lists competency requirements that are different for instructors and master trainers. *Note: the table does not show all requirements in the Standard.*

DIFFERENCES IN HOURS FOR INSTRUCTOR AND MASTER TRAINER EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS

	Instructor	Master Trainer
Classroom Teaching	80 h	240 h
Hands-on/ lab teaching	40 h	100 h
Training of Trainers		12 h
Instructional Design & Development		32 h
Continuing Education in Specific Technology	30 h	30 h
Training in Education		60 h
Practical Experience	1000 h (0.5 year)	2000 h (1 year)
Professional License		200 h

Time Limits

Some experience requirements are time limited and require the candidate to supply evidence of recent completion. For example, hours are counted for technology-specific teaching experience in the last five years. Please be sure to refer to the Standard as you review application materials to ensure the documented evidence adheres to specified time limits, where applicable.

Other Category

If a candidate feels that they are qualified for the credential, but lack hours in given category, they can submit written justification in the 'Other' category. The candidate must describe why they don't meet certain categories and include specific evidence and explain why this additional evidence should satisfy standard.

On-site Assessment (OSA)

The on-site assessment for Training Provider candidates (or other candidates for which IREC determines an on-site is required) is an opportunity for the Assessor to verify the information in the application. It is also a time for the Training Provider to show off the facilities, personnel and courses of which they are quite proud. Here the concept of triangulation comes into play. The on-site assessment is scheduled AFTER the Assessor receives IREC approval.

ACCREDITATION ON-SITE ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET FORM

We use the Accreditation On-site Assessment Worksheet FORM for a Training Provider assessment. The OSA Prep Word Document should be used as a tool to prepare for the visit and to take notes while on-site. In the Word document you will find a sample agenda that you can customize and then send to the candidate as a Communication in CMS.

Download a current template for the OSA Prep Word document in the OSA Worksheet FORM. After the on-site visit, upload the completed form with your notes from the visit to the OSA Worksheet FORM.

Example section of OSA Prep Word Document

WHILE ONSITE

The on-site assessment occurs over the course of a full day, and in the case of multiple JTAs, one to two days, not including travel time. There is much to be covered during the visit, so it should be carefully planned to maximize effectiveness. During the visit, the Assessor will meet with key personnel (determined and scheduled prior to visit); review documentation; inspect classroom, labs, tools, and equipment. Although not required by the standard, it can be helpful to schedule the on-site visit during a scheduled class. The Assessor can interview instructors (on breaks), talk to students, and see materials in use.

The Assessor begins the OSA with an opening meeting with selected personnel. Remember to plan for a lunch break during the day. You will also need at least an hour toward the end of the assessment to review your notes and prepare the Closing Meeting Report. The Closing Meeting Report is reviewed with selected personnel at the conclusion of the visit. Plan for about an hour for this final meeting.

On-site verification:

- Are policies and procedures accessible to and understood by, as applicable, training-related personnel?
- How are student records, including applications, surveys, and exams stored? Are they secure?
- How is feedback used for improving quality?
- Are there records of meetings with advisory boards or other stakeholder involvement?
- Are instructors technically knowledgeable?
- Does the instructor follow the curriculum?
- Does the content of the class you witness on site match the curriculum in the application, if applicable?

PHOTOS, RECORDINGS ON-SITE

Upload photos and recordings to document repository. See Policy: **Taking Copies, Photos, or Recordings** above.

DRESS CODE

Assessors will adhere to professional, business casual attire when conducting in-person meetings with IREC candidates and for any other IREC business function.

CLOSING MEETING REPORT WORD DOCUMENT

The Closing Meeting Report Word document is the document you review with the candidate at the closing meeting. The document contains:

1. A place for the candidate to confirm the names of the courses for which accreditation is sought
2. **Commendations**: *these are areas where you believe the candidate has gone **well above** meeting the standard*
3. **Opportunities for Improvement (OFIs):** *although not nonconformities, these are areas where you believe the organization should focus energy to improve the training*
4. **Nonconformities:** *specific requirements for which the candidate has not demonstrated meeting the standard*
5. Candidate signature: *acknowledge that Assessor has reviewed the entire report and that they understand any nonconformities and how to submit a corrective action plan in CMS*
6. Assessor signature: *acknowledge that you have reviewed the report with the candidate*

WHAT HAPPENS IF THERE IS A NONCONFORMITY?

If a nonconformity is identified while on-site, carefully cite it in the closing meeting report following the policy for writing nonconformities. Be sure the candidate understands that a nonconformity does not necessarily mean there will be no award granted.

1. Review the nonconformity with the candidate during the closing meeting. The candidate has two weeks to submit a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) in CMS.
2. Candidate acknowledges understanding of nonconformities by signing last page of Closing Meeting Report.
3. Inform IREC's Application Process Manager to let them know there is a nonconformity.
4. Application Process Manager makes available to the candidate a Corrective Action Plan Form in CMS.
5. Candidate uploads Corrective Action Plan to Form in CMS and informs Assessor.
6. Assessor reviews CAP. If acceptable, Assessor completes and submits Closing Assessment Report Form to IREC.

ACCREDITATION CLOSING ASSESSMENT REPORT FORM

The Closing Assessment Report Form is one of the selected documents the Award Committee reviews. As such, the information in this form should be double-checked for accuracy and completeness. Here the Assessor summarizes his findings from the assessment, describes any concerns and resolutions, and makes one of three recommendations to the award committee:

1. Progression to Award
2. Termination of the candidacy because the candidate does not meet the IREC Standard
3. Additional iteration to resolve nonconformities that were not adequately addressed with Corrective Action Plan

> *To be placed on the agenda, Final reports must be submitted at least one week prior to the Award Committee meeting.*

Award Committee

The Committee is composed of subject matter experts in clean energy technologies, training and curriculum development, and people with expertise in the processes of accreditation and setting standards. This committee provides the final review to confirm the Assessor has used due diligence in performing the assessment and provides balance and impartiality to the award decision.

You will be expected to attend Award Committee meetings only when you have a candidate on the agenda. In preparation for the meeting, you will receive the agenda and instructions for connecting to the call. When your candidate's award comes up on the agenda, you will be called upon for a **short, concise** presentation focused on how the candidate met the standard, and to answer any questions. Please make sure you have all your notes on hand and are situated such that you can hear and be heard on the conference call. Presentations are typically 5-10 minutes but discussion can last much longer.

In your presentation, **briefly** describe the candidate's background, the credential that is being sought, how the candidate followed the application requirements, some information about the process of iteration that occurred, any nonconformities or concerns, and any commendations or recommendations you would suggest for the candidate. Conclude your presentation with the specific recommendation you are making and the reasons for it.

The Award Committee will usually make one of the following three rulings:

1. Award of the credential,
2. Termination, which is closure of the candidacy, when too many nonconformities exist to resolve in a reasonable period of time, or
3. Additional Assessment, which means continued iteration is recommended to collect missing documentation or resolve nonconformities following the candidate's Corrective Action Plan.

Be prepared to respond to questions from the Award Committee as they deliberate their decision.

Listening to other Assessor's presentations and the committee's questions and discussion can be helpful to learn what is expected. For your first assessment, you can request that you not be placed first on the agenda.

IREC will contact the candidate (and copy the assessor) about the Award Committee's decision.

Credentialing Program Contact Information

LAURE-JEANNE DAVIGNON *Director of Credentialing Program*	BRIAN MATTISKE *Application Process Manager*	MICHELLE BARRETT *Project Manager*	KRISTEN FERGUSON *Manager of Assessor Training & Development*
laurejeanne@irecusa.org	brianm@irecusa.org	michelleb@irecusa.org	kristenf@irecusa.org

IREC Contact Information

Interstate Renewable Energy Council, Inc.

125 Wolf Rd, Suite 404

Albany, NY 12205

Tel 518-621-7379

Email credentialing@irecusa.org

Website http://www.irecusa.org/

Abbreviations

CAP Corrective Action Plan

DA Desk Assessment

DAR Desk Assessment Report

OFI Opportunity for Improvement

OSA On-site Assessment

NC nonconformity