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**INTERNATIONAL ORGANIC INSPECTORS  
ASSOCIATION**



**INSPECTOR ACCREDITATION  
PROGRAM**

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P.O. Box 6, Broadus, Montana 59317 USA

# **INTERNATIONAL ORGANIC INSPECTORS ASSOCIATION INSPECTOR ACCREDITATION PROGRAM**

**GENERAL:** The International Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA) was formed on September 5, 1991 as the Independent Organic Inspectors Association. The following inspector accreditation program has been developed to define accreditation status for IOIA organic inspector members. As a membership service, applicants and accredited members must be members of the IOIA. The program will be reviewed annually by the IOIA Board of Directors. Any amendments to this document may be approved by a majority vote of the membership.

The re-application process is available to IOIA members that are accredited in at least one category and have filed their application prior to the expiration date as stated on their Certificate of Accreditation. Applicants that have allowed their accreditation to expire must apply as an initial applicant.

**PURPOSE:** To establish organic crop, livestock and handler (processor) inspector standards for those persons seeking accreditation by IOIA. The categorized accredited inspector lists shall serve as a resource for organic certification agencies seeking trained and committed inspectors. They will also inform the organic community and the general public that organic inspections are conducted by committed and trained personnel.

## **IMPLEMENTATION:**

1. IOIA is an equal opportunity association, and shall not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, religion, or physical ability.
2. Recognizing the importance of a personal motivation and commitment to organics, the IOIA accreditation standards are designed to value both the technical and non-technical aspects of inspector qualifications. This will show that IOIA accredited inspectors are motivated individuals with a commitment to the organic community as well as being technically prepared for inspection work.
3. IOIA accreditation of applicants shall be granted or denied by majority decision of the Accreditation Review Panel (ARP). Applicants will receive documentation of their accreditation status plus comments from the ARP.
4. The Accreditation Review Panel (ARP) shall consist of three IOIA inspector members, one non-IOIA member, and one certifier representative, all of whom must be approved by the IOIA Board of Directors. The ARP shall have two alternates---one inspector and one outside alternate. In the future, IOIA will approach major certifiers to fill the certifier seat on the ARP. Appointment to the ARP shall be for one year. The ARP shall report to the IOIA Board of Directors semi-annually.
5. Accreditation fees shall be established by the IOIA Board of Directors. The Accreditation Program shall be self-funding by these fees. Accreditation fees are currently set at \$60.00 for application in the first category, plus \$10.00 for each additional category. Re-accreditation fees are currently set at \$30.00 for the first category, with \$10.00 each per additional category. A fee of \$35.00 per category is set for those whose applications have been previously denied.

6. Inspectors may be accredited in one or more of the three categories: Crop, Livestock, and Handling (Processing). Categories of accreditation are not intended to limit the range of operations which an inspector may inspect, but rather to identify members with particular qualifications. Small on-farm processing and minor livestock inspection are part of any IOIA recognized basic farm inspector training curriculum, thereby enhancing the qualifications of an accredited crop inspector to conduct such work.

7. The applicant's score will remain confidential with IOIA in the applicant's membership file. The applicant will be notified of approval or non-approval. If non-approved, the applicant will be given the reasons. Appeal of ARP decisions may be made to the IOIA Board of Directors.

8. Endorsement of inspectors shall be limited to publication of the following information:

- IOIA Inspector Accreditation Standards
- The inspector's accreditation status and categories
- The inspector's claimed areas of expertise
- The inspector's years of inspection experience
- Certification agencies which the inspector has worked with
- Organic inspector trainings which the inspector has completed
- Academic degrees and education which the inspector has completed
- Claimed proficiency in specific languages

9. Accreditation lists shall be updated semi-annually and published annually. This shall be in the form of a Membership Directory with accreditation statuses of inspectors clearly denoted. In addition to the information listed in item 8, the inspector will have the opportunity to make a brief personal statement.

10. Each inspector's accreditation status shall be reviewed through renewal application every three years. It is the responsibility of the accredited member to be aware of this date and to reapply at the appropriate time. Pending review, there shall be no interruption in accreditation status when the application for renewal is received prior to the expiration date. If no renewal application is received by the expiration date, accreditation shall be suspended.

11. The concept of self-assessment is incorporated in the IOIA accreditation application. Applicants are asked to assess their skills, experience, etc. in each category and to explain how they are upgrading their weaker areas.

12. All participation in this program is entirely voluntary. IOIA assumes no responsibility for any loss of advantage, real or imagined, that may be alleged by any party or organization to have resulted from either granting or denial of accredited status. Accreditation may be revoked for the following reasons:

- The applicant has willfully misrepresented information on the application, or
- Violation of the IOIA Code of Ethics or Code of Conduct.

Complaints will follow IOIA's Ethics Investigation Procedures.

# **INTERNATIONAL ORGANIC INSPECTORS ASSOCIATION INSPECTOR ACCREDITATION STANDARDS EXPLANATION**

Inspectors may apply for accreditation in each of three categories: Crops, Livestock or Handling. Each category will be evaluated separately.

IOIA recognizes that diversity of education and work experience can contribute to inspector qualifications. Therefore, if the applicant's work and/or education background are not directly related to the accreditation category(s) in an obvious way, the applicant is given the opportunity to make his/her case to establish this relationship. Failure to utilize this opportunity (incomplete applications) will result in denial of accreditation in the relevant categories.

## **COMMITMENT TO ORGANICS**

The application form includes a questionnaire designed to assess the applicant's commitment to organics and to assist them in assessing and developing their own inspection proficiency. For those seeking re-accreditation in the future, the previous application will be reviewed to evaluate progress. Responses will be judged by the Accreditation Review Panel (ARP) and scored against an optimal score of 100 points. Questions will be rotated periodically.

## **EDUCATION**

Applicants are asked to evaluate their communication skills to demonstrate satisfaction of the minimum education requirement. The manner in which the application is completed will be a factor when evaluating communications skills. Education related to the category in which the inspector is seeking accreditation will be evaluated by the ARP. Applicants will have the opportunity to explain the relationship between their education and the categories of accreditation for which they are applying.

## **WORK AND LIFE EXPERIENCES**

Work experience is evaluated on the basis of full time employment. For example, part-time work at 20 hours per week over four years would total two years of experience. Additional points are offered to those applicants with work experience in both organic and conventional aspects of their category. Regarding life experiences, applicants will have the opportunity to explain the relationship between their experience and the categories of accreditation for which they are applying.

## **INSPECTION EXPERIENCE**

Credit is awarded for both the number of inspections in a category and the number of seasons over which they occurred because inspection in different years adds value to an inspector's experience. Accreditation criteria include 2 years of inspection work, not 2 seasons. Some inspections may count toward more than one category. For example, if the producer applied for both crop and livestock certification, and the inspector reported on both of these aspects, then that inspection would count for

both categories (one inspection in each category). One processing inspection equals 2 days of work experience. One crop or livestock inspection equals 1.5 days work experience.

For re-accreditation, at least 5 organic farm/crop inspections over the immediate past three years with at least one inspection in the most recent year is required. At least 3 organic process or 3 organic livestock inspections over the immediate past three years with at least one inspection in the most recent year is required when applying for re-accreditation in organic process inspection or organic livestock inspection, respectively.

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION**

Seminars, conventions, and University Extension programs are credited at 1 hour for each hour of attendance. These may range from luncheons to retreats or workshops of several days or more. Both organic and conventionally oriented materials must be covered (not necessarily in the same seminar). Inspector trainings attended in addition to the one required every three years will be credited toward continuing education. Self-study programs will be evaluated on an individual basis.

The same as stated above is required for re-accreditation.

## **ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

1. Successful completion of an IOIA approved inspector training (in category) assures that the applicant has considered and demonstrated familiarity with all the basic requirements of performing organic inspection work. It is also a point at which communication skills are evaluated through the required exam and written report.

A Certificate of Completion from at least one IOIA-approved inspector training within the past three years is required for re-accreditation.

2. The certifier's inspector evaluation form is to be completed by all certifiers with whom the applicant has worked in the last three years. This form may be returned with the application or forwarded directly from the certifier to IOIA. The form will solicit information concerning the applicant's inspection experience and work performance in terms of competency, conduct, professionalism, etc.

The same as stated above is required for re-accreditation.

## SCORING CHART

Points	10	20	30	40
Commitment to Organics	Score 70%	80%	90%	95%
Education	Adequate communication skills	2 years related or any 4 year degree or equivalent	4 year related degree or equivalent	Related graduate degree or equivalent
Work and Life Experience	1 year	2 years	5 years include $\geq 1$ organic and $\geq 1$ conventional	10 years including $\geq 2$ organic and $\geq 2$ conventional
Inspection Experience	2 years and $\geq 10$ inspections	3 years and $\geq 20$ inspections	4 years and $\geq 30$ inspections	5 years and $\geq 40$ inspections
Continuing Education	Avg. 5 hours per year	Avg. 10 hours per year	Avg. 15 hours per year	Avg. 20 hours per year

Applicant inspector must score at least 10 points in each bracket with a total score of at least 100 points.