

Management Supervision**1. Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to outline the management supervision policies for Abet Management Consulting Private Limited (the Company) seeking accreditation under the Indian Forest and Wood Certification Scheme (IFWCS) and relevant international standards.

It defines the responsibilities and governance practices that the CB's top management must uphold to ensure compliance with IFWCS requirements, as well as standards like ISO/IEC 17065:2012, and the norms of globally recognized schemes such as the National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB).

By adhering to this policy document, the CB's management demonstrates a commitment to impartial, competent, and effective certification operations consistent with national and international best practices.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the certification unit and personnel of the CB involved in the IFWCS certification program. It covers the structure of governance, the responsibilities of top management and any committees, and the procedures for decision-making, financial oversight, and delegated authorities within the CB.

The scope encompasses compliance with IFWCS guidelines and applicable international accreditation standards (including ISO/IEC 17065 for product and process certification, and analogous requirements from FSC and PEFC programs). All forest management, trees-outside-forest, and chain-of-custody certification activities conducted by the CB are governed by these policies, ensuring they meet the criteria set by IFWCS and relevant ISO/IEC standards for accreditation. This document is intended for internal use by the CB's management and as evidence of conformity when submitting for accreditation to QCI/NABCB.

3. Governance Structure

The CB maintains a documented governance structure that clearly defines roles, responsibilities, and authorities of its top management, key personnel, and any committees. An organizational chart or description is kept up-to-date to show lines of authority and how various functions (e.g. auditing, certification decision, quality management) are organized. Because the CB is part of a larger organization, this structure description includes the line of authority and relationship to other parts of the legal entity.

Top management (which may be a board, group of persons, or an individual director) holds overall authority for establishing and enforcing these policies. In line with ISO/IEC 17065 requirements, management identifies who is responsible for critical oversight functions, including developing policies, supervising their implementation, financial oversight, and certification decisions.

As a CB we have formal rules for any committees involved in the certification process (such as a certification decision committee or an impartiality committee), including their appointment, terms of reference, and operation procedures. These committees must be free from undue commercial or financial influence, and the CB retains ultimate authority to appoint or withdraw committee members.

In accordance with IFWCS and international norms, the CB's governance structure also ensures impartiality – the certification body is independent, not engaged in consulting or forest management itself, and has a mechanism (e.g. an impartiality committee) to safeguard objectivity in all certification activities.

4. Management Responsibilities

The CB's top management is ultimately responsible for the effective functioning of the certification program and compliance with all scheme requirements. Management shall exercise the following key responsibilities:

- 4.1 **Compliance Assessments:** Ensure that robust procedures are in place for conducting independent audits and evaluations of clients against IFWCS criteria and relevant international standards.
- 4.2 The CB must have **documented processes** covering the entire certification cycle – from application review, through on-site assessment, to surveillance – in line with IFWCS and ISO/IEC 17065 requirements. Top management must provide adequate resources (competent auditors, technical experts, etc.) and oversight so that every compliance assessment is performed objectively and consistently according to the scheme's guidelines. Management also oversees that internal audit processes are conducted to evaluate the CB's own conformity to these policies and accreditation criteria.
- 4.3 **Policy Formulation:** Develop and approve policies and procedures for organizational functioning and the management system of the CB.
 - This includes a comprehensive quality manual and operating procedures that cover all aspects of the certification program (e.g. handling of applications, audit methodologies, decision-making, record-keeping).
 - Top management is responsible for establishing these policies in line with IFWCS guidelines and international standards, and for reviewing them periodically to ensure they remain adequate and effective. According to FSC accreditation requirements, the CB's top management must not only document such policies but also ensure they are implemented at all levels of the organization.
 - All personnel involved in certification activities should have access to, and be trained on, the management system documentation relevant to their roles.
- 4.4 **Decision-Making on Certification Approvals:** Oversee and control the certification decision process to ensure it is impartial, competent, and follows established criteria. The CB's management designates a Certification Decision-Making Entity (which could be a committee or authorized manager) that is responsible for reviewing evaluation results and granting or denying certification. As a matter of best practice and per IFWCS norms, individuals who participated in an audit must not be the ones to make the final certification decision, in order to maintain impartiality.

Our CB follows this principle strictly: the person(s) or committee deciding on certification are independent of the audit team, and all decisions are based on objective evidence collected during evaluations. Top management ensures that there are clear rules for how decisions are taken, including criteria for certification, handling of major or minor non-conformities, and requirements for additional reviews if necessary. The final decision on certification is only made after a thorough review of the audit findings by qualified personnel who have the authority from top management to approve or refuse certification.

Management also supervises that decisions are properly documented and communicated to clients, and that certificate issuance and surveillance schedules are in accordance with IFWCS procedures.

- 4.5 **Supervising Internal Policy Implementation:** Ensure that all policies and procedures are effectively put into practice throughout the CB's operations. Top management shall monitor compliance of staff and committees with the internal management system on an ongoing basis. This responsibility includes conducting regular management reviews and internal audits of the CB's own processes. At least annually, top management reviews the management system to verify its continuing suitability and effectiveness, making improvements as needed (a practice aligned with ISO/IEC 17065 requirements).

If policies are not followed or are found inadequate, management takes corrective actions and updates the procedures. By supervising implementation, management assures that day-to-day certification activities (from client communications to audit file handling) adhere to the accredited procedures and that any deviations are promptly addressed. This also involves oversight of training and qualification of personnel to make sure they remain competent to implement the CB's policies correctly.

- 4.6 **Financial Supervision:** Oversee the financial management of the certification body to ensure stability, transparency, and impartiality. The CB's management is charged with supervision of finances, including budgeting for certification programs, setting and reviewing fees, and ensuring sufficient resources are available for all certification activities.

Sound financial oversight is critical to maintain the integrity of the certification process – the CB must avoid any situation where financial considerations could compromise impartial decision-making. The top management regularly reviews financial reports and ensures that the fee structure for clients is transparent and does not incentivize undue leniency or non-compliance. In line with ISO/IEC 17065, management identifies the individual or body responsible for this financial oversight role. The CB also complies with any financial requirements set by the accreditation body (e.g. annual accreditation fees to the IFWCS Scheme Owner). By supervising finances, management assures that the certification body remains economically viable while upholding impartiality.

- 4.7 **Delegation of Authority:** Establish and regulate the delegation of authority to committees or individuals for executing the certification program, while retaining accountability. The CB's management may delegate specific tasks – such as audit execution, technical review of audit reports, certification decision recommendations, or impartiality oversight – to qualified personnel or committees. According to ISO/IEC 17065, top management must identify who has authority to perform defined activities on its behalf and ensure that delegation is clearly documented. For instance, the CB may have an internal Certification Committee that reviews audit results and advises on decisions, or an Impartiality Committee that monitors conflicts of interest; the roles and powers of these bodies are formally laid out (via terms of reference approved by top management).

Management ensures that any person or group with delegated duties is competent (meeting relevant qualification criteria) and free from undue influence. Even when authority is delegated, the top management of the CB remains ultimately responsible for the outcomes. It regularly supervises and evaluates the performance of those committees/individuals. If activities are outsourced or subcontracted (e.g. using external auditors or technical experts), the CB's management retains responsibility to ensure that those external parties comply with the CB's policies and IFWCS requirements

5. Decision-Making Processes

All decision-making processes related to certification are conducted under defined policies to guarantee fairness, competence, and compliance with accreditation criteria. The CB's internal procedures (approved by management) detail the steps for evaluation, review, and decision as required by ISO/IEC 17065. Key elements of our decision-making process include:

- **Impartial Review:** After auditors conduct an evaluation of a client against IFWCS standards, an independent review of the audit findings is performed. This review is typically by a person or panel that was not involved in the actual audit, ensuring a fresh and unbiased look at the evidence. This separation of roles (audit vs. decision) is a fundamental requirement in international best practices (emphasized by schemes like IFWCS) to uphold impartiality in certification.
- **Certification Committee/Decision Entity:** The CB may use a Certification Committee or assign a Certification Manager as the decision-making entity. This entity evaluates the audit report, any non-conformities raised, and the client's corrective actions. It then makes a decision whether to grant, maintain, suspend, or withdraw certification. The composition of any committee and its quorum, voting rules (if applicable), and decision criteria are defined in the CB's procedures and approved by top management.

As noted, those making decisions do not include the auditor(s) who conducted the audit, and they possess the necessary competence for the scope (e.g. knowledge of sustainable forest management and IFWCS standards). We follow the IFWCS guidelines and other NABCB guidelines that decision-makers must be qualified as auditors in the relevant field (to understand the technical content) but must remain independent of the specific audit in question.

- **Use of Committees:** If the CB employs committees (such as an Impartiality Committee contributing to decisions or a Technical Advisory group), their role in decision-making is clearly defined. ISO/IEC 17065 requires that any such committees involved in certification have formal terms of reference and operate free from undue influence.

Our Impartiality Committee periodically reviews the overall certification decision process to ensure neutrality and can advise on issues where conflicts of interest might arise. While it does not overturn certification decisions, if top management were ever to diverge from the Impartiality Committee's recommendations, the committee has the right to take appropriate independent action (such as notifying the accreditation body) to safeguard the integrity of the process.

- **Decision Records and Approval:** Every certification decision is recorded, with reasoning documented and communicated. Management ensures that there is a verification step that all required information (audit reports, corrective action evidence, peer reviews if any) has been considered before signing off on a decision. Certificates are then issued along with any applicable conditions. The CB also has policies for granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending, or withdrawing certification, in line with IFWCS scheme rules.

These policies include defined triggers for suspensions or withdrawals (e.g. unresolved major non-compliances) and are enforced consistently. Top management reviews trends in certification decisions (e.g., via annual performance reports) as part of supervision, to ensure decisions remain consistent and credible across different clients and auditors.

Overall, the decision-making process is designed to be consistent with international accreditation practices, where certification decisions are made competently and impartially based on objective evidence. This approach mirrors the "separation of roles" principle championed by NABCB and others to keep the certification process robust.

6. Financial Oversight

Effective financial oversight is a critical component of management supervision in the CB. The following outlines how the CB's finances are governed to support the integrity of the certification program:

- **Budgeting and Resource Allocation:** The CB's management annually prepares and approves a budget that allocates sufficient resources to carry out certification activities (audits, training, committee meetings, etc.). In accordance with ISO/IEC 17065 requirements, top management ensures the provision of adequate resources for all certification functions.

This budgeting process is reviewed to confirm that all necessary costs (e.g., auditor man-days, travel for on-site evaluations, accreditation fees, personnel training) are accounted for, so that quality is not compromised due to financial shortfalls.

- **Supervision of Fees and Revenue:** The CB maintains transparency in how it charges fees to clients for certification. A schedule of fees is established and made available, often as required by the IFWCS guidelines. Management supervises the income and expenses to ensure that financial practices do not adversely affect impartiality. The NABCB accreditation rules and IFWCS expect that a CB operates without financial pressures influencing certification decisions. Therefore, top management regularly reviews financial performance with an eye on risk (such as over-reliance on a few large clients) and implements controls to prevent any conflict of interest stemming from financial relationships.
- **Accounting and Reporting:** The CB follows standard accounting practices and keeps records of all financial transactions. Periodic financial reports (monthly, quarterly) are reviewed by senior management or a finance committee to track the financial health of the organization. Supervision of the finances by top management includes verifying that funds are used appropriately (for legitimate business operations) and that the CB remains solvent. Any significant changes that could affect the CB's ability to perform certification (e.g., changes in ownership, funding sources, or major investments) are evaluated for their impact on the CB's impartiality and capabilities.

- **Impartiality and Financial Independence:** The CB's financial policies incorporate safeguards for impartiality. For instance, the CB will not accept payments or gifts that could influence the outcome of an audit, and it will not have financial arrangements with clients other than the agreed certification fees. An impartiality mechanism (as required by ISO/IEC 17065) provides input on any potential financial conflicts.
- Top management addresses any such concerns by adjusting policies or recusing any decision-makers who may have a financial interest in a particular client. By supervising these aspects, management ensures that while the CB must be financially viable, its decisions remain unbiased and solely based on compliance evidence.

7. Delegation of Authority

The policy for delegation of authority defines how the CB's top management assigns duties to various personnel or bodies while ensuring adequate supervision. Key points include:

- **Defined Responsibilities:** The CB documents any delegation of authority to committees or individuals for performing certification activities

Auditors are delegated the authority to conduct audits on behalf of the CB, and technical reviewers might be authorized to verify that audit reports meet quality requirements. Each delegation is explicit about the scope of authority, any limits, and the reporting requirements. As per ISO/IEC 17065 clause 5.1.3, top management identifies who (by role or name) has overall responsibility for key functions, and this includes any person or group acting under delegated authority for tasks like evaluation, review, and approval.

- **Competence and Qualification:** The CB ensures that anyone given delegated authority is competent and meets any qualification criteria mandated by IFWCS or international standards. For instance, members of a Certification Committee should collectively have expertise in forest management, wood product supply chains, and auditing techniques. Auditors must have the required training and experience in sustainable forest management or chain-of-custody auditing as applicable.

Management establishes qualification requirements (e.g., following ISO 19011 guidelines for auditor competence and IFWCS-specific training) and verifies that individuals meet these before delegating tasks to them. Ongoing competence is monitored (through witness audits, performance reviews, etc.), and delegation can be rescinded if a person no longer fulfills the competence or impartiality requirements.

- **Oversight of Delegated Activities:** Even after delegating, top management maintains oversight of those activities. Delegated bodies or persons must report back to management or a supervisory function. For example, an Audit Team reports its findings in a written report that management (or designated reviewer) examines; a Certification Committee's meeting minutes and recommendations are reviewed by the Scheme Manager to ensure consistency with policies. The CB's management system includes checks and balances – such as requiring a secondary review of certification files or periodic audits of the decisions made under delegation – to ensure that delegated authority is exercised properly. In line with best practices, if the CB operates in multiple regions or uses franchise offices, the central office holding the accreditation ensures all regional offices implement the CB's policies consistently; independent local units cannot deviate from the core procedures without approval. All offices and subcontractors operate under the CB's direction and contracts, as the CB remains accountable to the accreditation body for their performance.
- **Retention of Ultimate Authority:** The top management and governing body retain the ultimate authority for certification decisions and policy enforcement. ISO/IEC 17065 emphasizes that while committees may be used, the certification body must retain authority to appoint or withdraw committee members and cannot abrogate its responsibility.

Our CB's policy reflects this – if a committee fails to function impartially or effectively, management will intervene or reconstitute it. Similarly, any decision made under delegated power can be reviewed by top management (for instance, via an appeal process or during

management review meetings). This ensures that the delegation is not a one-time hand-off, but a controlled process under the CB's broader supervision.

This delegation framework allows the CB to function efficiently (through distributed roles) while upholding accountability. By clearly delineating who can do what, and by monitoring those who carry out delegated tasks, the CB meets IFWCS's expectation that certification bodies work competently and reliably through authorized persons/committees. It also mirrors global certification body practices, where delegation is balanced with rigorous oversight to maintain confidence in the certification decisions.

8. Compliance with Accreditation Standards

In developing and enforcing the above management supervision policies, the CB aligns itself with IFWCS guidelines and international accreditation standards to ensure eligibility for accreditation and global recognition. Key points of compliance include:

- **Adherence to IFWCS Requirements:** The CB's policies are built to satisfy the specific requirements of the Indian Forest and Wood Certification Scheme. IFWCS, as managed by the Indian Forest and Wood Certification Council (IFWCC) and overseen by QCI's NABCB, requires that CBs operate impartially, competently, and transparently.

Our management supervision framework incorporates all stipulations from the IFWCS Guidelines – including auditor qualifications, audit process transparency, and public information obligations. This policy document, alongside our detailed procedures, demonstrates that such a management system is in place. We also comply with IFWCS provisions on accreditation fees and reporting to the Scheme Owner, and we participate in any oversight activities as part of maintaining accreditation.

- **Alignment with International Best Practices:** The CB also looks to international certification body requirements as benchmarks of best practice, given that these are globally recognized forest certification schemes. IFWCS accreditation standard stipulates that top management must establish and enforce policies and procedures for the certification program and ensure they are followed at all levels— reinforcing what ISO/IEC 17065 requires. We have implemented similar rigor by making sure our entire organization is aware of and abides by our certification procedures. Moreover, the Company stress the importance of impartial governance and separation of roles.

Our policy embraces this by clearly segregating the audit functions from decision-making functions, and by using ISO-based procedures, thereby reflecting the ethos of both IFWCS and NABCB. By drawing on these schemes' best practices, the CB not only meets IFWCS's baseline but aspires to the same level of quality and integrity found in leading global programs.

- **Continuous Improvement and Benchmarking:** Compliance is not a one-time achievement but an ongoing commitment. The CB's management stays updated with any revisions in IFWCS requirements, ISO standards, and international scheme expectations. For instance, if ISO or IFWCS releases updated guidelines, we review and integrate relevant changes into our management system. This ensures that our supervision policies remain current and robust. We also undergo regular management reviews and accreditation audits which provide feedback on our compliance status. Any non-conformities identified by internal audits or external assessors (NABCB or peer reviews) are treated by management as opportunities to strengthen our system, with corrective actions tracked to completion.

By adhering to the above, the CB attests that it complies with all criteria needed for accreditation under IFWCS and internationally. The synthesis of IFWCS guidelines, ISO/IEC 17065 principles, and NABCB best practices in this policy demonstrates a comprehensive approach to meeting accreditation expectations and maintaining global credibility as a certification body.