RFM Procedure 8:
Appointment and Control of RFM Assessors

Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) Certification Program
17065

Procedure 8: Appointment and Control of RFM Assessors

1. Purpose

This document sets out the procedures for appointment and approval of RFM Assessors to ensure that Assessors have the competency to carry out assessments required for the RFM Program.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all personnel authorized to conduct assessments under the RFM Fishery Standard or the RFM Chain of Custody Standard.

3. Method

3.1 Appointment

Each Assessor will be required to meet the requirements of its Certification Body and those applicable to the RFM Standard to be assessed.

Prior to appointment, an Assessor must submit a detailed C.V. to the Certification Body covering professional qualifications, training, and experience in the area of expertise required for assessment under the applicable RFM Standard.

Approval of a new Assessor will be carried out in two stages:

Stage 1

The Certification Body's Project Manager will review the appointee's C.V. against the relevant assessor criteria and interview the appointee. If the appointee is determined to possess the necessary skills, then the Certification Body will proceed to Stage 2.

Stage 2

Upon satisfactory completion of stage one, the appointee will undertake orientation. Orientation will cover at a minimum:

a) An overview of Certification Body's organization, quality systems and accreditation requirements;
b) The specific role and responsibilities of the Assessors; and
c) A review of the chain of custody methodology, if applicable and
d) FAO-Based Program for Responsible Fisheries Management, if applicable.

Assessor competence will be determined through interview and professional experience review; such reviews will be documented and approved.

Where applicable, this may be followed by a series of witnessed assessments (i.e. shadow audits) to verify Assessor competence. Experienced Assessors may demonstrate competence within a specific Program through interview and/or evidence of having completed an appropriate number of audits against the standard in question.

Satisfactory completion of this process will lead to confirmation of appointment. An Assessor that has not performed an assessment or audit for a period of more than 24 months must reapply for approval as an RFM Assessor.

The Certification Body Program Manager/Administrator for each Program will maintain a master list of approved RFM Assessors. For individual sub-contracted personnel, a formal contract will be drawn up on appointment and signed by both parties.

Upon appointment, each Assessor will sign a Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Undertaking form.

3.2 Controls

The performance of each Assessor will be monitored and reviewed as follows:

a) Reporting - Each Assessment Report will be reviewed by the Certification Body's staff and the Certification Committee; and

b) The Certification Body shall ensure that approved RFM Assessors are afforded reasonable opportunity for ongoing professional development relating to best practice in the relevant sector (fishery or CoC). Records of professional development shall be maintained.

4. Records

The CB Program Manager/Administrator will maintain the following records for each Approved RFM Assessor:

a) The Assessor Contract;
b) C.V.;
c) External Training Certificates;
d) Evidence of training on the relevant Standard;
e) Assessor Criteria Requirement Record;
f) Date of Approval;

g) Signed copies of Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality form;
h) Staff Training Records, where applicable;
i) Performance review schedule;
j) Assessor performance review;
k) Addition to audit scope – training & supervised audits;
l) A record of audits conducted;
m) Internal assessment reports; and
n) Witnessed assessment reviews (once every three years).

5. Fishery Assessor Qualifications for RFM Fishery Standard

Assessors must meet the following qualifications.

5.1 Formal Qualification

At least a post-high school diploma or equivalent (minimum course duration of two years) must have been obtained in a discipline related to fishery and or biological studies.

5.2 Technical Skills and Qualifications

5.2.1 Lead Assessor Training

a) For Lead Assessors only, successful completion of a Lead Assessor training course based on ISO 19011 principles that must have a minimum duration of 37 hours and must be externally recognized by the industry. The certificate must specify the course content and duration. Successful completion must be indicated on the certificate.
b) Training on FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.
c) Training on FAO Guidelines for the Eco-labelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries.

5.2.2 Experience

Demonstrate experience in at least one of the following:

a) **Fish stock assessment** - must have experience in the production or review of stock assessment(s) relevant for the fishery(ies) under assessment;
b) **Fish Stock Biology/Ecology** - must have five years' experience in research expertise in biology and ecology of the target or similar species;
c) **Fishing impacts on aquatic ecosystems** – must have at least five years' experience in research into, policy analysis for, or management of,

fisheries impacts on aquatic ecosystems, and/or marine conservation biology;

d) **Fishery management and operations** - must have at least ten years' experience as a practicing fishery/aquatic natural resource manager and/or fishery/aquatic natural resource management analyst. Must also have a good understanding of the management system(s) used in the fishery under assessment;

e) **Local Knowledge** Current knowledge of the country, language and local fishery context that is sufficient to support meaningful assessment of the fishery.

5.3 Communication Skills

"Working language" skills in the corresponding native/working language. The "working language" for the RFM Program is English. This must include the locally used specialist terminology in this working language.

6. Chain of Custody Qualifications for RFM

6.1 Scope of Expertise

Certification Bodies must demonstrate that their staff and contractors have the knowledge and expertise to work within the specified fields of knowledge relevant to the seafood sector being assessed. Each assessor undertaking certification assessments must have the appropriate qualifications, training, experience and skills to perform an evaluation against the RFM CoC Standard. Certification Bodies must demonstrate that appropriate training for each assessor and sub-contracted assessor has been undertaken to understand the RFM CoC Standard. The importance of demonstrable competency under the scope of evaluation cannot be over emphasized for all staff and Assessors.

6.2 Assessor Registration and Training

The Certification Bodies will hold detailed files for each assessor undertaking RFM CoC Standard assessments.

The Certification Bodies shall maintain up-to-date records demonstrating how each Assessor complies with the requirements for qualifications, training and experience required under the RFM CoC Standard.

These records shall be made available to the CSC and supplied on request.

6.3 Specific Assessor Qualification Requirements

Procedure 8: Appointment and Control of RFM Assessors

All assessors must be able to report in the English language. Assessors must also be able to communicate effectively with the language spoken at the site of the applicant. (The use of independent interpreters accompanying the assessor will be acceptable to cover any language barriers).

Formal education to a minimum of a high school diploma or equivalent (minimum course duration of two years) must have been obtained in a discipline related to fish processing or food production studies.

Lead Assessors must have successfully completed of a Lead Assessor training course based on ISO 19011 principles that must have a minimum duration of 37 hours and must be externally recognized by the industry. The certificate must specify the course content and duration. Successful completion must be indicated on the certificate.

The assessor must have formal auditor training in assessment techniques that are relevant in the seafood supply chain.

Assessors must have at least two years auditing experience in similar assessment programs or relevant work experience in the seafood industry.

Assessors must have successfully completed a recognized training course for the RFM CoC assessment techniques which includes:

a) General knowledge of the entire RFM Standards and relevant FAO references;
b) Specific Details of the RFM CoC Standard and certification Process;
c) Knowledge and understanding of specific processes to the sectors in the supply chain being assessed; and
d) Knowledge of relevant legislative requirements or regulations.

Assessors must have experience and knowledge in the production or review of the type of fish packing, processing, and distribution relevant for the unit of certification, the supply chain and species under assessment.

The Certification Body shall have a training program for new assessors to the program that shall incorporate, at a minimum:

a) An assessment of knowledge and skills for each field of evaluation; and
b) A document signed off upon to prove the satisfactory completion of the training program by a competent trainer within the Certification Body.

Certified Sustainable
ALASKA RFM

Certified Seafood Collaborative