

SIMPLIFIED CERTIFICATION SOP

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INTRODUCTION

Water Stewardship Assurance Services (WSAS) is the sole mission-driven Assurance Provider (AP) for the Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) System.

WSAS's role is to assess Sites against the AWS Standard, and to provide assurance that the Sites are in conformity with the requirements of the AWS Standard. WSAS issues certificates of conformity to those Sites that have been successfully assessed and meet the requirements of the standard.

WSAS conducts their assessments in line with the AWS Certification Requirements and the operational principles underpinning ISO 17065. WSAS also follows the ISO 19011 Guidelines for Auditing Management Systems.

The purpose of this simplified Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to describe the audit processes that WSAS follows when conducting certification activities. The intended audience is both WSAS Auditors and Sites seeking certification against the AWS Standard, or Sites that are already certified but are seeking information on a particular audit process.

SCOPE

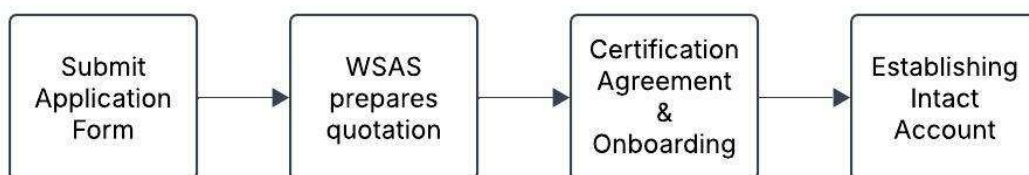
This SOP will provide a description of the following audit processes:

- Application Process
- Pre-Audit Process
- Audit Process
- Closure of Non-Conformities and Certification
- Surveillance Process
- Desktop Pre-Assessment (DPA) - Optional Process

The term 'Site' in this document refers equally to a Single Site, Multi-Site or Group Operation, unless specifically stated otherwise.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The Application Process consists of 4 stages:



The Site completes the [application form](#), which is available on the WSAS website, and this initiates the application review process.

WSAS will then prepare a quotation for the certification fee, based on a review of the information provided in the application form. The quotation will be issued within two weeks of the Site submitting their application form.

WSAS and the Site sign a Certification Agreement and proceed with the vendor registration process. The onboarding process can take up to 1-2 months from the quotation approval date, depending on the complexity of the Site's onboarding process.

Once the Certification Agreement is signed, WSAS will create an account for the Site on Intact, the WSAS Audit Platform. The Site is given access to the Document Upload area on the platform for uploading their AWS System documentation prior to the audit. The Site is required to upload parts of their AWS documented system, at the latest 2 weeks prior to the audit taking place. The site will receive an Audit Preparation Letter from their Regional Audit Lead, that outlines in detail the audit preparation stage, including which documents to upload onto Intact.

AUDIT PREPARATION PROCESS

The Audit Preparation stage for an initial audit, consists of three broad steps:



The WSAS Regional Audit Lead (RAL) and the Site will agree on audit dates after which the RAL will appoint the Audit Team. This will usually consist of a Lead Auditor and, in certain circumstances, also a Support Auditor, to ensure the audit and stakeholder interviews can be undertaken in the local language. If required, additional technical experts may be appointed e.g. hydrogeologist, if WSAS considers it necessary for the audit.

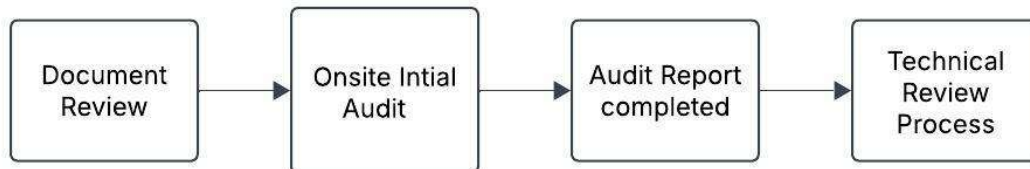
WSAS will prepare a Stakeholder Announcement for Initial or Recertification Audits, which is published on the AWS and WSAS Websites. Sites are also required to publicise the announcement in two outlets and Auditors will request evidence of this at the audit. This activity is undertaken 8 weeks before the audit takes place. Stakeholder Announcements are not required for Surveillance audits, and that step is skipped in surveillance years.

The Regional Audit Lead will issue the site with an Audit Preparation Letter, outlining details of how the Site should prepare for the audit and explaining what Sites can expect from their onsite audit.

The appointed Lead Auditor will request the Site's Stakeholder List, in order to facilitate the preparation of the audit plan and the stakeholder interview requests. The Audit Plan will be shared with Sites at least 2 weeks before the audit is scheduled to take place, and the plan will outline the audit scope, audit dates and locations, composition of the audit team and team members' roles, and a proposed agenda with expected time and duration of the audit activities. The plan will also list the proposed stakeholders that the Audit Team would like to interview during the audit, as well the areas to be viewed at the Site and catchment tours.

AUDIT PROCESS

The Audit Process consists of four broad stages:



The Site must complete the document upload process two weeks before the audit takes place, so the Audit Team can start the document review process. Details of what documents to upload, are included in the Audit Preparation Letter.

The onsite audit takes place on the agreed dates, usually across 3 days for an initial audit, and 2 - 2.5 days for a surveillance audits. A Gold or Platinum certification audit will usually take place over 4 days, depending on the complexity of the Site. Large sites, and Group structures require additional time onsite, and the amount of additional time required depends on the size and structure of these.

The audit includes a site tour of all water-related infrastructure, interviews with relevant staff and external stakeholders, and an assessment of the Site's AWS System. The structure of the audit is explained during the opening meeting, where the Site will also be encouraged to explain their operations to the Audit Team.

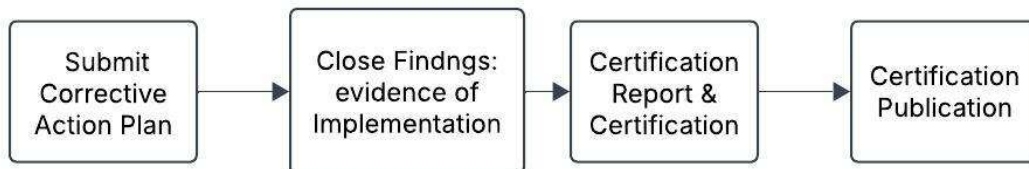
The audit is concluded with a closing meeting, where the Audit Team will present any findings and provide the Site with their Findings Overview spreadsheet, so the Site can start working on their Corrective Actions and implement them. The Audit Team will also make a recommendation for certification if the audit outcomes support that statement, or recommend the ongoing certification of the Site, in surveillance audits.

The Audit Team prepares the audit report, which describes how the Site conforms with the requirements of the AWS Standard and any identified non-conformities, the evidence that underpins the assessment findings, and the Audit Team's recommendation for certification.

The appointed WSAS reviewer conducts a Technical Review of the report and the documented evidence supporting the assessment outcomes. In some instances, the wording of findings may be changed, or findings added or deleted by the Reviewer in consultation with the Lead Auditor. The Reviewer is responsible for formally issuing any Non-conformities. The Audit Report is shared with the Site and will be issued by WSAS, within 6 weeks of the audit end date.

CLOSURE OF NON-CONFORMITIES AND CERTIFICATION

The Closure of Non-Conformities and Certification Process for Initial and Recertification Audits consists of 4 stages:



The Site will have been issued with their Findings Overview spreadsheet at the Closing Meeting, which will list the non-conformities raised by the Audit Team. This is to encourage sites to begin working on their root cause analysis and Corrective Action Plans, immediately after the audit. When the Technical Review has been completed, and the Audit Report is issued, then the confirmed findings will be formally issued to the site via Intact platform. Sites can then input the work they have already undertaken on the corrective action plans and proof of implementation onto Intact.

Please note that WSAS will no longer be issuing Minor and Major Non-Conformities, in line with the AWS Certification Requirements (v.4), but use a single classification of Non-Conformity. All NCs must be formally closed out, before certification is granted or the certificate maintained in surveillance years. Any non-conformities are addressed by submitting a Corrective Action Plan within 1 week of receiving the Audit Report, although please note that Sites can start working on their Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) from the Closing Meeting when they receive their Findings Overview spreadsheet. The Technical Reviewer will endeavour to review and approve the CAPs within 1 (calendar) week of receipt or send them back to the Site if the CAP is not deemed adequate.

The Site will have to submit evidence of having implemented the Corrective Action Plans within 3 weeks of receiving the Audit Report. WSAS will review the evidence within 1 week from the date of receipt.

For initial and recertification audits, once all the CAPs are approved and the NCs are closed, then WSAS will prepare the Public Certification Report within one week. This is a simplified version of the Audit Report, and this is the version that sites will be requested to comment on, before it is published on the AWS website. It is at this stage that the Site can publicly communicate their AWS Certification, in line with the AWS Claims Policy. The AWS Certificate will be shared with the Site with their final Public Certification Report, which is valid for the three-year certification cycle.

SURVEILLANCE PROCESS

The certification cycle is three years, with a surveillance audit taking place approximately 12 and 24 months after the initial certification audit. The surveillance audits are normally conducted onsite and, in some cases, WSAS will consider the option of doing the audit remotely, in line with the conditions set out in the AWS Certification Requirements and following the completion of a successful internal WSAS Risk Assessment.

The purpose of the surveillance audit is to confirm the maintenance of certification, and that Sites can demonstrate continuous improvement. The Audit Team will assess a selection of the AWS Standard

indicators at the Surveillance Audit. Some aspects of the AWS Standard will be assessed each year, due to their critical nature and because they will change year on year e.g. Water Stewardship Plan, On-site Water Balance.

Surveillance reports are prepared and shared with the Sites, after the Technical Review process has been completed. WSAS aims to issue the report within 6 weeks after the audit end date. Surveillance reports are not currently made publicly available, but they can be, on request of the AWS System Integrity unit.

If non-conformities are raised during the surveillance audits, then the Site will be requested to follow the same process that was described in the 'Addressing NCs' section.

DESKTOP PRE-ASSESSMENT (OPTIONAL)

The Desktop Pre-Assessment (DPA) is an optional desktop review of the Site's AWS System documentation, to check the Site's level of document preparedness for their initial certification audit. This process consists of three stages:



The Site is given access to the DPA document upload area on Intact, where the Site is requested to upload documents and accompanying evidence indicator by indicator, and supplying comments where applicable. This process can start after the signing of the Certification Agreement or approving the Quotation.

WSAS will appoint an Auditor to assess the documentation and point out any gaps or areas for improvement, for each indicator. The Auditor prepares a DPA Report, based on their assessment and this is issued to the Site. The DPA is not linked to the initial certification audit, and the results from it do not guarantee a successful certification audit.