



INFORMATION ON THE APPLICATION PROCESS

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Issued by: AQRATE

Approved by: Chief Executive Officer

1. Purpose and Scope

This document provides necessary information on the AQRATE Verification process to enable applicants to apply for a BEE verification. This document should be read in full prior to submitting a formal application for BEE verification.

2. Verification

AQRATE verification is official recognition that an organisation is in compliance with the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act. AQRATE's verification is an independent and in-depth audit and verification process aimed at establishing the BEE status of companies, closed corporations and economic entities. A verified entity (client) will have demonstrated through formal verification that it is in compliance with the BEE Act and the BEE Codes of Good Practice.

3. Application Process

The verification process is described in **Appendix 1** (last page) together with the approximate times required to complete each action in the process. All applications are processed internally in accordance with the process outlined in the AQRATE Administration Process (**P08**). When an enquiry pertains to an organisation seeking verification, **AQRATE** will forward the verification guide to the potential applicant **OR** alternatively, the potential applicant can download the verification guide from our website www.aqrates.co.za

The verification guide shall include the following documents:

- ◆ Information on the Application Process (**A 02**)
- ◆ Application Form and Standard Terms and Conditions(**F 04**)

An application will not be processed until the **Completed application form, signed standard terms and conditions, and the appropriate application fee** has been received by **AQRATE**. Upon receipt of the aforementioned documentation and payment the administrator will process the application by opening of a file for the applicant, acknowledging receipt of application and by sending the Verification Manual to the applicant (See paragraph 5 below together with "Administration Process (P08)").

4. The Application Form

Applicants are advised to read the relevant **AQRATE** documents in the verification guide prior to completing and submitting the **AQRATE** application form. When the applicant is confident that the organisation satisfies these requirements then the **AQRATE Application form (F 04)** should be completed.

5. Verification Manual

- 5.1 Once AQRATE received the above-mentioned documents the administrator will send the client an acknowledgement of receipt together with the relevant Verification Manual. The relevant Verification Manual must be completed and returned to AQRATE within 15 days with all the evidentiary documents attached.
- 5.2 Although the collection of evidentiary documentation that is requested is the responsibility of the Applicant, AQRATE will on request assist the applicant with the interpretation of the Verification Manual. The Operations Manager may arrange meetings with the applicant to assist in this regard.
- 5.3 In circumstances where the sheer volumes of evidentiary documentation or other relevant circumstances, will make forwarding them to AQRATE impractical, the applicant must complete the Verification Manual and gather all the relevant evidentiary documentation and arrange a pre-on-site visit, within the 15-day period, at the applicants premises where AQRATE's Operations Manager will perform the document review (See paragraph 6 below). The Operations manager will be allowed should it deem it necessary to remove any of the documentation presented to it for review from the premises of the applicant.

6. Document Review

The Operations Manager or an analyst to whom he has delegated the authority, will once **AQRATE** receive the relevant **Verification Manual** with all the required evidentiary documents or at the pre-onsite visit (See paragraph 5 above) should the circumstances warrant it, perform a document review (see **Document Review Form - F32**) and setup the on site verification date. During the document review, samples are selected from the information provided. The client will be asked to provide more evidence based on the sample selected.

7. On-site Verification

Unless otherwise agreed to the dates for the on site verification will be such that the applicant shall be given at least two (2) weeks notice of the verification. A **Verification plan (F11)** will be forwarded to the applicant, detailing the responsibilities of each member of the verification team. The verification plan is flexible and can accommodate the workings of the organisation should this be necessary. The verification plan shall identify the BEE elements to be assessed, verified and evaluated. The verification shall be performed at the applicant's premises. During the site visit all information supplied to AQRATE will be verified by means of interview, verifying original documentation, etc...

On completion of the on site verification, the verification analyst / team shall make one of the following recommendations by means of a **Recommendation Report (F 02)** regarding the applicants BEE status:

BEE Status	Qualification	BEE Procurement Recognition Level
Level One Contributor	≥100 points on the Generic Scorecard	135%
Level Two Contributor	≥85 but <100 points on the Generic Scorecard	125%
Level Three Contributor	≥75 but <85 points on the Generic Scorecard	110%
Level Four Contributor	≥65 but <75 points on the Generic Scorecard	100%
Level Five Contributor	≥55 but <65 points on the Generic Scorecard	80%
Level Six Contributor	≥45 but <55 points on the Generic Scorecard	60%
Level Seven Contributor	≥40 but <45 points on the Generic Scorecard	50%
Level Eight Contributor	≥30 but <40 points on the Generic Scorecard	10%
Non Compliant Contributor	<30 points on the Generic Scorecard	0%

8. The Approval

The AQRATE Verification Manager will evaluate the findings as presented by the verification analyst/team that did the on-site visit and makes the final approval on behalf of the **AQRATE** Board. The Verification Manager shall review all documentation associated with the verification to ensure that all **AQRATE's** verification requirements have been met and applied and that the documentation can demonstrate this.

AQRATE shall notify all applicants in writing of the outcome of the Verification Manager's decision with respect to their application. Applicants' cannot claim to be BEE verified until they have received the official notification (i.e. a verification certificate) of the Verification Manager decision. This can be done electronically.

It is possible that the Verification Manager may make recommendations and/or decisions that are different to those made by the verification team. In these instances **AQRATE** will inform the applicant immediately and depending on the nature of the difference implement the appropriate actions.

9. Appeals

Should an organisation wish to appeal a decision by **AQRATE**, they should immediately contact the CEO to lodge an appeal. **AQRATE** has an independent appeals procedure that would automatically be invoked under these circumstances. This procedure can be downloaded from our website (www.aqrate.co.za). An appeal must be lodged with **AQRATE** within 1 month of the incident.

10. Confidentiality

All information submitted to **AQRATE** in support of the application form shall be treated in confidence. All evaluators used by **AQRATE** are required to sign confidentiality agreements and contracts. Any breaches of confidentiality are treated extremely seriously. **AQRATE** will request written permission from all applicants prior to releasing any information to a third party. **AQRATE** may be required to release confidential information in compliance with the law or in response to the regulators.

In addition to the above each **AQRATE** evaluator is required to sign a confidentiality form specific for each verification. These are maintained on file in the company's file.

11. Time scale for verification Process

AQRATE makes every effort to ensure that all applications are processed as efficiently as possible. The time taken to process an application depends on a number of factors, some of which are outside the control of AQRATE. The timing is dependent on:

11.1 The quality of the applicant's documentation and the extent to which it complies with **AQRATE's** requirements.

11.2 The availability of the resources within **AQRATE**.

Generally verification takes between 2-4 weeks from receipt of the application form to the on site verification. See Appendix 1 for an indication of the specific time expectations for each stage of the application process.

12 AQRATE Verification Logo

No organisation is permitted to use the AQRATE verification logo until they have received permission to do so in writing from AQRATE. Organisations that receive written confirmation that they have been verified can use the AQRATE verification logo. A verified organisation should consult AQRATE document number (R 02) entitled **Conditions for use of AQRATE Verified Logo**, prior to preparing any organisational material which makes any reference to the verification or the logo.

Process for BEE Verification

TIMEFRAME GUIDELINES

Applicant enquiry	One (1) day
AQRATE sends verification guide to applicant OR alternatively download from www.aqrata.co.za	
AQRATE receives the signed application form and standard terms and conditions and the fees for the BEE verification.	One (1) week
Administrator will send the applicant an acknowledgement of receipt together with the verification manual.	One (1) day
AQRATE receive the completed verification manual. The Operations Manager performs a review and accepts or rejects the application	Within 15 days
Start of initial verification – AQRATE sends applicant a verification plan including verification dates and times.	One (1) day
Applicant accepts verification plan.	One (1) day
AQRATE performs BEE verification at applicants' site/office.	One (1) day
Verification Manager approves applicant's BEE verification status	Two (2) week
AQRATE issues verification certificate and scorecard	
AQRATE conducts follow up evaluation/annual evaluation	Within Twelve (12) Months

Please note that the above timelines are approximate indications.