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1. Introduction

1.1. The Supplement Safety & Compliance Initiative (SSCI) is a non-profit foundation comprising major global retailers, distributors, raw material suppliers (including cultivators), raw material manufacturers, finished product manufacturers, certifying bodies, and experts in quality control, quality assurance, and safety of dietary supplement.

1.2. SSCI’s vision is to elevate the quality and credibility of dietary supplements globally by continuously driving improvements in quality processes. The initiative is focused on engaging and collaborating with stakeholders in the supply chain with the goal of raising standards of the entire industry.

2. SSCI Objectives

2.1. SSCI objectives are to ensure consistency in the interpretation, auditing, certification and, therefore, manufacturing of dietary supplements consistent with Dietary Supplement Safety and Compliance (DSSC) initiative requirements and demonstrating continuous improvements in GMP standards to improve efficiency, manage cost, and provide a platform for stakeholders to collaborate and exchange knowledge and information.

2.2. SSCI also consists of Technical Working Groups composed of experts in multiple areas of dietary supplement safety and authenticity. These groups work on various projects that advance the objectives of SSCI.

2.3. To ensure the authenticity, safety, and cGMP compliance of dietary supplements throughout the supply chain, SSCI manages a robust benchmarking process and oversight over the third-party independent accredited process for facility certification. SSCI recognizes entities have successfully completed the benchmarking process and are continuously meeting SSCI requirements of the Dietary Supplement Safety and Compliance (DSSC) initiative.
SSCI recognizes each entity (AB, CB, and facility) separately based on results of the benchmarking to the requirements of the DDSC initiative.
SSCI recognizes each entity (AB, CB, and facility) separately based on results of the benchmarking to the requirements of the DDSC program.
3. Purpose

3.1. This manual explains the operational activities and responsibilities of SSCI, recognized certification program owners (CPOs), recognized accreditation bodies (ABs), recognized management systems certification bodies (CBs), and certified organizations.

Note: All references to ISO, IAF, and other controlled materials are to the current versions, including new versions and revised versions in transition. IAF documents are accessible free of charge at www.iaf.nu. ISO documents are copyright material and can be purchased from ISO and National Standards Bodies such as ANSI in the US.

3.2. For more information, contact SSCI at info@ssciglobal.org.

4. Definitions

4.1. Refer to DSSC Initiative Definitions Document.

5. General

5.1. Applicant and recognized CPOs, ABs, CBs, facilities are required to commit to fulfilling requirements for SSCI recognition.

5.2. SSCI has defined the terms and conditions required for application and recognition by SSCI. CPOs, ABs, CBs, and certified organizations are required to abide by these terms and conditions while in application and when recognized.

5.3. The terms and conditions are outlined in the Recognition Agreement and referenced in each application for initial recognition.

5.4. SSCI assigns a designated contact person for each applicant. Communication related to application and recognition is between the SSCI contact and the contact assigned by the applicant.

5.5. A committee of supplement safety experts appointed by the SSCI Board to ascertain whether an applicant can demonstrate conformity with the requirements of the DSSC initiative manages the evaluation of whether the applicant meets the requirements of the program.

5.6. Following the review, the committee makes a recommendation to the SSCI Board for recognition or non-recognition of the applicant. The review is carried out in a systematic manner in accordance with the process defined within this document.

5.7. The applicant may withdraw the application at any stage during the process, but the withdrawal must be confirmed in writing to info@ssciglobal.org. The subject line of the email should state “DSSC Application Withdrawal – NAME OF THE ENTITY.”

5.8. Throughout the process, SSCI and the applicant shall respect the confidentiality of information.
6. AB Application for Recognition

6.1. ABs interested in recognition by SSCI shall apply using application available for download on the SSCI website [http://www.ssciglobal.org/](http://www.ssciglobal.org/). The application and requested supporting documentation shall be provided to info@ssciglobal.org. The subject line of the email should state “DSSC Initiative AB Application – NAME OF THE AB.”

6.2. After SSCI receives the application and it is reviewed by the SSCI Benchmarking Committee, SSCI informs the applicant AB of its decision. Following notification from SSCI of recognition, the AB may recognize CBs under the DSSC initiative.

6.3. The AB name and contact information is posted on the SSCI website.

7. CB Application for Recognition of CB’s scheme

7.1. CBs interested in administering certification under the DSSC initiative must first apply to an AB for recognition for the desired scope under the DSSC initiative. Information on available scopes is documented in the SSCI requirements for certification document. The AB issues the CB a confirmation of receipt of the application.

7.2. The SSCI recognition process shall be carried out in accordance with the following steps:

1. Application review
2. Preliminary desk review by an assigned reviewer
3. Benchmarking Committee review
4. SSCI Board review
5. Approval (if all requirements are fulfilled)
6. Re-evaluation of the recognition by the Benchmarking Committee
7. Continued recognition

7.3. The CB shall complete the DSSC initiative application (using the template available on the SSCI website). The CB shall submit to SSCI the completed SSCI application along with confirmation of receipt of application for accreditation from an AB and a valid copy of the certificate of accreditation for ISO/IEC 17065, in accordance with instructions on the application. The desired scope of recognition must be included in the application for accreditation to an AB.

7.3.1. Recognition is scope specific, therefore a CB must submit a separate application(s) for any scopes not included under initial recognition.

7.3.2. The application and requested supporting documentation shall be provided to info@ssciglobal.org. The subject line of the email should state “DSSC Initiative CB Application – NAME OF THE CB”
7.4. After the application is received by SSCI and reviewed by the SSCI Benchmarking Committee, SSCI informs the applicant CB of its decision. If application is approved, the CB is granted scope specific conditional recognition for a maximum of 12 months. The CB may issue certification under the DSSC initiative during the period of conditional recognition.

7.5. Upon approval of the application for recognition, the CB name and contact information is posted on SSCI website with the date of recognition and the date of expiry of conditional recognition.

7.6. The CB shall obtain accreditation before the end of the conditional recognition period. If for any reason the CB does not progress toward accreditation to meet the expiration timeline, the CB shall work with SSCI to address the situation and, if necessary, agree on a process to transfer any certificates issued by the CB during the conditional period.

7.7. The CB should immediately communicate to SSCI when accreditation is achieved, including the scope of accreditation. Information on the SSCI website will be updated based on this information.

7.8. The recognition status of a CB is reviewed in detail following each reassessment by an AB based on the information provided by the AB gathered throughout the accreditation cycle, from the integrity program, and feedback provided by certified organizations.

8. Integrity Program

8.1. SSCI measures the quality and integrity of SSCI recognized certification and recognized CBs. Through its integrity program, SSCI identifies areas of improvement to help to ensure consistent implementation to meet stakeholder expectations. The intent of the integrity program is to ensure consistently reliable performance and foster continual improvement over time, providing added value for certified organizations and end users.

8.2. Certification Body Monitoring

8.2.1. SSCI-recognized ABs, CBs, and organizations are monitored by SSCI to ensure conformance to SSCI initiative requirements.

8.2.2. SSCI reviews accreditation assessment results (office and witness) and certification reports issued by recognized CBs to ensure consistency in implementation of the initiative, and supplier surveys are issued to identify the strengths and opportunities for improvement.

8.2.3. SSCI also solicits input from certified organizations.

8.3. Stakeholder Input

8.3.1. SSCI seeks stakeholder input in the interest of improving the program, and any type of feedback on the program or participants can be submitted via email to SSCI to info@ssciglobal.org.
9. Complaints and Appeals

9.1. Complaints

9.1.1. Formal complaints shall be submitted in writing to info@ss ciglobal.org. The subject line of the email should state “Complaint.”

9.1.2. Complaints are reviewed in an impartial manner by an independent party that is not a representative of an AB or CB and is not affiliated with the complainant.

9.1.3. As needed, SSCI includes ABs, CBs, and/or regulatory authorities in the process for resolution of complaints.

9.1.4. The documented process for handling SSCI complaints is available by request from info@ss ciglobal.org.

10.2. Appeals

10.2.1. Applicant and recognized entities have the right to appeal any decision made by SSCI and its related entities in relation to the recognition process and associated systems and procedures. Appeals shall be conducted in accordance with the SSCI appeals Procedure. The SSCI appeal procedure is available by request from info@ss ciglobal.org.

10.2.2. Only the party to which a recognition decision relates has the right of appeal to the SSCI Board.

10.2.3. The appeal must be submitted within 30 days of the decision to which it relates. The appeal shall be submitted in writing and shall clearly describe the reason and justification for the appeal, with substantive evidence for the investigation. The documentation must be in writing provided to info@ss ciglobal.org. The subject line of the email should state “Appeal.”

10.2.4. Appeals are heard by an Appeal Committee specifically assembled by the SSCI Board for the purpose of hearing a specific appeal. The appointed Appeal Committee will not include any person or SSCI staff member involved with the decision being appealed.

10.2.5. At every step of the process, SSCI ensures that the investigation is conducted in an impartial and professional manner, without any actual or perceived conflict of interest.

10.2.6. The final outcome of the investigation by the Appeal Committee is conveyed to the appellant.

10.2.7. Appeal Committee is the final authority over the appeal process and the decision of the Appeals Committee cannot be challenged any further.
11. Withdrawal

11.1. Sites that have had their certification withdrawn cannot re-enter the program for a 12-month period.

11.2. A list of sites that have been suspended or withdrawn is published on the SSCI website.

11.3. If for any reason SSCI withdraws recognition of an AB, the AB shall work with SSCI for a smooth and timely transition of the accredited CBs under DSSC initiative.

11.4. If for any reason SSCI withdraws recognition of a CB, the CB shall work with SSCI and its AB for a smooth and timely transition of the certificates issued under DSSC initiative.

11.5. An AB or CB whose recognition is withdrawn must notify its customers that its recognition by SSCI has been withdrawn and communicate the process for transition to another AB or CB recognized by the SSCI.

11.6. SSCI will inform the customers of the withdrawn organization directly if the organization does not do so within the timeframe specified by SSCI.

12. Notifications

12.1. SSCI-recognized entities are required to provide program specific information to SSCI. Details are documented in the specific to the type of entity requirements document.

12.3. This information will be shared with members of the SSCI for the purposes of recognition only.

13. CPO Application for Recognition

13.1. CPOs interested in recognition of their certification programs as equivalent to DSSC initiative shall apply using application available for download on the SSCI website http://www.ssciglobal.org/. The application and requested supporting documentation shall be provided to info@ssciglobal.org. The subject line of the email should state “DSSC Initiative CPO Application – NAME OF THE CPO.”

13.2. The SSCI recognition process shall be carried out in accordance with the following steps:

1. Application review
2. Preliminary desk review by an assigned reviewer
3. Benchmarking Committee review
4. SSCI Board review
5. Approval (if all requirements are fulfilled)
6. Continued recognition
13.3. The CPO shall complete the DSSC program application (using the template available on the SSCI website).

13.3.1. Recognition is scope specific, therefore a CPO must submit a separate application(s) for any scopes not included under initial recognition.

13.3.2 The application and requested supporting documentation shall be provided to info@ssciglobal.org. The subject line of the email should state “DSSC Program CPO Application – NAME OF THE CPO”

13.4. Upon approval for recognition, the CPO name and contact information is posted on SSCI website with the date of recognition and the date of expiry. The maximum duration of recognition is 5 years.

13.6. The CPO shall submit application for continual recognition 90 days prior to the expiration date of the current recognition period.

13.2. The SSCI review of continual recognition process shall be carried out in accordance with the following steps:

1. Application review
2. Preliminary desk review by an assigned reviewer
3. Benchmarking Committee review
4. SSCI Board review
5. Approval (if all requirements are fulfilled)