



AFFORDABLE HOUSING  
**ACCREDITATION BOARD**

**POLICY & PROCEDURE MANUAL**

August 2017

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## **Preface**

The Affordable Housing Accreditation Board (AHAB) was founded to serve the public by establishing and enforcing standards for the operation of affordable housing organizations that meet these standards. AHAB operates independently of any of the governing bodies of affordable housing organizations. AHAB Board members make autonomous decisions about the accreditation status of affordable housing organizations and policies and procedures to be followed for accreditation. The purpose of this Policy & Procedure Manual is to outline an effective and efficient accreditation process, including fair and uniform application of the accreditation standards. The AHAB board approved the 2017 Accreditation Standards and Guidelines, effective for all organizations submitting applications for candidacy and full accreditation as of January 1, 2018. They may be found on the AHAB website.

This manual was developed for use by affordable housing organizations, the AHAB board, staff and volunteer reviewers.

## **Introduction**

### **Eligibility for Accreditation**

Affordable housing organizations eligible for accreditation are private for-profit or non-profit corporations, or housing authorities that receive funding from federal, state or local programs in exchange for ensuring affordability of housing under their management. The organization must have been in existence at least ten (10) years.

#### *Public Housing Authority*

A public housing authority is defined, for purposes of AHAB accreditation, as the entity with primary statutory authority by an incorporated municipality to acquire, develop, lease and operate affordable housing for residents with limited income. This authority can be defined by statutes or regulations, or established by Executive Order.

#### *Private For Profit*

A private for profit corporation may apply for AHAB accreditation if they receive funding from federal, state or local programs to operate affordable housing for residents with limited income.

#### *Non-Profit*

A non-profit corporation may apply for AHAB accreditation if they receive funding from federal, state or local programs to operate affordable housing for residents with limited income.

#### **Role and Value of Accreditation**

Accreditation is a voluntary process that recognizes the quality of an organization and assists in its improvement. As such, it provides value to organizations while protecting the public interest. Accreditation brings together organizations, residents, community stakeholders, and regulators to improve governance, management and service delivery, ultimately benefiting the industry and the public that it serves.

Accreditation of affordable housing organizations rests on the belief that public and affordable housing is a necessity to the health and welfare of the population and the economic health of the communities where they exist, that it requires national standards. Currently, AHAB's scope of accreditation is for organizations providing public housing and affordable housing.

#### *Benefits of accreditation*

- Organizations are evaluated on their ability to meet national standards developed by and for the profession.
- Peer review by housing professionals encourages continuous quality improvement.
- Accreditation participation demonstrates a commitment to self-assessment, to improving quality, and to adopting new methodologies to improve organizational effectiveness.
- Accreditation participation affirms a commitment to accountability to residents and the local community.
- Accreditation participation establishes confidence with potential funders and regulators for future capital investment.

## **AHAB Mission**

To continuously improve affordable housing for the public, by evaluating affordable housing organizations and inspiring them to excel in providing safe, well managed, high quality affordable housing in their communities.

## **AHAB Vision**

AHAB is valued for advancing excellence in affordable housing.

## **AHAB Values**

AHAB volunteers and staff exhibit the following values in their accreditation activities and interpersonal interaction:

- Objectivity—AHAB board members, staff, and volunteer reviewers evaluate all matters related to organization evaluation in a fair and unbiased manner.
- Integrity—AHAB board members, staff, and volunteer reviewers demonstrate honest and ethical behavior in all interactions, actions and decisions.
- Accountability—AHAB board members, staff, and volunteer reviewers accept responsibility for assuring that AHAB-accredited organizations provide experiences that meet all accreditation standards.
- Respect—AHAB board members, staff, and volunteer reviewers treat all people with consideration, courtesy, and dignity.

## **AHAB Strategic Goals**

To achieve its mission and vision, the AHAB board has established strategic goals.

- AHAB assures the quality of affordable housing organizations through a peer review process.
- AHAB effectively communicates the accreditation process and expectations.
- AHAB fosters innovation in affordable housing.

## **AHAB Accreditation Standards**

The AHAB board approved the 2017 AHAB Accreditation Standards, effective for all programs submitting applications for candidate and full accreditation as of January 1, 2018. The 2017 AHAB Accreditation Standards can be found on the AHAB website at

[www.housingaccreditation.org/](http://www.housingaccreditation.org/)



## **SECTION 1: Organization of Affordable Housing Accreditation Board**

AHAB consists of a board of directors, professional staff and volunteer reviewers. The AHAB board of directors functions as the governing body and grants final accreditation decisions. The staff and volunteers carry out the daily operational functions of the organization.

### **A. Affordable Housing Accreditation Board of Directors**

#### *1. Composition*

AHAB is governed by a board of no more than twelve (12) directors, and no less than three (3). The core composition of any AHAB committee must include at least two directors who are affordable housing organization chief executives. Minimally, the composition of the board is as follows:

- a. Two chief executives of affordable housing organizations
- b. One member of the general public
- c. One member that resides in affordable housing
- d. The other directors shall have backgrounds and professional experience that will benefit AHAB.

#### *2. Qualifications for AHAB Board Members*

General qualifications for all Board members, regardless of member type:

- a. Actively involved in the industry.
- b. Show evidence of professional leadership.
- c. May not serve simultaneously on other groups that may represent a conflict of interest with AHAB activities.

#### *3. Requirements of all Board Members*

- a. Time available for AHAB work, including travel to different locations and willingness on the part of the employer to permit time for performance of duties. This office requires attending scheduled meetings annually. The position also requires time for correspondence, planning meetings, reviewing documentation etc.
- b. Participation on committees and assistance with AHAB activities, such as reviewer training, workshops and forums on accreditation.

- c. Ability to work closely with/through AHAB staff in order to promote/strengthen continuity from year to year and to facilitate communication.
- d. Commitment to team decision making and setting of AHAB objectives.
- e. Ability to be impartial in the decision making process.

#### 4. Additional Requirements for Specific Board Positions

- a. Chair and Vice Chair
  - i. Must have at least 7 years in executive capacity of an affordable housing organization.
  - ii. May serve in capacity of Past Chair, with majority vote of Board for at least one year after term is complete.
- b. Public Representative
  - i. Public representatives are appointed by the AHAB board based on the above requirements for all Board Members in addition to the following criteria:
    - a. *“Representative of the public means a person who is not (1) an employee, member of the governing board, owner, or shareholder of, or consultant to, an organization that either is accredited by AHAB or has applied for accreditation; or (2) a member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with AHAB; or (3) a spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an individual identified in (1) or (2) of this definition.”*
  - ii. Public representatives must not be current affordable housing organization employees, but may be from other disciplines.
  - iii. Public representatives serve three-year terms. The term may be extended by election of the AHAB board for an additional 3 years.
- c. Resident representative
  - i. Resident representatives are appointed by the AHAB board based on the following criteria:
    - a. Must be a resident of an affordable housing community or participant in an affordable housing program.
    - b. Show evidence of community leadership at the local level.
    - c. Actively involved in the community.

- ii. Resident representatives are appointed by the AHAB board based on Section 1.A.3 requirements for all Board Members in addition to the following requirements:
- iii. Resident representatives-elect are elected by the AHAB board.
- iv. Resident representatives-elect serve for 1 year and at the close of the fiscal year automatically becomes resident representative.
- v. Resident representatives serve two-year terms. Terms of resident representatives are staggered.

## **B. Affordable Housing Accreditation Board Staff**

### *1. Chief Executive Officer*

- a. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Affordable Housing Accreditation Board, including program planning, accreditation activities and administration; personnel and volunteer reviewer selection and management; oversight of Organization Review Teams, and providing candidate organization accreditation materials and Organization Review Team recommendations to the Board of Directors.

### *2. Accreditation Specialist*

- a. The Accreditation Specialist is an employee of AHAB, responsible for managing the accreditation experience of each candidate organization. The Accreditation Specialist is the main point of contact to the accreditation candidate organization Accreditation Coordinator.
- b. The Accreditation Specialist serves as the lead AHAB staff person for the Organization Review Team.

## **C. Organization Review Teams**

1. An Organization Review Team will be established for each candidate organization site visit.
2. The Organization Review Team will be led by an AHAB Accreditation Specialist who is an employee of AHAB.
3. Volunteer reviewers are assigned to Organization Review Teams to evaluate candidate affordable housing organizations.

## **D. Volunteer Reviewers of the Affordable Housing Accreditation Board**

## 1. General Qualifications

- a. Current or past experience working at administrative level of an affordable housing organization for at least five years.
- b. Bachelor's degree minimum; Master's or higher degree preferred.
- c. Willing to provide professional leadership.
- d. Currently employed in or retired from an affordable housing organization(s).
- e. Have a commitment to affordable housing.
- f. Represent different geographical areas of the United States.
- g. May not serve simultaneously on other groups that may represent a conflict of interest with AHAB activities.

## 2. Time Commitment

- a. Employer organization commitment, if applicable
- b. Reviewers must attend training following appointment.
- c. Reviewers must be willing and able to devote the time required to prepare a thorough evaluation of accreditation materials and to complete other responsibilities as assigned (i.e., program review, meetings, telephone calls, correspondence, etc.).
- d. Reviewers must be willing and able to devote time required to conduct at least two site visits annually (20 days annually, including preparation time, travel, etc.) and evaluations of applications for candidacy for accreditation, including documentation review, organization self studies, five-year reports, or major change reports as needed.

## **SECTION 2: Responsibilities and Functions of AHAB**

### **A. AHAB Board Responsibilities**

1. The AHAB board establishes, evaluates, and administers standards, policies, and procedures for accreditation, including eligibility for, granting of, periodic renewal of and withdrawal of accreditation.
2. Seeks input and reviews data on the eligibility requirements, standards and procedures for accreditation annually from organizations under review.
3. Eligibility requirements and standards are reviewed in response to significant events that impact affordable housing organizations, such as results of a financial audit, organizational strategic planning process, trends in affordable housing development and

associated service delivery, standards of governance and management, and others as applicable. This review occurs at least every five years.

4. This recurring review assists in determining that eligibility requirements and standards, policies, and procedures provide a consistent basis for determining the quality of the different organizations being evaluated.
5. Input is sought from affordable housing organization boards, management, staff, residents, regulators, investors and other appropriate stakeholders throughout the review process.
6. Updates, as necessary, standards, policies and procedures related to the accreditation process, including written guidelines and guidance for accreditation documents and AHAB meetings.
7. Proposed revisions to the eligibility requirements and accreditation standards are published and disseminated for comment to organization boards, management, staff, residents and other stakeholders prior to adoption for a comment period of a minimum of 60 days.

#### **B. AHAB Board General Functions**

1. Schedule site visits and process documents related to accreditation utilizing AHAB staff.
2. Monitor accredited programs through the review process, which includes self-assessments, narrative reports, interim reports, annual reports and other documentation.
3. Upon written notification, review accreditation status of an organization when an adverse action is taken against the organization by a regulating or legal authority body and determine appropriate action.
4. Set qualifications for AHAB board members, staff and reviewers.
5. Maintain accreditation files utilizing AHAB staff.
6. Review issues related to accreditation and take action as necessary.
7. Investigate written complaints concerning accredited organizations.
8. Establish, review, and modify fees as necessary and provide for responsible fiscal planning and control for the administration of the accreditation process.
9. Direct the activities of the Organization Review Teams utilizing the AHAB CEO for the oversight of the evaluation of affordable housing organizations.
10. Formulate organization evaluation and review policies that assure efficient, consistent implementation by reviewers.

11. Maintain an efficient mechanism for transmitting Organization Review Team findings for organization accreditation status.
12. Reach autonomous decisions regarding accreditation for affordable housing organizations.
13. Accredite programs that meet the Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards in effect at the time and recommendations from the Organization Review teams.
14. Provide opportunity for third-party comment regarding organizations under consideration for accreditation.
15. Review and approve decision letters.
16. Publish accreditation decisions.
17. Communicate accreditation decisions to the public.
18. Approve final appointment and training of reviewers with AHAB staff.
19. Solicit applications for new reviewers from affordable housing organizations as needed.
20. Follow established reviewer selection and reappointment procedures.
21. Conduct reviewer training sessions.
22. Monitor performance of trained reviewers.
23. Establish policies and procedures for appeals of accreditation decisions.
24. Appoint committees and consultants to assist the AHAB board in meeting its program of work, goals, and objectives.
25. Act and advocate in all appropriate ways before the public, and the industry to encourage and achieve the highest standards in operating affordable housing organizations.
26. In cooperation with industry representative organizations, foster excellence in operating affordable housing organizations through initial input in development and revision of standards and guidelines.
27. Report to the accredited organizations through a variety of means, i.e. website, emails, other media.
28. Collaborate with other accreditation agencies as appropriate to improve the efficiency of the accreditation process.

### **C. Responsibilities of Individual AHAB Board Members**

1. Attend scheduled meetings of the AHAB board.
2. Review accreditation recommendations from organization review teams in preparation for participating in making decisions on the accreditation status of organizations.

3. Perform other duties as assigned by the Chair, such as serving on standing or ad hoc committees, attending meetings related to accreditation, etc.
4. Take appropriate action to avoid conflict of interest in carrying out AHAB responsibilities.

#### **D. Functions and Responsibilities of Chair of AHAB**

1. Functions
  - a. Implement and coordinate action plans for AHAB.
  - b. Maintain communication within AHAB.
2. Responsibilities
  - a. Assume responsibility cooperatively with AHAB staff in determining action to be taken on selected matters relating to the accreditation process. These actions are based on decisions made by members of the AHAB board and staff, and Organization Review Teams.
  - b. Schedule and preside at all meetings of the AHAB board.
  - c. Serve as ex-officio member of AHAB committees.
  - d. Appoint AHAB committees, as necessary, with the advice of the AHAB board in order to carry out AHAB action plans.
  - e. Represent AHAB at meetings of other organizations relevant to accreditation.
  - f. Request legal counsel, as necessary, for advice related to accreditation, appeals, etc.
  - g. Orient new AHAB directors, before they assume responsibilities on AHAB.
  - h. Serve as Past Chair for one year after term ends.

#### **E. Functions and Responsibilities of Vice Chair of AHAB**

1. Functions
  - a. Perform functions of the chair if the chair is unable to perform the functions of the office of chair.
  - b. Develop a program of work for AHAB in cooperation with staff for the vice chair's term as chair.
  - c. Serves as Chair of Nominating Committee.
2. Responsibilities
  - a. Assist the chair and represent AHAB upon the chair's request.
  - b. Review general correspondence and major changes from programs, as directed by the AHAB chair and in accordance with accreditation policies and procedures.

- c. Become chair of AHAB at completion of term as vice chair.
- d. Participate in the preparation of the AHAB budget, in cooperation with staff.
- e. Appoint AHAB board members to standing committees for vice chair's term as chair.
- f. Represent AHAB at meetings of other organizations relevant to accreditation.
- g. Represent Organization Review Teams at AHAB board meeting if conflict of interest exists.
- h. Set AHAB board meeting dates for following year.

#### **F. Functions and Responsibilities of Past AHAB Chair**

- 1. Functions
  - a. Provide counsel to AHAB as needed.
- 2. Responsibilities
  - a. Represent AHAB at meetings.
  - b. Serve on AHAB ad hoc or standing committees as appointed.
  - c. Participate in site visits, focused site visits, and paper reviews as needed.

#### **G. Functions and Responsibilities of Public Representative**

- 1. Function
  - a. Serve as a member of the AHAB board.
- 2. Responsibilities
  - a. Review AHAB materials.
  - b. Attend and participate in scheduled AHAB board meetings.
  - c. Participate on committees.
  - d. Assist with AHAB activities such as reviewer training, workshops, and forums on accreditation.

#### **H. Functions and Responsibilities of Resident Representative**

- 1. Function
  - a. Serve as a member of the AHAB board.
- 2. Responsibilities
  - a. Review AHAB materials.
  - b. Attend and participate in scheduled AHAB board meetings.
  - c. Participate on committees.



- d. Assist with AHAB activities such as reviewer training, workshops, and forums on accreditation.

## **I. Functions and Responsibilities of AHAB Staff**

### **1. Functions**

- a. Serve as liaison with industry groups, US Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) and other relevant groups.
- b. Provide administrative assistance to the AHAB board, its review teams and committees.
- c. Carry out the daily operations of AHAB to fulfill its mission.

### **2. Responsibilities**

- a. Draft reports, correspondence, or other materials related to the activities of AHAB.
- b. Maintain official files on all accredited programs.
- c. Schedule site visits.
- d. Provide assistance or information to programs when needed.
- e. Maintain information as needed: registration and application documentation, progress reports, any AHAB annual report, directory of programs updated annually, summary of major accrediting activities over the past year if requested, changes to policies, procedures or standards that might affect its scope of recognition or compliance with the criteria for recognition, and notification of expansion of scope, etc.
- f. Attend meetings of HUD and other groups related to accreditation.
- g. Orient new members before they assume responsibilities on the AHAB board, in cooperation with the AHAB chair.
- h. Maintain reviewer records, including Organization Review Team reports and documents.
- i. Develop procedures for implementing policies established by the AHAB board.
- j. Implement administrative notification as needed.
- k. Obtain legal counsel as necessary for advice related to accreditation, appeals, etc., in cooperation with the AHAB chair.
- l. Coordinate meetings and conference calls.
- m. Draft decision letters for approval by the AHAB board.
- n. Serve as initial contact for affordable housing organization with questions or concerns about the accreditation process.

- o. Communicate, as needed, with the AHAB board and reviewers regarding any questions or concerns about accreditation.
- p. Coordinate review of accreditation materials including the assignment of reviewers to avoid conflict of interest.
- q. Sign decision letters and other correspondence as directed by the AHAB chair (Proxy authorization given to the AHAB Chief Executive Officer).
- r. Review and acknowledge accredited affordable housing organization leadership and other substantive changes in accordance with AHAB policies and procedures.

## **J. Functions and Responsibilities of Committees**

1. The AHAB board may carry out its functions through committees, panels, or task forces.
  - a. Such committees will include at least one member of the AHAB board. Other persons will be selected by the AHAB chair with the advice of board members.
  - b. The continued need for each committee will be assessed at least annually.
  - c. The Committees shall continue to exist until the duties assigned to them are accomplished or the committee is dissolved by the chair of AHAB.
2. Standing Committees
  - a. Executive Committee
    - i. Executive Committee Acts on the Board's behalf between Board meetings in the following matters:
      - a) Matters that cannot wait for consideration of the full Board
      - b) Pro forma matters that are considered necessary for usual course of business
      - c) Drafting Board meeting agenda in conjunction with staff
      - d) Evaluating the Chief Executive Officer
      - e) Periodically assessing the quality of committee work
      - f) Issues referred to it by the full Board for study
      - g) Issues generated by the Committee itself
      - h) Has no authority to exercise affordable housing organization accreditation decisions on behalf of the Board
    - ii. Membership:
      - a) AHAB Chair (Executive Committee Chair)
      - b) AHAB Vice Chair
      - c) AHAB Past Chair, if remaining on the Board

- d) AHAB Chief Executive Officer
- e) Other individuals may be invited to attend an Executive Committee meeting if the topic under discussion requires her/his expertise
- iii. Authority:
  - a) The Board, at its next in person meeting or conference call, shall review and ratify Executive Committee actions, if any.
  - b) All members of the Executive Committee will be voting members with the exception of AHAB Chief Executive Officer.
  - c) An Executive Committee member's term is concurrent with her/his term on the Board
- iv. Meetings:
  - a) Meetings may be in person or by distance communication
  - b) The AHAB chair in collaboration with the AHAB Chief Executive Officer will set the agenda for the Executive Committee meeting
  - c) A quorum is two-thirds of the voting membership; a quorum would be 2 voting members
  - d) The AHAB vice chair will chair the meeting in the absence of the AHAB chair
- b. Accreditation Standards Committee
  - i. Responsibilities:
    - a) Ongoing monitoring of accreditation standards
    - b) Periodic review and revision of accreditations standards
    - c) Assess and implement, as appropriate, current trends and new developments in affordable housing organization management and service delivery
    - d) Assure policies, guidelines, guidance and documents used in the accreditation process are in compliance with any applicable regulations
  - ii. Membership:
    - a) Committee chair (appointed by the Executive Committee)
    - b) AHAB Directors
    - c) AHAB Staff
    - d) Committee membership may be temporarily expanded with board and non- board members when needed to meet responsibilities
  - iii. Authority:

- a) Make recommendations to the AHAB Board
  - b) Chair reports committee activities to the AHAB Board at each Board meeting
  - c) All members of the Accreditation Standards Committee will be voting members with the exception of AHAB Staff.
  - d) Accreditation Standards Committee members are appointed by the Executive Committee and serve on the Committee for the duration of their term on the Board.
  - e) Temporary members for expanded Accreditation Standards Committees are appointed by the Executive Committee to complete specific, short-term tasks and may serve until the tasks are complete.
- iv. Meetings:
- a) May be in person or by distance communication
  - b) AHAB Staff is responsible for preparing materials for the meeting; and taking meeting minutes
  - c) A quorum is two-thirds of the voting membership (3 voting members when committee membership has not been expanded)
- c. Nominating Committee
- i. Responsibilities:
    - a) Recruit qualified individuals for appointment to the AHAB Board
    - b) Review applications for AHAB Board appointees based on anticipated vacancies
    - c) Identify qualified candidates for Public Representative
    - d) Identify qualified candidates for Resident Representative
    - e) Recruit qualified individuals to serve as Reviewers
    - f) Review applications for Reviewers utilizing AHAB staff
    - g) Review current Reviewers for reappointment utilizing AHAB staff
    - h) Monitoring the performance of Reviewers utilizing AHAB staff
  - ii. Membership:
    - a) AHAB vice chair (Committee Chair)
    - b) Directors (2 in addition to Chair)
    - c) Public or Resident Representative (1)
    - d) Others as needed to be appointed by the chair
    - e) AHAB Staff (non-voting)

- iii. Authority:
  - a) Recommend slate of qualified candidates for position of vice chair to the AHAB Board
  - b) Recommend slate of qualified candidates to the AHAB Board for appointment as representatives elect, public member, and resident member
  - c) Recommend qualified individuals to appoint/reappoint as reviewers
  - d) Chair reports committee activities to the AHAB Board at each Board meeting
  - e) All members of the Nominating Committee with the exception of AHAB Staff will be voting members
  - f) Nominating Committee members will be appointed by the Executive Committee and will serve on the Committee for the duration of their term on the Board
- iv. Meetings:
  - a) May be in person or by distance communication
  - b) A quorum is a majority of the voting membership (2 voting members)
  - c) AHAB Staff is responsible for preparing materials for the meeting; and keeping meeting minutes
- d. Education and Training Committee
  - i. Responsibilities:
    - a) Collaborate with staff in developing reviewer training
    - b) Collaborate with staff in developing candidate organization accreditation training
    - c) Collaborate with staff in developing new board member training
    - d) Collaborate with staff in developing Board development programs
  - ii. Membership:
    - a) Committee chair (appointed by the Executive Committee)
    - b) Directors (4 in addition to Chair)
    - c) AHAB Staff
  - iii. Authority:
    - a) Make recommendations to the Board on training offerings
    - b) Chair reports committee activities to the AHAB Board at each Board meeting.

- c) All members of the Education and Training Committee will be voting members with the exception of AHAB Staff
    - d) Education and Training Committee members will be appointed by the Executive Committee and will serve on the Committee for the duration of their term on the AHAB board
  - iv. Meetings
    - a) Meetings may be in person or by distance communication
    - b) A quorum is two-thirds of the voting membership; a quorum (3 voting members)
    - c) AHAB Staff is responsible for preparing materials for the meeting; and keeping meeting minutes
- e. Policy and Procedures Committee
  - i. Responsibilities:
    - a) Ongoing development and monitoring of AHAB policies and procedures
    - b) Compliance with any requirements and regulations
    - c) Consistency and due process for all programs
    - d) Annual review and revision of AHAB policies and procedures using data collected from monitoring activities
  - ii. Membership:
    - a) Committee chair (appointed by the Executive Committee)
    - b) Directors (4 in addition to Chair)
    - c) AHAB Staff (non-voting)
    - d) Committee membership may be temporarily expanded with board and non- board members when needed to meet responsibilities
  - iii. Authority:
    - a) Make recommendations to the Board on additions, deletions, and revisions to AHAB policies and procedures.
    - b) Chair reports committee activities to the AHAB Board at each Board meeting
    - c) All members of the Policy and Procedure Committee will be voting members with the exception of AHAB Staff
    - d) Policy and Procedure Committee members are appointed by the Executive Committee and serve on the Committee for the duration of their term on the Board.

- e) Temporary members for expanded Policy and Procedure Committees are appointed by the Executive Committee to complete specific, short-term tasks and may serve until the tasks are complete
- iv. Meetings:
  - a) Meetings may be in person or by distance communication
  - b) A quorum is two-thirds of the voting membership (2 voting members)
  - c) AHAB Staff is responsible for preparing materials for the meeting; and keeping meeting minutes
- f. Finance Committee
  - i. Responsibilities:
    - a) Ongoing development and monitoring of AHAB budgets and finances
    - b) Establish criteria for frequency and level of detail of financial reporting to the AHAB Board
    - c) Compliance with any requirements and regulations
    - d) Review Annual independent audit of AHAB finances and accompanying report
    - e) Annual review of 990 tax return prior to submission to IRS
    - f) Identification of any financial anomalies or areas impacting AHAB in a possible negative manner, financially, legally, or publicly.
  - ii. Membership:
    - a) Committee chair (appointed by the Executive Committee)
    - b) Directors (2 in addition to Chair)
    - c) AHAB Staff (non-voting)
  - iii. Authority:
    - a) Make recommendations to the Board on financial obligations or strategies
    - b) Approve annual budget for full board approval
    - c) Chair reports committee activities to the AHAB Board at each Board meeting
    - d) All members of the Finance Committee will be voting members with the exception of AHAB Staff

### 3. Ad-Hoc Appeals Panel

#### a. Purpose

- i. Function as a decision-making body that is independent from the AHAB Board for the purpose of reviewing accreditation decisions to withdraw, suspend, revoke, deny or terminate candidacy or full accreditation from an organization.
- ii. An Ad Hoc Appeals Panel is only assembled if an organization has received an adverse accreditation action, and it has made a formal request for an appeal of the decision.
- iii. The core composition of any AHAB decision making body for accreditation status must include at least one director, one public member, and one resident member. The AHAB CEO is also a non-voting member.
- iv. In the event that any of the above members have a conflict of interest the AHAB chair will create a list of AHAB chairs or program representatives (as applicable) from the last 5 years with similar qualifications.
- v. The appellant is allowed 14 days to reject up to half of the individuals from the list.
- vi. From those names not rejected, the AHAB chair appoints the Appeals Panel.
- vii. The appellant is informed of the individuals appointed within 14 days of the appellant's response to the list of names.
- viii. The appellant communicates with the Appeals Panel only in writing through AHAB staff.

#### b. Authority

- i. Makes the decision to affirm, amend, or reverse the original accreditation decision or
- ii. Send the original decision back to the AHAB Board for further consideration
- iii. Appeals Panel will identify specific issues that the AHAB Board must address
- iv. AHAB Board must act in accordance within the Appeals Panel's instructions
- v. The program may have legal counsel present and/or participate in any presentation the program is permitted to make

#### c. Meetings

- i. Meetings are called on an as needed basis



- ii. Meetings may be in person or by telephone conference call or comparable communication means
- iii. No meetings shall occur without active participation from all committee members
- iv. AHAB Chief Executive Officer will be responsible for overseeing the preparation materials for the meeting and overseeing the recording of the committee meeting minutes.

#### **K. Meetings of the AHAB Board**

1. The AHAB board holds four in-person meetings and additional teleconference meetings, as needed, each year.
2. Scheduling
  - a. Special meetings of the AHAB board may be called by the chair as needed.
  - b. Meetings are scheduled by the AHAB chair and staff. Notices of meetings are sent to AHAB board members by staff.
  - c. Members are notified of the in-person meeting date and time in sufficient time to make convenient, economical travel arrangements.
  - d. Agendas for in-person meetings, including Organization Review Team reports for accreditation are sent to AHAB board members for arrival two weeks before the in-person meetings. Agendas for teleconference meetings are sent for arrival one week before the meeting.
3. Transacting business
  - a. A quorum to transact business for a regular or special meeting is at least a majority (more than 50%) of the AHAB board.
  - b. Parliamentary authority: the rules contained in Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised govern AHAB board meetings in all cases that they are applicable and in which they are not superseded by AHAB policies and procedures.
  - c. The AHAB CEO or designated staff members present the Organization Review Team's report at the AHAB board meeting. A motion is made to accredit or not accredit the candidate organization. If the motion to not accredit prevails, a detailed rationale statement shall be documented in the meeting minutes.

## L. Reviewers

1. Procedures for Selection of Reviewers
  - a. Nominations are solicited as needed from the affordable housing industry.
  - b. An application that includes a current resume, a statement from applicant identifying why he/she wants to be a program reviewer and the names of two persons qualified to substantiate her/his qualifications must be submitted as detailed by AHAB in any solicitations for nominations.
  - c. The AHAB staff reviews all applications, interviews all qualified applicants and contacts their references.
  - d. The Nominating Committee recommends to the AHAB board an adequate number of qualified individuals to be trained and appointed to conduct organization reviews projected for the upcoming years. Qualified applicants will be invited to attend a training workshop held before they are appointed.
  - e. AHAB board members may submit comments to the Nominating Committee substantiating selection of, or reasons for not selecting, any proposed reviewer during the AHAB board meeting at which the appointment of the individual is voted on.
2. Reappointment of Reviewers
  - a. Reviewers are subject to review and reappointment every three years. This review takes place at an AHAB board meeting. Eight weeks before the meeting, a list of persons whose appointments are ending is made available to the members of the Nominating Committee by AHAB staff. The Committee recommends those to be reappointed and provides a list of names in the AHAB board agenda for approval.
  - b. A reviewer ordinarily serves a three-year term. If workload requires, reviewers may be reappointed for additional terms.
  - c. Criteria for not reappointing a reviewer include:
    - i. Two or more documented complaints.
    - ii. Inability to do two site visits annually. The Nominating Committee receives documentation of reasons for not participating in site visits.
    - iii. A reviewer may not serve simultaneously on other groups that may represent a conflict of interest with AHAB activities.
    - iv. Reappointment may be denied based on criteria for discipline and/or disqualification.

- d. Letters for reappointment are sent to reviewers by the Nominating Committee.
  - e. Reappointments are contingent upon attending a training workshop within 12 months of the reappointment date. Extensions may be granted, for good reason, by the chair, Nominating Committee.
3. Evaluation of Reviewers
- a. Evaluation procedures
    - i. Each Candidate Affordable Housing Organization Chief Executive and Accreditation Coordinator are requested to submit to AHAB staff an evaluation of the site visit and conduct of the reviewers.
    - ii. Individual reviewers are required to complete an evaluation of the visit and submit it to AHAB staff.
    - iii. Reviewers may be requested by AHAB staff to prepare a written response if a written complaint is received.
    - iv. Permanent confidential files on reviewers are maintained by AHAB.
  - b. Feedback/complaints
    - i. Post site visit evaluations from Candidate Affordable Housing Organization Chief Executives, Accreditation Coordinators, and individual reviewers are sent to the Accreditation Specialist who led the site visit after the site visit.
    - ii. The post site visit evaluations from the candidate organization are not reviewed until after the AHAB board takes action on the accreditation status.
    - iii. Summary comments based on post site-visit evaluations are provided to all reviewers periodically. Additional relevant information may be included.
    - iv. Complaints may include: conduct during a site visit, poor preparation for the site visit, poor quality of the report, or non compliance with procedures.
    - v. Complaints are brought to the Nominating Committee chair. All complaints about reviewers are investigated immediately. The reviewer is asked to respond. The Nominating Committee chair brings the incident to the next scheduled AHAB board meeting. The AHAB board determines the action to be taken.
  - c. Termination of appointment
    - i. Two or more documented complaints.
    - ii. If a reviewer or AHAB board member acts as a consultant to a program or accepts employment from a program that he/she has visited/reviewed within the past three years.
4. Procedures for Scheduling Reviewers for Site Visits

- a. Reviewers are contacted and scheduled for site visits by AHAB staff approximately three to four months in advance.
- b. Reviewers must decline a site visit that in their best judgment places them in a real or apparent conflict of interest.
- c. Only individuals appointed as a reviewer, members of the AHAB board and AHAB staff may be scheduled to conduct a site-visit.
- d. Observers may be included on the site-visit team with the permission of the candidate organization.

## **M. Organization Review Teams**

- 1. Function
  - a. Review organizations based on policies and procedures developed by AHAB board.
  - b. Follow accreditation guidelines in reviewing applications and other documents, conducting interviews, and utilizing reviewer guidance.
  - c. Provide all documentation and reports to the AHAB board regarding candidate organization for AHAB board to determine accreditation status.
- 2. Responsibilities of reviewers for all assigned Organization Review Teams
  - a. Serve as one of a minimum of two persons to review the application and submitted documentation from organizations applying for accreditation.
  - b. Provide comments in proper format to the Accreditation Specialist for the candidate organization by the established deadline.
  - c. Ensure all reviewer information and notes of a candidate organization's application and submitted documentation are provided to the Accreditation Specialist who presents the review team's analysis to the AHAB CEO in the Organization Review Team Report.
  - d. Provide input to AHAB staff developing and updating policies and procedures.
  - e. Maintain working files for all organizations reviewed, utilizing AHAB policies and procedures for handling documents and data.
  - f. Remain anonymous to organization administrators, and Accreditation Coordinators when reviewing candidate organization documentation prior to the site visit.
  - g. Be prepared to thoroughly discuss summary findings with the Accreditation Specialist and/or designated AHAB staff after established time for review of documents, evidence and/or site visit.

- h. Submit a current resume and any required information to the AHAB staff annually within communicated timeframes in order to remain an active reviewer.
3. Responsibilities of Accreditation Specialist
- a. In addition to the responsibilities of a reviewer, the Accreditation Specialist, is an AHAB staff member
  - b. Aids Organization Review Team in adhering to established deadlines.
  - c. Works with AHAB staff to finalize the site visit schedule with the Accreditation Coordinator; communicates and reviews plans with accompanying reviewer(s) and designated AHAB staff.
  - d. Communicates with reviewers and additional designated AHAB staff via telephone or email to assure an accurate and thorough organization review process.
  - e. Assists reviewers in preparing summary according to guidance as necessary.
  - f. Confers with reviewers regarding unclear issues and/or disagreeing viewpoints.
  - g. Checks accuracy of all statements and recommendations.
  - h. Ties all comments to specific criteria; writes comments in a style that can be communicated to the Candidate Organization Chief Executive.
  - i. Contacts designated AHAB staff if questions arise.
  - j. Summarizes all reviewers' notes and observations at end of site visit into a Summary Finding Report, which reflects consensus of all members of Organization Review Team and is shared orally with the candidate organization prior to completing the site visit.
  - k. Utilizes Summary Finding Report from site visit to finalize Organization Review Team report.
  - l. Sends copy of Organization Review Team report to all reviewers, AHAB CEO, and designated AHAB staff.
  - m. Is prepared to thoroughly discuss Organization Review Team report with AHAB CEO and/or designated staff.
  - n. Brings any potential problems around the accreditation process, candidate organization or the site visit to the immediate attention of the AHAB CEO.
4. Responsibilities of reviewers conducting a site visit
- a. Follows established policies and procedures for conducting site visits in a professional ethical manner.
  - b. Represents AHAB to candidate accreditation organizations.

- c. Substantiates that the organization is in compliance with the AHAB Standards and Guidelines in effect at the time, for evidence verifiable during a site visit.
- d. Reviews the application and documentation submitted by the candidate organization before the site visit to develop an in-depth understanding of the organization and to determine information to be collected during the site visit.
- e. During a site visit verifies information presented in the application materials.
- f. Participates in preparing a Summary Findings report with other team members, led by the Accreditation Specialist, which is verbally shared with the candidate organization at the site visit exit conference.
- g. After the site visit, submits all notes and documentation to the Accreditation Specialist. The Accreditation Specialist drafts the Organization Review Team report for final review and consensus from all reviewers on the team.
- h. The Organization Review Team report is then given to the AHAB CEO for review. After review and finalization, the Organization Review Team report is submitted via email to the candidate organization at the same time it is submitted to the AHAB Board to determine accreditation status.

#### **N. Ethics, Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest**

1. AHAB board members and reviewers abide by the AHAB Code of Ethics in Appendix A of this Policies and Procedures Manual.
2. The potential for conflict of interest exists when one's ability to make decisions to protect the public is compromised by any relationship with an organization that might interfere with objectivity in the accreditation process.
3. All actions of AHAB board members, reviewers, and staff are consistent with the AHAB guidelines concerning confidentiality of program decisions and visits.
4. As a nationally recognized accrediting body, AHAB has the responsibility to maintain confidentiality of privileged information.
5. Acceptance of an invitation to be an AHAB board member, staff member or reviewer constitutes an agreement to safeguard this confidentiality. Organization files and documents are available only to these members, staff working in accreditation, and reviewers (organization(s) they are reviewing).

6. The disclosure to unauthorized persons of information obtained in connection with the review of any application for accreditation is prohibited.
7. When the AHAB board has cause to believe that any program is acting in an unethical manner or is deliberately misrepresenting itself to residents or the public, it will investigate the matter and take action.
8. Conflict of interest must be avoided by AHAB board members, reviewers and staff in all situations in which accreditation recommendations or decisions are being made.
9. If an AHAB board member is currently affiliated as an employee, paid consultant, or appointee of the candidate organization under review, he/she will not be provided the written material for the program in the agenda packet or at the time of the meeting. The decision regarding the program is disclosed only in an official decision letter.
10. Three years must elapse from the time a reviewer reviews or visits an organization or an AHAB board member reviews an organization, before he/she may serve as a consultant to that organization.
11. Although AHAB staff does not participate directly in decisions regarding accreditation, they provide consistency across organization reviews and ensure that policies and procedures are followed. Thus, staff must adhere to the same conflict of interest guidelines for reviewers and board members.
12. Reviewers are not assigned to review or site visit an organization and AHAB board members are absent from deliberations and decisions for an organization and it is so noted in the meeting minutes if they:
  - a. Currently serve or have served as an employee, paid consultant or appointee of the organization seeking accreditation.
  - b. Are a former resident of the organization seeking accreditation.
  - c. Have a family member who is employed or affiliated with the organization seeking accreditation.
  - d. Have a personal relationship with any board member or staff in the organization seeking accreditation
  - e. Are employed by an organization of the same type within the competitive proximity of the program.
  - f. Have been identified as a conflict of interest by the organization seeking accreditation.
13. AHAB volunteers must adhere to the following provisions while providing consultative services, education or training for the purpose of assisting others in maintaining or

obtaining AHAB accreditation when those consultative services, education or training are not sponsored by AHAB or not part of the individual's responsibilities as a AHAB volunteer:

- a. AHAB reviewers must update their declaration of conflicts of interest whenever they provide consultative services, education or training for the purpose of assisting others in maintaining or obtaining AHAB accreditation, apart from their normal responsibilities as AHAB volunteers.
  - b. Reviewers must provide a written statement to parties receiving consultative services, education or training that they are not acting on behalf of AHAB.
  - c. Informal, impromptu conversations or request for advice are exempt if neither reimbursement nor remuneration is provided and it is explicitly stated that the volunteer is not acting on behalf of AHAB.
14. AHAB board members and staff may not provide consultative services, education or training apart from their normal duties.
15. Prior written approval must be received before using AHAB documents and materials as part of non-AHAB-sponsored consultative services, education or training for the purpose of assisting others in maintaining or obtaining AHAB accreditation.
16. Summary of the conditions under which AHAB volunteers and staff may provide outside consultative services, education or training for the purpose of assisting others in maintaining or obtaining AHAB accreditation:

Board Members                      No. AHAB board members are prohibited from providing consultation services, education or training to organizations for the purpose of assisting them in maintaining or obtaining AHAB accreditation outside their roles as AHAB board members whether they are free of charge, reimbursed or remunerated.

Reviewer                              Yes. Reviewers may provide consultation services, education or training if they notify the AHAB board and provide a written statement to parties receiving their services that they are not acting on behalf of AHAB.

AHAB Staff                            No. AHAB staff are prohibited from providing consultation services, education or training to organizations for the purpose of assisting them in maintaining or obtaining AHAB accreditation outside their roles as AHAB staff whether they are free of charge, reimbursed or remunerated.

## **O. Denial or dismissal of AHAB volunteers**



1. The following circumstances may result in the AHAB Nominating committee denying an individual's request for participation or reinstatement as an AHAB volunteer, or result in the AHAB chair asking a current volunteer to relinquish a position or face dismissal:
  - a. Violation of any of the following:
    - i. AHAB Code of Ethics;
    - ii. Candidate organization conflict of interest policy;
    - iii. Intentional disregard for AHAB policies and procedures;
    - iv. Repeated inability of the volunteer to perform duties;
    - v. Publicly disparaging the integrity of AHAB.
2. The AHAB board reserves the right to deny participation of, not reinstate or dismiss a volunteer for cause.
  - a. A denial of participation or reinstatement as a AHAB volunteer, or a chair's request to relinquish positions may be appealed to the AHAB board of directors.
  - b. The decision of the AHAB board is final. The AHAB board may vote to request that the chair relinquish leadership of the AHAB board or face dismissal for the reasons listed above. That decision may be appealed to a special committee composed of two former AHAB chairs, none of whom may be currently sitting on the AHAB board, and the currently sitting Vice Chair of AHAB.
  - c. Individuals will be notified in writing.
3. Appeal of denials of dismissals of AHAB volunteers
  - a. To file an appeal of a decision to deny an individual's participation or reinstatement as a AHAB volunteer, or a chair's request to relinquish an individual's position as an existing volunteer, the individual must notify the AHAB CEO in writing, by certified mail, return receipt requested, that she/he appeals the decision or request.
  - b. The written appeal must include pertinent facts in support of the appellant's position.
  - c. The written appeal must be postmarked within 10 calendar days of the date of receipt of the notice of the decision or request, as documented by the record of express mail second-day delivery.
  - d. If such a request is not submitted and postmarked within this 10-day period, all rights to appeal are considered to be waived and the decision is final.
  - e. Appeals made by the AHAB chair will be considered by a special committee composed of two former AHAB chairs, none of whom may be currently sitting on the

AHAB board and the current Vice Chair of AHAB. Appeals from all other volunteers will be considered by the AHAB board of directors.

- f. At the appeal hearing, the appellant will have an opportunity to present oral testimony via conference call.
- g. An appellant who is being dismissed from current services as a AHAB volunteer will be exempt from all AHAB responsibilities and travel until after the appeal decision is made.
- h. The appellant will be notified of the final decision by mail.
- i. All decisions are final

#### **P. Training of New Reviewers and AHAB Board Members**

1. An orientation is scheduled at least annually for new reviewers and AHAB board members. The orientation generally includes:
  - a. Discussion of the role and value of accreditation.
  - b. Review of accreditation and site visit process.
  - c. Review of current AHAB Accreditation Standards and Guidelines.
  - d. Responsibilities of reviewers and board members.
  - e. Review of affordable housing trends and impact on accreditation procedures.

#### **Q. Funding and Budget**

1. The AHAB board participates with the staff in determining its financial needs and managing its expenditures. AHAB may supplement the fees for accreditation by seeking grants made by grantors to non-profit organizations to carry out the operations of AHAB and its committees.
2. The AHAB board may change fees to maintain fiscal responsibility.
3. AHAB staff in consultation with the Treasurer and Finance chair is responsible for the budget for all accreditation activities.
4. Members of the AHAB board, reviewers and committees do not receive any stated salaries or other compensation for services. Members are reimbursed for approved expenses in accordance with reimbursement policies of AHAB.

#### **R. Records**

1. Official Organization Files

- a. Content
    - i. Final decision letters are kept indefinitely.
    - ii. Correspondence between programs and AHAB are kept indefinitely.
    - iii. Summary Finding reports, Organization Review Team reports, accredited organization interim reports and annual reports through two review periods, and the most recent application are kept in the organization's file.
    - iv. Correspondence regarding complaints and action taken are kept indefinitely.
    - v. Files of organizations that have ceased operating or have had accreditation withdrawn are kept in an inactive file.
  - b. Access
    - i. All organization files are confidential.
    - ii. Materials generated by organizations are the property of the organization and cannot be copied or used in any way by persons not involved in the accreditation process of the organization without written permission from the candidate organization chief executive.
    - iii. Access to files is restricted to the AHAB CEO or designated AHAB staff and reviewers unless written permission is provided by the candidate organization chief executive for other authorized access.
2. Working Files
- a. Content
    - i. Working files include notes and draft reports. Working files maintained by AHAB board members, reviewers and staff are destroyed immediately following the AHAB meeting at which the final accreditation decision is made.
    - ii. Other materials are kept as designated for official organization accreditation files. Files of AHAB board members and reviewers are destroyed two years after the final decision for an organization has been communicated.
    - iii. Organization files of AHAB board members or reviewers are transferred to other AHAB board members or reviewers as necessary.
  - b. Access to working files
    - i. Working files are considered unofficial files and are maintained in a confidential manner.
3. Communication with Reviewers
- a. Reviewer selection/appointment correspondence is kept until the reviewer is no longer active.

- b. Reviewers submit a current curriculum vita or resume and required information documenting their expertise for evaluating affordable housing organizations to the AHAB staff as requested.
  - c. Documentation of reviewer performance is kept until the reviewer is no longer active.
4. Records of Telephone Conversations
- a. The conversation is confirmed with appropriate written correspondence.
  - b. No decisions of the AHAB board are given by telephone. Organizations will receive written notification of a decision.
5. Records of Complaints
- a. Organizations are required to inform residents of the mailing address and telephone number for AHAB.
  - b. Resident complaints received by or made available to AHAB are reviewed by and action taken by the AHAB board according to the Complaint Procedure.
  - c. If a complaint does not relate to the AHAB Accreditation Standards in effect at the time, the AHAB chair may refer it to Federal, State, and other agencies as appropriate.
  - d. Resident complaints relating to the AHAB Accreditation Standards in effect at the time and action taken are included in the review of the program for re-accreditation.

#### **S. Amendments to the Policies and Procedures for Accreditation**

1. Amendments to the policies and procedures for accreditation may be proposed by any voting member of the AHAB board. Amendments to procedures may also be proposed by the CEO.
2. The policies and procedures may be amended at any regular or special meeting of the AHAB board by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the voting members, in person or by written proxy, at such meeting, providing that written notice containing the proposed amendment is sent to the voting members not less than three weeks before the meeting at which the amendment is offered. Editorial changes that do not change the intent may be made at any time.
3. The policies and procedures are reviewed and updated as necessary, at least annually, at an official quarterly meeting of the AHAB board.

## **SECTION 3: Accreditation Process**

The Affordable Housing Accreditation Board has established five steps for organizations to follow to achieve accreditation: 1) Readiness and Eligibility Determination; 2) Registration; 3) Application and Documentation Submission; 4) Review, Site Visit and Report; 5) Accreditation Decision.

### **A. Readiness**

A housing organization's preparation is critical to their success with the accreditation process. In addition to appointing an Accreditation Coordinator, an organization should determine an approach to readying itself for accreditation that fits its operational needs, and takes into consideration its stakeholders. Reviewing the standards and guidelines, along with the Readiness Survey and common documentation will assist the organization with identifying strengths and areas that need more attention before they apply, to reduce challenges throughout the process.

#### *1. Accreditation Coordinator*

- a. The housing organization is required to appoint one person as an Accreditation Coordinator.
- b. The Accreditation Coordinator is the assigned staff member who is responsible for coordinating all aspects of the accreditation process within the housing organization.
- c. The Accreditation Coordinator is the single communication contact with AHAB throughout the entire accreditation process.
- d. The selection of the right individual is essential, as the Accreditation Coordinator must have authority to communicate with AHAB, know the organization thoroughly, however not have responsibility of running the housing organization on a daily basis, i.e. the Chief Executive (Executive Director or CEO).

#### *2. Accreditation Coordinator Training*

- a. Accreditation Coordinators are required to participate in online applicant training before the candidate housing organization submits the application. The training assists the applicant organization with tips on how to organize and delegate information gathering and evidence for the application, as well as how to coordinate the site visit.
- b. AHAB will not provide individualized training (except in cases where AHAB identifies the need for special training).

- c. The required Accreditation Coordinator training will not teach applicants how to comply with specific standards or guidelines. For example, the training will not provide guidance on how to develop a performance management system or how to write a strategic plan. That type of technical assistance is provided by other industry or third party consultants and consulting organizations.

### *3. Standards and Guidelines Review and Preparation*

- a. In preparation for accreditation, the housing organization should review the AHAB Standards and Guidelines and conduct the Accreditation Readiness Survey taking careful note of the recommended documentation to substantiate compliance with the Standards and Guidelines.
- b. This preparation will enable the organization to identify plans and processes that should be in place, necessary infrastructure of the organization, and documents, and/or policies and procedures that need to be developed or updated.
- c. The entire accreditation documentation submission will take place online.

## **B. Eligibility**

### *1. Eligibility Determination*

- a. The first step to become an Accreditation Candidate is determination of eligibility of the housing organization for accreditation using AHAB's eligibility determination form.
- b. The Eligibility Determination form identifies the housing organization as an eligible applicant and potential candidate for affordable housing organization accreditation.
- c. It is non-binding and does not commit an affordable housing organization to register and apply, however if the organization is determined as eligible for accreditation, the registration must be submitted within 90 days of AHAB's eligibility determination of the organization.
- d. The Eligibility Determination form is an online form that collects contact and other basic information about the housing organization.
- e. On the form, the housing organization will submit the name of the chief executive and the person designated as the Accreditation Coordinator, who is the primary point of contact throughout the accreditation process, should the organization be eligible and decide to proceed with its registration and application for accreditation.
- f. It is the responsibility of the housing organization to notify AHAB promptly if any of the contact information changes.

- g. The final component of the Eligibility Determination is a required digital signature of the housing organization chief executive to authorize AHAB to determine eligibility for accreditation.
- h. Upon submission of the Eligibility Determination form, AHAB staff will review it and, if complete and the entity meets the eligibility requirements, will notify the housing organization that they may proceed with their Registration for accreditation that must be submitted within 90 days.

## **C. Registration**

### *1. Registration Serves as Notification*

- a. The registration serves as formal notification to AHAB of the housing organization's desire to become a candidate for affordable housing accreditation.
- b. The registration is an agreement that the applicant will abide by the current and future policies and procedures of AHAB's accreditation process to achieve and maintain accreditation status for the five-year accreditation period.
- c. Upon notification from AHAB that the housing organization is eligible for candidacy, an organization may submit their Registration form within 90 days.
- d. The Registration form contains much of the initial information from the Eligibility form, but also includes narratives about the current status of the organization operationally and environmentally.

### *2. Pre-Candidacy Fee*

- a. The completed and signed Registration form is emailed to AHAB, and the organization pays AHAB the pre-candidacy fee.
- b. Upon receipt of the fee, AHAB will open the online portal for submission of the Application.
- c. From this point forward, the applicant organization is encouraged to utilize its appointed Accreditation Coordinator, leading a designated Accreditation Committee to communicate with AHAB and delegate assignments for gathering documentation and evidence for conformance with the Standards and Guidelines.

## **D. Application and Document Submission**

### *1. Application*

- a. The Application provides AHAB with the detailed information needed to review the narratives, documentation and evidence to understand the applicant organization, and plan for the site visit. This is the area of the process that is the most time consuming for the applicant organization.

## *2. Application Requirements*

- a. The organization is minimally required to upload an organizational chart, most current audited financial report, and a letter of support for pursuing accreditation from the governing body.
- b. The application also includes an organization narrative around compliance with each Standard and Guideline and has indicated its progress toward being in conformance with the guidelines through a narrative and accompanying evidence, i.e. documentation.
- c. The application will include a mutual non-disclosure agreement and require an electronic signature from the chief executive and a representative of the governing body.
- d. The application is considered complete by the candidate housing organization, once submitted online. AHAB will then begin its completeness review.

## *3. Application Completeness Review*

- a. AHAB staff will review the submitted application and documentation to determine that the application is complete and that the required materials have been uploaded.
- b. AHAB will respond to the applicant, indicating whether the application has been accepted as complete within 30 days.
- c. If the application is not complete, the applicant will be told what additional or different information is required to complete the application, and must provide the information within 30 days.

## *4. Review and Site Visit Fee*

- a. Upon acceptance of the application by AHAB, AHAB will finalize the housing organization's accreditation review and site visit fee per the current pricing schedule and send an invoice to the organization due upon receipt.
- b. AHAB's Accreditation Pricing Schedule is published on AHAB's website. The pre-candidacy fee and reviewer site visit fees are established to cover the costs of reviewing materials provided by the housing organization. The annual accreditation fee assists



AHAB with organizational expenses benefitting all accredited agencies equally. It is applicable to the housing organization for a period of five years, beginning with the date of approval of the application.

- c. Electronic invoices will be provided by AHAB to the applicant housing organization. Invoices are due upon receipt.
- d. The pre-candidacy fee and the reviewer and site visit fee are required to be paid by the housing organization prior to the AHAB internal review of the housing organization's compliance with the Standards and Guidelines which takes place prior to the site visit.

#### *5. Documentation Selection*

- a. The process of identifying and uploading documents that demonstrate the housing organization's conformity with the AHAB Standards and Guidelines is one of the most important components of the accreditation process.
- b. Selection of documentation should be based on reviewing the Standards and Guidelines, as well as the Common Documentation. Each applicant should utilize the best document for their individualized needs. Narratives are useful to provide context if documentation is unique to the applicant or was specifically adapted for use by the organization.
- c. The documentation submitted by the housing organization to AHAB is what the Organization Review Team will review, along with the narratives and site visit, as the basis to assess the housing organization's conformity with the Standards and Guidelines and to develop the Organization Review Team Report. The Organization Review Team Report is the major basis for the AHAB Board accreditation decision.

#### *6. Document Submission*

- a. Upon receipt of the pre-candidacy fee, AHAB will provide the candidate organization access to the online portal where information can be uploaded.
- b. Every housing organization will be assigned an AHAB Accreditation Specialist to be available to provide technical assistance concerning the accreditation process and the interpretation and intent of the Standards and Guidelines. By the end of the Accreditation Coordinator training, the housing organization will be notified which AHAB Accreditation Specialist has been assigned to their housing organization.
- c. The Accreditation Specialist is available to answer questions about document submission.

## *7. Timeframe for Documentation Submission*

- a. Applicant housing organizations must upload and submit documentation to AHAB before the deadline date AHAB established upon acceptance of the organization's candidacy.
- b. If a housing organization does not submit its documentation within the 90 day timeframe after Registration, it may request an additional 30 day extension.
- c. After one 30 day extension is granted in writing by the AHAB CEO, and the applicant does not meet that deadline, the application becomes void and the applicant must begin the process again with eligibility determination. The pre-candidacy fee is not refundable.

## *8. Completeness Review*

- a. Once the applicant submits its documentation, AHAB will conduct a completeness review of the application. This review is to ensure that the application is ready for the Organization Review Team.
- b. Documents that, for example, are not dated, do not provide evidence that they are authentic to the housing organization, open sideways, or are examples of activities that are outside of AHAB's scope of authority will not be accepted.
- c. AHAB will ensure the portal is open for the housing organization to upload additional documentation or narratives if required based on the completeness review.
- d. The housing organization will have 30 days to respond to the completeness review.
- e. If the housing organization does not respond within the 30 days, the process will proceed with the originally submitted information.
- f. If a housing organization requests an extension within the first 30 days, it may request an additional 30 day extension.
- g. After one 30 day extension is granted, and the applicant does not meet that deadline, the process will proceed with the originally submitted documentation.
- h. AHAB's completeness review does not include the review of the documentation for conformity with the Standards and Guidelines. The Organization Review Team will make the determination as to whether any given guideline is demonstrated, based on the submitted documentation, narratives and the site visit.
- i. It is the responsibility of the housing organization to ensure that complete documentation is submitted, that documentation is submitted using acceptable file

formats, that documents open right-side up, that documents are in final form (i.e. not draft), that examples are within the scope of AHAB's accreditation authority, and that documents are dated and provide evidence that they are authentic to the housing organization.

- j. The housing organization may be asked to resubmit documentation that does not conform to these requirements. This may require additional work for the housing organization and delay the review process.

#### *9. Content of Documentation*

- a. The AHAB Standards and Guidelines Evidence Matrix document sets forth examples of common documentation and evidence that may demonstrate conformity with each guideline. The Standards and Guidelines Evidence Matrix should be consulted as housing organizations work to select the best evidence to serve as conformity of the guideline.
- b. The Standards and Guidelines Evidence Matrix includes guidance specific to each guideline, and is also utilized by the Organization Review Team.
- c. The housing organization should pay close attention to the Standards and Guidelines Evidence Matrix, as well as the Common Documentation list when selecting their most appropriate documentation and narrative to demonstrate conformity with a guideline.
- d. Although the Evidence Matrix and Common Documentation are tools to assist through the accreditation process, they are not all inclusive, and AHAB will review each piece of documentation and evidence submitted on its own merits and relevance to the candidate organization.

#### *10. Additional Documentation Guidance*

- a. Documentation should be selected that best demonstrates conformity with the requirements of the guideline. Selected documentation should also represent and portray the housing organization and how it performs its functions.
- b. Selected policies, procedures, and plans must be current and in use by the housing organization.
- c. More than one document may be needed to demonstrate conformity with any one guideline. That is, the housing organization may upload multiple documents for one guideline.

- d. Any document may be used more than one time, for multiple guidelines. The section of the document that relates to the particular guideline should be noted, or highlighted for the Organization Review Team.
- e. The housing organization should not upload more documentation than is required to demonstrate conformity with the guideline. Uploading more examples than what demonstrates conformity with the guideline can cause confusion on the part of Reviewers as they review the documentation and look for clear compliance with the guidelines.

#### *11. Documentation Description*

- a. Information is provided on the AHAB website for housing organizations to refer to while compiling their documentation and how it demonstrates conformity with the guideline.
- b. The housing organization is strongly encouraged to provide a short description for each submitted document to explain why the housing organization believes the documentation demonstrates conformance with the guideline.
- c. The description should also describe any larger document from which the documentation is derived. In addition, the upload description should direct the Organization Review Team to the exact part of the uploaded documentation that demonstrates conformity. Reviewers should be able to readily ascertain the relevance of the selected documentation to the guideline.
- d. If more than one document is uploaded to show conformance, the housing organization should describe for the Organization Review Team how the documents relate to one another and how they collectively provide the evidence to support compliance with the guidelines.

#### *12. Narrative along with Documentation*

- a. The housing organization narrative for each guideline is also extremely important. The narrative provides context for how the organization believes it is compliant or not compliant with a guideline.
- b. The housing organization would utilize the narrative to assist the Organization Review Team in understanding the specific characteristics of their unique organization and operating environment.
- c. The narrative will also provide context for the site visit, and scheduling of interviews for additional guidance for the final Organization Review Team report.

## **D. Review, Site Visit & Organization Review Team Report**

### *1. Site Visit Preparation and Purpose*

- a. After the housing organization has submitted its documentation and narratives for all guidelines, AHAB has concluded the completeness review, and the housing organization has responded to the completeness review, the review of all components of the application by a team of AHAB trained Reviewers will begin.
- b. The purpose of the Reviewers' review of the submitted information is to assess the housing organization's application against the AHAB Standards and Guidelines and to develop an Organization Review Team Report. The review of the information will be conducted in two phases: a Pre-site Visit Review and a site visit to the housing organization.
- c. The purpose of the Pre-site Visit Review is to review the documentation and ask the housing organization questions or request additional documentation prior to the site visit.
- d. The purpose of the site visit is to provide the Reviewers the opportunity to acquire a more comprehensive review of the housing organization through the combination of interviews, verifying narrative evidence, meetings with key stakeholders, and visual observations of the housing organization.
- e. The housing organization will have an opportunity to describe its operations, its relationship with the community, the role of its governing entity (See AHAB Acronyms & Glossary of Terms for the definition of "governing entity"), and provide other qualitative information in person and on site.

### *2. Housing Organization Site Visit Participants*

- a. The housing organization Chief Executive and Accreditation Coordinator must be on site and available for the entirety of the site visit.
- b. If the housing organization has designated Standard team leaders (responsible for the identification and selection of documentation for a particular Standard), they should be available for any Standard specific interviews.

- c. The housing organization will determine which department staff will participate in each session during the site visit.
- d. The housing organization must invite community partners, residents and governance representatives to meet with the Reviewers for specific site visit sessions. The housing organization may invite others to attend the site visit, at their discretion.
- e. The AHAB Organization Review Team reviews documentation and conducts the site visit comprised of a team of reviewers, trained and selected by AHAB, and led by an AHAB Accreditation Specialist.
  - i. AHAB employs a peer review model. The number of Reviewers on a team will be determined by the size or complexity of the housing organization as detailed in the initial application.
  - ii. AHAB Reviewers are representatives of AHAB.
  - iii. Their responsibility is to learn about the housing organization through the review of documentation and through the interviews conducted during the site visit.
  - iv. Their responsibility is then to develop an Organization Review Team Report that accurately describes and reflects the housing organization that they have reviewed.
  - v. The Reviewers will not decide or recommend the accreditation status of the housing organization.
  - vi. The Organization Review Team Report that the Reviewers develop is the basis for the accreditation status decision made by AHAB Board.

### *3. Appointment of Organization Review Team*

- a. AHAB will appoint an Organization Review Team led by an Accreditation Specialist who is an AHAB employee for each housing organization.
- b. In the assignment of individuals to Organization Review Teams, AHAB may include Reviewers experienced in similar affordable housing organizations as the organization being visited, such as centralized or decentralized structures, rural or urban, if such trained Reviewers are available.
- c. AHAB determines when Organization Review Teams should include individuals with specific experiences, such as Moving To Work, etc.

### *4. Conflict of Interest*

- a. AHAB strives to ensure that a bias-free decision process is maintained.

- b. All AHAB Reviewers must identify and disclose actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest.
- c. A Reviewer with a conflict of interest with a housing organization could still serve as a Reviewer, but will not be assigned to review any housing organization with which a conflict of interest exists.
- d. The goal is to prevent any negative impact that conflicts of interest may cause to the accreditation process.
- e. Reviewers will be asked to disclose any potential conflicts of interest with the applicant housing organization to which they are assigned.
- f. Conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:
  - i. Previous or current employment with the housing organization;
  - ii. Previous or current consultation or other business arrangement with the housing organization;
  - iii. Family relationship with key employees of the housing organization; and
  - iv. Any other relationship with the housing organization that would afford the Reviewer access to information about the housing organization other than that which is provided through the AHAB accreditation process.
- g. Additionally, to ensure objectivity, Reviewers will not be from the same state as the applicant housing organization.
- h. The housing organization will also have an opportunity to review any potential Organization Review Team member for conflict of interest and request that a change be made in their Team membership, based on that conflict.
- i. No Organization Review Team member may serve as a consultant to any housing organization they review for a period of 12 months following the conclusion of the site visit.

#### *5. Accreditation Specialist*

- a. Upon final assignment of an Organization Review Team to a housing organization, the Team will be notified of the AHAB Accreditation Specialist assigned to that housing organization.
- b. The Accreditation Specialist is the lead member of the Organization Review Team.
- c. The Accreditation Specialist will work to ensure quality assurance, consistency within and across the Summary Findings report and the Organization Review Team Report,

reviewer and inter-reviewer reliability, and clarity of information in the final Organization Review Team Report.

- d. The Accreditation Specialist will lead the Organization Review Team and provide technical assistance concerning the review process and the Standards and Guidelines.
- e. The Accreditation Specialist will act as a liaison between the Reviewers and the housing organization for purposes of finalizing the site visit agenda. The Organization Review Team individual reviewers are expected to seek and utilize the advice and counsel of the Accreditation Specialist for any logistics, communication, questions or problems arising in relation to the accreditation process or Organization Review Team assignment.

## *6. Confidentiality*

- a. Confidentiality is a critical aspect of the accreditation process.
- b. To promote open and honest participation by Organization Review Team members and by housing organization representatives, it is important that the confidential nature of the site visit process is respected. The Team may be reviewing, for example, personnel records, results of investigations, and minutes of staff meetings. It is imperative that confidentiality of information and observations be maintained.
- c. Confidential information includes:
  - i. Any and all of the housing organization's documentation;
  - ii. Team pre-visit, site visit, and post-visit discussions;
  - iii. Contents of the Summary Findings Report and Organization Review Team Report;
  - iv. Opinions expressed to the team during interviews and site visit discussions;
  - v. Documents viewed and visual observations made as part of the onsite visit; and
  - vi. Other members of the Organization Review Team.
- d. Reviewers are instructed to not discuss the candidate housing organization or any of its documentation with others not involved in the housing organization's AHAB accreditation process. Reviewers are also instructed not to comment on the potential accreditation status of the applicant housing organization.
- e. Housing organizations may share information about their housing organization and review at their discretion. They should not however, disclose to others who their Reviewers were.

## *7. Reviewer and Inter-Reviewer Reliability*



- a. AHAB will make every effort to ensure reviewer and inter-reviewer reliability. The following is a list of some of AHAB's activities to promote consistency in the way Organization Review Teams assess conformity:
  - i. Providing specific and consistent guidance in the Standards and Guidelines document and through trainings on the requirements for demonstrating conformity.
  - ii. Requiring Reviewers to assess documentation and receive feedback from AHAB during training, after the training is completed, and on a periodic, ongoing basis.
  - iii. Having each member of the Organization Review Team independently conduct an assessment of documentation submitted for one guideline, once the team is assigned to a housing organization. Feedback from the Accreditation Specialist is provided for a team discussion and to ensure comments are being developed in a similar manner.
  - iv. Requiring the Organization Review Team to discuss the assessment of any guideline that is assessed as less than fully met.
  - v. Relying on the Accreditation Specialists to promote reviewer and inter-reviewer reliability through guidance and feedback to the Organization Review Team members
  - vi. Conducting a review of all Organization Review Team Reports before they are finalized by one or more AHAB staff members.
- b. In addition, quality improvement reviews may be conducted from time to time as part of AHAB's internal quality improvement process.

#### *8. Pre-site Visit Documentation Review*

- a. The individual reviewer will review the documentation and score each guideline (Met, Partially Met, or Not Met).
- b. The Organization Review Team will conduct conference calls to review the materials, determine potential areas of non-conformity, identify missing documentation, formulate questions, and determine if any guidelines will be reopened for additional documentation.
- c. Any guideline that is initially assessed as less than Met will be discussed by the entire Organization Review Team.

#### *9. Questions and Requests for Additional Documentation*

- a. Organization Review Teams may ask the housing organization questions about the documentation and may reopen guidelines to provide an opportunity to the housing organization to upload additional documentation.
- b. The housing organization will have 30 days to provide the answers to questions and upload additional documentation.
- c. The Organization Review Team will review the answers and new documentation prior to the site visit.
- d. If the housing organization does not respond within the 30 days, the Reviewers will proceed with the originally submitted documentation.
- e. The purpose of the opportunity to ask questions or request additional documentation is to provide the Organization Review Team with the information they need to develop an Organization Review Team Report that accurately describes how conformity with the guidelines was demonstrated or details what is missing.
- f. The overall objective is for the Organization Review Team Report to accurately reflect the housing organization's demonstration of conformity with the guidelines, the department's strengths and challenges, and how the housing organization functions.
- g. Examples of situations when the Organization Review Team might ask for additional documentation include:
  - i. A majority of the documentation was selected from a limited number of program areas. Reviewers may request documentation from additional program areas if a cross section of programs is not represented in the documentation.
  - ii. The activity being documented is outside of AHAB's scope of authority.
  - iii. The documentation is outside of the required time frames.
  - iv. The examples did not provide sufficient evidence of compliance.
  - v. The documentation does not include evidence of the housing organization's accountability for a program or service.
  - vi. The documentation references other documents that are not included but which would be helpful to assessing the guideline.
  - vii. The organization uploaded appropriate documentation in a guideline that the Organization Review Team feels would be an appropriate example elsewhere.
  - viii. The documentation includes confidential information.
- h. Examples of situations when the Organization Review Team might ask a housing organization a question include:

- i. The housing organization’s documentation consists of several documents and it is not clear to the Organization Review Team how they tie together and how they address the Standard and Guideline.
  - ii. The description of the document does not appear to match the documentation or is an unclear description. The Organization Review Team may ask for further clarification or for a description of how the documentation meets the documentation requirements or how the documentation demonstrates conformity.
  - iii. The uploaded documentation is a large document and the Organization Review Team cannot locate the specific part of the document that addresses compliance with the guideline.
- i. It is the responsibility of the housing organization to ensure that documentation is complete, speaks to the intent of the guideline, addresses all elements required in the Standards and Guidelines, directs the Reviewer to the specific parts of the document that fulfill the requirements, and is sufficiently described and explained. Therefore, the need for Reviewers to reopen guidelines should be infrequent.
  - j. Any document that a housing organization uploads into the AHAB portal during the Pre-site Visit Review must be dated on or before the housing organization’s original documentation submission date. That is, documentation created after the original submission date will not be accepted by AHAB.

*10. Conducting the Site Visit*

- a. The number of days of the site visit depends on the size of the housing organization, scope of the application, and the complexity of the documentation. Site visits usually last from one to three days.
- b. During the visit, Reviewers will focus on gathering information to: (1) validate and verify the evidence presented in the documentation that was submitted to AHAB; (2) understand the context in which the documentation is implemented by the housing organization, (3) ask for additional documentation, at their discretion, to supplement what they received prior to the site visit; and (4) make visual observations.
- c. Information will be gathered through on-site interviews and may include verification of onsite materials, systems, policies, etc.

- d. Reviewers will have the opportunity to meet with a range of stakeholders, including housing organization staff, housing organization governance representatives, residents and community partners.
- e. During the site visit, Reviewers may reopen guidelines and ask that additional documentation be uploaded into the AHAB portal. Any additional documentation must be submitted by the housing organization through the AHAB portal (no paper documents will be accepted).
- f. Any documentation submitted to AHAB during the site visit must have been current and in use by the housing organization at the time of the housing organization's original documentation submission date and must be dated accordingly.
- g. The purpose of the opportunity to request additional documentation is to provide the Organization Review Team with the information they need to develop an Organization Review Team Report that accurately describes how conformity with the guidelines was demonstrated or details what is missing.
- h. During the site visit, the Accreditation Specialist will be the main point of contact for the work of the Organization Review Team, act as spokesperson, and lead meetings involving Organization Review Team members.
- i. All team members may ask questions and participate in dialogue during all of the onsite interviews.
- j. The Organization Review Team will not make any comment regarding possible or recommended accreditation status at any time during the site visit or in the Organization Review Team Report.
- k. The Organization Review Team members will not provide advice to the housing organization nor share information about how other housing organizations fulfill their roles and responsibilities.
- l. The role of the Reviewers during the visit is to gather information, not provide feedback or recommendations to the housing organization during the course of the visit. The exit conference will verbally highlight the major findings during the visit, and the housing organization may ask for suggestions from the Organization Review Team at that time, based on the exit conference discussion.

#### *11. Site Visit Scheduling*

- a. The dates of the site visit will be scheduled for a time that is practical and agreeable for all parties involved in the process.

- b. The timing of the site visit will allow AHAB and members of the Organization Review Team sufficient time to conduct a thorough review of the documentation prior to the on-site visit.
- c. It is important that the housing organization ensures that all staff involved in the accreditation documentation will be available throughout the site visit for interviews and meetings. This will include key staff from any other departments or agencies with supportive services involved in agreements or contracts cited as evidence of conformity to specific standards. It also includes representatives of the housing organization's governing entity, residents and community partners.

## *12. Site Visit Agenda*

- a. The site visit agenda will include:
  - i. an entrance conference;
  - ii. visual observations of the housing properties;
  - iii. interviews with key staff;
  - iv. interviews with a representative of the governing entity, residents and of community partners;
  - v. collection of additional information, if requested by the Organization Review Team, regarding conformity with the Standards and Guidelines;
  - vi. and an exit conference to summarize or highlight major identified strengths, areas of challenges/opportunities for improvement.
- b. The agenda may be amended to coordinate Organization Review Team members' and housing organization staffs' needs to attend various sessions.
- c. A final site visit agenda will be provided to the housing organization by the Accreditation Specialist prior to the site visit so that the housing organization can ensure that the necessary staff members and others are present.

## *13. Organization Review Team Report*

- a. The Organization Review Team will develop an Organization Review Team Report that will be submitted to AHAB.
- b. The Organization Review Team Report has two audiences: the AHAB Board will use the report to make an accreditation decision and the Housing organization will use the

report for continuous quality improvement, annual reports to AHAB upon accreditation, and an Action Plan (if required).

- c. Developing the Organization Review Team Report is a process that begins when the Organization Review Team is conducting the Pre-site Visit review of the documentation and ends when the Team has reached consensus and the Accreditation Specialist submits the Report to the AHAB CEO.
- d. All compliance determinations and narratives may be revised at any time until the Accreditation Specialist submits the report to AHAB.
- e. AHAB staff will provide consultation to the Organization Review Team to aid in consistent interpretation of the Standards and Guidelines and to assist in the development of an Organization Review Team Report that provides the AHAB Board with the information necessary to make an accreditation decision.
- f. The Organization Review Team will provide an assessment and narrative for each guideline that describes how conformity with the guideline was demonstrated, or details what was missing.
- g. The Team may also describe any areas of excellence or unique promising practices and/or describe any opportunities for improvement that they identify.
- h. Opportunities for improvement identified by the team may be noted, even if the guideline is “Met”.
- i. The Organization Review Team will also provide narrative that will summarize the housing organization’s performance by each standard. An overall Report summary will provide the Team’s assessment of (1) the housing organization’s strengths, (2) the most serious/challenging opportunities for improvement, and (3) the organization as a functioning affordable housing organization.
- j. The Organization Review Team Report is the Organization Review Team’s assessment of the affordable housing organization’s conformity with the AHAB Standards and Guidelines, based on the entirety of the information they have gathered through the review process.
- k. The Organization Review Team Report is developed by consensus of the members of the Organization Review Team. No one team member makes the decision on the assessments of guidelines.
- l. If one member of the Organization Review Team does not believe the documentation fully demonstrates a guideline, the full team will discuss the evidence provided in the

documentation and through the site visit and will reach a consensus on the final assessment.

- m. AHAB CEO and designated staff will review the Organization Review Team Report and may ask questions of the Organization Review Team and/or request that edits to narratives in the Organization Review Report be made for clarity and consistency.
- n. Clarity and consistency in the Organization Review Team Report are important for the AHAB Board to have the most reliable information it can to make the accreditation decision.
- o. The final Organization Review Team Report will be sent to the housing organization for their information.
- p. Housing organizations may submit written comments at this time concerning the Organization Review Team Report, to the AHAB Board of Directors. They have 10 days after receipt of the Organization Review Team Report to submit written comments to the AHAB Board to consider in the accreditation decision.
- q. Housing organizations shall submit an evaluation after the site visit as part of AHAB's evaluation processes. This evaluation will not be reviewed until after the AHAB Board accreditation decision.
- r. AHAB will not make Organization Review Reports available to anyone other than the housing organization, AHAB staff, and the AHAB Board of Directors.
- s. The housing organization may share their Organization Review Report with others, at their discretion.

#### *14. Accreditation Process Evaluation*

- a. For AHAB's continuous quality improvement of the accreditation process and supporting guides and documents, AHAB conducts evaluation activities and may contract with an external evaluator to gather additional feedback.
- b. AHAB or its contractor may ask Reviewers and applicant housing organizations to complete surveys or participate in interviews or focus groups.
- c. Topics for the evaluation may include, for example, the steps in the accreditation process, trainings and resources, AHAB staff, and AHAB's online application submission.
- d. AHAB will use the findings of its evaluations to make decisions regarding all components of the accreditation process.
- e. All applicant housing organizations and Organization Review Team members are expected to participate in AHAB's evaluation process.

- f. Findings from the evaluation that are shared publicly will not identify individuals or organizations.
- g. Nothing that a housing organization says in the evaluation will affect the accreditation decision.
- h. It is through evaluations that the housing organizations and Reviewers are provided opportunities to submit comments and recommendations concerning the Standards and Guidelines, the Organization Review Report, the Organization Review Team, the accreditation process, or any aspect of the accreditation experience.



## **E. Accreditation Process Extensions and Suspensions**

### *1. Extensions*

- a. Housing organizations may request an extension to a deadline for certain steps in the accreditation process based on legitimate cause or extenuating circumstances. Standard timeframes and maximum extensions that can be granted are set forth in the AHAB Timeframes for Accreditation Activities.
- b. A legitimate cause or extenuating circumstance is an event or circumstance that is beyond the control of the housing organization and that significantly compromises the housing organization's ability to complete an AHAB accreditation process step within the timeframes set by AHAB.
- c. Examples of a legitimate cause or extenuating circumstance that would be considered by AHAB when determining if an extension will be granted include:
  - i. Damage to the housing organization facility or facilities, such as a flood or fire, that hinders the housing organization's normal operations;
  - ii. A community wide emergency, such as an environmental disaster, that requires the housing organization to redirect resources in order to contain or mitigate a health or safety problem or hazard; or
  - iii. An unanticipated change in the housing organization chief executive or Accreditation Coordinator (for example, separation from the housing organization for any reason or a serious illness) that would create a significant disruption in the housing organization's accreditation process work.
- d. Extensions may be granted for the following steps in the Accreditation Process:
  - i. Accreditation Coordinator Training
  - ii. Documentation Submission
  - iii. Response to Completeness Review
  - iv. Response to Pre-site Visit Review
  - v. Action Plan
  - vi. Action Plan Report
- e. Extensions will not be granted for the following steps in the Accreditation Process:
  - i. The housing organization's AHAB registration. The housing organization will be required to begin its registration over if it is not submitted within 60 days of starting it.

- ii. The housing organization's submission of the application. The housing organization will be deleted from the AHAB system and will be required to begin its registration over if the application is not completed within 90 days of AHAB's acceptance of the registration.
  - iii. The housing organization's submission of the Annual Report. The housing organization will not receive feedback from AHAB if the Annual Report is not submitted within 30 days of the due date.
- f. The request for an extension must be submitted to AHAB in writing (emails are acceptable). AHAB will consider the request for extension and respond to the housing organization. An extension for any one of the steps listed above may be granted to a housing organization only one time.

## *2. Inactive Status*

- a. Inactive Status is a pause in the accreditation process. That is, while a housing organization is in Inactive Status, the accreditation process is on hold.
- b. Inactive Status is provided for housing organizations that are in the accreditation process but are not prepared to complete a step in the process.
- c. The purpose of the Inactive Status is for the housing organizations to have time to identify or develop documentation (depending on the step that is put on hold).
- d. Inactive Status is different than an extension, which may be granted for situations beyond the housing organization's control (see definition above).
- e. Inactive Status may be applied to a housing organization during the following process steps:
  - i. Application Preparation and Documentation Submission,
  - ii. Response to the Completeness Review, or
  - iii. Response to the Pre-site Visit Review.
- f. Housing organizations will not have access to AHAB's portal during the Inactive Status. The amount of time of the Inactive Status will be determined in consult between AHAB and the housing organization. An established fee will be charged the housing organization for maintenance of the housing organization in the AHAB portal and for ongoing technical assistance from AHAB staff. Fees associated with the Inactive Status are described in the fee information on AHAB's website.

- g. Inactive status may be requested by a housing organization during the Application Preparation and Documentation Submission phase. When a housing organization determines that it is not sufficiently prepared to complete the application because it does not have the required documentation, it may request an Inactive Status. The housing organization may use this Inactive Status time to develop documentation.
- h. Inactive Status may be requested by a housing organization that determines that it requires more time to respond to the completeness review or the Pre-site Visit Review. Any documentation that is submitted in response to the completeness review or the Pre-site Visit review must have been current and in use at the time of the original application submission date. That is, the Inactive Status during the completeness review or during the Pre-site Visit Review is not an opportunity to create new documentation.
- i. The housing organization may be required by AHAB to go into an Inactive Status if AHAB determines that the housing organization is not ready to proceed in the process.
- j. Inactive Status may be required by AHAB during the steps in which the housing organization is responding to the completeness review or the Pre-site Visit Review.
- k. AHAB will make this determination based on the number of guidelines that are do not have sufficient documented evidence, the subject matter of the guidelines, and the types of reasons that the guidelines are not completely addressed.
- l. Any documentation that is submitted in response to the completeness review or the Pre-site Visit review must have been current and in use at the time of the housing organization's original documentation submission date. That is, the Inactive Status during the completeness review or during the Pre-site Visit Review is not an opportunity to create new documentation.

## **SECTION 4: Accreditation Decisions**

### **A. AHAB Board of Directors Decision**

1. The AHAB Board is charged with reviewing Organization Review Team Reports and determining the accreditation status of affordable housing organizations pursuant to Board-adopted policies and procedures. The Board generally meets on a quarterly basis and more frequently, as required.
2. There are two accreditation decision categories:
  - i. Accredited (5 years)
  - ii. Not Accredited – Action Plan
3. If the AHAB Board of Directors grants accreditation to a candidate housing organization, it will identify specific measures on which the housing organization must report through their Annual Report to AHAB in order to maintain accreditation.
4. The AHAB Board of Directors also identifies specific measures that must be included in an Action Plan, when an Action Plan is required prior to granting accreditation.

### **B. Accreditation Decision Process**

1. The responsibility of the AHAB Board begins with the receipt of the Organization Review Team Report. All Organization Review Team Reports will be available to all members to read (unless a conflict of interest has been identified and recusal warranted).
2. The AHAB Board will review the housing organization's Organization Review Team Report and determine accreditation status.
3. The AHAB Board will make accreditation decisions based on the Organization Review Team Report, including the Organization Review Team's assessments of conformity with each measure, conformity statements, and answers to overall questions. There is no numerical formula by which the decision will be made.
4. There are no numerical thresholds of measures demonstrated to confer accreditation.
5. No standards or measures are weighted.
6. If members of the AHAB Board have questions, the Accreditation Specialist may be requested to speak with members before the meeting or may be asked to be available by telephone during the committee deliberations.
7. AHAB staff will be available to address conformity issues or compliance with the process, policy, or rules to avoid lack of uniformity and avoid arbitrary decisions.

8. AHAB does not accept testimony, letters, phone call, or other means of communication from the public about an individual housing organization while their accreditation process is in progress.
9. Accreditation of a housing organization is based on demonstration of conformity with established standards and measures and is an indication of their capacity to carry out core functions.
10. National accreditation does not address local political or personnel issues.
11. Applicants are not permitted to attend AHAB Board meetings, though AHAB may disclose when the Board will review the Organization Review Team Report.
12. Identifying information concerning the housing organization, the Organization Review Team Report, and the Board's deliberations is confidential and will not be shared outside of AHAB.

### **C. Conflict of Interest in the Accreditation Decision Making**

1. AHAB has an obligation to ensure a bias-free decision making process.
2. All members of the AHAB Board have an obligation to identify and disclose actual, potential, and perceived conflicts of interest, and avoid the impact that such conflicts of interest may create in the accreditation process.
3. Members of the AHAB Board must disclose any conflicts of interest they have with any housing organization being reviewed. A member could still be able to serve as a member of the AHAB Board but will not be selected to review a housing organization's Organization Review Team Report with which they have a conflict.
4. Members are required to recuse themselves from any review, discussion, deliberation, or voting related to the respective housing organization to which the conflict is attached.
5. Recusal means that the member will not have access to the candidate housing organization's Organization Review Team Report and they must leave the room when that housing organization accreditation status decision is being discussed and made.

### **D. Accredited Affordable Housing Organizations**

1. AHAB will email a letter stating the official AHAB accreditation decision to the chief executive of the housing organization with a copy to the Accreditation Coordinator (as specified in the housing organization's application) within two weeks of the conclusion of the AHAB Board meeting.

2. A follow-up written letter will be sent by US postal mail.
3. The accredited housing organization will also receive a certificate, a plaque, and access to a password protected AHAB portal for accredited affordable housing organizations to download promotional material to communicate successful accreditation publicly.
4. No verbal feedback will be provided to applicants before the official written decision letter is sent to applicants.

#### **E. Maintenance of Accreditation**

1. If the housing organization receives a status of “accredited,” the Board will provide the housing organization with an Annual Report template to complete annually, which will include specific areas that are opportunities for improvement. This will support the organization’s continuous quality improvement efforts.
2. The housing organization is required to report on progress on the listed measures in its Annual Reports to be submitted annually to AHAB for maintenance of accreditation.

#### **F. Not Accredited - Action Plan**

1. If the housing organization does not receive a status of “accredited,” it has an opportunity to submit an accreditation Action Plan to AHAB.
2. The Action Plan must be submitted to AHAB within 90 days of the receipt of notification that the department did not receive the status of “accredited.”
3. If the housing organization does not submit an Action Plan within 90 days, the housing organization will be designated as “Not Accredited.”
4. To become accredited after a “Not Accredited” designation, the housing organization must begin the accreditation again with registering with AHAB and submitting a new application.
5. The intent of the Action Plan option is to provide those affordable housing organizations that the Board cannot accredit the opportunity to address areas that are critical to their becoming accredited.
6. A list of specific measures for improvement will be provided by the Board to the housing organization that must be addressed in the Action Plan. The issues to be addressed and content of an Action Plan are unique to each housing organization and are based on the Organization Review Team Report.

7. The Action Plan must specify the steps, actions, and improvements that the housing organization will implement in order to be in conformity with the measure.
8. Generally, the Action Plan will address: (1) identified opportunities for improvement or gaps that the housing organization plans to address; (2) steps and actions the housing organization will take, including milestones or benchmarks; and (3) the documentation that the housing organization plans to submit (but will not be limited to).
9. AHAB will provide an Action Plan Template.
10. The Action Plan is part of the accreditation process and is designed to encourage improvement. Just as AHAB maintains confidentiality concerning which affordable housing organizations are in the process of seeking accreditation, AHAB maintains confidentiality concerning which affordable housing organizations are going through or have gone through the Action Plan process.
11. The Board will review the Action Plan and may consult with the Organization Review Team, Accreditation Specialist, and/or members of AHAB staff in the review of the plan.
12. The Board may accept the Action Plan or request revisions to the Action Plan.
13. If the Board accepts the Action Plan, the housing organization must sign an acceptance agreement and implement the Plan and submit an Action Plan Report within nine months of notification of the acceptance of the plan.
14. If the Board requests a revision of the Plan, the Board will communicate to the housing organization what must be revised or expanded in the Action Plan in order to be accepted for review by the Board.
15. The housing organization will be provided 60 days (from the receipt of guidance from the Committee) to revise and resubmit the Action Plan. If the housing organization does not submit a revised Action Plan within 60 days, the housing organization will be designated as “Not Accredited.”
16. When the Action Plan is resubmitted, the Board will review it and accept or reject it. If the Board accepts the Action Plan, the housing organization must sign an acceptance agreement and implement the Plan and submit an Action Plan Report (documentation of implementation of the plan and conformity with the measures) within nine months of notification of the acceptance of the plan. If the Action Plan is rejected, the housing organization will be “Not Accredited.”

17. Affordable housing organizations should not consider the Action Plan step to be a “fall back” or “safety net.”
18. Affordable housing organizations should make every effort to be prepared for the accreditation process and for uploading documentation when they apply for accreditation.
19. The Action Plan step, though a quality improvement opportunity, requires additional work for the housing organization and for AHAB and will delay receipt of accreditation status.

### **G. Action Plan Report**

1. If the Action Plan is approved, the housing organization must submit documentation for each of the measures (Action Plan Report). This is due to AHAB within nine months of notification that the Action Plan has been accepted.
2. If the housing organization does not submit an Action Plan Report within nine months, the housing organization will be designated as “Not Accredited.”
3. To become accredited after being designated as “Not Accredited”, the housing organization must begin the accreditation again by registering with AHAB and submitting a new application.
4. The housing organization may submit its Action Plan Report at any time within the nine month timeframe.
5. The Action Plan Report will be reviewed by the Accreditation Specialist and/or reviewers on the Organization Review Team, if they are available.
6. If a member of the original Organization Review Team is not available, another AHAB trained Reviewer will be assigned to review the Action Plan Report.
7. AHAB staff, in consultation with the Accreditation Specialist and available reviewers, will determine if an on-site review is required.
8. If the review of conformity after the actions have been taken is review of documentation within AHAB (and does not require a site visit), the applicant will not be charged an additional fee. If review of conformity requires an on-site review, the applicant will be charged to cover the costs of the site visit.



9. AHAB staff will forward the Reviewer's assessment of the measures in the Action Plan to the Board for their review and accreditation status decisions. The range of accreditation status decisions includes:
  - i. Accredited (5 years)
  - ii. Not Accredited

## **H. Appeals and Complaints**

### *1. Appeals*

- a. A housing organization may appeal denial of initial accreditation status or revocation of accredited status as a result of a decision by the Board. Points in the accreditation process where accreditation can be denied include:
  - i. Lack of submission of the Action Plan within the required time frame;
  - ii. Resubmission (second submission) of an Action Plan that the Board deems to be non-responsive to the measures that are required to be addressed in the Action Plan, and/or severely deficient;
  - iii. Lack of submission of the Action Plan Report (documentation) within the required time frame;
  - iv. Submission of an Action Plan Report that the Board deems to not provide sufficient evidence of implementation of the Action Plan and conformity with the measures, based on the review and assessments of the Action Plan Report by AHAB Reviewers;
  - v. Revocation of accreditation status based on non-submission of the required Annual Report; or
  - vi. Revocation of accreditation status based on the review of the Annual Report by the Board.
- b. Grounds for appeals may be the following:
  - i. A negative decision was arbitrary, capricious, or otherwise in disregard of AHAB's accreditation standards;
  - ii. A negative decision was arrived at in disregard of AHAB's accreditation procedures; or
  - iii. A negative decision was not supported by evidence in the record on which the decision of the Board was based.

- c. The Appeals Procedure adopted by the AHAB Board of Directors, describes the steps for initiating an appeal, as well as AHAB's review and decision procedures, and post appeal procedures.
- d. Fees associated with appeals are described in the fee information on AHAB's website.

## *2. Complaints*

- a. AHAB has established policies and procedures for receiving and addressing written complaints about an accredited housing organization.
- b. AHAB can accept only written complaints about an accredited housing organization that are specific to a possible lack of conformity with AHAB's Standards and Measures under which the housing organization was accredited.
- c. AHAB cannot address complaints or disputes between individuals and affordable housing organizations; complaints about supportive services; social services; environmental health issues; professional licensing or practice; or any state, local or Tribal regulations.
- d. AHAB does not serve in the role of mediation between the housing organization and any party.
- e. A written complaint against an accredited housing organization must follow the AHAB Complaint Procedure and must be filed using the AHAB complaint form (See the AHAB website, [www.housingaccreditation.org](http://www.housingaccreditation.org) for the Complaint Procedure and Form), must be specific as to the accreditation standard that is being violated, must identify the outcome sought, must include documentation that appropriate administrative processes have been exhausted and must be signed. Full disclosure of any remedies that have been or are being sought must be included.
- f. Complaints, and their resolution, will be maintained on file with AHAB for the remainder of that housing organization's accreditation cycle, or no longer than five years. AHAB will not publicly release the complaints received nor the results of the complaint assessments.

## Appendix 1: Glossary

Term	Definition
Accreditation Coordinator	The staff person of a candidate organization for accreditation who is the primary point of contact with AHAB for the accreditation process, and ensures the organization is following the timelines for submission of documentation, planning for the site visit and preparing responses to AHAB inquiries.
Accreditation Specialist	The AHAB staff person who leads the Organization Review Team and is the primary point of contact with the candidate organization.
Application	The formal submission of information and documentation to AHAB for Affordable Housing Accreditation.
Candidate Organization	The status of an organization that has been deemed eligible for accreditation and has paid the pre-requisite fees.
Chief Executive	The staff member of an organization who has the highest ranking operational authority.
Compliance	Adherence to a standard or regulation. Used interchangeably with conformity.
Conformity	Adhering to or acting in accordance with a standard or guideline. Used interchangeably with compliance.
Eligibility	The determination that an organization meets the initial criteria for obtaining affordable housing accreditation.
Evidence	Documentation, including narratives and interviews demonstrating conformity with a standard or guideline.
Governing Entity	The body that has legal accountability for the organization to be in existence and act upon its mission.
Inactive Status	An AHAB approved status that is determined based on an organization requesting to pause for a short period of time during its accreditation process, but does not foresee needing to stop the process altogether.
Organization Review Team	The industry peer body that reviews all evidence, conducts the site visit, and provides a full report to the AHAB Board to make an accreditation decision.
Quality	The achievement of conformance with industry standards along with the commitment to continue to pursue excellence in operations.
Readiness Survey	A tool utilized by the organization interested in pursuing accreditation prior to registration.
Registration	Form submitted by organization interested in pursuing accreditation to determine if they meet the eligibility requirements for AHAB accreditation.
Reviewer	Affordable housing professional experienced and trained in all aspects of running an effective quality affordable housing organization. Trained by AHAB on the process of accreditation, and is a member of the Organization Review Team that reviews all candidate organization documents for conformity with the AHAB standards and guidelines.

## Appendix 2: Accreditation Process Chart

STEP	Housing Organization Activities	Affordable Housing Accreditation Board Activities	
1. Pre-Registration	Interested in becoming accredited	Available for consultation via phone or email	
	Review <i>AHAB Standards &amp; Guidelines</i>		
	Review <i>Accreditation Application</i>		
	Conduct <i>Accreditation Readiness Survey</i> for organization readiness for accreditation		
	Appoint Accreditation Coordinator		
2. Eligibility Determination & Registration	Complete <i>AHAB Eligibility Determination Form</i>	Determines Housing Organization is Eligible	
	If eligible, sign, complete and submit <i>AHAB Registration for Candidacy form</i>	Opens Portal for Application	
	Submit Pre-Candidate Fee		
3. Application and Document Submission for Accreditation	90 Days with max 30 day ext	Establish Accreditation Committee	Establishes Organization Review Team
		Prepare <i>Accreditation Application</i> responses, narratives, and documentation	
		Upload Application and documentation to portal	Reviews Application for Completeness
		Respond to completion of application questions	Application is Considered Complete
4. Candidacy for Accreditation Review, Site Visit and Report	Pays Review and Site Visit Fee	Review of Application begins	
	Plans and establishes site visit agenda, dates, times	Accreditation Specialist organizes reviewer activity per agenda dates and times	
	Responds to pre-site visit review questions	Compiles pre-site visit questions	
	Site visit occurs per agenda established in advance	Organization Review Team conducts site review, including entrance conference, tours, interviews and compiles Summary Findings report for verbal feedback at exit conference	
	Submits accreditation process evaluation	Accreditation Specialist works with full Organization Review Team to complete Organization Review Team Report	

		Submits comments about Organization Review Team Report	Organization Review Team Report submitted to AHAB CEO
			AHAB CEO submits Organization Review Team report to AHAB Board for accreditation decision
			Reviewers submit their evaluation of accreditation process
5. Accreditation Decision			AHAB Board meets and decides accreditation decision
Accredited Organization – maintenance of accreditation for 5 years	Every 12 months	Pays Annual Accreditation Fee	
		Accesses AHAB portal to obtain accreditation promotional materials	
		Implements activities to maintain accreditation	
		Submits Annual Report within 12 months of accreditation decision	AHAB reviews
		Pays Annual Accreditation Fee	
Not Accredited – Action Plan	9 months		Sends Action Plan Template
		Submits Action Plan	Accepts Action Plan
		Works on Action Plan	
		Submits Action Plan Report	Accepts Action Plan Report – see Accredited Organization after Step 5
			Denies Action Plan Report – No Accreditation

### Appendix 3: Accreditation Process Deadlines and Maximum Extensions

AHAB Accreditation Process Step	Required Timeframe/Deadline	Maximum Additional Time Provided (Extension)
Eligibility for Accreditation	90 calendar days prior to registration	None – must file Eligibility Determination Form 90 calendar days prior to registration
Registration Submission	Within 90 calendar days of eligibility determination	None
Application Submission	90 calendar days from registration submission	30 calendar days
Accreditation Coordinator Training	90 calendar days from acceptance of registration	None – must occur before application is submitted
Documentation Submission	Must be submitted as part of the application	
Respond to the completeness review	30 calendar days	30 calendar days
Respond to the Pre-Site visit review	30 calendar days	30 calendar days
Action Plan	60 calendar days from date of accreditation decision	None
Action Plan Report	9 months maximum – depending on approved plan. Must be submitted electronically via AHAB portal.	None
Annual Report	Due one year from the date in which accreditation was conferred. Must be submitted electronically via AHAB portal.	None – must be submitted within 30 calendar days of due date