Guide for New Applicants

Environmental Choice New Zealand

About this Guide

The purpose of this Guide is to help you to:

- understand how applications for Environmental Choice New Zealand (ECNZ) licences are processed; and
- progress as quickly, easily and cost-effectively as possible through your application assessment.

Your Environmental Choice New Zealand Assessor

The New Zealand Ecolabelling Trust (The Trust) will appoint an assessor to assess your application for an ECNZ licence and to report to The Trust.

The assessor will be an independent and experienced environmental specialist, who has been trained and is on The Trust's register of approved assessors.

<u>All ECNZ assessors complete their assessments under a time and cost contract with The Trust, which begins from the time they are appointed to process an application.</u>

Getting Started

Your assessor will contact you very soon after you have lodged your application with The Trust. He or she will:

- introduce him or herself and provide you with contact details;
- confirm and clarify information on your application form and collect additional details about your products or services and when you expect to be ready for the assessment to begin;
- ensure you have a copy of the relevant ECNZ specification and Applicant Checklist for your products.

You should take this opportunity to ask any questions you may have about the application process or the specification requirements.

Scope of Work for the Assessment

The first task for your assessor is to establish the scope of work required to assess your licence application. This will depend on a number of factors, including:

- what type of products/services you are seeking a licence for (some specifications have more or more complex requirements than others);
- how many products/services you want to be assessed;

- where your products are manufactured (or services are delivered), including different manufacturing locations if your product involves a number of different manufacturing processes;
- what information will need to be assessed on-site and which sites will need to be visited;
- how much information (data, records, technical reports) the assessor will need to review.

Your assessor may require some more information from you, for example details about your suppliers and supply chain and about your management and records systems. You may find it helpful to have an initial meeting with your assessor to discuss the scope of the assessment work that will be required by you and your assessor.

Assessment Scoping Tips

- Be clear at the beginning of the process what product ranges/services and their supply chains are included in your application. A change of supplier or raw material means extra assessment work.
- Provide your assessor with sufficient information so that he or she can clearly understand your supply chain and company organisation– who makes what and where.
- Consider additional products/services that you may wish to have licensed in the near future and ensure that any on-site assessment covers any relevant processes. This should remove the need for an additional site visit later.
- Let your assessor know if you have other eco-labels or environmental management system certifications and if copies of assessment/audit reports are available. If information in these reports is relevant and reliable the assessor will be able to streamline his or her assessment work.

Assessment Scope and Fee Proposal

Your assessor will prepare a formal work and fee proposal for The Trust. This will set out the expected scope of assessment work (including details of site visits required) and an **estimate** of the total assessment cost (including the work already completed to establish the scope of the assessment).

The Trust will forward details of the scope of work and fee estimate to you, including a 5% administration charge. The Trust will ask you to confirm your acceptance of the scope of work and fee estimate, before any further work begins and you incur any further costs.

Making a Good Licence Submission

A good ECNZ licence submission is one that is clear, well organised and complete. A good submission should be easy for your assessor to assess, requiring less of his or her time and therefore less cost to you.

Remember that your assessor will be looking for evidence to show that all the products/services you are seeking a licence for meet all the relevant requirements in the specification.

Your submission needs to include (in hard or electronic copy):

- a completed Applicant Checklist;
- supporting information;
- an Applicant Statement on Compliance (completed and signed towards the end of the assessment process).

Completing the Applicant Checklist

Before the assessment process proper can begin, you need to complete the Applicant Checklist. It is important that you complete all the relevant parts of the Checklist and that you identify and reference all the required supporting records and information.

Checklist Tips

- Read the relevant ECNZ specification and the Checklist carefully, including the "Verification Required" sections, as this will help you identify what information is required for each clause in the specification.
- Ask your assessor questions, if you are not quite certain what is required or how a clause should be interpreted. Time spent answering questions at the beginning saves more time later on. An early meeting with your assessor to run through the checklist may be helpful.

Supporting Information

Some supporting information will be able to be written into the checklist or attached to the Checklist. Other information may need to be viewed on-site, for example some production records or by inspection of processes or products. The relevant supporting evidence may also be "buried" in technical documents and reports. Being sure you provide relevant, complete and well organised supporting information will significantly reduce the time your assessor needs to spend reviewing it, and in turn, the cost of your assessment.

Tips for Supporting Information

General Tips

- Discuss with your assessor what information is most appropriate to send with your Checklist and what is best assessed during the site visit. In general, copies of certificates, licences, permits, MSDS and reports etc should be sent with the Checklist and a review of manufacturing records, monitoring results, electronic QA records etc is best done on site.
- Send supporting information that is largely complete. Sending information piecemeal takes more time for your assessor to organise,

"piece together" and review.

- Use consistent names/product codes for products/services and ingredients. It may be helpful to provide lists setting out any different codes or names used (for example supplier codes vs your own internal codes or names).

Tips for Hard Copy Information

- Organise the supporting information in a way that clearly identifies which part is relevant to which product or specification clause. Cross reference clearly from the checklist. Organise by specification clause and/or by product/service and make it easy for your assessor to understand how it is organised, use file dividers etc.

- If submitting multiple products for assessment against the same specification, consider organising the common information together (e.g. legal requirements, energy & waste management etc) and clearly identify sections for each type of product/service-related information (e.g. ingredient MSDS, training information).

- Use highlighter pens, post it tags, page numbers and handwritten notes to identify the relevant information. Only send extracts of long documents.

- There is no need for repeat copies if submitting information for more than one product/service. Add a note in the checklist referring to the first copy and/or add a note on the document saying which products it is relevant to.

Tips for Electronic Information

- Information on CD or flash memory stick is fine, email attachments can work but opening and saving lots of individual files can be time consuming for the assessor. Consider sending separate emails for each group of files so these can quickly be saved together in one folder. For example, send all the energy management files in one email clearly stating that this is all the evidence for section 5.X Energy Management or send all the MSDS relating to one product together in one email.

- If sending a CD or flash memory stick, group files into relevant folders.

- Make file names informative, re-name scanned files ie "solvent MSDS.pdf" rather than "IMG2956002346.pdf".

- Add handwritten notes to documents before scanning if this improves clarity.

Applicant Statement on Compliance

The Applicant Statement on Compliance is a form your assessor will provide you with. There are some details that need to be carefully completed on the form to be certain that the declaration accurately reflects your products/services (including, for some questions, boxes that need to be ticked).

The Applicant Statement on Compliance is an important document that your Chief Executive or other authorised representative of your company must sign. A signed Applicant Statement on Compliance means you:

- have completed the checklist;
- have assembled and reviewed all the required supporting information; and
- are confident that the evidence you have provided demonstrates that your products or services meet all the relevant requirements of the ECNZ specification.

On-site Assessment

Your assessor will review your completed Checklist and supporting information and will then plan any on-site work needed to complete the assessment. He or she will contact you to:

- arrange a time(s);
- discuss what he or she will need to see, who he or she will need to meet with and how much time this is likely to take; and
- confirm any health and safety requirements.

Tips for the On-site Assessment

- Have all the hard copy records your assessor needs to see already retrieved from files/archives.
- Ensure any electronic records in databases will be readily accessible, with any technical support available if needed to quickly access the records.
- Ensure the people your assessor needs to meet are available during the time he or she will be on-site, with appointment times arranged if necessary.
- Be prepared for your assessor to make a tour of your site/facilities. A site layout plan will help your assessor to quickly become oriented and identify areas he or she will need to visit or inspect.

The Assessor's Report to The Trust	When your assessor has completed all the assessment work (including reviewing additional information required after the on-site visit), he or she will prepare a report to The Trust. The report will comprise: • a brief letter report including the assessor's overall findings and recommendation about issue of a licence and products/services to be included on the licence; • a completed Assessor's Checklist, providing a record of the evidence your assessor has seen to confirm your products/services comply with the specification; • a copy of your signed Applicant Statement on Compliance; and • a recommended Licence Supervision Plan.
Issuing your Licence	The Trust will review your assessor's report and recommendations. If The Trust accepts the recommendation that a licence be issued, The Trust will send you a letter/email advising you of The Trust's decision. The letter/email from The Trust will include your licence number and a copy of your assessor's report and all attachments.
Supervision Assessments	The Trust or your appointed ECNZ assessor will be in contact with you when a supervision assessment is required by your Licence Supervision Plan. This will involve reviews of records and periodic follow-up on-site assessment.