

Gold Recognition and Certification Process for New Trainees

The following is intended to explain the path forward to Gold Recognition and to Certification for new trainees in the NBP Biosolids Management Program. The “original” program offered one path to achieve recognition as “certified” by the NBP. Organizations received training, constructed and implemented a manual, underwent an internal audit, and, about six months later, engaged an NBP recognized contractor to perform an external or third-party audit. The auditor usually discovered major and/or minor “non-conformances,” which were reported to the organization for resolution. Once the non-conformances were resolved to the satisfaction of the auditor, the auditor reported to the NBP that the subject program had been successfully “verified.” *Upon receipt of that report, the NBP proceeded to “certify” that program by mailing a Certificate of Recognition to the organization, along with a flag, and permission to use the “NBP Certified” logo.* Approximately one year after verification, in the original program, the first interim audit was performed. Upon successful resolution of that interim audit’s findings, the NBP was notified of same by the auditor and proceeded to award the program with the Platinum Certification, the highest achievement possible. In January, 2010, as a result of concerns expressed by the existing certified organizations about both the frequency and cost of third-party audits, it was decided to offer an “alternate path” to some form of NBP recognition. That program, described below, came to be called Gold, (NBP staff have subsequently developed criteria for Bronze and Silver to make for a progressive pyramid of advancement for “new” trainees).

New organizations proceed in the same way and pace with the same expectations as before, up to the point of having their program “verified” for the first time by a third-party audit firm after a successful internal audit. This is the exact place where further clarification is now needed. The certified agencies and the NBP have made it clear that the integrity of the original program process and rewards must be retained to protect both the NBP and the existing certified organizations. The “alternate” (Gold) program should not reference “certification.” As a result, the NBP has adopted the following process to implement the alternative recognition program, beginning with organizations in the NBP BMP training program.

1. Organizations will proceed through an internal audit, resolve any deficiencies found, and subsequently undertake a third-party audit
2. Upon the successful resolution of any deficiencies found in the third-party audit, they will be awarded a 1-year Gold Recognition certificate by the NBP. Between that date for up to one year, they are in a position to declare their intentions as follows:
 - a. The organization chooses to commit to the Platinum Certification audit requirements, including a third-party interim audit one year after the initial third-party audit that led to their verification and recognition at the Gold Level. This validates that organization is on the exact path of the original

program. Upon receipt of that declaration, the NBP will award the Certificate of Recognition certificate, along with all associated flag, use of “NBP certified” logo, etc.; OR

b. The organization chooses instead to commit to the Gold recognition level and to perform annual internal audits for 4 years followed by a Year-5 third-party reverification audit. These organizations will be referenced as *recognized*, not *certified*. Organizations in this group will continue to receive annual renewals of their Gold Recognition, contingent on the submission of annual internal audits to the NBP.

Organizations that chose option (b), above, and are recognized just at the Gold Level, can choose, at any time, to commit to annual third-party audits. After completing the next one, they will be awarded a Certificate of Recognition, and they will be elevated to Platinum Certified status. Their Gold Recognition expires and will not be renewed. In addition, existing Platinum Level Certified organizations have the option of reducing their annual third-party audits to once every 5 years to save costs. This action will result in them forfeiting their Platinum Certification designation and being reclassified as NBP Program Gold Recognition.