

Questions and answers regarding AWS certification and accreditation requirements

September 22nd 2015

Note: this document should be considered a “living document”. Additional content will be added as required over the course of the period of AWS interim accreditation.

1. Audit Team Qualifications

Q: The AWS Certification Requirements Version 1.0 contains quite detailed requirements regarding auditors as detailed in Annex 1a and 1b. This poses major challenges for conformity assessment bodies (CABs) at this early stage in the system’s development when we are still building capacity as well as cost issues for potential clients. These requirements were not fully communicated prior to our organization committing auditors to AWS training and submitting our expression of interest. How literally will these requirements be interpreted by AWS during this interim stage in the development of the AWS water stewardship system? What scope is there for a CAB to manage these requirements where it does not have specific expertise in its accredited audit staff? Will AWS be providing any support for CBs who may need to locate local auditors or experts to meet requirements in a particular catchment?

A: The intent of the AWS Certification Requirements is that the team has the expertise and local knowledge to be able to assess the organization/site, given the size and complexity of its operations to be included under the certificate.

It should be noted that AWS will implement the AWS Standard System in two phases: an interim phase (Phase 1: estimated 2015-2016) will be used work out any kinks and ensure capacity is sufficient to meet system needs. For the second phase (Phase 2: 2017+), AWS will update the AWS Standard System and add improved functionality (e.g. risk aspects, site pairing, etc.) pending AWS member input. Phase 1 will be used to gain experience with the system.

In relation to the AWS Audit team, AWS Certification Requirements state:

2.3.1 The CAB shall assemble an audit team, which, at a minimum, fulfills AWS criteria for qualifications and competencies (Appendix 1)....

2.3.4 The minimum size of the audit team shall be three (3) persons...

2.3.6 The CAB shall assign additional members to the audit team, including technical experts, in order to evaluate those subject areas, which are of greatest relevance to the site under assessment.

The requirement is not that each audit team member be a qualified Auditor, so it is possible to have team members who are experts in the relevant fields listed in Appendix 1.

It may be possible that the Lead AWS Auditor covers the roles detailed for both Lead AWS Auditor and Local AWS Auditor. The CAB, when assigning the Audit Team must assess this, as stated in the Requirements:

2.3.3.1 In circumstances where the person appointed as lead AWS auditor is also qualified to function as the local AWS Auditor, the CAB may consider assigning the same person to perform both roles provided that doing so would not compromise the qualifications of the audit team or comprehensiveness of the assessment.

In these circumstances, the CAB may consider a team of two (2) persons, rather than three (3), as adequate to fulfill the AWS Audit Team requirements. This team may then consist of a Local Lead AWS Auditor and a Technical Expert.

It is not a requirement that all Technical Experts are AWS Trained, whereas AWS Auditors must have completed the necessary AWS training and represent an AWS accredited CAB.

AWS accredits Trainers and Consultants. Such individuals or organizations may be used as a resource to supply Technical Experts to an AWS Audit Team. It must be determined that these Technical Experts do not have a conflict of interest, as defined for other members of the AWS Audit Team. AWS will publish a list of these accredited individuals and organisations on its website, along with some other details to assist CABs in finding Technical Experts in the subject areas and regions where they are operating as this capacity is developed.

2. AWS training that is still in development

Q: The AWS Standard includes a requirement that auditors receive training in AWS approaches to assessing water balance. This was not provided in the AWS training undertaken by our auditors. Will AWS be meeting this gap in the training provided to early adopters of the system?

A: Where specific AWS training is listed as 'required' in column B of Appendix 1b, this will not be required until such training is available e.g. AWS training in water balance evaluation. In such cases, fulfilment of column A qualifications will suffice.

AWS will provide training updates on a regular basis as the system develops and experience is gained. It is a requirement for all accredited organizations to ensure nominated individuals participate in regular "top-up" training to be organized by AWS.