Accreditation: Considerations and Avoiding Pitfalls

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There are between 5,400* and 9,000** certification programs in the U.S.

There are approximately 330 programs currently accredited by NCCA and 204 by ANSI.

* U.S. Dept Labor – Career One Stop
** Credential Engine

Overview

» NCCA/ANSI Accreditation - What is it?

» Why do organizations choose to pursue it?

» Why do organizations choose NOT to pursue it?

» Common Pitfalls

» An Accreditation Mindset

ANSI/NCCA-IAS Accreditation

» **International Organization for Standardization (ISO)**

  IEC – International Electrotechnical Commission

  - ANSI – American National Standards Institute
    - The U.S. member of ISO that awards accreditation
  - ANSI/ISO/IEC 17024 Conformity assessment – General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons

» **Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE)**

  - NCCA – National Commission for Certifying Agencies
  - IAS - International Accreditation Service
    - Affiliated with NCCA
    - Accredits based on 17024 Standards

What is Accreditation for a Credentialing Program?

» "Accreditation is the process by which a credentialing program is evaluated against defined standards by a third party. When in compliance with these standards, it is awarded recognition."*

» Regardless of accrediting body, NCCA/ANSI, extensive documentation is expected in terms of:

- Rigor in the test development process
- Strong justifications for process decisions
- Qualified personnel involved in test development and analyses

* Institute for Credentialing Excellence website

What is Accreditation for a Credentialing Program?

» This evaluation can include:

- The entire exam development, administration, and scoring process
- Governance structure
- Financials
- Re-certification
- Record retention and confidentiality
- Eligibility criteria
- Public information
- Key staff resumes and organization charts
- Policies and procedures
- And much, much more

Why Would a Certification Organization Pursue Accreditation?

» "Enables credentialing organizations to demonstrate to the profession it represents, and to the general public its certificants serve, that their program has met the stringent standards set by the credentialing community." *

» "Enhances a program's credibility and legitimacy by providing impartial, third party oversight of a conformity assessment system."

* Institute for Credentialing Excellence website

Why Would a Certification Organization Pursue Accreditation?

» Competitors

» De facto licensure

» Government requirements

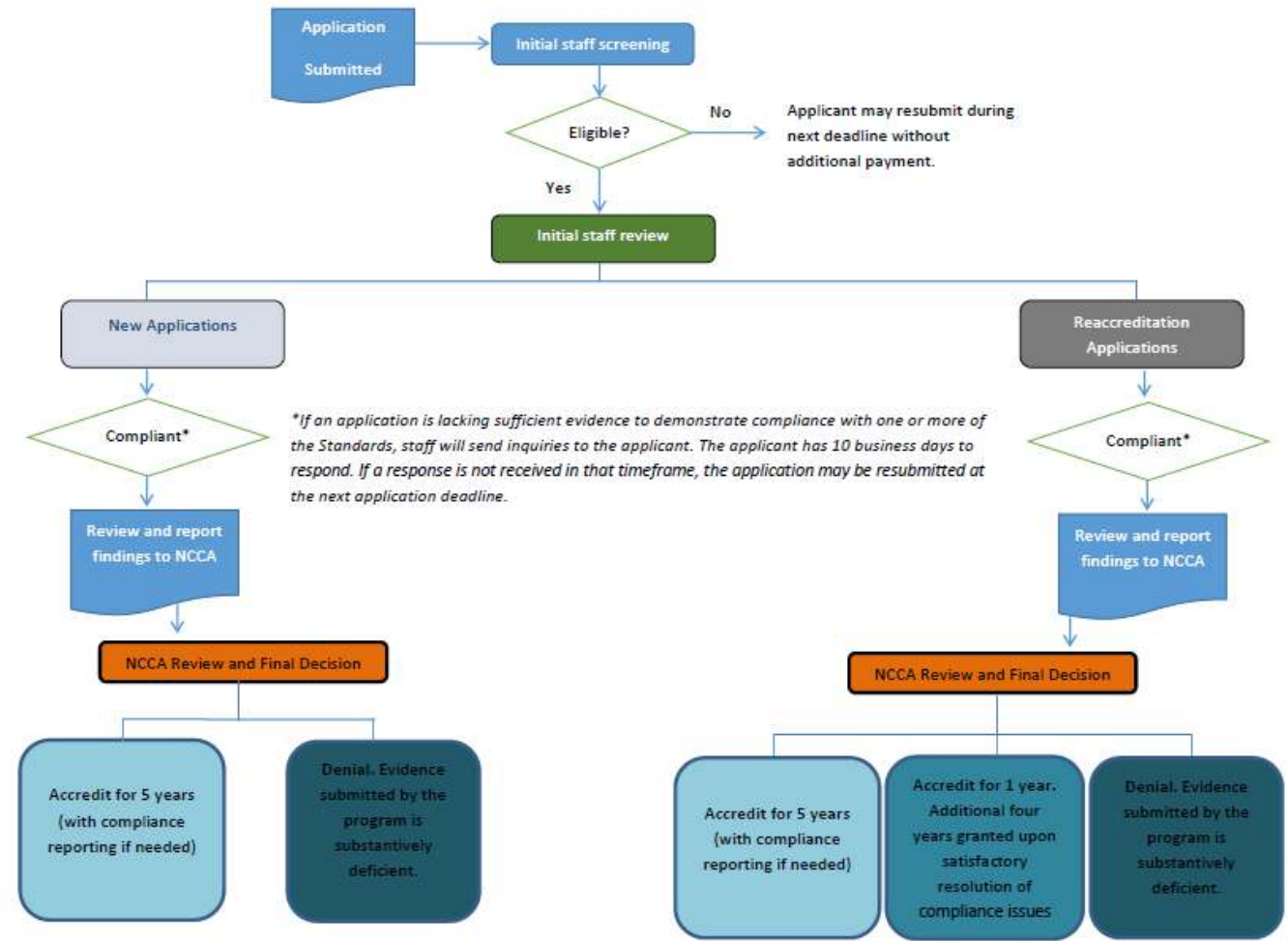# Why Would a Certification Organization NOT Pursue Accreditation?

» NCCA accreditation

» Timeline
- Application deadlines 3x per year
- Process takes 4-5 months to complete
- Notification of status within 4-5 months

» Application process deadlines for NCCA:
- January 31st
- April 30th
- August 31st

Why Would a Certification Organization NOT Pursue Accreditation?

» NCCA Accreditation Fees

	Initial or Re-accreditation Application Fee	Subsequent Linked Application Fee*
ICE Member	$2,050	$1,330
Non-Member	$2,730	$1,775

*This fee applies to each additional application that is linked to the first application, up to 10 applications

Annual Fees

Effective January 1, 2018:

Organization with up to two accredited programs	$4,725/year
Each additional accredited program	$1025/year
Maximum accreditation fee	$12,925/year

Why Would a Certification Organization NOT Pursue Accreditation?
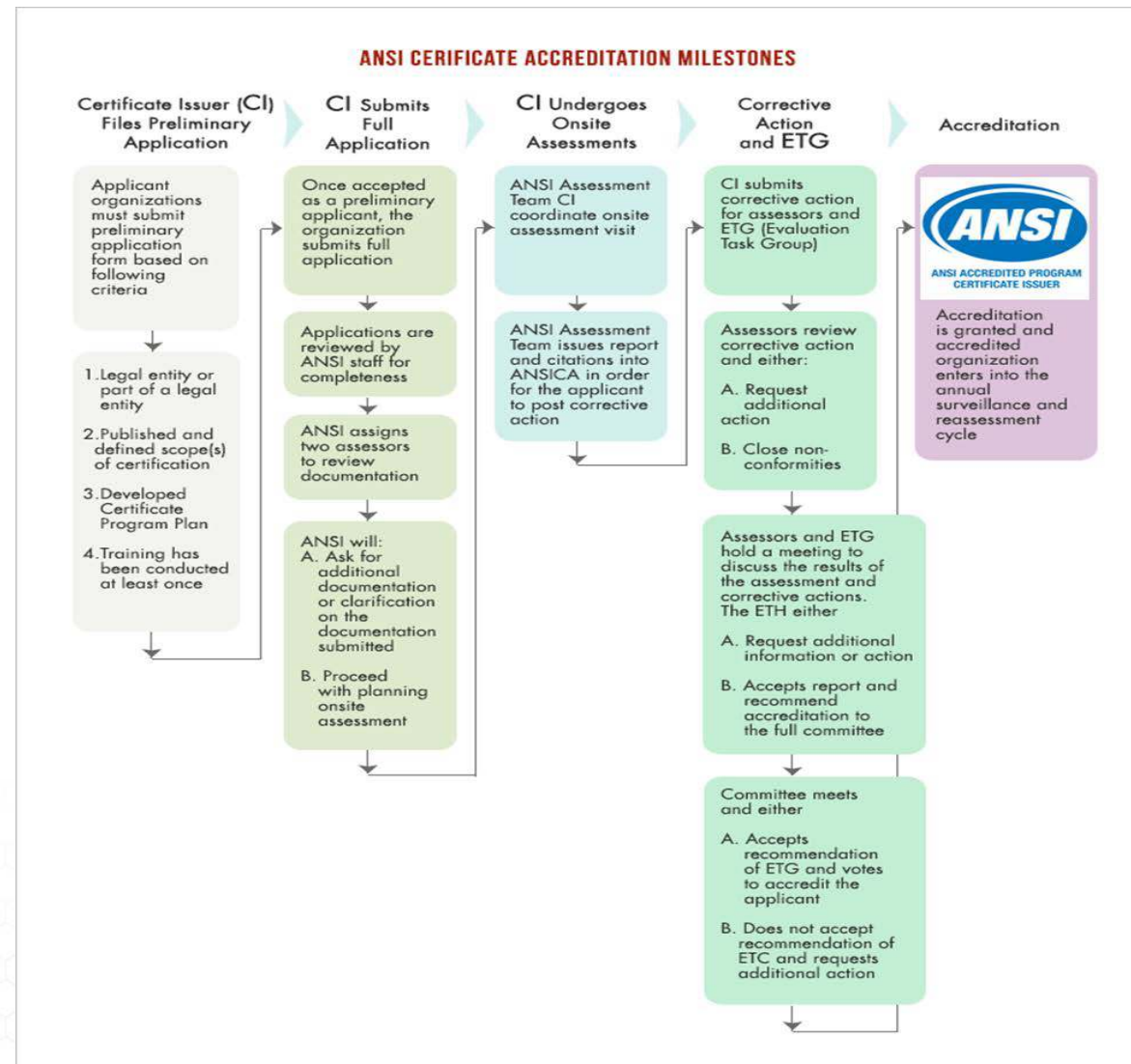
» ANSI accreditation

» Timeline
  • Application deadlines: Ongoing
  • Meetings 4x/year
  • Process takes 12-24 months to complete

» 2018 Meeting Dates
  • March 23
  • June 25
  • September 21
  • December 3

» *www.ansi.org

ANSI CERIFICATE ACCREDITATION MILESTONES

Certificate Issuer (CI) Files Preliminary Application

Applicant organizations must submit preliminary application form based on following criteria

1. Legal entity or part of a legal entity
2. Published and defined scope(s) of certification
3. Developed Certificate Program Plan
4. Training has been conducted at least once

CI Submits Full Application

Once accepted as a preliminary applicant, the organization submits full application

Applications are reviewed by ANSI staff for completeness

ANSI assigns two assessors to review documentation

ANSI will:
A. Ask for additional documentation or clarification on the documentation submitted
B. Proceed with planning onsite assessment

CI Undergoes Onsite Assessments

ANSI Assessment Team CI coordinate onsite assessment visit

ANSI Assessment Team issues report and citations into ANSICA in order for the applicant to post corrective action

Corrective Action and ETG

CI submits corrective action for assessors and ETG (Evaluation Task Group)

Assessors review corrective action and either:
A. Request additional action
B. Close non-conformities

Assessors and ETG hold a meeting to discuss the results of the assessment and corrective actions. The ETH either
A. Request additional information or action
B. Accepts report and recommend accreditation to the full committee

Committee meets and either
A. Accepts recommendation of ETG and votes to accredit the applicant
B. Does not accept recommendation of ETC and requests additional action

Accreditation

ANSI ANSI ACCREDITED PROGRAM CERTIFICATE ISSUER

Accreditation is granted and accredited organization enters into the annual surveillance and reassessment cycle

Why Would a Certification Organization NOT Pursue Accreditation?

» ANSI Accreditation Fees

Process	Cost
Preliminary Application	$0
Full Application	$3,000
Assessor Review Fee	$1,250/day/assessor (x 3/4 assessors)
Site Visit	2 days x 2 assessors
Annual Maintenance Fee	>$3,000 (based on assessment revenue)
Surveillance	Daily + travel costs
(Expansion of scope)	($1,500 + review costs)
(Appeal Fee)	($1,000)

Why Would a Certification Organization NOT Pursue Accreditation?

» Documentation

Evidential Support	Standard(s)
Proof of legal status, governance documents, bylaws, policies and procedures, organizational charts, candidate handbooks, publicly available information about certification preparation, financial statements	1-5
Policies and procedures manual, website pages, candidate handbook	6-7
Candidate handbook, policies and procedure, website	8
Secure records retention, destruction policies, confidentiality and conflict of interest statements and agreements	9-12
Reports of job task analysis, cut score study, examination development, and examination specifications, and policy for frequency of cycle	13-17
Security manuals, proctor manuals, candidate handbooks, exam administration manuals, QAS policies, non-disclosure agreements	18
Technical reports showing pass/fail letters, reliability, equating and evidence of comparability	19-21
Candidate handbook, websites, policies and procedures	22
Policies and procedures, quality assurance policies, meeting minutes, calendars or schedules, training logs	23

Why Would a Certification Organization NOT Pursue Accreditation?

» **Notification** (NCCA: ~ 4-5 months from submission; ANSI: depends on timing of application vs. quarterly meetings)

- 1. Accredit (for a period of 5 years)
    - Annual reports are required for accredited programs (available in January, due by June 1st each year)

- 2. Accredit with compliance reporting
    - "Compliance Plan" must be submitted within 60 days of notification
        - If accepted, receives conditional 1-year accreditation & must submit progress plans at 6 months and at 1 year
            - o If 1-year accreditation is accepted, accreditation is extended for an additional 4 years

- 3. Deny
    - If this is the first time applying, program can reapply for one of the next two application deadlines for no additional fees.

Accreditation Common Pitfalls

» Accreditation is expensive

» Accreditation is time consuming

» Accreditation is hard to get and requires an ongoing commitment to maintain

Accreditation Common Pitfalls

» Maintain separation between certification and education functions

» Ensure Subject Matter Expert (SME) panels are representative of the candidate population

» Clearly demonstrate a link between the Job Task Analysis study and the content of the examination

» Required information publicly available (e.g., content outline, pass rates, accommodation policy, impartiality statement)

Accreditation Common Pitfalls

» Provide evidenced-based rationale for eligibility and recertification policies

» Supply documentation with sufficient rigor to meet individual Standards

» Adhere to own policies and procedures related to essential certification decisions

» Maintain an autonomous certification board charged with making essential certification decisions

An Accreditation Mindset

» The certification board must be truly autonomous and responsible for all essential certification policies and activities, e.g.,

- Eligibility standards
- Disciplinary determinations
- Development, administration, and scoring of examinations
- Selection of subject-matter experts (SMEs)
- Standards for initial certification and maintaining certification

» The board can delegate the work, but not the responsibility.

» The organization is giving up some authority to this board.
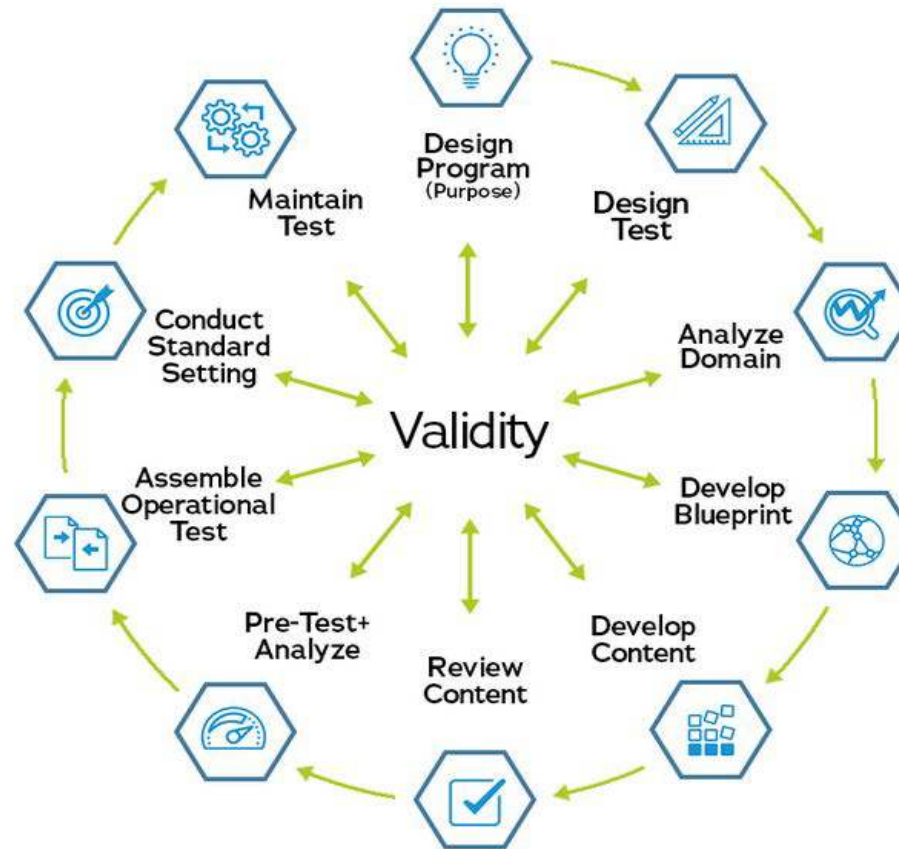
An Accreditation Mindset

» Documentation!

- NCCA and ANSI will expect extensive documentation related to each of their standards, e.g.,
  - Policies, procedures, financial reports, psychometric reports, organizational charts, key staff resumes, candidate handbooks, website information, application forms, ADA request forms, and much, much, more.

- They will expect all documentation to be cataloged and indexed to the specific relevant standards.

An Accreditation Mindset

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An Accreditation Mindset

» Document each step of the test development cycle with an eye toward the relevant accreditation standards.

An Accreditation Mindset

» Get help.

- As we've seen, accreditation is a complicated process.

- Alpine can advise on psychometric and test development areas of strength and weakness in your exam program and provide documentation.

- Other consulting firms specialize in the non-psychometric areas of accreditation.

NCCA/ANSI Non-Psychometric Standards Consultation

Hanchar Consulting Services
http://www.hancharconsulting.com/

Limitless Association Solution Resource https://limitlessasr.org/

SeaCrest   http://www.seacrestcompany.com/

* Listed in alphabetical order, not in order of preference

QUESTIONS?

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