

DRAFT – February 2023

Indoor airPLUS Certification System

for Homes and Apartments

Effective: <DATE TBD>



Last Revised: February 2023

Overview

1.1 Background

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s Indoor airPLUS Program was developed as an opportunity for homebuilders to take additional measures, beyond the important energy efficiency requirements of ENERGY STAR, to implement and sell additional indoor air quality (IAQ) protections in new homes. The earliest form of these IAQ specifications originated as the ENERGY STAR "Indoor Air Package".

In 2007, before Indoor airPLUS was formalized into a separate specification and partnership program, the ENERGY STAR program developed and implemented a structure to formally recognize the independent organizations that provide oversight of the verification process and the raters that performed the inspections and testing necessary to document compliance with ENERGY STAR program requirements. These organizations were referred to as Verification Oversight Organizations (or VOOs).

In October 2008, EPA released the first set of Indoor airPLUS Construction Specifications utilized to earn the Indoor airPLUS qualification and label on a newly-built (or gut rehabilitated) home or apartment, along with a separate Indoor airPLUS partnership opportunity for builders and raters. Because ENERGY STAR certification was a prerequisite of the Indoor airPLUS program, homes and apartments that earned the Indoor airPLUS label were automatically subject to third-party verification, under the oversight of a VOO. However, while many Indoor airPLUS raters perform verification routinely for both programs, oversight of their verification process has thus far been limited to the ENERGY STAR requirements under the current scope of the VOO's and has therefore not included verification oversight of many Indoor airPLUS requirements. During the development of Indoor airPLUS Version 2, EPA began to consider a formal, parallel structure for certification and verification oversight, with respect to the Indoor airPLUS Construction Specifications.

During that same time, in 2019, EPA's ENERGY STAR Residential Branch undertook a comprehensive update of the oversight recognition structure to better align with the responsibilities of these organizations as they relate to its ENERGY STAR Certified Homes (now Single-Family New Homes) program. That revision included changing the terminology from VOO to Home Certification Organization (HCO), with the intent to refocus emphasis on the entire home certification process, rather than just verification oversight. Around this time, EPA also developed a parallel structure for the oversight related to its ENERGY STAR Multifamily New Construction Program. This structure allowed another type of oversight organization, Multifamily Review Organizations (MRO), to provide similar oversight over the entire certification process for multifamily buildings, that were not currently within the oversight of an HCO. During the same period, EPA's WaterSense Labeled Homes Program transitioned from

Version 1 to Version 2 and published a parallel framework titled the WaterSense Home Certification System, Version 2.0 (February 2021), which includes similar Home Certification Organizations (HCOs) that are recognized by EPA to implement the certification and labeling of homes that meet WaterSense program requirements. While the WaterSense certification system has unique guidelines for the establishment of water efficiency criteria, the overarching framework is similar, creating the scope for HCOs¹ to oversee certification of both single-family and multifamily residences, including both new and existing construction.

1.2 Summary Intent for Indoor airPLUS Version 2 Framework

The development of a similar oversight structure offers Indoor airPLUS an improved framework to support the direction and increased market adoption of the Indoor airPLUS program, given that Version 2 will contain new specifications with significant updates. As in Version 1, Indoor airPLUS will include certification opportunities for new and substantially rehabilitated homes and apartments in residential buildings of all heights. EPA will also introduce two certification pathways or “tiers”. A base Certification tier would focus specifically on IAQ fundamentals without other pre-requisite certifications or labels. A second pathway would continue to maintain ENERGY STAR certification as a pre-requisite to earning EPA’s highest certification for IAQ—the Indoor airPLUS “Gold” label. The base Indoor airPLUS “Certification” tier serves as both a stepping stone for builders/developers entering the high performance home market with a primary interest in marketing healthier home improvements, as well as an improved opportunity for participation in the sectors of affordable housing and gut-rehabilitation. EPA expects current leading Indoor airPLUS partners to continue to strive for the improved energy-efficiency and IAQ upgrades included in the “Gold” tier, while also defining a set of IAQ-specific measures in a base “Certification” tier that will encourage new builders and developers to take cost-effective steps toward improved health protections in a diverse housing stock. With these changes, EPA’s Indoor Environments Division intends to increase program participation in Indoor airPLUS and ENERGY STAR residential programs in both the affordable housing sector and market-rate homes.

1.3 Introduction of Certification System

EPA is committed to improving implementation and consistency in its approach to the certification process across its residential building labeling programs: Indoor airPLUS, ENERGY STAR, and WaterSense. The following elements are key themes in EPA’s ENERGY STAR and WaterSense certification systems and core requirements for each certification organization, which EPA intends to include in the Indoor airPLUS Certification System:

- Independent oversight

¹ ¹Indoor airPLUS HCOs are not limited to the current list of HCOs/MROs approved by EPA. See details on page 5.

- Quality assurance
- Verifier training and authorization
- Verification protocols
- Impartiality
- Messaging and reporting

Some differences in program structures and protocols are inherent, due to the differences in the prescriptive and modeled approaches to improving energy efficiency, water efficiency, and indoor air quality outlined by the respective program specifications. However, EPA proposes a certification structure for Indoor airPLUS consistent with those of ENERGY STAR and WaterSense, implemented by Home Certification Organizations (HCOs) and based on a set of standards and policies for governance, impartiality, and oversight. The certification structure and the specific eligibility criteria, policy requirements, and certification procedures required of an Indoor airPLUS Home Certification Organization (HCO) are defined by two documents: this *Indoor airPLUS Certification System* and the specific construction and verification requirements outlined in the *Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol*.

Indoor airPLUS Certification System

for Homes and Apartments

This document, subsequently referred to as the *Indoor airPLUS Certification System*, establishes the specific eligibility criteria, policy requirements, and certification procedures required of a Home Certification Organization (HCO)¹.

Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol

for Homes and Apartments

This companion document, subsequently referred to as the *Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol*, identifies the Standards and Program Requirements required to be met for a home or apartment to earn the Indoor airPLUS certification.

An Indoor airPLUS Home Certification Organization (HCO) is defined as an independent organization that is recognized by EPA to implement an Indoor airPLUS certification program that complies with the *Indoor airPLUS Certification System*. These organizations are responsible for decisions related to the granting and withdrawal of Indoor airPLUS certifications for existing and new construction homes and apartments, and provide for the

credentialing, oversight, and quality assurance of individuals that verify existing or new construction homes and apartments to earn Indoor airPLUS certification, hereafter referred to as ‘Verifiers.’

An organization seeking to become an HCO must submit an ‘Application for Recognition’ to EPA that demonstrates that it meets the program’s eligibility criteria and has the capability, competencies, and proper controls to implement an Indoor airPLUS certification program in accordance with the *Indoor airPLUS Certification System* and the *Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol*. EPA will evaluate each Application for Recognition and will either approve an HCO to operate an Indoor airPLUS certification program or provide written feedback to the applicant noting where the application did not meet EPA requirements, and the opportunity to discuss identified issues with EPA. Applicants will be given 90 days to amend their application and resubmit for review. If the applicant does not resubmit within 90 days, the application may be terminated. Further, if EPA determines that the resubmitted application does not meet its requirements, the application may also be terminated.

In the context of this Indoor airPLUS Certification System, EPA’s recognition of an HCO relates solely and specifically to the Indoor airPLUS certification programs. While an ENERGY STAR HCO provides oversight only for the ENERGY STAR Single-Family New Homes program and multifamily buildings that are certified using an Energy Rating Index (ERI) approach in the ENERGY STAR Multifamily New Construction program, an HCO in the context of the Indoor airPLUS Certification System provides oversight for one or more of the Indoor airPLUS certification tiers. While a separate designation, Multifamily Review Organization (“MRO”), was required to provide oversight for non-ERI certification approaches in ENERGY STAR Multifamily New Construction, a separate MRO designation is not necessary for Indoor airPLUS. While currently recognized HCOs or MROs are eligible to apply as an Indoor airPLUS HCO, it is not a requirement to be a currently recognized HCO for another EPA residential labeling program.

Activities undertaken by HCOs are not intended as services provided to the federal government. HCOs are expected to be market-based and may not submit claims for compensation to EPA or any other federal agency for their activities related to fulfilling the required roles and responsibilities of recognized HCOs. Recognized HCOs may implement participation or certification fee structures, or seek funding from other sources, to support their Indoor airPLUS certification program.

2.0 Effective Date

The *Indoor airPLUS Certification System* will be posted for public comment and stakeholder feedback. Public input will be reviewed by EPA for potential refinements to the Certification System and Certification Protocol, at which time EPA will publish a final version and set an effective date for implementation.

3.0 HCO Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for recognition by EPA as an Indoor airPLUS HCO, an organization is required to demonstrate the following:

3.1. Legal Responsibility

The organization is required to be a legal entity, or defined part of a legal entity, that can be held responsible for all activities related to its Indoor airPLUS certification program.

3.2. Independent Governance

The organization is required to be independent, and all certification decisions are required to be independent from the influence of (1) homeowners, builders, and developers whose homes and apartments would be certified and (2) other entities directly involved in the design, renovation, or construction of the building to be certified through its Indoor airPLUS certification program. In addition, the organization is required to maintain an independent governance mechanism to ensure that its policies and activities related to its Indoor airPLUS certification program comply with the requirements of the *Indoor airPLUS Certification System* and the *Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol* and support the integrity of the Indoor airPLUS program. Examples of such mechanisms include, but are not limited to maintaining a Board of Directors or Independent Governance Committee with the following attributes:

- Specific responsibility for safeguarding the impartiality and integrity of the HCO's Indoor airPLUS certification program;
- Authority to review the HCO's policies, procedures and actions;
- A balanced representation of significantly interested parties such as builders, conformity assessment experts, Verifiers, designees, and representatives of trade associations, such that no single interest predominates;
- Access to all information necessary to fulfill its functions;
- Have the right to independently inform EPA if the HCO does not follow the input of this mechanism.

Accreditation to the ISO/IEC 17065 governing standard, “Conformity Assessment: Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes, and services,” is also considered to meet the independent governance requirement through section 5.2 of that standard, “Mechanism for safeguarding impartiality.”

3.3. Scope of Operations

The organization is required to have the ability to implement its Indoor airPLUS certification program through the following:

- Having access to a broad network of qualified Verifiers; and
- Maintaining a quality assurance and oversight mechanism for Verifiers that ensures consistency in application of the Indoor airPLUS specifications, appropriate to the regions served by the Verifiers.

3.4. Staffing and Competency

The organization is required to employ, or have access to, sufficient personnel with the competencies necessary to meet all EPA requirements related to the *Indoor airPLUS Certification System* and the *Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol*. This may include on-staff personnel, as well as designees² working under a contract or other formal agreement that places their activities under the legal responsibility of the HCO.

4.0 HCO Policies

An HCO is required to maintain documented formal policies related to:

4.1. Business Code of Ethics

The HCO is required to maintain a business code of ethics for itself, its Verifiers, and its designees (if used).

4.2. Impartiality and Objectivity

The HCO is required to maintain conflict of interest (COI) policies to identify and mitigate risks to impartiality of the HCO, its Verifiers, and its designees. These policies must address COI that pertain to both the individuals and organizations involved and how it is related to the Indoor airPLUS certification process. Where designees are used, the HCO must maintain a specific COI policy for designees. COI policies are required to include disclosure of existing or potential COI and steps to resolve the conflicts. In addition to any other conflicts identified, these policies must address at minimum, the following conflicts:

- Conflicts between the HCO and its builder/developer clients;

² See Section 6.0 for additional information about the use of designees.

- Conflicts between individuals involved in the certification process and other entities involved in the design or construction of the home or apartment to be certified;
- Conflicts between Verifiers, individuals performing quality assurance activities, and/or individuals making certification decisions.

All COI policies are required to be reviewed on an ongoing basis and disclosures updated, as necessary. The HCO is required to disclose any identified potential or existing COI and mitigation steps to EPA on an annual basis.³

In addition, the HCO's organizational chart and management system is required to reflect impartiality of decision making related to its Indoor airPLUS certification program and show a clear separation of roles between certification decisions from other business activities that may present COI, if any. Certification decisions are required to be carried out by individuals that have not been involved in the process of evaluation (i.e., Verifiers).

4.3. Non-Discrimination

The HCO's policies, and the administration of its policies, are required to be non-discriminatory and may not unduly impede or inhibit access to its Indoor airPLUS certification program, nor the *Indoor airPLUS Certification System* or the *Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol*. Further, the HCO is required to make its Indoor airPLUS certification program accessible to all eligible Indoor airPLUS builder and developer partners, and access may not be conditional upon the size of the Indoor airPLUS builder or developer partner, nor membership in any association or group.

4.4 Publicly Available Information

The HCO is required to provide publicly available information online that describes its Indoor airPLUS certification program and the HCO's policies and procedures for granting and withdrawing certification.

³ See Section 5.7 for additional information about HCO reporting requirements.

5.0 Certification and Oversight Procedures

An Indoor airPLUS HCO is required to take all necessary steps to evaluate conformance with the *Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol*, including the following measures:

5.1. Training and Credential Review of Verifiers

- Deliver or recognize training, examination, and continuing education programs for Verifiers that provide the knowledge and skills necessary to verify Indoor airPLUS-specific program requirements and comply with the HCO's policies related to its Indoor airPLUS certification program.
- Confirm individuals have satisfied the training requirements specified above and ensure that only Verifiers with the requisite credentials perform verification of homes and apartments to earn the Indoor airPLUS label.

EPA will develop and deliver training and a written examination on Indoor airPLUS-specific requirements and maintain a public list of credentialed Verifiers for its Indoor airPLUS certification program that is updated regularly.

5.2. Quality Control Protocols

The HCO is required to implement comprehensive quality control systems and procedures that ensure Indoor airPLUS certifications are supported by on-site observation and testing including, at a minimum:

- Verification that Indoor airPLUS checklists are completed and maintained by the Verifier for every certified home and apartment;
- Quality assurance file reviews at a rate of at least ten (10) percent of homes/apartments submitted in a year by each individual Verifier;
- Quality assurance field evaluation, whereby quality assurance personnel independently verify Indoor airPLUS program requirements via a witness or after-the-fact test, of at least one (1) home or apartment submitted in a year by each individual Verifier; Where less than ten (10) homes/apartments are submitted in a year, an additional file evaluation may be used in lieu of a field evaluation;
- Selection of homes/apartments for file and field review are as representative as possible across builders, developers, communities, and/or applicable Indoor airPLUS specifications (i.e., Certification, Gold);

- A set of repeatable standards for assessing whether discrepancies found during quality assurance file reviews and field inspections are within allowable thresholds, which include the use of the appropriate Indoor airPLUS Quality Assurance checklist;
- In the event that discrepancies are discovered outside allowable thresholds, provisions for addressing the specific discrepancies of the certification(s) in question and, more generally, for identifying and addressing the root cause(s) to ensure the discrepancies do not reoccur; and
- In the event of recurring discrepancies for an individual Verifier, provisions for increasing the rate of file review and field evaluation, as well as conditions for triggering disciplinary action by the HCO.

Quality Assurance Protocols that employ innovative quality control schemes, such as those relying on remote video QA, automated file flagging, and/or proposing alternative file and field review frequencies, may be submitted to EPA for consideration.

5.3. Sampling Protocol

Where approved by EPA, the HCO may choose to offer a sampling protocol for use in its Indoor airPLUS certification program. When offered, the sampling protocol is required to, at a minimum:

- Require that homes and apartments participating in sampling be within the same subdivision, planned community, or property, be the same construction type, and include the same envelope systems;
- Require successful inspection of at least the first seven (7) consecutive instances of a sampled measure before applying sampling to that measure;
- Ensure that verification occurs on a representative sample of homes and apartments at a rate of no less than one-in-seven (or 15 percent);
- Corrective actions to address failures identified during sampling, including, at a minimum:
 - Correction of any failed measures in the home or apartment where it was discovered,
 - Additional evaluation of measures in minimum of two (2) additional homes or apartments, and
 - After multiple additional failures, requalification through evaluation of measure in at least three (3) additional homes or apartments and/or documentation of a root cause analysis.

5.4. Issuing the Indoor airPLUS Label and Certificate

The HCO is required to maintain the final authority over all Indoor airPLUS certifications and responsibility for determining that certified homes and apartments conform with and have been verified in accordance with applicable requirements and specifications in the *Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol*. The HCO is required to either provide the Indoor airPLUS Verifier, builder, or developer partner with the Indoor airPLUS label and certificate for each certified home or apartment or to provide guidance to the Verifier on printing the label and certificate. Blank label stickers can be ordered through HOST for Indoor airPLUS once the quarterly reports are submitted or by contacting Indoor_airPLUS@epa.gov. An Indoor airPLUS label printing tool is also available upon request for Verifiers to print data onto the sticker labels and certificates. Labels and certificates are based on template designs provided by EPA and include identification of the issuing HCO.

5.5. Ethics Compliance and Homeowner Inquiry Resolution

The HCO is required to maintain:

- An ethics complaint process covering the HCO, its Verifiers, and designees;
- Procedures for disciplining Verifiers, including provisions for appeal; and inform EPA when disciplinary action is taken⁴; and
- A resolution process for inquiries, including:
 - Providing a web page that allows homeowners, renters, building owners, and/or property managers, to submit inquiries or concerns regarding the Indoor airPLUS certification of their home or apartment.
 - For eligible inquiries, performing certification reviews for the applicable Indoor airPLUS program as defined by the Indoor airPLUS Quality Assurance and certification review checklist (pending) and rescinding the Indoor airPLUS label in cases where the HCO determines a home or apartment fails the certification review.

5.6. Recordkeeping, Reporting, and Disclosure

- Require retention of certification documentation, including verification records, related to the Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol for a minimum of ten (10) years.

⁴ EPA reserves the right to terminate the Indoor airPLUS Partnership Agreement of Verifiers that violate the terms of their partnership.

- Maintain and make publicly available a database or spreadsheet of Indoor airPLUS certified homes and apartments, including physical address, certification date, builder or developer partner name, Verifier name and company, and Indoor airPLUS program & version number.
- Provide EPA with routine summary reports of the number of homes and apartments certified through the HCO's Indoor airPLUS certification program, by geographic location, builder or developer partner name, and rating company name (if used).
- Provide EPA with aggregate/summary information about the IAQ features used in homes and apartments certified through the HCO's Indoor airPLUS certification programs, upon request. Examples include elements readily attained from Indoor airPLUS Verification Checklists such as envelope leakage, duct leakage, radon test results, or types of equipment installed (e.g., ventilation system type, dehumidification systems, presence of radon fan). EPA anticipates the creation of spreadsheet-based checklists to facilitate the collection of such data.
- Conduct an annual internal management review and provide EPA with an annual report (or more frequently, upon request) regarding the HCO's administration of its Indoor airPLUS certification program, including quality assurance, dispute resolution activities, any identified conflict of interest and conflict of interest mitigation.

5.7. Coordination with EPA

- Maintain open lines of communication with EPA to address questions and concerns promptly.
- Participate in meetings upon request by EPA.
- Work collaboratively with EPA to facilitate the comprehensive and coordinated investigation and response to:
 - Findings resulting from routine quality assurance activities;
 - Certification discrepancies, including those referred to the HCO by EPA; and
 - Certification review requests and other inquiries from building owners or occupants.

6.0 Use of Designees

An HCO is permitted to delegate many of the responsibilities related to the implementation of its Indoor airPLUS certification program to one or more external parties, referred to as designees. As examples, designees may

serve as Verifiers or perform quality assurance activities. Where an HCO chooses to use designees, the HCO is required to:

- Take responsibility for all activities of designees related to the implementation of its Indoor airPLUS certification program;
- Have documented qualification criteria for designees;
- Maintain a public or private list of approved designees and their approved scope of activity;
- Ensure that designees follow all of the HCO's policies and procedures, including those required in Sections 4.0 and 5.0;
- Have a quality assurance process by which to assess and monitor the activities completed by the designees on a regular basis; and
- Implement corrective action for any designee breach of the HCO's policies or procedures.

An HCO may not use designees for the following activities:

- Establishing policies governing Indoor airPLUS certification activities, including business code of ethics and conflict of interest policies, as outlined in Section 4.0.
- Exercising final authority over credentialing of Verifiers to work with the HCO's Indoor airPLUS certification program, as outlined in Section 5.1.
- Exercising final authority over certification decisions and issuance of the Indoor airPLUS label, as outlined in Section 5.4.
- Exercising final authority in resolving ethics complaints, presiding over appeals, and disciplining Verifiers, as outlined in Section 5.5.
- Maintaining a database or spreadsheet of homes and apartments that are certified as Indoor airPLUS, as outlined in Section 5.6.
- Coordinating with EPA, as outlined in Section 5.7.

EPA reserves the right to prohibit a designee's participation in Indoor airPLUS certification activities with cause.

7.0 EPA Audits

EPA reserves the right to conduct periodic audits of any and all HCO activities related to the implementation of the *Indoor airPLUS Certification System* and the *Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol* as needed to ensure the

value and integrity of the Indoor airPLUS program. It is EPA's intention to audit HCOs one (1) year after initial recognition and every two (2) years thereafter, with additional audits as necessary based on performance issues that arise. EPA may revisit the audit protocols and schedules as the HCO marketplace evolves. These audits may include, but are not limited to:

- Review of HCO policies, procedures, documentation, and certification records.
- Phone interviews with HCO personnel and/or designees.
- In-person meetings with HCO personnel and/or designees at the HCO, designee, or EPA offices, at EPA's discretion.
- Site visits (including re-testing, at EPA's discretion) at homes and apartments that have been certified by the HCO through the *Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol*.

HCOs are expected to fully cooperate with EPA audits, provide requested documentation, and make personnel available for interviews and meetings with EPA staff.

If EPA's audit identifies deficiencies, EPA will provide the HCO with written notification and allow 30 days to resolve identified issues and provide EPA with a written response to EPA's findings. If the organization fails to submit a satisfactory response to EPA that addresses the deficiencies identified, EPA reserves the right to suspend or terminate the organization's recognition.

8.0 Amendments, Modifications, and Revisions

The following sections describe procedures to be followed in the event of amendments, modifications, and/or revisions initiated either by the HCO or EPA.

8.1. EPA-Initiated Changes

EPA reserves the right to amend, revise, or provide technical clarification regarding the *Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol* and *Indoor airPLUS Certification System* as needed to ensure the value and integrity of the Indoor airPLUS program. EPA releases revisions to program documents as enhancements, refinements, and/or clarifications are deemed necessary. HCOs are required to implement changes according to the implementation timeline that EPA publishes with each update.

For changes to the *Indoor airPLUS Certification System*, organizations previously recognized by EPA will generally be given 180 days to implement any policies or procedures needed to comply with new EPA requirements, unless otherwise specified by EPA based on consultation with HCOs. If changes affect an

HCO's Application for Recognition or an applicant's referenced documents, the HCO is required to provide EPA with a redlined copy of any updates.

8.2. Revisions, Amendments, and Interpretations of Referenced Standards

HCOs are required to implement revisions, amendments, and interpretations of standards referenced in the *Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol* within one (1) year of formal adoption by the standards developer and to publish an implementation timeline online. HCOs may petition EPA for a longer implementation period if warranted on a case-by-case basis, which, if granted, would be made available to all approved HCOs.

8.3. HCO-Initiated Changes

The HCO is required to notify EPA in writing about any proposed organizational, procedural, or policy changes, such as an addendum or interpretation to the HCO's operating standards, that materially affect its compliance with the requirements outlined in the *Indoor airPLUS Certification System*. If changes affect an HCO's Application for Recognition or applicant's referenced documents, the HCO is required to provide EPA with a redlined copy of any updates. Notification must be made at least 60 days prior to the implementation of such changes and with sufficient time to allow for EPA to evaluate the changes and determine if the HCO will continue to meet all program requirements.

9.0 Suspension/Termination

EPA reserves the right to suspend or terminate its recognition of an HCO that no longer meets the eligibility, policy, certification, and oversight procedure requirements of the *Indoor airPLUS Certification System* and/or has demonstrated a pattern of actions that may negatively impact consumer and industry confidence in, or the integrity of, EPA's Indoor airPLUS program. In such cases, EPA will provide the HCO with written notification and allow 30 days to resolve identified issues and provide EPA with a written response summarizing the changes made. If the organization fails to submit a satisfactory response to EPA that addresses the deficiencies identified, EPA will suspend or terminate the organization's recognition.

Should EPA suspend or terminate an HCO, or if an HCO determines that it will no longer implement an *Indoor airPLUS Certification System*, the organization is required to cooperate with EPA to ensure an orderly closure of its activities and timely transfer of relevant documentation related to the certification of homes and apartments to the *Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol*. Organizations whose recognition as an HCO is terminated may re-apply for recognition after a period of six months.

Application for EPA Recognition as an Indoor airPLUS Home Certification Organization

Completed applications should be submitted to EPA at the physical address below, or via email at indoor_airplus@epa.gov.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Indoor Environments Division (MC 6609T)
Indoor airPLUS Program
1200 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20460

EPA will confirm receipt of applications received within five business days and will use its best effort to make determinations on applications received within 90 business days. Note that all applicants must also participate in a formal interview process with EPA staff, to be conducted either at EPA's offices or via conference call. EPA also strongly encourages organizations considering pursuing recognition to contact Indoor airPLUS to discuss their interest before applying.

PART ONE: General Applicant Information

Organization Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Contact: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Primary Contact Telephone #: _____

Organization Web Site Address: _____

PART TWO: Required Documentation

Attach to this application any policies and procedures, manuals, guidance documents, attestations, detailed narrative(s), and any other documents necessary to demonstrate that your organization meets the eligibility requirements and has the capability, competencies, and proper controls to implement an Indoor airPLUS certification program in accordance with the *Indoor airPLUS Certification System for Homes and Apartments* and, where applicable, the ENERGY STAR program requirements. Complete the table below by filling in the “Applicant’s Reference Document(s)” column to indicate the submitted documentation that fulfills the Indoor airPLUS requirement noted at left. To facilitate application review, please record the exact file name that is used in the attachment and highlight the applicable text within the document or note in the table its exact location.

Indoor airPLUS Requirements for Home Certification Organization (HCO)	Applicant's Reference Document(s)
3.0 HCO Eligibility Requirements	
3.1 Legal Responsibility	
Provide documentation that the organization is a legal entity, or a defined part of a legal entity.	
3.2 Independent Governance	
<p>Provide detailed narrative of how the organization ensures that certification decisions are independent from the influence of (1) builders and developers whose homes and apartments would be certified, and (2) other entities directly involved in the design or construction of the building to be certified.</p> <p>Provide a description of the organization's independent governance mechanism, such as a Board of Directors or Independent Governance Committee, and documentation of the following attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific responsibility for safeguarding the impartiality and integrity of the HCO's Indoor airPLUS certification program; • Authority to review the HCO's policies, procedures and actions; • A balanced representation of significantly interested parties such as builders, conformity assessment experts, Verifiers, designees, and representatives of trade associations, such that no single interest predominates; • Access to all information necessary to fulfill its functions; • Have the right to independently inform EPA if the HCO does not follow the input of this mechanism. <p>Alternatively, provide documentation of accreditation to the ISO/IEC 17065 governing standard, "Conformity Assessment: Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes, and services."</p>	
3.3 Scope of Operations	
<p>Provide a detailed narrative to establish the organization's ability to implement its Indoor airPLUS program. This must be demonstrated, at a minimum, through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having access to a broad network of qualified Verifiers; and • Maintaining a quality assurance and oversight mechanism for Verifiers appropriate to the regions served by the verifiers. 	

3.4 Staffing and Competency	
Provide description of sufficient available personnel and/or designees with the necessary competencies to meet all requirements related to the <i>Indoor airPLUS Certification System</i> and the <i>Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol</i> .	
4.0 HCO Policies	
4.1 Business Code of Ethics	
Provide HCO's business code of ethics for the organization, its Verifiers, and its designees.	
4.2 Impartiality and Objectivity	
<p>Provide conflict of interest (COI) policies used to maintain impartiality of the HCO, its Verifiers and its designees (if used). The COI policy must address COI that pertains to the individuals and organizations involved in verification and certification, include disclosure of existing or potential conflicts of interest and steps to resolve the conflict, and outline the frequency of review of the COI policies and when disclosures are updated.</p> <p>In addition to any other conflicts identified, these policies must address, at a minimum, the following conflicts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicts between the HCO and its builder clients; • Conflicts between individuals involved in the certification process and other entities involved in the design or construction of the home to be certified; • Conflicts between Verifiers, individuals performing quality assurance activities, and/or individuals making certification decisions. <p>Provide the organizational chart and management system to demonstrate impartiality in the decision, making and the separation of roles between certification decisions and any business activities that may present a conflict of interest, if any. Certification decisions are required to be carried out by individuals that have not been involved in the process of evaluation (i.e., Verifiers).</p>	
4.3 Non-Discrimination	
Provide policies and procedures and/or a detailed narrative indicating how the policies and administration of policies are non-discriminatory, and do not unduly impede or inhibit access to the organization's Indoor	

<p>airPLUS certification program, nor the <i>Indoor airPLUS Certification System</i> or <i>Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol</i>.</p> <p>The policies and procedures and/or detailed narrative must also include how the organization makes its Indoor airPLUS certification program accessible to all eligible Indoor airPLUS builder or developer partners, and include evidence that access is not conditional on the size of the Indoor airPLUS builder or developer partner, nor membership in any association or group.</p>	
4.4 Publicly Available Information	
<p>Provide the publicly available information covering the organization's Indoor airPLUS certification program and policies and procedures for granting and withdrawing certification and where it can be found online.</p>	

5.0 Certification and Oversight Procedures	
5.1 Training and Credentialing Review of Verifiers	
<p>Provide policies and procedures or description for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver or recognize training, examination, and continuing education programs for Verifiers; • Confirm individuals have satisfied training requirements and ensure only Verifiers with requisite credentials perform verification of homes and apartments. 	
5.2 Quality Control Protocols	
<p>Provide policies and procedures and/or documentation describing the quality control systems and procedures in place to include, at a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification that checklists are completed and maintained by Verifier for every certified home and apartment; • Quality assurance file reviews of at least ten (10) percent of homes submitted by each individual Verifier; • Quality assurance field evaluation, whereby quality assurance personnel independently verify Indoor airPLUS program requirements via a witness or after-the-fact test, of at least one (1) home or apartment submitted in a year by each individual Verifier, where less than ten (10) 	

<p>homes/apartments submitted in a year an additional file evaluation may be used in lieu of field evaluation;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection of homes for file and field review are as representative as possible across builders, developers, communities, and/or application Indoor airPLUS specifications (i.e., Certification, Gold); <p>A set of repeatable standards for assessing whether discrepancies found during quality assurance file reviews and field inspections are within allowable thresholds, which include the use of the appropriate Indoor airPLUS Quality Assurance checklist;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the event discrepancies are discovered outside allowable thresholds, provisions for addressing the specific discrepancies of the certification(s) in question and, more generally, for identifying and addressing the root cause(s) to ensure the discrepancies do not reoccur; • In the event of recurring discrepancies on an individual Verifiers' homes, provisions for increasing the rate of file review and field evaluation, as well as conditions for triggering disciplinary action by the HCO. • If proposed, provide a detailed description of innovative quality control schemes, such as those relying on remote video QA, automated file flagging, and/or proposing alternative file and field review frequencies. 	
5.3 Sampling Protocol	
<p>If a sampling protocol is proposed, provide description of the sampling protocol, to include, at a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stated requirement that homes and apartments participating in sampling be within the same subdivision or planned community, be the same construction type, and include the same envelope systems; • Stated policy that requires successful inspection of at least the first seven (7) consecutive instances of a sampled measure before applying sampling to that measure; • Evidence that verification occurs on a representative sample of homes and apartments at a rate of no less than one-in-seven (or 15 percent); • Corrective actions to address inspection failures identified during sampling, including, at a minimum: 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Correction of any failed measures in the home or apartment where it was discovered, ○ Additional evaluation of measures in minimum of two (2) additional homes or apartments, and ○ After multiple additional failures, requalification through evaluation of measure in at least three (3) additional homes or apartments and/or documentation of a root cause analysis. 	
5.4 Issuing the Indoor airPLUS Label and Certification	
Provide attestation that the HCO maintains final authority over all Indoor airPLUS certifications and takes responsibility for determining that certified homes and apartments conform with and have been verified in accordance with the <i>Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol</i> and will provide the Indoor airPLUS building or developer partner with the Indoor airPLUS label and certificate for each certified home or apartment.	
5.5 Ethics Compliance and Homeowner Inquiry Resolution	
<p>Provide policies and procedures and/or a detailed narrative documenting the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ethics complaint process for HCOs, Verifiers, and designees; • Procedures for disciplining Verifiers, including provisions for appeal; and attestation that HCO will inform EPA when disciplinary action is taken; • A resolution process for homeowner inquiries, including the web page that allows homeowners to submit inquiries or concerns regarding the Indoor airPLUS certification of their home or apartment and performing certification reviews and rescinding the label in cases where applicable. 	
5.6 Recordkeeping, Reporting, and Disclosure	
<p>Provide policies and procedures and/or detailed narrative to demonstrate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification documentation retention policy, indicating documentation is maintained a minimum of ten (10) years; • Public database that includes the physical address, certification date, builder or developer partner name, Verifier name and company, and Indoor airPLUS program and version number; • Attestation that the HCO will provide EPA with routine summary reports of the number of homes and apartments certified through the HCO's Indoor airPLUS certification program; 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attestation that the HCO will provide EPA with aggregate/summary information about the indoor air quality features used in homes and apartments certified through the HCO's Indoor airPLUS certification program, upon request; • Attestation that the HCO will conduct an annual internal management review and provide EPA with an annual report (or more frequently, upon request) regarding the HCO's administration of its Indoor airPLUS certification program, including quality assurance, dispute resolution activities, any identified conflict of interest and conflict of interest mitigation. 	
5.7 Coordination with EPA	
<p>Provide attestation that the HCO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain open lines of communication with EPA to address questions and concerns promptly. • Participate in meetings, upon request by EPA. • Work collaboratively with EPA to facilitate the comprehensive and coordinated investigation and response to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Findings resulting from routine quality assurance activities; ○ Certification discrepancies, including those referred to the HCO by EPA; and ○ Certification review requests and other inquiries from homeowners. 	

6.0 Use of Designees	
6.0 Use of Designees	
<p>Provide a detailed description of activities that the HCO plans to delegate to designees.</p> <p>Where an HCO chooses to use designees, provide an attestation that the HCO takes responsibility for all activities of designees related to the implementation of its Indoor airPLUS certification program. In addition, provide policies and procedures and/or detailed narrative to demonstrate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented qualification criteria for designees; • Maintenance of a public or private list of approved designees and their approved scope of activity; 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of how the HCO will ensure that designees follow all of the HCO’s policies and procedures, including those required in Sections 4.0 and 5.0; • A quality assurance process by which to assess and monitor the activities completed by the designees on a regular basis; • Description of how the HCO will implement corrective actions for any breaches of the HCO’s policies or procedures. 	
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8.0 Amendments, Modifications, and Revisions	
8.1 EPA-Initiated Changes	
Provide a narrative detailing the HCO’s implementation of EPA-initiated amendments, revisions, or technical clarification regarding the <i>Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol</i> .	
8.2 Revisions, Amendments, and Interpretations of Referenced Standards	
Provide a narrative detailing the HCO’s implementation of revisions, amendments, and interpretations of standards referenced in the <i>Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol</i> within one (1) year of formal adoption by the standards developer and publishing of an implementation timeline online.	
8.3 HCO-Initiated Changes	
Provide a narrative detailing the HCO’s implementation of HCO-initiated proposed organizational, procedural, or policy changes that materially affect its compliance with the requirements outlined in the <i>Indoor airPLUS Certification System</i> .	

PART THREE: Declaration

As an officer of _____, I, the undersigned, represent here that I have the authority to serve as an authorized signatory and submit this Application for Recognition as an Indoor airPLUS Home Certification Organization to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. I understand that intentionally submitting false information to the U.S. government is a criminal violation of the False Statements Act, Title 18 U.S.C. section 1001.

The organization, _____, agrees to adhere to the provisions for Home Certification Organizations (HCOs) outlined in the *Indoor airPLUS Certification System for Homes and Apartments*, including granting EPA the right, at its discretion, to conduct periodic audits of any and all HCO activities related its Indoor airPLUS certification program.

_____, also agrees to notify EPA in writing about any proposed organizational, procedural, or policy changes that materially affect its compliance with the requirements outlined in the *Indoor airPLUS Certification System* at least 60 days prior to the implementation and, if applicable, provide an updated Application for Recognition.

_____, understands that EPA may amend, revise, or provide technical clarification regarding the *Indoor airPLUS Certification Protocol* to be implemented according to the implementation timeline exhibit published with each update.

_____, understands that EPA may amend, revise, or provide technical clarification regarding the *Indoor airPLUS Certification System* and that organizations that have been previously recognized by EPA will generally be given at least 180 days to implement any new policies or procedures needed to comply with EPA requirements, although EPA reserves the right to specify a shorter or longer timeline based on consultation with HCOs.

In addition, _____, understands that if, after recognition, EPA determines that an HCO no longer meets the eligibility, policy, certification and oversight procedure requirements of the *Indoor airPLUS Certification System* and/or has demonstrated a pattern of actions that may negatively impact consumer and industry confidence in, or the integrity of, EPA's Indoor airPLUS program, EPA will provide the HCO with written notification and allow 30 days to resolve identified issues and provide EPA with a written response summarizing the changes made. If the organization fails to submit a satisfactory response to EPA that addresses the deficiencies identified, EPA will suspend or rescind the organization's recognition.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Title: _____

Organization: _____

Date: _____