

EPA Recognition of HVAC Quality Installation Oversight Organizations (H-QUITOs) 2013 Application Revision:

Overview

There are two ENERGY STAR programs that are designed to verify the quality installation of heating and cooling equipment:¹

- The ENERGY STAR Certified Homes program, which requires the quality installation of heating and cooling equipment by a credentialed HVAC contractor² (under the oversight of an EPA-recognized HVAC Quality Installation Oversight Organization) in new homes that earn the ENERGY STAR label; and
- The ENERGY STAR Verified HVAC Installation (ESVI) program, which requires the quality installation of ENERGY STAR certified heating and cooling equipment by a credentialed HVAC contractor (under the oversight of an EPA-recognized HVAC Quality Installation Oversight Organization) in existing homes.

To ensure that HVAC contractors delivering services through these programs meet all applicable requirements, EPA recognizes HVAC Quality Installation Oversight Organizations (H-QUITOs) to provide credentialing programs, oversight, and quality assurance activities³. Organizations seeking EPA recognition as an H-QUITO must:

¹ The requirements of both programs are based upon the quality installation requirements detailed in the ANSI/ACCA 5 QI – 2010 Standard (*HVAC Quality Installation Specification*).

² An HVAC contractor is defined as a professional business that is: (1) directly involved in the selling, installing, and/or maintaining of HVAC equipment; (2) maintains business licenses, certifications, and insurance/bonding as required by the jurisdictions in which the contractors provides services related; and (3) has policies and practices that comply with local, state and federal regulations (e.g., EPA §608 Refrigerant Certification of Technicians, hazardous material handling, employment laws, and any permitting requirements).

³ EPA provides no funds to petitioning organizations to develop or maintain their credentialing and oversight programs. H-QUITOs may choose to implement participation fee structures or seek funding from other sources to support their programs.

- (1) Demonstrate compliance with all specified eligibility criteria;
- (2) Submit an application that successfully responds to all required H-QUITO roles and responsibilities;
- (3) Agree to abide by all applicable requirements of the ENERGY STAR Certified Homes and/or ENERGY STAR HVAC Verified Installation programs.

The following application identifies the common H-QUITO requirements for both the ENERGY STAR Certified Homes and ENERGY STAR Verified HVAC Installation programs, with an addendum that identifies additional requirements that are specific to the ENERGY STAR Verified HVAC Installation program.

Modifications

EPA reserves the right to modify or amend the eligibility requirements and/or required roles and responsibilities for H-QUITOs as needed to ensure the value of the ENERGY STAR Certified Homes and ENERGY STAR Verified HVAC Installation programs. Organizations that have been previously recognized by EPA will be given a period of 180 days to begin complying with new EPA requirements and are expected to be in full compliance within one year.

Termination

If, after recognition, EPA determines that an H-QUITO is not adequately meeting its required roles or responsibilities or is not acting in good faith to maintain consumer and industry confidence in the ENERGY STAR program, EPA will provide the H-QUITO with written notification and allow a period of 60 days to resolve identified issues and provide EPA with a written response summarizing the programmatic changes made. If the organization fails to satisfactorily resolve the identified issues, EPA may act to suspend or rescind recognition. As this is a voluntary program, an H-QUITO may also terminate their participation with written notification to EPA with an allowance of 90 days.

Core Application for EPA Recognition: HVAC Quality Installation Oversight Organizations (H-QUITOs)

Part I: Eligibility

Impartial enforcement of credentialing program requirements is of critical importance for H-QUITOs. To be eligible for EPA recognition, a petitioning organization must demonstrate that it is organized and operated to safeguard the objectivity and impartiality of its activities by meeting, at a minimum, the following criteria:

- Status as a 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(6) not-for-profit corporation, as recognized by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service; and

_____ (initial and attach documentation)

- Maintaining a governing Board of Directors or Executive Committee with no single entity predominating; and

_____ (initial and attach list/qualifications of current and/or proposed members)

- Operating the credentialing/oversight program that allows participation by any qualified HVAC contractor, regardless of membership status in a trade organization, union, or other exclusive body; and

_____ (initial and attach policy document or statement); and

- Not being directly involved in the selling, installing, and/or maintaining of HVAC equipment.

_____ (initial)

Part II: Demonstration of National Scope of Operations

Petitioning organizations must submit documentation of their ability to provide oversight services across the United States⁴. National scope of operations can be demonstrated through the following types of organizational characteristics:

- o Maintaining a base of credentialed contractors that are distributed throughout the U.S.; and/or
- o Maintaining the ability to provide quality assurance (QA) and oversight for HVAC contractors throughout the U.S.; and/or
- o Maintaining a governing Board of Director or Executive Committee with demonstrated experience in providing technical expertise in HVAC-related services throughout the U.S; and /or
- o Having program and technical requirements that can accommodate unique HVAC characteristics and requirements throughout the climate zones of the U.S.

Part III: H-QUITO Roles and Responsibilities

Applicants must attach documentation that describes their organization's policies and approach to conducting each of the activities listed in this section. These roles and responsibilities apply to H-QUITOs that are seeking to provide oversight for either the ENERGY STAR Certified Homes or the ENERGY STAR Verified HVAC Installation programs:

1. Develop and maintain a credentialing program for qualified HVAC contractors who demonstrate that they have the required knowledge, skills, abilities, tools, and policies to deliver quality installation services⁵;

⁴ This requirement does not apply where an existing permanent non-national H-QUITO has been previously recognized; nor where a program sponsor is already operating an ENERGY STAR Quality Installation retrofit program.

⁵ H-QUITOs may directly offer training to help contractors demonstrate or enhance their knowledge of the technical elements of Quality Installation, but this is not a requirement for recognition.

2. Provide general orientation training on applicable ENERGY STAR programs and their application of HVAC quality installation requirements. Training must include instruction on how to complete all required ENERGY STAR program documentation (e.g., HVAC QI Contractor Checklists);
3. Maintain a publicly available online list of credentialed contractors;
4. Provide oversight and conduct periodic quality assurance of participating contractors' installations;
 - a. Conducting periodic quality assurance (QA) reviews of participating contractors that are consistent with the scope of the H-QUITO's credentialing program.
 - b. For the ENERGY STAR Verified HVAC Installation program: *See Addendum A for additional requirements related to the ENERGY STAR Verified HVAC Installation program.*
5. Develop and maintain a participating contractor dispute resolution process that includes procedures for investigation of complaints, contractor probation, dismissal, and appeals; and
6. Submit annual reports to EPA at the end of each calendar year summarizing, at a minimum, quality assurance activities undertaken, disciplinary actions, and changes to the credentialing program. *See Addendum A for additional requirements specific to the ESVI program.*

Part IV: Application Certification and Representation

The organization is applying for recognition as an H-QUITO in the following ENERGY STAR programs (select all that apply):

- ENERGY STAR Certified Homes Program (New Homes)
- ENERGY STAR Verified HVAC Installation Program (Existing Homes)

As an official representative of _____, I, the undersigned, hereby submit this Application for Recognition as an HVAC Quality Installation Oversight 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.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Primary Contact/Telephone #: _____

Primary Contact E-mail Address: _____

Organization Web Site Address: _____

Completed applications for recognition should be submitted to by mail EPA at:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
ENERGY STAR Residential Branch (MC 6202J)
Attn: ESVI Program Manager
1200 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Or by email at: HQUITO@energystar.gov

EPA will confirm receipt of applications received within 10 business days and will make a determination on the application and notify the petitioning organization within 90 business days.

The public reporting and recordkeeping burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 2 hours per response. Send comments on the Agency's need for this information, the accuracy of the provided burden estimates, and any suggested methods for minimizing respondent burden, including through the use of automated collection techniques to the Director, Collection Strategies Division, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2822T), 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20460. Include the OMB control number in any correspondence. Do not send the completed form to this address.

Addendum A: Additional H-QUITO Requirements for ENERGY STAR Verified HVAC Installation Program for Existing Homes

The ENERGY STAR Verified HVAC Installation (ESVI) program provides recognition for the quality installation of ENERGY STAR certified heating and cooling equipment by a credentialed HVAC contractor (under the oversight of an EPA-recognized HVAC Quality Installation Oversight Organization) in existing homes. Through this program, HVAC system installations that meet all program requirements may be recognized as ENERGY STAR Verified Installations.

In addition to the requirements specified in the core H-QUITO application, H-QUITOs seeking recognition from EPA to credential contractors who will work in EPA's ESVI Program must also develop and implement policies and procedures to ensure that:

1. Credentialed contractors are informed of the opportunity to become ENERGY STAR partners and that only ENERGY STAR partner contractors are authorized to offer ESVI to consumers.
 - o Prior to acceptance of a Partnership Agreement, EPA will confirm that the contractor seeking ENERGY STAR partnership is properly credentialed by a recognized H-QUITO by reviewing the contractor listings on H-QUITO websites.
 - o To maintain ENERGY STAR partner status, a contractor must submit at least one installation that is recognized as an ENERGY STAR Verified Installation within the prior twelve month period.
2. Credentialed contractors complete an ENERGY STAR Verified HVAC Installation Contractor checklist for all installations that may be recognized through the ESVI program.⁶
3. All ENERGY STAR Verified HVAC Installation Contractor checklists (and supporting materials) are submitted to and reviewed by the H-QUITO for every installation seeking recognition under the ESVI program using the ENERGY STAR Verified HVAC Installation Verification checklist⁷.

⁶ Subject to EPA approval, H-QUITOs may choose to develop their own contractor checklists, forms, or on-line documentation in lieu of the ENERGY STAR checklist, so long as all ESVI program requirements are met.

⁷ Subject to EPA approval, H-QUITOs may choose to develop their own verification checklists, forms, or on-line documentation in lieu of the ENERGY STAR checklist, so long as all ESVI program requirements are met.

- o 100% of submitted ENERGY STAR HVAC VI Contractor checklists (and supporting materials) shall be reviewed for compliance with program requirements by the H-QUITO prior to issuance of an ESVI certificate to the consumer.
- 4. An ENERGY STAR Verified HVAC Installation certificate shall be issued to the consumer by the H-QUITO for each installation that is verified through the ESVI program.⁸
- 5. Quality Assurance of participating credentialed contractors is performed at a rate no less than the following:⁹
 - o 5% of each credentialed contractor's ESVI installations each year shall receive an in-field quality assessment¹⁰.
 - o 1% of credentialed contractors shall be reviewed each year to ensure they are in compliance with the professional business requirements detailed in Footnote 2 of the H-QUITO application.¹¹

Recordkeeping and Quarterly Reporting Requirements

H-QUITOs participating in the ENERGY STAR Verified Installation program must maintain a database of:

- All ENERGY STAR Verified HVAC Installation Contractor checklists and supporting materials submitted by credentialed contractors;
- All ENERGY STAR Verified HVAC Installation Verification checklists completed by the H-QUITO (and other relevant documentation of file reviews conducted);
- Documentation of all in-field quality assurance activities performed;
- Documentation of all professional business requirement reviews performed; and
- All ENERGY STAR Verified HVAC Installation Certificates issued.

⁸ Subject to EPA approval, H-QUITOs may choose to develop their own co-branded certificate that could be issued in conjunction with (but not in lieu of) the ESVI Certificate. EPA will allow co-branding of its Certificate.

⁹ H-QUITOs may choose to perform quality assurance activities under an alternative Quality Management System (QMS) submitted and approved by EPA.

¹⁰ For contractors that submit less than 20 installations in a calendar year, in-field review of at least one installation shall be performed.

¹¹ This review can be accomplished through an on-site visit, virtual meeting, electronic submission, or other mechanism, subject to EPA approval.

H-QUITOS must also submit annual reports to EPA summarizing, at a minimum, quality assurance activities undertaken, disciplinary actions, and changes to the credentialing program. On a quarterly basis, the H-QUITO must also provide to EPA the number of ENERGY STAR Verified Installation Certificates issued by contractor and by location¹².

¹² Initially, this can be accomplished using a simple spreadsheet; however, EPA may consider developing an on-line reporting system in the future.