

**ENERGY STAR Certification System**  
for Homes and Apartments  
Using an Energy Rating Index or Dwelling Unit Modeling  
Compliance Path

**Effective: 5/26/2020**

**Last Revised: 5/9/2022**

## 1.0 Introduction

Since its inception, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s ENERGY STAR New Construction Program has required third-party verification of homes and apartments that earn ENERGY STAR certification. In 2007, EPA 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 2018, EPA began a comprehensive update of the oversight recognition structure, including changing the terminology from VOO to Home Certification Organization (HCO). These changes are intended to better reflect the entire home certification process, rather than just verification oversight. The changes also provide for better consistency in EPA's approach across its residential home labeling programs (such as WaterSense). The certification structure is now defined by two documents:

<b>ENERGY STAR Certification System</b> for Homes and Apartments Using an Energy Rating Index or Dwelling Unit Modeling Compliance Path
This document, subsequently referred to as the <i>ENERGY STAR Certification System</i> , establishes the specific eligibility criteria, policy requirements, and certification procedures required of a Home Certification Organization (HCO).

<b>ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol</b> for Homes and Apartments Using an Energy Rating Index or Dwelling Unit Compliance Path
This companion document, subsequently referred to as the <i>ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol</i> , identifies the Standards and ENERGY STAR Residential New Construction national and regional Program Requirements required to be met for a home or apartment to earn the ENERGY STAR certification when an ERI or dwelling unit modeling path is used.

A Home Certification Organization (HCO) is defined as an independent organization that is recognized by EPA to implement an ENERGY STAR certification program that complies with the *ENERGY STAR Certification System*. These organizations are responsible for exercising final authority over decisions related to ENERGY STAR certifications for homes and apartments, including the credentialing, oversight, and quality assurance of individuals that verify homes and apartments to earn ENERGY STAR certification, hereafter referred to as 'raters.'

Originally, the HCO construct was put in effect for HCOs operating at the national level using Energy Rating Index (ERI)-based compliance paths, which covers the ENERGY STAR Single-Family New Homes and Multifamily New Construction “National” program requirements and all regional program requirements, except for California. In 2022, EPA expanded the HCO construct to cover homes and apartments certified in California, where regional program requirements that align with the state’s energy code are in effect. While most requirements in this document apply to all HCOs, a subset of modifications are applicable only to California-serving HCOs, as indicated in this document by a prefix of *For California*. Organizations may apply for HCO recognition at the national level, in California only, or both nationally and in California.

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 ENERGY STAR certification program in accordance with the *ENERGY STAR Certification System* and the *ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol*. EPA will evaluate each Application for Recognition and will either grant approval for an HCO to operate an ENERGY STAR 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 30 days to amend their application and resubmit for review. If the applicant does not resubmit within 30 days, the application will be terminated. Further, if EPA determines that the resubmitted application does not meet its requirements, the application will be terminated and the Agency will not review subsequent amendments to the application for a period of six months.

EPA’s recognition of an HCO relates solely and specifically to the ENERGY STAR Residential New Construction programs for site-built single-family homes and multifamily buildings that are certified using an Energy Rating Index (ERI) or, in California, dwelling unit modeling approach, and does not qualify an organization to implement or participate in other aspects of the ENERGY STAR program (e.g., ENERGY STAR certification of multifamily buildings using an ASHRAE-based approach or ENERGY STAR certified manufactured homes), nor federal tax credit verification (unless ENERGY STAR is specifically required for tax credit eligibility).

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 ENERGY STAR certification program.

## **2.0 Effective Date**

The *ENERGY STAR Certification System* shall be effective on May 26, 2020.

*For California:* The *ENERGY STAR Certification System* shall be effective for homes and apartments certified in California using Version 3.3 (and later) of the ENERGY STAR Single-Family New Homes California program requirements and Version 1.3 (and later) of the ENERGY STAR Multifamily New Construction California program requirements.

## **3.0 HCO Eligibility Requirements**

To be eligible for recognition by EPA as an 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 ENERGY STAR 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) 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 through its ENERGY STAR certification program. In addition, the organization is required to maintain an independent governance mechanism to ensure that its policies and activities related to its ENERGY STAR certification program comply with the requirements of the *ENERGY STAR Certification System* and the *ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol* and support the integrity of the ENERGY STAR 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 ENERGY STAR 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, raters, 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. Geographic Scope of Operations

The organization is required to have the ability to implement its ENERGY STAR certification program on a national level<sup>1</sup>. This must be demonstrated, at a minimum, through the following:

- Having access to a network of raters capable of providing ENERGY STAR certifications across the U.S.; and
- Maintaining a quality assurance and oversight mechanism for raters that may be distributed across the U.S.

*For California:* The network of raters, and the quality assurance mechanism that provides oversight, need only be capable of providing ENERGY STAR certifications in California.

### 3.4. Staffing and Competency

The organization is required to employ, or have access to, sufficient personnel with the competencies necessary to meet all applicable requirements related to the *ENERGY STAR Certification System* and the *ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol*. This may include on-staff personnel, as well as designees<sup>2</sup> working under a contract or other formal agreement that places their activities under the legal responsibility of the HCO.

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<sup>1</sup> EPA may consider recognizing HCOs that do not have national scope of operations for specific states or regions where unique geographic situations, code structures, or state/local law warrant different oversight models.

<sup>2</sup> See Section 6.0 for additional information about the use of designees.

## 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 raters, 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 raters, and its designees. These policies must address COI that pertains to both the individuals and organizations involved in the ENERGY STAR certification process. Where designees are used, the HCO must maintain a specific conflict of interest policy for designees.

COI policies are required to include disclosure of existing or potential conflicts of interest and steps to resolve the conflicts. In addition to any other conflicts identified, these policies must address, at a minimum, the following conflicts:

- 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 raters, 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 conflicts of interest and mitigation steps to EPA on an annual basis.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, the HCO's organizational chart and management system is required to reflect impartiality of decision making related to its ENERGY STAR certification program and show a clear separation of roles between certification decisions from other 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., raters).

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<sup>3</sup> See Section 5.7 for additional information about HCO reporting requirements.

#### 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 ENERGY STAR certification program, nor the *ENERGY STAR Certification System* or the *ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol*. Further, the HCO is required to make its ENERGY STAR certification program accessible to all eligible ENERGY STAR builder and developer partners, and access may not be conditional upon the size of the ENERGY STAR 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 ENERGY STAR certification program and the HCO's policies and procedures for granting and withdrawing certification.

### 5.0 Certification and Oversight Procedures

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

#### 5.1. Training, Credentialing and Listing of Raters

- Develop or recognize training, examination, and continuing education programs for raters that provide the knowledge and skills necessary to perform ERI ratings, verify ENERGY STAR-specific program requirements, apply relevant elements of the *ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol*, and comply with the HCO's policies related to its ENERGY STAR certification program.
  - *For California*: Training must provide raters the skills and knowledge to perform California HERS ratings, rather than ERI ratings.
- Credential individuals that have satisfied the training requirements specified above and ensure that only credentialed raters perform verification of homes and apartments to earn the ENERGY STAR label.
- Maintain a public or private list of credentialed raters for its ENERGY STAR certification program that is updated regularly.

#### 5.2. Approved Software Rating Tools

EPA reserves the right to review the software rating tools on an ongoing basis and grant final approval for a tool's use in an HCO's ENERGY STAR certification program. An HCO is required to:

- Ensure that software rating tools used in the HCO's ENERGY STAR certification program are approved through one of the following pathways:
  - EPA validation of proper functioning of software that is built using EnergyPlus and the NREL-developed ruleset for calculating ERIs.
  - Approval by the RESNET Accreditation Committee in accordance with the most current version of RESNET Publication 002.
  - *For California*: Rather than the above pathways, ensure that software rating tools used in the HCO's ENERGY STAR certification program for homes and apartments in California are approved by the California Energy Commission (CEC) in accordance with the applicable version of California's Building Energy Efficiency Standards.
- Ensure that current versions of software rating tools are used for ENERGY STAR certifications. A transition period no longer than six (6) months is allowed following new software version releases, as determined by a home or apartment's permit date.

### 5.3. Quality Control Protocols

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

- Collection of energy simulation files for every certified home;
- Quality assurance file review of at least ten (10) percent of homes submitted by each individual rater;
- Quality assurance field evaluation, whereby quality assurance personnel independently verify ENERGY STAR program requirements via a witness or after-the-fact test, of at least one (1) percent of homes submitted by each individual rater;
- Selection of homes for file and field review are as representative as possible across builders and communities;
- 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 ENERGY STAR Quality Assurance checklist and a maximum allowable ERI score variation of three percent (3%);

- For California: Rather than being based on 3% variation, threshold standard must ensure that installed building components meet or exceed the energy performance of the design specifications (in alignment with the threshold structure in California’s Building Energy Efficiency Standards).
- 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 on an individual rater’s homes, 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.

#### 5.4. Sampling Protocol

The HCO may choose to offer a sampling protocol for use in its ENERGY STAR certification program.

When offered, the sampling protocol is required to, at a minimum:

- Require collection of energy simulation files for every certified home based on a worst-case analysis;
- Require 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;
- 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 ready within a 30 calendar day period 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.

#### 5.5. Issuing the ENERGY STAR Label and Certificate

The HCO is required to maintain the final authority over all ENERGY STAR certifications and responsibility for determining that certified homes and apartments conform with the *ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol*. The HCO is required to provide the ENERGY STAR builder or developer partner with an ENERGY STAR label and certificate for each certified home or apartment. Labels and certificates are based on template designs provided by EPA and include identification of the issuing HCO.

#### 5.6. Ethics Compliance and Homeowner Inquiry Resolution

The HCO is required to maintain:

- An ethics complaint process covering the HCO, its raters, and designees;
- Procedures for disciplining raters, including provisions for appeal; and inform EPA when disciplinary action is taken<sup>4</sup>; and
- A resolution process for homeowner inquiries, including:
  - Providing a web page that allows homeowners to submit inquiries or concerns regarding the ENERGY STAR certification of their home or apartment.
  - For eligible inquiries, performing Certification Reviews for the *ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol* as defined by the ENERGY STAR Certified Homes Rater Quality Assurance and Certification Review Checklist (pending) and rescinding the ENERGY STAR label in cases where the HCO determines a home fails the Certification Review.

#### 5.7. Recordkeeping, Reporting, and Disclosure

The HCO is required to:

- Ensure the retention of certification documentation, including verification records, related to the *ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol* for a minimum of three (3) years.
- Maintain a public or private database of ENERGY STAR certified homes and apartments, including physical address, certification date, ERI score, ENERGY STAR ERI Target, builder or

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<sup>4</sup> EPA reserves the right to terminate the ENERGY STAR Partnership Agreement of raters that violate the terms of their partnership or the Federal ENERGY STAR trademark.

developer partner name, rater name and company, software version number, and ENERGY STAR version number.

- *For California*: Rather than ERI metrics, database must include Efficiency Energy Design Ratio (EDR) and/or Compliance Margin delta, as applicable.
- Provide a public interface to the database above that, at a minimum, accepts queries by physical address and reports the home or apartment's current ENERGY STAR certification status and date.
- Provide EPA with quarterly summary reports of the number of homes and apartments certified through the HCO's ENERGY STAR certification program, by geographic location, builder or developer partner name, and energy rating company name (if used).
- Provide EPA with aggregate/summary information about the energy-efficiency features used in homes and apartments certified through the HCO's ENERGY STAR certification program, upon request. Examples might include average performance test scores or average installed HVAC performance for certified homes in a given year.
- Conduct annual internal management review and provide EPA with annual report (or more frequently, upon request) regarding the HCO's administration of its ENERGY STAR certification program, including quality assurance, dispute resolution activities, any identified conflict of interest and conflict of interest mitigation.

#### 5.8. Coordination with EPA

The HCO is required to:

- 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 homeowners.

## 6.0 Use of Designees

An HCO is permitted to delegate many of the activities related to the implementation of its ENERGY STAR certification program to one or more external parties, referred to as designees. As examples, designees may serve as raters 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 ENERGY STAR 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 ENERGY STAR certification activities, including business code of ethics and conflict of interest policies, as outlined in Section 4.0.
- Exercising final authority over credentialing of raters to work with the HCO's ENERGY STAR certification program, as outlined in Section 5.1.
- Exercising final authority over certification decisions and issuance of the ENERGY STAR label, as outlined in Section 5.5.
- Exercising final authority in resolving ethics complaints, presiding over appeals, and disciplining raters, as outlined in Section 5.6.
- Maintaining a database of homes and apartments that are certified as ENERGY STAR, as outlined in Section 5.7.
- Coordinating with EPA, as outlined in Section 5.8.

EPA reserves the right to prohibit a designee's participation in ENERGY STAR 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 *ENERGY STAR Certification System* and the *ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol* as needed to ensure the value and integrity of the ENERGY STAR 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-evaluation, at EPA's discretion) at homes and apartments that have been certified by the HCO through the *ENERGY STAR 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 amend, revise, or provide technical clarification regarding the *ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol* and *ENERGY STAR Certification System* as needed to ensure the value and integrity of the ENERGY STAR program.

EPA generally releases revisions to program documents referenced in the *ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol*, such as the National Program Requirements and Mandatory Measures, once per year.

HCOs are required to implement changes according to the implementation timeline exhibit that EPA publishes with each update.

For changes to the *ENERGY STAR 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. Revision, Amendments, and Interpretations of Referenced Standards

HCOs are required to implement revisions, amendments, and interpretations of standards referenced in the *ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol* within one (1) year of formal adoption by the standards developer and to publish an implementation timeline online. HCOs may request that EPA allow for a longer implementation period when needed and on a case-by-case basis. If granted, the extended implementation timeline would be made available to all recognized 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 *ENERGY STAR 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 *ENERGY STAR 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 ENERGY STAR 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 *ENERGY STAR 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 *ENERGY STAR 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 a Home Certification Organization

Completed applications should be submitted to EPA at the physical address below, or via email at [energystarhomes@energystar.gov](mailto:energystarhomes@energystar.gov).

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
ENERGY STAR New Construction Program (MC 6202A)  
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 ENERGY STAR 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: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed Geographic Scope (select one or both):  National <sup>5</sup>  California <sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> HCOs operating at the national level may certify homes and apartments in all U.S. states and territories except for California, using an Energy Rating Index (ERI)-based compliance path within the applicable ENERGY STAR Single-Family New Homes or Multifamily New Construction “National” or regional program requirements.

<sup>6</sup> HCOs Operating in California may certify homes and apartments in California, using a dwelling unit modeling approach within the ENERGY STAR Single-Family New Homes or Multifamily New Construction regional California program requirements.

**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 ENERGY STAR certification program in accordance with the *ENERGY STAR Certification System for Homes and Apartments Using an Energy Rating Index or Dwelling Unit Modeling Compliance Path* and the *ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol for Homes and Apartments Using an Energy Rating Index or Dwelling Unit Modeling Compliance Path*. Complete the table below by filling in the “Applicant’s Reference Document(s)” column to indicate the submitted documentation that fulfills the ENERGY STAR 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.

An organization with national HCO recognition seeking to extend their certification program to California need only complete the sections indicated as *“For California,”* unless other aspects of the organizations’ original application are also being updated. All other organizations must complete the entire table.

<b>ENERGY STAR Requirements for Home Certification Organization (HCO)</b>	<b>Applicant's Reference Document(s)</b>
<b>3.0 HCO Eligibility Requirements</b>	
<b>3.1 Legal Responsibility</b>	
Provide documentation that the organization is a legal entity, or a defined part of a legal entity.	
<b>3.2 Independent Governance</b>	
<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"> <li>• Specific responsibility for safeguarding the impartiality and integrity of the HCO's ENERGY STAR certification program;</li> <li>• Authority to review the HCO's policies, procedures and actions;</li> <li>• A balanced representation of significantly interested parties such as builders, conformity assessment experts, raters, designees, and representatives of trade associations, such that no single interest predominates;</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to all information necessary to fulfill its functions;</li> <li>• Have the right to independently inform EPA if the HCO does not follow the input of this mechanism.</li> </ul> <p>Alternatively, provide documentation of accreditation to the ISO/IEC 17065 governing standard, <i>“Conformity Assessment: Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes, and services.”</i></p>	
<b>3.3 Geographic Scope of Operations</b>	
<p>Provide a detailed narrative to establish the organization’s ability to implement its ENERGY STAR program on a national level. This must be demonstrated, at a minimum, through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having access to a network of raters capable of providing ENERGY STAR certifications across the U.S.; and</li> <li>• Maintaining a quality assurance and oversight mechanism for raters that may be distributed across the U.S.</li> </ul> <p><i>For California:</i> Having access to a network of raters and maintaining a quality assurance mechanism capable of covering California.</p>	
<b>3.4 Staffing and Competency</b>	
<p>Provide description of sufficient available personnel and/or designees with the necessary competencies to meet all applicable requirements</p>	

related to the <i>ENERGY STAR Certification System</i> and the <i>ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol</i> .	
<b>4.0 HCO Policies</b>	
<b>4.1 Business Code of Ethics</b>	
Provide HCO’s business code of ethics for the organization, its raters, and its designees.	
<b>4.2 Impartiality and Objectivity</b>	
<p>Provide conflict of interest (COI) policies used to maintain impartiality of the HCO, its raters 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"> <li>• Conflicts between the HCO and its builder clients;</li> <li>• Conflicts between individuals involved in the certification process and other entities involved in the design or construction of the home to be certified;</li> <li>• Conflicts between raters, individuals performing quality assurance activities, and/or individuals making certification decisions.</li> </ul>	

<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. raters).</p>	
<p><b>4.3 Non-Discrimination</b></p>	
<p>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 ENERGY STAR certification program, nor the <i>ENERGY STAR Certification System</i> or <i>ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol</i>.</p> <p>The policies and procedures and/or detailed narrative must also include how the organization makes its ENERGY STAR certification program accessible to all eligible ENERGY STAR builder or developer partners, and include evidence that access is not conditional on the size of the ENERGY STAR builder or developer partner, nor membership in any association or group.</p>	
<p><b>4.4 Publicly Available Information</b></p>	
<p>Provide the publicly available information covering the organization’s ENERGY STAR certification program and policies and procedures for granting and withdrawing certification and where it can be found online.</p>	

<b>5.0 Certification and Oversight Procedures</b>	
<b>5.1 Training, Credentialing and Listing of Raters</b>	
<p>Provide policies and procedures or description for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of training, examination, and continuing education programs for raters or recognition of existing training, examination and continuing education programs;</li> <li>• <i>For California</i>: The development of training that covers California HERS ratings (rather the ERI ratings), in addition to other elements;</li> <li>• Training syllabus for training that will be delivered or recognized;</li> <li>• Credentialing process for individuals and process for ensuring that only credentialed individuals perform verification of homes and apartments; and</li> <li>• Public or private list of credentialed raters that is updated regularly.</li> </ul>	
<b>5.2 Approved Software Rating Tools</b>	
<p>Provide list of proposed software rating tools and login credentials for EPA testing use.</p> <p>Provide evidence that proposed software rating tools are approved through one of the following pathways.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DOE validation of proper functioning of software that is built using EnergyPlus</li> </ul>	

<p>engine and the NREL-developed ruleset for calculating ERIs, or;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval by the RESNET Accreditation Committee in accordance with the most current version of RESNET Publication 002.</li> <li>• <i>For California:</i> Provide evidence that (rather than above pathways) software is approved by the California Energy Commission (CEC) in accordance with the applicable version of California’s Building Energy Efficiency Standards.</li> </ul> <p>Provide description of implementation process when new software is released, specifically outlining transition periods that are no longer than six (6) months, as determined by a home or apartment’s permit date.</p>	
<p><b>5.3 Quality Control Protocols</b></p>	
<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"> <li>• Collection of energy simulation files for every certified home;</li> <li>• Quality assurance file reviews of at least ten (10) percent of homes submitted by each individual rater;</li> <li>• Quality assurance field evaluation, whereby quality assurance personnel independently verify ENERGY STAR program requirements via a witness or</li> </ul>	

<p>after-the-fact test, of at least one (1) percent of homes submitted by each individual rater;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Selection of homes for file and field review are as representative as possible across builders and communities;</li><li>• A set of repeatable standards for assessing whether discrepancies found during quality assurance file reviews and field inspections are within allowable thresholds, which standards include the use of the appropriate ENERGY STAR Quality Assurance checklist and a maximum allowable ERI score variation of three percent (3%);</li><li>• <i>For California</i>: A threshold standard that ensures that installed building components meet or exceed the energy performance of the design specifications (rather than being based on 3% variation);</li><li>• 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; and</li><li>• In the event of recurring discrepancies on an individual raters' homes, provisions for increasing the rate of file review and field</li></ul>	
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<p>evaluation, as well as conditions for triggering disciplinary action by the HCO.</p> <p>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.</p>	
<p><b>5.4 Sampling Protocol</b></p>	
<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"> <li>• Stated requirement that energy simulation files based on a worst-case analysis be collected for every certified home;</li> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• Evidence that verification occurs on a representative sample of homes and apartments ready within a 30 calendar day period at a rate of no less than one-in-seven (or 15 percent);</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedure for addressing inspection failures identified during sampling, including additional inspections of non-inspected homes and apartments, at a minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Correction of any failed measures in the home or apartment where it was discovered,</li> <li>○ Additional evaluation of measures in minimum of two (2) additional homes or apartments, and</li> <li>○ 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.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Conditions for revoking eligibility to participate in sampling.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5.5 Issuing the ENERGY STAR Label and Certification</b></p>	
<p>Provide attestation that the HCO maintains final authority over all ENERGY STAR certifications and takes responsibility for determining that certified homes and apartments conform with the <i>ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol</i> and will provide the ENERGY STAR building or developer partner with the ENERGY STAR label and certificate for each certified home or apartment.</p>	

<p><b>5.6 Ethics Compliance and Homeowner Inquiry Resolution</b></p>	
<p>Provide policies and procedures and/or a detailed narrative documenting the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An ethics complaint process for HCOs, its raters, and designees</li> <li>• Procedures for disciplining raters, including provisions for appeal; and attestation that HCO will inform EPA when disciplinary action is taken; and</li> <li>• A resolution process for homeowner inquiries, including the web page that allows homeowners to submit inquiries or concerns regarding the ENERGY STAR certification of their home or apartment.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5.7 Recordkeeping, Reporting, and Disclosure</b></p>	
<p>Provide policies and procedures and/or detailed narrative to demonstrate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certification documentation retention policy, indicating documentation is maintained a minimum of three (3) years</li> <li>• Public or private database that includes the physical address, certification date, ERI score, ENERGY STAR ERI Target, builder or developer partner name, rater name and company, software version number, and ENERGY STAR version number.</li> <li>• <i>For California:</i> The database includes Efficiency Energy Design Ratio (EDR) and/or Compliance Margin delta, as applicable (rather than ERI metrics).</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public interface to the database above that, at a minimum, accepts queries by physical address and reports the home or apartment’s current ENERGY STAR status and date.</li> <li>• Attestation that the HCO will provide EPA with quarterly summary reports of the number of homes and apartments certified through the HCO’s ENERGY STAR certification program</li> <li>• Attestation that the HCO will provide EPA with aggregate/summary information about the energy-efficiency features used in homes and apartments certified through the HCO’s ENERGY STAR certification program, upon request.</li> <li>• Capability to provide aforementioned aggregate/summary information about the energy-efficiency features.</li> <li>• 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 ENERGY STAR certification program, including quality assurance, dispute resolution activities, any identified conflict of interest and conflict of interest mitigation.</li> </ul>	
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<b>5.8 Coordination with EPA</b>	
<p>Provide attestation that the HCO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain open lines of communication with EPA to address questions and concerns promptly.</li> <li>• Participate in meetings, upon request by EPA.</li> <li>• Work collaboratively with EPA to facilitate the comprehensive and coordinated investigation and response to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Findings resulting from routine quality assurance activities;</li> <li>○ Certification discrepancies, including those referred to the HCO by EPA; and</li> <li>○ Certification Review Requests and other inquiries from homeowners.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>6.0 Use of Designees</b>	
<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 ENERGY STAR certification program. In addition, provide policies and procedures and/or detailed narrative to demonstrate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documented qualification criteria for designees;</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance of a public or private list of approved designees and their approved scope of activity;</li> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• A quality assurance process by which to assess and monitor the activities completed by the designees on a regular basis;</li> <li>• Description of how the HCO will implement corrective actions for any breaches of the HCO’s policies or procedures.</li> </ul>	
<b>8.0 Amendments, Modifications, and Revisions</b>	
<p>Provide a narrative detailing the HCO’s implementation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EPA-initiated amendments, revisions or technical clarification regarding the <i>ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol</i> such as new revisions of the National Program Requirements and Mandatory Measures documents; and</li> <li>• Revisions, amendments, and interpretations of standards referenced in <i>the ENERGY STAR Certification Protocol</i> within one (1) year of formal adoption by the standards developer and publishing of an implementation timeline online.</li> </ul>	

Provide attestation that, if needed, HCO will request EPA's permission for any extended implementation timelines (beyond one year).	
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**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 a 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 *ENERGY STAR Certification System for Homes and Apartments Using an Energy Rating Index or Dwelling Unit Modeling Compliance Path*, including granting EPA the right, at its discretion, to conduct periodic audits of any and all HCO activities related its ENERGY STAR 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 *ENERGY STAR 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 *ENERGY STAR 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 *ENERGY STAR 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 *ENERGY STAR 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 ENERGY STAR 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: \_\_\_\_\_