TRUSTED MARK® SCHEME

Trust 200 - Certification Process

In accordance with ISO/IEC 17067:2013 and ISO/IEC 17065:2012

Revision History

Version	Date	Description
1.0	20.12.2016	Original publication of the Certification Process
2.0	24.11.2020	Revision after addition of Trusted Shopping Centre Standards
3.0	19.07.2026	Minor Revisions
4.0	03.08.2026	Comprehensive revision and alignment with the IRF Trusted Mark Certification Scheme, including the revised Application and Certification Process, introduction of Remote (e-Audit) and Hybrid Audit methodologies for Certification and Surveillance Audits, revised Certification Body qualification requirements, streamlined certification workflow, and editorial improvements.

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Introduction

This **IRF Trusted Mark Certification Process** describes the various stages involved in certification under the IRF Trusted Mark Scheme. A brief overview of the certification process is as follows:

1. Qualification and approval of the Certification Body (CB)
2. Client (Retail / Shopping Centre Organisation) submits its application and required information.
3. Client selects the CB and enters into a certification agreement.
4. The CB appoints competent auditor(s) and finalises the audit methodology and audit schedule.
5. The CB carries out the document review of information submitted by the client.
6. The IRF Trusted Mark Secretariat (the Scheme Owner) submits the Mystery Audit Report to both the CB and the client.

7. The client addresses the gaps identified during the Mystery Audit.
8. The CB auditor(s) conduct the Certification Audit and issue Nonconformities (NCs), where applicable.
9. The client implements corrective actions and submits objective evidence.
10. The auditor verifies and closes the NCs through remote verification and/or on-site verification, as appropriate.
11. Certification is granted only where the applicant achieves the minimum score of **70 out of 100**, as prescribed in the applicable Trust Standard.
12. The auditor submits the audit report with a recommendation to the CB Certification Committee.
13. The CB Certification Committee reviews the audit report and supporting evidence and makes the certification decision.
14. The CB issues the certificate (electronic and/or paper format) and informs the IRF Trusted Mark Secretariat.
15. The Scheme Owner uploads the certification details on its website and provides the client with decorative certificates, plaques and other authorised promotional material, where applicable.
16. Surveillance Audits and, where applicable, Surprise Audits are conducted during the certification cycle.

Audit Methodology

The CB shall determine the most appropriate audit methodology—**On-site Audit, Remote (e-audit), or Hybrid Audit**—based on the client's operations, complexity, risk, availability of information and communication technologies (ICT), and the requirements of the IRF Trusted Mark Scheme.

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1. Qualification of CB

- **a.** The CB shall be registered as a legal entity in India, or be a defined part of a legal entity, such that it can be held legally responsible for all its certification activities.
- **b.** The CB shall have been operating as a CB for at least five (5) years.
  The CB shall be accredited against ISO/IEC 17065 by the National Accreditation Body of its respective country, which shall be a member of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF).
- **c.** The CB shall be registered with the Scheme Owner after it ensures its auditors competency under the Trusted Mark scheme.
- **d.** The CB shall be responsible for and shall retain authority for its decisions relating to certification. This includes the granting, maintaining, renewing, extending, reducing, suspending and withdrawing of certification.
- **e.** The CB shall not offer consultancy relating to the IRF Trusted Mark Scheme to any client. It may conduct training on the 'Trusted' Scheme, provided such training is generic, equally available to all applicants and not client-specific, as client-specific training may be construed as consultancy.

f. The CB shall have the financial stability and resources required for the operation of the certification system.
g. The CB shall develop and operate its certification system in compliance with ISO/IEC 17065 and its applicable accreditation and certification governance requirements. A CB may undertake certification activities under the IRF TRUSTED MARK® Certification Scheme upon provisional approval by the Scheme Owner. The CB shall obtain accreditation from the National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB) for the IRF TRUSTED MARK® Certification Scheme within one (1) year from the date of its approval by the Scheme Owner. Any delay in obtaining such accreditation shall not affect the certification status of clients already certified under the Scheme during the valid period of the CB's approval, unless otherwise determined by the Scheme Owner in accordance with the Scheme requirements.
h. The Scheme Owner shall maintain and publish the current list of approved Certification Bodies on the official IRF Trusted Mark website. The list shall be updated whenever a CB is approved, suspended, withdrawn or removed from the Scheme.

Note: The IRF Trusted Mark Secretariat, as the Scheme Owner, may provide generic guidance on the interpretation of Scheme requirements, publish guidance documents and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), and facilitate communication between the client and the CB. Such activities shall be equally available to all applicants and shall not constitute consultancy or compromise the impartiality or independence of the certification process.

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2. CB Contract Agreement

a. The selected CBs shall provide contract agreement to the client. CB may interact with the client representative for more client details. This may include visit to client location to understand the operations. Alternately, the client may ask the CBs for a presentation.
b. The Scheme owner has defined the standard audit man-day table, which details the audit time for specific client (Trust 202). The audit time may vary depending on the size / turnover of the client, number of locations, number of employees and complexity of business. The man-day table also addresses multi-site situation or situation where one site may support the other site e.g. central kitchen and restaurant front end or central stores and multi stores. For audits undertaken under the IRF Trusted Mark Scheme, the Scheme Owner has prescribed a uniform Auditor Man-Day Fee of INR 15,000 per man-day (plus applicable taxes), applicable across all approved Certification Bodies.
c. For certification programmes covering three (3) or more retail brands, retail formats and/or shopping centres under common ownership and management,

the CB shall extend a pre-agreed 30% reduction in its audit fee under the IRF Trusted Mark Scheme, without affecting the audit duration or methodology determined in accordance with the Scheme requirements.

d. Client hence selects the CB based on CB credentials, location logistics and his / her comfort with the CB.
e. The contract agreement shall be developed by respective CB, however it shall be compliant to ISO / IEC 17065 requirements. The agreement shall at the minimum, address confidentiality of information, indemnity, conflict resolution and contract termination.
f. Client shall sign the contract agreement provided by CB. Alternately, the client may choose to issue Purchase Order / Work Order to CB or directly to IRF Secretariat. However, in such cases, the terms and conditions specified in the contract agreement shall be considered binding on both the parties (Client and CB).
g. Client may ask for quote to increase the scope of certificate or add more sites or recertification after expiry of the existing certificate. Trust 202 addresses such situations.

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3. Audit finalization

a. Once the contract agreement is signed by both the parties (Client and CB), either party shall contact the other to decide upon the audit dates.
b. Client shall inform the CB of the planned dates.
c. The Scheme Owner may nominate an observer to witness the audit. Such observation shall not influence the audit findings or certification decision.
d. The CB shall determine whether the audit will be conducted:

- On-site;
- Remotely (e-audit); or
- Using a Hybrid approach combining remote and on-site activities.

The decision should be documented.

e. CB shall identify qualified auditor(s).
f. Any audit carried out by a non-qualified auditor shall be considered NULL and VOID.
g. Such situation shall be reviewed by the Trusted Board Certification Committee (CC).
h. The Committee can take necessary action against the CB, which may include cancellation of the contract or deregistering the CB from the list of approved CBs.

4. Audit Preparation and Document Review

4.1 Document Review

a. The client shall submit the completed self-evaluation together with the required supporting objective evidence to the CB (CB).

b. The qualified CB auditor shall review the submitted documents to assess the adequacy of the management system and the client's preparedness for the Certification Audit.

c. The auditor may raise Nonconformities (NCs) relating to documented system requirements. The client shall address such NCs before the Certification Audit, where applicable.

d. The Certification Audit shall normally be completed within **90 days** of completion of the Document Review. Where this period is exceeded, the CB may require the Document Review to be repeated.

e. The CB shall provide the client with a formal Document Review Report covering the review findings, any NCs identified and the proposed audit plan for the Certification Audit.

4.2 Remote (e-audit), where applicable

Where the CB determines that a Remote (e-audit) is appropriate, the audit may be conducted using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). The CB shall ensure that the selected methodology enables the collection of sufficient objective evidence to support certification decisions.

The Remote (e-audit) may include, as applicable:

a. Secure electronic sharing of documents and records.

b. Live video interaction with relevant personnel.

c. Screen sharing for the review of documented information, records and information systems.

d. Remote interviews with management and other personnel.

e. Live virtual tours of facilities, operations and customer-facing areas, where appropriate.

f. Use of suitable ICT platforms that ensure the confidentiality, integrity and security of information exchanged during the audit.

g. Maintenance of confidentiality, impartiality and data security throughout the Remote (e-audit).

5. Mystery Audit

a. The mystery audit shall be conducted by The Scheme Owner or its appointed auditor/s in the sample outlets every year. The sample size shall be based on the square root of the no. of retail outlets available per brand.

b. The Scheme Owner shall appoint mystery shoppers from its audit team or subcontractor. Care shall be taken to preferably use a local person (to avoid travel costs).

c. Any competent member of its audit team or appointed subcontractor can act as a mystery shopper provided the report is submitted before GAP correction is recommended by the CB and / or during surprise audit and the client does not recognize the mystery shopper. The report of mystery audit will be submitted to CB within 30 days from the date of receiving intimation of CB finalisation from the retailer. The mystery audit fee calculations/ costs will be communicated to applicants after registration for the certification scheme.

d. The mystery shopper shall visit the client's business venue - offline or online, as applicable and carry out a purchase by ordering online or shopping or availing desired services in person. In case of restaurant, he shall eat at the restaurant. In case of fun zone or Cineplex, he shall play at the fun zone or enjoy the movie. In case of online he shall order online and in case of salon / spa / care he shall make prior booking / reservation before purchasing services.

e. The mystery shopper shall focus on efficiency and friendliness of staff, customer friendly initiatives, refund / returns / exchange policies and ease of business (entire cycle from entry to the shop to billing) and / or any other pre-defined activity. He will submit his findings in a prescribed format.

f. The Mystery Shopper shall retain, wherever practicable, the purchased goods together with the purchase bill. The bill and material shall also be the objective evidence of the mystery shopping and a copy of the bill shall be included in the report. In case of availed services as in case of restaurant, fun zone and Cineplex etc, it is not possible to retain and produce material evidence. In such case documents like booking confirmation slip, show ticket, F&B invoice etc can be retained and produced.

g. The CB auditor shall evaluate the Mystery Audit Report together with the Certification Audit findings while determining Nonconformities (NCs) and Opportunities for Improvement (OFIs).

6. Certification Audit

a. The CBshall schedule the Certification Audit in consultation with the client. The audit may be conducted **On-site, Remotely (e-audit), or using a Hybrid Audit approach**, as determined by the CB based on the Scheme requirements. Where an On-site Audit is conducted, it shall normally be carried out at the client's Head Office (HO) and/or other applicable locations.

b. Where more than one auditor is deployed, the audit team shall be led by a designated Team Leader. This may be necessary for large organisations, multisite operations or complex audits. Wherever practicable, the audit team shall include auditor(s) who participated in the Document Review to ensure continuity and familiarity with the client's documented information.

c. The audit team may include technical experts, subject matter experts and/or translators, where required. Such personnel shall support the audit team and shall not be counted towards the audit man-days. The audit team may also include observers from the Scheme Owner and/or the Accreditation Body.

d. The Certification Audit shall commence with an opening meeting to introduce the audit team, confirm the audit scope, objectives, methodology and audit plan, and explain the audit process. The CB may use its own audit checklist provided it adequately covers all applicable Trust requirements. The audit shall take into consideration:

- the Mystery Audit findings submitted by the Scheme Owner;
- the results of the client's internal audits; and
- the client's management review records, where applicable.

The client shall conduct internal audits of applicable retail outlets, shopping centres or other certified locations at least once every year. Sampling shall not be permitted for internal audits.

e. The client shall cooperate fully during the audit by making relevant personnel available, responding to audit enquiries and providing access to objective evidence. The auditor shall evaluate all applicable Trust requirements and record both conformities and nonconformities.

The audit shall be conducted in an open and transparent manner, with appropriate debriefing of the client throughout the audit.

f. The auditor shall verify compliance with all applicable statutory, regulatory and Scheme requirements relevant to the client's scope of certification.

g. Regulatory compliance requirements referred to in the applicable Trust Standard shall generally comprise:

- Mandatory statutory and regulatory requirements necessary for operating the business;
- Product- or service-specific regulatory requirements applicable to the relevant business sector; and
- Location-specific or other regulatory requirements applicable to particular sites or jurisdictions.

h. Mandatory statutory and regulatory requirements shall be verified during the Certification Audit. Product/service-specific and location-specific requirements shall be verified based on their applicability to the client's operations and may be assessed using an appropriate sampling approach, where justified.

i. If, at any stage during the certification cycle, the client is found to have materially violated applicable statutory or regulatory requirements affecting the integrity of the certification, the CB shall take appropriate certification action, which may include suspension or withdrawal of certification in accordance with the Scheme requirements.

j. Nonconformities (NCs) identified during the audit shall be classified as follows:

- **Major NC** – A significant failure to comply with one or more applicable Trust requirements, or a nonconformity that materially affects the integrity, effectiveness or intended outcomes of the certification. Closure of a Major NC may require on-site verification, remote verification or a combination of both, as determined by the CB.
- **Minor NC** – An isolated or non-systemic nonconformity where the applicable Trust requirement is substantially implemented but improvement is required. Minor NCs may normally be verified through review of objective evidence without requiring an additional on-site verification.

k. The Certification Audit shall conclude with a closing meeting during which the auditor or Team Leader shall present the audit findings, explain all Nonconformities (NCs) and Opportunities for Improvement (OFIs), discuss the agreed corrective actions and timelines, and formally conclude the audit.

l. The audit conclusion shall be one of the following:

m. Positive Recommendation for Certification – where the auditor concludes that the applicant has demonstrated adequate conformity with the applicable Trust requirements, all identified Major Nonconformities and Minor Nonconformities requiring closure have been satisfactorily addressed, and the applicant achieves the **minimum overall certification score of 70 out of 100**, as prescribed in the applicable Trust Standard.

n. Conditional Recommendation for Certification – where only Minor Nonconformities are identified. The applicant shall implement the agreed corrective actions and submit objective evidence for review within the stipulated time. The auditor may submit a Positive Recommendation for Certification after being satisfied that the corrective actions are effective and the applicant achieves the **minimum overall certification score of 70 out of 100**.

o. Deferred Recommendation – where one or more Major Nonconformities are identified, or where the applicant does not achieve the **minimum overall certification score of 70 out of 100**. Certification may be recommended only after the Major Nonconformities have been satisfactorily addressed, where applicable, and the applicant subsequently achieves the prescribed minimum certification score.

p. The client shall submit corrective action evidence within **90 days** from the date of issue of the Nonconformity. If the Nonconformities are not satisfactorily addressed within this period, the Certification Audit shall become invalid and a complete re-audit shall be required.

q. The CB shall prepare a formal Certification Audit Report and provide it to the client in electronic and/or paper form. The client shall acknowledge receipt of the report by signature or electronic confirmation. The format of the audit report may be developed by the CB, provided it meets the requirements of the IRF Trusted Mark Scheme.

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7. Corrective Action

a. At the conclusion of the Certification Audit, the auditor or Team Leader shall communicate the audit findings to the client. The client may accept or reject any or all Opportunities for Improvement (OFIs). The decision taken on each OFI shall be recorded. Where an OFI is accepted, the client shall record the action taken or planned. Where an OFI is not accepted, the client shall record the justification for not implementing the recommendation.

b. Corrective action shall be mandatory for every Nonconformity (NC), whether Major or Minor. The client shall analyse each NC to determine its root cause. The client may use the Why-Why technique or any other suitable root cause analysis methodology. For each NC, the client shall identify:

- the **Correction** (action taken to eliminate the identified nonconformity);
- the **Corrective Action** (action taken to eliminate the root cause and prevent recurrence); and
- the **Preventive Action**, where considered appropriate, to minimise the likelihood of similar nonconformities occurring elsewhere.

c. The client shall submit the root cause analysis, proposed correction, corrective action and, where applicable, preventive action together with supporting objective evidence to the auditor or Team Leader. Upon acceptance of the proposed actions, the client shall implement them and submit the required objective evidence for verification.

d. Where considered necessary for timely completion of the certification process, the CB may keep the IRF Trusted Mark Secretariat informed of the status of pending Nonconformities. The Secretariat may coordinate with the client and the CB to facilitate timely closure of the identified Nonconformities, including administrative follow-up, clarification of Scheme requirements and monitoring of certification timelines. Such coordination shall not include consultancy, preparation of client-specific documentation, recommendation of corrective actions or any activity that may compromise the impartiality of the certification process or the independence of the CB.

8. Follow-up Audit

a. The auditor or Team Leader shall review the proposed corrective action plan and assess its adequacy. Upon receipt of objective evidence from the client, the auditor shall determine whether the identified Nonconformity can be verified through review of the submitted evidence or whether additional verification is required. Verification may be conducted **On-site, Remotely (e-audit), or using a Hybrid Audit approach**, as determined by the CB. Where the verification is satisfactory, the Nonconformity shall be closed.

b. A formal opening meeting may not be necessary for a Follow-up Audit. However, the auditor shall communicate the outcome of the verification, discuss the effectiveness of the corrective actions taken, explain any remaining issues and formally conclude the Follow-up Audit.

c. Where the corrective actions are found to be ineffective, the CB may keep the Nonconformity open and require the client to undertake further corrective action. If the Nonconformity is not satisfactorily addressed within **90 days** from the date of its original issue, the Certification Audit shall become invalid and a complete re-audit shall be required.

9. Recommendation report to CB Certification Committee

The auditor or Team Leader shall submit the complete Certification Audit Report, together with the audit findings, supporting objective evidence and certification recommendation, to the CB Certification Committee for review. The CB may develop its own review checklist to ensure a systematic, impartial and consistent review of the audit report before the certification decision is taken.

The IRF Trusted Mark Secretariat may be informed by the CB regarding the progress of the certification process for administrative purposes, including monitoring of certification timelines and coordination with the client. However, the certification decision shall remain the sole responsibility of the CB and its Certification Committee. The Scheme Owner shall not participate in, influence or interfere with the certification decision-making process.

10. CB Certification Committee and its Certification decision on recommended report

a. The CB shall establish a **Certification Committee** with documented terms of reference and operating procedures. The Committee shall comprise competent personnel who are authorised to review audit reports and make certification decisions. **No person who participated in the Certification Audit, Document Review or Follow-up Audit of the client shall participate in the certification decision for that client.** The Committee may obtain technical advice from subject matter experts, where necessary; however, the responsibility for the certification decision shall remain solely with the Certification Committee.

The Certification Committee shall review, as applicable:

- the competence and suitability of the audit team;
- the adequacy of the audit duration and audit methodology adopted (On-site, Remote (e-audit), or Hybrid Audit);
- the completeness and effectiveness of the audit process;
- the audit findings and supporting objective evidence;
- the classification and closure of Nonconformities;
- the effectiveness of the corrective actions;
- the applicant's achievement of the prescribed minimum certification score;
- compliance with the applicable Trust Standard and Scheme requirements; and
- any relevant information or feedback received during the certification process.

Where necessary, the Certification Committee may seek clarification or additional information from the auditor or Team Leader and, where appropriate, from the client before making its certification decision.

b. The Certification Committee shall independently evaluate the audit report and supporting evidence before making one of the following certification decisions:

- Grant Certification;
- Defer the Certification Decision pending satisfactory completion of specified requirements; or
- Decline Certification.

Where the Committee does not accept the auditor's recommendation, the reasons for its decision shall be documented. The Committee may require additional information, further objective evidence, additional verification activities or a partial or complete re-audit before reaching its final certification decision. The certification decision of the Certification Committee shall be final.

11. Certificate Issuance

Upon a positive certification decision by the Certification Committee, the CB shall issue the Certificate of Conformity to the client, provided that the client:

- demonstrates conformity with all applicable Scheme requirements; and
- achieves the **minimum overall certification score of 70 out of 100**, as prescribed in the applicable Trust Standard.

The CB may determine the design and format of the certificate. However, the certificate shall, as a minimum, include:

- name and address of the certified client;
- certified location(s), where applicable;
- scope of certification;
- applicable Trust Standard(s);
- unique certificate number;
- date of issue;
- date of expiry;
- name and address of the CB; and
- signature or other authorised approval of the CB.

The **date of issue** shall be the date on which the Certification Committee makes the certification decision.

The certificate shall remain valid for **three (3) years** from the date of issue, subject to successful completion of the required surveillance audits and continued compliance with the Scheme requirements.

Example

Activity	Date
Client signs Certification Agreement with CB	01 January 2026
Document Review completed	03 March 2026
Certification Audit completed	17 March 2026
Corrective Action evidence submitted	29 March 2026
Nonconformities verified and closed	03 April 2026
Certification Committee decision	07 April 2026
Certificate Issue Date	07 April 2026
Certificate Expiry Date	06 April 2029

The CB may publish the certification status and certificate details on its website or other publicly accessible media, in accordance with its certification procedures and applicable confidentiality requirements.

12. Trusted Mark Website Upload

a. Following issuance of the Certificate of Conformity by the CB (CB), the client shall complete all applicable commercial obligations payable to the Scheme Owner in accordance with the agreed terms and conditions.

b. Upon fulfilment of the applicable commercial requirements, the **IRF Trusted Mark Secretariat**, on behalf of the Scheme Owner, shall provide the client with the applicable Trusted Mark promotional kit, which may include decorative certificates for display at certified locations, the Trusted Mark logo and usage guidelines, promotional and marketing material, commemorative mementoes and other Scheme-related communication material, as applicable.

c. The Scheme Owner shall publish the certification details of the client on the official Trusted Mark website (**www.irftrustedmark.org**) and may promote the certification through its magazines, newsletters, digital platforms, social media, press releases, email communications and other appropriate media, subject to the client's consent where required.

d. The client may, at its own discretion and cost, organise a function, media event or other promotional activity to announce or publicise the award of the IRF Trusted Mark. The Scheme Owner may extend reasonable support in such promotional activities, where appropriate.

13. Surveillance / Surprise Audit

a. The Certificate of Conformity shall remain valid for a period of **three (3) years**, subject to continued conformity with the applicable Trust Standard and successful completion of the required surveillance audits. During the certification cycle, the CB shall conduct **at least two surveillance audits**, normally at approximately **12 months** and **24 months** from the date of the initial Certification Audit. The surveillance audit may be conducted **On-site, Remotely (e-audit), or using a Hybrid Audit approach**, as determined by the CB.

b. In addition to the planned Surveillance Audits, retail organisations shall undergo **at least one unannounced (Surprise) Audit during the three-year certification cycle**. This requirement shall not apply to Shopping Centre certification unless specifically required by the Scheme Owner under exceptional circumstances.

The location shall normally be selected by the CB based on risk, geographical coverage, business significance and previous audit findings. Where applicable, the largest or highest-risk location may be selected.

Audit Schedule (Illustrative)

If the initial Certification Audit is completed in **December 2025**:

Activity	Timeline
First Surveillance Audit	Within 9–12 months (September–December 2026)
Second Surveillance Audit	Within 21–24 months (September–December 2027)
Recertification Audit	Before completion of 36 months (December 2028)

c. The surveillance audit shall be conducted using the same principles as the Certification Audit and shall include, where applicable:

- review of continued conformity with the applicable Trust Standard;
- review of Mystery Audit findings;
- review of the client's internal audit programme and results;
- verification of corrective actions taken since the previous audit;
- verification of continued statutory and regulatory compliance; and
- verification that the client continues to achieve the **minimum overall certification score of 70 out of 100**, as prescribed in the applicable Trust Standard.

The surveillance audit shall be a planned activity agreed between the client and the CB. Following completion of the audit, the auditor or Team Leader shall submit the audit report and recommendation to the Certification Committee for review and certification decision.

Where Major Nonconformities are identified, the CB shall determine the appropriate certification action, which may include suspension of certification until the identified Major Nonconformities have been satisfactorily addressed. Minor Nonconformities shall not normally affect the validity of certification, provided corrective actions are implemented within the stipulated timeframe.

d. The CB shall inform the IRF Trusted Mark Secretariat of the outcome of surveillance audits and any certification decisions relating to suspension, withdrawal, reinstatement or continuation of certification. The Scheme Owner shall update the certification status on the official Trusted Mark website and other Scheme records, where applicable. The Scheme Owner shall not influence the CB's certification decisions.

e. A client may change its CB during the three-year certification cycle. The new CB shall review the existing certification records and determine whether to accept the transfer in accordance with its documented procedures. Where the certification is transferred, the new CB shall issue a replacement certificate for the remaining certification period, retaining the original certification history by indicating the date **"Certified since"** corresponding to the client's initial certification.

f. The CB may conduct additional or special audits during the certification cycle, where necessary, including but not limited to:

- addition, reduction or change in the scope of certification;
- addition, relocation or closure of certified locations;
- change in ownership, legal status or management of the client;
- significant customer complaints or regulatory actions;
- significant changes affecting the client's management system or operations; or
- any other circumstance that may affect continued conformity with the Scheme requirements.

g. Where a client requests any significant change affecting its certification, the CB shall review the request and determine the extent of verification required. Verification may be conducted **On-site, Remotely (e-audit), or using a Hybrid Audit approach**, as appropriate. Where necessary, an additional Mystery Audit may also be conducted. Following satisfactory verification, the CB may issue a revised certificate, where applicable.

IRF TRUSTED MARK

THE INTERNATIONAL RETAIL FORUM SETTING **'CUSTOMER CENTRIC'** STANDARDS IN RETAIL

CONSUMER-CENTRIC. CERTIFIED.

'Trusted' Certification Mark – Application & Certification Process

The process followed by IRF Trusted Mark Secretariat and Certification Bodies (CBs)

Application with the IRF Trusted Mark Secretariat

The applicant shall submit the following to the IRF Trusted Mark Secretariat:
- Completed Application Form (Trust 201)
- Latest Business Profile (not older than three months)
- Applicable Fee

Application Acceptance

Upon acceptance of the application, the applicant shall receive:
- Notification of Application Acceptance
- List of Approved Certification Bodies (CBs)
- Applicable Trust Standard(s) and Self-Evaluation Checklist
- Notification of the applicable) Mystery Audit sample size and fee

Mystery Audit

Upon receipt of the applicable Mystery Audit fee, the IRF Trusted Mark Secretariat shall initiate the Mystery Audit in accordance with the Scheme requirements.

Selection of Certification Body (CB)

The applicant shall:
- Select an Approved Certification Body from the list provided by the Scheme Owner.
- Submit the completed Self-Evaluation Checklist and supporting documents to the selected Certification Body.
- Enter into a Certification Agreement with the selected Certification Body.

Submission of Mystery Audit Report

The IRF Trusted Mark Secretariat shall submit the Mystery Audit Report directly to the selected Certification Body, normally within 30 working days of receiving confirmation of the applicant's CB selection.

Document Review (Remote e-Audit)

The Certification Body shall:
- Review the applicant's submitted documents and Self-Evaluation Checklist.
- Verify the documented information through a Remote (e-Audit), where applicable.
- Finalise the Certification Audit schedule in consultation with the applicant.

Certification Audit

The Certification Body shall conduct the Certification Audit using an On-site, Remote (e-Audit), or Hybrid Audit approach, as appropriate, to:
- verify conformity with the applicable Trust Standard;
- verify statutory and regulatory compliance;
- review the Mystery Audit findings;
- review the applicant's internal audit records; and
- interview relevant personnel and verify objective evidence.

Corrective Actions

Following completion of the Certification Audit:
- The Certification Body shall communicate the audit findings, including any Major or Minor Nonconformities (NCs).
- The applicant shall implement the required corrective actions and submit objective evidence within the stipulated timeframe.
- The Certification Body shall verify the effectiveness of the corrective actions before finalising the audit.

Certification Decision

Where:
- all applicable Nonconformities have been satisfactorily addressed; and
- the applicant achieves the minimum overall certification score of 70 out of 100, as prescribed in the applicable Trust Standard,

the Certification Body shall make a positive certification decision and issue the Certificate of Conformity.

The Certification Body shall inform the IRF Trusted Mark Secretariat regarding the certification decision.

Administration and Trusted Mark Usage

Following certification:
- The IRF Trusted Mark Secretariat shall provide the applicant with the applicable commercial documentation, including the Trusted Mark Usage Agreement.
- The certified organisation shall complete the applicable commercial formalities with the Scheme Owner.
- The certified organisation shall indicate the number of decorative certificates or plaques required for display at its certified locations.
- Upon completion of the applicable formalities, the IRF Trusted Mark Secretariat shall provide the Trusted Mark Welcome Kit, which may include decorative certificates, logo usage guidelines, promotional material, commemorative items and other Scheme-related material, as applicable.
- The Scheme Owner shall publish the certification details on the official IRF Trusted Mark website.

Note: All activities are carried out in accordance with the IRF Trusted Mark Certification Scheme requirements.

Key Notes

- Certification for retail organisations shall normally cover **all stores operating under a retail brand**, unless the application is specifically limited to one or more defined retail formats or specific stores operated by the brand or its franchisee.
- Certification for shopping centres shall apply only to the specific shopping centre that has successfully completed the certification process.
- The client shall declare the number of operational sites (having been in operation for more than **six (6) months**) for each retail format in **Trust 201 – Application Form**.
- The client shall conduct internal audits covering **100% of certified sites** under each retail format at least once every year. The CB shall review the internal audit programme and results during its audits.
- For multisite retail organisations, the CB may adopt an appropriate sampling methodology, including the **square root sampling approach**, unless otherwise specified by the Scheme.
- Wherever practicable, locations selected during surveillance audits should include sites that have not previously been audited during the current certification cycle.
- The locations selected for audit should provide appropriate geographical representation of the client's operations and reflect business risk and operational diversity.
- The application shall become **null and void** if the applicant does not submit all required documents and audit-related information to the selected CB within **six (6) months** from the date of finalising the CB.
- Once the applicant has submitted all required documentation and entered the Certification Audit stage, the certification process will normally be completed within **three to four months**, subject to timely closure of Nonconformities and successful completion of all Scheme requirements.
- The IRF Trusted Mark Secretariat may modify the sequence of administrative activities or certification process stages, where necessary, provided that such modifications do not affect the integrity, impartiality or certification requirements of the Scheme.

IRF TRUSTED MARK SECRETARIAT

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