



# AMC Institute

# Accreditation Handbook

Policies and Procedures for Accreditation

## AMCI Institute (AMCI) Accreditation Contact Information

AMCI offers a variety of options for providing you with information and assistance.

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## About AMC Institute

Founded in 1963, the AMC Institute has a rich history of promoting the value and effectiveness of the AMC model and increasing the market share of the industry. AMC Institute (AMCI) helps AMCs coordinate their efforts to advance the status and scope of the association management company industry through education and accreditation. Members seek to improve their management techniques, enhance client services, and promote innovation in the industry. AMCI offers its members informative meetings, networking opportunities, accreditation, an online RFP service for new business, and other educational and promotional materials.

AMCI promotes service excellence among association management companies and strives to raise awareness of a burgeoning AMC industry by establishing its member companies as the recognized and preferred choice for quality association management and professional services.

The AMC accreditation program was founded in August 2002 by the International Association of Association Management Companies (IAAMC).

AMCI and ASAE had maintained separate and independent accreditation programs for several years. After a thorough review of the two programs it was agreed that a single industry accreditation program administered by AMC Institute would be accepted by the industry.

In May 2007, in order to provide clearer direction to associations interested in being managed by association management companies (AMCs), the AMCI and ASAE & the Center for Association Leadership agreed to support a single AMC accreditation program. The AMCI accreditation program is based upon the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) approved standard for good AMC practices.

## The Purpose and Value of Accreditation

The accreditation process improves management practices by providing firms with a defined set of “best practices” around establishing internal quality service systems while developing and improving important company policies and procedures. This conveys a message to current and prospective AMC clients as well as the marketplace that an AMC has demonstrated the commitment to deliver quality, professional services to its clients through conformance with the AMC Standard.

## ANSI Recognized

ANSI has recognized AMCI as the AMC Standard Developer. This recognition means that AMCI's standards development and administrative processes adhere to ANSI's rigorous requirements and exhibit the highest levels of quality and credibility.

The AMC Institute Standard of Good Practices was first approved by ANSI in 2002. Periodically, the standards and standards development process must be re-accredited. This process most recently occurred in 2018.

The current revision of the Standard went into effect on January 1, 2015 and may be found on AMCI's website under “**Accreditation – ANSI Standard**”.

The AMC Standards are subject to change periodically. Always use the most current version of the Standard.

## Keys to Successful Accreditation

- Identify your internal project team
- Thoroughly review the Accreditation Handbook and become familiar with the Standard, the accreditation requirements, and the process
- Consider attending an AMCI Accreditation Workshop or Webinar
- Perform a gap analysis of your internal operating procedures and the Standards
- Implement alignment initiatives
- Begin the formal Accreditation Process
  1. Apply for Accreditation
  2. Prepare for the Review
  3. Contact Your Reviewer
  4. Submit Forms to AMCI
  5. The Review Procedure
  6. Send Completed Review Forms to AMCI
  7. Approval from AMC Institute

## Accreditation Process

### Step 1 – Apply for Accreditation

Complete Form #1001 – This begins the AMC Institute Accreditation Process which formally notifies AMC Institute of your intention to become AMCI Accredited. This form is used to update potential accredited companies of any new information that may occur and is a way to keep in touch with your organization on accreditation matters.

Applicants can call or email the AMCI Accreditation Manager with questions about the process. AMCI also offers an Accreditation Workshop at the Annual Meeting, and Accreditation Training webinars are held throughout the year to help guide interested AMCs through the accreditation process.

Applicants can use samples made available on AMCI's website along with the Accreditation workbook and the AMC Standard as their guide to prepare and submit documentation to be used in the accreditation review process.

### Step 2 - Prepare for the Review

The independent review of the AMC's materials and the application of those materials is a required step of the AMC Institute Accreditation process. The AMCI Accreditation Workbook has checklists, sample policies, and information on understanding the review process. Once the AMC's materials are prepared and the processes and procedures are successfully applied within the AMC, you are ready to take the next step.

### Step 3 – Contact Your Reviewer

Once all materials and documents are collected, contact the selected CPA to conduct the review of your company's accreditation policies, procedures, and documentation. Give the CPA the Reviewer's Guide materials from the Workbook to become familiar with the process. It is important that they understand what will be expected of them and to make sure they meet the criteria for being a Reviewer.

The accrediting company will negotiate the cost of the accreditation review with the CPA firm. This is paid directly to the reviewer and the negotiation of fees occurs between the accrediting company and the reviewing firm.

The assigned reviewer must sign the Reviewer's Commitment Form (Form #1005) and the AICPA Release of Information form and send them to the accrediting company. The chosen reviewer must meet the following criteria:

- An Accounting Firm or individual CPA shall conduct the review of the AMC.
- The Accounting Firm or individual CPA shall be a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) or a similar organization.
- The Accounting Firm or individual CPA shall not be an employee of the AMC being reviewed.
- The Accounting Firm or individual CPA shall have been peer reviewed within the last three years. **ATTACH A COPY OF THE REVIEWER'S LAST PEER REVIEW OPINION LETTER TO FORM #1005.**
- The Accounting Firm or individual CPA selected shall be familiar with conducting reviews.

Approval of the reviewer is required and the review should not commence until the reviewer is approved.

International companies going through the accreditation process will need to provide the name and contact information for the entity that can verify that the reviewer is in good standing.

#### Step 4 – Submit Forms to AMCI

Submit the following completed forms to AMCI along with the initial accreditation fee payment as outlined in Form 1006 Fee Schedule.

- Form 1002 - Declaration of Intent to become AMC Institute Accredited
- Form 1003 – License Agreement
- Form 1005 – Reviewer Commitment
- Form 1006 – Accreditation Fee
- AICPA Release of Information Form

When completing the Declaration of Intent to become AMC Institute Accredited, the AMC must submit the name of the individual or company that shall be conducting the review of the AMC. The selected reviewer must meet the criteria listed on Form 1005. The AMC should share this information with the reviewer before confirming the agreement with them. It is also suggested that the AMC wait until after AMC Institute has approved the Reviewer before entering into any agreement with them.

AMCI will contact you within seven (7) working days of receipt of the above materials and notify you that your Reviewer has been approved. You must contact your Reviewer within thirty (30) days of notification from AMCI to negotiate the terms and conditions of the Review. Expenses related to the review are the responsibility of the firm which is being reviewed. The next step is to schedule the review. The review should be completed within six months of submitting Form 1002- Declaration of Intent to become AMCI Accredited.

#### Step 5 – The Review Procedure

Once the Reviewer has been approved by AMCI via Form 1005, the AMC will provide the Reviewer with the completed Accreditation Forms and customized company documentation. **THESE MATERIALS WILL BE TREATED AS HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL. THE REVIEWER WILL BE THE ONLY**

**ONE TO VIEW THESE MATERIALS. ALL MATERIALS WILL BE RETURNED TO THE AMC AFTER THE REVIEW PROCESS IS COMPLETED OR WITHDRAWN.**

The firm selected to conduct the AMC review may have specific requirements they need to follow as a member of AICPA or a similar organization. For purposes of this review process, the following types of review are acceptable and will be referred to as “review” in all AMC Institute Accreditation materials:

- Compliance Review
- Compliance Examination
- Special Agreed Upon Procedure
- AMC Review

The selected reviewer shall adhere to the following set of instructions when conducting the review:

- Reviewer visits shall be conducted during normal working hours, unless otherwise consented to by the AMC, and the reviewer shall have full and prompt access to the AMC’s facilities for the purpose of reviewing.
- The reviewer shall verify paper documentation against actual in-office implementation.
- The reviewer shall issue to the AMC a new review report for each review conducted.
- The reviewer may elect to submit an opinion letter.
- The reviewer shall issue to the AMC and the AMC Institute a copy of the review report upon completion of the review.

### Conducting the Review

1. A desktop review, based on the AMC Standard adopted by AMC Institute, will be conducted first. This shall be done either at the reviewer’s office or at the AMC’s office. The Reviewer is permitted to follow up by phone and/or written communication as necessary. All documentation submitted by the AMC should comply with every section of the AMC Standard.
  - a. It is important to note that the AMC Standard establishes requirements that each individual AMC will use to create its own measureables. An AMC’s compliance to this Standard shall depend on its documentation and implementation of its own definitions, procedures, and policies as they relate to each element of the AMC Standard.
  - b. The two-page Review Report Form (#1004) shall be used to conduct the desktop review. Indicate “complete or incomplete” in the corresponding areas as the AMC’s documentation is reviewed. Make notes in the comment section of specific materials needed to be modified or added to that particular section.
  - c. The reviewer is permitted to email or mail a copy of this page to the AMC.
  - d. The AMC and the reviewer should determine whether additional documentation should be compiled and shared before the onsite review occurs.
  - e. Based on the arrangements in “d”, review and accept the additional documents.
2. An onsite review will follow the desktop Review. The onsite review is conducted in-person at the AMC’s company location and will consist of an evaluation of the written documentation, systems, processes, policies, and procedures in operation as to conformance to the AMC Standard.

- a. The two-page Review Report Form (#1004) shall be used to conduct the onsite review. Indicate “complete or incomplete” in the corresponding areas as the onsite review is conducted. Make notes in the comment section of specific materials or activities needed to be modified or added to that particular section.
  - b. Submit a copy of this report to the AMC.
  - c. Determine with the AMC when the review of the items noted on the form shall be conducted.
  - d. Additional necessary work beyond the scope of the agreement with the AMC shall be discussed and confirmed by both parties. Any related fees shall be confirmed in writing and are the responsibility of the AMC.
3. Immediately following the onsite review, the Reviewing firm will submit the "Review Report" (Form # 1004) to the AMC and to AMCI. The results of the review may be as follows:
- a. **Review Passed:** The AMC will receive a congratulatory letter; an electronic accreditation logo to use on all materials, website and publications; and a listing on AMCI’s website in the Accreditation Directory.
  - b. **Review Incomplete:** The Reviewer will notify the AMC in writing. The Reviewer will include and indicate the area(s) that need to be addressed.

The AMC will respond in writing directly to the Reviewer with an explanation and supporting information that addresses the area(s) of concern or will withdraw its application for accreditation without prejudice. All monies and fees submitted to date will be considered payment for services rendered to date.

1. Review Passed: After additional review, the Reviewer may accept the written response and determine that accreditation status may be granted.
2. Review Failed: If the AMC still does not pass the review, the AMC will withdraw its application without prejudice or appeal its application to the Accreditation Review Board in accordance with 6.1 of the License Agreement.

An AMCI approved independent Reviewer other than the Reviewer that failed the AMC will conduct the Appeal. The Accreditation Review Board will review the documentation of the independent Reviewer. Upon review, the Review Board has the following options:

- Affirm the "failure."
- Permit further submittal of materials and information provided by the AMC.
- Grant Accreditation.

Upon affirmation of the “failure” (see 3b above), the Accreditation Review Board will permit further submittal of materials and information provided by the AMC. If the AMC elects to submit the additional requested materials there will be an additional \$500 appeals fee payable by the appealing AMC to AMCI.

An AMC failing to obtain accreditation is not eligible to reapply for a period of six months after notification of failure or withdrawing its application.



## Step 6- Send Completed Review Forms to AMC Institute

When the review is complete, the Reviewer will send a copy of page one of the Reviewer's Report (Form 1004) to AMCI. The reviewer should also send a copy of pages one and two of this report back to you, the accrediting firm.

## Step 7 – Approval from AMC Institute

AMCI will check the review report submitted by the reviewer to determine completeness. If the paperwork indicates the review has been passed, AMCI will update information in the database and send a congratulatory email with accreditation logos, a press release template, and Form 1007- Procedures of Alleged Violations of AMC Institute Accreditation Standards. Form 1007 should be signed and returned to AMCI. AMCI will prepare and send the Certificate of Accreditation to the newly accredited AMC.

## License Agreement

Form 1003 – The License Agreement sets forth the requirements for use and display of the AMCI Accreditation Mark. All accredited firms are required to sign and conform to the license agreement. Failure to do so may result in actions up to and including revocation of the accreditation.

## Accreditation Review Board (ARB)

The Accreditation Review Board (ARB) is the body given authority to review and consider any and all alleged violations of the AMC Institute Accreditation Standards by accredited firms. The Accreditation Review Board is comprised of 4-6 representatives from Accredited AMCI members in good standing, appointed by the Chair of the AMCI Board.

## Violations of AMC Institute Accreditation Standards

The AMCI Accreditation program defines very clear criteria and procedures for addressing reported or alleged violations of the Accreditation Standards by accredited firms and corresponding disciplinary actions. These policies and disciplinary actions are set forth to ensure the credibility of the program and to advance the standards of the industry.

- Accredited AMCs agree to be bound by the AMC Institute Standard
- Accredited AMCs must sign an affirmation of intent to comply with the AMC Institute Standard and these Procedures for Alleged Violations of AMC Institute Accreditation Standards with initial Accreditation and every reaccreditation.
- Accredited AMCs will not, in any way, attempt to persuade, induce, or coerce another AMC to breach the AMC Institute Standard, and acknowledge and agree that inducing a breach is to be considered a violation of the same.
- Accredited AMCs will be responsible for any violation by their agents, representatives, and employees if the ARB finds, after considering all the facts and circumstances, that the responsible member has authorized, condoned, or supported such a violation, or in any other way failed to prevent a violation from occurring where the responsible member had actual knowledge of the violation.

## Policies and Procedures for Alleged Violations

The policies and procedures for alleged violations of the AMC Institute Accreditation Standards and directions for submitting a complaint are contained in Form 1007 and are as follows:

### Submitting a Complaint

All complaints MUST be filed IN WRITING and signed by an authorized official of the complaining party (*Complainant*).

Should AMCI receive an inquiry or complaint by phone, mail, or in person, staff will inform the Complainant of procedures to officially file a complaint. It may be that an individual is simply making an inquiry as to clarification of a policy or procedure, in which case staff may provide guidance and resolve the issue. In this case the inquiry would not be considered an official complaint. Should staff determine based on the information provided that an actual procedure may have been violated the Complainant will be so advised and instructed to submit a written complaint.

It is the Complainant's responsibility to submit a formal, written complaint to AMCI. If no written complaint is received within thirty (30) days, no further action will be taken on behalf of the Complainant.

The written complaint must state with specificity the section of the Accreditation Standard that the AMC is alleged to have violated, and include all data, allegations, information or documentation supporting the allegation. The Complainant shall include a statement that grants a limited waiver of confidentiality for the sole purpose of allowing the members of the ARB to fully investigate the complaint.

The ARB will advise the Complainant that any information pertaining to the complaint may be provided to concerned parties, including, but not limited to, members of the ARB, the Board of Appeals (a *group of experienced members called upon to share their expertise and provide advice upon review of a complaint during the appeals process - all decisions made by the Board of Appeals are final*), potential witnesses, the accused member (*Respondent*) and, if necessary, members of the Board of Directors. The Complainant will be advised that refusal to waive confidentiality may impede the investigation conducted by the ARB.

Should a complaint be filed directly against AMCI and/or its staff members, the complaint will be immediately assigned to the ARB. The ARB will then take full responsibility for processing the complaint and handling all administrative aspects involving the Formal Complaint Procedure.

### Acknowledgement and Responses

If it is determined by the ARB review that the complaint is valid, AMCI staff will notify the Respondent AMC of the complaint with any appropriate documentation and that he/she has thirty (30) days to file a formal response to the complaint. The Respondent may respond to the allegations in the complaint, which should include all data, information, and documentation supporting its position. A description of corrective measures taken or intended to be taken may be included. Failure by the Respondent to provide a response within thirty (30) days will result in a default judgment with no right of appeal. The response will be reviewed by the ARB and shared with the Complainant.

## Determination

Once the ARB has received a response and any documentation from the Respondent, the ARB may investigate anything contained in the documentation at its sole discretion. This may be assigned to one member of the ARB or to the entire ARB. The ARB may, at its sole discretion, hold a hearing under the terms and conditions it deems appropriate. Within thirty (30) days of receiving the response, or, if a hearing is held, within 30 days of the hearing, the ARB will make a determination on the matter. All members of the ARB will have a vote. The ARB may determine that a violation has occurred only upon a finding of clear and convincing evidence by a unanimous vote of the ARB.

If the ARB determines that a violation has occurred, the ARB will then decide by majority vote as to the sanction to be imposed. The determination will then be mailed to all parties via certified mail, return receipt, or overnight delivery with signature confirmation and receipt. Whatever the outcome of the determination, either party will have the right of appeal under Section 4.

## Accepting Judgment

Either party will have the right, within fifteen (15) days of receiving an ARB decision, to request a further review which will be conducted by a Board of Appeals. If neither party files an appeal within fifteen (15) days, the decision of the ARB will be final. The Respondent and the Complainant will each have the right to be represented by their own legal counsel.

## Board of Appeals Procedure

The proceeding before the Board of Appeals will be based on written submissions by the interested parties per the schedule set forth below.

To initiate an appeal, the appealing party will file a notice of appeal and supporting brief specifically stating the grounds for appeal. The ARB will then provide, within thirty (30) days, the entire record of all information and proceedings to the Board of Appeals. The responding party will have thirty (30) days from the filing of the appeal to provide a response brief to the Board of Appeals. The Chair of the Board of Appeals will conduct the appeal process and may solicit further information from any and all parties involved. All correspondence will be delivered to the AMCI headquarters via certified mail, return receipt requested, or overnight delivery. AMCI headquarters staff will compile the appeals information from both parties for the Board of Appeals review.

The Board of Appeals will consider the appeal at its next meeting held after the reply submission is filed. All matters heard on appeal will be submitted in a written presentation. If the Board of Appeals deems it necessary, it will hear oral presentations by the parties. The Board of Appeals will render a final determination within thirty (30) days following the meeting at which the appeal is addressed. A unanimous vote of the Board of Appeals finding that the ARB decision was clearly erroneous is necessary to overturn a determination of the ARB. The decision of the Board of Appeals will be final.

The Chair of the Board of Appeals will notify the Complainant and the Respondent of the Board of Appeals' determination and any recommendations within twenty-four (24) hours of the final decision.

Any cost related to this arbitration process shall be paid by the accredited AMC in full. If the ruling is in favor of the accredited AMC, AMC Institute will reimburse fifty percent (50%) of the expense related to the arbitration process.

## Sanctions

If it is determined that grounds exist to take disciplinary action against an accredited AMC, one or more of the following actions may be taken or such other action(s) as the ARB may deem appropriate:

1. Require the AMC to engage in remedial education and/or training;
2. Suspend AMC's accreditation for a period of time and/or require the AMC to participate in a mandatory audit of continuing education for a period of time;
3. Deny an accredited AMC application for reaccreditation for a period of time;
4. Publish findings and sanctions in AMCI publications;
5. Notify other legitimately interested parties of findings and disciplinary action.

## Mailing Instructions

All complaints should be filed **IN WRITING** and signed by the chief official of the complaining party. The following items, found within Form 1007, must be submitted in order for AMCI to review and process your complaint:

- Formal, written complaint and supporting documentation
- Submittal Form (Form #1), including a brief statement on how this complaint directly relates to a violation of the AMC Institute Standard
- Authorization Form (Form #2)

All documentation listed above should be submitted directly to:

AMC Institute  
1940 Duke Street, Suite 200  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
703-570-8954

Email: [ecarter@amcinstitute.org](mailto:ecarter@amcinstitute.org)

## Maintaining Accreditation

AMCI Accreditation is maintained through an annual maintenance fee and a periodic reaccreditation process.

Accreditation is valid for four (4) years from the initial accreditation (or re-accreditation) date listed on the approval notice sent from AMCI. Reaccreditation occurs at the end of this four (4) year cycle.

To maintain your accreditation, AMCs must pay a **yearly maintenance fee** (see Program Fees, page 15).

## Annual Maintenance

The accredited company agrees to the license agreement, a display of the accreditation mark, and an annual maintenance fee. The current annual maintenance fee is \$550 for members and \$1,100 for non-members (see Program Fees, page 15). You will receive an invoice each year prior to your anniversary date.

Accreditation status will be revoked from any AMC that fails to pay any annual maintenance fee. Fees must be sent to AMCI within sixty (60) days of the annual maintenance due date. Any account not resolved within ninety (90) days after the due date shall be cause for revocation of the Accreditation License Agreement.

Reinstatement of this Agreement is obtained upon the payment of all outstanding charges plus a \$500 reinstatement fee (see Program Fees, page 15). If reinstatement is not obtained, AMCI may, after ninety (90) days, inform the AMC of the permanent revocation.

## Reaccreditation

In order to maintain AMCI Accreditation Status, AMCs are required to apply for reaccreditation every four (4) years. The process is similar to the initial accreditation process but using a different set of forms and fees. The reaccreditation fee is the same amount as a maintenance fee payment.

There are helpful checklists and sample policies in the AMC Accreditation Workbook to assist with the process.

Review the current AMC Standard and the processes that were submitted during your original application to insure your firm's policies and procedures are aligned with the standard and implement any updates needed. The AMC Standards are subject to change periodically. **Always use the most current version of the Standard available on AMCI's website.**

- Submit the following forms with the associated fees to AMC Institute.
  - Form 1002 – Declaration of Intent for AMC Institute Accreditation
  - Form 1003 – License Agreement
  - Form 1005 – Reviewer's Commitment
  - AICPA's Release of Information Form
- Plan to schedule your reviewer's visit no later than one month prior to your accreditation anniversary date.
- After the review submit Form 1004 - Reviewer's Report, no less than three weeks prior to your reaccreditation due date to allow time for processing.
- Once approved, the AMC must reaffirm their understanding of the Procedures for Alleged Violations of AMC Institute Accreditation Status, and must resubmit Form 1007.

## Extension Requests for Reaccreditation

Accredited AMCs may request a three-month extension due to the following circumstances:

1. Serious Illness of person(s) responsible for accreditation
2. Bereavement
3. Family Emergency
4. Extreme work commitments – Covering for a co-worker who is seriously ill.
5. Major event that effects operation of business (fire, flooding, etc.)

The AMC:

1. Must request the extension sixty (60) days prior to accreditation expiration.
2. Must present a rationale for the request and descriptive timeline of action to be taken with the extension request.

Extensions will not be granted due to:

1. Financial issues
2. Staffing issues (accept as listed above)

Three month extensions are calculated from the original reaccreditation due date. Similarly, the new reaccreditation expiration date will be calculated from the original reaccreditation due date.

Only one 3-month extension will be granted.

Extension requests will be reviewed by AMC Institute's Chief Executive Officer. Decisions on extension requests will be issued within thirty (30) days of receipt of the request.

## Failure to Reaccredit

If companies do not meet the deadline for reaccreditation, a letter will be sent by legal counsel informing them that they will need to remove all accreditation logos and references from their website and promotional material.

## Revocation of Accreditation

An AMC's accreditation shall be revoked by AMCI at any time where failure to comply with the AMC Standard is determined. Failure to pay annual maintenance fees or to reaccredit are also causes for revocation.

## Guide to Forms

Form 1001	Beginning the AMC Institute Accreditation Process	Interested/beginning the process
Form 1002	Declaration of Intent for AMC Institute Accreditation	Ready to start review process
Form 1003	License Agreement	Use of Accreditation Mark
Form 1004	Review Report	Completed by Reviewer after review
Form 1005	Reviewer Commitment	Designates the reviewer
Form 1006	Accreditation Fee Schedule	AMCI Fees for Accreditation
Form 1007	Procedures for Alleged Violations of AMC Institute Accreditation Standards	Policies and procedures for filing a complaint

## Programs Fees

The following table provides a summary of fees paid directly to AMCI. Costs associated with independent reviews are determined between the accrediting firm and the reviewer and are outside of the scope of this document. AMCI fees are subject to change.

Member Type	Initial Accreditation Fee	Annual Accreditation Maintenance Fee	Accreditation Reinstatement Fee
Member	\$1400	\$550	\$500
Non-Member	\$2800	\$1100	\$500

## Charter Accredited

All AMCs granted AMC Institute Accreditation status between August 1, 2002 and May 1, 2003 are considered CHARTER ACCREDITED AMCs.