



# Guide for New Applicants

## Environmental Choice New Zealand

### About this Guide

The purpose of this Guide is to help you to:

- understand how applications for Environmental Choice New Zealand (ECNZ) licences are processed; and
- progress as quickly, easily and cost-effectively as possible through your application assessment.

### Your Environmental Choice New Zealand Verifier

The New Zealand Ecolabelling Trust (The Trust) will appoint a verifier to assess your application for an ECNZ licence and to report to The Trust.

The verifier will be an independent and experienced environmental specialist, who has been trained and is on The Trust's register of approved verifiers. All approved verifiers have signed the Trust's Code of Ethics.

All ECNZ verifiers complete their assessments under a time and cost contract with The Trust, which begins from the time they are appointed to process an application.

### Getting Started

Your verifier will contact you very soon after you have lodged your application with The Trust. He or she will:

- introduce him or herself and provide you with contact details;
- confirm and clarify information on your application form and collect additional details about your products or services and when you expect to be ready for the assessment to begin;
- ensure you have a copy of the relevant ECNZ specification and Assessment Checklist for your products.

You should take this opportunity to ask any questions you may have about the application process or the specification requirements.

### Scope of Work for the Verification

The first task for your verifier is to establish the scope of work required to assess your licence application. This will depend on a number of factors, including:

- what type of products/services you are seeking a licence for (some specifications have more complex requirements than others);
- how many products/services you want to be assessed;
- where your products are manufactured (or services are delivered), including different manufacturing and distribution locations if your product involves a number of different manufacturing processes;
- what information will need to be assessed on-site and which sites will need to be visited;
- how much information (data, records, technical reports) the verifier will need to review.

Your verifier may require some more information from you, for example details about your suppliers and supply chain and about your management and records systems. You may find it helpful to have an initial meeting with your verifier to discuss the scope of the assessment work that will be required by you and your verifier.

### ***How can you help?***

Be clear at the beginning of the process what product ranges/services and their supply chains are included in your application. A change of supplier or raw material means extra assessment work.

Provide your verifier with sufficient information so that he or she can clearly understand your supply chain and company organisation – who makes what and where.

Consider additional products/services that you may wish to have licensed in the near future and ensure that any on-site assessment covers any relevant processes. This should remove the need for an additional site visit later.

Let your verifier know if you have other ecolabels or environmental management system certifications and if copies of assessment/audit reports are available. If information in these reports is relevant and reliable the verifier will be able to streamline his or her assessment work.

### **Verification Fee Proposal**

Your verifier will prepare a formal work and fee proposal for The Trust. This will set out the expected scope of assessment work (including details of site visits required) and an **estimate** of the total assessment cost (including the work already completed to establish the scope of the assessment).

The Trust will forward details of the scope of work and fee estimate to you, including a 5% administration charge. The Trust will ask you to confirm your acceptance of the scope of work and fee estimate, before any further work begins and you incur any further costs.

### **The verification process – providing information**

#### ***The Assessment Checklist***

Before the verification process proper can begin, you need to ensure you can provide all the information required in the Assessment Checklist.

Read the relevant ECNZ specification and the Checklist carefully, including the “Verification Required” sections, as this will help you identify what information is required for each clause in the specification.

Ask your verifier questions, if you are not quite certain what is required or how a clause should be interpreted. An early meeting with your verifier to run through the checklist may be helpful.

#### ***Supporting information***

Remember that your verifier will be looking for evidence to show that all the products/services you are seeking a licence for meet all the relevant requirements in the specification.

Some supporting information may need to be viewed on-site, for example some production records or by inspection of processes or products. The relevant supporting evidence may also be “buried” in technical documents and reports. Being sure you provide relevant, complete and well organised supporting information will significantly reduce the time your verifier needs to spend reviewing it, and in turn, the cost of your assessment.

Discuss with your verifier what information is most appropriate to send in advance of your assessment and what is best assessed during the site visit. In general, copies of certificates, licences, permits, SDS and reports etc should be sent to the verifier in advance and a review of manufacturing records, monitoring results, electronic QA records etc is best done on site.

Please note that you will be asked to provide evidence to substantiate any environmental claims you make about your product or services (e.g. natural, sustainable, recyclable). This could include evidence you have gathered in order to meet your obligations of substantiation under the Fair Trading Act.

**The verification process - on-site verification**

Your verifier will review your supporting information and will then plan any on-site work needed to complete the verification. He or she will contact you to:

- arrange a time(s);
- discuss what he or she will need to see, who he or she will need to meet with and how much time this is likely to take; and
- confirm your health and safety requirements, including the PPE he or she will need during the site visit..

**Applicant Statement on Compliance**

The Applicant Statement on Compliance is a form your verifier will provide you with towards the end of the verification process. There are some details that need to be carefully completed on the form to be certain that the declaration accurately reflects your products/services (including, for some questions, boxes that need to be ticked).

The Applicant Statement on Compliance is an important document that your Chief Executive or other authorised representative of your company must sign. A signed Applicant Statement on Compliance means you:

- have assembled and reviewed all the required supporting information; and
- are confident that the evidence you have provided demonstrates that your products or services meet all the relevant requirements of the ECNZ specification.

**The Verifier's Report to The Trust**

When your verifier has completed all the assessment work (including reviewing additional information required after the on-site visit), he or she will prepare a report to The Trust. The report will comprise:

- a brief letter report including the verifier's overall findings and recommendation about issue of a licence and products/services to be included on the licence;
- a completed Assessment Checklist, providing a record of the evidence your verifier has seen to confirm your products/services comply with the specification;

- a copy of your signed Applicant Statement on Compliance; and
- a recommended Licence Supervision Plan.

**Issuing your Licence**

The Trust will review your verifier's report and recommendations. If The Trust accepts the recommendation that a licence be issued, The Trust will send you a letter/email advising you of The Trust's decision.

The letter/email from The Trust will include your licence number and a copy of your verifier's report and all attachments.

**Supervision verification**

The Trust or your appointed ECNZ verifier will be in contact with you when a supervision verification is required by your Licence Supervision Plan. This will involve reviews of records and periodic follow-up on-site assessment.