B Corp Certification Guide for Small Enterprises

How small businesses can become
Certified B Corporations

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1 Requirements of Becoming a Certified B Corporation

Certified

B®

Corporation

Getting started

This guide will provide you with a general overview of the internal processes and tools used to achieve B Corp Certification, as well as clear expectations of the workload and resources that you'll need to accomplish your goal of becoming a Certified B Corp. We've developed it with input from businesses that have gone through the process, gleaning useful tips and practices to address commonly experienced barriers and challenges.

The guide will serve as your resource during the certification journey; however, we at B Lab and Sistema B will also work directly with you along the way. **Use the map on the B Lab Global website to find the B Lab or Sistema B organization near you.**

Understand the requirements of becoming a Certified B Corporation

The first step towards becoming a B Corp is to complete the **free and confidential B Impact Assessment** online. We'll review your B Impact Assessment so that we can best apply our performance-based standards to your application. If you are recertifying, please review the FAQs on the final page of this guide.

Performance: Certified B Corporations must earn a score of at least 80 points on the **B Impact Assessment.** Scores are verified through a review process, which includes documentation, calls, and, possibly, onsite visits. B Corps must recertify every three years.

Transparency: B Corps are required to make their B Impact Assessment score reports public through the B Corp Directory on the B Lab Global website.

Legal: B Corps must amend their corporate governing documents or adopt a corporate form that explicitly requires the considerations of all stakeholders, not just shareholders, in their decision-making — this is known as stakeholder governance. **You can learn more by visiting the Legal Requirement page on the B Lab Global website.** *Please note: Small enterprise companies must complete the legal requirement before finalizing their certification.*

Another important requirement for becoming a Certified B Corp is the **Disclosure Questionnaire,** which is an unweighted group of Yes/No questions that allows a company to confidentially disclose any sensitive industries, practices, fines, or sanctions related to its business or partnerships. For companies pursuing B Corp Certification, the Disclosure Questionnaire is used in conjunction with background checks and B Lab's public complaints process to identify material negative impacts. The disclosures that are deemed material may, in rare circumstances, result in ineligibility, but more commonly result in no further action, additional transparency on the B Corp Public Profile, or required remediation.

2 Timing

Timing Considerations

B Corp Certification project timelines vary widely depending on resources dedicated to the project, operational complexity, target deadlines, marketing considerations, and other strategic objectives.

Timelines can range from **three to twelve months,** as some companies choose to delay certification in order to maximize their B Impact Assessment score, while others apply and begin the certification process as soon as they reach the 80-point threshold that is the minimum for certification.

Please note that timelines are approximate and subject to change based on submission rates and B Lab's capacity. After you have submitted your company's assessment, you and your colleagues will be able to reference the status of the review directly through the B Impact Assessment.

3 Impact & Information

3 Impact & Information

Keep in mind that for every answer you provide through the B Impact Assessment, you'll need to provide supporting documentation. Check out this **Knowledge Base** article for documentation tips.

This chart shows the areas that B Corp Certification may impact, and where information may be found in order to fulfill specific information requests.

Impact area	What's covered	Information found
Governance	mission and engagement; ethics and transparency	c-suite, finance, legal
Workers	financial security; health, wellness, and safety; career development; engagement and satisfaction	human resources
Community	diversity, equity, and inclusion; economic impact; civic engagement and giving; supply chain management	corporate social responsibility; human resources; procurement
Environment	environmental management; air and climate; water; land and life	purchasing; sustainability; facilities and operations
Customers	customer stewardship	sales and marketing; customer experience

4 Build Your B Team

4 Build Your B Team

Before you begin the certification process, you'll need to establish your B Team — the internal stakeholders and partners who will get you across the Certification finish line.

We've identified several roles below; however, one **Project Manager** can manage all of them. We know that for many small businesses, their B Team will be a team of one. We're here to help B Teams of all sizes.

Role, alphabetically	Responsibility
Finance	Answer revenue and expenditure questions
Human Resources	Answer employee benefit and demographic questions
Legal / General Counsel	Answer questions related to transparency and others needed to fulfil the legal requirement of B Corp Certification
Marketing & Communications	Answer education and communication questions
Procurement	Answer supply chain questions
Project Manager	The Project Manager or "B Keeper" or "B Champion" leads the B Team and is the most important role in the B Corp Certification process as they will work to gather the information necessary to complete the B Impact Assessment
Senior Leadership	Because certification involves a substantial time commitment and significant public transparency, we recommend securing the support of Senior Leadership
Sustainability	Answer environmental and social impact questions

Project managers may experience pushback when they request data and/or ask others to implement changes in order to meet B Corp Certification requirements. The table below highlights some strategies that other companies have found to be helpful in addressing these obstacles:

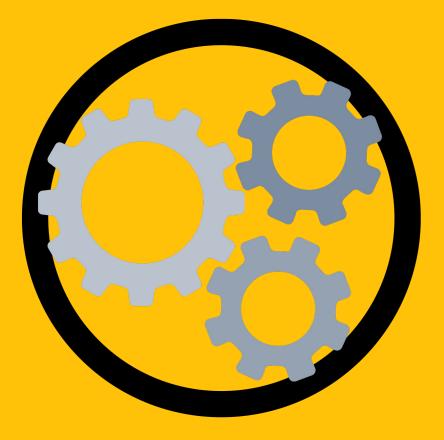| Strategies for Overcoming Obstacles |
| --- |
| Educate employees about B Corp Certification, sharing specific details on how their contribution matters to the process. |
| Show colleagues how the B Impact Assessment might help them achieve their goals and support their work. |
| Request support from B Lab for legal and transparency requirements. |
| If your operations are global, consider including a B Team member from each language group. |
| To receive answers, provide a list of questions in advance and/or conduct one-on-one interviews with information holders. |
| Consider dividing the work among B Team members; when asking for data or policy change, select the B Team member best suited to make the request. |
| Having a target date for certification will help keep the project moving forward. |
| Keep senior leaders informed about progress and the support needed to meet certification goals. |

4 Build Your B Team

As you begin collecting data, it's helpful to start educating your colleagues about what B Corp Certification is and why it's important. Answering the question, "What's in it for me?" for each part of your company is critical to the success of the project.

Team meetings help build excitement and engagement, which often translate into faster turnaround times for data collection. Establishing regular B Team meetings — with clear deadlines and resources for support — can help maintain the momentum needed to complete the assessment and build understanding of the importance of becoming a B Corp.

The B Corp community can also provide support. Use the B Corp Directory to research and reach out to companies in your industry. Within these companies, the individuals involved with the certification process are typically enthusiastic ambassadors and more than happy to help.

5 Certification & Verification Steps

Before you begin:

Here are some tips to keep in mind:

- You should accurately indicate the scope of your operations. For example, if your company has operations in multiple countries, the policy or practice in question should refer to at least 80% of your operations, employees, and facilities.
- Answering questions with "no" or "we don't track this" is acceptable when completing the B Impact Assessment.
- Responses should reflect the reality of business operations, not the aspirations of the company. We are more than willing to recognize policies, practices, or programs that are in nascent stages, but cannot assess those that have not yet been implemented.

Step 1: Register for the B Impact Assessment

This step will kick off the data collection phase in which the project manager will collect information required to complete the B Impact Assessment.

Step 2: Gather data & collect documentation

It is vital to keep detailed records of supporting documentation that you intend to submit through the B Impact Assessment. As you gather data, it's imperative that you track your methodology and back-up information, as you will be required to show your work at many points in the certification process. It also may be helpful to maintain a record of who provided the information and where it came from. You'll be able to track this with the comments function in the B Impact Assessment, along with any other notes.

Step 3: Take the B Impact Assessment

You can save and return to your assessment at any time. The information that you share through the B Impact Assessment is kept completely confidential. Please refer to our **Privacy Policy** for more information.

Step 4: Establish a Company Profile and Start the Disclosure Questionnaire

Once you have completed the majority of the assessment, you will be prompted to establish a company profile and begin the disclosure questionnaire (both contained within the B Impact Assessment). At this step, you may need the assistance of your legal team to answer the questions, as some request sensitive information.

Review your baseline score with your B Team and prioritize improvement areas by evaluating the available points, implementation difficulty, and feasibility. The Improvement Report and Goals functionality within the Assessment platform can help you get started.

Once you are over the 80-point benchmark (we recommend 85), you're ready to submit your B Impact Assessment!

Step 5: Submit your B Impact Assessment for Review

At this point, your company name will be visible in the reviews tab of the B Impact Assessment platform. There, you can see active tasks, respond to additional requests for action, and view due dates as your submission passes through multiple stages of review.

Step 6: Evaluation Queue

Now your submission will enter the evaluation queue, where a B Lab Evaluation Team analyst will review your B Impact Assessment and determine your company's eligibility for B Corp Certification.

You will also need an executive to sign the B Corp Statement, a quality assurance measure that ensures all responses were provided honestly and accurately. This is accompanied by a text description of how the B Impact Assessment was completed.

You will also be prompted to begin the process of meeting the Legal Requirement, which must be completed by the end of the review process (see step 9 for details).

Step 7: Evaluation

When your submission reaches the evaluation stage, **you will no longer be able to make changes to information you have submitted through the B Impact Assessment.** If you notice that something is incorrect, simply leave a comment on the question, indicate your proposed new answer, and provide supporting documentation; the analyst will take this new information into account. **A note on communication & notifications:** often the analyst will communicate with you via comments in the B Impact Assessment, and you'll receive an email when you have a notification. Be sure that your notifications are enabled so you don't miss a message from us.

During evaluation, the analyst will look over these aspects of your business in the following ways:

1. **Complex Structure Review** analyzes ownership and the structure of all entities and brands associated with your company.

2. **Controversial Industry Review** assesses your company's involvement in any of the industries B Lab has determined are controversial.

3. **Assessment Track Confirmation** looks at your selected B Impact Assessment track — including market, sector, size, industry, and industry category — to make sure that it is appropriate according to our standards. If the analyst determines that you need to change tracks, your submission will move back into the Review stage, which may result in additional questions to complete the assessment and/or a change to your company's score.

4. **Preliminary Scoring Screening** will include review of the Impact Business Model(s) that you selected in your B Impact Assessment. The questions associated with Impact Business Models are unique to our assessment and can be challenging; their review may result in a request for additional information and/or a change to your company's score.

5. **Define Verification Requirements** is the final check to make sure that your company is on the appropriate path for certification before entering the verification queue.

Please note that the analyst may close the review. If so, you will need to re-submit a B Impact Assessment and begin a new review process.

Step 8: Verification Queue

The verification stage is the most intensive and includes multiple rounds of review. Don't worry when your B Impact Assessment score changes — this happens to all companies during verification.

Once your submission has moved through the evaluation stage, you will be asked to complete the **Operational Highlights** section, which requests rationale for your Verification Report answers. You will need to select two questions in each impact area section of the B Impact Assessment — Governance, Workers, Community, Environment, and Customers — and detail your company's practices as related to that topic. Operational Highlights may represent practices that you:

- Currently report or market publicly through a website, social media, impact reports, etc.
- Are most proud of.
- Recently implemented to improve your company's impact.
- Believe to be unique in relation to your company's industry, size, geographic location, etc.

Step 9: Verification

Once Operational Highlights are completed and B Lab assigns an analyst to work with you, you'll continue to the verification process:

1. **Verification Report:** The analyst will begin by customizing your verification report.
2. **Review Call:** Then, the analyst will schedule a review call to clarify information and make edits to your B Impact Assessment.
3. **Documentation:** Finally, the analyst will request documentation to verify your Impact Business Model and information presented in the B Impact Assessment.
    - Documentation can include policies, reports, web links, presentations, agendas, or even photographs of why answer options selected apply to your company.

- You may use comments to clarify questions that were not addressed in the call or through documentation, and may include rationales, explanations, clarifications, and examples of why each answer option selected applies to the company.
- Although only one document can be uploaded per comment, questions may require multiple documents. Please leave multiple comments to upload multiple documents, indicate the pages within the uploaded document in which topics related to each answer option can be found, and provide a brief summary of what is stated in the document and why the document is relevant for the specific answer option selected.
- Your analyst may share additional instructions through the comments section; please follow these closely.
- In order to consider an answer verified, supporting evidence in the form of comments or documentation must be provided for each of the checkboxes selected within a question. When no evidence or comment is provided, those answers will be deselected and will negatively affect your score.

4. **Follow-Up:** Your analyst will provide at least one opportunity to provide follow-up documentation and comments after the review call.

By the end of this stage, all questions in the verification report will show a checkmark icon to indicate that they have been fully verified. At this point, if your company has not achieved a verified score of at least 80 points, the analyst will provide instructions on how to improve your B Impact Assessment score. You will also need to have fulfilled the Legal Requirement in order to move on to post-verification and certification.

Step 10: Post-Verification Stage

If your company has met the verified 80-point threshold as well as the Legal Requirement, you will move into the certification stage. There may be a few places in your B Impact Assessment that still require clarification and/or you may need to finalize steps related to the disclosure questionnaire section or the complex structure review.

Once all questions have been resolved, you will sign the B Corp Agreement, which states the terms of the B Corporation Certification, including the certification fee. This is an annual fee that is determined by your company's location and revenue; you can determine your certification fee by visiting the website of the B Lab or Sistema B organization in your region.

Step 11: Certification

In order to comply with the transparency requirement of B Corp Certification, you must create a public profile that includes your company's score and impact report in the B Corp Directory. For certain companies, additional transparency requirements, as outlined in the B Corp Agreement, may apply.

After certification, you can add the B Corp logo to product labels, printed materials, packaging, uniforms, email signatures, and more. Check out our **brand guidelines** for more information.

Step 12: Launch!

Congratulations, you made it! At this point, you may want to plan the announcement of your B Corp Certification — both internally with employees, board members, and shareholders, and externally with suppliers, vendors, and the public.

Certification launches are as unique as the companies that certify and should reflect your brand and corporate culture. Working with your marketing, public relations, and human resources teams, you can determine your short- and long-term communications goals. Customer and employee engagement with your announcement can be one of the most rewarding aspects of the process.

The next page has some ideas that other businesses have found helpful. Be sure to review our **brand guidelines** before taking action and connect with the B Lab or Sistema B organization in your region.

Internal Communications

- Announce your B Corp Certification on:
  - Internal messaging system / Intranet
  - Email
  - Company newsletter
  - Staff meetings
  - Flyers or posters
  - Host a certification celebration with employees
- Incorporate B Corp values into employee onboarding and training programs.
- Invite employees to join the B Hive if you're based in the US & Canada, and to follow B Lab Global and your local B Lab or Sistema B organization on social media.
- Include social and environmental metrics in employee job descriptions and evaluations.
- Post job openings on the B Work platform.
- Invite employees to join your internal B Team and focus on impact improvement.
- Add the B Corp logo to your company's email signature.

External Communications

Public relations:

- Submit a press release to newswires; pitch a story to media contacts and trade publications.
- Invite journalists, industry leaders, and other stakeholders to your launch party and plan a presentation sharing why you became a B Corp.
- Seek speaking engagements at trade shows, conferences, and other public events where you can highlight your B Corp Certification.

Website:

- Create a landing page announcing your B Corp Certification.
- Feature the B Corp logo on your website.
- Update your mission and/or vision statement to reflect your status.
- Write a series of blog posts about your journey to certification.

Social Media:

- Announce certification on your social media channels.
- Tag B Lab Global, your Global Partner, and allied B Corps for cross promotion.
- Share posts about your journey to certification.

Newsletter: Share the news with stakeholders through a personal email or newsletter.

Step 13: Continuous Improvement & Preparing for Recertification

Many companies use the B Corp Certification process as an ongoing methodology and tool for continuous innovation and improvement. Certification may also serve as a catalyst for your vendors and suppliers to improve their social and environmental impacts, and provides another way for you to engage customers and employees.

Some companies repeat the B Impact Assessment annually in order to closely monitor their goals and their path to recertification, which occurs every three years. The best practice is to begin your recertification a year before it is due; this will give you enough time to implement new practices that can raise your score.

In conclusion

Companies report exponential benefits from B Corp Certification. There's no question that the process is rigorous — and, at times, even onerous — but they agree that the rigor is what makes the process worthwhile and paves the way for more collaborative and inspired work. The B Impact Assessment serves as an excellent tool for breaking down silos, fostering innovation, and constructing a roadmap for continuous improvement. Some companies also develop stronger external relationships — with community members, vendors, suppliers, peers, and more — because of the certification process. But more importantly, they report how gratifying it is to serve as leaders in the movement that's transforming our global economic system to benefit all people, communities, and the planet.

6 Recertifying FAQs

When is the best time to submit the recertification B Impact Assessment?
It is important to submit the B Impact Assessment six months before your recertification date. This will ensure that your recertification is completed or in progress by the recertification date. You can find your recertification date on your dashboard when you log into the B Impact Assessment platform. Since the assessment is an annual reporting tool, please update the assessment with the most recently completed fiscal year information.

When will my company's recertification assessment be reviewed?
After you submit, the initial evaluation may take as much as two months; the full review may take up to three months. Delays can be experienced if new company information requires significant changes to be made to the B Impact Assessment.

Can you give me the name of the analyst who will be working on the assessment with me?
Once you complete the initial evaluation, you will be connected with the analyst who will be working with you on the review. In the meantime, you can ask questions through the B Impact Assessment platform, which will be addressed once the review process begins.

Can I delay recertification?
Companies should submit their assessment 6 months prior to the recertification date, posted on the B Impact Assessment platform dashboard, but no later than that date in order to remain in good standing. A Certified B Corp may forfeit that status if the submission has not occurred by the recertification date. If your company has any extenuating circumstances, please reach out to **support@bcorporation.net.**