



STEP-BY-STEP CERTIFICATION PROCESS CHECKLIST

For more detailed step-by-step guidance on the process for Certified California Sustainable Winegrowing (CCSW-Certified), please see Section 3 of the Certification Guidebook. All section references below correspond to a section in the Certification Guidebook.

STEP 1: Decide What to Certify

You first need to decide if you are certifying your entire operation, or just a portion of your operation. You cannot certify a product such as a quantity of wine, a wine brand, or grapes; only winery facilities and vineyards can be certified.

STEP 2: Submit Application and Enrollment Fee

Once you are ready to start the certification process, you will need to enroll with the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance (CSWA) by submitting the application form found at www.sustainablewinegrowing.org/certificationguidelines.php. You must also submit a check for the \$250 enrollment fee to CSWA by mail. The enrollment fee is a one-time set up charge for certification. (After you are certified there is an annual administration fee of \$150 for CSWA services in subsequent years.)

Applications are accepted year-round, however, if you are attempting to complete certification before harvest and do not complete the on-site audit before August 31st, you must complete a new self-assessment after September 1st. The new self-assessment completed after September 1st will be used by your auditor to complete the on-site audit. Please contact CSWA for any clarification on timing, if needed.

STEP 3: Complete Self-Assessment(s) and Check Requirements are Met

You can complete or update your SWP self-assessment(s) through the SWP online system, using a hard copy workbook, or during a self-assessment workshop. Self-assessments must be completed for all sites included in your certification. The natural unit of self-assessment is a winery or a vineyard. As a general rule, multiple vineyards or wineries may be grouped into one self-assessment only if each vineyard or facility is under the same management, within the same county, and achieves the same score on all criteria. CSWA strongly encourages all applicants to complete the self-assessment using the SWP online system. There are a number of features to the online system that will assist you in fulfilling the certification requirements more easily.

Use the online system and/or the certification requirements document available at www.sustainablewinegrowing.org/certificationguidelines.php to check that all certification requirements are met. You can run a report in the SWP online system called “Certification Audit Checklist” (available in the report dropdown menu) to easily see if you meet all the pre-requisites. Confirm that you have met all the 58 pre-requisites and have answered all the criteria that are mandatory to complete and are not allowed to be scored as N/A.

□ **STEP 4: Identify Priority Areas and Create Action Plans for Improvement**

After you have completed your SWP self-assessment(s) you can generate a SWP report comparing your practices against regional and statewide averages. These comparison reports allow you to identify and prioritize areas where improvements can be made in your operations. These reports will help you demonstrate to an auditor the process you used for making these determinations and why you prioritized certain criteria.

Action plan(s) should then be established for your priority areas. Action plan(s) should outline specific areas for improvement including action to be taken, timeframe, person(s) responsible, and current and target self-assessment score and/or other metric(s) to measure improvement. You are not required to have a certain number of action plans, but all SWP workbook pre-requisites must be met and priority areas should be addressed. See Section 9 in the Certification Guidebook or the SWP self-assessment workbook for action plan templates.

□ **STEP 5: Contract with a Third-Party Auditor**

After you have completed your self-assessment(s) and developed your action plans, use the list of CCSW-Certified Accredited Auditors to choose an auditor. The list of Accredited Auditors is available on the CSWA website or can be requested from CSWA. Contact your chosen auditor directly to schedule the audit and to develop a contract and determine payment. Please inform CSWA of your auditor choice so CSWA can give the auditor access to your online self-assessment scores. When a date for the on-site audit has been agreed, the auditor will confirm the arrangements via a pre-audit letter and a plan for the audit. The Audit Plan will outline the structure of the audit based on your organization's self-assessment(s).

□ **STEP 6: Prepare for the On-Site Audit**

You can prepare for the audit by compiling evidence to demonstrate your level of self-assessment scores. You can review evidence examples provided in the SWP online system, which are visible when you are completing the assessment, or in Section 10 and 12 of the Certification Guidebook. These examples are important and will assist you in the verification of your self-assessment scores and action plan(s). The more preparation you can do ahead of time will facilitate a more efficient on-site audit.

□ **STEP 7: Conduct On-Site Audit**

The auditor conducts a site visit to validate the self-assessment scores and verify conformance with the certification requirements. The site visit will follow the Audit Plan and will result in an audit report.

□ **STEP 8: Review Audit Report**

Your auditor will send you an audit report that includes information about everything that was covered during the on-site audit for your review. The audit report might also identify actions that need to be completed before certification can be awarded (these might include the need to create additional action plans to meet pre-requisites, the correction of self-assessment scores in the online system, or submission of additional documentary evidence).

□ **STEP 9: Complete Any Corrective Action(s), if necessary**

If the auditor has determined that corrective action(s) are required to meet the certification requirements you must complete them before certification can be awarded. Provide confirmation to the auditor along with any additional documentary evidence requested once the corrections have been made.

□ **STEP 10: Auditor Recommends Certification Status**

When all requirements for certification are satisfied (at the conclusion of the on-site audit or following completion of corrective actions), your auditor will send you the completed audit report for your signature. Once your auditor receives the signed audit report back, they will make a recommendation for certification and send a copy of the signed audit report to CSWA.

□ **STEP 11: CSWA Determines Certification Status**

After review of the auditor's recommendation for certification and audit report, the CSWA Certification Review Panel accepts or denies the recommendation at its quarterly meeting. If the certification is approved, you will receive a signed certificate, guidelines for communicating certification and a communications toolkit, and a form to complete that will be used to create your certification webpage for the CSWA website.

□ **STEP 12: Communicating Certification Status**

Once certification is awarded, you can use the certification logo and claim statement on your website, marketing materials, and secondary packaging, but not on the bottle, as defined in Section 4 of the Certification Guidebook.

□ **STEP 13: Annually Submit Self-Assessment and Action Plan(s)**

After the initial certification audit, you must update your online self-assessment(s) and action plan(s) annually to retain certification status. The on-site audits are on a three year cycle so for the intermediate years your auditor will review your annual SWP assessment(s) and action plan(s) during an off-site audit (see Section 3.2.3 of the Certification Guidebook for details). Multi-site organizations will follow a sampling approach for determining the frequency of on-site audits, as described in Section 3.2.4.

□ **STEP 14: Demonstrate Continuous Improvement**

Timely completion of action plan(s) is necessary to meet the certification program expectation of continuous improvement.

Please contact Lisa Francioni, CSWA Program Manager, with any questions about certification at lisa@sustainablewinegrowing.org or 415-356-7545.