



Improver<sup>BY</sup>  
Programme **asc**

# **Improver Programme by ASC Requirements (for Aquaculture Improvement Projects)**

Version 1.1

**1<sup>st</sup> October 2024**

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## Responsibility For These Requirements

Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) holds responsibility for this document.

For comments or questions regarding the content of this document, please contact the Improver Programme by ASC team via [AIPService@asc-aqua.org](mailto:AIPService@asc-aqua.org).

### Version Control:

Version:	Released Date	Effective Date	Description of Amendment
V 1.0	1 September 2023	1 September 2023	New document.
V 1.1	1 <sup>st</sup> October 2024	1 <sup>st</sup> October 2024	Corrected typos, corrected timelines and verification.

It is the responsibility of the user of the document to use the latest version as published on the ASC website.

To ensure the continued effectiveness of the ASC Standards, review of this document shall take place at least once every five years.

The next review of the Improver Programme by ASC Requirements is intended for 2027.

### Available language(s)

The official version of this document is English. The ASC may translate the Standard into additional languages, as necessary. In case of any inconsistencies and/or discrepancies between available translation(s) and the English version, the online English version (PDF format) will prevail.

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## About Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC)

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that operates a voluntary, independent third-party certification and labelling programme based on scientifically robust Standards.

The Standards define criteria that help to transform the aquaculture sector towards environmental sustainability and social responsibility, as per the ASC Mission.

### ASC Vision

Is a world where seafood farming plays a major role in supplying food and social benefits for humanity whilst minimising negative impacts on the environment.

### ASC Mission

Is to transform seafood farming towards environmental sustainability and social responsibility, creating value across the chain using market mechanisms, improvement incentives and delivering value-added services from farm to fork.

## Improver Programme by ASC

In line with ASC’s mission to transform aquaculture, seen as the fastest growing food sector in the world, only about 47% of global production is recognised as having responsible performance, with less than 4% achieving farm level certifications.

Improvement programs and pathways are not new to the industry but have struggled with lack of measurable progress and explicit frameworks to guide the process. The Improver Programme by ASC addresses these problems by establishing an improvement framework that makes certification and market opportunities accessible.

### Scope

This document comprises all administrative and process requirements that Applicant and existing Aquaculture Improvement Projects (AIPs), Improver Programme Implementers and Improver Programme Verifiers shall conform to, in addition to the requirements in the respective ASC Farm Standards.

### Improvement Scope

The Applicant AIP that seeks to improve its aquaculture practices is determined and adheres to the Improver Programme by ASC requirements as outlined in this document.

The Applicant AIP can choose the improvement scope for their Aquaculture Improvement Project (AIP):

- **AIP to ASC certification (AIP2ASC):** Aimed at improving practices to a level that is certifiable by the end of the AIP.
- **AIP to Better Practices (AIP2BP):** Aimed at improving responsible practices in specific environmental or social areas without ASC certification as the end-goal.

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## Biological and Geographic Scope

This document applies to all locations and scales of aquaculture production systems in the world.

## Normative References

The name of the programme is Improver Programme by ASC. The name ASC Improver Programme may also be used.

This document applies to the Applicant AIPs, ASC Improver Programme Implementers, and ASC Improver Programme Verifiers. Additional to this document, all listed documents below are important for implementation in the improvement phase.

The Applicant AIPs, ASC Improver Programme Implementers, and ASC Improver Programme Verifiers are strongly encouraged to read carefully the most recent versions and any guidance documents available for their understanding of the ASC Improver Programme Requirements and ASC Standard.

For references without dates or version numbers, the latest edition of the document referred to applies.

1. Improver Programme by ASC: See [Improver Programme by ASC Homepage](#)
2. ASC Farm Standard: See [Our Farm Standard](#)
3. MSC Chain of Custody (CoC) Standard: See [Our CoC Standard](#)
4. ASC Certification System: See [Our Certification System](#)
5. ASC Certification Requirements for Unit of Certification: See [ASC-RUoC](#)
6. ASC Variance Request Procedure: See [VR Procedure](#)
7. ASC GIS Tools and Guidance: See [ASC GIS Portal](#)

## Terms And Definitions

The definitions applicable to this document are available in Appendix 1 of this document.

The definitions applicable to the ASC Standards and Certification Systems are also available through [ASC's Vocabulary Portal](#).

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## Part A – Aquaculture Improvement Project (AIP)

### Applicant AIP and Formation

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Applicant AIP</b>	<b>1</b>	<p>Farms seeking to improve their aquaculture practices shall:</p> <p>1.1 Form an organisation or adapt an existing organisation (the AIP) that seeks to join the Improver Programme by ASC.</p> <p>1.2 The AIP applicant that is not an existing organisation may seek to join the Improver Programme by ASC if an existing organisation or individual who is part of the group is willing and able to enter a contract with ASC on behalf of the group.</p>
<b>AIP Eligibility</b>	<b>2</b>	<p>All applicant AIP Partners shall meet <b>ALL</b> the following eligibility criteria:</p> <p>2.1 <b>Legality:</b> possess valid license and permit to operate.</p> <p>2.2 <b>Environmental:</b> no deforestation of mangrove or natural wetlands after 1999 by any farm within the applicant AIP and farm(s) do not inhabit highly sensitive IUCN designated protected areas as identified in the requirements of ASC standards.</p> <p>2.3 <b>Social and Fraud Prevention:</b> has not been charged/convicted/admitted to any fraudulent practice or criminal act within the past 24 months before applying to be part of the applicant AIP.</p> <p>2.3.1 If an AIP Partner has been charged or admitted to fraudulent practice within the past 24 months, the Partner in question shall present to the applicant AIP proof of change(s) implemented to address the charge(s).</p> <p>2.4 <b>Capacity:</b> The applicant AIP has sufficient resources (e.g., budget, people) available to achieve its objective(s).</p> <p>2.5 <b>Commitment:</b> All applicants are committed to improve their practices and pursue the AIP improvement timeframe and requirements.</p>
<b>AIP Scope</b>	<b>3</b>	<p>The applicant AIP shall choose one improvement scope, according to its discretion and current level of performance.</p> <p>3.1 <b>AIP to ASC certification (AIP2ASC):</b> The applicant AIP that wish to improve practices to a level that is certifiable by the end of the AIP.</p> <p>3.2 <b>AIP to Better Practices (AIP2BP):</b> The applicant AIP that wish to improve responsible practices in specific environmental or social areas without ASC certification as the end-goal.</p>
<b>Formation</b>	<b>4</b>	<p>The applicant AIP may consist of one or more aquaculture farms where improvements are expected to be implemented and may include additional Partners. The farm or farms are Partners.</p> <p>If the scope is AIP2ASC, the applicant AIP may be formed as a Single Site, Multi-site or Group and shall implement, besides the ASC Standards the specific ASC requirements relating to the administration and internal management systems that are applicable to each of the expected certification type described in <a href="#">ASC RUoC</a>.</p>

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<p><b>A Single Site AIP2ASC</b></p>	<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>A Single Site:</b> One aquaculture farm having all the following elements:</p> <p>5.1 Capable of signing a binding contract that is legally enforceable.</p> <p>5.2 One production site, which has clear boundaries as described in the associated legal licenses and permits and may include multiple pens, cages, ponds, tanks, raceway systems or beds.</p>
<p><b>Multi-Site AIP2ASC</b></p>	<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>Multi-Site:</b> More than one aquaculture farms having all the following elements:</p> <p>6.1 Capable of signing a binding contract that is legally enforceable.</p> <p>6.2 Consisting of more than one site and all sites have clear boundary lines.</p> <p>6.3 All farms operate within the same jurisdiction or within neighbouring jurisdictions that share relevant common regulations.</p> <p>6.4 All farms shall be subject to and comply with the same ASC standard (e.g., shrimp).</p> <p>6.5 All farms shall operate in the same or similar production system.</p> <p>6.6 The applicant AIP is the only entity authorised to sell AIP products from all members.</p> <p>6.7 The applicant AIP may choose to apply for a multi-site either:</p> <p>6.7.1 Without Internal Management System (Option 1)</p> <p>6.7.2 With Internal Management System (Option 2)</p> <p>6.8 Other related ASC Multi-Site requirements may be applicable.</p>
<p><b>Group AIP2ASC</b></p>	<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>A Group:</b> More than one aquaculture farms having all the following elements:</p> <p>7.1 The applicant AIP representing all group members is capable of signing a binding contract that is legally enforceable.</p> <p>7.2 Each member in the group operates either a single site or a multi-site.</p> <p>7.3 All farms operate within the same jurisdiction or within neighbouring jurisdictions that share relevant common regulations.</p> <p>7.4 All farms shall be subject to and comply with the same ASC standard (e.g., shrimp).</p> <p>7.5 All farms shall operate in the same or similar production system.</p> <p>7.6 All farms shall be small-scale producers as defined by the ASC group requirements.</p> <p>7.7 Medium and large-scale producers may join the Group and comply with all requirements as a Group Member, but every site shall each be subject to external verification.</p> <p>7.8 The applicant AIP is the only entity authorised to sell AIP products from all members.</p> <p>7.9 A Group management body (GMB) is appointed to be in charge of implementing and monitoring compliance against the requirements of the Improver Programme by ASC, ASC Standard, and Group requirements.</p> <p>7.10 Other related ASC Group requirements may be applicable.</p>

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## Partners (General)

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Partners</b>	<b>8</b>	Any Partner, including supply chain partners, such as middlemen and collectors, governments, funders, investors and others, willing to support the Improver Programme by ASC and/or ASC AIPs may choose one of the engagement options below: 8.1 Option 1: AIP Partners 8.2 Option 2: Improver Programme by ASC Partners 8.3 Option 3: Combination Partners
<b>Partners</b>	<b>9</b>	Partners shall play an active role either in improving their operations (AIP Partners) or in supporting the goals of the Improver Programme by ASC (IP by ASC Partners).
<b>Feedback to AIP</b>	<b>10</b>	AIP Partners with supporting roles and Improver Programme by ASC Partners may share their feedback with the AIP after visiting the AIP improvement sites.

## AIP Partners (Option 1)

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>AIP Partners</b>	<b>11</b>	The AIP Partner may be <b>directly engaged</b> with an approved AIP or multiple AIPs. 11.1 The AIP Partner shall sign a Partnership Agreement (FORM B2) with the selected AIP(s) and shall be listed on the ASC website under the respective AIP(s) with indication of their role(s) in the AIP. 11.2 The AIP Partner, at their discretion, shall have access to farm sites and other facilities within the scope of the AIP to assess the progress of improvements made. 11.3 The AIP Partner may make claims about their engagement as laid out in the Improver Programme by ASC Claims guidelines. 11.4 If the role includes sourcing from the engaged AIP, the Supply Chain Partner shall report the purchased (and sold) volumes of products from the AIP in the format and manner specified by ASC. 11.5 The Partner engagement shall be subject to the AIP self-evaluations and ASC independent verification against the declared and agreed roles, responsibilities and obligations specified in the ASC Partnership Agreement and Improvement Plan(s).
<b>Lead Partners</b>	<b>12</b>	If the applicant AIP consists of more than one partner, a lead partner shall be appointed. Additional partners will serve supporting roles.
<b>Legal Entity</b>	<b>13</b>	An applicant AIP or its lead Partner shall be an incorporated or other legally recognised entity that can enter into a valid contract or be represented by an

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		existing organisation or individual willing to enter into an agreement with ASC for the purpose of establishing an AIP.
<b>Partnership Agreement</b>	<b>14</b>	The AIP Partnership Agreement shall be specific to an AIP and signed by all the AIP Partners.
<b>Content</b>	<b>15</b>	<p>The AIP Partnership Agreement shall describe/specify.</p> <p>15.1 Role, responsibility, and obligations (including financial support) of each AIP partner as agreed upon by all AIP Partners.</p> <p>15.2 Representative of the AIP who can speak on behalf of the AIP.</p> <p>15.3 The manner in which partners may represent their participation in the AIP.</p> <p>15.4 Improvement scope of the AIP that all Partners are committed to (AIP2ASC or AIP2BP).</p> <p>15.5 Decision-making mechanism(s) within the AIP relative to the AIP scope of activities. Including, but not limit to:</p> <p>15.5.1 Changing of the scope</p> <p>15.5.2 Adding new Partners</p> <p>15.5.3 Removing or leaving of AIP Partners</p> <p>15.6 Measures to be taken when a Partner does not adhere to terms and conditions specified in the Agreement.</p> <p>(FORM B2 - ASC AIP Partnership Agreement)</p>
<b>Being informed</b>	<b>16</b>	All AIP Partners shall be fully informed and updated on the Gap Analysis, the AIP’s Improvement Plan (and all updates to the AIP), and the findings of self-evaluations and external verifications.
<b>Resignation</b>	<b>17</b>	<p>AIP Partners may resign from the AIP at any time by submitting a letter to the AIP Manager with reason(s) for resignation.</p> <p>17.1 The AIP shall acknowledge the resignation of a Partner in writing.</p>
<b>Additions</b>	<b>18</b>	<p>Addition of new Partners to the AIP:</p> <p>18.1 Any party may apply to an AIP listed on the ASC website to become a Partner.</p> <p>18.2 New Partners of the AIP shall:</p> <p>18.2.1 Meet all the requirements for becoming a Partner,</p> <p>18.2.2 Be formally accepted and approved by the AIP, and</p> <p>18.2.3 Sign an AIP Partnership Agreement.</p> <p>18.3 The AIP should consider the following criteria, in addition to those the AIP has established, when evaluating the eligibility of applicant Partners to the AIP:</p> <p>18.3.1 The capacity of the applicant to reasonably meet the ASC requirements in the AIP’s improvement plan within the AIP’s (remaining) timeline.</p> <p>18.3.2 The willingness of the applicant to commit to the AIP’s Improvement Plan.</p> <p>18.3.3 The capacity of current AIP Partners to support the applicant.</p>

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<b>Inform Change to ASC</b>	<b>19</b>	The AIP Manager shall amend the AIP Partner Registry of Partners to reflect the resignations or additions and send to ASC within 3 days of the respective decision (FORM B3) for updating the AIP page on the ASC website.
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### IP by ASC Partners (Option 2)

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Improver Programme by ASC Partners</b>	<b>20</b>	The Partner may be <b>engaged in the Improver Programme by ASC</b> via ASC (Improver Programme by ASC Partners): 20.1 The Improver Programme by ASC Partner shall sign an Agreement with ASC (Improver Programme by ASC Partner Agreement) to state their intent and type of support (Form B8). 20.2 The Improver Programme by ASC Partners and their type of engagement shall be listed on the ASC website.
<b>Partners Benefit</b>	<b>21</b>	The Improver Programme by ASC Partners may: 21.1 Make claims about their engagement, following Improver Programme by ASC claim guidelines. 21.2 Request ASC to facilitate visits to AIPs and their improvements sites from which they source, support or have interest in.
<b>Supply Chain Partners</b>	<b>22</b>	The Supply Chain Partners: 22.1 May source products from any active AIPs listed on the ASC website that have the status "Active". 22.2 Shall commit to sourcing increasing volumes of products from ASC AIPs over time while continuing to source ASC certified products and not replacing the latter with the former in volume terms. 22.3 Shall report accurate purchased (and sold) volumes of products from ASC AIPs in the form and manner transparently specified by the ASC. 22.4 Shall be subject to ASC's monitoring and evaluation of its engagement.
<b>Partners Status</b>	<b>23</b>	ASC shall publish a summary of the status of the Improver Programme by ASC on a yearly basis, informing the Partner of results of their engagement.

### Combination Partners (Option 3)

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Combination Partners (Option 3)</b>	<b>24</b>	The Partner may be <b>directly engaged</b> with a listed AIP and <b>engage in the Improver Programme by ASC</b> via ASC. 24.1 The details of such a combination shall be agreed with ASC before it is signed or implemented.

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**AIP Manager**

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>New Appoint</b>	<b>25</b>	The applicant AIP shall appoint an individual as AIP Manager and inform ASC. 25.1 The new AIP Manager shall be added to the ASC IP's Portal and published on the ASC website.
<b>Listed</b>	<b>26</b>	ASC shall maintain a list of current and former AIP Managers for all AIPs.
<b>Role &amp; Responsibility</b>	<b>27</b>	The AIP Manager shall: 27.1 Be part of either the lead Partner or AIP farmers. 27.2 Be the contact person for communication with ASC. 27.3 Be the contact person for communication with other AIP related parties including Partners within the AIP, the implementer, verifier, and other service providers. 27.4 Maintain the AIP Registry of Farm Sites (FORM B3).
<b>Document Submission</b>	<b>28</b>	Any document (e.g. self-evaluations) submitted to ASC shall be submitted by the AIP Manager with the support of the ASC Approved Implementer(s) appointed by the AIP.

## Part B – AIP Process

### AIP Applications

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Submission</b>	<b>29</b>	The AIP shall submit a completed AIP Application (FORM B4) to ASC.
<b>Application Review</b>	<b>30</b>	<p>ASC shall review the application.</p> <p>30.1 ASC shall contact the AIP Manager if further information is required.</p> <p>30.2 ASC shall either accept or reject the application based on the following criteria:</p> <p>30.2.1 Eligibility of the applicant AIP or Partners.</p> <p>30.2.2 Completeness of the Application form.</p> <p>30.2.3 Accuracy of the information provided.</p> <p>30.2.4 Truthfulness of the declaration; and</p> <p>30.2.5 Any previously failed applications, projects, or ASC certifications due to irreconcilable compliance or conformance issues.</p> <p>30.3 Applications will be reviewed based on capacity and the objectives of the programme</p>
<b>Rejected Application</b>	<b>31</b>	<p>If the application is rejected by ASC:</p> <p>31.1 ASC shall explain its reason(s) and indicate the steps that will need to be taken, if any, for the applicant to re-submit its application.</p> <p>31.2 An application that is revised and re-submitted shall be subject to the same review and decision process as used for the initial application.</p>
<b>Accepted Application</b>	<b>32</b>	<p>If the application is accepted:</p> <p>32.1 The AIP shall sign an Agreement with ASC (ASC/AIP Agreement Template - Form B5)</p> <p>32.2 ASC shall publish an up-to-date list of approved AIPs on its website with respective status being: Active, Successfully Completed, Not Completed, Yellow Card, Suspended, Removed, or Voluntary Cancellation.</p>

### Appointment of an AIP Implementer

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Implementer Appointment</b>	<b>33</b>	Once the AIP application has been accepted by ASC, the AIP shall appoint an Implementer(s) to assist the AIP in all aspects of the project: conducting a gap analysis, developing and implementing the Improvement Plan, conducting self-evaluation, preparing for verification, and supporting the Improvement Plan implementation.

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		<p>33.1 The AIP shall appoint only ASC approved Implementer(s), who are listed on the ASC website.</p> <p>33.2 The AIP may appoint more than one Implementer to support its improvement efforts.</p> <p>33.3 The AIP appointed Implementer may be in-house or hired externally as long as the requirements for Implementers are met.</p>
<b>Implementer Dismissed</b>	<b>34</b>	<p>The AIP may remove the Implementer(s) and may appoint new Implementer(s) at any time.</p> <p>34.1. When an implementer(s) is removed, the AIP shall inform the Implementer(s) being changed of the reason(s) for the AIP's decision.</p> <p>34.2 The AIP shall inform all AIP Partners and the ASC of the removal and appointment of new implementer(s) (Form B13) or update its AIP details on the ASC IP platform.</p>
<b>Performance Evaluation</b>	<b>35</b>	<p>At a minimum, the AIP shall submit to ASC its evaluation and feedback of the performance of the Implementer(s) when an Implementer leaves or is replaced and at the end of the project (FORM B12).</p>

### Conduct a Gap Analysis

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Gap Analysis</b>	<b>36</b>	<p>All aquaculture farms within the AIP shall be assessed against a predefined set of requirements, depending on the end goal of the AIP (AIP2ASC or AIP2BP).</p> <p>A Gap Analysis shall be conducted by using FORM B6-ASC and instructions therein - AIP Gap Analysis Template.</p> <p>The AIP formed as Multi-site AIP2ASC or Group AIP2ASC shall require to be assessed against the applicable management system requirements, specified by the ASC RUoC.</p>
<b>AIP2ASC</b>	<b>37</b>	<p>The AIP2ASC shall conduct and complete the respective Gap Analysis package, comprising of a set of Eligibility, Essential, Mandatory, Completion and Reporting requirements and indicators against the applicable ASC Farm Standard.</p>
<b>AIP2BP</b>	<b>38</b>	<p>The AIP2BP shall conduct and complete the respective Gap Analysis indicators, comprising of a set of Eligibility, Essential, Mandatory, Completion and Reporting requirements and indicators against the desired level (s) of performance in topical areas that AIP Partners agree to improve when applied to an AIP.</p>
<b>CoC and Social requirements</b>	<b>39</b>	<p>Processing facilities that are recognised AIP Partners, but do not already hold an ASC CoC Certification, may decide to improve and thus be analysed against the MSC Chain of Custody (CoC) requirements and ASC Social Standard indicators (FORM B14).</p>
<b>Change of Scope</b>	<b>40</b>	<p>The AIP shall conduct an addendum Gap Analysis and submit to ASC a Change of Scope Form (FORM B4A) if changes the AIP scope from AIP2BP to AIP2ASC.</p>

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		40.1 Change from AIP2ASC to AIP2BP is not allowed.
<b>Adding new farm</b>	<b>41</b>	A Gap Analysis shall be conducted on any new farm against the relevant standard indicators. 41.1 The AIP Gap Analysis and Improvement Plan shall be updated accordingly and submitted to ASC.
<b>ASC Approved Implementer</b>	<b>42</b>	All Gap Analyses shall be conducted by ASC-approved Implementers who are listed on the ASC website. 42.1 If the Gap Analysis is conducted by unapproved Implementers, the Gap Analysis results shall not be accepted.
<b>Evidence-based</b>	<b>43</b>	A Gap Analysis shall be conducted to analyse the AIP’s current level of performance against the designated requirements. The results shall be written clearly with supporting evidence to ensure objectivity and evidence-based analysis.
<b>Gap Analysis Results</b>	<b>44</b>	All AIP Partners shall be informed and updated on the Gap Analysis results.

### Improvement Plan

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Implementer</b>	<b>45</b>	The AIP shall develop its Improvement Plan (FORM B6) based on the Gap Analysis results, with support of the AIP appointed Implementer.
<b>Improvement Plans</b>	<b>46</b>	<p>All improvement actions shall be planned in such a way that their execution and effectiveness can be verified before the target completion date of the AIP.</p> <p>The improvement actions shall specify the AIP’s commitment in terms of the percentage (%) of implementation and shall be planned by considering a completion timeframe required by ASC IP requirements in each phase.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Phase 1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maximum six (6) months after Improvement Plan is approved.</li> <li>○ Completed 100% of Essential + <b>10% Mandatory</b> + an elective % of Completion requirements/ indicators.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Phase 2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maximum 12 months after phase 1</li> <li>○ Completed 100% of Essential + <b>40% Mandatory</b> + an elective % of Completion requirements/ indicators.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Phase 3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maximum 12 months after phase 2</li> <li>○ Completed 100% of Essential + <b>70% Mandatory</b> + an elective % of Completion requirements/ indicators.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Phase 4</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Before the last self- evaluation and last verification</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed 100% of Essential + <b>100% Mandatory</b> + <b>100% of Completion</b> requirements/ indicators.</li> </ul>
<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>47</b>	The Improvement Plan shall have a maximum time frame of three (3) years from its approval date.
<b>Self-Evaluation</b>	<b>48</b>	The Improvement Plan shall include planned self-evaluations following the above maximum timelines throughout the AIP lifetime.
<b>AIP Partner Agreement</b>	<b>49</b>	<p>All AIP Partners or their representatives shall agree on the Improvement Plan.</p> <p>49.1 Improvement actions shall be assigned to AIP Partners according to their respective roles, responsibilities and obligations specified in the signed AIP Partnership Agreement.</p> <p>49.2 The AIP shall establish and maintain internal mechanisms for decision making and complaint/appeal processes.</p>
<b>Submission</b>	<b>50</b>	The AIP shall submit the Improvement Plan together with the Gap Analysis to ASC for review within two (2) months from the AIP application approval date.
<b>Review by ASC</b>	<b>51</b>	ASC should review and take a decision on the submitted Improvement Plan within two (2) weeks upon receipt
<b>Rejected or Approved Improvement Plan</b>	<b>52</b>	<p>ASC may reject or approve the (revised) Improvement Plan based on the following criteria:</p> <p>52.1 Completeness of the Improvement Plan and Gap Analysis;</p> <p>52.2 Consistency between the Improvement Plan and Gap Analysis;</p> <p>52.3 Correct use of the AIP templates for Gap Analysis and Improvement Plan;</p> <p>52.4 Information provided by stakeholders differing from the submitted one by the AIP.</p> <p>If the Improvement Plan is rejected, ASC shall notify the AIP with justification and recommendation for adjustment within three (3) days from the decision date.</p>
<b>Status updating</b>	<b>53</b>	The ASC shall update the AIP status on the ASC website when the Gap Analysis and Improvement Plan are approved.
<b>Review and Update by AIP</b>	<b>54</b>	The AIP shall review and update the Improvement Plan after each self-evaluation, independent verification, or Partner's visit feedback, and submit the revised Improvement Plan to the ASC for review and update.
<b>Record Keeping</b>	<b>55</b>	The AIP shall keep all records related to the implementation of improvement actions for self-evaluation and independent verification purposes.

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## Self-Evaluation and Self-Reporting

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Appointed Implementer</b>	<b>56</b>	The self-evaluation, root cause analysis and proposed corrective actions shall be conducted with support of the AIP appointed Implementer.
<b>Self-evaluations</b>	<b>57</b>	The focus of self-evaluations shall be placed on: 57.1 The progress of implementation of the approved Improvement actions. 57.2 Whether the expected outcomes of the improvement actions are achieved. 57.3 Whether the Improvement Plan needs to be updated; and 57.4 Correctness and accuracy of claims being made by the AIP Partners.
<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>58</b>	The self-evaluation of the implementation progress shall be conducted according to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Phase 1:</b> The first self-evaluation shall be conducted at six (6) months from the date of approval of the Improvement Plan</li> <li>• <b>Phase 2 – 3:</b> The AIP shall conduct subsequent self-evaluations as a minimum every 12 months or at the end of each phase after the first self-evaluation.</li> <li>• <b>Phase 4:</b> The last self-evaluation shall be conducted in time to allow for a final verification to sign off the AIP completion.</li> </ul>
<b>On-site evaluation</b>	<b>59</b>	As part of the self-evaluation, the AIP shall evaluate on-site improvements at AIP Partners premises as defined in the Improvement Plan. 59.1 Performance of each farm/processor site should be evaluated on-site at least once per year. The ASC may approve remote verification in low risk situation situations. 59.2 Farm performance against metric standard indicators shall be recorded in the self-evaluation report (FORM B6).
<b>Root cause (s) and Corrective Actions</b>	<b>60</b>	If the progress does not meet the target, within five (5) days of completion of the self-evaluation the AIP shall analyse the root cause(s) with relevant Partners and propose corrective actions (FORM 6) to prevent recurrence.
<b>Date submission</b>	<b>61</b>	Within two (2) weeks of completion of each self-evaluation, the AIP shall submit the self-evaluation report, including the root cause analysis and corrective actions, if applicable, to ASC to arrange external verifications.
<b>Completion Indicators</b>	<b>62</b>	The AIP shall record in the self-evaluation report the actual percentage achieved of Completion requirements and indicators.  If the improvement actions against Completion requirements and indicators are not completed by the specified timelines, they shall become Mandatory in the next self-evaluation. (Upgraded)

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<b>Update and inform</b>	<b>63</b>	The AIP shall update all AIP Partners on the self-evaluation, root cause analysis and corrective actions, if applicable.
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### Periodic Independent Verification

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Verifier</b>	<b>64</b>	The ASC shall appoint an independent Verifier for the AIP, who is approved and listed on the Improver Programme by ASC Database.
<b>Change Verifier by ASC</b>	<b>65</b>	During the course of the AIP, the ASC may change the Verifier if and when it is deemed necessary. The ASC shall communicate the reason(s) for change to the AIP.
<b>Change Verifier by AIP</b>	<b>66</b>	<p>The AIP may request a change of the Verifier via email to ASC, if there is evidence that the verifier:</p> <p>66.1 Lacks the required competence to conduct the verification effectively.</p> <p>66.2 Lacks the qualifications to conduct the verification; or</p> <p>66.3 Professional attitude is inappropriate</p>
<b>Timing</b>	<b>67</b>	<p>The independent verification shall be conducted according to the timeframe below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Phase 1:</b> The first independent verification shall take place within a maximum of twelve weeks following submission of the first self-evaluation report.</li> <li><b>Phase 2 – 4:</b> Within the AIP lifetime, the AIP shall receive an independent verification per phase, including a final one to sign off the AIP completion.</li> </ul> <p>At least one independent verification must be conducted during the harvesting of the principal product included in the AIP, throughout all phases of the programme.</p> <p>The focus of the independent verification shall be placed on the progress made in the past phase of the AIP. For the final verification, all applicable indicators should be verified.</p>
<b>Planning</b>	<b>68</b>	<p>ASC shall inform the AIP of the verification visit at least 1 month prior to the actual verification.</p> <p>68.1 Failure of the AIP to arrange for the verification to take place may result in potential suspension or removal from the Improver Programme by ASC.</p> <p>68.2 An AIP being removed from the Improver Programme by ASC due to this reason shall not be admitted back within 12 months from the date of removal.</p>
<b>Stakeholders' engagement</b>	<b>69</b>	<p>The Verifier shall reach out to identify stakeholders to collect additional information and/or interview them during the verification.</p> <p>69.1 This shall be documented in the verification report.</p>

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<b>Risk Assessment Tool</b>	<b>70</b>	For each verification, the Verifier shall follow the verification instructions provided in the AIP Risk Assessment Tool.
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>71</b>	The Verifier shall verify the self-evaluation results by interviewing AIP Partners, their staff, the AIP Manager; reviewing records, and inspecting farm sites and facilities where improvements are expected to happen on-site.  The verification may be conducted remotely or on-site.
<b>Full Access to AIP</b>	<b>72</b>	The AIP shall provide the Verifier with full remote and physical access to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documents and records relevant to the AIP implementation, including relevant purchasing and sale records and use of claims by its Partners.</li> <li>• AIP Partners and their staff for interviews.</li> <li>• All Operations and sites within the scope of AIP.</li> <li>• Take samples for testing as required.</li> </ul>
<b>Verification Report</b>	<b>73</b>	The Verifier shall prepare the verification report (FORM B7) that shall include at a minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details of deficiencies with objective evidence for each.</li> <li>• List of the sampled and verified sites; and</li> <li>• Recommended measure(s) to address the deficiencies of the AIP (see section on Measures below).</li> </ul>
<b>Draft Report</b>	<b>74</b>	The Verifier shall submit the draft verification report to ASC and the AIP at the same time within <b>two (2) weeks</b> upon completion of the verification. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If needed, the AIP may be requested to provide additional information and/or data to conclude the verification.</li> </ul>
<b>Action needs from AIP</b>	<b>75</b>	Upon receiving the draft verification report, the AIP Manager shall inform all AIP Partners about the verification results as well as actions to address deficiencies and areas for improvement identified by the Verifier. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The AIP may have one round of clarification on the verification report with the Verifier before it is finalised within the specified timeframe.</li> </ul>
<b>Final Report</b>	<b>76</b>	The final verification report, including any additional information and/or data and clarification from the AIP, shall be completed within <b>four (4) weeks</b> of the completion of the verification visit.
<b>Update Improvement Plan</b>	<b>77</b>	The AIP shall update the Improvement Plan to include the actions identified in the final verification report.  The revised Improvement Plan shall be submitted to ASC within <b>two (2) weeks</b> upon receipt of the final verification report.
<b>Status Updates</b>	<b>78</b>	ASC shall update the AIP Status on the ASC website according to the measures recommended by the Verifier.

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## Measures against AIP deficiencies

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>AIP Deficiencies</b>	<b>79</b>	AIP deficiencies may be identified during self-evaluation, independent verification, or visits by AIP Partners or the Improver Programme by ASC Partners.
<b>Categories</b>	<b>80</b>	Deficiencies shall be categorised as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type 1: Delay in meeting targets;</li> <li>• Type 2: Making claims without ASC's prior approval or any other inappropriate or prohibited use of ASC AIP claims;</li> <li>• Type 3: Selling more product than the AIP produced.</li> </ul>
<b>Root Cause Analysis</b>	<b>81</b>	The AIP shall conduct a root cause analysis of the identified deficiencies and implement corrective actions to address the issues and prevent recurrence.
<b>Prevent recurrence</b>	<b>82</b>	The AIP may decide to take internally agreed upon measures when deficiencies are repeated by the AIP itself or by AIP Partners.
<b>Risk Analysis</b>	<b>83</b>	The Verifier shall consider the following factors at the aggregated level of the deficiency situation to recommend corresponding measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequency of the deficiency occurrence</li> <li>• Severity of the deficiencies.</li> </ul>
<b>Yellow Card</b>	<b>84</b>	The Verifier may recommend to ASC the following measure(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send a Warning Letter to the AIP and flag a Yellow card on the ASC website for the AIP.</li> <li>• No immediate effects on the AIP, but the AIP shall take immediate actions to address the situation within a maximum of <b>three (3) months</b> from the publication date of the final verification report.</li> <li>• The AIP shall submit evidence of implementation of immediate actions to the Verifier and ASC within the given three (3) month period.</li> </ul>
<b>Suspension</b>	<b>85</b>	<p>Failure to submit evidence shall escalate to the AIP suspension.</p> <p>85.1 The AIP will be suspended for up to <b>six (6) months</b> and the AIP status will change from "Active" or "Active with Yellow card" to "Suspended".</p> <p>85.2 AIP Partners shall stop making and suspend any AIP-related claims from the suspension date and for the entire suspension period.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AIP Partners shall stop selling and reporting products from the AIP.</li> <li>• The AIP shall take actions to address the suspension reasons and submit evidence to the Verifier and ASC.</li> </ul> <p>85.3 The six-month suspension period, starting from the publication date of the final verification report, shall not be extended.</p>

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<b>Removed/Fail</b>	<b>86</b>	<p>Failure to address the deficiency situation within the given <b>six-month period</b> shall result in removing the AIP from the Improver Programme by ASC. The following actions will occur:</p> <p>86.1 Removal of the AIP from the Improver Programme by ASC and changing of the AIP status from "Active" or "Suspended" to "Removed".</p> <p>86.2 AIP Partners shall stop making and suspend any AIP related claims from the removal date.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AIP Partners shall stop selling and reporting products from the AIP.</li> <li>• AIP Partners may not form a new AIP or join an active AIP for <b>a period of up to 12 months</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>No extension</b>	<b>87</b>	The initial AIP completion date shall not be extended due to imposed Measures.

### Completion of the AIP

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>AIP Timeframe</b>	<b>88</b>	<p>The AIP shall be completed under one of the following conditions, at a minimum:</p> <p>88.1 Within a maximum of three (3) years from the approval date of the Improvement Plan or</p> <p>88.2 At the end of approved phase 4, or</p> <p>88.3 At any time provided the results of the verification report satisfy and comply with all requirements and indicators.</p>
<b>Early Completion</b>	<b>89</b>	The AIP may complete its Improvement Plan before the deadline for completion.
<b>Extension</b>	<b>90</b>	<p>A one-time extension of six (6) months may be granted, if ALL conditions below are met:</p> <p>90.1 The AIP applies for extension at least six (6) months prior to the project deadline, using FORM B10.</p> <p>90.2 The extension application shall include justifiable reason(s) and a proposal for an adjusted Improvement Plan.</p> <p>90.3 The AIP has not received any Warning Letter (Yellow card) or been suspended throughout the duration of the AIP.</p> <p>All changes to the AIP's scope and timelines on the ASC website shall be made transparently and in a timely manner by ASC.</p>
<b>Completion</b>	<b>91</b>	<p>A final verification visit shall be conducted to sign off on the implementation of the Improvement Plan.</p> <p>91.1 The final status of the AIP may be either (i) "Successfully Completed" or (ii) "Not Completed".</p>



<b>Pre-assessment</b>	<b>92</b>	The AIP with the AIP2ASC objective may discuss with ASC to arrange for a combined final verification and pre-assessment of the certification process.
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### Product from the AIP

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>AIP Products</b>	<b>93</b>	Only products coming from AIP partner farms registered with the AIP shall be marketed and sold as AIP products.
<b>ASC Logo Use not allowed</b>	<b>94</b>	Product coming from the AIP shall not bear any ASC related logo or label on B2B or B2C pack.
<b>Data Record</b>	<b>95</b>	<p>The AIP shall document the flow of products coming from farms and processing facilities within the AIP, before the product leaves the AIP.</p> <p>95.1 The AIP shall provide required key production data of each farm site and processing operations in the manner and at the time, and frequency specified by ASC. Key Data Element (KDE) may be applied.</p> <p>95.2 The AIP shall keep all records of each crop stocked, grown, harvested, and processed, including sold volumes.</p>

### Improver Programme by ASC Claims

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Claims</b>	<b>96</b>	<p>All AIP Partners and Improver Programme by ASC Partners may make claims using ASC pre-defined template to highlight their efforts and engagement in ASC AIP(s) or IP by ASC.</p> <p>If all AIP Partners and Improver Programme by ASC Partners wish to make claims using the Improver Programme by ASC Identifier, a Licensing Agreement with ASC needs to be signed. All claims require to meet the rules defined in the AIP Logo User Guide.</p>
<b>Claim approval</b>	<b>97</b>	All claims and their wording shall be approved by ASC before being used publicly or in other contexts (e.g., B2B materials).
<b>No ASC logo use</b>	<b>98</b>	Partners shall NOT use the ASC logo or label on-pack to communicate about product sourced from AIPs.
	<b>99</b>	All claims shall be dated as specified by the AIP Claims Procedure.

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	<b>100</b>	The use of claims shall be subject to verification for correctness, accuracy and evidence of engagement by those making the claims.
<b>Claims by the AIP Partners</b>	<b>101</b>	AIP Partners shall only make claims that align with their agreed roles, responsibilities and obligations as specified in the AIP Partner Agreement.
<b>First Claims</b>	<b>102</b>	AIP Partners shall only make claims after the first independent verification confirms that improvement actions have been implemented as planned.
<b>Successfully Completed</b>	<b>103</b>	Partners of a “Successfully Completed” AIP may make post-AIP claims and shall reference the specific AIP in which they were engaged on the ASC website.
<b>Not Completed AIP</b>	<b>104</b>	Partners of a “Not Completed AIP” shall immediately stop making any claims upon acceptance of the final verification report with the conclusion that the AIP was not completed.
<b>Breaching Rules</b>	<b>105</b>	Partners of a “Not Completed AIP” found to be continuing to make any ASC AIP claim shall not be admitted to any future ASC AIP or ASC certification, either individually or as part of another AIP or group.

### Dispute, Complaint and Appeal Mechanisms

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Mechanisms operated by the AIP.</b>	<b>106</b>	The AIP shall have transparent mechanisms to handle and resolve disputes, complaints and/or appeals raised by Partners.  All AIP Partners shall be informed of and knowledgeable about how to use the mechanisms when necessary.
<b>Appeal by the AIP to ASC</b>	<b>107</b>	The AIP may file a complaint to ASC regarding the performance of their Implementer or ASC-appointed Verifier.  107.1 The AIP may appeal decisions taken by Verifiers and ASC concerning the approval of the AIP application, Improvement Plan, Verification Report, and imposed Measures using FORM B11 - AIP Complaint or Appeal.  107.2 ASC shall handle complaints and appeals from AIPs and Partners in accordance with the Improver Programme by ASC Disputes procedure, which ensures transparency and fairness to all parties involved.



## Part C – ASC IMROVER PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTERS

### Eligibility and Qualification

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Qualification</b>	<b>108</b>	<p>Individuals or organisation seeking approval as Implementers shall meet all the required competencies specified below</p> <p><b>108.1 Education:</b> Have a degree or higher education diploma.</p> <p><b>108.2 Experience:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One year actual working on aquaculture or agriculture farm(s)</li> <li>• Successfully completed/managed five (5) projects in capacity building and/or extension services for (small/aquaculture) farmers.</li> </ul> <p><b>108.3 Professional training:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project management training</li> <li>• Successfully completed ASC training on standard(s), including social topics</li> <li>• Successfully completed Improver Programme by ASC training</li> <li>• MSC/ASC CoC training</li> </ul> <p><b>108.4 Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solid technical knowledge about aquaculture and seafood sector</li> <li>• Understanding of social and environmental issues, especially in aquaculture</li> <li>• Understanding of Quality Management System and Documentation</li> <li>• Understanding of Law and Regulations related to aquaculture.</li> <li>• Good knowledge of local context</li> </ul> <p><b>108.5 Soft skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to communicate clearly and effectively.</li> <li>• Analytical skills</li> <li>• Skills and interest in working with people.</li> </ul> <p><b>108.6 Language(s)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to speak the local language(s) and to communicate in English</li> </ul>
<b>Eligibility</b>	<b>109</b>	<p>Applicant Implementers may be self-employed or employed by a company or organisation.</p>
<b>Conflict of Interest</b>	<b>110</b>	<p>Applicant Implementers shall not be employed, either part time or full time for an organisation that is an applicant-to-be or approved as an Improver Programme by ASC Verifier, or for a CAB that is either seeking or holds ASC accreditation.</p> <p>110.1 Applicant Implementers shall disclose to ASC any connection with those companies or organisations within the past three (3) years prior to applying to become an IP Implementer.</p>

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## Application Procedure

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Application Submission</b>	<b>111</b>	<p>Individuals seeking to be approved as Implementers shall submit the Implementer Application form (C-1) with accompanying evidence of required competencies.</p> <p>111.1 Applicant Implementers may submit the application first while pending evidence for professional training.</p>
<b>Team Lead Appointment</b>	<b>112</b>	<p>Applicant Implementers may be more than one person or a team/organisation. Appointment of a Team Lead may be required with these roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>112.1 To liaise and communicate with ASC and AIP Partners.</p> <p>112.2 To oversee the team member's qualifications to ensure they meet the Improver Programme by ASC Requirements.</p> <p>112.3 To identify training needs and planning.</p> <p>112.4 Establish internal control and performance monitoring measurement.</p>
<b>Evidence</b>	<b>113</b>	<p>Applicant Implementers shall complete his or her application with the evidence within a maximum of three (3) months, or the application process shall start anew.</p>
<b>ASC first receiving</b>	<b>114</b>	<p>ASC shall acknowledge in writing within one (1) week of receipt of the application.</p> <p>The acknowledgement shall indicate whether or not the application is complete.</p>
<b>Reviewing</b>	<b>115</b>	<p>ASC may decide to interview the applicant Implementer when reviewing their application.</p>
<b>Rejected</b>	<b>116</b>	<p>The review decision (approved/not approved) shall be taken within a maximum of <b>four (4) weeks</b> of receipt of a complete application form.</p> <p>116.1 ASC shall inform the applicant Implementer in writing and of specific reason(s), should the application be rejected.</p> <p>116.2 Applicants whose applications were not accepted may re-apply once the reasons for non-acceptance have been effectively addressed.</p>
<b>Internal / External resources</b>	<b>117</b>	<p>ASC shall only approve individuals as Implementers; however, approved Implementers may work for an AIP Partner, not for profit organisation or other company or association.</p>
<b>Registration Number</b>	<b>118</b>	<p>ASC shall assign a unique registration number for each approved Implementer and publish agreed details on the website.</p>

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<b>Published on website</b>	<b>119</b>	<p>Once published on the ASC website, approved Implementers may promote their services using the designation “<b>ASC Approved Implementer</b>” along with their registration number.</p> <p>119.1 Any texts related to Improver Programme by ASC used to promote their service portfolio shall be submitted to ASC for official approval.</p> <p>119.2 Communicating about Improver Programme by ASC without prior approval of the text shall result in a Warning letter and a Yellow card on the ASC website.</p>
<b>Using non-ASC approved materials</b>	<b>120</b>	<p>Approved Implementers may disseminate ASC-approved information about the Improver Programme by ASC.</p> <p>120.1 Using non-ASC approved materials for promoting the Improver Programme by ASC shall result in a Warning letter and a Yellow card on the ASC website.</p>

### Maintain Qualification

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Maintain Qualification</b>	<b>121</b>	<p>To maintain qualification, the approved Implementers shall meet ALL requirements specified below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support an AIP within a maximum of 12 months after being approved by ASC.</li> <li>• Support at least one AIP at any point in time</li> <li>• Participate in training on changes to the Improver Programme by ASC prior to the changes coming into effect.</li> <li>• Participate in Improver Programme by ASC calibration sessions organised by ASC.</li> <li>• Participate and contribute to Improver Programme by ASC discussion forum with other approved Implementers, Verifiers and ASC staff providing technical content to discussions.</li> <li>• Positive feedback/evaluation by the AIP(s) receiving the Implementer support.</li> </ul> <p>The record shall be submitted to the Improver Programme by ASC Database</p>
<b>Feedback from AIPs</b>	<b>122</b>	<p>ASC shall have the right to visit or interview AIPs receiving support from approved Implementers as a means to evaluate Implementers' performance.</p>
<b>Transparency</b>	<b>123</b>	<p>ASC shall publish Implementer Performance on the website on a yearly basis based on a transparent Implementer performance evaluation mechanism.</p>

## Part D – IMPROVER PROGRAMME BY ASC VERIFIERS

### Eligibility and Qualification

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Qualification</b>	<b>124</b>	<p>Individuals seeking to be approved as verifiers shall meet all the required competencies specified below</p> <p><b>124.1 Education:</b> Have a degree or higher education diploma.</p> <p><b>124.2 Experience:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One year actual working on aquaculture or agriculture farm(s)</li> <li>• Successfully As an active (lead) auditor (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> party) for at least five (5) audits or ten (10) audit days, or conducted at least three (3) project evaluations prior to application to become ASC Verifier</li> </ul> <p><b>124.3 Professional training:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successfully completed an ISO 19011 based auditor training.</li> <li>• Training on project management and evaluation</li> <li>• Successfully completed ASC training on standard(s), including social topics</li> <li>• Successfully completed Improver Programme by ASC training</li> <li>• MSC/ASC CoC training</li> </ul> <p><b>124.4 Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solid technical knowledge about aquaculture and seafood sector</li> <li>• Understanding of social and environmental issues, especially in aquaculture</li> <li>• Good knowledge of local context</li> </ul> <p><b>124.5 Soft skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to communicate clearly and effectively.</li> <li>• Analytical skills</li> <li>• Skills and interest in working with people.</li> </ul> <p><b>124.6 Language(s)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaking local language(s) and ability to communicate in English</li> </ul>
<b>Employment</b>	<b>125</b>	<p>Applicant Verifiers may be self-employed or employed by a company or organisation.</p> <p>125.1 If being employed by a company or organisation, applicant Verifiers shall have an official permission to be ASC Verifiers and to conduct ASC verification.</p>
<b>Conflict of Interests</b>	<b>126</b>	<p>Applicant Verifiers shall not be working in any capacity with or for an organisation that is a Partner of an applicant or existing ASC AIP.</p> <p>126.1 Applicant Verifiers shall disclose their employment history or list of projects which they were involved in capacity of the past three (3) years prior to submitting the ASC Verifier Application.</p>

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## Application Procedure

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Application Submission</b>	<b>127</b>	Individuals seeking to be approved as Verifiers shall submit the verifier Application form (D-1) with accompanying evidence of required competencies.  127.1 Applicant Verifiers may submit the application first while pending evidence for professional training.
<b>Evidence</b>	<b>128</b>	Applicant Verifiers shall complete his or her application with the evidence within a maximum of three (3) months, or the application process shall start anew.
<b>ASC first receiving</b>	<b>129</b>	ASC shall acknowledge in writing within one (1) week of receipt of the application. The acknowledgement shall indicate whether or not the application is complete.
<b>Reviewing Process</b>	<b>130</b>	ASC may decide to interview the applicant Verifiers when reviewing their application.
	<b>131</b>	ASC may decide to witness a trial verification by applicant Verifiers before taking the approval decision.
	<b>132</b>	The witnessing of the verification may be remote or on-site by an ASC designated staff member or agent, including another experienced approved Verifier.
<b>Rejected</b>	<b>133</b>	The review decision (approved/not approved) shall be taken within a maximum of four (4) weeks of receipt of a complete application form.  133.1 ASC shall inform the applicant Verifiers in writing and of specific reason(s), should the application be rejected.  133.2 Applicant Verifiers whose applications were not accepted may re-apply once the reasons for non-acceptance have been effectively addressed.
<b>Approval</b>	<b>134</b>	Upon approval, a service contract shall be signed by ASC and approved Verifiers
<b>Registration Number</b>	<b>135</b>	ASC shall assign a unique registration number for each approved Verifiers and publish agreed details on the website.
<b>Published on website</b>	<b>136</b>	Once published on the ASC website; approved Verifiers may promote their services using the designation 'Approved ASC-IP Verifier' along with their registration number.  136.1 Any texts related to the Improver Programme by ASC used to promote their service portfolio shall be submitted to ASC for official approval.  136.2 Communicating about the Improver Programme by ASC without prior approval of the text shall result in a Warning letter and a Yellow card on the ASC website

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<b>Using non-ASC approved materials</b>	<b>137</b>	<p>Approved ASC Improver Programme Verifiers may disseminate ASC approved information about the Improver Programme by ASC</p> <p>137.1 Using non-ASC approved materials for promoting the Improver Programme by ASC shall result in a Warning letter and a Yellow card on the ASC website.</p>
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### Improver Programme by ASC Verification

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Assignment from ASC</b>	<b>138</b>	<p>Verifiers shall only receive verification work orders from ASC.</p> <p>138.1 Approved Verifiers shall follow risk-based instructions in the verification work order.</p> <p>138.2 Any verification conducted without ASC's knowledge shall be invalid and shall have an effect on Verifier performance evaluation.</p>
<b>Change of assignment</b>	<b>139</b>	<p>A Verifier assigned to an AIP may be changed by ASC depending on circumstances or based on the AIP request due to competency and/or a lack of professional attitude.</p>
<b>Witness by ASC</b>	<b>140</b>	<p>ASC shall have the right to witness any verification with or without prior notice, remotely or in person on site.</p> <p>140.1 Verifications may be witnessed by ASC staff members or ASC designated agents, including another experienced approved Verifier.</p>

### Maintain Qualification

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Maintain Qualification</b>	<b>141</b>	<p>To maintain qualification, the approved Verifiers shall meet ALL requirements specified below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a verification within a maximum of 12 months after being approved by ASC.</li> <li>• Conduct at least one verification a year.</li> <li>• Participate in training on changes to the Improver Programme by ASC prior to the changes coming into effect.</li> <li>• Participate in Improver Programme by ASC calibration sessions organised by ASC.</li> <li>• Participate and contribute to Improver Programme by ASC discussion forums with other approved Implementers, Verifiers and ASC staff providing technical content to discussions.</li> <li>• Positive feedback/evaluation by the verified AIP(s).</li> </ul>
<b>Feedback from AIPs</b>	<b>142</b>	<p>ASC shall have the right to contact verified AIPs to receive their feedback to evaluate Verifier's performance.</p>

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<b>Transparency</b>	<b>143</b>	ASC shall publish Verifier's Performance on the website on a yearly basis based on a transparent performance evaluation mechanism.
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**Impartiality of Verifiers and CABs**

KEY	NO.	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Conflict of Interests</b>	<b>144</b>	CABs may be involved in ASC AIPs as Verifiers but shall not be involved afterwards in certification of any AIP that the CAB or any member of the audit team has worked with for one full certification cycle of the AIP in question.
	<b>145</b>	<p>Verifiers shall disclose to ASC and any ASC Accredited CABs that they work for of any real or perceived conflicts of interest including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any ASC Accredited CABs that the implementer has worked for, either full time, part time or on a contract basis;</li> <li>Any involvement with farm groups that were applicants to or Partners in the Improver Programme by ASC.</li> </ul>



## Appendix 1: IP by ASC Vocabulary

	TERMS	DEFINITION
A	AIP	Aquaculture Improvement Project
	AIP2ASC	Aquaculture Improvement Project towards ASC Certification
	AIP2BP	Aquaculture Improvement Project towards <u>B</u> etter <u>P</u> ractices
	Applicant AIP	Group or organisation that has prepared, or is preparing to submit an application to be accepted into the Improver Programme by ASC.
	ASC Improver Programme Membership	An establishment organised and hosted by ASC consisting of companies, funds, investors, governments, NGOs, institutes, etc. that support and contribute into the Improver Programme by ASC through membership fees and/or in-kind contribution.
	AIP Partner	Company, producer or any other entity who want to be part of an AIP to improve their own practices/performance or support others within the AIP to improve their practices/performance via in-kind or in-cash contribution. AIP Partner Companies may source product from the AIP(s) that they are engaged in and will report sourcing data to the AIP and Improver Programme by ASC.
C	Claim	<p>Defined message/statement used to communicate about efforts and engagement in the ASC AIPs or the Improver Programme by ASC to set an organisation/company apart.</p> <p>Claims include any public or business to business message/statement or promotional communications.</p> <p><i>(adapted from <a href="#">ISEAL Sustainability Claim Good Practice Guide</a>)</i></p>
	Completion indicators and requirements	These are standard indicators and AIP requirements. The AIP can choose when they meet them as long as they are met before the AIP is concluded.
D	Deficiency	<p>Deficiency could be an outcome from self-evaluation, Partner's monitoring or in dependent verification. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delay in implementing improvement actions or in achieving targets as specified in the Improvement Plan.</li> <li>• Wrong use or abuse of an AIP claim or use without prior approval.</li> <li>• Overselling available product from AIP.</li> </ul>
	Detection Date	Date of the closing meeting when a non-conformity is reported to a client.

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<b>E</b>	<b>Eligible indicators and requirements</b>	Standard indicators and AIP requirements that must be met when applying to ASC be an AIP. These indicators and requirements are non-negotiable and must be met by applicant AIP Partners to be accepted into the Improver Programme by ASC.
	<b>Essential indicators and requirements</b>	These are standard indicators and AIP requirements that must be met at the end of Phase 1 of the AIP Improvement.
<b>F</b>	<b>Funder</b>	An individual, government entity or company that has given funds to an individual AIP or the Improver Programme by ASC.
<b>I</b>	<b>Implementer</b>	An individual or organisation that has been approved by ASC to help AIPs to implement the Improver Programme by ASC requirements.
	<b>Investor</b>	An individual, government entity or company that has invested in an AIP or ASC Improver Programme with an expectation to earn a return on the investment.
	<b>Improver Programme by ASC Partner (Member)</b>	Company, funder, investor, government, NGO, institute or any other entity who has an interest in and supports the Improver Programme by ASC through a membership fee and/or in-kind contribution (e.g. research, capacity development, etc.).  Improver Programme by ASC Partners are subject to verification of their claims and their actual contribution and/or sourcing practices.
<b>K</b>	<b>Key Production/Processing Data</b>	Key data at farm and processor levels required by the Improver Programme by ASC to enable monitoring and evaluation of impacts of the programme and managing the product volumes produced by AIPs.
<b>M</b>	<b>Mandatory indicators and requirements</b>	These are standard indicators and AIP requirements that must be met by a specified percentage at each Phase of the AIP Improvement Plan. Improvement areas proposed by the AIP with AIP2BP scope are automatically mandatory requirements.  Mandatory indicators and requirements are directly linked to the production of aquaculture species.
<b>V</b>	<b>Verification</b>	Independent confirmation of the self-evaluation results with regard to progress made in implementing the AIP's Improvement Plan through the provision of objective evidence. Verification for an AIP is conducted by an independent Verifier appointed by ASC. <i>(Adapted from ISO 22095:2020)</i>
	<b>Verifier</b>	An Individual that has been approved by ASC to evaluate the implementation of ASC active AIPs.

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## Appendix 2 : Document Master List

### Normative Documents

CODE	USER	DOCUMENT NAME	SOURCE
ASC-AIP-001	ALL	Improver Programme Requirements	This document

### Template / Form

CODE	USER	DOCUMENT NAME	SOURCE
B2	AIP Partners	ASC AIP Partnership Agreement	
B3	AIP	AIP Registration form. (Farm site & Partners)	
B4	AIP	AIP Application	
B4A	AIP	Change of Scope	
B5	ASC & AIP	ASC/AIP Agreement	
B6	AIP & Implementer	AIP GAP Analysis and Improvement Plan Template for AIP	
B7	Verifier	Verification Report	
B8	ASC & ASC Improver Programme Partners	Improver Programme by ASC Partner Agreement	
B9			
B10	AIP	Project Deadline Extension	
B11		AIP Complaint or Appeal.	
B12	Implementer	Implementer 's Performance Evaluation	
B13	AIP	Implementer Appointment	
B14	AIP & Implementer	AIP GAP Analysis Template for CoC	

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