Further Guidance for e-Stewards During the Time of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Date: October 5, 2021

Transition to Standard Version V4.0

The completion date for the transition to the e-Stewards Standard V4.0 was the 24th of August, 2021. On and after this deadline, it was brought to our attention that not all Processors had successfully transitioned to V4 of the e-Stewards Standard by the deadline. The cause for this appeared to be multiple sources of information (e-Stewards, ANAB and IAF) regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic and impact to accredited certification that together created some ambiguity.

Taking into consideration the different understandings of our stakeholders of the available information, we have decided to apply a generous interpretation of the V4.0 transition rules and recertification requirements to ensure that e-Stewards processors can maintain valid accredited certifications. We are therefore extending the deadline for completion of V4.0 transition of all Processors to February 24th, 2022.

This means that the V3.1 e-Stewards Standard certificates for Processors who are in the process of achieving V4.0 transition will be valid and in force until the revised deadline is passed or the Version 4.0 Certificate is granted, whichever comes first.

If the Certifying Body ("CB") has an e-Stewards Processor that has not achieved V4.0 transition by 24 August 2021, the e-Stewards Administrator is to be notified immediately with the status of the transition and likely V4.0 completion date.

By exception, going forward, if the CB is faced with a situation that in your understanding will lead to a Certified e-Stewards Processor not achieving transition by the revised 24th February 2022 deadline the CB must:

1. Notify e-Stewards Administrator of such contingency posed by the Processor immediately.
2. Document and report to the e-Stewards Administrator any reason why the CB is unable to conduct the transition audit as per V4 Appendix C - Requirements for E-Stewards Certification Bodies and Accreditation Bodies.

Based on this information the e-Stewards Administrator will determine if approval for the extension can be granted.

Re-certifications and Covid-19s

If the CB or Processor is faced with pandemic related challenges to complete the recertification as before expiration, the validity of the existing certificate may be extended for up to six months in accordance with the ANAB Communication 448 of February 28, 2020. Such extreme circumstances shall be documented and reported to the e-Stewards Administrator as soon as practicable.