



**Federal Communications Commission
Office of Engineering and Technology
Laboratory Division**

March 2, 2018

**OET PROCEDURES FOR THE RECOGNITION OF
LABORATORY ACCREDITATION BODIES**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Commission administers an equipment authorization program for radio-frequency (RF) devices under Part 2 of its rules.¹ The Office of Engineering and Technology (OET) administers the equipment authorization program under authority delegated to it by the Commission.² This program is one of the principal ways the Commission ensures that RF devices used in the United States operate effectively without causing harmful interference and otherwise comply with the Commission's rules. All RF devices subject to equipment authorization must comply with the Commission's technical requirements prior to importation or marketing.

The FCC rules require that equipment be authorized in accordance with one of the procedures specified in Subpart J of Part 2 of the rules.³ The specific provisions of these procedures apply to various types of devices based on their relative likelihood of causing harmful interference and the significance of the effects of such interference from the particular device at issue. In the case of the Certification procedure, the use of an FCC-recognized accredited testing laboratory is required.⁴ For FCC recognition, a testing laboratory must first be accredited by a Commission-recognized accreditation body as meeting applicable international standards and any additional Commission requirements.⁵ This document describes the procedures for the recognition of such laboratory accreditation bodies.

Organizations accrediting testing laboratories must be recognized by the Commission's OET to perform accreditation to ISO/IEC 17025, "*General Requirements for the Competence of Testing and Calibration*

¹ See 47 CFR Part 2 Subpart J.

² See 47 CFR § 0.241(b) and (f).

³ See FCC 17-93, *Amendment of Part 0, 1, 2 15, and 18 of the Commission's Rules regarding Authorization of Radiofrequency Equipment*. The Commission adopted changes to the equipment authorization program that combine the two self-approval procedures and simplified the equipment authorization protocol for many of the RF devices covered by the FCC rules. The verification and Declaration of Conformity procedures were combined under a new Supplier's Declaration of Conformity procedure. A one-year transition period was provided to allow for the continued use of the verification and Declaration of Conformity procedures. Note that when using the Declaration of Conformity procedures, testing must be performed by an FCC-recognized accredited testing laboratory.

⁴ See 47 CFR § 2.950. As of July 13, 2017, the FCC rules will no longer provide for the recognition of testing laboratories as "2.948 listed" for testing of equipment subject to certification. All testing performed on or after July 13, 2017 on applications for certification will be required to be based on testing performed by an FCC-recognized accredited testing laboratory.

⁵ A list of recognized accreditation bodies (Active Test Firm Accrediting Bodies) is found on the FCC web page: <https://apps.fcc.gov/oetcf/mra/reports/AccreditingBodyReport.cfm>.

Laboratories,” with respect to the FCC requirements, based on ISO/IEC 17011,⁶ *Conformity assessment — General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies*. Procedures have been established for the recognition of both domestic⁷ and foreign⁸ accreditation bodies.

II. ACCREDITATION BODY RECOGNITION PROCEDURE

The basic criteria that the OET will use to determine the acceptability of new laboratory accreditation bodies is specified in Section 2.949.⁹ Under this rule, an applicant must submit information that demonstrates how it satisfies the requirements of each of the four elements listed in Section 2.949(b). Applicants will be able to choose how they show that they meet each of the elements based on the guidance herein. To ensure the continued integrity of the laboratory accreditation program, the OET will periodically review the accreditation process, and maintain close coordination with each of the organizations that it has recognized to perform accreditations. The OET will pursue opportunities to observe peer review assessments, and to observe and participate in witness assessments of these laboratory accreditation bodies.

The following step-by-step procedure will be used for an accreditation body seeking to be recognized by the Commission as a testing laboratory accreditation body.

A. Submit Request. An applicant must submit to the Chief of OET a written request for such recognition, and provide the information described in B.¹⁰

B. General Information. The accreditation body provides general information about its organization, including:

⁶ It is noted that new editions of the ISO/IEC conformity assessment standards have been issued. The Commission will accept either ISO/IEC 17011:2004 or ISO/IEC 17011:2017 and either ISO/IEC 17025:2005 or ISO/IEC 17025:2017 at this time and is reviewing options to update the applicable FCC rules to specify the 2017 editions.

⁷ See also 47 CFR § 2.948(e) (describing the process for laboratory recognition). The OET will evaluate organizations seeking to be recognized for the accreditation of testing laboratories in the United States using the criteria listed in § 2.949 of the Commission’s rules.

⁸ See 47 CFR § 2.948(f). The accreditation of a laboratory outside the United States is considered acceptable under one of the following two conditions: (1) If the accredited laboratory has been designated by a foreign Designating Authority and recognized by the Commission under the terms of a government-to-government Mutual Recognition Agreement/Arrangement (MRA); or (2) If the laboratory is located in a country that does not have an MRA with the United States, then it must be accredited by an organization recognized by the Commission under the provisions of § 2.949 for performing accreditations in the country where the laboratory is located.

MRAs are government-to-government agreements intended to facilitate trade by promoting the mutual acceptance of the results of conformity assessment procedures, reducing the time and costs associated with introducing new products to the marketplace, and increasing the transparency of technical regulations, laws, policies, and procedures. Organizations accrediting testing laboratories in MRA-partner economies are approved by the FCC-recognized designating authority in the MRA-partner country. In the APEC TEL MRA, the term “economy” is used to indicate the country which is party to the agreement.

⁹ These procedures apply to all accreditation bodies recognized by the FCC including accreditation bodies in MRA partner countries intending to accredit test laboratories in U.S. or non-MRA countries. Testing laboratories in MRA partner countries must apply under the terms of the MRA; testing laboratories in non-MRA countries can request to be accredited by any accrediting body recognized by the FCC under the procedures in this KDB.

¹⁰ The request for recognition may be submitted electronically to the Chief of the Office of Engineering and Technology by submitting an inquiry at www.fcc.gov/kdb.

- 1) Contact information.
- 2) A general description of the organization.
- 3) Description of the scope of work for which it is seeking recognition.
- 4) The specific country in which the accreditation body is seeking to perform laboratory accreditations for the FCC rules.
- 5) Evidence that the accreditation body is authorized by the government in each country it plans to accredit testing laboratories to test to the FCC requirements, and to operate and perform accreditation services. Explain any legal constraints regarding the accrediting body's authorization to operate in the specific country in which it plans to perform accreditations (*e.g.*, has the required licenses and approvals necessary to operate a business).
- 6) Evidence of ability to perform assessments in each country it plans to accredit testing laboratories. The accreditation body must describe the process it will use to address laboratory performance issues, including the withdrawal or suspension of the accreditation of a testing laboratory.

C. Technical Qualifications. To demonstrate its credentials and qualifications to perform accreditation of laboratories that test equipment to Commission requirements, an applicant shall provide, at a minimum, evidence of:

- 1) Successful completion of an ISO/IEC 17011, "*Conformity assessment – General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies*" peer review, such as being a signatory to an accreditation agreement that is acceptable to the Commission.¹¹ The accreditation body must describe the procedures it has in place to ensure the impartiality and objectivity of its activities, as required by 4.3 of ISO/IEC 17011 (for example, the accreditation body shall not offer or provide conformity assessment services that CABs perform, consultancy activities, or any other service that would affect its impartiality).
- 2) Experience with the accreditation of electromagnetic compatibility (EMC), radio, and telecommunications testing laboratories to ISO/IEC 17025, "*General Requirements for the Competence of Testing and Calibration Laboratories.*" This will be verified by having OET staff participate in a witness audit of an EMC/Radio/Telecom testing laboratory.¹²
- 3) Accreditation personnel/assessors with specific technical experience on the Commission equipment authorization rules and requirements.
- 4) Procedures and policies developed for the accreditation and designation of testing laboratories for FCC equipment authorization programs. If the accreditation body is requesting that the OET recognize the accreditation body for accrediting testing laboratories located outside of the United States, in countries that do not have an MRA with the United States, the information provided to the OET must set forth specific procedures and policies for the accreditation of foreign testing laboratories for FCC equipment authorization programs. These procedures need to address any

¹¹ Examples of laboratory accreditation body arrangements (agreements) include: International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) (<http://www.ilac.org/ilacarrangement.html>); the European cooperation for Accreditation (EA); the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC); the Inter-American Accreditation Cooperation (IAAC); and the National Cooperation for Laboratory Accreditation (NACLA) (<http://www.nacla.net/>).

¹² As an exception, a witness audit including OET staff may not be required based on a review of the report generated by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) laboratory accreditation evaluation program as performed to support the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) MRA for Conformity Assessment of Telecommunications Equipment.

considerations when operating in a foreign country (*e.g.*, any laws governing the acceptance of foreign accreditation bodies), language used, experience with FCC regulations, selection of assessors, methods used to maintain competency in the FCC regulations, etc.

D. Public Review. The OET will issue a public notice soliciting comments on the request to be recognized as an accreditation body to perform accreditation of testing laboratories seeking to perform testing to the FCC technical requirements.

E. Decision. In making a decision on the request for recognition as an accreditation body, the OET will conduct review of the supporting documentation and consider any public comments received. The Chief of the OET will make a determination of recognition based on the information provided in support of an application. The OET will publish its findings, and maintain a list of recognized accreditation bodies on its webpage.

Change Notice

03/02/2018: 974614 D02 Accreditation Body Recognition v01r01 replaces 974614 D01 Accreditation Body v01. Changes to the document include:

- Updating references to the new Supplier's Declaration of Conformity procedures.
- Updating the document to allow use of the 2017 editions of ISO/IEC 17011 and 17025.