

# Accreditation



## *“How To” Guide For the Accreditation Application*



**National Interior Plantscape Association**  
Version Dated 6 December 2009

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## WHAT IS ACCREDITATION?

*“You can learn much about the reputation, integrity and sustainability of an Indoor Plant Hire operation and the general quality of its management, its products and technical delivery processes from its Accreditation status”.*

NIPA Accreditation is a transparent system or process for providing public confidence and accountability through a tool utilised for improvement in the “Indoor Plant Hire Industry” in Australia. Accreditation provides differentiation and recognition based on developed standards. **Membership of NIPA is compulsory to achieve NIPA Accreditation.**

NIPA Accreditation promises a basic level of integrity and quality in an Indoor Plant Hire businesses approach to its management practices, products and services through a process that examines many areas of the operation. The Accreditation process reveals publicly whether or not an Indoor Plant Hire company will hold the public trust and helps to ensure high-quality Industry supply and maintenance. Accreditation is a completely voluntary, non-governmental review process undertaken by the National Interior Plantscape Association (NIPA) for the benefit of the public/consumer and its members.

## INTRODUCTION

Company accreditation is usually applied by a third-party. Quality Accreditation or QA as it is more commonly referred to, is a process and system that assists companies in being professional and building efficiencies within their operation. It stamps a company as a quality supplier and carries with it recognition of world competitiveness and provides a benchmark on which a potential or existing client can measure its supplier.

Company ‘**Accreditation**’ identifies the business and its standing against its competition. Individual ‘**Certification**’ identifies the individual technician and their standing against their competition within the industry. Individual ‘**Certification**’ will be addressed by NIPA in a different program.

The NIPA company accreditation application form is designed for ease of completion. The application will rely on copying certain certificates that needs to be validated by a Justice of the Peace, lawyer or solicitor. This how-to guide for completing the application is provided to assist the applicant and to answer frequently asked questions on each item. Please refer to this guide for questions on related items.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

At all times confidentiality between the Applicant and the Association will be maintained. This document will be checked and filed under a separate members file in a confidential manner. Only the NIPA Accreditation Assessor will have access to the document. Provided the application passes the required 80% it will be presented to the board for approval - not review.

## NIPA BOARD APPROVAL

All successful Accreditation Applications are presented to the NIPA Board for approval. Approval may be refused to a member, if in the Board’s opinion, the company has dishonoured the NIPA Code of Ethics.

## POINTS RATING

The appropriate points rating will be inserted by the National Interior Plantscape Association Accreditation Assessor and used to assess the levels of attainment that is available to your Company.

A minimum of 80% of available points are required to achieve NIPA company accreditation. These points are delivered under a predetermined template and no correspondence will be entered into regarding the point's allocation. It is the responsibility totally of the applicant to ensure all areas on the application form are completed fully and correctly, validated copies by a Justice of the Peace, lawyer or solicitor are required for certain documents as noted in the application. It is not acceptable to just provide a photocopy of a document, ***“they must be validated correctly”***.

In many sections it is not good enough to simply tick yes or no. You must supply evidence. For example, if you claim you have a formal process, you must supply documentation to support that process. If you claim you use a contract, then please supply a copy.

## RESUBMISSION (including renewal)

The accreditation fee is made up of two parts, the NIPA Accreditation payment and the processing fee that is paid to the assessor.

If an application scores 70 % or more the assessor will correspond with the applicant and point out where the points were lost, so that hopefully with a few corrections and maybe more detail they will achieve the desired 80% and gain accreditation.

If the application scores less than 70 % the application will be returned and the applicant will be required to resubmit the complete application and pay a second processing fee. The processing fee is currently \$70 and \$35 for a franchise.

An application that needs resubmission will remain open for 60 days. We consider this to be a reasonable time, after which it will be closed and a completely new application must be submitted along with the full fee.

## FEES AND FRANCHISES

For a franchise – the franchisor pays the standard fee, and each franchisee to be accredited pays half this fee, and only completes PART A and PART B SECTION 2 TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT of the application.

The renewal fee covers accreditation for a two year period and includes GST.

## LEGAL DOCUMENT DECLARATION

Under “Item 3” a **DECLARATION** will be required from the person responsible for the company and this application is a **legal declaration** that ensures all information included within the document is true and accurate.

NB. *This legal declaration is a critical component of self-assessment and if is not witnessed, signed and dated it will not be processed. Similarly if the certificates and appropriate documentation is not independent third-party validated by a Justice of the Peace, lawyer or solicitor the application will not be processed.*

## **TAKE A COPY**

Before you post your application, take a copy of everything you send. One easy way is to go to the local news agent and ask them to copy it for you. Copy everything, certificates as well as your answers. You may need to refer to your copy when it comes time to renew (in two years time).

The documents you send will not be returned. The application and supporting documentation will be held on file by the third party Accreditation Assessor, for future reference.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Please label attachments clearly and use the same paragraph numbering as in the application.

## **NIPA TEMPLATES**

There are several NIPA templates that can be used if you need one. These can be downloaded from the same page as the other Accreditation documents.

## **CHECK LIST**

We have provided a check list to make sure everything has been completed before you post your application. This should be read before you start and when you think you have finished.

## **HELP**

If you are not clear on something please talk to The Chair of Accreditation Committee or The President. They will be able to help.

## **PART A - CORPORATE ASSESSMENT AND DECLARATION**

This section involves a check on the various aspects of business operation and the relevant information that should be automatically held by any quality business and therefore should not be hard to comply with. It only involves the copying and validating of appropriate policy documents that are already held by the business and other accreditation status documents that may be applicable.

### **ITEM 1 (A)**

This section requires documentation relating to public liability, professional indemnity, certificate of registration of a workplace, ACC work claims history (NZ), work cover policy (Aus) and insurance details. If for some reason you believe that you are not required to have any of these particular business tools please provide a brief explanation on a separate sheet and attach it to the application. This will then be taken into account when the application is assessed.

### **ITEM 1 (B)**

Some companies will have already undertaken independent third-party quality assurance certification or have been accredited by separate industry organisations and/or government authority. NIPA does not wish to undertake its own accreditation “proof of certification” process and is prepared to accept certification provided the documentation is validated by a Justice of the Peace, lawyer or solicitor.

### **ITEM 2 & 2.1**

This section is self-explanatory and requires the applicant to fill in the appropriate spaces and tick all questions in the checklist.

### **ITEM 3**

This is a **critical legal declaration** by the applicant and must be read thoroughly signed and witnessed by the appropriate person within the company that has the correct levels of authority.

***By signing this declaration the signatory legally acknowledges that all components answered within the application are a true, up-to-date and correct record of the business applying for this company accreditation.***

## **PART B - OPERATIONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

All parts of the application are compulsory and must be completed this section applies to business operations and its various forms and provides an overview of the company and its operational policies and procedures.

### ***SECTION 1 – Business Operations***

#### **(A) Technology**

This area addresses the level of technology utilised within the company as we enter the 21st century and the higher the level of usage required electronically. This area will be critical in the uptake of those areas working within guidelines of the Green Building Council in particular.

#### **(B) Management**

This area addresses the level of professionalism within the applying company's operations and it is self-explanatory.

#### **(C) Contractual**

This area addresses the area within the company regarding customer and supplier contracts under processes utilised by the company.

#### **(D) Systems**

Item D considers the areas of operational processes and systems, risk management and succession planning undertaken by the applying company in providing a quality product.

#### **(E) Project Management (for Indoor Plant Hirers)**

This item is for Indoor Plant Hire companies only and requires a yes no answer. Product suppliers to the contract should go to the next item "F".

#### **(F) Product Supply Management (for the Suppliers to Indoor Plant Hirers)**

This item is for the 'product suppliers' to the Indoor Plant Hire Contractors.

#### **(G) Environmental**

The areas of Indoor Plant Hire strongly relate to environmental controls and aspects. To be professional, environmental issues and the appropriate compliance plays a major part in the business environment associated with quality Indoor Plant Hire.

#### **(H) Workplace Health and Safety**

In the 21st century workplace health and safety issues will become stronger especially in the area of bacteria, chemicals, pesticides and operator safety. This issue refers to the company's approach to its staff and attention to workplace health and safety issues.

The standard NIPA Activity Register Template may be downloaded from the NIPA Website.

### **(I) Performance**

This area is similar to others only and requires a simple yes or no.

### **(J) Qualifications**

These two questions relate to ongoing staff training and innovation. It questions what the company is doing to maintain a professional level of competency.

The standard NIPA Activity Register Template may be downloaded from the NIPA Website.

### **(K) Staff Competency**

This important area relates to staff training and identification of training needs and performance appraisals to ensure the company remains up to date with current practices.

The standard NIPA Activity Register Template may be downloaded from the NIPA Website.

## **SECTION 2 – Technical Assessment**

Globally the National Interior Plantscape Association (NIPA) has identified three major areas on which assessment can be monitored they are:

1. DESIGN
2. INSTALLATION
3. MAINTENANCE.

This section is designed to provide the assessment panel with information on your company in relationship to the three areas above. NIPA has utilised these three major areas to cover the companies applying for 'Company Accreditation' as they fit with the Interior Plantscape Industry's requirements overall.

In each of the areas below you are required to advise and provide documentation for the assessment panel on which areas of training has been completed, is this being undertaken currently, or is it planned to be undertaken within the next six months for management and staff of the business in relationship to the technical aspects of the Interior Plantscape Industry. This 'Technical' section is more about the individual technician and training of those individuals working within the Interior Plantscape business.

Many companies believe they are doing a professional job but in fact are providing the industry with a bad reputation due to the fact that they are not trained in the quality and professional aspects of Design, Installation and Maintenance. This accreditation process will differentiate a quality company with one that just goes through the process supplying and maintaining in an unprofessional manner. It will also assist in building the reputation of our industry as professionals.

### **(A) Design Competency**

The following five items are considered important for horticulture suitability for live quality and well maintained interior plants. The applicant must comment on what technical training is provided to your staff that has been obtained in the following areas to assist in the design applications of these areas. This section relates totally to design competency.

#### **27**

In the design area how does your company and staff investigate, research and advise on areas of light both internal and external.

#### **28**

Plant identification and suitability is critical to a professionally designed Interior Plantscape. Please comment on the technical training provided to your staff by your company for this issue.

#### **29**

Density requirements can mean the difference between a cosmetically appealing plantscape and one that places plants for the sake of having plants in the building. Please comment on the training your company provides your staff for this issue. This could be internal training or external training (refer to GBC website [www.gbcaus.org](http://www.gbcaus.org))

#### **30**

How does your company provide your staff with knowledge of the benefits of plants so that through their interaction with potential and existing clients it promotes the industry and the knowledge of your company and its benefit to the customer? Again this is similar to above and

provides information to convince the assessors that your company understands the benefits of healthy well maintained interior plants to the workforce and your client.

**31**

Much has been written about soil types and mulches causing bacteria for “VOC” removal within an interior plantscape. How do you continuously update and train your staff? What environmental training do you provide and what research do you undertake to support your staff?

**GENERAL COMMENT:**

This area is for use by the NIPA Accreditation Assessor.

**(B) Installation**

If the installation is not undertaken professionally with the correct plants and processes for maintenance the total interior plantscape will be a failure. The following four areas are those identified within the area of installation requiring comment from the applicant company. In two areas here there is the requirement to provide copies of documentation undertaken by the company in a professional installation.

**32**

The installation procedure should be included in your quotation and therefore a copy should be provided easily.

**33**

Site management and transport is critical to quality installation (if it doesn't arrive in good condition it can't be installed in good condition) you are required to provide evidence of appropriate documentation for site management, the different changes and impacts to the site that occurs. Photographic evidence should be provided of the site prior to and post project that can support the applicant company's credibility in this area. At the completion of a project a final project audit is usually undertaken by both the company and the interior plantscape contractor. All that is needed is a copy of a final project audit undertaken recently.

**GENERAL COMMENT:**

This area is for use by the NIPA Accreditation Assessor.

**(C) Maintenance**

Once the project has been designed and the installation undertaken the project is only half completed. Now comes the job of ongoing professional maintenance that maintains the plantscape in a quality manner that appeals to the client and the associated personnel utilising the space. Professional, quality maintenance leads to repeat business and enhances the reputation of the total Interior Plantscape Industry. In this area you need to advise on the technical training being provided or already obtained by your staff.

**34**

After completion of the installation on many projects, plants are either removed or replaced by other species. Please provide details of a regular audit process undertaken by your company to ensure that the initial design remains in place. This can be taken from a copy of your maintenance program. It is important that you reference this issue 4C1 on your application.

**35**

Watering and cleaning can be evidenced by a copy of your company's maintenance program provided to the client. It is important that you reference this section as 4C2 on your application.

**36**

Describe your company's policy by attaching a copy from your quotation, of the identification and control of pests and diseases. It is important that you reference this section as 4C3.

**37**

Again this can be provided via a copy from your company's quotation detail and monitoring soil performance aspects of the project. It is important you reference this section as 4C4

**38**

Project communications and interpersonal mail communications provides excellent customer relations and the potential for ongoing repeat business.

**39**

Quality control of existing plants through maintenance and the replacement policy of your company needs to be provided and again can be done via a copy from your company's quotation. It is important you reference this section as 4C.6 & 4C.7. Pro forma testimonial documents are included for your use when contacting customers. This form covers all required areas in one testimonial.

**40**

Similar to 4C6 this item provides ongoing quality reputation to the industry and the company. It will result in repeat business. You are required to provide three testimonials from various companies you have serviced longer than 12 months that have utilised more than six species of plants in each project. It is important to reference these testimonials as 4C.6 & 4C.7. Pro forma testimonial documents are included for your use when contacting customers. This form covers all required areas in one testimonial.

**GENERAL COMMENT:**

This area is for use by the NIPA Accreditation Assessor.

***SECTION 3 – SUMMARY OF CONTINUING PROFESIONAL DEVELOPMENT***

**This section is for Renewal only.**

Accreditation Renewal is dependant on three things:

1. That all required insurances and certificates are current
2. That sufficient evidence has been supplied to validate processes and practices claimed in the Accreditation Application are in still place and being used
3. That there is evidence of CPD.

We are asking here for a quick summary of the improvements that have been made to the business in the last two years. This will help the assessor to assess you CPD status.

CPD may be in any area including for example:

- sales or marketing
- scheduling
- computers
- watering techniques
- training
- infrastructure or
- Green Policy.

## **PART C – ACCREDITATION ASSESSMENT**

This part is office use only.

## **PART D – ACCREDITATION FEE**

This section explains how to pay and where to send the application and relevant documents.

Please note:

1. The application goes to the Assessor who is independent of NIPA.
2. The payment goes to NIPA Administration.