

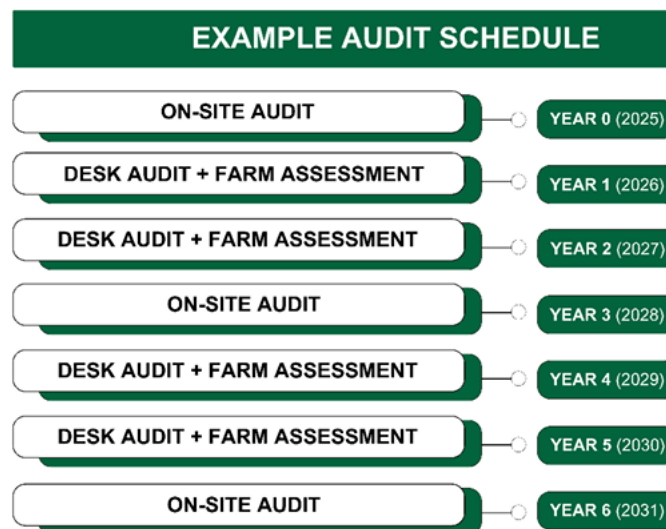
Soil & Climate Initiative Soil Health Assessor Training & Approvals

This document describes the necessary **qualifications**, **training requirements** and **approval process** for becoming an SCI-approved assessor to the Soil & Climate Health Initiative Verified program.

The role of SCI-approved assessors is described in Standard v3.0 Sections 8.7 and 8.8. Assessments serve a separate and distinct purpose:

Farm assessments are designed to ensure compliance with the applicable Verification Standard requirements appropriate for on-site review while offering the Producer feedback and support for their transition work. They serve as a "snapshot" to confirm that the Farm meets the key components and intentions of the Verification Standard.

Importantly, SCI-approved assessors are **not** tasked with making Verification decisions. Assessors deliver their assessment to the approved third-party auditor, and the completed assessment is bundled with other evidence during a remote desk audit in Years 1, 2, 4, 5, etc., as shown in the graphic below:



SCI's Verification Director has the sole discretion to add individuals to the list of Approved Assessors and to revoke approvals. Any person interested in applying to become an SCI-approved assessor may email verification@soilclimateinitiative.org for further information.

As described in this document, all prospective assessors are required to:

1. Possess certain qualifications and core competencies;
2. Complete the SCI Assessor training program and adhere to professional codes of conduct; and
3. Demonstrate no conflict of interest for each farm at which they conduct an assessment

SECTION 1: ASSESSOR QUALIFICATIONS & CORE COMPETENCIES

Assessor applicants must possess highly relevant experience that equips them to conduct the field work, documentation, and farmer communication aspects of the program.

Assessors should possess one or more of the following backgrounds, or equivalent:

- Agronomist or Soil Scientist (BS degree or equivalent experience)
- Professional Soil Health Consultant (minimum 3 years experience)
- NRCS Technical Service Provider (TSP) or Soil Conservationist
- Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) with regenerative/soil health emphasis
- Ecological Outcome Verification (EOV) Monitor Training (Savory Institute/Land to Market)
- Advanced-level SCI Farmers (minimum 5 years farming in the local region)

Assessors should additionally demonstrate most or all of the following core competencies:

1. **Soil Observation Skills** (i.e., ability to classify soil texture and structure; assess compaction and erosion; observe root systems and biological activity in the soil)
2. **Plant and Crop Identification Skills** (i.e., ability to recognize major cash crops at different growth stages; recognize common cover crop species; identify signs of health vs. stressed plants; identify common native plant species by region)
3. **Biodiversity Observation Skills** (i.e., identify evidence of wildlife presence; recognize beneficial insects and pollinators; assess vegetation diversity and coverage; characterize biodiversity action elements (pollinator strips, hedgerows, etc.))
4. **Field Testing & Technology Proficiencies** (i.e., familiarity with NRCS water infiltration, worm count, penetrometer and slake tests; ability to navigate via GPS and record a waypoint via smartphone app)
5. **Proven Communications Skills** (i.e., explain observations clearly without jargon; show respect for farmer knowledge and experience)
6. **Physical Requirements** (walk uneven terrain for 4-8 hours; kneel, bend, and dig repeatedly; lift equipment up to 50 lbs; work in various weather conditions)

Assessors must also demonstrate professional conduct, including punctuality and reliability, ethical behavior, confidentiality with farm data, and clear communication with farmers and SCI team.

SECTION 2: ASSESSOR TRAINING & CONTINUOUS EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

All prospective assessors are required to undergo an initial training and evaluation program, hosted by SCI on a biannual basis.

Once added to the list of Approved Assessors, annual Calibration Trainings and Continuing Education are required to remain on the list.

Initial Training Program Overview

Initial training is conducted in virtual and/or in-person sessions led by the SCI team, and consists of the following:

- One **2-hour overview session** that covers the SCI Farm Verification Standard and the structure of the SCI program as a whole
- One **3-hour in-depth training session** that covers the SCI Farm Assessment documents and field protocols
- One **1-hour instructional training** on how to use the FarmLab data collection platform and other data entry platforms as relevant
- One **90-minute** online evaluation (multiple choice, written format, and/or interview style) that covers key information needed to conduct a full and professional assessment using the SCI protocols.

SCI's Verification Director will weigh results from the evaluation alongside other application materials in deciding whether to add the applicant to the list of Approved Assessors.

Any applicant who is not approved following their initial training and evaluation is eligible to reapply and reattend trainings no less than twelve (12) months following and at the discretion of the SCI Verification Director.

Annual Recertification Trainings Overview

Annual Calibration Trainings (to remain on the list of Approved Assessors) will consist of the following:

- One **1-hour** refresher training ("Calibration Workshop") with SCI staff
- One **1-hour** individualized interview with SCI staff to go over completed assessments and answer any questions
- (in years with a significant update to SCI's Standard and/or Guidance) One **1-hour** Standards Update & Review session to go over new information relevant to the assessor role

Continuing Education Requirements

Every 12 months, SCI assessors must demonstrate attendance at **8 or more hours** of workshops, field days, courses, or other educational events relevant to the field of soil health, regenerative agriculture, and field observation.

SECTION 3: ASSESSOR APPROVAL AND REAPPROVALS PROCESS

Any person interested in applying to become an SCI-approved assessor may email verification@soilclimateinitiative.org for further details.

Initial Approval Process

STEP 1: Email SCI's Verification Director (verification@soilclimateinitiative.org) to receive application materials.

STEP 2: Submit application materials and register for an upcoming Training program (requires upfront payment of training fee).

STEP 3: Complete all required trainings and submit completed evaluation for review by SCI Verification Director.

STEP 4: (if approved) Complete all required forms and agreements, including:

- Professional Code of conduct
- Data privacy policy
- Attestation to no conflicts of interest
- Attestation of no unresolved ethics violations

STEP 5: Conduct onboarding interview with SCI Team and begin receiving offers of assignment.

Annual Recertification Process

STEP 1: Within 15 months of initial Approval, complete Calibration Workshop, submit evidence of Continuous Education, and conduct re-approval interview with SCI Team.

STEP 2: Submit Re-Approval fee.

Note: 30-day grace period if Recertification is not completed within 15 months of prior Approval, after which Inactive Status will apply

Training and Certification Costs

The following fees are subject to change at any time:

- A one-time application fee of \$75.00
- Initial Training Program fee of \$750 per person (virtual)
 - Cost of in-person trainings will be determined and communicated in advance of each scheduled training.
- Annual Recertification Fee of \$350 per person