

THE BROAD-BASED BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

PRACTICE GUIDE 01 of 2018

DETERMINING THE VALIDITY OF A BROAD-BASED BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT VERIFICATION CERTIFICATE, B-BBEE CERTIFICATE AND SWORN AFFIDAVIT

A. Introduction

1. The Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Commission (“B-BBEE Commission”) is an entity established by the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003 as amended by Act 46 of 2013 (“the Act”), to oversee the implementation of the Act, which includes provision of explanatory notices, non-binding advisory opinions and clarification services to improve the understanding of the Act.
2. This Practice Guide is issued as a non-binding guide purely to assist with the interpretation to ensure consistency in the application of the Act. Should this Practice Guide not be clearly applicable to your specific set of facts at any given time, you are advised to approach the B-BBEE Commission for a non-binding advisory opinion, which will be more specific to your set of facts.
3. This Practice Guide does not constitute a legal document or a ruling of the B-BBEE Commission on the issue concerned. Further, although this Practice Guide is not binding on the B-BBEE Commission, it does set out the approach that the B-BBEE Commission is likely to take on any matter relating to implementation of B-BBEE including determining the validity of B-BBEE certificates.
4. Section 9 (1) of the Act empowers Minister of Trade and Industry to issue Codes of Good Practice (“the Codes”) on broad-based black economic empowerment (“B-BBEE”) to promote the purposes of the Act. The Codes as amended are underpinned by the need to drive inclusive economy, and must at all times be interpreted and applied in a manner that is consistent with the objectives and purposes of the Act, and in compliance with the Constitution.

5. B-BBEE is an integrated coherent framework that seeks to advance the economic transformation of South Africa and bring about significant increase in the number of black people that manage, own and control the country's economy. The form in which economic transformation is realised is guided by the B-BBEE Act with the Codes guiding the implementation to achieve the outcome, not to aid measured entities to circumvent the B-BBEE Act.

B. Purpose of this practice guide

6. The B-BBEE Commission has issued a number of letters requiring entities to withdraw their B-BBEE Verification Certificates or sworn affidavits due to invalidity or incomplete information provided or fraudulent conduct by either the measured entities or issuing officers/verifiers. Thus, the purpose of this practice guide is to set out the approach the B-BBEE Commission is likely to take on matters relating to determining the validity of B-BBEE certificates for consistency
7. The five elements of B-BBEE adopted in the Codes each have a specific purpose and together provide an integrated intervention to empower black people as envisaged in the B-BBEE Act. Further, the B-BBEE Act allows for B-BBEE verification, which is a measure used to determine compliance with the B-BBEE Act, and results in the issuing of a B-BBEE Certificate.
8. A B-BBEE Verification Certificate, a sworn affidavit and a B-BBEE Certificate issued by the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) is evidence of a measured entity's compliance with the B-BBEE Act over a particular period. Such compliance is based on B-BBEE related information of a measured entity in line with the applicable Codes as per Section 9 (1) of the B-BBEE Act.
9. It is illegal for a measured entity to trade with an invalid/inconclusive or incorrect B-BBEE Verification Certificate. The procurement spend as a result of such an invalid document cannot be recognised during B-BBEE measurement, therefore, it is critical to determine the validity of B-BBEE certificates measured entities present in order to access an economic opportunity.

C. Determining validity of a sworn affidavit for B-BBEE compliance

10. The legal dictionary (<https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Affadavit>) defines a sworn affidavit as a written statement of facts voluntarily made by a person under an oath or affirmation administered by a person authorized to do so by law.
11. In terms of the Codes, Exempted Micro-Enterprises (EMEs) and black controlled and owned Qualifying Small Enterprises (QSEs) only have to use a sworn affidavit to indicate their B-BBEE compliance status. Government introduced this mechanism specifically to reduce the cost of doing business and regulatory burden for these entities.
12. The Department of Trade and Industry (**the dti**) has designed affidavit templates and qualifying measured entities must use these templates, which can be accessed on **the dti** website through the following URL http://www.thedti.gov.za/economic_empowerment/bee_codes.jsp. It is acceptable to use the templates on the letterhead of the measured entity.

13. The only time an EME can be verified by a South African National Accreditation System (SANAS) accredited verification professional is when it wishes to maximise its B-BBEE points and move to a higher B-BBEE recognition level, and that must be done using the QSE Scorecard.
14. The exception to this is only in the Transport Sector where EMEs have a choice of obtaining accounting officer letter or get verified and be issued with a B-BBEE certificate by SANAS accredited professional or agency because the Transport Sector Code has not been aligned to the amended generic Codes. Also, start-ups that are EMEs but wish to tender for contracts of R10 million in value or above must be verified using the QSE scorecard, and for tenders of R50 million and above must be verified using the generic scorecard.
15. Further, the Construction Sector Code, provides for EMEs whose annual turnover is R1.8 million for Built Environment Professionals and R3 million for contractors or less to obtain automatic recognition levels and these do not require to undergo verification except in instances where they elect to enhance their B-BBEE status levels. In those circumstances there is a requirement for these EMEs to contribute towards empowerment by complying with the 40% sub-minimum on skills development element and in ensuring compliance with the skills development element, these EMEs are required to be verified by a SANAS accredited verification professional or agency.
16. Furthermore, the Financial Services Sector Code, has granted an option to 51% and 100% black owned QSEs to undergo a verification process from a SANAS accredited verification professional or agency instead of a sworn affidavit. However, for consistent application, EMEs in the Financial Services Sector should only obtain a sworn affidavit, and not a B-BBEE Verification Certificate as there is nothing to verify.
17. The following pointers are key in determining the validity of a sworn affidavit:
 - a) Name/s of deponent as they appear in the identity document and the identity number.
 - b) Designation of the deponent as either the director, owner or member must be indicated in order to know that person is duly authorised to depose of an affidavit
 - c) Name of enterprise as per enterprise registration documents issued by the CIPC, where applicable, and enterprise business address.
 - d) Percentage of black ownership, black female ownership and designated group. In the case of specialised enterprises as per Statement 004, the percentage of black beneficiaries must be reflected.
 - e) Indicate total revenue for the year under review and whether it is based on audited financial statements or management account.
 - f) Financial year end as per the enterprise's registration documents, which was used to determine the total revenue.
 - g) B-BBEE Status level. An enterprise can only have one status level.
 - h) Empowering supplier status must be indicated. For QSEs, the deponent must select the basis for the empowering supplier status.
 - i) Date deponent signed and date of Commissioner of Oath must be the same.
 - j) Commissioner of Oath cannot be an employee or ex officio of the enterprise because, a person cannot by law, commission a sworn affidavit in which they have an interest.

D. B-BBEE Certificate issued by the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission

18. **the dti** through government Gazette Number 38765 published on 6 May 2015, mandated CIPC to issue B-BBEE certificates for EMEs and start-up enterprises, in its efforts to reduce cost of business for small businesses. A certificate issued by CIPC has the same status as a sworn affidavit.
19. Subsequently, CIPC issued a Customer Notice indicating that B-BBEE certificates can be applied for via e-services on the CIPC website (www.cipc.co.za), at CIPC Self Services Terminals when registering or filing Annual Returns.
20. The following conditions apply when an enterprise uses the CIPC services for obtaining a B-BBEE certificate:
 - a) Only directors of a company or members of close corporations can apply for a B-BBEE certificate;
 - b) Only companies and close corporations with a turnover of less than R10 million can apply via CIPC;
 - c) The enterprise's status must be "In Business";
 - d) All Annual Return filings for the relevant company or close corporation need to be up to date;
 - e) Application for a B-BBEE certificate can be done at any time (not only when registering a company or filing returns), provided that an application for the certificate which is still valid, was not done already.
 - f) Applicant must agree to the B-BBEE terms and conditions; and
 - g) A director or member amendment must be filed if the director or member's email address or telephone is not correct or up to date.
21. A CIPC certificate can be submitted to the B-BBEE Commission for attention of Mr. Madidimalo Ramare at MRamare@beecommission.gov.za to confirm if it was generated from the CIPC system. However, on face value, the following information must appear on the certificate:
 - a) Name of enterprise, registration number and business address.
 - b) Date of issue and expiry adding to twelve months (e.g 9 June 2018 to 8 June 2019) must be indicated.
 - c) Percentage of total black ownership, black female ownership and total white ownership.
 - d) Certificate number.
 - e) Barcode with tracking number.
 - f) Barcode with enterprise number.
 - g) B-BBEE Status and procurement recognition level.
 - h) **the dti** logo on the top left corner, and CIPC logo on the top right corner.
 - i) CIPC watermark.

E. Determining validity of a B-BBEE Verification Certificate for B-BBEE compliance

22. An entity that qualifies in terms of the B-BBEE Act to undergo a B-BBEE verification process, can only do so with a verification professional or agency that has been accredited by SANAS or a B-BBEE Verification Professional Regular that may be appointed by the Minister of Trade and Industry.

23. Verification means the process and activities conducted by a verification professional or agency to assess, verify and validate that the score awarded to a measured entity is a result of individual scorecard elements supplied by a measured entity, and to evaluate B-BBEE transactions in order to provide an indicative B-BBEE score and certification based on the principles of B-BBEE as per the Codes.
24. A B-BBEE verification process is important in assuring parties that rely on the score achieved by the measured entity and reflected on their B-BBEE Verification Certificate (refers to the B-BBEE Verification Certificate issued by the verification professional or agency which reflects the overall B-BBEE Status of a measured entity and scoring allocated for each scorecard element verified in respect of the measured entity) that the information on which the certificate was issued is acceptable, and has been independently verified, and is free from misstatements.
25. Therefore, the role of a verifier is to assess, verify and validate both disclosed and undisclosed B-BBEE related information of the measured entity. The verification thereof should be based on the principles contained in the B-BBEE Act and relevant Codes, by applying the verification methodologies outlined in the Framework for accreditation and verification by all verification agencies (also known as the verification manual) as well as the Accreditation of B-BBEE Verification Agencies document issued by SANAS (also referred to as the R47-02). Important to note that a verifier, is not to provide clarity or opinion on interpretation of any B-BBEE matter, such clarity must be sought from the B-BBEE Commission using the contact details mentioned below.
26. A B-BBEE Verification Certificate shall identify the following information:
 - a) Name of enterprise as per enterprise registration documents issued by CIPC, and enterprise business address.
 - b) Value-Add Tax number, where applicable.
 - c) The B-BBEE Scorecard against which the certificate is issued, indicating all elements and scores achieved for each element. The actual score achieved must be linked to the total points as per the relevant Codes.
 - d) B-BBEE status with corresponding procurement recognition level.
 - e) The relevant Codes used to issue the B-BBEE Verification Certificate.
 - f) Date of issue and expiry (e.g. 9 June 2018 to 8 June 2019). Where a measured entity was subjected to a re-verification process, due to material change, the B-BBEE Verification Certificate must reflect the initial date of issue, date of re-issue and the initial date of expiry. Re-verification does not extend the lifespan of the B-BBEE Verification Certificate.
 - g) Financial period which was used to issue the B-BBEE Verification Certificate.

- h) Unique identification number of the B-BBEE verification professional or agency (e.g. BVA...).
 - i) Name and logo/mark of the B-BBEE verification professional or agency.
 - j) A B-BBEE Verification Certificate must be signed by the technical signatory at the bottom with full name and surname. The details of the technical signatory can be checked from the SANAS website www.sanas.co.za. No other person is allowed to sign the B-BBEE Verification Certificate apart from the technical signatory.
 - k) The SANAS logo on the B-BBEE Verification Certificate.
27. The recipient or user of a B-BBEE Verification Certificate can contact any of the accredited verification professionals or agency that is said to have issued the B-BBEE Verification Certificate, to request confirmation on the issuance of B-BBEE Verification Certificate. The recipient or user is also advised to use the SANAS website to verify the accreditation status, accreditation period and scope of accreditation for the verification professional or agency. The SANAS website also has a list of all verification professionals or agencies whose accreditation status has been withdrawn, or suspended, because a verification professional or agency cannot issue a B-BBEE Verification Certificate if the accreditation status has expired, withdrawn or suspended.
28. The recipient or user of the B-BBEE Verification Certificate, sworn affidavit or B-BBEE Certificate issued by CIPC is also allowed as part of its due diligence processes, to request any relevant additional information or documents from the measured entity in order to validate the credibility of the information recorded on the B-BBEE Verification Certificate, sworn affidavit or CIPC B-BBEE Certificate.

F. Penalties as per the B-BBEE Act

29. Trading with an invalid or fraudulent B-BBEE Verification Certificate may constitute an offence in terms of Section 130 (1) (a) of the B-BBEE Act, which states that a person commits an offence if that person knowingly misrepresents or attempts to misrepresent the broad-based black economic empowerment status of an enterprise, and the B-BBEE Commission may institute an investigation in terms of Section 13J of the B-BBEE Act. In addition, Section 13A of the B-BBEE Act has empowered organs of state and public entities to cancel any contract or authorisation awarded on account of false information knowingly furnished by or on behalf of an enterprise in respect of its broad-based black economic empowerment status.
30. If an entity is found to have violated the B-BBEE Act, an entity could be fined up to 10% of its annual turnover, and individuals involved could be imprisoned for up to 10 years, and / or fined. Specifically, an

offence under section 13O (2) could lead to imprisonment of up to 12 months, or a fine, or both the fine and imprisonment.

31. In terms of section 13O (2) a verification professional, procurement officer or any official of an organ of state or public entity who becomes aware of the commission of, or attempt to commit, any offence referred to under section 13O (1) and fails to report it, is guilty of an offence.
32. This Practice Guide is issued as a guide purely to assist with the interpretation and testing the validity of a B-BBEE sworn affidavit/CIPC B-BBEE certificate as well as a B-BBEE Verification Certificate issued by an accredited verification professional or agency, and does not constitute a legal document or ruling of the B-BBEE Commission.
33. This Practice Guide may be updated anytime by the B-BBEE Commission if there are any material changes arising from developments in the application of the B-BBEE Act. In such an instance, an amended version will be published to replace this one.
34. For any queries or further clarity on this Practice Guide, kindly feel free to contact us at the following contact details:

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Issued by the B-BBEE Commission

3 September 2018