



Getting Started With QCA: A Quick Reference Guide

What is QCA?

Quality Certification Alliance (QCA) is a not-for-profit membership organization exclusively for the promotional products industry that helps companies provide safe and complaint decorated merchandise. We offer a comprehensive manufacturing compliance standards program, QCA Certification, which addresses five critical areas: product safety, product quality, supply chain security, social accountability and environmental stewardship.

Our mission is to educate and effectively improve the level and ability of our members to consistently achieve compliance—not in just one factory, but across their entire supply base. We want promotional products practitioners to be confident going into any sales situation, whether with a Fortune 1000 client or any local small business, knowing that through QCA Accredited Suppliers they have access to safe and compliant product that was manufactured in a responsible way—and have the documentation to back it up.

What measures of compliance does the QCA Accreditation Program include?

The QCA Accreditation Program encompasses five areas of compliance—product safety, product quality, supply chain security, social accountability and environmental stewardship. Companies that successfully complete the program and achieve QCA Accreditation can expect to have policies, procedures and processes in place to address all five areas.

These policies, procedures and processes will then be evaluated through independent third-party audits using stringent globally recognized standards, which are based upon a combination of state and national laws, international standards and industry-accepted best practices that are recognized for their strength and effectiveness by QCA Accredited companies, the promotional products industry and end-user clients.

Who is eligible to apply for QCA membership?

QCA is focused primarily on domestic suppliers to the U.S. promotional products industry.





Is QCA membership only for large manufacturers?

No. Companies of all sizes can successfully complete the QCA Accreditation Program. Currently, companies with sales ranging from less than \$2 million to more than \$480 million in revenue are part of the QCA Accreditation Program. In fact, smaller companies may actually benefit more, as they do not have the resources to develop comprehensive compliance programs on their own.

To address the needs of both small and large companies, QCA a tiered membership organization with two categories of membership as defined by sales volume. Each membership category utilizes the same set of rigorous standards to evaluate compliance.

Is the QCA Accreditation Program one-size-fits-all?

Each promotional products supplier is unique. There are significant differences in sourcing strategies and how each manufacturer gets product to market from design through decoration. Moreover, our members' product lines are widely varied; thus, the functional requirements for their respective processes are different. Because of these differences, the QCA Accreditation Program is uniquely addressed to each member's sourcing and manufacturing processes. But the result is always the same: compliance.

QCA Accreditation—what's in it for my business?

The QCA Accreditation Process includes consultative input for companies building the policies and procedures necessary to meet their customers' product safety and compliance needs. The accreditation fee provides for personalized, consultative assistance for completing a gap analysis in the five areas of compliance. The gap analysis will identify the correct policies and procedures that are in place as well as those areas that may not be adequately addressed so corrective action may be taken. The aim is to assure your company's preparedness for successfully completing multiple third-party audits in your domestic headquarters and your supply base.

There is also value in the opportunity to join a group of like-minded individuals that have made a similar good decision and to interact with those who have made the commitment. Compliance is a continuous endeavor; it's not a static target. Having access to a network of support and knowing you don't have to go through the process alone has proved invaluable to our members.





How long does it take to become accredited?

It depends. Compliance is not a simple one-time stamp of approval; it must be internalized to work. And this takes time. Typically, most companies take between 15 and 18 months to complete the entire accreditation process, from the initial gap analysis through third-party audit verification.

How can I apply and get started?

Getting started with QCA can be done in four steps:

- 1. Download the application and complete it.
- 2. Sign the self-certification letter.
- 3. Review the fee schedule to determine your application fee. (Application to QCA is non-refundable.)
- 4. Send your completed application, self-certification letter and check for application fee (credit cards are not accepted) to:

Quality Certification Alliance PO Box 446 Seattle, Washington 98111

Once the application and fees are received, you will be asked to complete a nondisclosure agreement that protects the respective intellectual property of both your company and QCA. You will also be asked to complete a brand usage agreement. Once you're company information is received and confirmed, you'll be up and running.