



Comprehensive Certification Program Policy

Virginia Emergency Management Association

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I. Administration

A. Introduction

The Virginia Emergency Management Association (VEMA) and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) jointly endorse the professional development of emergency managers in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Specifically, VEMA and VDEM endorse a professional development program that ensures the competency of emergency management principles and how they are executed in Virginia. VEMA shall implement a program of peer-reviewed credentials, experience, references, and training that shall meet the following prescribed standards and processes to be recognized as a certified emergency management practitioner in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The certification of a Virginia Professional Emergency Manager (VaPEM) recognizes not only dedication but the achievement of an individual who has dedicated their professional career to managing the program of emergency management as it applies to the laws and practical experiences in the state. The certification of a Virginia Associate Emergency Manager (VaAEM) recognizes a commitment to the emergency management profession and provides as a stepping stone to the VaPEM. The following policies reflect the process for management of joint certification between the state emergency management agency and the professional association.

B. Purpose

These policies outline the administration of the certification program and the policies that direct the actions of the certifying body of the VEMA Certification Committee.

C. Organization

The VEMA Certification Committee is a standing committee of the Virginia Emergency Management Association and reports, according to the bylaws of the association, to the VEMA Board of Directors. The VEMA Certification Committee shall be led by the appointed VEMA Certification Committee Chair who shall recommend appointments/removal of committee members, policy, and strategic direction to the VEMA Board of Directors. Additionally, the VEMA Certification Committee Chair will be responsible for the execution of this policy and will report successful certification to the Board of Directors as well as expirations and violations of policy, etc.

The VEMA Staff shall support the VEMA Certification Committee by providing administrative support including, but not limited to, managing the receipt and security of application packages, and processing certification fees.

The VEMA Certification Committee will include a VEMA Board of Directors Liaison who shall ensure continuity between the two bodies, and provide guidance and support.

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D. Business and Policy Management

The VEMA Certification Committee shall operate as an advisory body to the VEMA Board of Directors for development of organizational policy as it relates to certification. The process of developing, executing, and interpreting certification policy shall be conducted in a manner that is transparent and professional.

Policy Management

Generally, policies may only be approved by the VEMA Board of Directors; however, the VEMA Certification Committee shall provide feedback and input into all further development of or modification to certification policy. The VEMA Certification Committee shall, through the prescribed business management process, introduce, discuss, and recommend policy amendments. All recommendations for policy change shall require a majority of voting members of the committee with a quorum present.

This document shall be reviewed and re-recommended every five years (or as needed) by a majority of voting members of the committee with a quorum present.

Conduct of Business

The administration of official business conducted by the VEMA Certification Committee shall subscribe to the following standards.

Meetings shall be organized into the following agenda items:

- a) Reviewing of the minutes of the previous meeting [and their approval]
- b) Reports from any sub-committees
- c) Reports on special committees (ad hoc, etc.)
- d) Old Business
- e) New Business (including application review)
- f) Good of the Order

Agendas shall be provided to all members of the committee not less than one week prior to the meeting date with all documentation necessary ahead of the meeting. This shall include, at a minimum, minutes from the previous meeting. Members will be solicited for agenda items two weeks in advance of a meeting.

At a minimum, the VEMA Certification Committee shall meet quarterly (four times a year). Meetings may be in-person, teleconference, WebEx, or a combination of the three.

A quorum of the VEMA Certification Committee shall be considered a majority of the total committee membership. Any actions of the committee shall require a quorum be present (in-person or virtually).

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The Chair, or designee in exceptional circumstances, shall preside over the meeting.

Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.

E. Ad-Hoc Subcommittees

From time to time, the Chair may establish ad-hoc subcommittees to investigate or address relevant issues facing the certification program. Once the issue has been addressed, the ad-hoc committee will be dissolved by the Chair.

F. Finances and Fees

Generally, the VEMA Certification Committee will not be concerned with organizational budgetary responsibilities. The collection of fees for certification application will be managed by the VEMA Staff and applications will only be forwarded for consideration with a successfully collected fee.

There are expenses incurred by the VEMA Certification Committee for administering this certification program including the creation of certificates and letters and other general administrative supplies, and the reviewers' travel expenses (mileage). Therefore, the Chair of the committee shall advocate for the necessary funding to cover these costs during the normal budget development cycle and will be informed by the current and forecasted program status. However, due to the possibility that the organization as a whole may be unable to meet the requested financial support, all Committee members shall be advised that their travel and other contributions may be considered non-reimbursable.

Annually, the committee shall discuss and determine the budgetary requests for the upcoming fiscal year of the organization.

II. Committee Composition

The VEMA Certification Committee shall be composed of practicing emergency management professionals who have been selected based on their outstanding contributions to the profession and highly-held regard within the field, as identified by the Board of Directors or their designee. The committee shall be comprised of three types of members, the Chair, Members, and Non-Voting Ex-Officio.

The committee shall be comprised of not less than three and not more than seven voting members (including the Chair). The Chair has discretion based on workload and application volume to determine the necessary number of voting members.

A. Qualifications for VEMA Certification Committee Membership

To be a voting member of the VEMA Certification Committee, members must:

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- Be a current member of the Virginia Emergency Management Association;
- Have been a VEMA-certified Professional Emergency Manager for a minimum of one year (with the exception of up to one member certified at the VaAEM level);
- Exemplify the VEMA Code of Ethics;
- Maintain absolute confidentiality of candidate information;
- Complete all assigned application reviews within the assigned timeline;
- Attend a minimum of 75% of committee meetings (in-person or virtually); and,
- Complete the application process as prescribed by this policy.

B. Qualifications for the VEMA Certification Committee Chair

To be the VEMA Certification Committee Chair, the individual must meet the qualifications of the VEMA Certification Committee Members, as listed above, and:

- Be successfully appointed by the VEMA President;
- Have been a VEMA-certified Professional Emergency Manager for a minimum of one year;
- Have been a practicing emergency manager in any field/sector in Virginia for a minimum of three years; and,
- Attend at least 75% of all Board of Directors meetings (as invited).

C. Qualifications for Executive Appointee Committee Members

To be an Executive Appointee VEMA Certification Committee member, the individual must be appointed by the current VEMA President. These positions do not have term limits and include positions such as state agencies appointees and board liaisons. These members shall be reappointed by incoming VEMA Presidents to remain on the committee.

D. Term Limits

VEMA Certification Committee Members and leadership shall be held to the following limitations to ensure continuous program growth and development.

The VEMA Certification Committee Chair shall serve a one-year term which may be renewed for up to two additional years (for a total length of service not to exceed three years). The Chair must receive a majority recommendation from the voting membership of the committee and be approved by the VEMA President.

Committee Members will serve a one-year term which may be renewed for up to four additional years (for a total length of service not to exceed five years). Committee Members must receive an annual recommendation from the Chair and approval from the VEMA President.

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Executive Appointee Members shall serve at the pleasure of the VEMA President. There are no term limits for these positions.

All types of membership may reapply to be a member of the VEMA Certification Committee following a one-year absence after completing their maximum term of service.

E. Committee Application and Appointment Process

Annually, the Chair of the VEMA Certification Committee shall transmit a request to all members of the association calling for applications to join, based on the number of available positions.

The application shall consist of:

- A personal statement including:
 - The candidate's background in Emergency Management; and,
 - Why they would be a good fit for the VEMA Certification Committee;
- A copy of the individual's current VEMA Professional Emergency Manager certificate (or approval letter); and,
- A signed confidentiality and Code of Conduct Statement (Attachment 1: VEMA Certification Committee Member Code of Conduct Statement).

The Chair shall receive the applications for certification committee membership and select an ad-hoc committee to review and recommend a slate of candidates to the Chair. The Chair shall review and recommend all or a partial list to the VEMA President who has final authority to appoint committee members.

All individuals who apply shall be notified, in writing (electronically) of the final decision. The list of non-selected individuals shall be retained as possible alternates in the event a committee member shall need to be replaced.

Executive Appointee Committee Members are appointed and are not subject to an application process; however, they must sign a VEMA Certification Committee Member Code of Conduct Statement.

Those individuals currently a member of the VEMA Certification Committee seeking reappointment within their prescribed term limits shall only be required to submit a written request in response to the Chair's call for applicants (electronic correspondence is acceptable).

F. Vacancies

In the event that a vacancy is created on the VEMA Certification Committee while in the existing fiscal year of the member's appointment, the committee Chair shall exercise the

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right to recommend a replacement to the VEMA President without any additional process. The individual who is appointed shall serve the remainder of the fiscal year and is eligible for re-appointment by the process outlined herein.

G. Resignation/Removal

In the event that a committee member must resign, they shall offer a letter to the VEMA President and copy the Chair, so stating.

In the event that a committee member is unable to meet the obligations of their commitment or violates this policy, the Chair shall recommend to the VEMA President that they are removed and for what reasons. The ultimate decision to remove a committee member rests with the VEMA President.

H. Committee Member Training

All committee members shall complete an initial training on committee operations and view a brief video on Robert's Rules of Order. All committee members (except non-voting, ex-officio members) who review application packets shall complete a training on packet review.

Other training programs may be assigned by the committee Chair.

III. Certification Application Submission Policies, Criteria, and Process

At the program's core, the certification procedure and applicable criteria set the outward-facing program expectations of candidates and the inward-facing internal standards of work for committee members and VEMA staff. Certification recognizes the dedication to emergency management in the Commonwealth of Virginia through various levels of training and education, experience, and contributions to the profession.

A. Levels of Certification

The VEMA Certification Program offers two distinct levels of certification for professionals in the emergency management field, the Virginia Associate Emergency Manager (VaAEM) and the Virginia Professional Emergency Manager (VaPEM).

The **Virginia Associate Emergency Manager (VaAEM)** certification recognizes a commitment to the profession. Individuals eligible for this level of certification will have completed emergency management training, completed four professional contributions with two of the four performed in and/or directly impacting emergency management operations in Virginia and provided letters of reference. Target audiences for this level of certification may have recently completed an educational program or recently have entered the field.

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The **Virginia Professional Emergency Manager (VaPEM)** certification recognizes the knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience of Virginia's emergency managers. Individuals eligible for this level of certification have completed a substantial number of training hours (including in-classroom settings), attained three years of comprehensive emergency management experience, received three letters of reference, and provided six third-party/independently verified contributions three of which were performed in and/or directly impacting emergency management operations in Virginia. This level of certification sets apart the receiving individual as an emergency management subject matter expert in their field and a valuable resource to other practitioners in Virginia.

It is important to note that these levels are unique from another state, national, and international certifications in that they require the holder to have Virginia-specific knowledge which is validated through the following peer-reviewed certification process.

B. Application Submission

Candidates shall compile and submit scanned PDF document for review by the VEMA Certification Committee. Applications shall be inclusive of the document found in Attachment 2: VEMA Certification Application and sent to VEMA Headquarters with the appropriate fee where they will be held until assigned by the VEMA Certification Committee Chair. No applications will be included for review without a successfully received payment. Applications will be accepted year-round, although reviewed at a minimum, quarterly.

C. Application Review

The VEMA Staff will notify the Chair of the number of applications received and the Chair will assign those applications to two committee members for review and a third committee member for tie-breaking disputes. All applications shall be reviewed within 20 days of assignment and applicants will be notified within 45 days of the end of the quarter in which they were received.

| Application Received by | Notification by |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| January 1 st | February 15 th |
| April 1 st | May 15 th |
| July 1 st | August 15 th |
| October 1 st | November 15 th |

Committee members reviewing applications may reach out to candidates for additional information where only a minor gap is identified and correction would likely lead to successful certification. A minor gap shall be defined as not more than one missing piece of documentation. At no time may a committee member advise a candidate of their (potential) outcome.

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After determining the outcome of an application packet (accepted, incomplete, rejected), the application packet will be turned over to the Virginia Department of Emergency Management for digitizing and packet destruction.

Packets found to be incomplete by the reviewing committee members will be turned over to the Virginia Department of Emergency Management with pre-written instructions on areas for re-submission. All letter templates are found in Attachment 3: Notification Letter Templates.

For a graphical depiction of this process, please see Attachment 4: Application Review Process.

D. Notifications to Candidates

Candidates will be notified of their application results within 30 days of the close of the calendar quarter in which the application packet was submitted. There are four scenarios for notification to the candidate (aside from the appeals procedure):

1. Candidates who have submitted successfully reviewed and approved packets will receive the standard Approved Letter in Attachment 3.
2. Candidates who have submitted packets found to be deficient or incomplete will receive the standard Incomplete Letter in Attachment 3.
3. Candidates who have resubmitted documentation to enhance an application previously determined to have been incomplete and their resubmission was found to be complete, will receive the standard Approved Letter in Attachment 3.
4. Candidates who have resubmitted documentation to enhance an application previously determined to have been incomplete and their resubmission was found to be incomplete will receive the standard Rejection Letter in Attachment 3.

All questions regarding the status of applications shall be directed to the Chair. They shall affirm the application is being processed, regardless of knowledge of the actual status.

E. Appeals Procedure

In the event that an application packet has been rejected by the VEMA Certification Committee, which means that the candidate failed to correct the identified gaps in their original submission, they will receive the standard Rejection Letter. The letter will include a statement on the following appeals procedure.

If a candidate feels that they met identified areas of improvement listed in the standard Incomplete Letter, the candidate may appeal the rejection by submitting a letter informing the Chair of the appeal and on what grounds. The Chair will convene an ad-hoc committee to review only if the candidate completed the requested improvements.

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The ad-hoc committee will recommend approving the appeal and overturning the rejection or upholding the rejection.

The candidate shall have 30 calendar days to appeal the decision in writing from the date of the rejection letter.

At no point shall the application fee be refunded. The appeals decision is final and there is no other recourse.

F. Criteria for Certification

Both levels of certification have specifically required elements and also recommended methods for satisfying completion. Generally, each submission should have third-party, independent verification proving actual completion of the work.

All professional contributions and training should have occurred within the past ten years from the date of application.

To increase the status of this Virginia certification, three of the six contributions must have been performed in and/or directly impacts emergency management operations in Virginia to attain the VaPEM. For the VaAEM, at least two of the contributions must have been performed in and/or directly impacts emergency management operations Virginia.

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| Criterion | VaAEM | VaPEM | Requirement | Recommended Documentation |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Overall Application | Required | | Include the Certification Application | Professional presentation of the submitted documentation is required for consideration. |
| Work Experience | 1 year | 3 years | The individual must have served in an emergency management position. | Candidates should submit a copy of their current job description and all job descriptions for previous positions held. If a job description is not available, the candidate may submit a hand-signed letter from the organization stating their role and dates of employment. |
| References | 3 Required | | Letters of reference (the first must be from your current supervisor) and each on letterhead | Other references who may qualify are past supervisors, current EM practitioners, EM association leadership, or emergency services leadership. Reference sources who do not qualify include, a subordinate, a former student, or friends, neighbors, or relatives. |
| Education | Required | | High School Diploma or GED | High school or college transcript - if the applicant's name has changed, a brief explanation should be attached. |
| Training | 100 Hours EM 50 Hours GM | 100 Hours EM 75 Hours GM | General Management Training is defined as training that provides education on professional development topics | Use the Training Allocation Table on the VEMA Certification Website to determine whether or not training is EM or GM. |

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| Criterion | VaAEM | VaPEM | Requirement | Recommended Documentation |
|-----------|-------|-------|--|---|
| | | | <p>such as leadership, communication, computer skills, accounting, grant-writing, etc.</p> <p>Emergency Management Training is defined as training that provides education on comprehensive emergency management topics or topics that support a particular phase of emergency management.</p> | <p>Submit transcripts, certificates of completion, or other official documents (copies okay) that verify completion.</p> <p>Training does not have to appear on the Training Allocation Table to be included. However, training that does not appear on the Training Application Table shall be submitted with a Training Course Submission Form.</p> <p>A maximum of 25 hours in any one course will be counted.</p> <p>Applicants may submit the Advanced Professional Series (APS) certificate for 100 hours of EM training credit. This is an exception to the rule above.</p> <p>No more than 50% of total training hours may be online courses (e.g. FEMA EMI).</p> <p>Documentation showing completion of the FEMA PDS must be included and can be counted towards training hours.</p> <p>College courses can be</p> |

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| Criterion | VaAEM | VaPEM | Requirement | Recommended Documentation |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| | | | | submitted as training for EM or GM on a course-by-course basis. 1 semester credit hour = 15 hours; 1 quarter credit hour = 10 hours (25 hours maximum per course). |
| Professional Contributions | <p>Four Required</p> <p>(two are required to have been performed in or directly impacting Virginia)</p> | <p>Six Required</p> <p>(three are required to have been performed in or directly impacting Virginia)</p> | <p>The candidate shall submit at least (but not limited to) six professional Contributions having occurred in the last five years. Each category is limited to one submission. Each submission shall be required to submit the Professional Contributions Checklist.</p> | <p>Each submission shall include third-party, independent verification indicating completion and specific role. Below are additional recommendations for each type of contribution.</p> |
| Disaster Experience | | | <p>The candidate has documented experience operating in a disaster situation in an emergency management role.</p> | <p>Documentation should include either a copy of an Incident Action Plan and/or an After Action Report/Improvement Plan.</p> |
| Exercise Design Experience | | | <p>The candidate has documented experience in exercise development in an Exercise Planning Team role.</p> | <p>Documentation should include either a copy of an Exercise Plan and/or an After Action Report/Improvement Plan.</p> |
| Professional Membership | | | <p>The candidate holds/held a membership in an emergency management-related association for two years (i.e a national, international or state-</p> | <p>The documentation should be certificates of membership.</p> |

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| Criterion | VaAEM | VaPEM | Requirement | Recommended Documentation |
|--|-------|-------|--|--|
| | | | level emergency management association). | |
| Leadership and/or Participation | | | The candidate served as a leader of or major contributor to a state, regional, local, or federal committee/task force addressing a significant emergency management issue. | The documentation should be official meeting minutes or a letter from an organization official attesting to the candidate's role. |
| Speaking Engagements | | | The candidate provided three 20-minute or longer talks on an emergency management topic. | The documentation should include letters of thanks from event leaders indicating the length and topic of the presentation. Powerpoint slides and/or agendas do not provide proof of completion and are not acceptable. |
| Teaching or Instructing | | | The candidate provided a minimum of 12 hours of classroom instruction. | The documentation should include a confirmation from the institution/organization identifying the number of hours teaching and the subject matter taught. A copy of a syllabus or sign-in sheets does not provide proof of completion. |
| Publications | | | The candidate published an emergency management-related article or research project. The final product must have been published in a distributed forum. | The documentation should include a copy of the final product. Internal newsletters do not qualify. Bulleted lists do not qualify. |

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| Criterion | VaAEM | VaPEM | Requirement | Recommended Documentation |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|--|--|
| Audio-Visual Products | | | The candidate published an emergency management-related audio-visual product. | The documentation should include (ideally) a link to the product, screenshots of the product, and a letter from a third-party authority. Powerpoint slides do not qualify. |
| Awards or Recognition | | | The candidate received an award or recognition for an individual or small team accomplishment related to emergency management. | The documentation should include a copy of the award/citation, etc. stating the action or work that resulted in the award. |
| Mitigation Activity | | | The candidate completed a project that substantially decreased the impact of a hazard. | The documentation should be thorough and include independent verification of the candidate's work on this activity. |
| Special Assignment | | | The candidate completed a special assignment contributing to emergency management that was outside of the daily duties. | The documentation should include a letter from an authority (on letterhead) stating the candidate's actions and that they were not a part of their daily duties. |
| Service Role | | | The candidate completed a service project directly relating to enhancing emergency management activities. | The documentation should include a letter from an authority (on letterhead) stating the candidate's actions. |
| Professional Development | | | The candidate attended national or state level conferences for at least 20 contact hours. | The documentation should include certificates of attendance. Agendas, registrations, and other general documents do not prove attendance. If |

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| Criterion | VaAEM | VaPEM | Requirement | Recommended Documentation |
|--------------|-------|-------|---|--|
| | | | | the certificates do not state contact hours or IACET hours, 6 hours will be awarded per day. |
| Other | | | The candidate may have completed a major contribution to the profession that does not fall into any other category. | Provide ample documentation including third-party, independent verification of the candidate's role. |

G. Recertification Process

All certifications are valid for five years and the certification will expire at the end of the calendar year in the fifth year. For instance, if an individual was certified on June 15, 2015, their certification will expire on December 31, 2020.

In order to maintain certification, individuals must submit the following in addition to the recertification fee by the end of the calendar year in which they expire. No grace period will be offered unless approved by the VEMA Certification Chair and may only be extended for up to three months (or longer on a case-by-case basis).

A reminder letter shall be sent to the last recorded address of the candidate in January of the year of expiration and include instructions on how to recertify from the VEMA Headquarters.

Failure to submit recertification materials by the expiration of the certification will terminate the certification. A full application will be required to certify again.

For recertification, three of the six contributions must have been performed in and/or directly impacts emergency management operations in Virginia to attain the VaPEM. For the VaAEM, at least two of the contributions must have been performed in and/or directly impacts emergency management operations Virginia.

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| Criterion | VaAEM | VaPEM | Requirement |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Overall Recertification Application | Required | | Include the Certification Application, Professional Presentation of the Submitted Documentation |
| References | 1 Required | | A letter of reference from the candidate's current supervisor |
| Experiences | Required | | One (1) Exercise or Actual Disaster Experience (since last certification/recertification) |
| Training | 50 EM 25 GM | | Submit training hours earned since application or last certification approval |
| Professional Contributions | 4 Required (2 in VA) | 6 Required (3 in VA) | Submit professional contributions |

H. Reciprocity

In order to recognize certifications earned through other organizations, the VEMA Certification Committee will grant the VaPEM to candidates who have held the International Association of Emergency Managers Certified Emergency Manager (CEM®). The VaPEM shall be set to expire at the end of the end of the CEM® certification and will have to recertify their VaPEM using the same requirements found in Section G. Reciprocity for the CEM® may only be granted to an individual one time.

In order to be considered to receive reciprocity, candidates shall submit the following:

- A hand signed letter requesting reciprocity;
- A copy of their IAEM CEM® certificate or award letter; and,
- The full application fee (depending on member/non-member status).

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Candidates will be notified of their certification at the same time as the traditional application packages.

Certifications awarded by other states are not accepted for reciprocity.

IV. Ethics

The VEMA Certification Committee may recommend, on a case-by-case basis, the indefinite suspension of a VaAEM or VaPEM certification in cases where an individual brings dishonor to themselves or to the field. This is an extreme measure and requires action of the VEMA Board of Directors

V. Use of the VaPEM and VaAEM

Awardees of VEMA certifications are entitled to use "VaPEM" and the "VaAEM" initials after their name for as long as they are currently certified. Upon expiration of an individual's certification, use must cease and desist. Individuals found to be using these initials who are not currently certified shall be sent a "cease and desist" letter from the VEMA Board of Directors and Staff.

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Attachment 1: VEMA Certification Committee Code of Conduct Statement

(Date)

I, _____ (full name), do hereby affirm that I shall conduct myself with professionalism and integrity as a member of the VEMA Certification Committee. I agree to complete the assignments made by the Committee Chair and will make notice of any work I am unable to complete within the allotted timeframe. Further, I acknowledge that the work of this committee is sensitive in nature as it pertains to candidate professional development and the handling of potentially For Official Use Only documentation provided in support of certification. I will not release any information regarding candidate applications, the status thereof, or information found within. I will follow this policy and am aware that I shall present questions to the Chair prior to making any assumptions regarding document control and/or processing applications.

I agree to abide by the VEMA Code of Ethics.

Finally, I understand that I may be removed from committee service for not meeting these or any other expectations of my position by the Chair or VEMA President.

(Signature)

(Date)

(Printed Name)

To be retained in the shared drive/folder for each committee member.

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Attachment 2: VEMA Certification Applications

<http://www.vemaweb.org/vema-certifications>

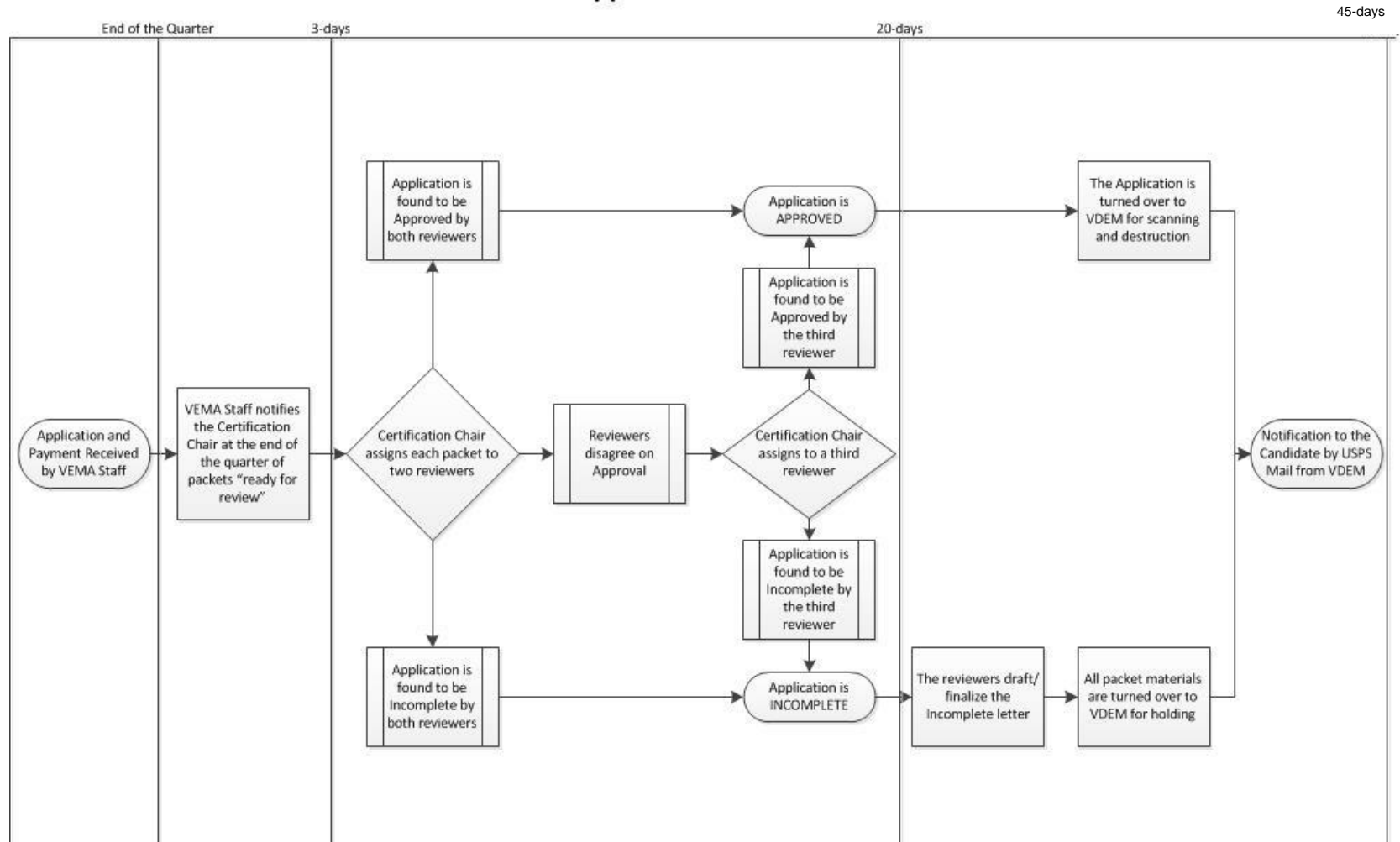
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Attachment 3: Standard Notification Letters

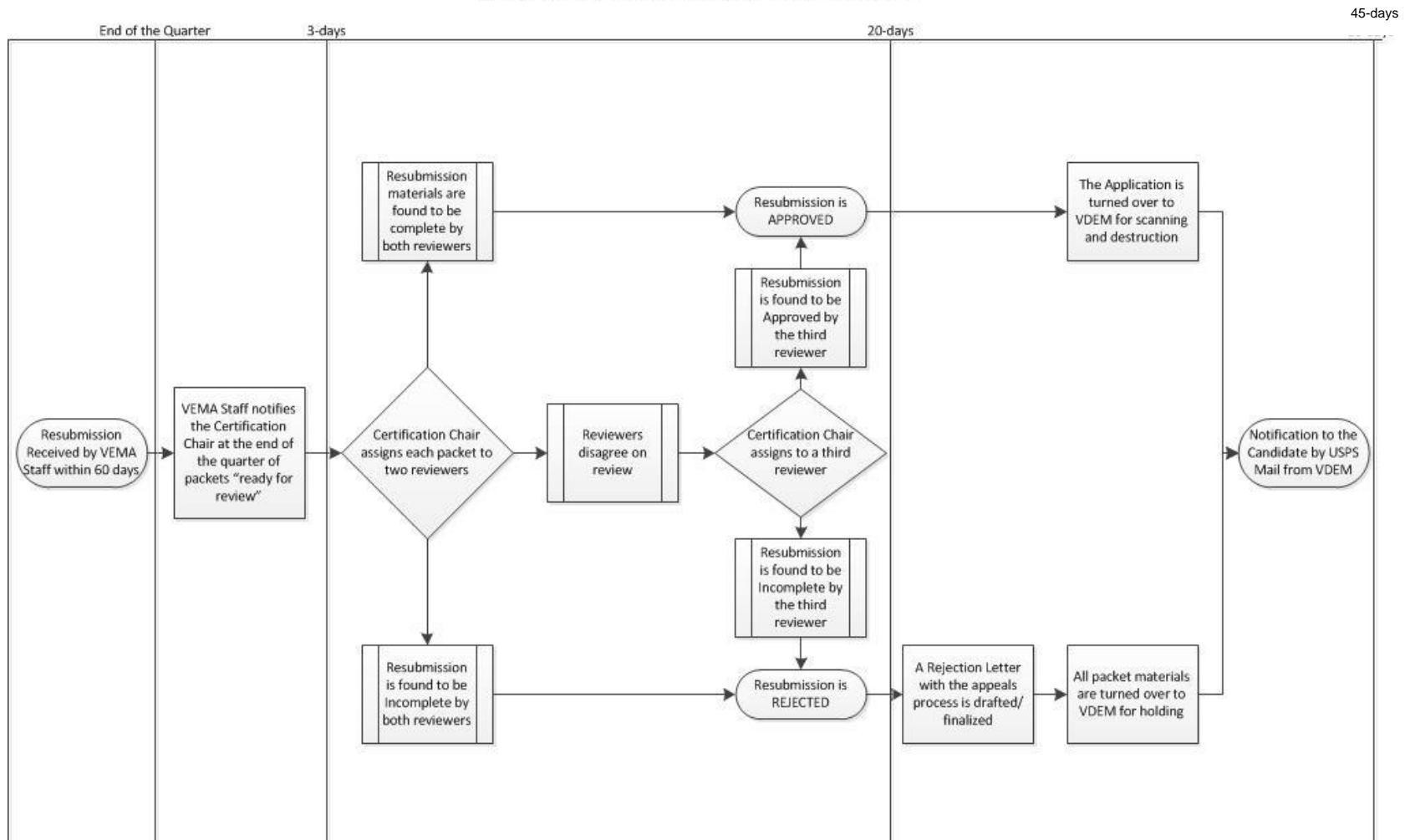
For document security/control, these letters are not released in the policy and are retained by the Committee Chair.

Attachment 4: Application Review Process Visualization

VEMA Application Review Process



VEMA Resubmission Review Process



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