

NSF P391 General Sustainability Assessment Criteria for Services and Service Providers

NSF P391 General Sustainability Assessment Criteria for Services and Service Providers is the principal protocol used to evaluate and certify sustainability of service providers. The NSF P391 protocol can be applied across a variety of services and service providers such as facilities and maintenance, consulting services and installation services.

This U.S. protocol was developed by NSF through a consensus-based process with an expert panel of stakeholders including service providers, suppliers, regulatory agencies, customers, end users, and other participants. The purpose of this protocol is to address the environmental, economic and social aspects of services and service providers. The criteria in this protocol ensure that service providers meet the expectations for the procurement of sustainable services, including services requiring the use of products.

While the standardization of sustainable products is relatively straightforward and products can be readily identified, sustainable services are not as easily evaluated. One of the major challenges of these efforts has been the scarcity of accurate and reliable information on the sustainable characteristics of services purchased. Before this protocol was developed, comparing the sustainability qualities of one service to another was a complex endeavor and often done on a “single-attribute” basis – for example, energy efficiency or toxicity. The goal of this multi-attribute protocol is a sustainability assessment that standardizes data to allow for more streamlined comparisons of the sustainable attributes of services and service providers.

Standard P391 Overview

Based on life-cycle assessment principles, NSF P391 employs an easy-to-use checklist to evaluate service providers against established prerequisite requirements, performance criteria and quantifiable metrics in three key areas:

- Environment
- Labor
- Social Responsibility

For example, the criteria in the Waste Management Section include management of waste, reduction or elimination of waste, recovery of discarded products, and solid waste reduction targets. In the Energy Management section, service provider’s organizations shall report their plan to reduce energy consumption and increase their use of renewable energy.



NSF Certification to P391 is based on achievement of points for the criteria that are applicable to the service provider at Conformant, Silver, Gold, or Platinum level. Service providers certified by NSF are authorized to use the NSF Sustainability Certified Mark in their advertising. Monitoring and periodic reevaluation is required to maintain certification.

Sustainability Assured for Service Providers

Certification Benefits

Certification of services to this protocol allows service providers to:

- Distinguish “green” services from competitors and enhance their brand.
- Obtain preferred vendor status from those seeking sustainable solutions.
- Meet state and federal procurement guidelines.
- Achieve the most credible type of certification available in the marketplace.
- Save money by adopting more sustainable operational practices and business approaches.

Background

In October 2009, the President of the United States issued Executive Order (E.O.) 13514. The E.O. represents a new level of Federal commitment to sustainability, requiring agencies to “prioritize actions based on a full accounting of both economic and social benefits and costs.” The E.O. also advances sustainable acquisition by requiring that 95 percent of applicable contract actions, including services, are energy-efficient, water-efficient, bio-based, environmentally preferable, non-ozone depleting, contain recycled content, or are non-toxic or less-toxic alternatives.

In 2010, NSF identified a large gap in ‘green’ standards – while there are many standards and programs that cover products, very few pertain to services. With the range of possible services, professional, trade, on site, off site across dozens of disciplines comes varying environmental and social impacts. As a starting point, general criteria applicable to all service providers have been developed with the intention to add criteria for specific service types on a continuous basis. These criteria are intended to be used by any organization that desires to assess the sustainability practices of their service providers. The General Services Administration (GSA) determined that the contemplated ‘green’ standard could meet its customers’ purchasing needs by identifying services that comply with E.O. 13514 and has been supportive of the standard’s development.

Contact Us

For more information about certification to NSF P391, please contact NSF at +1 (734) 476-2543, internationally at 00 +1 (734) 476-2543 or by e-mail at sustainability@nsf.org.

To purchase a copy of NSF P391, visit <http://www.techstreet.com/nsfgate.html>.

NSF International has been testing and certifying products for safety, health and the environment for more than 65 years (www.nsf.org). As an independent, not-for-profit organization, NSF’s mission is to protect public health and the environment through standards development, inspection, testing and certification for the food, water, building materials, retail, chemical and health science industries. Operating in more than 120 countries, NSF is committed to protecting public health worldwide.



NSF Sustainability draws upon this expertise in standards development, product assurance and certification, advisory services and quality systems management to help companies green their products, operations, systems and supply chains. Through its National Center for Sustainability Standards, NSF has developed sustainability standards for: chemicals, building products and materials and water quality. NSF works with

leading regulators, scientists, engineers, public health and environmental health professionals, and industry representatives to develop these transparent, consensus-based standards.