

Quick Start Guide: Certify 8(a) Initial Application for Firms

Task	Instructions
Getting Started in Certify	
Before Starting your 8(a) Annual Review	Download the document checklist from the prepare section of certify.SBA.gov to gather all required documents. Save documents as PDF files with the naming convention: document title_year (ex. W2_2015).
Confirm your profile is correct in SAM.gov	Visit the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) and login to review your business information. If changes are needed, make these changes in SAM before beginning your 8(a) Annual Review in Certify.
Create your Certify Account	<p>Visit certify.SBA.gov and click the “Create an Account” button to begin the registration process. Only firm owners are allowed to create accounts on Certify. In order to link your SAM.gov profile to Certify, you will need your DUNS number, TIN number, EIN or SSN, MPIN (from SAM.gov) and firm structure (e.g. corporation, LLC, sole proprietorship) to register.</p> <p>You will be asked to create a passphrase. The passphrase requirement is complex to protect the personal information you will upload to Certify. If you do not receive an email from Certify after you’ve created your account, check your spam folder and add certify@sba.gov to your contacts. The account creation email link expires after 24 hours.</p>
Accessing and Completing your Annual Review	
Fill out your Annual Review	Firms are required to submit their Annual Reviews at the end of each year in the program, except for year 9, within 30 days of their anniversary date. To get started, log into your Certify account. You will see several application/program choices, select the 8(a) Annual Review. You will immediately begin filling out your Eligibility information, then upon finishing this section you will be taken to your Application Overview where you can review and complete the other sections (Ownership, Control, Business Development, and Individual Contributors). Each section has various questions/prompts to help complete your Annual Review and upload documents. As you complete each section, you must select "Save and Continue" to move to the next page.

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<p>Add Contributors</p>	<p>If this is your first time completing your Annual Review in Certify, you will be required to add the following contributors to your Annual Review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Disadvantaged individual(s) (i.e. DVD) ● Spouse(s) of DVDs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If spouse is claiming DVD, spouse should be noted as a DVD – they will fill out the DVD questionnaire, not the spouse questionnaire. ○ If spouse is not claiming DVD but is an officer, but is a director or 10% owner or more, the spouse should fill out the spouse questionnaire ● 10% or more owners ● Directors, management members, managing partners, and officers <p>In future years, you will only need to add/update contributors who are DVDs or spouses of DVDs for Annual Reviews.</p> <p>Open the Individual Contributors section to submit each individual contributors' name and email address. This will send an invitation to each individual to create an account to login to Certify and fill out their contributor questionnaire. The firm owner can see the completeness status of each individual's questionnaire, but not the information contained within them, and is able to send reminders on the right side of the Annual Review Overview page, if needed. To protect personal information, contributors do not have access to the firm owner's Annual Review information.</p> <p>Take care to add all contributors before submitting your Annual Review - if you need to add contributors after submission, processing of your Annual Review may be delayed. Certify will not allow the firm owner to submit their Annual Review until all contributors have completed their questionnaires.</p>
<p>Make Edits to Annual Review Sections (Before Submitting)</p>	<p>Select the section title (ex. Control) where you wish to make edits and make necessary changes. The edit will not be saved unless you continue through the section and click "Save and Continue" at the bottom of the questionnaire you are editing. The section will not read "complete" until you finish clicking through all the pages of that entire section. This is because changing an answer to one question could cause changes to the other questions presented to you.</p>

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Upload and View Documents	<p>You will be prompted to upload documents only while answering questions in Certify. You will not be able to upload documents directly to the documents tab or within the messages tab. Documents should be saved as individual PDF files (not zipped) with the naming convention: document title_year (ex. W2_2015). Files must be 25MB or less. Do not password protect any files.</p> <p>To view all documents uploaded in Certify, regardless of program/application, click the white “Documents” link in the dark navigation bar at the top of the page to access your complete Document Library. To view documents associated to your Annual Review, select the Annual Review year desired from your dashboard, then select the Documents link on the Annual Review Overview page.</p>
Delete Documents	<p>Click the “Documents” link in the dark navigation bar at the top of the page to view your Document Library and click the trash can icon to archive a document. Archived documents remain accessible by SBA but no longer appear in the documents list for an application or Annual Review. You cannot delete documents that have been uploaded in Certify.</p>
Submit Your Completed Annual Review	<p>Annual Reviews can only be submitted when all sections say “Complete”, including all individual contributor information. Select “Review and Sign” from the dashboard to send your Annual Review to SBA. You will not be able to edit your Annual Review after submission unless SBA requests additional information.</p>
What to Expect After Submission	
Check the Status of Your Annual Review	<p>Log into your Certify account and view the “Status” column for your Annual Review on the dashboard.</p>
Correspond with SBA after Submission	<p>Click the “Messages” tab found in the menu on the Annual Review Overview page. You will be able to correspond with an SBA analyst after your Annual Review has been assigned. Firms receive notifications letting them know once their case has been assigned to an analyst.</p>
Notification Received from SBA	<p>If the SBA analyst has questions or issues with your Annual Review, you will receive an email notification. Log into Certify to access your Annual Review. Within the “Messages” tab you will find more information and actions that you need to take.</p>

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Deficiency Letter Received	If your Annual Review is returned with a deficiency letter, log into Certify and read the deficiency letter within the Messages tab of Certify. The letter will document additional information needed in order to have SBA process your Annual Review. Once you receive a deficiency letter, the entire Annual Review is unlocked for editing. The letter note each section requiring edits/clarification and the questions that need revisions within each sections. Review each section/questionnaire to address the issues and upload new documents if necessary. You may send a message back to SBA for further clarification if needed. Firms have 10 days to complete their responses to the deficiency letter.
Letter of Intent Received	If you receive a letter of intent to terminate from SBA, the letter will document additional information or actions needed. You have 30 days to respond by submitting the necessary information requested in the letter within your Annual Review questionnaires. . You may send a message back to SBA within the Messages tab for further clarification. If you do not upload the necessary information within 30 days, at that time SBA will begin proceedings for the Notice of Termination to end your firm's involvement in the 8(a) program.
Retain Letter Received	Firms that complete all the requirements to stay eligible for the 8(a) program will be retained at the end of their Annual Review processing. If you receive a retain letter, SBA has confirmed that your firm will remain in the 8(a) program. Your status on the dashboard will also read "retained" once your Annual Review has been fully processed and accepted.
Request Withdrawal from 8(a) Program	If you wish to withdraw from the 8(a) program, you are still required to submit your Annual Review until SBA has received your signed Voluntary Withdrawal form. Email your analyst to begin the voluntary withdrawal process.