

# Guide to Building Department Accreditation

## *Helping Building Departments Achieve Excellence*

Improving Services

Achieving Goals

Building Confidence

Building Departments across the country are pursuing accreditation from the International Accreditation Service (IAS) to bring improvements to their organization, achieve quality goals and build confidence in the Department. This information guide provides a brief overview of the accreditation program and how it can benefit your team.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### ***What is Accreditation?***

Accreditation is defined as “Formal third-party recognition that a body fulfills specified requirements and is competent to carry out specific conformity assessment and regulatory tasks.”

#### ***Why Building Department Accreditation?***

Building Department Accreditation provides a structured approach for departments to improve their organization, achieve goals, build community confidence and gain national recognition for excellence.

#### ***Who Provides the Accreditation?***

The International Accreditation Service (IAS), a nationally recognized accreditation body and a subsidiary of the International Code Council, operates the Building Department Accreditation program.

#### ***What is the Accreditation Based On?***

Accreditation is based on IAS Accreditation Criteria (AC251), the International Building Code and related industry standards.

#### ***Has the Accreditation Changed Over the Years?***

Yes, there have been a number of changes to improve and streamline the accreditation process. The accreditation criteria AC 251 is reviewed every year in a public accreditation committee meeting and any improvements and/or changes are made at that time.

Recent Significant Changes Include:

- The elimination of a pre-assessment visit to the department. As departments are becoming more educated about the program, they are better prepared.
- Reduction in the cost to become accredited.
- Reduction in the amount of paperwork required to demonstrate compliance with the AC251.

#### ***What Areas are Covered by the Accreditation?***

The Building Department Accreditation is based on IAS Accreditation Criteria AC251. Below is a list of some of the areas covered in the accreditation criteria:

- Service goals (timeliness, quality, etc.)
- Documents and records
- Budget
- Emergency response plans
- Complaints and appeals
- Plan Reviews
- Quality management system
- Personnel
- Inspections
- Management reviews
- Permitting



*Representatives of the Building Inspections Department, City of McKinney, Texas, IAS Accredited Building Department*

### ***How Much Does it Cost to Become Accredited?***

The cost varies depending on factors such as the size of the department, whether the department opts to have a pre-evaluation, geographic location (primarily impacts those outside the U.S.) and the readiness of the department. You may obtain a no-obligation quote from the IAS website at [www.iasonline.org](http://www.iasonline.org).

### ***What are Some of the Biggest Challenges to Becoming Accredited?***

The primary focus of the AC251 accreditation criteria is on the quality of service provided. While many Building Departments have implemented some quality control measures, there may be insufficient administrative infrastructure to fully implement those measures. Accordingly, AC251 assists Building Departments in implementing quality control measures that are practical, measurable, regularly verified and reported.

### ***What is the Best Approach to Prepare for Accreditation?***

There are multiple ways to prepare for accreditation. These include reviewing the Building Department Accreditation Program page on the IAS website, contacting IAS with your questions, obtaining a copy of the accreditation criteria AC251, talking with other departments that have already achieved accreditation and attending a one-day training class that is offered by IAS

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## **What Building Department Leaders Say About AC251 Accreditation**

*The following are excerpts from a series of profile articles that feature accredited Building Departments. The series is currently running in ICC's Building Safety Journal.*



*"IAS accreditation has helped our team identify and implement opportunities that drive a high-performance organization and encourage professional growth, while raising awareness of building codes and safe building practices. Our job tasks and procedures have become much more consistent, which strengthens departmental accountability and improves the quality of customer service. We have an established and proactive continuous plan of improvement for the department that will be under continual review by IAS."*

**Rick Herzberger, Chief Building Official, City of McKinney, Texas**



*"The accreditation criteria helped us document all of our work procedures. This created a library of information that promotes consistency in all we do. Locally, our department is recognized as an accredited department in Plano. It raises the bar on how we are perceived and creates a sense of pride within our department organization."*

**Selso Mata, Director of Building Inspections in Plano, Texas**



*"The biggest benefit was establishing our quality control manual that gave us the ability to develop and track service goals. We were able to clearly show the need for additional staff and received a unanimous vote approving our request."*

**Scott Cope, Director of Building/Ordinance/Facilities, City of Rochester Hills Building Department, Rochester Hills/Oakland County/Michigan**



*"I was curious to see if there were areas that we could do better so I decided to apply for the IAS accreditation process. Accreditation is a great way to have your business processes and day-to-day operations analyzed from an independent third party. Obtaining accreditation will elevate your reputation in the development community and also with the elected officials in your jurisdiction."*

Scott Berg, AIA, Chief Building Official, Building Division, Aurora, Colorado



*"Some of the benefits our department has seen from going through the accreditation process have included improvements in customer service and services in general, excellent relationships with internal and external stakeholders, and strengthening our team culture."*

Rebai Tamerhoulet, PE; SE, Administrator/Building Official, Building and Safety Division, Salem, Oregon



*"Building Department Accreditation has helped our department with efforts to recruit the best candidates and employee retention. It has also helped to build positive relationships with all customers, both internal and external. Finally, it has helped to achieve recognition as an industry leader."*

Joel Dramis, Building Code Administrator, City of Port St. Lucie Building Department, Port St. Lucie, FL / St. Lucie County

## Ten Reasons to Become an IAS-Accredited Building Department

*Here are great reasons to consider becoming an IAS-accredited Building Department.*

1. Be included among the leading Building Departments in the U.S. that have achieved the distinction of IAS accreditation.
2. Establish positive change by embracing a program proven to drive Building Departments toward more effective and efficient operations.
3. Achieve departmental goals as a result of accreditation requirements for strategic planning, benchmarking and tracking.
4. Identify strengths and weaknesses to ensure ongoing development and progress.
5. Generate solid analytics to support budget requests and lower costs.
6. Provide evidence of your department's due diligence and help limit liability.
7. Raise the profile and build confidence in your department in the eyes of city/county managers, mayors, city council, industry leaders and citizens.
8. Verify quality operations through independent assessment of your department's administrative, code enforcement and quality management systems.
9. Learn from peer Building Departments that have successfully achieved accreditation.
10. Receive documented proof, from a leading accreditation authority that your department uses best practices and operates at the highest ethical, legal and technical standards.

## How the IAS Program Works

*The IAS Building Department Accreditation Program is for governmental agencies that are proactively seeking to improve their organization. Increased efficiencies, improved decision making and enhanced public confidence in your services are benefits of accreditation.*

1. Accreditation is based on the IAS Accreditation Criteria (AC251) which is available on the IAS website ([www.iasonline.org](http://www.iasonline.org)).
2. Building Departments submit an application, fee, basic information about the jurisdiction and technical information about the department to demonstrate compliance with AC251.
3. IAS conducts an on-site assessment of the department.
4. Once a department has demonstrated compliance with the criteria, it is issued an IAS Certificate of Accreditation.
5. The accreditation certificates for all IAS-accredited Building Departments are on the IAS website ([www.iasonline.org](http://www.iasonline.org)) 24/7.

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## More Benefits for Building Departments

- A proactive way to strengthen the department and improve its public safety services
- Independent, third-party recognition that a department operates under the highest ethical, legal and technical standards
- Identifies strengths and weaknesses to ensure ongoing development and progress
- Assists with development of strategic plans with steps to measure progress toward achieving the department's goals
- Serves as support for budget requests
- Provides evidence of a department's due diligence
- Improves customer service
- Provides assurance of competence to city/county managers
- May help attract developers

### **About IAS**

IAS is a nonprofit subsidiary of the International Code Council® (ICC®) and a globally recognized accreditation body.

***Take your Building Department to next level with IAS Building Department Accreditation.***

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## Get More Information

[www.iasonline.org](http://www.iasonline.org)

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