At IQMC, we are firmly committed to protecting the confidentiality of all information obtained during social compliance audits and verification activities. Safeguarding sensitive data is essential to maintaining the integrity of our audit process, protecting client interests, and meeting the highest legal and ethical standards. This policy reflects our unwavering dedication to confidentiality and guides the actions of everyone involved in audits.

This policy applies to all employees, auditors, verifiers, contractors, interpreters, trainees, and any individual engaged in activities on behalf of IQMC. It covers all forms of information collected during audits, including documents, digital files, photographs, communication records, and any other data shared by clients, workers, or stakeholders. All information obtained during audits is classified as confidential and shall be handled, stored, transmitted, and disposed of in accordance with this policy. Disclosure of information is permitted only under specific circumstances. It may occur when the client provides explicit written consent, when disclosure is necessary to execute the service, or when required by applicable law. Disclosure is also allowed when needed to obtain legal or ethical advice regarding compliance with laws, codes, or standards, or when required to establish a legal claim or defense.

IQMC complies with applicable Indian laws, contractual obligations, client-specific confidentiality agreements, and internationally recognized standards related to information protection. This includes principles aligned with APSCA Code of Conduct expectations, and brand or retailer protocols governing the handling of sensitive audit information. All personnel are required to understand and adhere to these legal and contractual obligations as part of their professional responsibilities.

All employees, contractors, and associates must treat audit information as strictly confidential and ensure it is never disclosed to unauthorized parties. Confidential information must be stored securely, whether in physical or digital form, and accessed only by authorized personnel with a legitimate business need. Digital data must be protected through secure passwords, encryption, and approved communication channels, while physical documents must be kept in locked storage. The use of personal devices, personal email accounts, or unapproved cloud storage for audit-related information is strictly prohibited.

IQMC maintains clear rules for data retention and disposal. Audit-related information is retained for the minimum period of ten years or for a longer period where required by legal, contractual, or accreditation obligations. Upon expiry of the authorized retention period, all records must be securely destroyed using approved methods such as shredding for physical records or encrypted digital deletion for electronic data. No confidential information may be retained beyond the authorized retention period without written approval from senior management.

Member auditors shall not retain, disclose, or distribute any confidential information gathered while performing audits. All audit data must be delivered to IQMC upon completion of assigned work. Upon departure from employment or termination of a service contract, member auditors are required to immediately return all audit data to the IQMC. Once the IQMC confirms receipt of all audit data, auditors must delete or securely destroy any copies in their possession.

Confidential information may only be shared with third parties when legally required, contractually permitted, or necessary for accreditation, oversight, or regulatory review. In such cases, the receiving party must be bound by confidentiality obligations equal to or greater than those outlined in this policy. Under no circumstances may confidential information be shared for personal, commercial, or unauthorized purposes. All personnel must avoid conflicts of interest that could compromise confidentiality or impartiality. Individuals must disclose any potential conflicts to management prior to accepting audit assignments. IQMC ensures that auditors remain impartial and free from undue influence, and that confidentiality is upheld throughout the audit process.

Our commitment extends to continuous training and awareness so that every team member understands and upholds confidentiality obligations. Training sessions are conducted at least every six months, and additionally whenever an incident occurs or there is an update to policies or at the time of onboarding, to reinforce impartiality principles, independence and avoidance of conflicts of interest. Any suspected violations of this policy must be reported immediately to senior management. All breaches will be investigated promptly, and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken, which may include suspension, termination, or legal action depending on the severity of the violation.

This policy is reviewed periodically to ensure its continued effectiveness and alignment with evolving legal requirements, industry standards, and organizational needs. Updates are approved by senior management and communicated to all personnel to ensure consistent understanding and implementation. IQMC remains committed to maintaining the highest standards of confidentiality and protecting the trust placed in us by clients, workers, and stakeholders.