

Author: C. Lamoureux	Social Accountability International	Issue: 2
Approval: J. Hwang	SAI Notification 1: Transition Timeline For SA8000:2026	Effective: 04/21/26



Notification 1

Issue: 2

Date: April 21, 2026

To: All SAAS Accredited and Applicant Certification Bodies (CBs)

From: Chris Lamoureux, Associate Director, Standards & Impacts

RE: Transition Requirements for Certification of Organizations to SA8000:2026

Purpose and Scope: This document sets out the timeline and requirements for SAAS-accredited Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) to transition to SA8000:2026. It covers the steps CABs must take to update their systems, train personnel, communicate with clients, and begin delivering accredited SA8000:2026 certification audits. All related documents are available for download from the SAI website at www.sa-intl.org.

SA8000:2026 was published by Social Accountability International (SAI) in January 2026. The revised Standard introduces significant structural changes and updated language related to management systems, along with minor scope clarifications. This timeline and related requirements were produced with the goal of:

1. Establishing a collaborative process for transitioning to SA8000:2026
2. Creating clear expectations for SA8000 stakeholders
3. Reducing financial burden on CABs and their clients

Status: The requirements contained herein are normative. Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) SHALL comply with these requirements as a condition of maintaining accreditation.

Relevant Dates	Required Activity
December 31, 2025	Deadline: CABs SHALL develop a transition plan for integrating SA8000:2026 and updated SA8000 certification scheme requirements into their management systems. CABs SHALL have submitted these transition plans to SAAS for review.

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June 1, 2026	<p>CABs MAY begin conducting SA8000:2026 audits, provided SAAS has approved their transition plan.</p> <p>In order to deliver SA8000:2026 audits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CABs SHALL have amended all SA8000 system documents including: forms, instructions, contracts, policies, and procedures. The revised documents SHALL reflect the normative requirements found in ISO 17021-1:2015 and updated SA8000 certification scheme requirements for conducting certification audits to SA8000:2026. • CABs SHALL have complied with the timeline and process for training SA8000-related personnel described in this notification and the previous.
November 1, 2026	<p>Deadline: CABs SHALL have fully amended all SA8000 system documents including: forms, instructions, contracts, policies, and procedures. The revised documents SHALL reflect the normative requirements found in ISO 17021-1:2015 and updated SA8000 certification scheme requirements for conducting certification audits to SA8000:2026.</p> <p>CABs SHALL have complied with the timeline and process for training SA8000-related personnel.</p>
December 31, 2026	<p>Deadline: ALL SA8000-certified organizations SHALL have completed the Getting Started with SA8000:2026 on-demand training course and SA8000:2026 Self-Assessment.</p>
January 1, 2027	<p>Deadline: As of this date, all SA8000 certification audits of new clients SHALL be to SA8000:2026.</p> <p>Deadline: As of this date, all SA8000 recertification audits of existing clients SHALL be to SA8000:2026.</p>
March 31, 2027	<p>Deadline: CABs SHALL have participated in a special SA8000:2026 witness audit by SAAS.</p>
May 31, 2029	<p>Deadline: As of this date, all SA8000 certified organizations SHALL have transitioned to SA8000:2026.</p>
June 1, 2029	<p>Deadline: As of this date, any remaining SA8000:2014 certificates SHALL be withdrawn.</p>

Transition Requirements:

**Note 1: While this notification refers to ‘Scheme Requirements 200:2026’, until released, ‘SAAS Procedure 200:2020’ in conjunction with ‘SAI Procedure 200 Supplement - SA8000:2026 Interim [Bridging] Requirements’ SHALL be used in its place.*

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1. SA8000:2026 was published by SAI in January 2026. The revised Standard introduces significant structural changes and updated language, along with minor scope clarifications.
2. The deadline for all certified organizations to transition to the requirements of SA8000:2026 is May 31, 2029. After that date, all SA8000:2014 certificates SHALL be invalid.

3. Processes for Client Transition to SA8000:2026:

3.1. CABs may continue to conduct SA8000:2014 recertification and surveillance audits for existing SA8000-certified clients through December 2026. Currently certified clients due for recertification before December 31, 2026 may be recertified to SA8000:2014, but SHALL transition to SA8000:2026 by May 31, 2029.

3.2. All SAAS-accredited CABs SHALL require SA8000-certified clients to conduct a gap analysis to understand the areas of their system that need to be revised and implement needed changes to their procedures, documents, and policies to meet requirements of SA8000:2026. Wherever possible, SA8000-certified organizations SHALL implement those changes without delay.

3.2.1. CABs shall have access to this gap analysis for review during the transition audit.

3.3. In order to transition to SA8000:2026, a client SHALL complete a recertification audit to the requirements of SA8000:2026.

3.3.1. CABs shall assess their clients’ implementation of SA8000:2026 using the revised ‘Scheme Requirements 200:2026’ (see Note 1) document.

3.3.2. The on-site transition audit shall focus on the significant changes in the revised Standard.

3.3.3. As the transition audit MUST be a recertification audit, the audit SHALL start the client on a new three-year certification cycle.

3.4. All CABs SHALL inform their certified clients of the transition dates in Table 1 and the requirements of this notification. SAAS SHALL review the relevant

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communications between CABs and their certified clients at the next CAB head office audit.

4. Process for Clients Not Yet Certified to SA8000:

- 4.1. After December 31, 2026, CABs SHALL not conduct any audits for initial certification to SA8000:2014. Beginning January 1, 2027, all SA8000 initial certification audits of new clients SHALL be to SA8000:2026.
- 4.2. All SA8000:2026 certification audits SHALL be conducted using the requirements and processes found in ‘Scheme Requirements 200:2026’ (see *Note 1*). Therefore, the CAB SHALL conduct the SA8000:2026 audits using amended documents, forms, instructions, contracts, policies, and procedures to reflect the normative requirements of certification to SA8000:2026.

5. Transition Requirements for SAAS-Accredited CABs:

- 5.1. All SAAS-accredited CABs SHALL identify and implement all changes necessary to existing procedures, documents and policies related to SA8000 in order to incorporate the changes in SA8000:2026, ‘Scheme Requirements 200:2026’ (see *Note 1*), and SAAS Procedures 201A and 201B. The deadline for compliance is November 1, 2026.
- 5.2. Wherever possible, an accredited CAB should implement those identified changes without delay. Assessment by SAAS shall be collaborative and operate in 2 parts—a special witnessed audit and regular scheduled head office audits—and shall cover the CAB’s plans for effectively managing the transition to the new requirements.
- 5.3. Special Witnessed Audits: From January 1, 2027 to March 31, 2027 SAAS SHALL monitor the CABs’ implementation of their transition plans through special SA8000:2026 witnessed audits. These audits SHALL include participation of the CAB’s SA8000 Program Manager.
- 5.4. CABs SHALL report all transitions of their existing clients and new applicants to SA8000:2026 in the SAI Database by updating the Certification Forms.

6. Training Requirements for SA8000 Auditors:

Author: C. Lamoureux	Social Accountability International	Issue: 2
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6.1. CABs SHALL ensure all SA8000 auditors have completed the following courses prior to delivery of SA8000:2026 audits:

6.1.1. SA8000:2026 Transition Course

6.1.2. Key Updates for SA8000:2026 Auditors module

6.1.2.1. *This will be added to the transition course as a module to ensure access and no additional cost to auditors.*

6.2. Once launched, CABs SHALL ensure all SA8000 auditors and program staff have completed the SA8000:2026 SAI Database Training in the SAI Training Center.

7. Management Systems Maturity Declarations (MSMDs) and the SA8000:2026 Certification Process:

7.1. For organizations certified to SA8000:2014, ALL current requirements related to the MSMD remain in place.

7.2. For organizations transitioning or certified to the SA8000:2026 Standard, the MSMD is not required, as assessment of management system maturity is executed through use of the SA8000:2026 Audit Tool.

7.3. All CABs SHALL inform their clients of this change.

8. Training Requirements on Certified Organizations:

8.1. ALL currently SA8000-certified organizations SHALL complete the *Getting Started with SA8000:2026 and Due Diligence* on-demand training course in the SAI Training Center by December 31, 2026.

8.1.1. ALL initial certifications SHALL complete the *Getting Started with SA8000:2026 and Due Diligence* on-demand training course in the SAI Training Center within 6 months prior to Stage 1 audits.

8.2. SAI SHALL provide organizations that completed and paid for the 2014 Self-Assessment within a year prior to the launch of the 2026 Self-Assessment with

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access to the *Getting Started with SA8000:2026 and Due Diligence* training course on-demand training free of cost.

8.2.1. Once launched, payment for the 2026 Self-Assessment will include access to the *Getting Started with SA8000:2026 and Due Diligence* on-demand training course.

8.2.2. Organizations must enter their SAI Database ORG# in the *Getting Started with SA8000:2026 and Due Diligence* on-demand training course when prompted. Failure to do so, or complete the course prior to the deadline, will result in inability for CABs to assign audits to these clients in the Database.

8.3. Beginning January 2027, SAI will launch scheme requirements for SA8000-certified organizations. These will require minimum levels of continuing education for relevant SA8000 management representatives of certified organizations.

9. Self-Assessment Requirements on Current and Potential Certified Organizations:

9.1. Completion of and payment for an SA8000 Self-Assessment will continue to be required within 6 months prior to any Stage 1 or Recertification audit.

9.2. Once launched, the SA8000:2026 Self-Assessment will replace the existing 2014 Self-Assessment, even for clients going for certification to the 2014 Standard. The 2014 Self-Assessment will no longer be available.

9.2.1. Until launched, organizations should continue to complete the SA8000:2014 Self-Assessment in the SAI Database, even for SA8000:2026 audits.

9.3. All SA8000-certified organizations SHALL complete the 2026 Self-Assessment before December 31, 2026. Due to technical requirements, they may do so in either of two ways:

9.3.1. Completion of the SA8000:2026 Self-Assessment in the SAI Database once launched.

9.3.2. Completion of the downloadable Excel SA8000:2026 Self-Assessment available after completion of the *Getting Started with SA8000:2026 and Due Diligence* on-demand training in the SAI Training Center.

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9.4. CABs SHALL inform their clients of these requirements and verify completion on the next audit or follow-up review.

10. Normative Documents:

10.1. CABs SHALL be responsible for disseminating the Standard to all their SA8000 auditors (including contract auditors) and other personnel. The Standard can be downloaded directly from SAI’s website here: <https://sa-intl.org/resources/sa8000-standard/>.

10.2. All SA8000:2026 certification audits SHALL be conducted in accordance with the requirements of ‘Scheme Requirements 200:2026’ (see Note 1).

11. Guidance and Reference Documents:

11.1. The SA8000:2026 Guidance Document: This document is still in draft as of publication of this notification. CABs will be responsible for disseminating the Guidance Document to all their SA8000 auditors (including contractors) and other personnel once available.

11.1.1. CABs and certification clients are encouraged to use the SA8000:2014 Guidance Document until the 2026 guidance is released.

11.2. The SA8000:2026 Indicator Library (IL): The IL was released publicly by SAI in January 2026. CABs are responsible for disseminating the IL to all their SA8000 auditors (including subcontractors) and other personnel. The IL can be downloaded directly from SAI’s website here: <https://sa-intl.org/resources/sa8000-performance-indicator-annex/>