

CEF Accreditation Framework

Recognising Excellence in Ethical Franchising

Evaluating franchisors and franchisees across governance, transparency and culture

Overview

The CEF Accreditation Framework recognises excellence in governance, transparency and culture within franchise systems. Unlike traditional associations, our model evaluates both franchisor and franchisee behaviour — ensuring fairness is not assumed but evidenced. Accreditation is awarded through a structured audit process that assesses more than 120 data points across ethics, governance, operations, culture and performance.

Accreditation Levels

Bronze – Foundation of Fair Practice

Bronze accreditation confirms that a franchise system meets the essential ethical and operational standards expected of a modern, transparent organisation. Brands at this level publicly declare that good faith and transparency are the baseline of their operations.

- **Governance:** Basic code of ethics adopted and communicated to all franchisees.
- **Contracts:** Clear disclosure documents and fair termination/renewal clauses.
- **Operations:** Demonstrable support, training and complaint-resolution process.
- **Culture:** Annual ethics briefing and evidence of two-way communication channels.
- **Verification:** Desktop review and interviews with key representatives.

Silver – Partnership in Practice

Silver accreditation recognises systems that embed ethical principles into daily operations and decision-making. Holders demonstrate that ethical behaviour and commercial performance can coexist.

- **Governance:** Independent advisory oversight or internal ethics committee in place.
- **Contracts:** Franchise agreements reviewed against CEF's Fair Contracting Standard.
- **Operations:** Transparent financial reporting and collaborative KPI review with franchisees.
- **Culture:** Anonymous feedback mechanism and diversity & inclusion policy evidenced in practice.
- **Verification:** Hybrid audit (document review plus on-site interviews and franchisee sampling).

Gold – Exemplary Governance & Industry Leadership

Gold accreditation is the highest recognition awarded by CEF and reserved for organisations that set the benchmark for ethical franchising in the UK. Gold signals leadership with integrity and responsible innovation.

- **Governance:** External assurance of compliance against CEF and ISO 37000 standards.
- **Contracts:** Full transparency on commercial models and fee structures, independently validated.
- **Operations:** Continuous-improvement programme linking ethics to profitability and ESG reporting.
- **Culture:** Documented social-impact strategy and demonstrated franchisee participation in strategic decisions.
- **Verification:** Full-scope audit by CEF assessors and third-party governance specialists; annual re-validation required.

How It Works

1. **Assessment:** Completion of CEF's diagnostic questionnaire and evidence submission.
2. **Audit:** Evaluation across five pillars — Governance, Contracts, Operations, Culture and Impact.
3. **Accreditation:** Independent panel review and public certification.
4. **Improvement:** Annual development roadmap with measurable targets for progression.

Why It Matters

The CEF Accreditation Framework bridges the gap between voluntary codes and enforceable standards. It provides franchisors with a credible, recognised structure for demonstrating ethical leadership — and franchisees with a transparent measure of protection and trust. By combining practical compliance, cultural alignment and independent verification, CEF sets a higher bar for fairness and accountability in franchising. Ethical franchising isn't an aspiration; it's an expectation. Accreditation gives every business — from emerging brand to established network — the framework to prove it.