



## Frequently Asked Questions—Smart's Closure and New Roles for SPTF and CERISE

### Who will maintain the Client Protection Standards?

SPTF will maintain the Client Protection Standards as part of the Universal Standards for SPM. Dimension 4 of [the Universal Standards](#)—entitled *Treat Clients Responsibly*—has always contained all of the Campaign's Client Protection Standards and is a central part of our work. SPTF members have been important contributors to the Client Protection Standards and will continue to be in the future. As time passes, SPTF and CERISE will steward the evolution of this client protection content. When revisions to the standards are necessary, we will continue to use our highly collaborative standard setting process, consulting a broad range of industry experts and testing new standards in the field.

SPTF, CERISE, and Smart have shared staff and consultants over the years, we have collaborated closely on standards and tool development, and we've held weekly meetings for the past two years. The Smart Campaign's contribution to the industry cannot be replicated, but SPTF and CERISE are well-positioned to take up the client protection torch and carry it forward.

### Who will support Client Protection Assessments?

FSPs and investors derive significant value from assessments. Though the Smart Campaign Client Protection Assessment as a branded product will no longer exist, FSPs can use the [CERISE SPI online, \(the digital version of SPI4 and ALINUS\)](#) for the same purpose. The SPI4 has always been fully aligned with the Client Protection Standards and provides a Client Protection Dashboard to identify gap areas and targets ways to improve practice. We encourage everyone who has conducted a Client Protection Assessment in the past to upload the results to the [CERISE SPI online](#) to compare your results to peer benchmarks, and get a fresh perspective on your results ([contact CERISE](#) directly with questions).

Experts in client protection assessment include rating agencies, SPI4 qualified auditors, and experts formerly trained by the Smart Campaign. In the immediate term, these experts can still evaluate a FSP's client protection practices using the existing Getting Started Questionnaire. SPTF and CERISE will continue to develop plans for future assessment tools and processes.

Similarly, a social rating provides external validation of practice and a grade that indicates progress toward outstanding social performance management. The specialized microfinance rating agencies already include the Client Protection Principles in their social rating methodologies. The SPTF-run Responsible Inclusive Finance Facilities will continue to offer co-funding for SPI4 assessments, social ratings, and client protection assessments.

## Who will maintain Client Protection Certification?

Client Protection Certification in its current form will draw to a close. For international certification to be successful, an independent accreditation body must set the certification standards, then accredit, audit, and oversee a cadre of certification bodies (e.g., rating agencies) to carry out certification missions. Neither SPTF nor CERISE are structured as an accreditation body.

However, given the demand for client protection evaluations, rating agencies will continue to offer products that serve this purpose. Our recent conversations with the rating agencies who were accredited by Smart Campaign, indicate that they are committed to providing client protection evaluation products and are excited to bring more flexible options to the market. SPTF is eager to assist rating agencies as they make this transition. We also want to help communicate these new options to the market and ensure that all products continue to align with the Universal Standards. Together with the rating agencies, we will work to ensure FSPs, investors, and regulators have the data they need to understand how individual institutions are performing on both client protection and social performance.

## What does this mean for “Smart accredited” assessors and trainers?

Many accredited assessors and trainers have spent years building their client protection expertise. This expertise will be as relevant and necessary as ever! The Client Protection Standards are not changing right now (see *Who will maintain the Client Protection Standards?*), so the Smart Campaign’s closure does nothing to diminish the skills or relevancy of the experts who have been trained on those standards.

However, since the Smart “brand” will no longer be used, these experts will no longer carry the label “Smart accredited.” SPTF invites all formerly accredited assessors and trainers who have not already done so to join the SPTF TA Database. Here, experts will be able to identify their previous client protection training and qualifications.

SPTF and CERISE are also working on a plan to cultivate an ongoing community of practice for client protection and SPM experts. For client protection experts specifically, we want to offer training on client protection topics, promote discussion about industry developments, and solicit input on client protection standards as they evolve in the future.

## What does this mean for “Smart” tools and resources?

SPTF and CERISE will maintain the Campaign’s extensive library of resources—guides, templates, case studies, and more—in the SPTF Resource Center. Though we already have many of these resources on our website, our Resource Center will soon offer a better user experience and new features that will make it easier to find the resources that you need. Stay tuned for more information on this and please join SPTF’s mailing list so you will receive future updates. Social media is another great way to get updates on events and publications. Twitter: SPTF Twitter and CERISE Twitter and LinkedIn: SPTF LinkedIn and CERISE LinkedIn.