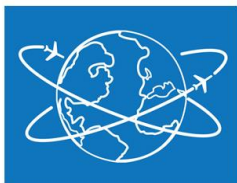


The Notary Public Administrators’  
**Handbook on  
Apostilles and  
Authentications<sup>©</sup>**

**A PUBLICATION OF THE NPA SECTION,  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECRETARIES OF STATE**

Notary Public  
Administrators





# **The Notary Public Administrators’ Handbook on Apostilles and Authentications©**

A Publication of the NPA Section,  
National Association of Secretaries of State  
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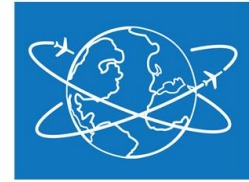
For more information on the NPA Section, please visit [www.npa-section.com](http://www.npa-section.com).

# Legalisation

*The process of certifying a public document to be used in another country. It generally consists of multiple separate authentications, including by the Embassy or Consulate of the place in which the document is to be presented.*

*An Apostille is a form of legalization that eliminates the need for multiple separate authentications.*

The information in this Handbook is provided with the understanding that the user is solely responsible for maintaining his/her knowledge of the latest recommendations and requirements for issuance of Apostilles and authentications. The information in this book is subject to change. Revisions to this *Handbook* will be distributed electronically to all U.S. state notary public administrators and offices, utilizing the most recent known email address for that person or office. Reproduction of the material herein is authorized for non-commercial purposes only, provided the source is fully acknowledged.



**THIS Handbook** represents years of dedicated effort to create an authoritative reference for issuance of Apostilles and Authentications by U.S. states' competent authorities.

The development team behind past and present editions of the *Notary Public Administrators' Handbook on Apostilles and Authentications* includes members of the Notary Public Administrators Section of the National Association of Secretaries of State, distinguished experts from the Permanent Bureau of the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH) and the U.S. Department of State, as well as representatives of the nation's leading professional associations for notaries public.

The *Handbook* seeks to provide guidance to U.S. competent authorities grappling with:

- conformity with basic requirements of the Convention as well as Conclusions and Recommendations;
- rejections by intended recipients of U.S. state-issued Apostilles due to lack of consistency in their format, design and circumstances of issuance; and
- security of the Apostille to reduce misuse and abuse.

In most states, the administrative tasks associated with issuing Apostilles and Authentications are performed by state Notary Division personnel. While users are encouraged to adopt the guidelines and best practices contained in the *Handbook*, it is understood that, in light of differing state laws and customs, few states could adopt *every single* recommendation offered. Still, this *Handbook* represents a milestone in the history of America's notary public administrators.

This *Handbook* is a living document; future additions and revisions to it will be available to all U.S. notary public administrators. All users are encouraged to share questions, comments and suggestions.

Finally, the NPA Section wishes to recognize the immeasurable expertise and input provided to the *Handbook* development team by Dr. Christophe Bernasconi, Secretary General, Hague Conference on Private International Law; and Mr. William P. Fritzlen, Attorney Adviser, Office of the Assistant Legal Adviser for Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. We are forever indebted to these individuals for their dedicated work, and they have our everlasting regard and friendship.

*Mike Smith, President  
Notary Public Administrators, a staff  
Section of the National Association  
of Secretaries of State*

# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	5
SECTION 1 – GLOSSARY .....	7
SECTION 2 – THE APOSTILLE CONVENTION	
a) Purpose.....	13
b) Outline of the Apostille Convention .....	13
c) Contracting Parties.....	13
d) e-Apostille and e-Register – Bringing the Convention into the Electronic Age.....	15
SECTION 3 – AUTHENTICATIONS	
a) Overview.....	17
b) Authentications .....	17
c) Single Certificate...	
SECTION 4 – APOSTILLE & AUTHENTICATION ISSUANCE GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
a) Background.....	20
b) Issuance Guidelines, Version 3.0.....	22
• Assumptions .....	22
• Frequent Request Scenarios, Apostille & Authentication Issuance Summary.....	23
• Scenarios .....	24
c) NPA Best Practices (Format, Design, Affixation of Apostilles & Authentications) .....	31
d) Sample Step-by-Step Instructions, Affixation of Apostilles & Authentications in Compliance with the 2010 NPA Resolution.....	32
e) How to Complete and Attach Apostilles & Authentications .....	34
SECTION 5 – RESOURCES	
a) HCCH Website: Apostille Section.....	36
b) ABCs of Apostilles Informational Brochure .....	36
c) Apostille Handbook.....	36
d) U.S. Department of State, Office of Authentications.....	36
SECTION 6 – APPENDIX	
a) Resolutions	
• 2010 NPA Resolution (To Promote Uniformity in the Format, Design and Affixation of Apostilles).....	37
• 2013 NASS Resolution (Adoption of National Apostille Issuance Guidelines).....	38
• 2023 NASS Resolution (Adoption of National Apostille Issuance Guidelines – Amended & Reauthorized) ....	39
b) Apostille Certificate Samples ( <i>Model, Bilingual, Trilingual, “Outside the Box” Language and Single Certificate</i> ).....	40
c) e-Apostille Certificate Examples.....	43
d) Text of the Apostille Convention and Annex .....	44
e) 2003 Special Commission Conclusions & Recommendations .....	44
f) 2009 Special Commission Conclusions & Recommendations .....	44
g) 2012 Special Commission Conclusions & Recommendations .....	44
h) 2016 Special Commission Conclusions & Recommendations .....	44
i) 2021 Special Commission (Convened 5-8 October 2021).....	44

## **SECTION 1 - GLOSSARY**

**Acknowledgment** - a notarial act that requires a declaration by an individual made in the presence of a notary public or other notarial officer, that the individual signed a record for the purpose stated in it. Acknowledgments may be made in an individual or representative capacity.

**Affidavit** - a written declaration or statement of facts, made voluntarily by an individual and signed under oath in the presence of a notary public or other notarial officer.

**Allonge** - a slip of paper upon which an Apostille is affixed, then attached to the underlying public document (see definition of ‘public document’). An allonge is an alternative to affixing an Apostille directly on the underlying public document.

**Apostille** – a certificate issued under Article 3(1) of the Hague Apostille Convention, an international treaty that enables a single certificate—an Apostille—to be issued to certify the authenticity of the origin of a ‘public document’(see definition of ‘public document’). An example of a public document is a notary public’s signed and sealed notarial certificate.

**Apostille & Authentication Issuance Guidelines** (*Issuance Guidelines*) – a part of Handbook on Apostilles and Authentications published by the Notary Public Administrators (NPA) Section of NASS, designed for use when notary administrators or staff are unsure whether to accept or reject a particular request for an Apostille.

**Apostille Convention** – the common name for the Hague Treaty that simplifies the authentication of public documents for use abroad.

**Apostillisation** - the process of issuing an Apostille under the Apostille convention. A document for which an Apostille is properly issued has been ‘apostillised’.

**Authentication (of a public document)** - the process of verifying, or authenticating, that a public document is genuine, also called ‘legalisation’. The issuance of an Apostille is a type of authentication used between Contracting Parties to the Apostille Convention to certify the origin of a public document to be used abroad. Where the Apostille Convention does not apply, documents may be subject to a series of authentications as part of the legalisation process in order to be presented abroad.

**Capacity (of Document Signatory)** - the legal authority to perform a prescribed function, typically conferred upon a person by virtue of a position or role. In the context of the Apostille Convention (see Arts 2 and 3), capacity refers to the position with the legal authority to execute the underlying public document as defined by the law that applies in the territory where the document is executed.

**Certificate** - a document or record confirming the authenticity of a fact, event, or item. For the purposes of this Handbook, when capitalized, the term ‘Certificate’ refers specifically to an Apostille. This distinguishes it from other types of certificates, such as an ‘official certificate’ which is a public document referred to in Article 1(2)(d) of the Apostille Convention.

**Certificate of Notarial Act** – (*see Notarial Certificate*)

**Certificate, Model** - (*see Model Certificate*)

**Certification of Copy** – (*see Copy Certification*)

**Certified Copy** - usually a public document that is ordered from a jurisdictional office and states it is a ‘certified copy’ of the original document maintained by that office.

**Competent Authority** - the authority designated by a Contracting Party under Article 6 of the Apostille Convention to issue Apostilles. A Contracting Party may determine how many Competent Authorities are designated and the extent of their competence (e.g., issuing Apostilles only for certain types of public documents). Information about Competent Authorities designated by Contracting Parties is available on the Apostille Section of the HCCH website.

**Consulate** - embassies, consulates, and missions are places where government representatives serve in foreign countries. Consulates provide the same services as embassies, but they follow the lead of the embassy *or* a building that supports the embassy in its host country.

**Contracting Party** - a state (i.e., country) that has joined the Apostille Convention, whether by ratification, accession, or succession. A party is considered a contracting party from the time of the deposit of their instrument.

**Convention** - an agreement between countries covering particular matters, especially one less formal than a treaty.

**Copy Certification** - an act performed by a notary to verify that a copy made from an original document is a true, correct, and complete copy.

**Digital Certificate** - an electronic credential that links the identity of a signature to an individual or authority through public key infrastructure.

**e-Apostille** - a Certificate issued under Article 3(1) of the Apostille Convention, when issued in electronic form. It is signed with a digital signature. Subject to domestic law or policy, e-Apostilles may be issued on electronic public documents or on paper public documents that have been scanned into electronic form or otherwise digitized. The issuance of e-Apostilles is one of the two components of the e-APP (the other being the operation of e-Registers).

**e-APP (electronic Apostille Programme)** – an initiative aimed at promoting and facilitating the implementation of technology under the Apostille Convention. The e-APP comprises two components: the issuance of e-Apostilles and the operation of e-Registers. These components can be implemented separately or together.

**Electronic Record** - a public document or other record created, generated, sent, communicated, received, or stored by electronic means.

**Electronic seal/electronic stamp** – an electronic image attached to or logically associated with an electronic seal *or* information within a notarized electronic document that includes the notary public’s name, jurisdiction of appointment, commission number, and commission expiration date, and generally corresponds to data in notary public seals used on paper.

**Electronic signature** – an electronic sound, symbol, or process attached to, or logically associated with, a document or other record in electronic form, to evidence the signing of that document or record. For the purposes of this Handbook and to mirror the text of the Apostille Convention, the term may include an “electronic seal” or “electronic stamp.”

**Entry Into Force** - (abb. EIF) – the date on which a country’s membership in the HCCH became effective or the date on which a country became a party to the Apostille Convention.

**e-Register** - the register kept under Article 7 of the Apostille Convention, when that register is kept in electronic form and publicly accessible online. An e-Register may include records of both paper Apostilles and e-Apostilles. The operation of e-Registers is one component of the e-APP (the other being the issuance and use of e-Apostilles).



**Execution of a public document** - the formal act of creating a public document. This includes drafting the document, affixing the signature of the issuing official and/or the seal or stamp of the issuing authority. The execution of a public document is governed by the law that applies in the territory where the document is executed.

**Extensions of Application** - this refers to countries that are parties to the Apostille Convention because they are territories of a Contracting Party. For example, Puerto Rico is a party to the Apostille Convention because it is a territory of the United States.

**Grommets** – eyelets placed in a hole in a sheet of paper or panel to protect or insulate a rope or cable passed through it or to prevent the sheet or panel from being torn.

**Hague Conference** - the intergovernmental organization formed to work for the progressive unification of the rules of private international law. The organization develops and adopts HCCH Conventions and Instruments and supports the promotion, implementation, and operation thereof.

**HCCH** - Hague Conference on Private International Law – Conférence de La Haye de droit international privé. *See Hague Conference.*

**Issuance Guidelines (for Apostille & Authentications Issuance)** - a quick reference document produced by the Notary Public Administrators Section of NASS for use when notary administrators are unsure whether to accept or reject a particular request for an Apostille or Authentication.

**Law** - a formally recognized rule that is enacted and followed by a state or country and which may be enforced through the imposition of penalties.

**Legalisation** - the process of certifying a public document to be used in another country. It generally consists of multiple separate authentications, including by the Embassy or Consulate of the place in which the document is to be presented. An apostille is a form of legalization that eliminates the need for the multiple separate authentications.

**Model Certificate** - the Certificate that was annexed to The Hague Apostille Convention for the issuance of apostilles. It is surrounded by a border and includes 10-numbered standard items that must be included with each apostille. Apostilles should conform as closely as possible to this Model Certificate. In particular, an Apostille must:

- be identified as an Apostille; and
- include the short version of the French title of the Convention (Convention de La Haye du 5 octobre 1961); and
- include a box with the 10 numbered standard informational items.

**Notarization** (*also Notarial Act*) - an act, whether performed with respect to a tangible or electronic record, that a notarial officer may perform under the law of the state where commissioned; an instrument or certificate drawn up by a notary that may perfect, record, or verify an obligation, fact, or agreement. This should be distinguished from situations where an “act” is used to refer to a function that a notary is authorized to perform.

**Notarial Certificate** - a certificate completed by a notarial officer that certifies the facts of the notarial act that was completed by the notarial officer.

**Notarial Officer** - a notary public or other individual authorized to perform a notarial act.

**Notary Commission** – a person’s official endorsement by a designated state official that grants them authority to perform notarial acts.

**Notary Public Administrators** - persons in government with professional interests and responsibilities in notary law and the commissioning and administration of notaries.

**Notary Seal** – the impression, image of, or information contained in, the Notary Public’s inked stamp or crimping embosser on a tangible or electronic document. It is used to authenticate the Notary's signature and facts stated in the notarial certificate. The imprint of the Notary seal contains the Notary Public's commission information that meet jurisdictional requirements. The contents of a notary seal are prescribed by law and/or rules of the notary’s commissioning state.

**Notary Signature** – a notary’s name written in a distinctive way as a form of identification thereby allowing the notary’s commissioning authorities and the state government to verify that the notarization was performed by the person whose name appears as the notary on the document’s notarial certificate.

**NPA Section** – the Notary Public Administrators (NPA) Section, a staff section of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), is a national organization of persons in government and the private sector with professional interests and responsibilities in notary law and the commissioning and administration of notaries.

**Official Record** - a record produced by a government entity or individual acting in their official capacity of authorization to produce such records; generally, vital records such as birth, death, or marriage certificates.

**Official Seal** – an ink or embossed impression, or an electronic symbol, used to authenticate the signature of an individual executing a tangible or electronic record in an official capacity relating to an office held by that individual.

**Origin, Country of** – (*see State of Origin*)

**Permanent Bureau** - the secretariat of the HCCH. Among its responsibilities, the Permanent Bureau monitors the promotion, implementation, and operation of the Apostille Convention, as it does for all HCCH Conventions and Instruments. This includes supporting Members and Contracting Parties, as well as organizing meetings of the Special Commission and e-APP Forum.

**Public document** - a public document is a document executed by an authority or individual acting in an official capacity. This comprises a broad range of documents, including the categories of documents listed in Article 1(2) of the Apostille Convention. For the purposes of the Apostille Convention, the law of the State of origin determines whether a document is public in nature.

**Recipient** - the person or authority receiving the apostilled public document in the State of destination.

**Register** - a database or index required under [Article 7](#) of the Apostille Convention in which a Competent Authority records the particulars of each Apostille issued.

**Rejection** - an unaccepted submission not meeting requirements for issuance of apostilles.

**Seal** – (*see Notary Seal; Official Seal*)

**Signature, Notary’s** – (*see Notary Signature*)

**Single Certificate** - a Certificate, including the Apostille, used to certify the origin of public documents destined for both Contracting and non-contracting Parties. This allows the official or Competent Authority in the State of origin to authenticate public documents without the need to distinguish between those States that are party to the Convention and those that are not.

**Sovereign Citizens/Strawmen** - members of a political movement of people who oppose taxation, question the legitimacy of government and believe that they are not subject to the law, *or* an anti-government extremist who believes the government is the illegitimate product of a conspiracy that subverted the original, lawful government. They claim people can take steps to divorce themselves from the illegitimate government, after which it has no authority or jurisdiction over them.

**State** - a nation or territory considered as an organized political community under one government. Similarly, “state” may also be defined as any country, nation, land, sovereign state, nation-state, kingdom, empire, republic, confederation, federation, body politic, commonwealth, power, world power, superpower, polity, domain, territory, fatherland, motherland, realm, or *res publica* (e.g., “Germany, Italy, and other European states”).

**State (Country) of Destination** - the country where an Apostilled/Authenticated document is being sent to or used in.

**State (Country) of Origin** – the country in which a record was originally produced *or* the contracting party from which the public document is being issued.

**Status Table** - A list of countries that have joined the Apostille Convention. This list is maintained on the HCCH website and refers to the countries as “contracting Parties.”

**Tamper-Evident** - means the use of a set of applications, programs, hardware, software, or other technologies that will display evidence of any changes made to an electronic record after it has been electronically signed and/or notarized. In other words, it is a technology that cannot be hacked, or if hacked will show a record of any changes made to the notarization or the document itself.

**Territory** - an area of land under the legal jurisdiction of a particular country or ruler. For example, Puerto Rico is a United States Territory.

**Treaty** - a binding formal agreement, or contract, that establishes the obligations between two or more sovereign states.

**Trilingual Certificate** - the universal certificate used for apostille/authentication is in a trilingual format. The certificate has three languages.

**True & Correct Copy** – a true and correct copy, or a true copy, is a photocopy or duplicate made (without alterations) of any original document. A certified true copy refers to a copy of an original record made by a notary public or the official custodian of the record.

**Underlying Document** - the public document to which an Apostille relates, or for which an Apostille is issued.

**Universal Certificate** – a certificate that meets the requirements for both Hague (Apostille) and non-Hague (Authentication) countries. *See Single Certificate.*

**Verify** - the act of certifying that information or a statement made in a record is true and accurate.

**Vital Record** - records of life events kept under government authority (example: birth certificate, marriage certificate, death certificate).

**Wet -Ink or Wet-Signed** - traditional ink-signed record or notarization.

# *Apostille*

*A Certificate issued under the Apostille Convention authenticating the origin of a public document.<sup>1</sup>*

*Apostille, from the French, is pronounced:*

**“Ah-pos-TEE”**

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<sup>1</sup> Source: [Handbook on the Practical Operation of the Apostille Convention \(Apostille Handbook\)](#); published by the Hague Conference on Private International Law.

## **SECTION 2 – THE APOSTILLE CONVENTION**

### **2-A) PURPOSE<sup>2</sup>**

Public documents<sup>3</sup>, such as birth certificates, judgments, patents or notarial attestations (acknowledgments) of signatures, frequently need to be used abroad. However, before a public document can be used in a country other than the one that issued it, its origin must often be authenticated. The traditional method for authenticating public documents to be used abroad is called legalization and consists of a chain of individual authentications of the document. This process involves officials of the country where the public document was issued as well as the foreign Embassy or Consulate of the country where the public document is to be used. Because of the number of authorities involved, the legalization process is frequently slow, cumbersome and costly.

A large number of countries all over the world have joined a treaty that greatly simplifies the authentication of public documents to be used abroad. This treaty is called *the HCCH Convention of 5 October 1961 Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents*. It is commonly known as the *Apostille Convention*. Where it applies, the treaty reduces the authentication process to a single formality: the issuance of an authentication Certificate by an authority designated by the country where the public document was issued. This Certificate is called an *Apostille*.

The Apostille Convention has proven to be extremely useful and is applied millions of times each year throughout the world. It greatly facilitates the circulation of public documents issued by a country party to the Convention and that are to be used in another country also party to the Convention. For issuance of an Apostille, all of the following must apply:

- The country (“State”) where the document was issued is party to the Apostille Convention; and
- The country in which the document is to be used is party to the Apostille Convention; and
- The law of the country where the document was issued considers it to be a public document; and
- The country in which the document is to be used requires an Apostille in order to recognize it as a foreign public document.

### **2-B) OUTLINE OF THE APOSTILLE CONVENTION**

The “Apostille Section”<sup>4</sup> of the HCCH web site provides a concise overview (“Outline”) of the Apostille Convention, including:

- purpose;
- who may issue an Apostille;
- how to verify the origin of an Apostille;
- the effects of an Apostille;
- monitoring of the Convention;
- the electronic Apostille Programme (e-APP).

To view the Outline, please visit [HCCH 1961 Apostille Convention - Outline](#) .

### **2-C) CONTRACTING PARTIES**

<sup>2</sup> Source, Section 1-A: *The ABCs of Apostilles* brochure, published by the HCCH. See [The ABCs of Apostilles](#).

<sup>3</sup> A document that is executed by an authority or a person acting in an official capacity, and includes the categories of documents listed in Article 1(2) of the Convention. The determination of what constitutes a public document is entirely a matter for the law of the State of origin. Source: *Handbook on the Practical Operation of the Apostille Convention*. See [Handbook on the Practical Operation of the Apostille Convention \(Apostille Handbook\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> The website’s Apostille Section: <https://www.hcch.net/en/instruments/conventions/specialised-sections/apostille>

Apostilles can only be issued for documents issued in one country party to the Apostille Convention and that are to be used in another country which is also party to the Convention. An Apostille may never be used for the recognition of a document in the country where that document was issued—Apostilles are strictly for the use of public documents abroad.<sup>5</sup>

The Permanent Bureau (Secretariat) of the HCCH maintains a list of countries that have joined the Apostille Convention. This list is referred to as the *Status Table* and lists countries as “contracting Parties.”

Before consulting the Status Table, a review of the HCCH’s informational flyer on [how to read the Status Table](#) is strongly recommended. This flyer may be viewed at <http://www.hcch.net/upload/how2readthetastable.pdf> .

**While some may find reading the Status Table to be daunting, users are strongly urged to rely solely on the online Status Table for up-to-date and accurate information on a Contracting Party’s status. The Status Table may be viewed at [http://www.hcch.net/index\\_en.php?act=conventions.status&cid=41](http://www.hcch.net/index_en.php?act=conventions.status&cid=41) .**

**A key column in the Table is labeled “EIF,” or *entry into force***, which means the date that the Convention entered into force for the state (country). Contracting Parties in bold are Members of the HCCH (the Organisation). Contracting Parties in italics and not bolded are not Members of the Organisation but *are* nonetheless party to the Apostille Convention.

- The **date format** used in the EIF (entry into force) column is **day-month-year**.
- The **day** is represented by an **Arabic numeral** (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9).
- The **month** is represented by a **Roman numeral** (I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII).
- The **year** is represented by **Arabic numerals**.

Thus the date “9-V-2004” as displayed in the Status Table is “9<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2004.”

**Another key column in the Status Table is “Ext,” or “Extensions of Application.”** This refers to **countries that are party to the Apostille Convention by virtue of their status as a territory of a Contracting Party (country)**. These territorial jurisdictions will not be displayed in the main Status Table, but their information appears as a sub-set of the member state’s listing in the Table.

For example, the Netherlands—a Contracting Party to the Apostille Convention—has four territories: Aruba; Curacao; Sint Maarten; and the islands of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba. The Ext column of the Status Table displays the number “4” in the row for the Netherlands. Click on the “4,” and the web site will display a new page listing the Contracting Party’s territories (“territorial units”) and each territory’s entry into force (EIF) date (when the Apostille Convention entered into force there).

If you are unsure whether a jurisdiction is actually a territory of another country, a simple web search can help. Try entering a query or statement (for example, “Aruba territory” or “Aruba is a territory of”) into any of the major online search engines. If the jurisdiction in question is indeed a territory of another country, you may then review the Ext column for that country’s Status Table listing and verify that the Apostille Convention does apply to the territory.

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<sup>5</sup> Source: [The ABCs of Apostilles](#) brochure, published by the HCCH.

## 2-D) E-APOSTILLE AND E-REGISTER – BRINGING THE CONVENTION INTO THE ELECTRONIC AGE<sup>6</sup>

The Apostille Convention was drafted with only a paper environment in mind (i.e., public documents executed in paper, Apostilles issued in paper, and Apostilles registered in a paper register).

Technology, however, has changed how governments operate. E-government initiatives are being pursued in many parts of the world. As a result, individuals and businesses are just a click away from communicating with government online. Increasingly, government authorities are executing public documents in electronic form, including important civil status and commercial documents.

Notarial acts and other authentic acts are being executed electronically as well. The availability of online public information registers has also grown, giving the general public ready access to a range of important information for conducting individual or business activities.



In light of these realities, the HCCH has developed the **electronic Apostille Programme (e-APP)** for implementation by Competent Authorities, worldwide. The e-APP promotes the issuance of electronic Apostilles (e-Apostilles) and the operation of electronic registers of Apostilles (e-Registers) that can be accessed online by recipients to verify the origin of an Apostille they have received. Since the e-APP's inception as a pilot in 2006, Competent Authorities across the globe have implemented one or both of these components, confirming the place of the Apostille Convention in the electronic age.

### **Benefits of the e-Apostille and e-Register**

By implementing e-Apostilles, the issuance, transmittal and registration of Apostilles moves from the paper to electronic realm. Implementation of the e-Register permits easy online verification of the authenticity of both paper and electronic Apostilles. Together, the e-Apostille and e-Register components of the e-APP yield a swift and secure paperless procedure for issuing, recording and verifying Apostilles.

At the same time, the e-Apostille provides a powerful tool to combat fraud and abuse of Apostilles by offering a level of security that significantly exceeds current standards in the paper environment. As it promotes the paperless operation of the Apostille Convention, the e-Apostille is also more environmentally friendly. If Apostilles are issued electronically, effective Apostille operations might continue to run even in circumstances such as a pandemic when in-person contact is limited and offices are closed.

For more information on the e-APP, including information about the status of its implementation around the world, visit the Apostille Section of the Hague Conference on Private International Law online, at <https://www.hcch.net/en/instruments/specialised-sections/apostille>.

*As of the date of this publication, seven states – **Connecticut, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, Rhode Island, Utah, and Washington** are issuing or intending to issue, e-Apostilles and have implemented e-Registers.*

*In addition, **Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, New York, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and West Virginia** have implemented e-Registers.*

*(Verified 4/30/2024)*

<sup>6</sup> Sources: [The ABCs of Apostilles](#) brochure, published by the HCCH Also [Handbook on the Practical Operation of the Apostille Convention, 2023](#), published by the HCCH.



# *Authentication*

*Authentication is a generic term that commonly refers to the process of verifying, or authenticating, the origin of a public document. Authentication and legalization are sometimes used synonymously, and authentication may also be used to refer to the apostillisation process.*



## SECTION 3 – AUTHENTICATIONS

### 3-A) OVERVIEW<sup>7</sup>

As explained in Section 1 of this *Handbook*, before a public document<sup>8</sup> can be used in a country other than the one that issued it, its origin must often be authenticated.

**“Authentication” is the process of verifying, or “authenticating,” the origin of a public document.** Traditionally, the process requires a chain of individual authentications of the document, involving officials of the country where the document was issued as well as the foreign Embassy or Consulate of the country where the document is to be used.

The HCCH Apostille Convention<sup>9</sup> streamlines this multi-layered authentication process to a single formality—the issuance of an Apostille. For issuance of an Apostille, all of the following requirements must be met:

- The country where the document was issued is party to the Apostille Convention; and
- The country in which the document is to be used is party to the Apostille convention; and
- The law of the country where the document was issued considers it to be a public document; and
- The country in which the document is to be used requires an Apostille in order to recognize it as a foreign public document.

When an Apostille is not appropriate, but authentication of the origin of a document is required, a certificate of authentication is issued instead.

### 3-B) AUTHENTICATIONS

Every U.S. state competent authority may issue an Authentication Certificate when an Apostille is not appropriate. Guidelines for Authentication Certificates are largely driven by individual state laws.

#### **Documents Remaining in the United States:**

If the document requiring authentication is for use in the United States, not abroad, an Apostille is NEVER appropriate. An Authentication Certificate must be issued instead.

#### **Documents to be Used Abroad:**

If the document requiring authentication is for use abroad but is not eligible for an Apostille (see the bulleted requirements list above), an Authentication Certificate may be issued instead. While Apostilles require no further diplomatic or consular legalization, **usually**<sup>10</sup> certificates of authentication must first be processed by the U.S. Department of State before being sent to countries not party to the Apostille Convention.

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<sup>7</sup> Source, Section 3-A: [Handbook on the Practical Operation of the Apostille Convention](#) and [The ABCs of Apostilles](#) brochure. Both published by the HCCH.

<sup>8</sup> A document that is executed by an authority or a person acting in an official capacity, and includes the categories of documents listed in Article 1(2) of the Convention. The determination of what constitutes a public document is entirely a matter for the law of the State of origin. Source: [Handbook on the Practical Operation of the Apostille Convention](#).

<sup>9</sup> See this *Handbook's* Section 2, “The Apostille Convention.”

<sup>10</sup> Rarely, exceptions can occur based on a receiving country’s practice.

### **U.S. Department of State, Office of Authentications:**

Since the U.S. Department of State was established in 1789, one of its responsibilities has been to authenticate documents using the imprint of its seal. The Office of Authentications is responsible for signing and issuing certificates under the Seal of the U.S. Department of State. It also ensures that requested information will serve in the interest of justice and is not contrary to U.S. policy.

### **The requirements that must be met for documents to be authenticated by the U.S. Department of State illustrate the chain of authentication that occurs when an Apostille cannot be used.**

For general documents alone, the requirements are:

1. Signed by a notary public;
2. Certified by the clerk of court of the county in which the notary is commissioned\*<sup>11</sup>; and
3. Certified by the Secretary of State of the state in which the document is executed.<sup>11</sup>

*\*Item 2 may be omitted if the authority in item 3 will certify directly to the notary.*

Other document types, such as those issued by state and local officials and federally issued documents, have their own set of requirements to be met for issuance of an Authentication Certificate by the U.S. Department of State. For more detailed information on Authentication Certificate requirements, please visit the website of the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Authentications, at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/records-and-authentications/authenticate-your-document/authentication-certificate-requirements.html> .

### **3-C) SINGLE CERTIFICATE**

Approximately ten years ago, the state of Oregon adopted a combined certificate that incorporated the Apostille and additional language for issuance of authentications. This “Single Certificate” complies with the requirements of the Apostille Convention but is also acceptable for issuance of authentications when an Apostille is not appropriate. **The distinguishing feature of this certificate is the following statement at the bottom of the form, outside the square border:**

“This certificate does not constitute an Apostille under the *Convention of 5 October 1961 Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents* for those countries that have neither ratified nor acceded to that Convention, and remains subject to additional applicable authentication requirements.”

Several other states’ Competent Authorities have subsequently adopted this combined form to simplify the processing of certification requests, and more specifically to reduce the potential for issuing the wrong form. **States that choose to adopt the Single Certificate must submit a copy of their form to the U.S. Authentications Office prior to initial issuance.** A sample of Oregon’s certificate is on page 41.

Experience has shown that additional instructions should be shared with customers advising them that this form is acceptable for documents going to non-Hague Contracting Parties, but that additional authentication by the U.S. State Department and/or the country’s Embassy or Consulate may be necessary.

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<sup>11</sup> Source: [U.S. Department of State, Office of Authentications, Authentication Certificate Requirements.](#)

# *Public Document*

*A broad concept that is the focal point of the Apostille Convention. Essentially, a public document is a document that is executed by an authority or a person acting in an official capacity, and includes the categories of documents listed in Article I(2) of the Convention.*

*The determination of what constitutes a public document is entirely a matter for the law of the state of origin.<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>12</sup> Source: [Handbook on the Practical Operation of the Apostille Convention](#).

## **SECTION 4 – APOSTILLE & AUTHENTICATIONS ISSUANCE GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4-A) BACKGROUND**

This Section’s *Apostille Issuance Guidelines - Version 1.0 – July 2013* represented more than 15 years of dedicated effort to create an authoritative reference document for issuance of Apostilles and Authentications by U.S. states’ competent authorities.

The *Guidelines* are designed to provide **a quick reference when notary administrators are unsure whether to accept or reject a particular request for an Apostille**. The *Guidelines* cover more than 60 real-life scenarios related to Apostille requests. Each scenario comes not only with a recommendation to accept or reject the request, but also—where relevant—whether to sanction the notary public for improper acts evidenced by the notary’s certificate on the document. Comments, references and cites are provided as well.

#### ***Guidelines Development Timeline:***

##### 2006-2007

The NPA Section of the National Association of Secretaries of State commits to examining Apostille-issuance practices as an organized initiative. The Authentication Practices Workgroup is formed. Conference calls over the ensuing months result in a well-vetted “wish-list” of information to appear in any final reference handbook.

##### 2008

The *Apostille Issuance Guidelines* initiative becomes a high-priority work item on the NPA Section’s annual NASS Summer Conference agenda. Representatives of the HCCH and the U.S. State Department illustrate the project’s relevance by becoming regular NPA Summer Conference participants. The development team begins with a reference chart describing “25 or more real-life scenarios” encountered by competent authorities when asked to issue an Apostille. The team discusses appropriate resolution of each scenario and records conclusions in the chart.

##### 2009

In February, NPA Section member delegate Kathy Sachs (Kansas Department of State) observes and participates in the meeting of the HCCH Special Commission on the Practical Operation of the Apostille Convention, an international event for competent authorities around the world. These deliberations produce valuable recommendations that inform and influence the *Apostille Guidelines*.

The *Apostille Issuance Guidelines* development team analyzes specific uniformity issues related to Apostille format, design and methods of affixing them to the underlying document. During the 2009 NASS Summer Conference, the NPA Section adopts a resolution to develop “best practices” for uniform format, design and affixation of Apostilles, in order to breed conformity with the Convention, reduce rejections by receiving jurisdictions, and minimize potential for misuse.

## 2010

At the 2010 NASS Summer Conference, the NPA Section expands upon the 2009 resolution, issuing a more comprehensive 2010 resolution<sup>13</sup> in support of detailed “best practices” for format, design and affixation of Apostilles.

## 2011

The reference chart that began in 2008 with 25 or so scenarios that notary public administrators commonly encounter when issuing Apostilles has expanded to more than 60 common scenarios. All require exacting review and debate, which continues at the 2011 NASS Summer Conference.

The workload has become so large that the *Apostille Issuance Guidelines* development team meets in Kansas City later that year for another 3-day work session.

## 2012

The development team once again dedicates a multi-day work session to the *Apostille Issuance Guidelines*, meeting this time in Williamsburg, Virginia. **This work session results in completion of the *Guidelines* chart detailing issuance scenarios and recommended actions.**

In November, NPA Section delegate Maureen Ewing (Rhode Island Department of State) observes and participates in the meeting of the Special Commission on the Practical Operation of the Apostille Convention. Conclusions and recommendations of the Special Commission will be discussed in a future NPA Section meeting and incorporated, if applicable, into the *Notary Public Administrators’ Handbook on Apostilles and Authentications*.

## 2013

With the development of the *Apostille Issuance Guidelines* chart complete, the NPA Section now moves forward with these objectives:

- a) to secure adoption of the support resolution by the Secretaries of State in attendance at the 2013 NASS Summer Conference, in order to promote widespread use of the *Apostille Issuance Guidelines*; and
- b) to expand on the *Guidelines* by compiling a complete handbook to serve as a comprehensive reference manual on all matters related to Apostilles and authentications.

## 2018

The NASS Resolution for the Adoption of National Apostille Issuance Guidelines was reauthorized at the NASS Summer Conference, July, 2018.

## 2023

The NASS Resolution for the Adoption of National Apostille Issuance Guidelines was amended and reauthorized at the NASS Summer Conference, July, 2023.

## 2024

The *Notary Public Administrators Handbook on Apostilles and Authentications* was edited and updated to reflect implementation of e-Apostilles by U.S. Competent Authorities. It also explains and encourages the adoption of single certificates as a means of simplifying the issuance of authentications to those countries that are not Contracting Parties of the Hague Convention.

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<sup>13</sup> See Section 4-C, page 31.

*NOTE: The assumptions, guidelines, and recommendations herein relate not only Notaries Public, but also to notarial officers and other authorized government agents, if applicable (see Request Scenarios 10 and 11).*

## **ASSUMPTIONS:**

- 1 Best Practice Document.** This document is intended to identify *Best Practices*, not necessarily what is currently a majority practice among states. In many cases, you will find an indicated action that is precisely the opposite of your current practice. The NPA has extensively discussed and reviewed each item in these guidelines, and come to the conclusions reflected herein. We strongly recommend these guidelines for your consideration, because it is in the best interests of all to adopt a uniform practice among the states wherever possible.
- 2 Public Document.** The *HCCH Convention of 5 October 1961 Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents* (Apostille Convention)<sup>14</sup> applies to public documents only. For the purposes of these guidelines, the term "public document" refers to a document that under domestic law is appropriate for authentication.
- 3 Notarization.** A notarization must include all of the formal elements required under the state law under which it is executed, including document execution, properly completed notarial certificate, and appropriate dates. The notary's signature and a seal alone does not constitute a notarization.
- 4 Notarial Certificate.** A notarial certificate must be compliant with state law. It must meet state requirements and not exceed the authority of a notary in that state. A notarial certificate must be attached, but it is not the duty or responsibility of the notary or competent authority to determine the type of certificate, i.e., whether the notarial act should have been an acknowledgment, jurat, etc.
- 5 Seal Requirement.** The term "seal" refers to either a rubber stamp or embossed seal of a notary public or other notarial officer. If the office or jurisdiction does not require a seal, then the requirement is met even without a seal.
- 6 Notary's / Official's Signature.** With regard to terms and operation of the Convention and the duty of competent authorities to verify the signature, capacity and seal (if applicable) of a notary public or other authorized official, there is no distinction between a wet-ink signature and an electronic signature. The law of the issuing state determines what constitutes a signature, electronic or otherwise.
- 7 "Law."** "Law" of a state is not limited to a statute. It can include a regulation, guidance, interpretive practice or executive order.
- 8 Limited Effect of an Apostille or Authentication.** The only effect of an Apostille or Authentication is to certify the authenticity of the signature, the capacity in which the person signing the document has acted, and where appropriate, the identity of the seal or stamp which the document bears. They do not relate to the content of the underlying document, i.e., the apostillized/authenticated document.
- 9 State-Specific Provisions Prevail.** These guidelines are intended to guide all states in the issuance of Apostilles and Authentications. However, it recognizes that, where specific state law contradicts these guidelines, the state law and practice prevail.
- 10 Alternatives to Rejection.** Depending on your state law, there may be alternatives available for documents that should be rejected, according to these guidelines. For example, although you may not be able to issue an Apostille for a Statement of Existence executed by a notary, an affidavit of fact witnessed by a notary could be apostillized. Sometimes, a certified copy of a document - where state law allows - may be substituted for an original that cannot be notarized itself, such as a vital record from a foreign country.

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<sup>14</sup> To view the text of the [Apostille Convention](#), visit the Apostille Section of the HCCH website.

**FREQUENT REQUEST SCENARIOS, APOSTILLE & AUTHENTICATION ISSUANCE SUMMARY**  
**SCENARIOS AND GUIDELINES BEGIN ON NEXT PAGE**

<b>1. Original Certified Copy of an Official or Vital Record Signed by a Proper Government Agent. Not Notarized.</b>	<b>13. Destination Country</b>
<b>2. Notary Certified Records, True and Correct Copy - Birth, Death, or Other Vital Record</b>	<b>14. Non-Member Jurisdiction</b>
<b>3. Notary Certified Records, Notarized on Actual Document - Birth, Death, or Other Vital Record</b>	<b>15. Irrational or Offensive Statements</b>
<b>4. Notarized Affidavit Attached to Original Vital Records - Birth, Death, or Other Vital Record</b>	<b>16. Non-original Documents</b>
<b>5. Notary Error</b>	<b>17. Multiple Transactions</b>
<b>6. Date Error</b>	<b>18. Sealed Documents</b>
<b>7. Signature Problem</b>	<b>19. Foreign Language</b>
<b>8. Stamp/Seal Problem</b>	<b>20. True and Correct Copy</b>
<b>9. No Document</b>	<b>21. No Record of Notary</b>
<b>10. Notarial Acts Under Federal Authority</b>	<b>22. Notarization (certificate) Problem</b>
<b>11. Notarial Acts Under State and Other Authority</b>	<b>23. Extra Formalities</b>
<b>12. Notarial Act Under Native American Jurisdiction</b>	<b>24. Electronic Notarization Considerations</b>



**1. Original Certified Copy of an Official or Vital Record Signed by a Proper Government Agent. (Not Notarized).**

	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
A. The certificate is not recent and the competent authority does not have a copy of the signature of the registrar on file. The record is not notarized. The certified copy appears to be valid.		X		Either obtain signature specimen; contact current registrar for verification of signature or direct customer to obtain new certificate.
B. The record has a signature of an authorized signer that can be verified, but contains no certificate language.	X			If your laws allow the signature of an authorized official, not usually considered a notarial officer, to be validated, and does not require a completed certificate; otherwise reject. See Assumption 9.
C. The record contains the electronic signature and/or seal of an authorized official that can be verified .	X			The method used to affix the signature or seal should not be determinat.

**2. Notary Certified Records, True and Correct Copy - Birth, Death, or Other Official or Vital Record**

<i>A Vital Record From My State</i>	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
A. My state does not permit a notary to certify a copy of these types of these types of records.		X	X	See Assumption 9.
B. My state law is silent on whether officials other than the custodial official may “certify” a copy of a vital record.	X			
<i>A Vital Record From Another State</i>				
C. The record clearly states that it is a violation of state law to copy or reproduce and certify a photocopy.		X	X	See Assumption 9.
D. The record does not address whether it is a violation of state law to photocopy.	X			See Assumption 9.

**3. Notary Certified Records, Notarized on Actual Document - Birth, Death, or Other Official or Vital Record**

<i>A Vital Record From My State</i>	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
A. My state does not permit a notary to certify a copy of a vital record.		X	X	See Assumption 9.
<i>A Vital Record From Another State</i>				
B. The record clearly states that it is a violation of state law to certify a copy of a vital record.		X	X	See Assumption 9.
C. My state law is silent on whether a notary may certify such records.	X			

**4. Notarized Affidavit Attached to Original Vital Records - Birth, Death, or Other Vital Record**

	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
A. A vital record from my state	X			The Apostille is not certifying the vital record; it is certifying the public document, which is the notarization. See Assumption 2. *This could be a certification by document custodian.
B. A vital record from another state	X			



<b>5. Notary Error</b>				
	<b>Attach</b>	<b>Reject</b>	<b>Sanction</b>	<b>Citations and Comments</b>
A. No notarial certificate, just a seal and notary signature.		X	X	See Assumption 2.
B. No seal, just notary signature and notarial certificate.		X	X	See Assumptions 2, 3, and 4.
C. No notary signature, just a seal and notarial certificate.		X	X	See Assumptions 2, 3, and 4.
D. No notarial certificate or seal, just a notary signature.		X	X	See Assumptions 2, 3, and 4.
E. No notarial certificate or signature, just a seal.		X	X	See Assumptions 2, 3, and 4.
F. Incomplete acknowledgment or other notarial act.		X	X	See Assumptions 2, 3, and 4. A purported notarial act is a public document only if all required components of the notarial act are present; therefore an incomplete notarial act is not a public document.
G. Notary performs an act that exceeds statutory authority. The notarization is therefore improper, but the seal and signature are correct.		X	X	See Assumptions 2, 3, and 4. A purported notarial act is a public document only if that act is authorized by state law; therefore an act that exceeds statutory authority is not a public document.

<b>6. Date Error</b>				
	<b>Attach</b>	<b>Reject</b>	<b>Sanction</b>	<b>Citations and Comments</b>
A. The date on the notarial certificate is prior to the date the signer signed the document.		X	X	See Assumption 3; an improperly completed notarial certificate is not a public document.
B. The expiration date of the seal reflects a commission that expired prior to the act.		X	X	See Assumption 3; an improperly completed notarial certificate is not a public document.
C. The seal has an expiration date from a commission that has not yet begun.		X	X	See Assumption 3; an improperly completed notarial certificate is not a public document.

<b>7. Signature Problem</b>				
	<b>Attach</b>	<b>Reject</b>	<b>Sanction</b>	<b>Citations and Comments</b>
A. The notary signature on the document does not appear to match the signature on file.		X	X	See Assumption 8; signature is verified against the official signature on record.
B. The document contains a notarial certificate that contains the particulars of the notarial act but lacks the notary's signature.		X	X	See Assumption 8; signature is verified against the official signature on record. See Assumption 3; an improperly completed notarial certificate is not a public document.
C. The document contains a completed notarial certificate, but the document has not been signed by the signing party.		X	X	See Assumption 3; a notarial act includes the execution (principal) signature, if applicable.

*Scenario continued next page*

D. The document contains a notarial certificate but has neither a signing party signature nor notary signature.		X	X	See Assumption 8; signature is verified against the official signature on record. See Assumption 3; a notarial act includes the execution (principal) signature, if applicable.
E. The document contains only a notary seal (no notarial certificate and no notarial signature).		X	X	See Assumption 8; signature is verified against the official signature on record. See Assumption 3; a document without a notarial certificate is not a public document.

### 8. Stamp/Seal Problem

	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
A. The seal on the document does not match the seal for the commission in effect at the time of the notarization.		X	X	See Assumption 8; the seal is verified against the official record. See Assumption 3; a notarial act includes the official seal.
B. The seal is not legible.		X	X	See Assumption 8; the seal is verified against the official record.
C. No seal on document.		X	X	See Assumption 8; the seal is verified against the official record. See Assumption 3; a notarial act includes the official seal.
D. The seal does not appear in its entirety on the notarial certificate.		X	X	See Assumption 8; the seal is verified against the official record. See Assumption 3; a notarial act includes the official seal.
E. The seal is not affixed in full on the notarial certificate, but fanned over multiple pages.		X	X	See Assumption 8; there must be at least one legible, complete seal impression on the notarial certificate.

### 9. No Document

	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
A. Customer asks for an apostille on a particular notary, but does not have a document to attach.		X		Article 4, Apostille Convention; Numbers 16 and 17, Conclusions and Recommendations 2003. There must be a public document that evidences the notarial act.

### 10. Notarial Acts Under Federal Authority

	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
A. Federal judge		X		In all situations unless the competent authority is granted authority through enabling legislation to authenticate the signatures of such federal officials.  <i>These documents must be sent to the U. S. Authentications Office.</i>
B. Federal Clerk or deputy clerk of a court of record		X		
C. Federal commissioned officer on active duty		X		
D. Any other person authorized by federal law		X		

### 11. Notarial Acts Under State and Other Authority

	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
A. Judge	X			<i>If your state law does not allow these or other officials to perform notarial acts, or if your office does not have the ability to verify the signatures of these officials, then refer the customer to the appropriate authority for authentication in your state.</i>
B. Clerk or deputy clerk of a court of record	X			
C. A commissioned officer on active duty	X			
D. County clerk	X			
E. Any other person authorized by law	X			
F. An attorney	X			
G. Ex-officio notary	X			

### 12. Notarial Act Under Native American Jurisdiction

	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
A. A document is presented that was notarized or certified by a person acting under the authority of a Native American tribe.		X		See Assumption 10.

### 13. Destination Country

	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
A. Customer submits a notarized document and requests an Apostille without providing the country to which the document is being sent.	X			Article 1, Apostille Convention.
B. Customer identifies the country of use as United States.		X		Article 1, Apostille Convention. Attach authentication/certification.
C. The customer states that the document is for use in a subscribing jurisdiction (i.e., another Contracting Party), but the contents of the document strongly imply that the document is intended for use in the United States.	X			Article 1, Apostille Convention. However, your state may have laws that require rejection.

### 14. Non-Contracting Party

	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
A. The customer provides the destination country, however it is not listed on the HCCH website. This information is related to the customer who continues to insist their request is correct. The customer is advised the request cannot be performed for a non-participating jurisdiction (i.e. a non-Contracting Party).		X		Article 1, Apostille Convention. The state is the competent authority to judge if an Apostille is appropriate to issue. The Apostille is not for use in the U.S.; it is only for use in another country (Contracting Party) where the Convention is in force. If the document will be presented in a country that is not party to the Convention, contact the embassy of that country in Washington, DC for information regarding additional requirements.
B. Competent authority has adopted the Single Certificate for use in any country.	X			It is the customer's responsibility to acquire whatever other authentications the Destination Country (State) requires.

<b>15. Irrational or Offensive Statements</b>				
	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
A. False Statements - The underlying document contains statements that, on the face of it, appear to be false. The notarization is properly executed.	X			Unless the competent authority is granted authority to reject through enabling legislation.
B. Obscenities - The underlying document contains offensive language that would be considered foul or offensive speech by prevailing standards. The notarization is properly executed.	X			Unless the competent authority is granted authority to reject through enabling legislation.
C. Sovereign Citizen/Strawman Rhetoric - The underlying document contains language that is commonly associated with rhetoric that is often used to attempt to commit fraud. The notarization is properly executed.	X			Unless the competent authority is granted authority to reject through enabling legislation. See U.S. Department of Justice definition, "Sovereign Citizen Use of Documents to Further Fraudulent Schemes: Reference Guide." [Feb. 2012]
D. Inflammatory Statements - The underlying document contains language that appears to be intentionally inflammatory to either an individual or an organization. The notarization is properly executed.	X			Unless the competent authority is granted authority to reject through enabling legislation.
E. The notarial certificate states that the attached is a true and correct copy. The notarization is properly executed, but no document is attached.		X	X	Assumption 3; the certified copy is not attached to evidence the notarial act. (Use discretion in sanctioning; notary may not be directly responsible for this circumstance. Look for evidence that the notary attached the notarial certificate to the document.)

<b>16. Non-original Documents</b>				
	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
A. The notarial certificate (paper only) document is clearly not an original.	X			<i>It is not the responsibility of the competent authority to determine if the document is original.</i>
B. The notarial certificate (paper only) appears to be a copy, but the customer insists it is an original.	X			<i>It is not the responsibility of the competent authority to determine if the document is original.</i>

17. Multiple Transactions				
	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
A. Customer requests that two clearly separate documents, notarized by the same notary public, be authenticated together with one apostille.		X		NASS Resolution of July 2010. 2003 Special Commission Conclusions and Recommendations - Number 17. Per recommendations, an Apostille should be affixed to each signature/certificate page – or attach to the first signature/certificate page (customer may direct).
B. Customer presents one document with two (or more) distinct notarizations and requests two (or more) distinct apostilles.	X			Customer may request two (or more) Certificates.

18. Sealed Documents				
	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
A. A notarized school transcript and diploma for authentication are submitted with the requirement that an apostille be affixed to each document. However, the notarized documents are sealed in an envelope that states "if opened not valid."	X			Article 1, Apostille Convention. Open envelope and affix.

19. Foreign Language				
	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
A. The notarial certificate is in a language the competent authority cannot read / comprehend.		X		Refer to state law. States may choose to authenticate notarial certificates written in languages in which they are competent.
B. The notarization is in English, but the document is in another language.	X			Refer to state law. State law may require translation. See Assumption 8.

20. True and Correct Copy				
	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
A. The notary has attested that the document is a true and correct copy but it is apparent that the document is an original.	X			It is not the responsibility of the competent authority to determine whether the underlying document is a copy or an original.
B. Document was electronically executed, electronically notarized, and papered-out. Paper copy is not certified as a true/correct copy.	X			The state of origin determines whether a public document has been presented, regardless of form and as long as elements making it a public document under state law are present. See 2016 Special Commission Conclusions and Recommendations - Number 7
C. Electronically executed and notarized document is papered-out and certified to be a true/correct copy by a party authorized under state law (for example, a Notary in a state authorizing copy certifications).	X*			The (paper) certificate of the party that certified the true/correct paper copy of the electronic document is considered to be a public document. *If the certifying party's signature, capacity, and seal (if present) are verified by the competent authority receiving the request.

<b>21. No Record of Notary</b>				
	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
A. The notary's name listed on the seal or certificate does not exactly match the name on the record of the competent name on the record of the competent authority at the time of notarization		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	See Assumption 8; notary's name is verified against the official name on record.

<b>22. Certificate Problems</b>				
	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
. The notarial certificate includes language for an act that exceeds the authority of a notary public under state law. For example, "I certify that this is an accurate translation"; "The principal is a qualified CPA"; etc.		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	Refer to state law. Assumption 4; language of the notarial certificate must not require the notary to perform an act that exceeds the notary's authority.

<b>23. Extra Formalities</b>				
	<i>Only issue and attach Apostille in your normal manner</i>	<i>Adhere to country request</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>	
A. The destination country is requiring more than the Convention requires.	<b>X</b>		Article 3, Apostille Convention. 2003 Special Commission Conclusions and Recommendations - Numbers 16 and 18. 2009 Special Commission Conclusions and Recommendations - Numbers 87 and 92. 2012 Special Commission Conclusions and Recommendations - Number 27.	

<b>24. Electronic Notarization Considerations</b>				
	<i>Attach</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Citations and Comments</i>
A. Electronic or Online Notary is required to use a particular or specified technology to perform electronic/online notarial acts. Notary has evidently failed to use the required technology, but signature and capacity can be verified.	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	If the state is capable of verifying the Notary's electronic signature and capacity, then failure to use a particular or specified technology is not cause to reject. Could sanction for Notary's failure to meet technology requirement.
B. Public document issue: Document was electronically executed, electronically notarized, and papered-out. Paper copy is not certified as a true/correct copy.	<b>X</b>			The state determines whether a public document has been presented, regardless of form and as long as elements making it a public document under state law are present. See Conclusions and Recommendations of the 2016 meeting of the HCCH Special Commission, Number 7.
C. Notary signature issue: plain paper (not certified) photocopy showing an image of the Notary's electronic signature is presented.	<b>X</b>			Competent authority may verify the Notary's signature if the state is capable of recognizing it, and dependent on state law.

#### 4-C) NPA BEST PRACTICES: FORMAT, DESIGN AND AFFIXATION OF APOSTILLES

Having recognized that uniformity in the format, design and affixation methods of Apostilles by U.S. competent authorities would reduce rejections by intended recipients and strengthen the security of the Apostille against misuse and abuse, **the NPA Section in 2010 adopted the following best practice recommendations**<sup>15</sup>:

- The Apostille shall conform to the model Certificate annexed to the Apostille Convention in the form of a bordered square with sides at least 9 centimeters long on an *allonge*<sup>16</sup> that is 8.5 x 11 inches.
- The type of paper to be used for the Certificate is at the discretion of the Competent Authorities.
- The Apostille Convention itself does not specify how an Apostille should be affixed to the underlying document. However, when affixing an Apostille, Competent Authorities should use the following procedures:
  - Offset the *allonge*
  - Affix the *allonge* to the front of the page that contains the signature and seal that is certified
  - Apply a stamp that overlaps the *allonge* and the underlying public document
  - Where feasible, the *allonge* should be affixed on the left side of the public document; otherwise the *allonge* may be attached as appropriate. The readability of the Apostille and the public document should be the primary consideration in making this determination.
- Competent Authorities shall use tamper-evident methods of affixation. The Notary Public Administrators recommend the use of grommets as a uniform standard.
- The following language should be used outside the bordered square:

*“This Apostille only certifies the authenticity of the signature and the capacity of the person who has signed the public document, and, where appropriate, the identity of the seal or stamp which the public document bears.*

*This Apostille does not certify the content of the document for which it was issued.*

*This Apostille is not valid for use anywhere within the United States of America, its territories or possessions.*
- The following language may also be added, if the issuing state has an online e-Register in which its Apostilles can be verified.

*[The issuance of this Apostille can be verified at: [insert URL of e-Register of issuing state]]”*

See the Appendix, Pages 40, 41, 42, and 43, to review samples of Apostille Certificates that conform to the model Certificate annexed to the Apostille Convention, and to the above recommendations.

Also, see the Appendix, Pages 34-35, for a sample internal document to competent authority staff, providing step-by-step instructions for affixation of Apostilles and authentications in a manner that complies with the NPA Section’s best practices recommendations above.

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<sup>15</sup> July 20, 2010 - Notary Public Administrators’ Resolution to Promote Uniformity in the Format, Design and Affixation of Apostilles. See Appendix, Page 37.

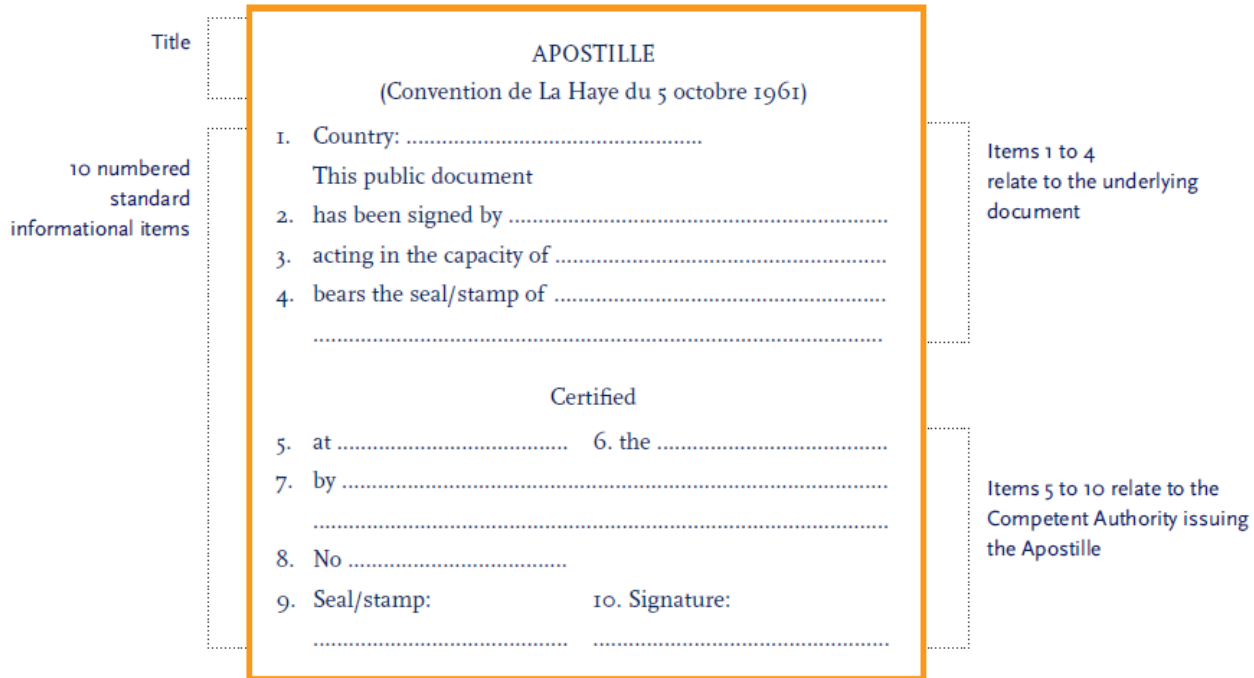
<sup>16</sup> As defined in the [Handbook on the Practical Operation of the Apostille Convention](#), an *allonge* is “A slip of paper, attached to the underlying public document, on which an Apostille is placed. An allonge is used as an alternative to placing the Apostille directly on the underlying public document (see Art. 4(1) of the Apostille Convention).” See Page 41 to view Rhode Island’s allonge.



## 4-D) HOW TO COMPLETE AND ATTACH A PAPER APOSTILLE

### COMPLETING THE APOSTILLE

The following illustration of the Model Apostille Certificate shows the 10 numbered, standard informational items that must be noted in every Apostille. It also shows which of these items relate to the underlying public document and which relate to the Competent Authority issuing the Apostille.<sup>17</sup>



The following chart<sup>18</sup> provides detailed explanations of the 10 numbered, standard information items to be noted in every Apostille (begins on next page).

<sup>17</sup> Source, [Apostille Handbook](#), HCCH.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.



Item	Information to be Filled In	
No 1 – “Country”	Insert the name of the State of origin.	Items 1 to 4 relate to the underlying public document
No 2 – “has been signed by”	Insert the name of the person who signed the underlying public document. If the document does not bear a signature, write “not applicable” or “n/a” or otherwise indicate that the item is not applicable. An Apostille only authenticates the signature/seal of a <i>single</i> official or authority.	
No 3 – “acting in the capacity of”	Insert the capacity in which the person signing the underlying public document acted ( <i>e.g.</i> , the title of the position held by the official). If the document does not bear a signature, write “not applicable” or “n/a” or otherwise indicate that the item is not applicable.	
No 4 – “bears the seal / stamp of”	Insert the name of the authority which has affixed the seal / stamp on the underlying public document. What constitutes a seal depends on the law of the State of origin, and some Competent Authorities treat the logo of the issuing authority as its seal. If the document does not bear a seal or stamp, write “not applicable” or “n/a” or otherwise indicate that the item is not applicable. An Apostille only authenticates the signature / seal of a <i>single</i> official or authority.	
No 5 – “at”	Insert the name of the place where the Apostille is issued ( <i>e.g.</i> , the city where the Competent Authority is located).	Items 5 to 10 relate to the Competent Authority issuing the Apostille
No 6 – “the”	Insert the date on which the Apostille is issued.	
No 7 – “by”	Practice among Competent Authorities in filling in this numbered standard informational item varies. Some Competent Authorities insert the title / name of the Competent Authority (noting that some Competent Authorities are officials identified by the title of the position whereas others are legal bodies identified by their name) and the name of the authorized officer issuing the Apostille. Other Competent Authorities insert <i>either</i> the title / name of the Competent Authority <i>or</i> the name of the authorized officer. The Convention does not require the authorized officer to be named; however, to avoid complications, the name of the issuing officer should be included in item 7 or in item 10.	
No 8 – “No”	Insert the number of the Apostille.*	
No 9 – “Seal / stamp”	Affix the seal / stamp of the Competent Authority.	
No 10 – “Signature”	<p>Practice among Competent Authorities in filling in this numbered standard informational item varies. For most Competent Authorities, the authorized officer issuing the Apostille applies his / her own signature. Of these States, many also add the name of the officer in the signature field.</p> <p>The Convention does not require the officer signing the Apostille to be named; however, to avoid complications, the name of the issuing officer should be included in item 10 or item 7 to allow the recipient to associate the signature with the officer signing the Apostille.<sup>+</sup></p>	

\* The number of the Apostille, a unique identifier, is critical in allowing a recipient to verify the Apostille. See paragraphs 240 and 241 of the [Handbook on the Practical Operation of the Apostille Convention](#) for more information.

+ For more on signing Apostilles, see Paragraph 261 of the [Handbook on the Practical Operation of the Apostille Convention](#).

## ATTACHING THE ALLONGE

### 4-E) SAMPLE STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS, AFFIXATION OF APOSTILLES AND AUTHENTICATIONS IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE 2010 NPA RESOLUTION<sup>19</sup>

#### Authentication Attachment Guidelines (for Competent Authority Staff)

**[Name of state]** follows the Uniform Apostille Standards (Appendix A), and adopts the Model Apostille Certificate format of the Hague Conference on Private International Law. Attach the authentication to the document using the following procedure. An example of an attached authentication is shown below.

1. Offset the right side of the authentication approximately ½" from the document, as shown in the example, and staple the certificate on the left side of the document **page that contains the signature and seal** of the official being authenticated.
2. When stapling, please use two staples, as shown, but the exact location of the staples is not crucial. In general,

Note: Where feasible, the apostille or certificate should be affixed on the left side of the public document; otherwise the authentication may be attached as appropriate. The readability of the authentication and the document should be the primary consideration in making this determination.

3. Apply the **[name of state]** seal stamp as displayed in the example. When applying the seal, approximately half of the seal should appear on the authentication, and the other half should appear on the document page containing the official's signature and seal. Keep in mind the rule about readability when affixing the seal.

#### Questions and Answers

##### 1. How do we attach notarial certificates that are attached as half sheets?

These attachment certificates will usually be attached to the signature page and stapled on the left hand side. Attach the apostille/authentication to the page that includes the certificate, and the state seal stamp will be placed crossing over the attachment cert.

##### 2. How do we attach where the notarization is on the back of the document?

We will attach to the notarization, which will mean we attach as if it were rightside up. Our certificate will actually look backwards to a person looking at the front of the document as a whole.

*These instructions are intended for use by Competent Authority staff. They illustrate a process for affixing Apostilles and authentications in a manner that complies with the 2010 NPA Resolution (recommendations on format, design and affixation of Apostilles).*

<sup>19</sup> See Page 37 for the 2010 NPA Resolution To Promote Uniformity in the Format, Design and Affixation of Apostilles.

[Name of State]  
Secretary of State

**APOSTILLE**  
(Convention de La Haye du 5 octobre 1961)

<b>1. Country:</b> Pays / País: <b>United States of America</b>	
<b>This public document</b> Le présent acte public / El presente documento público	
<b>has been signed by</b> a été signé par / ha sido firmado por <b>[Name of Notary]</b>	
<b>acting in the capacity of</b> agissant en qualité de / quien actúa en calidad de <b>Notary Public</b>	
<b>4. bears the seal / stamp of</b> est revêtu du sceau / timbre de / y está revestido del sello / timbre de <b>the said notary</b>	
<b>Certified</b> Attesté / Certoficado	
<b>5. at</b> à / en <b>[City, State]</b>	<b>6. the</b> le / el <b>[Date]</b>
<b>7. by</b> par / por <b>[Competent Authority]</b>	
<b>8. N°</b> sous n° / bajo el número <b>[Certificate number]</b>	
<b>9. Seal / Stamp</b> Sceau / timbre: / Sello / timbre: <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;">[Stamp/Seal]</div>	<b>10. Signature</b> Signature: / Firma: <b>[Signature of Competent Authority]</b>

This Apostille only certifies the authenticity of the signature and the capacity of the person who has signed the public document, and, where appropriate, the identity of the seal or stamp which the public document bears.

This Apostille does not certify the content of the document for which it was issued.

This Apostille is not valid for use anywhere within the United States of America, its territories or possessions.

To verify the issuance of this Apostille, [insert appropriate verification information].

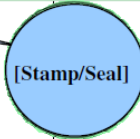
This certificate does not constitute an apostille under the Hague Convention of October 5, 1961 for those countries that have not acceded to that Convention.

www.Apostille.com

Affix to document using staples as shown here.

Offset apostille as shown here.

Place State seal here.



*This illustration details various Apostille affixation elements that comply with the recommendations of the 2010 NPA Resolution, including tamper-evident method of affixation (in this example, staples), offsetting the allonge from the underlying public document, and applying the competent authority's seal/stamp such that it overlaps the allonge and underlying public document.*

## **SECTION 5 – RESOURCES**

### **5-A) WEB SITE: THE HAGUE CONFERENCE ON PRIVATE INTERNATIONAL LAW (HCCH), APOSTILLE SECTION**

**The Apostille Section of the HCCH’s website is a rich source of information and guidance on all matters pertaining to the Apostille Convention.** In addition to the Status Table (discussed in this *Handbook’s* Section 1-C, Contracting Parties), the Apostille Section web page offers the text of the Convention; informational documents; recommended model Apostille Certificates; Conclusions and Recommendations of the Special Commissions on the Practical Operation of the Apostille Convention; and more.

Visit the Apostille Section webpage at <https://www.hcch.net/en/instruments/specialised-sections/apostille>

### **5-B) ABCS OF APOSTILLES INFORMATIONAL BROCHURE**

Published by the HCCH, *The ABCs of Apostilles* is a brochure that is primarily addressed to users of Apostilles with short answers to frequently asked questions, including when, where and how Apostilles are issued and what their effects are.<sup>20</sup>

*The ABCs of Apostilles* may be viewed at [6dd54368-bebd-4b10-a078-0a92e5bca40a.pdf \(hcch.net\)](https://www.hcch.net/en/publications-and-studies/details4/?pid=5888)

### **5-C) HANDBOOK ON THE PRACTICAL OPERATION OF THE APOSTILLE CONVENTION (APOSTILLE HANDBOOK)**

Published by the HCCH, the *Apostille Handbook* is a comprehensive reference tool that is designed to assist Competent Authorities [worldwide] in performing their functions under the Apostille Convention, as well as address issues that arise in the contemporary operation of the Convention.<sup>21</sup>

The *Apostille Handbook* may be viewed at <https://www.hcch.net/en/publications-and-studies/details4/?pid=5888>.

### **5-D) U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, OFFICE OF AUTHENTICATIONS**

The U.S. Department of State is responsible for providing authentication services to U.S. citizens and foreign nationals on all documents that will be used overseas. The Office of Authentications receives a variety of documents from commercial organizations, private citizens, and officials of the Federal and State governments.<sup>22</sup>

Learn more about the functions of the U.S. Department of State’s Office of Authentications online, at <http://www.state.gov/m/a/auth/>

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<sup>20</sup> Source, website of [The Hague Conference on Private International Law, Apostille Section](https://www.hcch.net/en/instruments/specialised-sections/apostille).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Source, “*Authentication Services*” brochure, published by the U.S. Department of State.

## SECTION 6 – APPENDIX

### 6-A) RESOLUTIONS

#### 2010 NPA RESOLUTION (TO PROMOTE UNIFORMITY IN THE FORMAT, DESIGN AND AFFIXATION OF APOSTILLES)

##### **Notary Public Administrators Section of the National Association of Secretaries of State**

##### **Resolution to Promote Uniformity in the Format, Design and Affixation of Apostilles July 20, 2010**

Recognizing that under The Hague Apostille Convention of 1961 each Competent Authority retains the discretion to issue Apostilles in a form consistent with the basic requirements of the Convention;

And further recognizing that this affords the possibility of a variety of forms;

And further recognizing that the variety of forms issued by US state Competent Authorities has led to confusion among and rejections by intended recipients of US state-issued Apostilles;

And further recognizing that a higher degree of uniformity among US state-issued Apostilles would alleviate confusion and minimize rejections;

The Notary Public Administrators, in order to implement a series of best practices with the goal of achieving uniformity to the greatest extent possible, and in conformity with the Conclusions & Recommendations adopted in 2003 and 2009 by the Special Commission on the practical operation of The Hague Apostille Convention;

Resolve to adopt the following best practices:

- The Apostille shall conform to the model Certificate annexed to The Hague Apostille Convention in the form of a bordered square with sides at least 9 centimeters long on an allonge<sup>23</sup> that is 8.5 x 11 inches.
- The type of paper to be used for the Certificate is at the discretion of the Competent Authorities.
- When affixing an Apostille, Competent Authorities should use the following procedures:
  - o Offset the allonge
  - o Affix the allonge to the front of the page that contains the signature and seal that is certified
  - o Apply a stamp that overlaps the allonge and the underlying public document
  - o Where feasible, the allonge should be affixed on the left side of the public document; otherwise the allonge may be attached as appropriate. The readability of the Apostille and the public document should be the primary consideration in making this determination.
- Competent Authorities shall use tamper-evident methods of affixation. The Notary Public Administrators recommend the use of grommets as a uniform standard.
- The following language should be used outside the bordered square:
  - “This Apostille only certifies the authenticity of the signature and the capacity of the person who has signed the public document, and, where appropriate, the identity of the seal or stamp which the public document bears.
  - This Apostille does not certify the content of the document for which it was issued.
  - This Apostille is not valid for use anywhere within the United States of America, its territories or possessions.
  - [To verify the issuance of this Apostille: [www.e-Register of issuing state]]”

And the Notary Public Administrators further resolve to encourage the active consideration of issuing electronic Apostilles (e-Apostilles) and operating electronic registers (e-Registers) of Apostilles as suggested by the electronic Apostille Pilot Program (e-APP).

<sup>23</sup> As defined in the HCCH’s *Handbook on the Practical Operation of the Apostille Convention*, an *allonge* is “A slip of paper, attached to the underlying public document, on which an Apostille is placed. An allonge is used as an alternative to placing the Apostille directly on the underlying document (see Art. 4(1) of the Apostille Convention).” See Appendix, Page 41, to view Rhode Island’s allonge.





**Resolution for the Adoption of National Apostille Issuance Guidelines<sup>24</sup>**

WHEREAS the United States is party to the Convention Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents (Apostille Convention); and

WHEREAS The Hague Conference on Private International Law recognizes each of the 50 states to be a competent authority in the administration of the Apostille Convention for that state; and

WHEREAS The Hague Conference and the Notary Public Administrators section of the National Association of Secretaries of State have long worked together to promote uniformity and consistency of practice in the issuance of apostilles; and

WHEREAS it is up to each competent authority to administer the convention within the context of local law; and

WHEREAS consistent practice among the states facilitates international commerce with all the states; and

WHEREAS a handbook promoting best practices enables consistent application of the Apostille convention principles within the context of local law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the National Association of Secretaries of State supports the adoption of the 2013 NASS Apostille Issuance Guidelines;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the National Association of Secretaries of State recommends that its members use these guidelines to inform the issuance of apostilles in their capacity as competent authorities of the Apostille Convention.

ADOPTED the 21<sup>st</sup> day of July, 2013  
in Anchorage, AK

Expires: Summer 2028

Hall of States, 444 N. Capitol Street, N.W., Suite 401, Washington, DC 20001  
(202) 624-3525 (202) 624-3527 Fax

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

<sup>24</sup> Reference to the NPA Section's *Apostille Issuance Guidelines, Version 1.0*, appears on Page 20 of this *Handbook*.



## **NASS Resolution for the Adoption of National Apostille Issuance Guidelines**

Originally adopted July 2013; Reauthorized July 2018; Amended and reauthorized July 2023

WHEREAS the United States is party to the [Convention Abolishing the Requirement of Legalization for Foreign Public Documents \(Apostille Convention\)](#); and

WHEREAS the Hague Conference on Private International Law recognizes each of the 50 states to be a competent authority in the administration of the Apostille Convention for that state; and

WHEREAS the Hague Conference and the Notary Public Administrators section of the National Association of Secretaries of State have long worked together to promote uniformity and consistency of practice in the issuance of apostilles; and

WHEREAS it is up to each competent authority to administer the convention within the context of local law; and

WHEREAS consistent practice among the states facilitates international commerce with all the states; and

WHEREAS a handbook promoting best practices enables consistent application of the Apostille convention principles within the context of local law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the National Association of Secretaries of State supports the adoption of the [NASS Apostille Issuance Guidelines](#);

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the National Association of Secretaries of State recommends that its members use these guidelines to inform the issuance of apostilles in their capacity as competent authorities of the Apostille Convention.

Adopted July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, in Washington, D.C.

EXPIRES: Summer 2028

## 6-B) APOSTILLE CERTIFICATE EXAMPLES<sup>25</sup> (MODEL, BILINGUAL, TRILINGUAL, “OUTSIDE THE BOX” LANGUAGE AND SINGLE CERTIFICATE)

### a THE ORIGINAL MODEL CERTIFICATE

239 The Annex to the Apostille Convention provides the following Model Apostille Certificate:

The diagram shows the original Model Apostille Certificate with the following structure:

**Title:** APOSTILLE (Convention de La Haye du 5 octobre 1961)

**10 numbered standard informational items:**

- Country: .....  
This public document
- has been signed by .....
- acting in the capacity of .....
- bears the seal/stamp of .....

**Certified**

- at ..... 6. the .....
- by .....
- No .....
- Seal/stamp: ..... 10. Signature: .....

**Annotations:**

- Items 1 to 4 relate to the underlying document
- Items 5 to 10 relate to the Competent Authority issuing the Apostille

The purpose of the Model Apostille Certificate is to ensure that Apostilles issued by the various Contracting Parties are clearly identifiable to all other Contracting Parties, thereby facilitating the circulation of public documents abroad. For this reason, Apostilles issued by Competent Authorities should conform as closely as possible to the Model Apostille Certificate (Conclusion & Recommendation No 13 of the 2003 Special Commission). In particular, an Apostille must:

- bear the title in French 'Apostille (Convention de La Haye du 5 octobre 1961)'; and
- contain the 10 numbered standard informational items.

APOSTILLE (Convention de La Haye du 5 octobre 1961)			
1. Country: Pays :			
This public document Le présent acte public			
2. has been signed by a été signé par			
3. acting in the capacity of agissant en qualité de			
4. bears the seal / stamp of est revêtu du sceau / timbre de			
Certified Attesté			
5. at à		6. the le	
7. by par			
8. N° sous n°			
9. Seal / stamp: Sceau / timbre :		10. Signature: Signature :	

The bilingual Model Apostille Certificate

APOSTILLE (Convention de La Haye du 5 octobre 1961)			
1. Country: País / País:			
This public document Le présent acte public / El presente documento público			
2. has been signed by a été signé par / ha sido firmado por			
3. acting in the capacity of agissant en qualité de / quien actúa en calidad de			
4. bears the seal / stamp of est revêtu du sceau / timbre de / y está revestido del sello / timbre de			
Certified Atesté / Certificado			
5. at a / en		6. the le / el día	
7. by par / por			
8. N° sous n° / bajo el número			
9. Seal / stamp: Sceau / timbre : / Sello / timbre:		10. Signature: Signature : / Firma:	

The trilingual Model Apostille Certificate

In accordance with a Recommendation of the Special Commission (Conclusion & Recommendation No 89 of the 2009 Special Commission), the Permanent Bureau has developed a bilingual Model Apostille Certificate in which the 10 numbered standard informational items are in English and French. It has also developed a trilingual Model Apostille Certificate in English, French and another language (e.g., Spanish). The bilingual and trilingual Model Apostille Certificates are available on the Apostille Section of the HCCH website.

The model, bilingual and trilingual Apostille Certificates, including templates, may be downloaded at [HCCH | Multilingual Model Apostilles](https://www.hcch.net/en/instruments/conventions/specialized-sections/apostille/multilingual-model-apostilles).

<sup>25</sup> Source of model, bilingual and trilingual Apostille Certificates and explanatory captions: [Handbook on the Practical Operation of the Apostille Convention](#).





State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
A. Ralph Mollis  
Secretary of State

**APOSTILLE**

(Convention de La Haye du 5 octobre 1961)

- 1. Country: United States of America
- 2. This Public document has been signed by Jane Doe
- 3. acting in the capacity of Notary Public
- 4. bears the seal/stamp of Jane Doe

**CERTIFIED**

- 5. at Providence, Rhode Island
- 6. on Thursday, March 10 2011
- 7. by Acting Deputy Secretary of State
- 8. No. 201103172410
- 9. Seal/Stamp
- 10. Signature


Maureen Ewing  
Acting Deputy Secretary of State



This Apostille only certifies the Authenticity of the signature and the capacity of the person who has signed the public document, and, where appropriate, the identity of the seal or stamp which the public document bears.  
This Apostille does not certify the content of the document for which it was issued.  
This Apostille is not valid for use anywhere within the United States of America, its territories or possessions.  
To verify the issuance of this Apostille: [www.business.sos.ri.gov/apostillesearch](http://www.business.sos.ri.gov/apostillesearch)

*Rhode Island's Apostille Certificate ("allonge"), fully compliant with the July 2010 NPA Section Resolution (see Page 31 of this Handbook).*

*Note the "outside the box" language at the bottom of the Certificate, outside the required bordered square. This language is meant to deter intentional, fraudulent misuse of the Apostille. Also note the reference to Rhode Island's online Apostille register.*

State of Oregon Secretary of State	
<b>APOSTILLE</b> (Convention de La Haye du 5 octobre 1961)	
1. <b>Country:</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>United States of America</b></span> Pays / Pais:	
<b>This public document</b> Le présent acte public / El presente documento público	
2. <b>has been signed by</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>MOLLY MARIE BOYD</b></span> a été signé par ha sido firmado por	
3. <b>acting in the capacity of</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Notary Public</b></span> agissant en qualité de quien actúa en calidad de	
4. <b>bears the seal / stamp of</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>the said notary</b></span> est revêtu du sceau / timbre de y está revestido del sello / timbre de	
Certified Attesté / Certificado	
5. <b>at</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Salem, Oregon</b></span> à / en	6. <b>the</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Tuesday, May 21, 2013</b></span> le / el dia
7. <b>by</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Secretary of State, State of Oregon</b></span> par / por	
8. <b>N<sup>o</sup></b> <span style="float: right;"><b>870220P9</b></span> sous n <sup>o</sup> bajo el número	
9. <b>Seal / Stamp</b> Sceau / timbre: Sello / timbre:	10. <b>Signature:</b> Signature: Firma:    <b>Kate Brown</b>

This Apostille only certifies the authenticity of the signature and the capacity of the person who has signed the public document, and, where appropriate, the identity of the seal or stamp which the public document bears.

This Apostille does not certify the content of the document for which it was issued.

This Apostille is not valid for use anywhere within the United States of America, its territories or possessions.

To verify the issuance of this Apostille, call (503) 986-2593 or email corporation.division@state.or.us.

**This certificate does not constitute an apostille under the Convention of 5 October 1961 Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents for those countries that have neither ratified nor acceded to that Convention, and remains subject to additional applicable authentication requirements.**

*This is Oregon's "Single Certificate," utilized by that U.S. state's competent authority for issuance of Apostilles and authentications. This Certificate model complies with the requirements of the Apostille Convention, but is also acceptable for issuance of authentications when an Apostille is not appropriate. The distinguishing feature of this Certificate is the following statement (see the bottom of the form, outside the square border): "This certificate does not constitute an Apostille under the Convention of 5 October 1961 Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents for those countries that have neither ratified nor acceded to that Convention, and remains subject to additional applicable authentication requirements."*

# E-APOSTILLE CERTIFICATE EXAMPLES

**SECRETARY OF STATE  
STATE OF MONTANA**

**APOSTILLE**  
(Convention de La Haye du 5 octobre 1961)

- Country: UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
- This public document
- has been signed by KRISTI STROUF
- acting in the capacity of NOTARY PUBLIC
- bears the SEAL/STAMP OF KRISTI STROUF, NOTARY PUBLIC, STATE OF MONTANA, U.S.A.

**Certified**

- at HELENA, MONTANA
- on 25TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2023
- by CHRISTI JACOBSEN, STATE OF MONTANA
- No: 08984
- Seal/Stamp
- Signature



**Christi Jacobsen**  
Montana Secretary of State



Verification #: 08984      Verify Online: <https://biz.sosmt.gov/apostille>

<b>Document Description:</b> Last Name Sample_Passport	Document Description - serves to attest this apostille to the accompanying underlying document. Parameters are customer specified. The apostille neither confirms, denies, or makes any reference about the underlying document.
<b>Security:</b> With Adobe Reader, certification and encryption are designated by a blue banner and black ribbon, which signifies the document has not been modified since issuance and cannot be repudiated. Do not trust the document if any other symbol is displayed.	
<b>This e-Apostille:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only certifies the authenticity of the signature and the capacity of the person who has signed the public document, and, where appropriate, the identity of the seal or stamp which the public official bears.</li> <li>Does not certify the content of the document for which it was issued.</li> <li>Constitutes an Apostille under the Hague Convention of 5 October 1961 Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents only if the Convention is in force between the United States and the country where it is to be presented.</li> <li>Complies with the proceedings of the International Forum for the electronic Apostille Programme (e-AFP).</li> </ul>	


**OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR  
STATE OF UTAH**

**APOSTILLE**  
(Convention de La Haye du 5 octobre 1961)


- Country: UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
- This public document
- has been signed by KRISTI STROUF
- acting in the capacity of NOTARY PUBLIC
- bears the SEAL/STAMP OF KRISTI STROUF, NOTARY PUBLIC, STATE OF UTAH, U.S.A.

**Certified**

- at SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, U.S.A.
- on 7TH DAY OF MARCH, 2023
- by DEIDRE M. HENDERSON, LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR, STATE OF UTAH, U.S.A.
- No: 07092
- Seal/Stamp
- Signature



**Deidre M. Henderson**  
Lieutenant Governor



Verification #: 07092

<b>Document Description:</b> POA-Jackson	Document Description - serves to attest this apostille to the accompanying underlying document. Parameters are customer specified. The apostille neither confirms, denies, or makes any reference about the underlying document.
<b>Security:</b> With Adobe Reader, certification and encryption are designated by a blue banner and black ribbon, which signifies the document has not been modified since issuance and cannot be repudiated. Do not trust the document if any other symbol is displayed.	
<b>This e-Apostille:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only certifies the authenticity of the signature and the capacity of the person who has signed the public document, and, where appropriate, the identity of the seal or stamp which the public official bears.</li> <li>Constitutes an Apostille under the Hague Convention of 5 October 1961 Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents only if the Convention is in force between the United States and the country where it is to be presented.</li> <li>Is not valid for use anywhere within the United States of America, its territories, or possessions.</li> <li>Complies with the proceedings of the International Forum for the electronic Apostille Programme (e-AFP).</li> </ul>	


**SECRETARY OF STATE  
STATE OF WASHINGTON**

**APOSTILLE**  
(Convention de La Haye du 5 octobre 1961)


- Country: UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
- This public document
- has been signed by KATHERINE HUTCHINSON
- acting in the capacity of STATE REGISTRAR OF VITAL RECORDS
- bears the seal/stamp of WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**Certified**

- at OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON
- on FEBRUARY 8, 2024
- by STEVE R. HOBBS, SECRETARY OF STATE, STATE OF WASHINGTON
- No: 022436544
- Seal/Stamp
- Signature



**Steve R. Hobbs**  
Washington Secretary of State



Verification #: 022436544      Verify Online: <https://www.sos.wa.gov/electronic/apostille-verify>

<b>Document Description:</b> Enter Description Here	Document Description - serves to attest this apostille to the accompanying underlying document. Parameters are customer specified. The apostille neither confirms, denies, or makes any reference about the underlying document.
<b>Security:</b> With Adobe Reader, certification and encryption are designated by a blue banner and black ribbon, which signifies the document has not been modified since issuance and cannot be repudiated. Do not trust the document if any other symbol is displayed.	
<b>This e-Apostille:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only certifies the authenticity of the signature and the capacity of the person who has signed the public document, and, where appropriate, the identity of the seal or stamp which the public official bears.</li> <li>Does not certify the content of the document for which it was issued.</li> <li>Is not valid for use anywhere within the United States of America, its territories, or possessions.</li> </ul> <p>To understand the Apostille Program, see: <a href="https://www.sos.wa.gov/electronic/apostille-verify">https://www.sos.wa.gov/electronic/apostille-verify</a></p> <p>This certificate does not constitute an apostille under the Convention of 5 October 1961 Abolishing the Requirement of Legalization for Foreign Public Documents for those countries that have neither ratified nor acceded to that Convention, and remains subject to additional apostille authentication requirements.</p>	


**SECRETARY OF STATE  
STATE OF MARYLAND**

**APOSTILLE**  
(Convention de La Haye du 5 octobre 1961)


- Country: UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
- This public document
- has been signed by KRISTI STROUF
- acting in the capacity of NOTARY PUBLIC
- bears the SEAL/STAMP OF KRISTI STROUF, NOTARY PUBLIC, STATE OF MARYLAND, U.S.A.

**Certified**

- at ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND
- on 7TH DAY OF MARCH, 2023
- by SUSAN C. LEE, STATE OF MARYLAND
- No: 07092
- Seal/Stamp
- Signature



**Susan C. Lee**  
Maryland Secretary of State



Verification #: 07092

<b>Document Description:</b> POA-Jackson	Document Description - serves to attest this apostille to the accompanying underlying document. Parameters are customer specified. The apostille neither confirms, denies, or makes any reference about the underlying document.
<b>Security:</b> With Adobe Reader, certification and encryption are designated by a blue banner and black ribbon, which signifies the document has not been modified since issuance and cannot be repudiated. Do not trust the document if any other symbol is displayed.	
<b>This e-Apostille:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only certifies the authenticity of the signature and the capacity of the person who has signed the public document, and, where appropriate, the identity of the seal or stamp which the public official bears.</li> <li>Constitutes an Apostille under the Hague Convention of 5 October 1961 Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents only if the Convention is in force between the United States and the country where it is to be presented.</li> <li>Is not valid for use anywhere within the United States of America, its territories, or possessions.</li> <li>Complies with the proceedings of the International Forum for the electronic Apostille Programme (e-AFP).</li> </ul>	

#### **6-D) TEXT OF THE APOSTILLE CONVENTION AND ANNEX**

Text of the Apostille Convention (*Convention Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents [Concluded 5 October 1961]*) is provided on the web site of The Hague Conference on Private International Law:

<http://www.hcch.net/upload/conventions/txt12en.pdf>

#### **6-E) 2003 SPECIAL COMMISSION CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings of the 2003 Special Commission (*The Special Commission on the Practical Operation of The Hague Apostille, Evidence and Service Conventions [28 October to 4 November 2003]*) are provided on the web site of The Hague Conference on Private International Law:

[http://www.hcch.net/upload/wop/lse\\_concl\\_e.pdf](http://www.hcch.net/upload/wop/lse_concl_e.pdf)

#### **6-F) 2009 SPECIAL COMMISSION CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings of the 2009 Special Commission (*The Special Commission on the Practical Operation of The Hague Apostille, Service, Taking of Evidence and Access to Justice Conventions [2 to 12 February 2009]*) are provided on the web site of The Hague Conference on Private International Law:

[http://www.hcch.net/upload/wop/jac\\_concl\\_e.pdf](http://www.hcch.net/upload/wop/jac_concl_e.pdf)

#### **6-G) 2012 SPECIAL COMMISSION CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings of the 2012 Special Commission (*The Special Commission on the Practical Operation of the Apostille Convention [6 to 9 November 2012]*) are provided on the web site of The Hague Conference on Private International Law:

[http://www.hcch.net/upload/wop/apostille2012concl\\_e.pdf](http://www.hcch.net/upload/wop/apostille2012concl_e.pdf)

#### **6-H) 2016 SPECIAL COMMISSION CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings of the 2016 Special Commission (The Special Commission on the Practical Operation of the Apostille convention [2 to 4 November 2016]) are provided on the HCCH website:

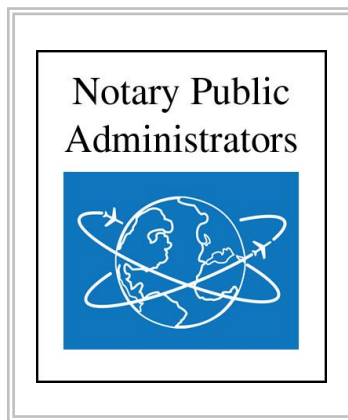
<https://assets.hcch.net/docs/274103ec-0086-46a3-adc5-c192993304f6.pdf>

#### **6-I) 2021 SPECIAL COMMISSION CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings of the 2021 Special Commission (Convened 5-8 October 2021):

[SC 2021 C&Rs \(hcch.net\)](https://www.hcch.net/sc2021-c&r)





**The Notary Public Administrators’  
Handbook on Apostilles and Authentications©**

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