



Additional guidance from the TMB on stakeholder engagement



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About this document

In recent years, to be responsive to both current and new stakeholder needs and to maintain itself as a highly relevant International Standards developer, ISO has seen its work programme expand and evolve into new subject areas. Compelling challenges for ISO regarding its standards development processes have come with this evolution, as stakeholder expectations of the ISO system are changing.

As a result, in 2008 the ISO Technical Management Board (ISO/TMB) formed its Process Evaluation Group (PEG) to investigate the responsiveness of the ISO standards development processes to these changing dynamics. The intent of the PEG's efforts was to safeguard the outcomes of the ISO system and to promote the existing value, strength and authority of International Standards and the processes by which they are produced. Indeed, the ISO/TMB agreed that the PEG, in its work, must uphold the commitment of the ISO system to participation via national standards bodies (NSBs), as well as through the consideration of the input received from liaison organizations.

The PEG was charged with two main tasks.

- Task 1 – To review the current situation and consider the possibility of alternative models of standards development operations and participation in ISO, and
- Task 2 – To examine processes for consensus decision-making and stakeholder engagement within national standards bodies (NSBs) and liaison organizations, which may impact the credibility of resulting ISO standards.

The result of the PEG's pursuit of Task 2 were two publications: 1) Guidance for liaisons: http://www.iso.org/iso/guidance_liaison-organizations.pdf and 2) Guidance for NSBs: http://www.iso.org/iso/guidance_nsb.pdf. Since the publication of the guidance for NSBs, an online companion was developed to give examples of how some NSBs have incorporated the stakeholder engagement principles into their working procedures. Its intended audience includes NSBs who may be considering drafting, amending or updating their policies on stakeholder engagement, plus those who are simply interested in seeing what others do. <http://www.iso.org/sites/PEG/index.html>

The result of the PEG's pursuit of Task 1 included a number of papers which provide further guidance on various aspects of stakeholder engagement. These papers were based on the responses to a PEG survey of NSBs and organizations in liaison and also draws from the experience gained through the development of ISO 26000 *Social responsibility*.

Below are the subjects addressed in the papers. Any questions about their contents can be directed to the TMB secretariat at tmb@iso.org.

- [Benefits of early public information on proposals for new work](#)
- [Benefits of early stakeholder engagement in ISO standards development](#)
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- [Identification of stakeholder categories to be engaged given the subject area](#)
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- [Providing proper attention to aspects of representation \(for example, stakeholders, economic status, regions, gender, etc.\)](#)

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Benefits of early public information on proposals for new work

BACKGROUND

In the ISO Technical Management Board (ISO/TMB) Process Evaluation Group (PEG) Task 1 survey responses, a number of comments were expressed regarding the value of early public information on proposals for new work and particularly the benefits that such an approach would bring to the ISO standardization system.

PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The ISO/TMB recognizes the value that early public information on proposals for new work will bring to the ISO system.
2. The engagement of stakeholders in the standardization process is an essential part of the ISO process and the earlier that stakeholders can be engaged in new work items and new fields of activity at the national level, the more effective the national consultation on the proposals for new work will be.
3. Early information on proposals for new work will allow public review of proposed standards. This will enable all stakeholders to learn about new proposals for standards and provide valuable feedback to national standards bodies.
4. Ultimately, the aim of such a system is to enable ISO and its members to publish standards that cater exactly to stakeholder needs and promote best practice where needed.
5. The engagement of stakeholders at the new work proposal stage will have a positive impact on the stakeholder engagement throughout the standard development process.
6. The ISO Central Secretariat (ISO/CS) makes available on a monthly basis a listing of and all new work item proposals, new fields of activity and existing preliminary work items to the national standards bodies (NSBs) to assist the NSBs in this task. The ISO/TMB encourages its partners in the World Standards Cooperation (WSC), International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) and International Telecommunication Union (ITU), to do the same.
7. It is recommended that all ISO members establish a system at the national level that will enable early public information on proposals for new work; this may take the form of, a publicly available website.
8. It is recommended that proposals made available to the public contain as much information as possible regarding the scope, purpose of the standard and any additional information. This should allow the user to be well informed about the proposal and able to send considered feedback to the relevant NSB.

NOTE: In this paper, proposals for new work includes NWIP (new work item proposals), TS/Ps (new fields of activity proposals) and PWI (preliminary work items).

Benefits of early stakeholder engagement in ISO standards development

BACKGROUND

In the ISO Technical Management Board (ISO/TMB) Process Evaluation Group (PEG) Task 1 survey responses, a number of comments were expressed regarding the value of early stakeholder engagement within the ISO standards development process.

As engagement is such a key issue to ISO, there are many provisions relating to stakeholder engagement including:

From the **ISO Code of Ethics**: *'ISO parties are committed to ... Communicating in a fair and transparent manner to interested parties when work on new standards is initiated and subsequently on the progress of their development...'*

From the **List of Fundamental Principles of the ISO System, 1999**: *'For the ISO work in which they choose to participate, ISO members are expected to organize national consultation mechanisms, according to their national positions that reflect a balance of their country's national interest...'*

From the **ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1**, Foreword, Item C on Discipline: **'...National bodies have the responsibility of ensuring that their technical standpoint is established taking account of all interests concerned at national level.'**

PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The ISO/TMB recognizes the value of early stakeholder engagement in the ISO standards development process.
2. An open and transparent system is a cornerstone of the ISO standards development process and it is essential therefore that engagement with stakeholders takes place as early as possible in the process. Early engagement with stakeholders creates opportunities to build relationships, understand concerns, resolve / manage issues, minimize risks and involve those with an interest in the standard being developed.
3. Early engagement with stakeholders at the national level is essential in order to ensure that nationally all stakeholder interests are involved in the decision-making at various stages within the process, regarding the consultation on new work and as such that internationally we can be confident that national decision-making on projects is engaging with all relevant stakeholders.
4. Early engagement with stakeholders at the international level is crucial to ensure that from the outset all relevant viewpoints are brought together at the earliest opportunity and stakeholders have an opportunity to be involved in the decision-making and development process.
5. Early stakeholder engagement can prevent problems occurring later in the standardization process. Problems are far more likely to occur when people are engaged later in the process when the standard is being drafted, and objections are raised at this point.
6. In principle, all relevant stakeholders should have access to and ability to participate in the standardization process.
7. Members are recommended to consult all relevant stakeholders at a very early stage in the process, particularly in advance of returning the national position on the new work item proposal.

8. The ISO Central Secretariat (ISO/CS) or the relevant ISO Technical Committee (TC) are recommended to consult all relevant liaison organizations at a very early stage in the process, preferably in advance of deciding the national position and comments on a new work item proposal.
9. National members and liaison organizations are requested to consult the ISO Guidance for ISO national standards bodies: http://www.iso.org/iso/guidance_liaison-organizations.pdf and http://www.iso.org/iso/guidance_nsb.pdf and to follow the guidance contained therein for how to engage stakeholders at a national level.

Monitoring stakeholder engagement at the working group (WG) and technical committee level by committee leadership

BACKGROUND

In the ISO Technical Management Board (ISO/TMB) Process Evaluation Group (PEG) Task 1 survey responses, a number of comments were expressed regarding both the importance of committee leadership having a clear understanding of the types of stakeholders that should be engaged in and participating in the technical committee activity and also in terms of the experts participating at the working group level. Comments expressed indicated that this understanding should extend to a stakeholder monitoring role within these areas.

Feedback received also indicated that whilst the above was considered to be very important, it was considered to be equally important that the national standards bodies (NSBs) maintained the responsibility for selecting and nominating delegates to subcommittees (SCs), project committees (PCs) and technical committees (TCs) and selecting and nominating experts to working groups (WGs). In addition, whilst it was considered valuable to have a range of stakeholders participating in the TC, the national delegation principle should be upheld.

PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Consistent with the national delegation principle that is an essential element of the ISO standardization process, NSBs (via a national committee, or equivalent) are the responsible bodies for selecting and nominating national experts to WGs and delegations to SCs and TCs.
2. The ISO/TMB recognizes that it is important that ISO's WGs and technical committee structures are constituted with experts and delegates, adequately qualified and equipped for the task, broadly representative of all those stakeholder groups with a legitimate interest in the project and conscious of its potential impact.
3. The ISO/TMB recognizes that it is also important for committee leadership to have an understanding of the stakeholders engaged internationally on any given standard development activity in order to ensure that there is appropriate representation of stakeholders participating in the standard development.
4. NSBs should not just nominate NSB staff to the relevant WG but national experts from particular stakeholder categories.
5. The stakeholder category to which experts belong must be entered when stakeholders are registered in the ISO Global Directory ([ISO stakeholder engagement](#)).
6. WG leadership should be aware of the stakeholders identified by the proposer on the new work item proposal and in advance of the first meeting establish which stakeholder categories the nominated experts represent.
7. Where the WG leadership identify stakeholder gaps between the original stakeholders identified on the proposal and those nominated to the WG, the leadership should report this information to parent TC (or SC) and notify the relevant ISO/CS Technical Programme Manager, with details of the stakeholder imbalance. The committee leadership of the TC (or SC) working with the ISO/CS Technical Programme Manager contacts the NSB and liaison organizations in order to request the nomination of a particular stakeholder category to the relevant area.

8. It is imperative that the committee leadership and the ISO Central Secretariat (ISO/CS) contact the relevant NSB and liaison organization if a potential gap is identified and do not approach any individual from a particular stakeholder category in isolation – this shall always take place via the NSB or liaison organization.
9. Quotas shall not be used, because it's not possible to make general rules for stakeholder balance, due to diversity of technical sectors.
10. It is recommended that for SC, PC and TC meetings that NSBs nominate a delegation comprising of a range of stakeholder categories.
11. It is recommended that when nominating a delegation to a meeting of an SC, PC or TC, details of the stakeholder categories of those delegates are included and these are monitored by the leadership of those technical structures.
12. While it may be useful to monitor stakeholder engagement on TC/SC delegations, it is important to note that these are national delegations which are mandated to represent a national position at TC/SC meetings, not individual stakeholder positions.

Identification of stakeholder categories to be engaged given the subject area

BACKGROUND

In the ISO Technical Management Board (ISO/TMB) Process Evaluation Group (PEG) Task 1 survey responses, a number of comments were expressed regarding the value of identifying the stakeholders that should be engaged in the standards development activities early on in the process. Such an approach would enable national standards bodies (NSBs) to have a clear understanding, particularly on new fields of activity of the type of stakeholders that should be engaged at a national level and therefore it would have significant benefits to the ISO standardization system as a whole.

PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In order to identify the range of stakeholders that should be engaged in the standardization activity those stakeholder categories that will have an interest in the subject area being standardized.
2. The range, type and number of stakeholder categories that should be engaged will be dependent on the subject area being standardized, but the technical committees should as a minimum review those stakeholders defined by the ISO/TMB (see: [ISO stakeholder categorization](#)) to determine whether those stakeholders will have an interest in the subject area being standardized.
3. It is recommended that in the initial identification of stakeholders, technical committees do not limit the stakeholder categories but attempt to identify all stakeholders that will have an interest (however seemingly marginal) in the activities of the technical committee.
4. It is recommended that the stakeholder identification is regularly reviewed to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are identified. It is good practice for a technical committee to have regular workshops / brainstorming of the stakeholders in the technical committees to ensure that all possible stakeholders have been identified and engaged in the process.

Direction from ISO and guidance for NSBs on appropriate stakeholder categories to be engaged and nominated to participate given the subject area

BACKGROUND

In the ISO Technical Management Board (ISO/TMB) Process Evaluation Group (PEG) Task 1 survey responses, there were a number of positive comments with regard to the value of having direction from ISO on appropriate stakeholder categories to be engaged and nominated to participate in the standard development process. Some national standards bodies (NSBs) felt that whilst stakeholder engagement is key in any standards development activity, that such a direction (and pressure from the technical structure itself) encouraged the NSB to develop a strong engagement strategy and constantly seek to find such stakeholders and that such a direction in fact assisted the NSBs in this engagement exercise.

PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ISO/TMB recognizes that NSBs and liaison organizations have various effective mechanisms in place to engage stakeholders in the standards development process.
2. ISO/TMB recognizes that in some cases, particularly where there is significant public interest (e.g. new fields of activity in areas traditionally not developed by ISO) in the standard under development, that it may be valuable to give direction and guidance to NSBs on the stakeholders that should be both engaged in and nominated to the working group developing the Standard.
3. In determining if a subject area requires enhanced stakeholder engagement, that based on the proposers original identified stakeholders and the feedback from members on those stakeholders identified, ISO/TMB may determine which stakeholder categories need to be engaged in the standards development activities and provide direction to ISO members.
4. ISO/TMB will encourage the NSBs to follow any direction it provides and to constitute the national committee (or equivalent) with those stakeholders and to nominate those stakeholders to participate in the standards development process.
5. It is proposed that guidance for NSBs on appropriate stakeholder categories to be engaged and nominated to participate use the definitions established by ISO/TMB (see: [ISO stakeholder categorization](#)).
6. It is proposed that NSBs do not just nominate NSB staff to the relevant WG but competent national experts from particular stakeholder categories.
7. ISO/TMB also recognizes that there may be numerous reasons why not all of the stakeholders identified would necessarily be engaged at the national level. What is important is that those stakeholders have been given the opportunity to participate even if they choose not to do so.
8. ISO/TMB encourages NSBs to keep records of their engagement initiatives and pursuit of the identified stakeholders provided by ISO/TMB.

Providing proper attention to aspects of representation (for example, stakeholders, economic status, regions, gender, etc.)

BACKGROUND

In the ISO Technical Management Board (ISO/TMB) Process Evaluation Group (PEG) Task 1 survey responses, a number of comments expressed the need for attention and commitment by the ISO committee to issues of representation and balance among ISO national standards bodies (NSBs) and liaisons, stakeholder categories, national economic status, geographic diversity, gender and other considerations. It is argued that, especially in subjects requiring broader public interest engagement, including subjects of wider societal interest, proper representation and balance will lead to a more credible ISO standards development process and enhanced credibility in the resulting ISO standards. These concerns on representation and balance relate not only to the delegates and experts involved, but also to the selection of ISO committee leaders.

PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ISO committees addressing subjects requiring broader public interest engagement, including subjects of wider societal interest, shall determine the appropriate diversity necessary in their participation and leadership that will lead to credible standards development efforts and resulting deliverables. These elements of diversity should be identified as early as possible in the ISO committee or at the outset of a new project.
2. It should not be assumed that the same diversity aspects will apply to any or all ISO committees addressing subjects requiring broader public interest engagement, including subjects of wider societal interest. For example, issues such as national economic status, geographic diversity or gender may be highly relevant in some ISO committees and subject areas more so than in others. Furthermore, some stakeholder categories may be more relevant in some ISO committees and subject areas than in others.
3. While appropriate representation of all stakeholders is a desirable goal and should be encouraged in these ISO activities, it is very difficult to achieve. Despite all good faith efforts to achieve balance, not all parties can be compelled to become involved. What is important is that the ISO committee, and its leaders and members are committed to working to achieve the best possible representation.
4. Lack of perfect balance should not be considered a barrier to proceeding with standards development nor should it lead to criticism of the ISO standards development process or the resulting deliverables. What is important is that all stakeholder interest are appropriately taken into account in determining consensus.

Guidance on use of existing structural and sub-structural approaches (e.g. a Project Committee (PC) operating in PC and Working Group (WG) modes)

BACKGROUND

In the development of ISO 26000, there was some perception that the ISO Working Group on Social Responsibility (WGSR) was a unique and different structural approach than those that normally develop ISO standards. In fact, the ISO Technical Management Board (ISO/TMB) purposefully formed this structure as an ISO working group (WG) for the following reasons:

1. To allow the effort to develop ISO 26000 to be conducted to the degree possible consistent with the ISO/IEC Directives and traditional ISO structures; and
2. To allow subject matter experts to participate freely as individual technical experts in the WG in the drafting of ISO 26000 consistent with Clause 1.12.1 of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1 where it states:

The experts act in a personal capacity and not as the official representative of the P-member or A-liaison organization by which they have been appointed with the exception of those appointed by D-liaison organizations.

The ISO/TMB recognized at the time that establishing this activity as a WG rather than as a technical committee (TC) was responsive to concerns expressed that this more open engagement of the subject matter experts was necessary for effective stakeholder engagement and credibility in the SR subject area. At the time of the formation of the WGSR, the ISO/TMB had not yet established the option of Project Committees (PCs).

In its review of the ISO/TMB Process Evaluation Group (PEG) Task 1 survey responses, the PEG recognized the need to provide some guidance on the applicability and responsiveness of existing and traditional ISO committee structures to address subjects requiring broader public interest engagement, including subjects of wide societal interest.

PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The ISO/TMB recognizes and supports the "double-level" consensus mechanism in ISO standards development: first among subject matter experts at the WG standards drafting level and then among ISO national standards bodies (NSBs) at the committee draft (CD), draft international standard (DIS) and final draft international standard (FDIS) voting levels.
2. Existing ISO committee structures are applicable and responsive to the need for effective stakeholder engagement for experts to be directly engaged in the drafting of ISO standards as follows:
 - ISO TCs and Subcommittees (SCs) establish WGs and/or Project teams for the purpose of drafting ISO standards within the scope of the TC or SC with participation modeled as described above in Clause 1.12.1 of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1.
 - ISO PCs are expected to conduct the drafting of their standards in accordance with Clauses 1.12.1 and 2.4 of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1 which provides the same procedures used by TCs and SCs for the preparation and drafting of their standards. Therefore, like TCs and SCs, ISO Project Committees may also establish WGs and/or Project Teams for the drafting of standards.

Therefore, these structures support an effective combination of stakeholder engagement of experts acting in a personal expert capacity for drafting standards in WGs, with NSB-based plenaries of the TC, SC or PC for formal decision-making.

3. The ISO standards development system extends to the engagement of all relevant stakeholders by ISO NSBs at the national level and by external liaisons at the organizational level, in support of their positions, who, through ISO processes can comment and participate in ISO standards development.

Increased national consultation networks beyond National Mirror Committees (NMC) prior to or throughout the development process

BACKGROUND

The WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to trade has established principles for the development of international standards that should be observed by national standards bodies (NSBs) when developing international standards. One of these principles relates to the openness and transparency of the system and in particular that at the draft international stage, all stakeholders at a national level should have access to and ability to comment on the draft standards.

In addition to recognizing the above, in the Process Evaluation Group (PEG) Task 1 survey responses, it was identified that a number of NSBs established networks beyond their national mirror committee (NMC) for input into the standardization development activity prior to the draft international stage. It was also highlighted that it may be valuable in future in some subject areas for networking to take place with stakeholder forums at the national level via the NSB.

The value of strengthening the NMCs and national delegations in the international context is of significant importance to the ISO Standards development activities. The NMC, the international input and the resulting standard development should be strengthened if all stakeholders, including traditionally 'underrepresented stakeholders' take an active part in the NMC. Such national stakeholders will be benefited in the international environment by exchanging views with international colleagues.

PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recognizing the importance of the national delegation principle, it is recommended that at a national level, stakeholders that cannot participate in the NMC are still engaged in the process via the relevant stakeholder groups represented on the NMC. This will ensure that the NMC has an extended stakeholder engagement process and as many stakeholders as possible can be engaged in the process of the standard development.
2. It is recommended that NSBs utilize national networks for consultation and discussion during the standard development activities and support these where possible at the national level in order to strengthen the input at the NMC level.
3. It is recommended that in certain subject areas requiring enhanced stakeholder engagement, that an informal network of NSB-NSB stakeholder category forums be established in order to have dialogue with other NSBs on key areas of importance and in advance of meetings.

Use of international stakeholder groups (including election processes within them)

BACKGROUND

Throughout the development of ISO 26000, informal meetings would occur among experts in each stakeholder category at the international meetings of the ISO Working Group on Social Responsibility (WGSR). These international stakeholder group meetings were not considered formal sub-structures within the operations of the ISO WGSR, and they took place, usually in the early morning or evening on the margins of the formal sessions of the ISO WGSR. Purposes of these meetings included:

- Networking among experts within each stakeholder category;
- Discussion and sharing of viewpoints on issues within the development of ISO 26000;
- Determination of stakeholder category consensus on issues within the development of ISO 26000; and
- Selection of stakeholder category representatives by the experts from that category to participate and represent the stakeholder category in formal ISO WGSR structures such as the Chairman's advisory group (CAG) and the integrated drafting task force (IDTF).

On many occasions within the formal ISO WGSR structures and working sessions, the WGSR leaders would call upon representatives of each international stakeholder group to comment on the perspective of these groups on issues within the development of ISO 26000.

In the ISO Technical Management Board (ISO/TMB) Process Evaluation Group (PEG) Task 1 survey responses, a number of ISO WGSR experts commented on the benefits of these international stakeholder groups and the possible applicability of support this approach in other ISO activities for subjects requiring broader public interest engagement, including subjects of wider societal interest.

PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The ISO/TMB recognizes some benefits to experts from stakeholder categories organizing meetings within their categories in conjunction with ISO committee meetings as described above.
2. If international stakeholder groups decide to organize and meet in conjunction with a specific ISO activity, the organization of these meetings should remain informal and external to the formal ISO structures. Organizational and operational details of these groups should be determined by the groups themselves and not by their related ISO committee. These groups should be open to all officially named delegates and experts to the ISO committee from national standards bodies (NSBs) or liaison organizations.
3. Given their informal and external nature, ISO committee leaders and hosts of ISO meetings should not be expected or required to organize these meetings or provide time and meeting space and support services for them. However, ISO committee leaders and hosts may voluntarily choose to do so.
4. If an ISO committee decides to compose a subgroup seeking balance to the degree possible among the stakeholder categories, the ISO committee may choose to rely on these informal international stakeholder groups to select their category representatives. The selection/election process for the leaders or representatives of the informal international stakeholder groups will be determined within and by consensus among the members of the groups.
5. ISO committee leaders may seek to have representatives of the informal international stakeholder groups express category consensus viewpoints in the formal ISO standards development sessions. However, this should not prevent or limit the ability or effectiveness of individual experts to have fair and appropriate consideration of their input as provided by the ISO Directives. Furthermore, individual

experts are not obligated to advocate for any positions developed within the informal international stakeholder groups.

6. ISO committees and their leaders should take care and make efforts to ensure that the existence and discussions of these informal stakeholder groups do not result in polarized stakeholder category positions that impede the achievement of consensus within the ISO committee across all experts and stakeholder categories.