



Sustainable Events Guide

Developing a sustainability management system for events
A stepping-stone to BS ISO 20121

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About BSI

BSI is the UK's National Standards Body (NSB) and the world's first NSB. We represent UK economic, environmental and social interests across all European and international standards' organizations, and in the development of business information solutions for British organizations of all sizes and sectors.

Welcome

Thank you for choosing this guide. We hope that it will inform, inspire and equip you with the knowledge to begin creating a truly sustainable management system for your events.

The good news is that you're already in great company. The concept of event sustainability management is increasingly widespread. In recent years, organizers and event suppliers have become more aware of the environmental, social and economic impacts of their activities. They're also recognizing the strong business case for managing events sustainably: from cost savings and generating additional revenues, to greater sponsorship opportunities.

Who this guide is for

Most organizations put on an event at some point during the year. From business meetings, festivals, concerts and sporting events to corporate hospitality, conferences, exhibitions, workshops, promotional launches, open days and village fêtes – all types of event have the potential to be managed more sustainably. Whether you're an events' organizer, a small community start-up, a corporate organization, or a venue owner, or supply products or services to the events' sector, this guide is for you.

About this guide

This guide is designed to be an introduction to event sustainability management. It is a 'stepping stone' towards the full, global event sustainability management system standard BS ISO 20121.

BS ISO 20121

Originally conceived in the run-up to the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, BS ISO 20121 sets out a comprehensive framework for tackling priority sustainability risks and opportunities – be it reducing costs, limiting carbon emissions and waste, managing the biodiversity of venues, respecting human rights, or achieving a diverse and inclusive workforce.

Since its launch in June 2012, BS ISO 20121 has rapidly become the global standard of choice for the event industry. Early adopters have included other Olympic and Paralympic organizing committees (e.g. Rio 2016) and major sporting events (e.g. Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games) and individual venues (e.g. Weymouth & Portland National Sailing Academy and the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff). In fact, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) now requires all host city organizing committees to be certified to ISO 20121 at least three years before their Games.

Beyond sport the standard is being used by a number of exhibition and conference venues such as Olympia in London and AECC in Aberdeen, and large music festivals such as the Sydney Festival in Australia as well as by several major events' organizers (e.g. UBM). Other examples include the World Economic Forum, COP21 Conference/ Paris 2015 and Milan 2015 World Expo. Even organizations outside of the event industry have used it – Coca-Cola and Deutsche Bank are two examples.

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- Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre (AECC)
- London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG)
- UBM EMEA

whose generous contribution of case study material has enabled illustration of the benefits of ISO 20121 in use.

How to use this guide

As every organization is different, there is no single correct way to use this introductory guide. We have divided the guide into four sections – each of which contains a number of key steps. These do not necessarily follow the same order as the standard, nor does this guide cover all of its requirements.

If you're starting your management system from scratch, it may be helpful to follow the steps in this guide. If you're looking to improve or extend an existing management system, we recommend that you review each section for any gaps – and tailor the advice to your needs.

Note: Following the advice in this guide does not (and should not) cut across any other performance-based standards and schemes you have adopted (e.g. [Creative Industry Green](#)). In fact, if correctly implemented it should support and complement their delivery.

What next?

This introductory guide is not an official standard. However, we hope that it will help you begin to embed a sustainability management system successfully within your organization. If you follow the steps here, you should also find it much easier to meet the full requirements of BS ISO 20121.

What is a management system?

All businesses have some form of 'management system' – even if they don't use that term to describe it. They have policies and processes (even if they are not formalized or written down) which – among other things – will define rules around how to run the business, how to procure goods and services, how to hire people, how to communicate, and so on. A management system is essentially the sum of all these parts.

Businesses are increasingly moving away from managing issues on an ad hoc basis. By following a management system approach, they have a smarter way of managing and continuously improving their overall sustainability performance.

What makes an event sustainable?

There are many different definitions of 'sustainability'. However, a more sustainable approach to event management will typically:

- provide an accessible and inclusive setting for all;
- have minimal negative impacts on the environment;
- provide a safe and secure atmosphere;
- encourage healthy living;
- promote responsible sourcing;
- deliver excellent customer experience;
- encourage more sustainable behaviour; and
- leave a positive legacy.

For more information on BS ISO 20121, see:
www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/iso-20121-sustainable-events-management/

Getting started

It's tempting to get stuck in to the details straightaway, but let's leave these for a minute. If you can implement the following five steps well, you'll have a solid foundation for making your event's sustainability management system (which we'll shorten to 'SMS') as effective as possible.

Top management

The top management of an organization is the person or group of people directing and controlling the organization at the highest level e.g. Chief Executive Officer; Managing Director. That person or group has the power to delegate authority and provide resources within the organization. If the management system only covers part of an organization then top management refers to those who direct and control that part of the organization.

Lead by example

Is top management demonstrating leadership and commitment?

If you want to integrate sustainability successfully into your organization (and even if you already have some sustainability initiatives in place), it is essential to have solid and genuine commitment from the top. This means securing the required commitment from your top management.

What do we mean by solid and genuine commitment? Top management need to go beyond simply delegating roles and responsibilities – they need to lead by example.

How to do it

Your top management should demonstrate why sustainability and the SMS is important through:

- actions (e.g. making decisions and resolving issues);
- communications and how they engage with stakeholders;
- promoting what the organization is doing; and
- looking for further opportunities for improvement.

Leading by example – Land Rover BAR

Land Rover BAR, the team set up by Sir Ben Ainslie to challenge for the 35th America's Cup in 2017.

When Sir Ben decided to start his own team he set the bar very high by taking on two huge challenges – firstly to bring the Cup home to the UK and secondly to do so in a way that establishes a new blueprint for sustainable sports teams. He wanted to win the America's Cup, build a sustainable long-term business and do it whilst respecting all the principles of sustainable development. Together with the support of the team's Exclusive Sustainability Partner, 11th Hour Racing Inc., the team aims to push sustainability boundaries both on and off the water and by doing so hopes to inspire the next generation and other sporting teams.

Land Rover BAR decided that BS ISO 20121 was the most effective way to embed sustainability across all its operations. Demonstrating leadership and commitment, from the outset Team Principal, Sir Ben and Team CEO, Martin Whitmarsh have been actively involved in the development and implementation of the sustainability management system.

Sir Ben not only leads the team's sustainability message internally, but is also part of wider calls to action. Externally, he actively promotes what Land Rover BAR are doing and champions sustainable sport. He recently joined forces with BT to launch 100% Sport – a global initiative to inspire sports fans to switch to renewable energy. Sir Ben is also a patron of the 1851 Trust – the official charity of Land Rover BAR – which aims to inspire and engage a new generation to become innovators of the future and stewards of the marine environment.

Land Rover BAR achieved third party certification to the standard across all its activities in January 2015.

More Info: <http://www.landroverbar.com/en/sustainability.html>



Source: Harry Kenny-Herbert

Land Rover BAR's training boat T3 in action



Source: Harry Kenny-Herbert

Collage of Land Rover BAR's sustainability activities (Harry Kenny-Herbert)

Assign roles and responsibilities

Have you assigned and communicated roles and responsibilities relevant to the SMS?

To develop and implement your SMS, you'll need to include a number of individuals and organizations. As with any project, that needs careful coordination. Just as an orchestra would struggle without its conductor, you'll face problems if no individual or team has been assigned responsibility for the SMS.

How to do it

Top management should ideally nominate someone from the senior leadership team to take overall responsibility for the SMS.

In turn, they should then give an individual (or team) the necessary day to day authority to develop and implement the SMS. In large organizations, this could be a full time dedicated role or team. In smaller organizations – or if only a few events are being organized – this could be part of someone's role.

Understand your organizational context

Can you identify the internal and external issues relevant to your organization's purpose, which may affect the success of your SMS?

Your SMS doesn't stand alone – it needs to fit into your organization. If it doesn't, it could actively stop you achieving your sustainability objectives. If you want to create a successful SMS, you therefore first need to understand your organizational context.

How to do it

First, take a step back and look at the business holistically to identify issues that could:

- affect your ability to achieve the SMS's objectives; or
- arise due to the SMS – and affect your organization's ability to meet its wider business objectives.

It may be useful to liaise with internal and external stakeholders to help identify all the relevant issues. You will need to take all this into account when developing the SMS.

Note: The BS ISO 20121 standard includes additional requirements that relate to the organization's purpose, values and sustainability performance.

Set your scope

Have you set the boundaries of the SMS?

'Setting your scope' really just means deciding what you'll include (and exclude) from your SMS. The key factors to consider here are your organizational context and your stakeholders' views or needs (see previous step).

How to do it

Your organizational structure should help you set your scope:

- smaller organizations often find it easier to apply the SMS to every event and all functions/activities from the start;
- larger or more complex organizations may need to be more gradual. If you have different venues or only want to apply the SMS to a flagship event (or series of events), you could limit your scope at first – and expand it across the rest of your organization over time; and
- suppliers to the event industry may prefer to apply the SMS to a particular part of their business – particularly if they serve other industries as well.

Remember that even the simplest event involves a number of different activities/ functions. Generally everything that is in your control and influence should be 'in scope' – but this can of course be prioritized later on (e.g. once you know what your issues are).

You may also choose to exclude certain areas if you consider them to be managed sufficiently already – particularly if they are heavily regulated, such as workplace health and safety.

Draft policy

Has top management endorsed a sustainability policy?

A sustainability policy is a written 'statement of intent' – it provides the foundation for your SMS.

How to do it

When you're starting out, you may only be able to produce a draft policy – and that's fine. You should communicate it internally and externally, and can continue to refine it as you progress.

The policy should articulate your commitments around sustainability. It should also state that you will comply with the law and any other requirements and give an overview of your key sustainability issues and the key actions you plan to take. If you already have an existing sustainability policy, this may (or may not) be sufficient – you'll need to check.

Once finalized your policy will need to be endorsed by your top management, made easily accessible, and communicated extensively internally and externally.

Note: The BS ISO 20121 standard includes additional sustainability policy requirements.

What's important

Now we can move on to the more detailed planning phase. This is where the direction of your SMS starts to take shape as you decide how to improve your sustainability performance.

Determine your obligations

Identifying and implementing legal and other obligations

All organizations have a duty to comply with the law. This is the first step towards improving your sustainability performance. Many sustainability issues will have minimum legal requirements – which you can look to exceed.

How to do it

The way you plan and deliver your event(s) will likely be affected by a number of legal requirements (e.g. environmental protection, planning, health and safety, diversity, accessibility, employment law, human rights, etc.) You may have other obligations too, such as corporate policies and standards, NGO agreements, or industry/other best practice codes. You should identify these obligations and check how you'll comply with them.

You will need to draw upon a number of sources of legal guidance and ensure you are aware of any new or emerging developments. It is advisable to pull together all your obligations into one place, ideally a concise register of sorts. An example of this is the one prepared by the London 2012 Organising Committee (see Further Resources section).

Note: Where the law (or its implementation) does not provide for adequate economic, environmental or social safeguards, you should always strive to achieve 'international norms of behaviour' where there are no legal conflicts.

Engage and prioritize stakeholders

Deciding on key stakeholders and their requirements

Once you've covered legal compliance, you can set the right foundations for improved sustainability – and that's where stakeholder engagement really matters. Stakeholders both inside and outside your organization can bring valuable insight, expertise and experience; help identify issues you may have missed; and act as advocates for your SMS. The better engaged you are, the more robust and justifiable your SMS is likely to be.

How to do it

From employees and customers to NGOs, sponsors and suppliers – you'll already be engaging many different stakeholders on a daily basis. However, you may not have asked for their input on sustainability. Many of them will want to share their views – as they'll either be affected by (or can have an effect on) your SMS.

There are a number of helpful resources on stakeholder engagement (see Further Resources section). But the three key steps can be summed up as follows:

1. Map your stakeholders according to groups (e.g. NGO, government, supplier, employee, sponsor, customer, etc.).
2. Determine the level of interest and influence they have in your organization.
3. Tailor your engagement approach according to importance – prioritize those with a high level of interest and influence.

It's advisable to check regularly that relevant groups and organizations are represented as your key stakeholders may change over time.

Note: The BS ISO 20121 standard includes additional stakeholder requirements.

Identify and prioritize issues

Listing sustainability issues (risks and opportunities) and evaluating their significance

Sustainability issues can present both risks (e.g. rising cost of energy) and opportunities (e.g. improved operational efficiency). You will need to identify and focus on the most important issues.

How to do it

You need to come up with a shortlist of what's relevant to you and your stakeholders. There is no right or wrong way to do this – as long as it works for your organization. You'll almost certainly evolve and improve this over time.

Here is an example framework to help you get started:

- **cast the net wide** – identify your longlist of potential direct (e.g. organizational) and indirect (e.g. supply chain) issues. Remember to consider anything that you identified previously in the 'Getting Started' phase;
- **categorize the issues** – how can you divide your longlist into categories? Aim to be specific (e.g. 'organizational greenhouse gas emissions' rather than 'climate change') and avoid any duplication;
- **initial prioritization** – rank the issues according to likelihood, scale of impact, legal obligations and whether you have control or influence;
- **consult your organization** – engage with key colleagues and teams to seek their views on your initial prioritization – and then revise your list as appropriate; and
- **consult key external stakeholders** – by this stage you should have a shortlist, which shows what's most important to your organization. It's a good idea to sense check these with external stakeholders (e.g. you may not agree with what your external stakeholders feel is important, or there may be some things that you can't tackle at this stage).

Your final shortlist of priority issues shows you where to focus your attention and what your SMS needs to address. Don't expect to get the list right straightaway. You'll be able to refine and improve it over time. There are many resources to help you create your shortlist (see Further Resources section).

Establish your goals

Setting sustainability objectives and supporting targets

Goals give an overall direction to your SMS. They're a great way to focus attention and create a shared ambition for everyone to buy into and work towards. They help people understand what sustainability means and – more importantly – how it applies to the organization and their role. You can set them at an organizational, functional or event level – or assign them to individuals.

How to do it

By now, you'll have your (perhaps still draft) policy. You've identified your obligations and your priority issues. Now you need to get more specific about what you want to achieve and how you're going to do it.

There is no set way to set objectives and targets. Using your priority issues as a springboard, think about:

- **the issue** – what is the risk or the opportunity;
- **the aim** – what do you ultimately want to achieve;
- **the objective** – how specifically will you meet this aim; and
- **supporting targets** – what outcome(s) do you need to achieve to meet a particular objective?

When you set your objectives and targets, ensure that they align with your policy, the resources you will need to deliver them and how you will measure success. You may be unable to set a target due to insufficient information. It's perfectly fine to measure something (e.g. waste) one year with a view to setting a target the following year, for example.

Develop action plans

Putting in place action plans to address priority issues

If you do not take steps to embed the SMS into an organization properly, any actions taken will not reach their maximum effectiveness.

How to do it

You already know what you'll focus on to improve your sustainability performance. Now you'll need to compile this into clear action plans. These should identify how you intend to deliver what needs to be done (e.g. actions for priority issues, objectives and targets, etc.), timeframes, resource needs, roles and responsibilities, etc.

You'll also need to consider how to embed these actions into key organizational processes (or 'ways of working') – however formal or informal. Tips include:

- **keep it clear** – you need to be able to communicate your plans simply to a wide audience;
- **regular reviews** – regularly check and update your actions and plans to ensure you're as effective as possible;
- **slot everything together** – some teams may contribute to the same objectives and targets but in different ways – other teams may not have much involvement at all; and
- **don't reinvent the wheel** – how will your plans fit with processes already in place? It's always better to adapt existing ways of working to achieve your objectives.

Note: The BS ISO 20121 standard includes additional requirements of relevance to event sustainability objectives and plans.

Planning for sustainability – Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre (AECC)

AECC began their journey to become more sustainable in early 2013 by committing to work towards the new BS ISO 20121 standard.

Up until this point much of their focus had been on the environmental aspect of sustainability. For example, the venue had previously achieved Green Tourism Business Scheme Gold status. They realized though that 'sustainability' was not a substitute word for 'green', but rather an all-encompassing approach to identifying and responding to the key social, economic and environmental issues faced by their business – now and in the future.

With this in mind and as the standard was so new, AECC decided to bring in an external consultant to help guide their way through the initial process of developing a management system. Top management were involved in the early stage planning and an internal team was formed comprising representatives from all departments (Operations, Sales & Marketing, Events, Catering, Accounts, etc.) with the goal of achieving third party certification.

The consultant facilitated a series of workshops with the internal team guiding their way through the planning stage; from formalizing a list of stakeholders and how they are engaged, identifying and prioritizing key issues which then formed the basis for the organization's objectives and targets.

Once a plan was in place and the company's scope and sustainability policy finalized, the competency of the team was assessed to ensure objectives set were truly feasible and the necessary resources were in place to achieve them.

The venue achieved third party certification to the standard in May 2015 and was the first to do so in Scotland. AECC believe that the process of implementing the standard is helping to future proof their business and engender a new way of thinking.

More Info: <https://www.aecc.co.uk/about-us/aecc-overview/csr/>



The Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre – the first major venue in Scotland to be ISO 20121 certified AECC event recycling initiatives in action

Take action

This is where your SMS starts to come into its own as you implement your planned actions and improve your sustainability performance.

Manage suppliers

Engaging individual suppliers that can help deliver objectives, targets and plans

Most organizations will have a significant impact through their procurement decisions and the actions of goods and services suppliers. You'll therefore need to determine how your supply chain can support the implementation of your SMS. For example, could they implement BS ISO 20121 in their own right?

How to do it

Think carefully about what you want – what is a 'must have' versus a 'nice to have'. It may help to create a matrix, listing your various procurement categories and what's expected or proposed for each, e.g. all timber supplied for the event must be sourced sustainably.

If possible, talk to prospective suppliers in detail – especially if you haven't yet appointed them formally. Be sure to communicate your needs and expectations clearly so they can respond appropriately.

Ideally, you should incorporate your sustainability requirements into whatever process you have for sourcing or procuring goods and services (however formal or informal that is). But regardless of your approach, you should have clear criteria for evaluating prospective suppliers on their ability to meet or contribute towards your needs.

If you're in a pre-existing contractual relationship there may be limits on what you can do – don't be afraid to see what can be achieved through positive engagement though. If there is push back you may need to check for break clauses or simply see when it's up for renewal and prioritize accordingly.

Sustainably sourced – London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG)

The delivery of LOCOG's sustainability goals was heavily dependent on its supply chain. As a result, procurement was the single biggest sustainability intervention that it made. This was delivered through a Procurement Governance Model (PGM) which was administered by the Procurement team, working collaboratively with other key team leads including the Sustainability team.

A supporting Sustainable Sourcing Code was produced which set out LOCOG's requirements in detail and applied to all commercial suppliers, sponsors and merchandise licensees. It was not intended to be prescriptive – it instead set out a framework to enable LOCOG to make informed choices by applying a set of core principles throughout. These were:

- Responsible sourcing
- Minimizing embodied impacts
- Use of secondary materials
- Healthy materials

Put simply, its approach to sourcing more sustainable products was based on asking the following questions:

1. Where does it come from?
2. Who made it?
3. What is it made of?
4. What is it wrapped in?
5. What would happen to it after the Games?

On occasions when it sourced services involving labour, it used the Ethical Trading Initiative Base Code as the required standard that suppliers were to work towards.

The Sustainable Sourcing Code included an indicative list of spend categories and how each section was likely to apply. It contained a number of core obligations too (e.g. it set out expectations around ways of working). LOCOG also reserved the right to audit and know the location of factories used to produce products for the Games.

The popular view is that achieving sustainability adds cost, although in practice LOCOG saw little evidence of this. LOCOG was able to successfully integrate sustainability into its procurement process and deliver the Games within its budget. It was quite common for the most commercially advantageous deals to also be favourable on sustainability grounds.

LOCOG also found that SMEs were often better equipped to meet sustainability requirements than many larger suppliers.

More Info: <http://learninglegacy.independent.gov.uk/documents/pdfs/sustainability/cs-games-sustainable-procurement.pdf>



An unprecedented choice of more sustainable quality food was sourced and served at the Games



Compostable coffee cups procured for the Games showing orange compostable packaging waste stream logo

Take control

Putting processes in place to implement and control actions that address priority sustainability issues

How will you meet your policy commitments, comply with legal and other obligations, manage priority sustainability issues and achieve your objectives and targets? This is where you need to put appropriate measures or interventions in place – either internally or through your suppliers.

How to do it

First, you need to ensure that everyone responsible for supporting the delivery of your SMS has the necessary controls or tools to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. Your goal is to identify the things you really need to control and manage.

To do this, map out your key business processes and controls – identifying how they relate to each other and are relevant to your SMS. Your processes include: overarching management arrangements that control how your business is run and how decisions are made; operational processes (e.g. procurement, event production, security); and support processes (e.g. HR, IT, finance). Examples of controls include policies, documented procedures or standards, plans, supplier contracts, use of trained staff or suppliers, etc.

Ask yourself the following questions – both for a ‘business as usual’ and an ‘extreme’ scenario, where something might go wrong:

- Is there a sustainability angle to the process/control and is it important to the delivery of your SMS goals?
- Is an existing process/control suitable from a sustainability perspective – can something happen without any consideration for sustainability? Is it aligned with your objectives and targets? Does it need to be modified?
- Do you need a new process/control or do you need to do something else to achieve your desired outcome?

Events are often high pressure situations – so even if you think suitable measures are in place, it’s a good idea to expect the unexpected.

Note: The BS ISO 20121 standard includes additional operational planning and control requirements.

Build your capacity

Identifying and providing adequate resources for the SMS

The success of your SMS will hinge on whether you have allocated sufficient resources to it (e.g. staff, training, infrastructure, technology and finance) – and the competence, engagement and motivation of your staff and suppliers.

How to do it

It's one thing to assign specific SMS-related roles and responsibilities to key individuals, teams and suppliers – but do they have everything they need to fulfil these roles? Referring back to your SMS priority issues, objectives, targets and plans, you'll need to identify the types and levels of resources required.

It's vital that all relevant staff, including suppliers, are appropriately trained to fulfil their SMS duties. You'll need to continually review their learning and development needs and update training programmes as appropriate. You could also explore integrating sustainability into performance management systems and bonus criteria for key employees.

Note: The BS ISO 20121 standard includes additional resources, competence and awareness requirements.

Communicate your efforts

Developing internal and external communications about the SMS

There are many reasons to raise awareness of your SMS and promote its achievements both internally and externally. It will help you create a positive culture, and engage and motivate people across the business. As well as maintaining good dialogue with all stakeholders and building strong partnerships, this will help you generate positive media coverage, and receive and respond to enquiries and feedback.

How to do it

Start by reviewing how you currently engage and communicate with the stakeholders you've already identified. Your ideal approach should support dialogue on sustainability and complement your wider stakeholder engagement efforts. Take care that this doesn't affect any other team's communications work.

There are a number of communication's mechanisms – ranging from use of websites, social media, newsletters and reports through to internal presentations, focus groups, public meetings, surveys or one-to-one meetings. Whichever you choose, your approach should always take stakeholder interests into account. Sustainability can be a complex subject to communicate – and you may need to simplify messages, avoid jargon and use language that people can relate to and understand easily.

Note: The BS ISO 20121 standard includes additional communications requirements.

Document sensibly

Keeping, updating and controlling appropriate documentation

When you develop and implement an SMS, a certain amount of documentation is necessary – but you don't need to record everything. The key is getting the balance right between appropriate documentation and other demonstrable actions.

How to do it

A management system should not be a bureaucratic, paper-generating machine! (And there's no point generating information no one will read.) Consider instead what's required to prove – if needed – that you have carried out your SMS as planned and document this information.

Clear, accurate and precise documentation is also valuable when:

- something needs to be carried out in a common way; or
- you perform an activity so infrequently that people might struggle to remember how it was done before.

It is also important to maintain records of performance as well as situations where things have gone wrong or near misses – particularly where they relate to your SMS goals.

Note: The BS ISO 20121 standard includes additional requirements for documented information.

Keep on track

Your SMS should now be improving your organization's sustainability performance. This phase is about understanding how well you're doing – and getting better.

Check your progress

Making arrangements to monitor, measure and evaluate progress

You'll need to make appropriate arrangements to regularly monitor and measure key aspects of your SMS (e.g. action on priority issues and objectives, targets and plans). You will also need to consider how you will communicate your efforts and achievements.

How to do it

Ideally you'll be able to identify and respond to things before they become a big problem. Consider:

- What do you need to monitor and measure within the boundaries of your SMS? What data are appropriate?
- What data are relevant to your objectives and targets?
- What data do you need for ongoing engagement with stakeholders including your top management?
- How do problems or potential problems get reported, escalated and investigated?
- Do you want/need to report internally or externally (and to whom?)

Try to identify lessons learned, i.e. what works and what doesn't – and use this to improve the planning and delivery of future events.

What gets measured, gets managed – UBM EMEA

UBM EMEA, a division of UBM plc, is responsible for organizing many of the world's largest exhibitions, conferences and awards in a wide variety of industries. Having achieved BS 8901 in 2012, it was a natural step for them to progress to ISO 20121 the following year. Thirteen of their events are now covered by their certification.

As part of their system, UBM EMEA have put in place arrangements to capture data in order to assess the impact of their events and offices. They gather not only environmental information (e.g. energy, water, gas, waste), but also data on social issues such as charitable giving as well as data on economic performance as a result of sustainability considerations and initiatives.

They have developed an internal sustainability rating system for their trade shows allowing them to compare the sustainability performance of each one. This allows them not only to capture achievements of the different events, but also to share knowledge and flag areas for improvements year on year.

UBM EMEA's Board receives a monthly update on sustainability. Each year their senior management team also receive a full progress briefing. During this meeting the previous year is reviewed and objectives set for the coming year. Making it relevant and applicable to all parts of the business has significantly helped to progress sustainability within the business. All this is also helping to foster a culture of continuous improvement.

UBM EMEA believe that the continual engagement of their senior management team on sustainability is essential to their success. By reporting on sustainability efforts and achievements they have generated further management buy-in. This in turn has resulted in greater reductions in emissions of greenhouse gases, better risk management, enhanced community support, increased charitable giving, cost savings through environmental efficiencies and in total a continued benefit to the company.

More Info: <http://sustainability.ubm.com/index.php>



UBM EMEA gathers information on the environment, social issues and economic performance

Review outcomes

Reviewing the SMS periodically with top management

It is important to take stock periodically with your top management – and check how the overall SMS has performed. This will look at what you've achieved, identify if there are any lessons learned and decide what needs to be done to improve effectiveness.

How to do it

It's important to give your top management a full progress briefing – in addition to your normal reporting channels. Your goal here is to determine whether your SMS is genuinely meeting your organization's needs and helping improve its sustainability performance. To support this review, you might typically include:

- stakeholder issues and concerns;
- performance against your objectives and targets;
- problems or potential problems identified (and associated lessons learned); and
- any recommendations for improvement.

Examples of an improvement opportunity might include additional resources to support delivery, amending objectives and targets, or even creating new processes. Some organizations carry out this review annually, but you may want to do it more frequently.

Note: The BS ISO 20121 standard includes additional performance evaluation and improvement requirements.

Summary of key actions

Prepare

- ✓ Confirm that top management has full 'buy in' and actively demonstrates leadership and commitment.
- ✓ Assign and communicate SMS roles and responsibilities to key individuals.
- ✓ Ensure everyone understands your organizational context.
- ✓ Decide what's in and what's out of scope.
- ✓ Declare your commitment and intentions in the form of a policy – written and agreed by top management.
- ✓ Communicate your policy to staff, suppliers and other key stakeholders.
- ✓ Make your policy easily accessible and available to stakeholders.

Plan

- ✓ Identify your legal and other obligations.
- ✓ Map out your stakeholders and identify your key ones.
- ✓ Plan how you will engage with your stakeholders.
- ✓ Identify and prioritize significant or key issues.
- ✓ Establish objectives and targets for your priority issues.
- ✓ Prepare action plans – setting out what needs to be done.

Deliver

- ✓ Assess your suppliers' ability to meet your sustainability requirements.
- ✓ Define sustainability criteria for your key processes and controls, and clarify what needs to happen to meet the criteria.
- ✓ Be responsive to unexpected issues.
- ✓ Identify the resources you need.
- ✓ Evaluate the competence of key staff and suppliers, and take action to correct any shortfalls.
- ✓ Plan what and how you will communicate (and to whom).
- ✓ Specify your communication channels.
- ✓ Decide what you need to document to prove your SMS has been carried out as planned.

Learn

- ✓ Plan how you will monitor and measure the event(s) you deliver.
- ✓ Evaluate how things are going and identify lessons learned.
- ✓ Review your SMS performance with top management.

Further resources

Thank you again for choosing this guide. We hope it has provided you with helpful advice on how to work towards meeting the requirements of BS ISO 20121. Any steps that you can take to implement sustainability will make a difference. No matter how small the action or initiative, now is the right time to start.

For more information on BS ISO 20121, see:

www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/iso-20121-sustainable-events-management/

The following selected further resources are not exhaustive, but they may provide helpful reference material when using this guide or if you decide to implement the full requirements of the BS ISO 20121 standard. Please note that external links were correct at the time of writing and that BSI is not responsible for the content of these external websites and does not necessarily endorse the website or the site's owners.

General resources

- BS ISO 20121:2012, *Event sustainability management systems – Requirements with guidance for use*, British Standards Institution, 2012
- London 2012 Learning Legacy website (free)
- London 2012 Sustainability Guidelines for Corporate and Public Events (free)
- London 2012: A Guide to ISO 20121 Sustainable Event Management for the Coca-Cola Company (free)
- Resource Efficient Scotland, *How to Plan and Deliver Environmentally Sustainable Events*, 2015 (free)
- Phil Cumming, *Management Systems for Sustainability: How to Connect Strategy and Action*, Do Sustainability, 2013
- United Nations, *Guide to Corporate Sustainability*, UN Global Compact, 2014 (free)

Identifying obligations

- LOCOG Sustainability Obligations Register (free)

Identifying and evaluating issues

- BS ISO 26000:2010, *Guidance on social responsibility*, British Standards Institution, 2010
- Dwayne Baraka, *Making Sustainability Matter: How to Make Materiality Drive Profit, Strategy and Communications*, Do Sustainability, 2014
- Global Reporting Initiative Sustainability Reporting Guidelines – Event Organizers G4 Sector Disclosures (free)
- UN Sustainable Development Goals Compass (free)
- WRAP Event Resource Management Plan (RMP) Tool (free)

Stakeholder engagement

- BS 8900-1:2013, *Managing sustainable development of organizations. Guide*, British Standards Institution, 2013
- From Words to Action: The Stakeholder Engagement Manual, Volume 1 *The Guide to Practitioners' Perspectives on Stakeholder Engagement*, Stakeholder Research Associates, UNEP, 2006 (free)
- From Words to Action: The Stakeholder Engagement Manual, Volume 2, *The Practitioner's Handbook on Stakeholder Engagement*, AccountAbility, UNEP, 2006 (free)

Supply chain management

- BS 8903: 2010, *Principles and framework for procuring sustainably: Guide*, British Standards Institution, 2010
- BSR, *A Guide to Traceability: A Practical Approach to Advance Sustainability in Global Supply Chains*, UN Global Compact, 2014 (free)
- Defra, *Sustainable procurement: the Government Buying Standards (GBS)*, 2012 (free)
- Defra, *Sustainable Procurement in Government: Guidance to the Flexible Framework*, 2011 (free)



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