BS ISO 20121:2024

BSI Standards Publication

Event sustainability management systems — Requirements with guidance for use

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National foreword

This British Standard is the UK implementation of ISO 20121:2024. It supersedes BS ISO 20121:2012, which is withdrawn.

The UK participation in its preparation was entrusted to Technical Committee SES/1/10.

A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to its committee manager.

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ISO 20121

Second edition
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Event sustainability management systems — Requirements with guidance for use

Systèmes de management responsable appliqués à l'activité événementielle — Exigences et recommandations de mise en oeuvre

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO document should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

ISO draws attention to the possibility that the implementation of this document may involve the use of (a) patent(s). ISO takes no position concerning the evidence, validity or applicability of any claimed patent rights in respect thereof. As of the date of publication of this document, ISO had not received notice of (a) patent(s) which may be required to implement this document. However, implementers are cautioned that this may not represent the latest information, which may be obtained from the patent database available at www.iso.org/patents. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Project Committee ISO/PC 250, *Sustainability in event management*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 20121:2012), which has been technically revised.

The main changes are as follows:

— the text, clause sequence and relevant definitions have been aligned with the harmonized structure for management system standards in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1, 2022, Annex SL, Appendix 2;

— the text has been reviewed and improved to take into consideration: enhancement of environmental, social and governance (ESG) requirements; a reduction of negative impacts and maximization of positive ESG impacts; making the standard more user friendly and accessible.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

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Introduction

Events are sometimes, by their nature, high profile and transient, with both positive and negative social, economic and environmental impacts. This document has been drafted to help organizations and individuals to improve the sustainability of their event-related activities.

At the same time it requires organizations to recognize their relationship with and their impact on society and society's expectations of events.

This document challenges an organization to improve its process and thinking to lead to continual performance improvement and allows the organization the flexibility to be more creative about the delivery of event-related activities without detracting from the aim of the event. This document is not a checklist or a reporting framework or a method of evaluating event sustainability performance. This document is intended to be applied flexibly and allows organizations that have not formally addressed sustainable development to start to implement an event sustainability management system. Organizations with existing management systems can integrate the requirements of this document into their existing systems. All organizations can benefit from the process of continual improvement over time (see Figure 1).

This document has been designed to address the management of improved sustainability throughout the entire event management cycle.

Additional guidance and information is provided in Annexes A to C to support its implementation.

The complexity of the system and the extent of documentation and the resources devoted to it are proportional to its defined scope, the size of the organization and the nature of the organization's activities, products and services. This is particularly the case for small and medium sized enterprises.

The success of the system depends on commitment from all levels and functions, especially from top management. In addition, in order for such a management system to be successful, it should be flexible and integrated within the event management process and not just regarded as a component to be added on. For maximum effectiveness, its influence should extend throughout the supply chain, as well as the identified interested parties.

This document can be used to prove compliance, as detailed in the Scope.

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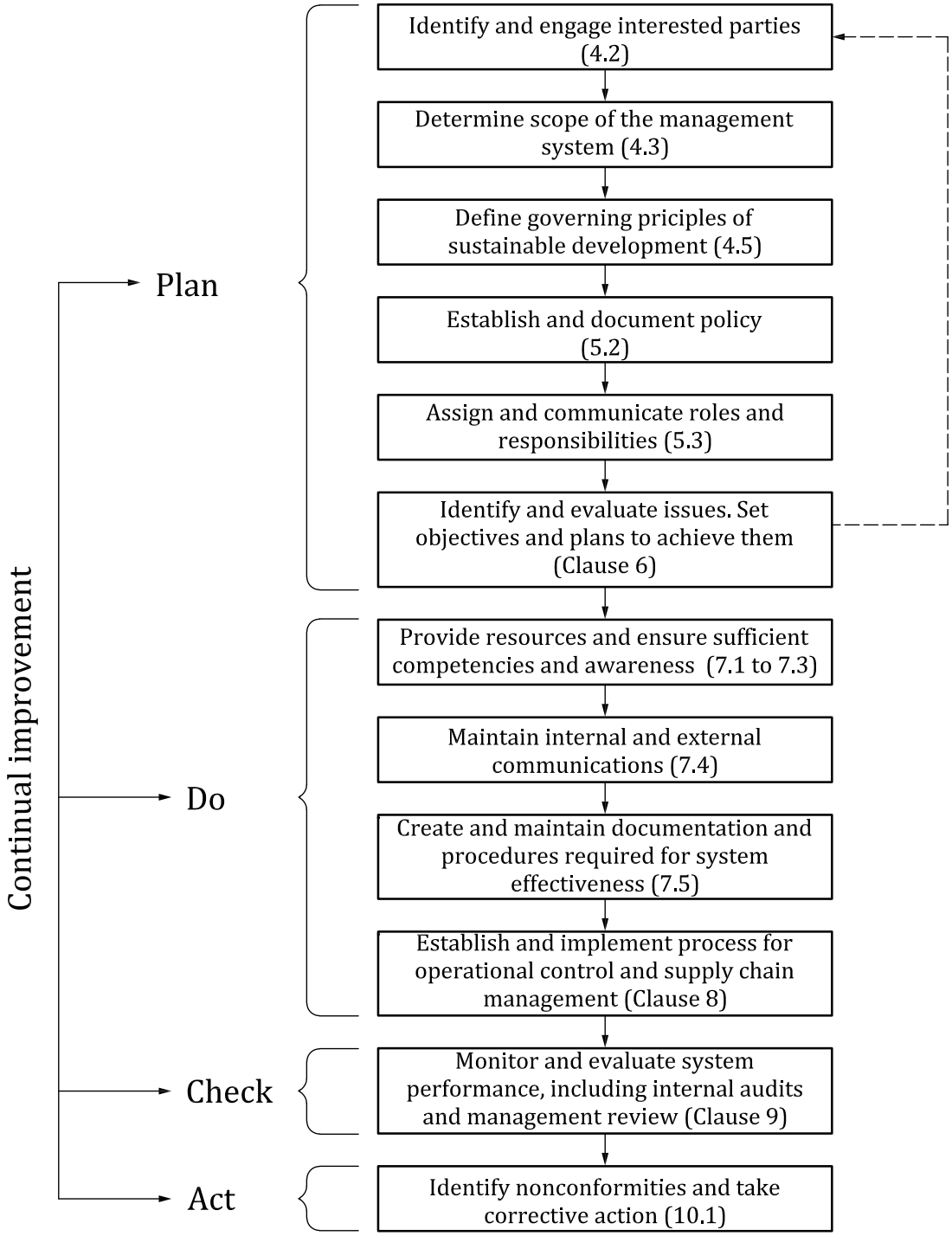

Figure 1 — Event sustainability management system model for this document

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Event sustainability management systems — Requirements with guidance for use

1 Scope

This document specifies requirements for an event sustainability management system for any type of event or event-related activity, and provides guidance on conforming to those requirements.

This document is applicable to any organization that wishes to:

a) establish, implement, maintain and improve an event sustainability management system;

b) ensure that it is in conformity with its stated sustainable development policy;

c) achieve the intended result(s) of its event sustainability management system;

d) demonstrate voluntary conformity with this document by:

— first party (self-determination and self-declaration);

— second party (confirmation of conformance by parties having an interest in the organization, such as clients, or by other persons on their behalf);

— an independent third party (e.g. a certification body).

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at https://www.iso.org/obp

— IEC Electropedia: available at https://www.electropedia.org

3.1
organization
person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its *objectives* (3.6)

Note 1 to entry: The concept of organization includes, but is not limited to, sole-trader, company, corporation, enterprise, authority, partnership, charity, institution, associations, non-governmental organizations or part or combination thereof, whether incorporated or not, public or private.

Note 2 to entry: If the organization is part of a larger entity, the term "organization" refers only to the part of the larger entity that is within the scope of the *event* (3.7) *sustainability* (3.2) *management system* (3.22). For organizations with more than one operating unit, a single operating unit may be defined as an organization.

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3.2
sustainability
degree of *sustainable development* (3.3) in the *context* (3.39) of the *organization* (3.1) or *event* (3.7)

Note 1 to entry: For guidance on sustainability, refer to, for example, the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), applicable international standards on environmental and social issues, including the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights[57] and the Paris Agreement[65]. See Annex A.

3.3
sustainable development
development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

Note 1 to entry: The *process* (3.25) provides an enduring, balanced approach to economic activity, environmental responsibility and social impacts.

Note 2 to entry: Depending on the activity considered, the *organization* (3.1) can take into account the most relevant SDGs when defining its sustainable development *policy* (3.5).

[SOURCE: ISO 26000:2010, 2.23, modified — The original Note 1 to entry has been replaced by two new notes to entry.]

3.4
risk
effect of uncertainty

Note 1 to entry: An effect is a deviation from the expected — positive or negative.

Note 2 to entry: Uncertainty is the state, even partial, of deficiency of information related to, understanding or knowledge of, an event, its consequence, or likelihood.

Note 3 to entry: Risk is often characterized by reference to potential events (as defined in ISO Guide 73) and consequences (as defined in ISO Guide 73), or a combination of these.

Note 4 to entry: Risk is often expressed in terms of a combination of the consequences of an event (including changes in circumstances) and the associated likelihood (as defined in ISO Guide 73) of occurrence.

Note 5 to entry: In Notes 2, 3 and 4 to entry, the term "event" does not refer to the term "event" as defined in 3.7.

3.5
policy
intentions and direction of an *organization* (3.1) as formally expressed by its *top management* (3.23)

3.6
objective
result to be achieved

Note 1 to entry: An objective can be strategic, tactical, or operational.

Note 2 to entry: Objectives can relate to different disciplines (such as financial, health and safety, and environmental) and can apply at different levels [such as strategic, organization-wide, project, product and *process* (3.25)].

Note 3 to entry: An objective can be expressed in other ways, e.g. as an intended outcome, as a purpose, as an operational criterion, as an *event* (3.7) *sustainability* (3.2) objective or by the use of other words with similar meaning (e.g. aim, goal, or target).

Note 4 to entry: In the context of event sustainability *management systems* (3.22), event sustainability objectives are set by the *organization* (3.1), consistent with the event sustainability *policy* (3.5), to achieve specific results.

3.7
event
planned physical, digital or hybrid gathering with respect to time and a place where an experience is created and/or a message is communicated

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3.8
event management cycle
stages and activities of an *event* (3.7) (including products and services involved), from research, conception and planning through to implementation, review and post-event activities

3.9
event organizer
person or entity that produces and/or manages all or some aspects of an *event* (3.7)

Note 1 to entry: An event organizer can be an *organization* (3.1) or a body.

Note 2 to entry: The event organizer is not necessarily the *event owner* (3.10).

3.10
event owner
entity that commissions the *event* (3.7)

Note 1 to entry: For the purposes of this document, the event owner can be the *event organizer* (3.9).

3.11
attendee
organization (3.1) and/or individual that takes part in an *event* (3.7) for the primary purpose of receiving services or content

3.12
participant
organization (3.1) and/or individual that takes an active part in the contents of an *event* (3.7)

3.13
accessibility
usability and display of a product, service, information, environment or facility to enable the participation of people with the widest range of capabilities

Note 1 to entry: This definition is related to the fundamental principle of universal accessibility in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which outlines the *requirements* (3.24) to be fulfilled by environments, *processes* (3.25), goods, products and services, objects, instruments, tools and devices in order to be understandable, usable and viable for all people in safe and comfortable conditions, and as independently and naturally as possible.

Note 2 to entry: This definition also refers to ISO 26800, which states the extent to which products, systems, services, environments, and facilities can be used by people from a population with the widest range of characteristics and capabilities to achieve a specified objective in a specified context of use.

3.14
interested party
person or *organization* (3.1) that can affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision or activity

Note 1 to entry: This can be an individual or group that has an interest in any decision or activity of an organization.

3.15
inclusion
practice of fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all *interested parties* (3.14)

Note 1 to entry: Inclusion refers to all interested parties, regardless of characteristics outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including: race, age, gender, colour, religion, sexual orientation, culture, national origin, income, disability (mental, intellectual, sensorial and physical) or any other form of discrimination.

Note 2 to entry: For further information, see ISO 53800.

3.16
integrity
adherence to ethical principles

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3.17
legacy
tangible and intangible enduring result(s) and *impact* (3.41) of an *event* (3.7)

Note 1 to entry: Hard legacy is tangible and includes the enduring physical, economic, social and environmental impacts of an event or events.

Note 2 to entry: Soft legacy includes non-material elements, such as new capacities acquired as a consequence of events, e.g. new knowledge, training, standards, *best practices* (3.27), skills, *organizations* (3.1), systems, relationships, partnerships and innovations.

Note 3 to entry: Legacy includes planned and unplanned results of hosting an event on *interested parties* (3.14). Legacy can be of greater relevance to larger events and should be considered in the issue identification and evaluation (see A.8 and A.12).

3.18
stewardship
responsibility, management and care for *sustainable development* (3.3) shared by all those whose actions affect environmental *performance* (3.30), economic activity, and social impact, reflected as both a value and a practice by individuals, *organizations* (3.1), communities, and competent authorities

3.19
transparency
openness about decisions and activities that affect society, the economy and the environment, and willingness to communicate these in a clear, accurate, timely, honest and complete manner

Note 1 to entry: Transparency also includes openness about the outcomes of decisions and activities.

[SOURCE: ISO 26000:2010, 2.24, modified — Note 1 to entry has been added.]

3.20
supplier
organization (3.1) providing products, services or facilities

3.21
supply chain
sequence of activities or parties that provides products or services to the *organization* (3.1)

[SOURCE: ISO 26000:2010, 2.22, modified — Note 1 to entry has been deleted.]

3.22
management system
set of interrelated or interacting elements of an *organization* (3.1) to establish *policies* (3.5) and *objectives* (3.6), as well as *processes* (3.25) to achieve those objectives

Note 1 to entry: A management system can address a single discipline or several disciplines.

Note 2 to entry: The management system elements include the organization's structure, roles and responsibilities, planning and operation, etc.

Note 3 to entry: The scope of a management system can include the whole of the organization, specific and identified functions of the organization, specific and identified sections of the organization, or one or more functions across a group of organizations.

3.23
top management
person or group of people who directs and controls an *organization* (3.1) at the highest level

Note 1 to entry: Top management has the power to delegate authority and provide resources within the organization.

Note 2 to entry: If the scope of the *management system* (3.22) covers only part of an organization, then top management refers to those who direct and control that part of the organization.

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3.24
requirement
need or expectation that is stated, generally implied or obligatory

Note 1 to entry: "Generally implied" means that it is custom or common practice for the *organization* (3.1) and *interested parties* (3.14) that the need or expectation under consideration is implied.

Note 2 to entry: A specified requirement is one that is stated, e.g. in *documented information* (3.29).

3.25
process
set of interrelated or interacting activities that uses or transforms inputs to deliver a result

Note 1 to entry: Whether the result of a process is called an output, a product or a service depends on the context of the reference.

3.26
procedure
specified way to carry out an activity or a *process* (3.25)

Note 1 to entry: A procedure may not always be formally documented.

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.4.5, modified — Note 1 to entry has been modified.]

3.27
best practice
documented *process* (3.25) or product shown by research and/or experience, and accepted or prescribed by the user community, which produces optimal results and is established or proposed as suitable for widespread adoption

Note 1 to entry: Best practices can apply to a process, procedure, policy, approach, standard, guidelines, product or service, with reference, if applicable, to national and/or international conventions, laws, strategies and similar. A best practice specifies what ought to be done without regard to what is being done already.

3.28
competence
ability to apply knowledge and skills to achieve intended results

3.29
documented information
information required to be controlled and maintained by an *organization* (3.1) and the medium on which it is contained

Note 1 to entry: Documented information can be in any format and media and from any source.

Note 2 to entry: Documented information can refer to

a) the *management system* (3.22), including related *processes* (3.25);

b) information created in order for the organization to operate (documentation);

c) evidence of results achieved (records).

3.30
performance
measurable result

Note 1 to entry: Performance can relate either to quantitative or qualitative findings.

Note 2 to entry: Performance can relate to the management of activities, *processes* (3.25), products, services, systems or *organizations* (3.1).

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3.31
monitoring
determining the status of a system, a *process* (3.25) or an activity

Note 1 to entry: To determine the status, there can be a need to check, supervise or critically observe.

3.32
measurement
process (3.25) to determine a value

Note 1 to entry: For the purposes of this document, "value" can mean numerical or ethical values.

3.33
audit
systematic and independent *process* (3.25) for obtaining evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which the audit criteria are fulfilled

Note 1 to entry: An audit can be an internal audit (first party) or an external audit (second party or third party), and it can be a combined audit (combining two or more disciplines). First-, second- and third-party audits require, impartiality (particularly for second- and third-party), specific competencies, responsibility, openness, confidentiality and responsiveness to complaints.

Note 2 to entry: Specific competencies for the audit and certification of management systems are defined in ISO/IEC TS 17021-4.

Note 3 to entry: An internal audit (first party) is conducted by the *organization* (3.1) itself, or by an external party on its behalf. External audits are conducted according to a contractually enforceable agreement between the organization and the external party that issues a statement of conformity (validation/verification statement). Third-party audits are conducted by a conformity assessment body and may be in alignment with an agreed accreditation programme prescribed by the national standards body.

Note 4 to entry: "Audit evidence" and "audit criteria" are defined in ISO 19011.

3.34
effectiveness
extent to which planned activities are realized and planned results are achieved

3.35
conformity
fulfilment of a *requirement* (3.24)

3.36
nonconformity
non-fulfilment of a *requirement* (3.24)

3.37
corrective action
action to eliminate the cause(s) of a *nonconformity* (3.36) and to prevent recurrence

Note 1 to entry: In the case of other undesirable outcomes, action is necessary to minimize or eliminate the causes and to reduce the *impact* (3.41) or prevent recurrence. Such actions fall outside the concept of "corrective action" in the sense of this definition.

3.38
continual improvement
recurring activity to enhance *performance* (3.30)

3.39
context
environment in which the *organization* (3.1) seeks to achieve its *objectives* (3.6)

Note 1 to entry: Context can be external or internal. See Clause A.3 and ISO Guide 73:2009, 3.3.1.1 and 3.3.1.2.

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3.40
preventive action
action to eliminate the cause of a potential *nonconformity* (3.36)

3.41
impact
positive or negative change to the society, economy or the environment, wholly or partially, resulting from an *organization's* (3.1) past and present decisions and activities

Note 1 to entry: The impacts can be negative or positive, short-term or long-term, intended or unintended, and reversible or irreversible.

Note 2 to entry: Society includes the host community and refers to the local population or those directly involved with the *event* (3.7).

Note 3 to entry: See Annex C, which provides guidance on reporting.

3.42
mission statement
brief description of the overarching intention and goals and values of the *organization* (3.1)

3.43
SWOT
strategic planning tool used to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of an *organization* (3.1) or a project

3.44
PESTLE
analysis which studies the key external factors (political, economic, sociological, technological, legal and environmental) that influence an organization

3.45
materiality assessment
process (3.25) to define the topics that have the most significant impact on the environment, the economy and on people including human rights (impact materiality) and influences or can influence the future cash flows and the value of the organization (financial materiality)

3.46
double materiality assessment
process (3.25) in which a company reporting on sustainability assesses the relevance of a sustainability matter from two perspectives:

— the organization's impact on people and the environment, e.g. damage to nature or violations of human rights (the inside-out view);

— (new) risks and opportunities for the organization created by sustainability-related developments and events (the outside-in view)

4 Context of the organization

4.1 Understanding the organization and its context

The organization shall determine external and internal issues that are relevant to its purpose and that affect its ability to achieve the intended result(s) of its event sustainability management system. This shall include consideration of its social, economic, and environmental impacts.

The organization shall determine whether climate change is a relevant issue.

NOTE 1 Consideration of the SDGs and other relevant frameworks can assist in determining the issues to be addressed (see Clause A.11).

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NOTE 2 Tools that are commonly used to determine external and internal issues include but are not limited to SWOT and PESTEL analysis.

4.2 Understanding the needs and expectations of interested parties

The organization shall determine:

— the interested parties that are relevant to the event sustainability management system;

— the relevant requirements of these interested parties (i.e. their needs and expectations whether stated, implied or obligatory).

— which of these requirements will be addressed through the event sustainability management system.

NOTE 1 Relevant interested parties can have requirements related to climate change.

The organization shall establish, implement and maintain a process for the identification of and engagement with interested parties on the identified and emerging sustainable development issues relating to its role in the value chain of events. Where appropriate, the organization shall document the outputs from its engagement with interested parties (see 7.3, 7.4 and 8.3).

The identification of interested parties shall, where applicable, encompass the following:

a) event owners, e.g. commissioners, funders and/or investors;

b) event organizers, e.g. event managers;

c) partners and/or sponsors;

d) workforce, e.g. employees, labour unions, staff, advisors and volunteers;

e) suppliers, e.g. venue, product and service suppliers (including sponsors); this category can also include emergency services, fire, ambulance, etc.;

f) participants, e.g. speakers, performers, athletes, exhibitors, contestants;

g) attendees, e.g. customers, audience, fans, spectators, visitors, delegates;

h) regulatory bodies, e.g. local authorities/municipalities and licensing authorities, police; this category can include central government and statutory consultees;

i) community and organizations e.g. local community and neighbourhood, indigenous people and minorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), institutions, industry bodies, destination and tourism entities, trade and professional associations, networks, consumers, media and protestors.

NOTE 2 Certain interested parties can fall into different categories, e.g. fire and police can be placed in supply chain and/or in regulatory body.

NOTE 3 Engagement with interested parties can take different forms, such as verbal conversation, written correspondence, meetings, working groups, certification labels and awards, progress plans.

NOTE 4 Refer to Table A.1 for the full list of interested parties.

NOTE 5 See Annex D on human rights.

4.3 Determining the scope of the event sustainability management system

The organization shall determine the boundaries and applicability of the event sustainability management system to establish its scope.

When determining this scope, the organization shall consider:

— the external and internal issues referred to in 4.1;

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— the requirements referred to in 4.2.

The scope shall be available as documented information (see Annex A).

NOTE The documented information on the scope is meant to be a factual and representative statement of the organization's business processes and operations included within the boundaries of the event sustainability management system; it is not meant to mislead interested parties.

4.4 Event sustainability management system

The organization shall establish, implement, maintain and continually improve an event sustainability management system, including the processes needed and their interactions, in accordance with the requirements of this document.

Each organization may choose the most suitable way to establish, maintain, communicate and continually improve its event sustainability management system.

NOTE Formalizing all the processes for the event management system can be done, but is not compulsory.

4.5 Sustainable development principles and mission statement

The organization shall integrate the principles of sustainable development (stewardship, inclusion, integrity and transparency) into an overall mission statement. The organization shall define and document its purpose, mission, its social, environmental and economic benefits, risks and values with respect to its activities, products and services that relate specifically to events.

The principles, mission statement and values of the organization shall provide a framework for setting its policies (see 5.2), objectives and targets, and operational plans (see Clause 8) as defined within the scope of its event sustainability management system.

5 Leadership

5.1 Leadership and commitment

Top management and/or governing body (when applicable) shall demonstrate leadership and commitment with respect to the event sustainability management system by:

a) ensuring that policies and objectives are established for the event sustainability management system and are compatible with the strategic direction of the organization;

b) ensuring the integration of the event sustainability management system requirements into the organization's business processes;

c) ensuring that the resources needed for the event sustainability management system are available;

d) communicating the importance of effective event sustainability management and of conforming to the event sustainability management system requirements;

e) ensuring that the event sustainability management system achieves its intended result(s);

f) directing and supporting persons to contribute to the effectiveness of the event sustainability management system;

g) promoting continual improvement;

h) supporting other relevant roles to demonstrate their leadership as it applies to their areas of responsibility.

NOTE Reference to "business" in this document can be interpreted broadly to mean those activities that are core to the purposes of the organization's existence.

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5.2 Policy

Top management and/or governing body (when applicable) shall establish a sustainable development policy that:

a) is appropriate to the purpose of the organization;

b) if applicable provides a framework for setting short-, medium- and long-term sustainable development objectives of the organization or the event;

c) includes a commitment to meet applicable requirements;

d) includes a commitment to continual improvement of the event sustainability management system;

e) include a commitment to assess and report on achievements and lessons learned and, where appropriate, wider outcomes (event impact and legacy);

f) includes a commitment to take into consideration the needs of interested parties.

The sustainable development policy shall:

— be available as documented information;

— if applicable, include a 3 to 10 year vision based on the long-term sustainable development objectives of the organization or the event;

— include details of the main objectives of the organization or the event;

— be communicated within the organization;

— be available to interested parties, as appropriate;

— reference its mission statement;

— include the organization's commitment to its governing sustainable development principles within its defined scope;

— be dated and signed by the management.

5.3 Roles, responsibilities and authorities

Top management and/or governing body (when applicable) shall ensure that the responsibilities and authorities for relevant roles are assigned and communicated within the organization.

Top management and/or governing body (when applicable) shall assign the responsibility and authority for:

a) ensuring that the event sustainability management system conforms to the requirements of this document;

b) reporting on the performance of the event sustainability management system to top management.

6 Planning

6.1 Actions to address risks and opportunities

6.1.1 General

When planning for the event sustainability management system, the organization shall consider the issues referred to in 4.1 and the requirements referred to in 4.2 and determine the risks and opportunities that need to be addressed to:

— give assurance that the event sustainability management system can achieve its intended result(s);

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