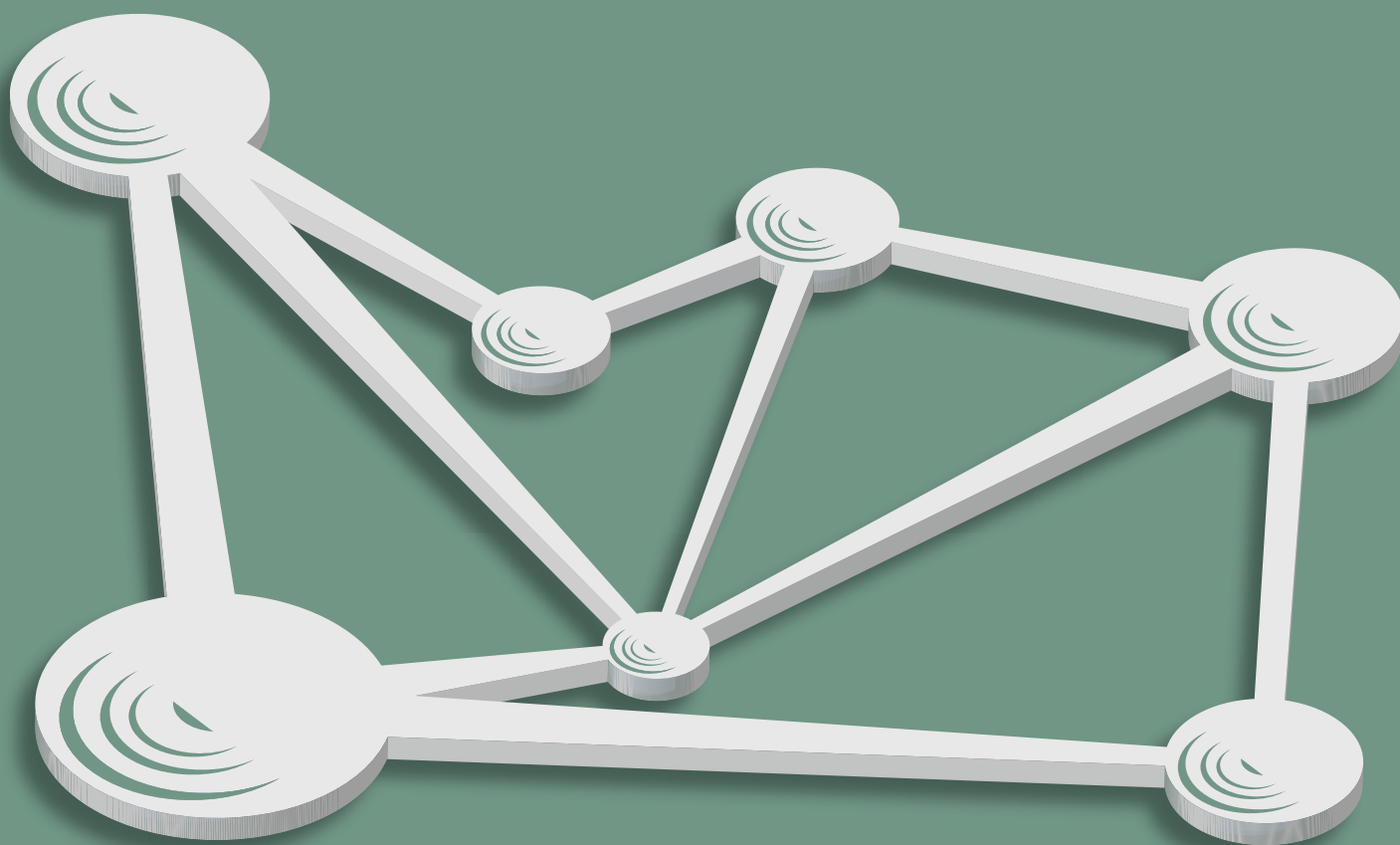


PAS 98:2011

Standards consortia – Part II:

Suitability assessment – A good practice guide



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Foreword

BSI PAS 98, providing guidance on the topic of standards consortia, has been developed under the aegis of the British Standards Institution by a group of experts with considerable experience in the working of consortia.

Consortia are playing a growing role in the development of standards, but the nature of their formation and management can sometimes give rise to misunderstanding amongst observers as to their objectives. This negativity can be particularly prevalent in business and industry sectors where consortia have not yet had the opportunity to demonstrate meaningful and beneficial influence.

In an attempt to correct such misconception, BSI convened a group of experts with experience in the world of consortia to capture current good practice in the formation and management of consortia. This is presented in a manner that will assist interested parties to understand how a consortium can best meet the needs of its members within the constraints placed upon it by the community in which it operates. The result is PAS 98, which offers guidance on the formation, management and understanding of consortia formed for standards-related purposes.

This guidance is presented in two parts, with both parts addressing the attributes of establishing, governing and operating consortia formed for standards-related purposes, but with Part I doing so from the perspective of those undertaking those roles and Part II considering the needs of members and potential members. Although the latter part is primarily intended to assist entities considering participation in consortia activity for the first time, the process described may well be useful to existing consortia members and be found to be of assistance to standards consortium management in assessing the functionality of their own consortium.

Acknowledgement is given to the following organizations that were consulted in the development of both PAS 98 documents:

- Adobe Systems Inc.
- BSI Consumer & Public Interest Network (CPIN)
- CEN (European Committee for Standardization)
- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)
- Gesmer Updegrove LLP
- IBM, Europe
- Sun Microsystems
- University of Reading
- ZFIB Conseil
- 79 Brinkburn Ltd

Comments from other parties were also sought by BSI. The expert contributions from all the organizations and individuals consulted in the development of both parts of this BSI PAS are gratefully acknowledged.

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The parts of this BSI PAS, either jointly or together, do not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for their correct application.

Attention is drawn to the fact that this BSI PAS is not intended to support compliance assessment processes and that following the guidance of either or both parts does not of itself confer immunity from legal obligations.

Neither part of this BSI PAS is to be regarded as a British Standard.

0 Introduction

0.1 General

Consortia are business tools that can be of considerable assistance in meeting specific business needs and providing a resolution to a range of business challenges. Unlike other forms of dedicated standards development organization (SDO), they often support many types of activities intended to supplement standards development activities, such as undertaking promotional activities, launching certification and branding campaigns, drafting white papers, conducting training programmes and supporting public advocacy. Any entity considering engagement with the world of standards consortia should first undertake a rigorous assessment of their reasons for doing so, and the likelihood of the consortium or other alternatives meeting its needs and expectations in that respect.

For the purposes of BSI PAS 98, any documented specification, test method, practice or procedure that promotes an agreed course of action, performance or behaviour to achieve a predetermined level of quality or attainment amongst an identified stakeholder group can be considered as a standard.

A significant number of standards (frequently identified as “formal standards”) are produced on a national, regional or worldwide basis by bodies operating rigorous procedures that embody the principles of diverse input and consensus. The standards developed by such bodies are generally intended for voluntary application, although they can become mandatory if taken up in legislation or regulation or cited in a contract.

Standards can also be developed privately or unilaterally, for example by a specific company or other commercial entity, government or regulatory body. Standards can also be developed by groups such as trade unions, trade associations or group of organizations agreeing formally or informally to work together for that purpose. It is to assist in the enhancement of recognition and credibility of these latter standards development groups (standards consortia) that BSI PAS 98 has been prepared.

Entities considering engagement with consortia, whether by becoming a member of an existing consortium or joining with others to establish a new consortium, would be well advised to consider the guidance of this PAS as the basis for undertaking the necessary assessment.

The principal stages of the recommended assessment process for interaction with consortia are:

- determination of what the nature and extent of the business needs/problems are;
- consideration of whether new or revised standards, or one of the other activities noted above, constitute all or part of the solution;
- clarification of whether engagement with a consortium/consortia will offer the most appropriate route to resolution;
- choosing the most appropriate form of engagement with a consortium/consortia (i.e. engagement with an existing consortium or participation in the establishment of a new consortium).

This Part of BSI PAS 98 highlights the benefits of the consortium in relation to standards setting and promotion, while also identifying the possible limitations. It provides helpful guidance on what to look for when reviewing consortia and outlines a practical process for assessing the relevance and functionality of consortia for entities considering engagement, and should be used in conjunction with BSI PAS 98, *Standards consortia – Part 1: Formation and management – A good practice guide*, to provide more comprehensive understanding.

0.2 How to use this document

This BSI PAS has been designed in such a way as to highlight (in blue boxes) the key issues that should be taken into account when considering participation in consortia. These key issues are then expanded upon in the form of concept notes that offer supplementary guidance on assessing the suitability of a consortium with a view to taking up membership.

Clause 2 of BSI PAS 98 provides a list of terms defined to aid understanding and use of this BSI PAS. Where these defined terms appear for the first time, they are distinguished from other text using a shaded typeface.

