

# Sustainable events with **ISO 20121**



## ISO in brief



ISO is the International Organization for Standardization. ISO has a membership of 164\* national standards bodies from countries large and small, industrialized, developing and in transition, in all regions of the world. ISO's portfolio of over 19 200\* standards provides business, government and society with practical tools for all three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, environmental and social.

ISO standards make a positive contribution to the world we live in. They facilitate trade, spread knowledge, disseminate innovative advances in technology, and share good management and conformity assessment practices.

ISO standards provide solutions and achieve benefits for almost all sectors of activity, including agriculture, construction, mechanical engineering, manufacturing, distribution, transport, healthcare, information and communication technologies, the environment, energy, safety and security, quality management, and services.

ISO only develops standards for which there is a clear market requirement. The work is carried out by experts in the subject drawn directly from the industrial, technical and business sectors that have identified the need for the standard, and which subsequently put the standard to use. These experts may be joined by others with relevant knowledge, such as representatives of government agencies, testing laboratories, consumer associations and academia, and by international governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

An ISO International Standard represents a global consensus on the state of the art in the subject of that standard.

\*May 2012

This brochure presents a concise overview of the ISO International Standard, ISO 20121:2012, *Event sustainability management systems – Requirements with guidance for use*. ISO 20121 is a practical tool for managing events so that they contribute to the three dimensions of sustainability – economic, environmental and social.

## What is the purpose of this brochure ?



To tackle the world's problems most effectively, people need to combine their energy and act together. The visual world of the Internet and social media creates great new possibilities, but does not remove the efficiency, buzz and sheer enjoyment of the face-to-face contact offered by events.

## Why is ISO 20121 important ?



Events come in all shapes and sizes. From rock concerts to the Olympic Games. The annual meeting of an association of small and medium-sized enterprises, to international trade fairs. A village barbeque to raise money for a school outing, to a political summit of global leaders.

Events can be “just for a good time” (and there’s nothing wrong with that!), or they can provide the occasion for the signing of international treaties or commercial contracts, achieving sporting records, or creating understanding between different communities, countries and cultures.

However, there can be a downside to events. The “ great time we had today ” can leave an aftermath of problems for tomorrow. When people get together, particularly in large numbers, they can put a strain on local resources such as water and energy, and create significant waste, or tensions related to culture or sheer proximity with neighbouring communities. An added challenge is the number of different partners and suppliers involved in organizing and servicing an event. In response, individual event professionals and companies have begun developing tools to address one or several of these challenges.

What makes ISO 20121 so important is that it provides state-of-the-art solutions for the event industry worldwide because it has been developed by representatives of this same sector on an international scale. It tackles the event industry’s challenges in all three dimensions of sustainability, at all stages of its supply chain.

## Who can ISO 20121 benefit ?



ISO 20121 offers benefits to all actors involved in the organization of an event, at all stages of the supply chain, including the following :

- Event organizers
- Event owners
- Workforce
- Supply chain (such as caterers, stand constructors, transport companies)
- Participants
- Attendees
- Regulatory bodies
- Communities.

### Best business practice

It makes sense to take an organized, process-based approach to managing economic, environmental and social impacts in event management. In addition, the monitoring and measuring required by the standard provides opportunities to reduce the use of resources and cut costs.

### Reputational advantage

Using a recognized international framework will enable leaders in event management sustainability to demonstrate their actions in a credible and transparent way.

In addition to the above key benefits, ISO 20121 presents other advantages, including the following.

Implementing ISO 20121 is made easier because it is based on ISO's well-known and proven range of management system standards, such as ISO 9001 (quality management) and ISO 14001 (environmental management), including the Plan-Do-Check-Act approach (see [Figure 1](#) on next page).

Because the management system approach is a flexible one, it responds to the unique needs and nature of the diverse organizations making up the event sector. At the same time, it offers a methodology based on expert international consensus for achieving positive results in the implementation of sustainability.

## What benefits can ISO 20121 provide ?



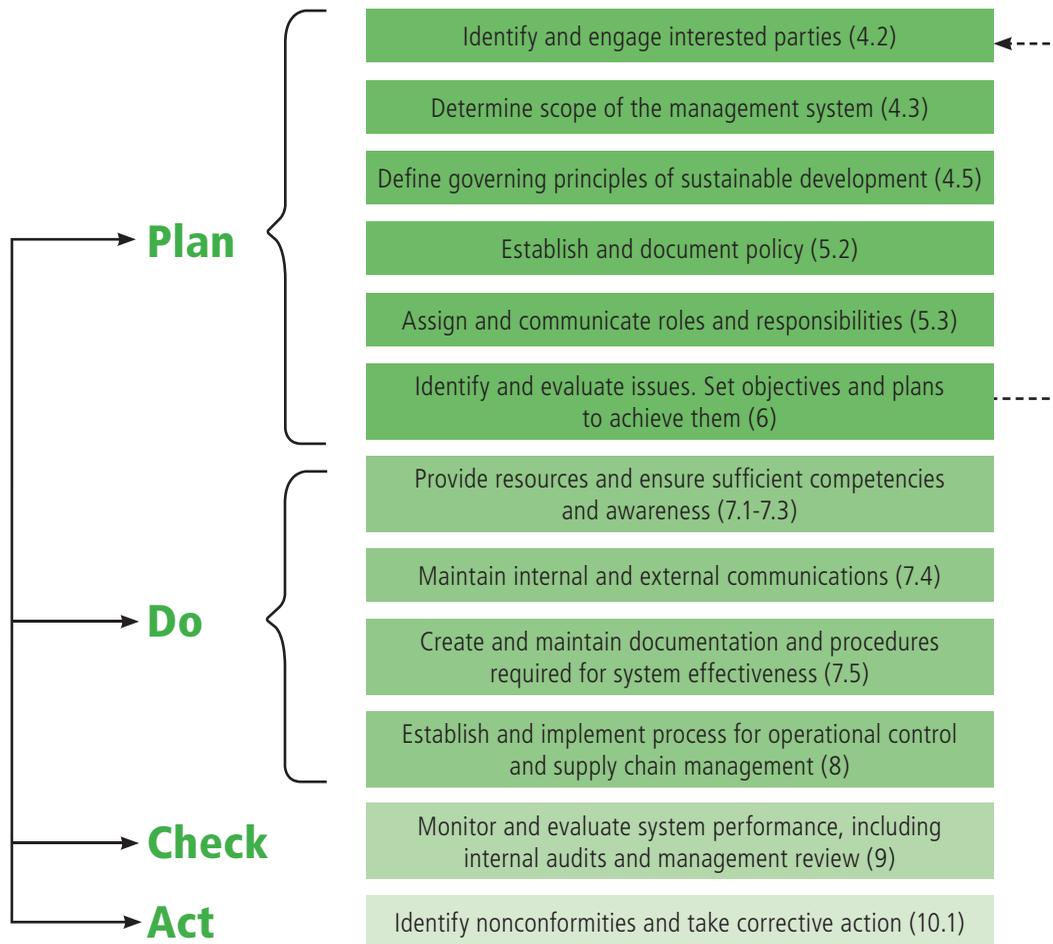


Figure 1 – ISO 20121's event sustainability management system model (the figures in brackets refer to clauses and subclauses in the standard).

ISO 20121 is applicable to any organization or individual – including clients, suppliers and event managers – involved with all types of events, including exhibitions, sporting competitions, concerts, etc. It is as relevant for small conference meetings as large-scale sporting events. One of the results of using the framework is likely to be an increased level of communication within the event industry concerning its approach to economic, environmental and social impacts.

Offering a common international language for events management, it provides a framework for global tendering and comparison of offers, encouraging international trade in the sector.

ISO 20121 allows commitment to sustainability to be demonstrated in a globally recognized manner. Events based in different geographical locations around the world will experience different sustainability issues, but they will all be able to implement the ISO 20121 framework.

Once users of the standard have identified the issues which are relevant to their unique situation, further stages of the standard will support them with setting targets, creating action plans, monitoring and measuring steps taken, and pursuing continual improvement.

Users can implement ISO 20121 for the internal benefits to their processes and external benefits to their customers and stakeholders. They can also decide to seek certification to the standard as an independent verification of conformity to its requirements.

In addition to direct users of the standard, ISO 20121 can benefit other stakeholders. These include regulators who have health, safety, environmental and other responsibilities related to events. The standard also provides a basis for discussion for local communities and for nongovernmental organizations which may have concerns about an event.

## What's in ISO 20121?



## The contents of ISO 20121 cover:

### Foreword

### Introduction

- 1** Scope
- 2** Normative references
- 3** Terms and definitions
- 4** Context of the organization
  - 4.1 Understanding of the organization and its context
  - 4.2 Understanding the needs and expectations of interested parties
  - 4.3 Determining the scope of the event sustainability management system
  - 4.4 Event sustainability management system
  - 4.5 Sustainable development principles, statement of purpose and values
- 5** Leadership
  - 5.1 Leadership and commitment
  - 5.2 Policy
  - 5.3 Organizational roles, responsibilities and authorities

## **6 Planning**

- 6.1 Actions to address risks and opportunities
- 6.2 Event sustainability objectives and how to achieve them

## **7 Support**

- 7.1 Resources
- 7.2 Competence
- 7.3 Awareness
- 7.4 Communication
- 7.5 Documented information

## **8 Operation**

- 8.1 Operational planning and control
- 8.2 Dealing with modified activities, products or services
- 8.3 Supply chain management

## **9 Performance evaluation**

- 9.1 Performance against governing principles of sustainable development
- 9.2 Monitoring, measurement, analysis and evaluation

9.3 Internal audit

9.4 Management review

## **10 Improvement**

10.1 Nonconformity and corrective action

10.2 Continual improvement

## **ISO 20121 also includes three informative annexes:**

**Annex A** – Guidance on planning and implementing this International Standard

**Annex B** – Supply chain management

**Annex C** – Evaluation

## Who developed ISO 20121 ?



ISO 20121, published on 15 June 2012, was developed by the event industry for the event industry, working within the ISO project committee, ISO/PC 250, *Sustainability in event management*. The development process has been led by members of the event industry from around the world who have experience of event management and sustainability leadership initiatives.

Delegations of experts of the national standards institutions of 25 countries developed the standard, with another 10 countries as observers. Eight stakeholder organizations from the event industry, or with a strong interest in sustainability, also participated.

The twinned secretariat of ISO/PC comprised the ISO members for the United Kingdom, the British Standards Institution (BSI) and Brazil, Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas (ABNT).



## ISO's Website

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

*(in English and French, with top levels in Russian and individual publications in other languages)*

## ISO Focus+ magazine

[www.iso.org/iso/iso-focus-plus](http://www.iso.org/iso/iso-focus-plus)

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## ISO videos

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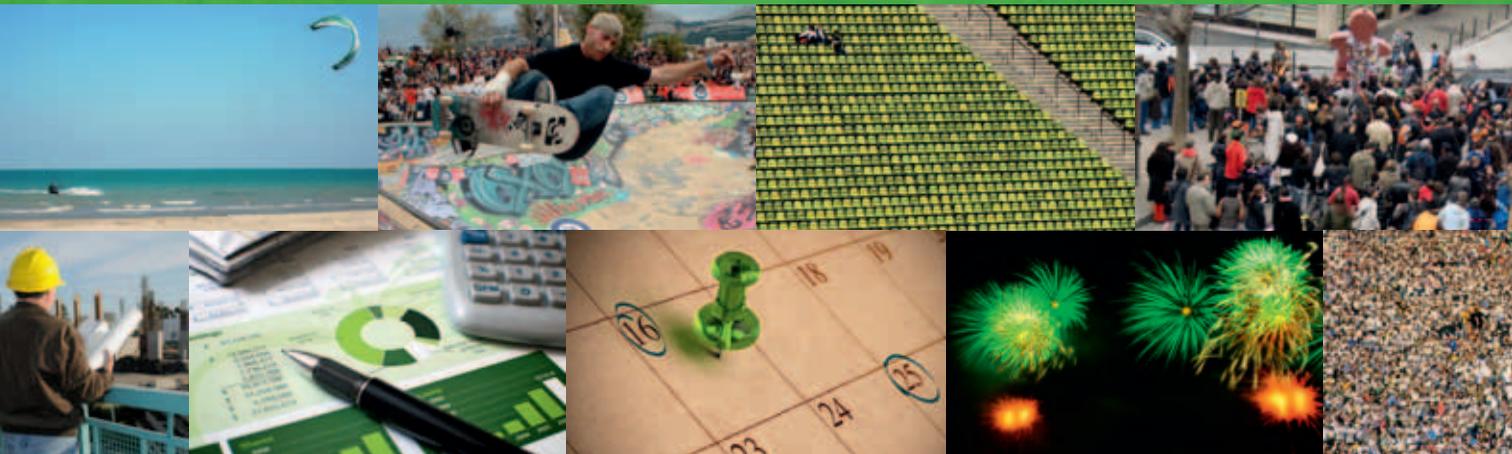
## Contact the ISO member in your country

[www.iso.org/isomembers](http://www.iso.org/isomembers)

## Resources



# Events with ISO 2012



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