

Wales Council for Voluntary Action

Supporting charities, volunteers and communities

2. Running your organisation

2.16 Environmental Sustainability management systems



Introduction

Governments and organisations around the world to become more environmentally conscious and responsible in their operations; therefore 'environmental management systems' (EMS) are becoming an increasingly important part of an organisation's policies.

Certification against Environmental Management Standards such as Green Dragon, BS8555, ISO14001 or EMAS demonstrates an organisation's commitment to protecting the environment. An environmental certification is representative of good working practices and environmental awareness.

As well as signalling their environmental friendliness, environmental management systems give organisations a chance to reduce waste, lower costs and increase efficiency. They are also increasingly a requirement (among other compliances) within procurement both from the public sector and in supply chains for the private sector. Therefore taking care of the environment benefits the organisation and the planet.

Environmental Management Systems (EMS): What is an EMS?

Organisations are recognising that the environment is a management issue and not just a matter of compliance. An Environmental Management System (EMS) provides a practical proactive framework for understanding an organisations interaction with the environment. An operational EMS contains a set of management processes and procedures that allow an organisation to implement pollution prevention measures and environmental impact minimisation programmes to analyse, control and reduce the environmental impact of its activities, products and services and operate with greater efficiency and control.

While it isn't a legal requirement to get your environmental management system (EMS) independently certified, it can be a very good idea. Having an externally certified EMS shows you take your environmental performance seriously, and it can be a powerful marketing and sales tool.

Make sure you use an EMS certification body approved by the United Kingdom Accreditation Services (UKAS). There are organisations that appear to provide low cost certification. However using a UKAS accredited certification body will ensure that your customers fully recognise your certification.

Only UKAS accredited schemes/Bodies are recommended by Government and this is backed up by the new Supplier Qualification Information Database (SQuID). SQuID is the set of pre-set questions which all local authorities in Wales have signed up to using for PQQs and which have been developed by Value Wales.

An externally certified EMS can assist an organisation to:

- Comply with environmental legislation
- Ensure pollution prevention
- Increase overall environmental performance
- Ensure consistent continual environmental Improvement
- Identify objectives and targets on which to focus in the future
- Identify opportunities to reduce resource consumption and waste
- Ensure a competitive edge during a procurement process
- Reduce your operating costs

Although many organisations have already made significant improvements in their environmental performance, an EMS will ensure that improvements continue through on-going maintenance and monitoring of the system. An EMS also ensures that environmental performance and other related issues are raised regularly with senior management and that the momentum for making improvements is maintained.

There are a number of different Standards or Certifications; the main ones being:

Green Dragon Environmental Standard

Operated by Groundwork Wales (a UKAS Accredited inspection body), Green Dragon is available to organisations throughout the UK. It provides a manageable way of achieving a recognised and independently inspected Environmental Management System (EMS).

Green Dragon is split into 5 levels. Level 5 of Green Dragon is equivalent to (and, in some respects, exceeds) ISO 14001. Organisations can apply at the level which suits their size and environmental impacts. At every level you achieve a fully recognised EMS, but each level takes you to a higher standard. This gives Green Dragon a great deal of flexibility; large organisations can build their way up to Level 5 over a number of years, whereas smaller organisations can apply at the lower levels and can have a recognised, certified EMS that is appropriate to their size.

BS 8555

BS 8555 is a British standard that provides guidance for implementing an EMS on a phase-by-phase basis and it can be a good way of working towards either ISO 14001 or the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS).

The six phases of BS 8555 are:

1. commitment and establishing the baseline
2. identifying and ensuring compliance with legal and other requirements
3. developing objectives, targets and programmes
4. implementation and operation of the EMS
5. checking, auditing and review
6. EMS acknowledgement

There are two schemes that you can follow to achieve BS8555:

- **The Seren Scheme**

The UKAS accredited Seren Scheme has been designed to offer you a robust and cost effective methodology to register your organization against the requirements of BS 8555:2003. BS 8555 is split into 6 separate phases. You choose whether you wish to use the Seren Scheme in a staged approach to reach other EMS standards such as ISO 14001 or EMAS or (as many do) apply for registration at a phase that is appropriate to the nature and scale of your business and remain at that phase. In fact, the requirements of Phase 5 and 6 exceed the requirements of ISO 14001. As long as you pass an annual Inspection you can remain at that particular phase indefinitely and use your EMS to demonstrate to stakeholders and customers your commitment to environmental management

- **The Acorn Scheme**

The IEMA Acorn Scheme offers external recognition for organisations evaluating and improving their environmental performance through the phased implementation of an EMS in accordance with BS8555. Acorn offers a unique feature whereby organisations can engage environmental performance indicator (EPI) reporting within the procurement process. This compliments the 'one size fits all' aspects of ISO14001 & EMAS and provides the opportunity to set environmental requirements in supplier contracts and monitor operational/product performance – a strength acknowledged by the Government in a recent EMS position statement published by DEFRA.

ISO 14001

ISO 14001 is the internationally recognised standard for the environmental management of businesses. It prescribes controls for those activities that have an effect on the environment. These include the use of natural resources, handling and treatment of waste and energy consumption.

Implementing an Environmental Management System is a systematic way to discover and control the effects your organisation has on the environment. Cost savings can be made through improved efficiency and productivity. These are achieved by detecting ways to minimise waste and dispose of it more effectively and by learning how to use energy more efficiently. It also verifies compliance with current legislation.

Further information

Business Wales – Environmental Guidance

Operated by the Welsh Government, Business Wales can provide free environmental support and guidance on legislation to organisations in Wales.

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/zones/corporate-social-responsibility/environment/simple-ways-save-energy>

Natural Resources Wales

<http://naturalresources.wales/splash?orig=/>

The Seren scheme

www.serenscheme.com

The Acorn Scheme

http://ems.iema.net/acorn_scheme

ISO 14001

www.iso.org

Green Dragon

Tel: 01495 222605

<http://www.groundwork.org.uk/sites/greendragon>

One Planet Living® Programme

www.oneplanetliving.org/index.html

Centre for Sustainable Energy

www.cse.org.uk/pages/information/community-groups

Green Consumer Guide

www.greenconsumerguide.com

Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.

For further information contact

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The logo for WcVA CgGC is a red trapezoidal shape. Inside, the text 'WcVA' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font, with a thin white horizontal line underneath it. Below the line, the text 'CgGC' is written in a larger, white, bold, sans-serif font.

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