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**Sustainable development in  
communities — Management system  
for sustainable development —  
Requirements with guidance for use**

*Développement durable des communautés — Système de  
management pour le développement durable — Exigences et lignes  
directrices pour son utilisation*



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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 documents 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](http://www.iso.org/directives)).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see [www.iso.org/patents](http://www.iso.org/patents)).

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

For an explanation on 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 the following URL: [www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html](http://www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html).

The committee responsible for this document is Technical Committee ISO/TC 268, *Sustainable development in communities*.

## Introduction

This International Standard adopts a holistic approach to the establishment of the requirements of a management system for sustainable development in communities, including cities, and provides guidance aimed at:

- improving the contribution of communities to sustainable development;
- fostering smartness and resilience in communities, while taking into account the territorial boundaries to which it applies;
- assessing the performance of communities in progressing towards sustainable development.

It sets out to establish a coherent framework to enable the community to develop its purposes and vision.

This International Standard sets out requirements and guidance to help communities achieve a framework that will allow them to become more sustainable. It does not set benchmarks or expected levels of performance.

While the challenge of sustainable development is global, the strategies for achieving it at community level are local, to a large extent, and can therefore differ in context and content from country to country and region to region. Community strategies need to reflect the context, preconditions, priorities and needs, particularly in the social environment, e.g. social equity, cultural identity and traditions, heritage, human health, safety and comfort, and social infrastructure.

In order to become more sustainable, communities also face the challenge of respecting planetary boundaries and taking into account the limitations these boundaries impose.

NOTE 1 The concept of “planetary boundaries” describes a framework within which humanity needs to live in order to continue to develop and thrive for generations to come. Climate change, freshwater consumption, land-use change and loss of biodiversity are examples of planetary boundaries. Crossing these boundaries could generate abrupt or irreversible environmental changes, while respecting them significantly reduces risks. Planetary boundaries can be broken down in order to select measures that can be addressed at community level, while taking into account the specific situation.

The management of sustainable development in communities encompasses a wide range of issues, e.g. issues related to the economic, social and natural environment of communities and their interactions. Those issues can have strategic, operational and competitive implications.

NOTE 2 The capacity to foster cross-discipline harmony and common purpose is fundamental to achieving a community’s objectives effectively and efficiently.

This International Standard is designed to empower communities and to build on local initiatives. It targets environmental, social and economic issues, including improved community services and socio-economic benefits, as well as supporting clear purposes for sustainable development in communities and encouraging sound planning systems to achieve them.

This International Standard focuses on communities as stepping stones towards sustainability of society as a whole. Although each community has values and interests of its own, all communities can derive mutual benefits from agreeing upon ownership of shared values and objectives without exonerating individual actors from their respective responsibilities. This can be achieved only if the community applies a long-term view on planning, while respecting the Earth’s overall capacity and the needs of current and future generations, including the capability and resources to provide resilience.

This International Standard fosters the establishment of a multi-actor process in communities, through a holistic approach that facilitates the cooperation of all interested parties and avoids a silo approach. It is intended to provide guidance for organizations that implement other management systems that are compatible with this International Standard, such as ISO 14001, ISO 45001, ISO 50001, ISO 20121, ISO 14046 and ISO 26000, whether involved directly or indirectly in sustainable development in communities at different stages in their life cycles.

Involvement of interested parties through a multi-actor process can take different forms, such as:

- participatory partnerships;
- public participation;
- community based collaboration.

They all aim at involving interested parties in a cooperative dialogue for more sustainable solutions.

The successful implementation of this International Standard can help communities elaborate holistic and integrated strategies for sustainable development that depart from usual business approaches. It can also help communities show interested parties that an appropriate management system is in place and encourage them to become proactive.

Successful implementation of this International Standard can:

- help to build consensus on sustainable development within communities;
- improve the sustainability, smartness and resilience of strategies, programmes, projects, plans and services conducted under the direct responsibility of communities, or on the territory they relate to;
- evolve cross-sector, multidisciplinary, life cycle value and total costing approaches;
- foster synergies between several actors through a holistic approach;
- increase the efficiency and attractiveness of communities.

The successful implementation of this International Standard is intended to establish a coherent framework to enable communities to develop their purpose and vision. Using relevant indicators and metrics, the outcome of strategies, programmes, projects, plans and services can be measured throughout communities. Metrics and indicators are connected, but often developed for different reasons. Metrics have a more technical focus, e.g. a parameter of the performance of a product, a process or an infrastructure element.

The International Standards developed by ISO/TC 268 aim to make use of indicators and metrics for structured and consistent support of sustainable, smart and resilient management of communities. Indicators such as those used in ISO 37120 are quantitative, qualitative or descriptive measures defined for actual use in monitoring and evaluating the overall performance of a community. In contrast, metrics such as those used in ISO/TS 37151 are the measurement method and measurement scale defined for use in evaluating the technical performance of infrastructure elements (hardware and software), e.g. in energy, transport or waste management services.

[Annex B](#) provides a mapping of issues, indicators and metrics between this International Standard, ISO 37120:2014 and ISO/TS 37151:2015

This International Standard is based on the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) model, which can be briefly described as follows:

- Plan: establish objectives and processes necessary to deliver results in accordance with community purposes;
- Do: implement processes and achieve objectives;
- Check: monitor and measure processes against community policy, objectives and commitments, and report the results;
- Act: take necessary actions to improve performance.

[Figure 1](#) illustrates how this International Standard follows a PDCA approach to the management of sustainable development in communities.