



ISO 37101

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Sustainable
development
in communities

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ISO 37101, *Sustainable development in communities – Management system for sustainable development – Requirements with guidance for use*, sets out requirements and guidelines to help communities become more sustainable. Using the standard will help communities set objectives and define a strategy for sustainable development at the local level that takes into account the views of all interested parties.





What is **sustainable development?**

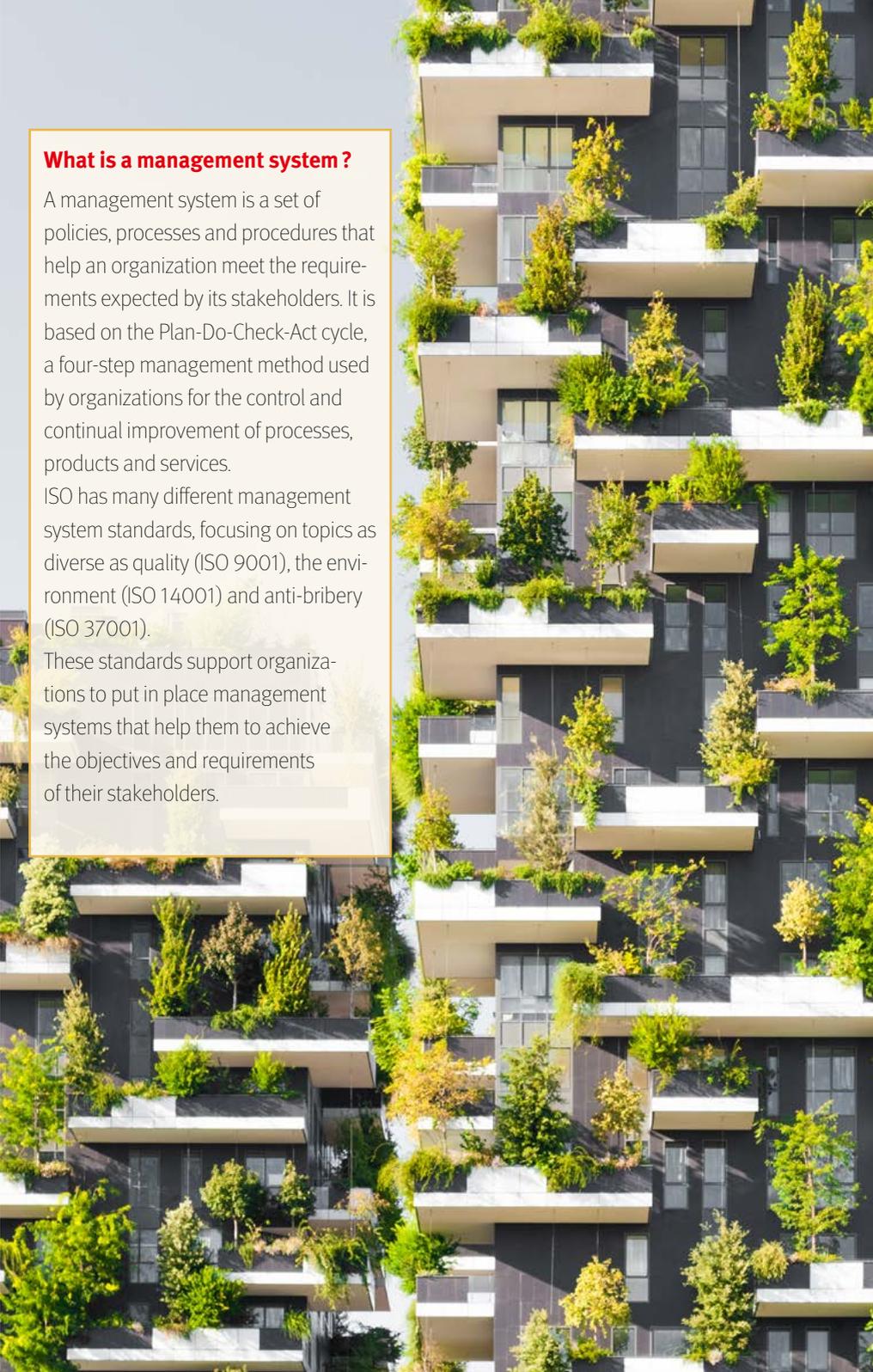
Sustainable development can be defined as development that meets the environmental, social and economic needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. With a growing population and increasing demands placed on the planet, it is one of the biggest challenges facing the world today and the subject of much debate by politicians and business leaders. In the end, though, many of the concrete actions to build a sustainable future are made at the local community level by the citizens themselves, and this is what ISO 37101 has been designed to support.

What is a management system ?

A management system is a set of policies, processes and procedures that help an organization meet the requirements expected by its stakeholders. It is based on the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle, a four-step management method used by organizations for the control and continual improvement of processes, products and services.

ISO has many different management system standards, focusing on topics as diverse as quality (ISO 9001), the environment (ISO 14001) and anti-bribery (ISO 37001).

These standards support organizations to put in place management systems that help them to achieve the objectives and requirements of their stakeholders.





How can ISO 37101 **help** promote **sustainable development in communities?**

ISO 37101 has been designed to help communities **define their sustainable development objectives** and put in place a **strategy** to achieve them.

Defining objectives

ISO 37101 sets out the broad principles (referred to in the standard as “purposes of sustainability”) of what a community may wish to achieve with a sustainable development strategy, such as responsible resource use, preserving the environment and improving the well-being of citizens. In addition, it requires communities to take into account sustainability issues such as governance, empowerment, education, health and mobility, which will help to define its sustainable development objectives.

Developing a strategy

ISO 37101 is a **management system standard** (see box on opposite page for more information). It sets out the steps a community needs to take in order to achieve its sustainable development goals, such as creating an action plan, allocating responsibilities and measuring performance. Like other management system standards, it is also based on the continual improvement principle, which means users are required to regularly adjust their objectives and strategy to ensure they are constantly moving forward.

Who can use ISO 37101?

ISO 37101 has been designed to be used at the community level by a multi-actor structure. This reflects the wide variety of players that need to be involved in the management of real-life projects in cities and communities.

This unique approach means that one of the first steps when using the standard is to create the group or structure that will implement it on behalf of the community.





Alternatively, a community may want to mandate an external organization to drive the implementation of the standard. Whatever the choice made, it is important that as many interested parties as possible are involved when defining and implementing the sustainable development strategy. Any group set-up must be able to successfully involve all actors in the community, from citizens to local government and from urban developers to local commerce.

ISO 37101 defines a **community** as a “group of people with an arrangement of responsibilities, activities and relationships”. In many cases, a community may have a defined geographical boundary, but this is not always true. The standard is applicable to communities of all sizes, structures and types, from small villages to cities in both developed and developing countries.

In addition to implementing the standard at the community level, anyone involved in the life of a community, for example a local developer, may also use the standard to ensure that his or her plans take into account the principles of sustainable development.



..... What **benefits** will **ISO 37101** bring?

The ultimate goal of implementing ISO 37101 is to create a more sustainable future for communities. This means an improved local environment, a happier and healthier place for citizens, and a community that can better anticipate and adapt to natural disasters, economic shocks and climate change.

But ISO 37101 will also bring a host of additional benefits to communities, some during the early stages of implementation. For example:

- Implementing ISO 37101 may require the creation of a specific structure within a community that is mandated to drive the sustainable development process. Merely defining this structure, where the future of the community can be discussed openly between many actors, may bring a number of benefits.

- ISO 37101 puts a strong emphasis on involving all interested parties in discussions to define and implement a sustainable development strategy, which means the community's ability to connect with all its stakeholders will be improved. Citizens of a community are naturally one of the most important stakeholder groups, so any future development of the community should reflect their needs.
- The principles and themes included in the standard reflect international best practice on sustainable development, and are wholly compatible with evolving ideas in the sector.
- ISO 37101 underlines the importance of deciding collectively on objectives, a strategy and a timeline in which to get there ; this gives greater visibility to wider stakeholders as to the sustainable development approach adopted by the community.



..... How to **get started** with **ISO 37101**?

There are a number of ways an organization can implement ISO 37101 for sustainable development in communities, but here are a few tips to get you started.

Tip 1 – Define the structure or group that will drive the implementation of the standard. It is important that the interests of as many stakeholders as possible be reflected in this group.

Tip 2 – Assess the current situation of sustainable development in the community and define who else will need to be implicated in the process.

Tip 3 – Define the sustainable development strategy for the community by looking at the six principles (referred to as “purposes of sustainability” in the standard) and the 12 issues highlighted. Asking these questions will help create a framework and identify the objectives that are important to your specific community.





More information

- ISO Website
www.iso.org
- ISO Website section on sustainable development
www.iso.org/iso/sustainable_development.htm
- ISO Website section on social responsibility
<http://www.iso.org/iso/iso26000>
- ISO Website section on management standards
www.iso.org/iso/management-standards
- *ISOfocus* magazine
www.iso.org/isofocus

About ISO

ISO (International Organization for Standardization) is an independent, non-governmental international organization with a membership of 162* national standards bodies. Through its members, it brings together experts to share knowledge and develop voluntary, consensus-based, market-relevant International Standards that support innovation and provide solutions to global challenges. ISO has published more than 21000* International Standards and related documents covering almost every industry, from technology to food safety, to agriculture and healthcare. For more information, please visit www.iso.org.

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