

DRAFT INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

ISO/DIS 44004

ISO/TC 286

Secretariat: BSI

Voting begins on:
2021-04-02

Voting terminates on:
2021-06-25

Collaborative business relationship management — Guidelines for large organizations seeking collaboration with MSMEs

ICS: 03.100.01

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Reference number
ISO/DIS 44004:2021(E)

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ISO copyright office
CP 401 • Ch. de Blandonnet 8
CH-1214 Vernier, Geneva
Phone: +41 22 749 01 11
Email: copyright@iso.org
Website: www.iso.org

Published in Switzerland

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Foreword

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The committee responsible for this document is ISO/TC 286 *Collaborative business relationship management*.

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Introduction

Introduction alternative 1

The aim of this document is to establish guidelines for how large organizations can adjust their approach when collaborating with MSMEs. It is based on the principles for successful collaborative business relationship management as described in ISO 44000. A similar document, ISO 44003, provides guidelines to MSMEs on how to adopt the same principles. When read in conjunction, ISO 44004 and ISO 44003 facilitates the understanding of how to apply the principles for successful collaboration from both a large company working with MSMEs and an MSME perspective.

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Collaborative business relationship management — Guidelines for large organizations seeking collaboration with MSMEs

1 Scope

This document gives guidance for large organizations seeking to engage Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSME) within their Collaborative relationship programmes

It mirrors the 12 collaborative relationship management principles which underpin ISO 44001; *Collaborative business relationship management systems — Requirements and framework*.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references.

3 Terms and definitions

There are no terms and definitions.

4 Context

The recommendations in this document are based on the premise and experience that many large organizations tend to have evolved requirements, processes, templates and systems in place that are optimized to work within their own business while working primarily for and together with other large organizations. In some cases these processes and systems give rise to an increased focus on internal requirements, causing the organization to be perceived as self-centred on compliance rather than interested in identifying and paying attention to the needs of partners, especially MSMEs that will be smaller and tend to have less need for complex governance structures.

MSMEs will typically bring more agility and flexibility to a collaborative relationship. They are also likely to have more limited resources and structures when it comes to management processes and have many times been overwhelmed by the requirements which are imposed through the processes and systems of larger organizations.

Large organizations are likely to have processes and tools for collaboration but they are not designed to bring out the best performance of MSMEs in collaborative relationships. Often where large organizations have taken the lead in process and governance of collaboration initiatives with MSMEs, one-size-fits-all processes and requirements have weighed down their smaller partners that have tried to conform to a way of working that is unnatural to them. When this mismatch occurs all parties will miss out on the intended and expected value return of the collaboration and real financial, resourcing and efficiency barriers will occur for the MSMEs.

Large organizations experiencing some or all of the issues described above are likely to benefit from learning to pragmatically adjust their way of working on more MSME-friendly terms and achieve better alignment, in line with the recommendations in this document. Consequently, this will lead to greater value from the relationship and a more positive experience for the MSME when working with the large organization.

5 Implementation

5.1 Relationship management

A structured process to manage and sustain collaborative relationships underpins their success. To be sustainable over time, a collaborative relationship needs to be based on systems and processes, whether internal or jointly developed, together with a continued focus on monitoring and developing competence and behaviours. Collaborative relationships that are based solely on personal relationships, although important, are vulnerable where personnel may change over time.

When larger, more complex, organizations evaluate the robustness of small company processes they should be aware of the need for these organizations for less complex processes. It is the lean management structure that allows smaller organizations to be more dynamic, creative and flexible.

A policy that acknowledges the need for scaling your relationship approach to be fit for purpose with smaller organizations can be a key enabler for realizing the value of collaboration initiatives between large organizations and MSMEs.

Complex processes, systems and organizational structures of larger organizations may be difficult for any partner to navigate and is likely to be particularly complex for smaller organizations. An MSME relationship manager can act as direction finder for smaller organizations to navigate internal structures and support engagement.

For larger organizations used to working in, with and for other large organizations, internal processes may be set up to operate together with single entities. Amongst MSMEs however, it is not uncommon to form ecosystems or clusters to deliver as single but connected entities. This can be challenging for larger organizations and cause them to miss out on valuable collaborative relationship opportunities. It will require top level support and processes to ensure appropriate risk management for all parties.

Recommendations

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1. Consider establishing a policy for encouraging engagement with smaller organizations.
2. Consider appointing a MSME relationship manager with appropriate accountability to specifically support smaller organizations as appropriate.
3. Establish a platform to address the engagement process for all partners. This can be done by producing a joint relationship management plan in which the partners mutually define how they will work together to achieve single and joint objectives in the relationship. It will also help each organization understand the structure and workings of the other.
4. Ensure, if appropriate, that you have the top level support along with processes and capabilities to work with MSME clusters or ecosystems of MSMEs.

5.2 Visions and Values

The visions and values of organizations wanting to work together will have an impact on the

effectiveness of the collaboration. Operating a collaborative business relationship will inevitably involve the reputation, ethics and culture of partner organizations. As each party considers the value of a collaborative relationship, the profile of the organization and potential compatibility with partners will be a key factor in establishing and aligning their capabilities and joint performance.

The visions and values of larger organizations may have significant internal and external implications which could result in reputational risks when engaging with third parties. As such they may have extensive requirements to ensure compliance to their policies that smaller organizations do not have the resources or systems in place to accommodate. Larger organizations that operate multiple and often complex compliance requirements may benefit from adopting a more flexible approach when dealing with smaller organizations.