
**Sustainable cities and communities —
Transforming our cities — Guidance
for practical local implementation of
ISO 37101**

*Villes et communautés territoriales durables — Transformer nos villes
— Document d'orientation pour la mise en oeuvre pratique de l'ISO
37101 au plan local*

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Foreword

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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).

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For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, 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 www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 268, *Sustainable cities and communities*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

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Introduction

The unprecedented growth in urban population across the globe presents massive challenges to governments and their citizens. At the same time, this trend offers an opportunity to find new ways of managing cities and the overall impact of human settlements on the environment, respecting planetary boundaries¹⁾, addressing in particular climate change and loss of biodiversity. Accordingly, many communities, both large and small, are therefore committed to sustainable development.

On 25 September 2015, many countries through the United Nations committed to adopting 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) addressing a broad range of development issues, including ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring sustainable levels of prosperity for all²⁾. Each goal has specific targets to be achieved by 2030. However, UN SDG 11b specifies that by 2020 cities should embark on integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, and resilience to disaster. Achieving these goals requires coordinated work by governments, the private sector, civil society and citizens. Cities, in particular, are key sites of, and actors in, sustainable development. Local governments play a key organizing role in building more sustainable and desirable collective futures. ISO 37101 refers to the SDGs: "When evaluating the contribution to achieve the six purposes of sustainability, taking into account the twelve sustainability areas of action, the organization shall *consider the UN SDGs* (in particular Goal 11), as well as their **potential implementation** in communities".

ISO 37101 is a management system standard for communities that commit to the sustainable development of their administrative area or territory. **This document applies ISO 37101 to specific types of communities: cities, towns, villages or other kinds of human settlements** with territorial boundaries and administrative authority. Building on and operationalizing the general requirements set out in ISO 37101, this document offers practical guidance to all types of cities and other settlements on initiating, planning, implementing, measuring and managing sustainable development activities in a way that is holistic, inclusive and based on sustainability principles. Successful sustainable development should deliver well integrated environmental and societal outcomes (social cohesion, economic stability and people's quality of life), and other long-lasting benefits.

The purpose of this document is to guide organizing bodies, usually local governments, in their efforts to stimulate and coordinate sustainable development. This document is primarily designed to assist with city-wide strategies. Other ISO standards might apply or other guidance might be developed for schemes on a broader or smaller scale. This document helps cities to raise questions without necessarily providing standardized answers. It provides a common framework that facilitates exchange and communication.

This document recommends the different steps that local governments should take to ensure that, in their city or community, their actions contribute to the achievement of the six purposes of sustainable development set out in ISO 37101. It applies the ISO 37101 Plan-Do-Check-Act systems approach (PDCA) to local governments. PDCA is a management methodology of five steps, based on political commitment, used to ensure the continuous improvement of a wide range of complex processes. This document also gives guidance for establishing, implementing, maintaining and continually improving such a management system to enable local governments to follow a systematic approach to sustainable development.

ISO 37101 and this document coalesce around *six main purposes* that typically express and underpin the values of communities that wish to develop sustainably: overall attractiveness, the preservation and improvement of the environment, resilience, responsible resource use, social cohesion and the well-being of citizens. These purposes are explored across *12 closely relevant sustainable development areas of action*.

1) See ISO 37101:2016, Introduction.

2) See UN Report 'Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development', <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld/publication>. Use of the word 'transforming' in the title of the current document represents a direct connection to this UN report, seeking to highlight the role of cities in securing the broad transformation required by the SDGs.

In addition to recommendations for the use of a management system approach, this document provides local governments with a methodological framework based on cross-tabulation of the purposes and areas of action that allows users to explore systematically whether existing and new strategies, programs, plans or services inter-connect and make a positive contribution to the sustainable development of cities and other settlements.

Following the introductory clauses outlining the scope of this document ([Clause 1](#)), relevant normative references ([Clause 2](#)) and a set of terms and definitions drawn principally from ISO 37101 ([Clause 3](#)), this document identifies three main components for successful implementation of a management system for sustainable development, as described in [Figure 1](#):

- 1) In [Clause 4](#), a **political commitment** that supposes:
 - city council leadership of a scheme and the expression of a vision for its implementation;
 - one organization in charge of the management of the scheme;
 - involvement of all relevant interested parties;
 - awareness, capacity building and reinforcement of staff competencies.
- 2) In [Clause 5](#), a **management system of the scheme** that mobilizes all relevant fields for the sustainable development of cities, cross-analysing the 12 areas of action and six purposes, with four main stages:
 - baseline review;
 - establishing the strategy, which includes identifying and prioritizing the objectives according to the policy, that provides the global vision, conformity obligations, resources and their contribution to the six purposes;
 - establishing the action plan;
 - conducting evaluation of performance and continual improvement.
- 3) In [Clause 6](#), robust **support for the management system** that ensures:
 - mobilization of adequate resources;
 - a communication plan at each stage of the process;
 - a record of the documented information.