CertiSource

Stakeholder Engagement

Policy 08 v4.00

1 August 2017

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Policy Applicable To	All CertiSource Staff
Policy Managed By	The CertiSource Programme Director owns this policy and can be approached in relation to this policy:
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Approved By	Paul Wilson
Position	Programme Director
Signed	

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1. Policy Background

1.1. Introduction

This document contains the policy that governs CertiSource engagement with stakeholders.

This policy has been formulated to comply with international standards and best practices in stakeholder engagement.

Frameworks, standards and codes drawn on to provide the guiding principles for this policy include the AA (AccountAbility) 1000 Series (on systematic accountability, including engagement), the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Sustainability Reporting Guidelines (on reporting), and The Stakeholder Engagement Manual Volume 1 & 2 (Stakeholder Research Associates Canada Inc, United Nations Environment Programme, AccountAbility).

1.2. Scope

This policy is designed for reference and guidance for CertiSource staff at any point (pre through post) in the process of engaging with stakeholders.

CertiSource recognises that a definitive and prescriptive final list of material issues on which engagement with stakeholders will be conducted is not feasible. Nevertheless core material issues where CertiSource will always engage with stakeholders are:

- Developments of, and changes to, any legality verification standards (this would include opening new operations in a new location);
- Auditing standards;
- Policies that impact CertiSource's working relationship with external parties;
- Policies that have impact on CertiSource's scope of timber legality claims.

As a requisite a formal review/revision of CertiSource core material issues is carried out at least once a year.

1.3. Definitions

For purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply:

Accountability	An organisation can be considered as accountable when it accounts to its stakeholders regarding material issues (transparency), responds to stakeholders regarding these issues (responsiveness) on an ongoing basis, and complies with standards to which it is voluntarily committed, and with rules and regulations that it must comply with for statutory reasons (compliance)[1].
Communication	Any form of information sharing with stakeholders, generally through one-way, one-off processes.
Consultation	The process of gathering information or advice from stakeholders and taking those views into consideration to make decisions, change plans or set directions.

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[1] *Source for this definition: Institute of Social and Ethical Accountability.*

Dialogue	An exchange of views and opinion to explore different perspectives, needs and different strategies to address an issue or initiative. The aim is generally to create and foster mutual understanding, trust and cooperation on a strategy or initiative.
Engagement	An organisation's efforts to involve and understand stakeholders and their concerns in its activities and decision-making processes.
Inclusivity	The notion of including the views and needs of all stakeholder groups. Inclusivity requires the consideration of 'voiceless' stakeholders including future generations and the environment[2].
Material(ity)	Knowledge of the concerns those are relevant and important to both an organization and its stakeholders.
Partnerships	In the context of corporate social responsibility interactions, partnership has been defined as "people and organizations from some combination of public, business and civil constituencies who engage in common societal aims through combining their resources and competencies"[3] sharing both risks and benefits.
Responsiveness	Coherently and consistently responding to stakeholders' and the organisation's material issues, including the adequate communication of these responses to its stakeholders.
Stakeholder	Stakeholders broadly defined are those groups or individuals: (a) that can reasonably be expected to be significantly affected by an organization's products, services and activities (b) Whose actions can reasonably be expected to affect the ability of an organization to successfully implement its strategies and achieve its objectives[4].

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[2]*Definition adapted from the AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard.*
[3]*Source for this definition: Partnership Alchemy: New Social Partnerships in Europe (Copenhagen: The Copenhagen Centre, 2001).*
[4]*Source for this definition: GRI Sustainability Reporting Guidelines.*

2. Policy Standards

2.1 General

Stakeholder engagement is core to CertiSource's mission of promoting CertiSource's organisational accountability and transparency.

CertiSource will effectively and strategically engage stakeholders to:

- Give those who have a right to be heard the opportunity to be considered in decision-making processes;
- Allow CertiSource to learn from stakeholders;
- Achieve better management of risk and reputation;
- Where appropriate allow and encourage the pooling of resources (technology, knowledge, people and money) to solve problems and reach objectives;
- Build and strengthen trust between CertiSource and its stakeholders.

2.2 Principles of Stakeholder Engagement

The process for CertiSource stakeholder engagement has inclusivity as its foundation consistent with the AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard.

CertiSource is committed to reflect, at all stages of a process, the views and needs of all stakeholder groups to that process.

Views will always be sought in an engagement process that allows stakeholders to express themselves openly and without fear or restriction. Inclusivity also requires the consideration of 'voiceless' stakeholders that includes the environment.

The foundation of inclusivity in stakeholder engagement is underpinned by a number of principles. Stakeholder engagement will be:

- Purposeful;
- Transparent;
- Meaningful;
- Timely;
- Responsive.

Purposeful:

The reason, scope, and potential outcomes of any engagement should be clearly articulated at each stage.

Transparent:

All stakeholders should have access to engagement outputs, and the comments of other stakeholders.

Meaningful:

Engagement should address the material concerns important to both CertiSource and its stakeholders, and aim to get a complete and balanced picture of material impacts.

Timely:

Any engagement process should balance the need to give participants adequate time to respond and any need for expedient remedies to issues.

Responsive:

Following an engagement process there must be a timely and coherent response to stakeholders' expectations and concerns (responsiveness).

2.3 Processes of Stakeholder Identification and Engagement

CertiSource recognizes and accepts that relationships with various stakeholder groups will be fluid, and that the map of stakeholders may look different from issue to issue, and new stakeholders potentially can emerge and old ones disappear over periods of time.

Examples of key stakeholders include:

- NGOs;
- Financial institutions;
- CertiSource clients;
- Multi-stakeholder forums;
- government institutions;
- Supply chain members;
- Scientific organisations;
- ISO Accreditation Bodies (JAS-ANZ).

CertiSource will use dynamic tools to go through the process of mapping stakeholder material issues and relevant stakeholder groups. As a requisite a formal review/revision is carried out at least once a year.

Stakeholder material issues and relevant stakeholder groups are reviewed and confirmed at the start of every individual engagement process.

Engagement with stakeholders is carried out in line with the principles of engagement described above.

CertiSource recognizes that there are numerous options for the process of engaging with stakeholders. These range from basic communications through to consultation and dialogue to more innovative processes such as advisory panels or multi-stakeholder forums.

CertiSource will seek to ensure it uses techniques of engagement that are appropriate for a given issue depending on CertiSource's objectives and the range of stakeholder needs.

At a minimum CertiSource will seek to ensure techniques of engagement will:

1. Address the stakeholder material expectations and concerns;
2. Ensure stakeholders' concerns, perceptions and viewpoints can be expressed and recorded fully and accurately;
3. Enable CertiSource to provide a coherent response to stakeholders' expectations and concerns.

To ensure the continuous use of international best practices CertiSource will re-evaluate the tools and guidelines it uses for stakeholder engagement techniques annually.

2.4 Reporting following Stakeholder Engagement

CertiSource recognizes reporting as an integral and vital part of any stakeholder engagement in terms of providing feedback to those directly involved in the engagement process and as a way to inform those that were not involved.

CertiSource is committed to reporting standards that comply with international best practices, and as with engagement standards and procedures these will be reviewed annually.

CertiSource recognizes that as an organization it may not on all occasions agree with or be in a position to comply with the whole range of stakeholder concerns and interests.

Regardless of this CertiSource is committed to report coherently and consistently on any engagement process.

There are numerous ways to report back to stakeholders, but as a minimum an adequate response will include:

• Acknowledgement of the key concerns;
• A prioritisation of issues (including how this was determined);
• Action implemented since engagement;
• Next steps within a fixed timeframe.

2.5 Reviewing Stakeholder Engagement

CertiSource is committed to at least one annual review of its stakeholder engagement processes and activities with a view to learn from successes and mistakes, and to identify areas where further development and improvements of the stakeholder engagement process are needed and can be made.

Resulting recommendations will be fed into subsequent engagement cycles to shape the prioritisation of key stakeholders and material issues, and the commitment of the necessary resources.

Where appropriate CertiSource is committed to sharing any lessons learnt not only with others within the organization, but also with our peers, business partners and stakeholders.

3. Related Information

3.1 Related Polices and Documents

This policy has connections to the following CertiSource Policy Statements.

Policy 01: Policy Statement

Policy 02: Policy Development

This policy has connections to the following external documents:

- AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard Exposure Draft: AA1000SES, London (2005).
- The Stakeholder Engagement Manual Volume i: The Guide To Practitioners' Perspectives On Stakeholder Engagement – Stakeholder Research Associates Canada Inc, United Nations Environment Programme, AccountAbility.
- The Stakeholder Engagement Manual Volume ii: The Guide To Practitioners' Perspectives On Stakeholder Engagement - Stakeholder Research Associates Canada Inc, United Nations Environment Programme, AccountAbility.
- Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Sustainability Reporting Guidelines- GRI.

3.2 Policy Review

To ensure that this policy statement remains relevant it will be reviewed regularly at a minimum frequency of every six months. Revisions will be made when necessary to provide solutions to any practical problems encountered.

4. Document History

Version	Date Approved	Description
3.00	14 October 2014	1. Document history added (i.e. this section). 2. Programme Manager changed to Programme Director. 3. Reference (section 3.2) to SOPs deleted. 4. Scope 1.2: Point added: "Policies that have impact on CertiSource's scope of timber legality claims". 5. In the "approvals" space the date of the next revision is deleted. This is to avoid confusion as to whether or not a policy is still valid (e.g. the date of the next revision in the past failed to be changed after a review if nothing was changed in a policy.
3.01	1st December 2014	6. Section 2.2 added: Examples of key stakeholders include: • NGOs; • Financial institutions; • CertiSource clients; • Multi-stakeholder forums; • Government institutions; • Supply chain members; • Scientific organisations; • ISO Accreditation Bodies (JAS-ANZ).
	1st August 2015	1. Contact details changed and general review.
3.02	June 29 2016	1. Transfer to new template
4.00	1st August 2017	1. Overall check on continuing validity and relevance. 2. Up-dated to v4.00 (round number) to streamline with other revisions during this annual review. 3. Included effective date.