AWS Standards Development Procedure

Version 1.0

Nov 2016

Contents

PURPOSE

This document sets out the procedure for development, review and revision of the AWS Standard and the associated Certification and Interim Accreditation Requirements. It includes the structure and content of the standard along with the rationale for thresholds of compliance.

This document is a normative reference which will be used alongside other normative AWS documents to assign responsibilities, manage processes and set deadlines for the timely and effective development, review and revision of the AWs Standard System. This procedure is intended to inform the process of development, review and revision, rather than set out in detail here. Such processes will be formulated and agreed by the AWS Technical Committee.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THESE REQUIREMENTS

The AWS Technical Committee is the body responsible for the *AWS Standards Development Procedure*. The Technical Committee will review the contents of this document on an ongoing basis. A record of amendments is shown below.

Amendment Record

Version No.	Date of Publication	Description of Amendment
Draft 1.3	Sept 2016	Post TC Comments
Draft 1.4	Oct 2016	Board Comments integrated
Version 1.0	Nov 2016	Approved

**ALLIANCE FOR WATER STEWARDSHIP (SCIO)**
Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation (ECCI), High School Yards, Infirmary Street, Edinburgh EHI 1LZ, Scotland
TEL: +44 (0)131 651 4690 | EMAIL: INFO@ALLIANCEFORWATERSTEWARDSHIP.ORG

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AWS STANDARD SYSTEM

AWS is the standards system owner and keeper of The AWS International Water Stewardship Standard ("the AWS Standard"). As such, AWS is responsible for implementation of the AWS Standard, including standards development, capacity building, assurance, labelling and monitoring. To achieve these goals, AWS has structured its standards system into three programs: verification program, training & capacity-building program, and membership program (Figure 1). These three programs are complementary. They serve to reinforce one another to ensure that the AWS Standard System provides a credible and robust implementation of the AWS Standard.

Figure 1. Diagram of the AWS Standard System.

AWS Standard System		
Verification Program	Training & Capacity Building Program	Membership Program
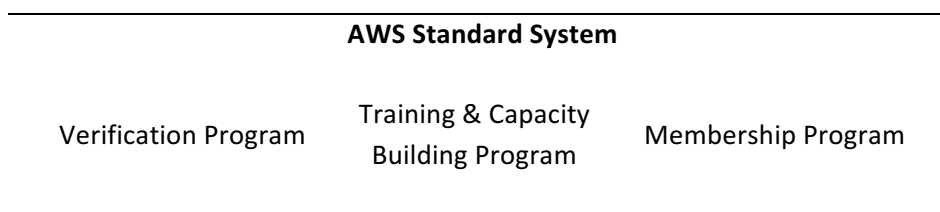
AWS STANDARD FRAMEWORK

The AWS Standard System is rooted in four normative documents which, together, comprise the AWS 'Standard Framework'. The scope and interrelationship of these normative documents is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Interrelation of the four normative documents of the AWS standards framework.

Normative Document	Purpose	Program	Primary Target Audience
AWS Standard	Sets the Standard	AWS Verification Program	Implementers CABs
AWS Self-Verification Requirements	Sets the process for self-verification	AWS Verification Program	Implementers
AWS Certification Requirements	Sets the process for certification	AWS Verification Program	CABs AWS or AB

AWS Interim Accreditation Requirements	Sets the criteria and the process for accreditation	AWS Interim Accreditation Program AWS Verification Program & AWS Training & Capacity Building Program	CABs Trainers Consultants

First and foremost is *The AWS International Water Stewardship Standard* which lays the foundation of the AWS Standard System by establishing the actions, criteria and indicators for how sites should manage water at the site level and how water should be stewarded beyond the boundaries of the site. This is a normative document which is applicable, on a voluntary basis, to any site wishing to demonstrate its conformity with the AWS Standard.

The second normative document of the AWS standard framework is the *AWS Self-Verification Requirements*. This document describes the mandatory requirements for the processes of self-verification which are to be followed by implementers.

The third normative document of the AWS standard framework is the *AWS Certification Requirements* (i.e. this document). It describes the mandatory requirements for certification which are to be followed by CABs.

The *AWS Interim Accreditation Requirements* is the fourth normative document of the AWS standard framework. It sets out the mandatory criteria that AWS (or accreditation body) will use to evaluate the competency of AWS service providers (CABs, trainers and consultants). Scope is therefore applicable at two program levels - verification and training & capacity-building.

AWS may produce additional normative documents in support of program-level objectives. Such objectives may include establishing rules and requirements for membership, branding and claims, training, capacity-building, and related topics.

In addition to normative documents, AWS may also produce guidance documents from time to time. The purpose of guidance is to help implementers, service providers, and stakeholders to better understand AWS requirements and how to implement them effectively. For example, AWS intends to produce a guidance document entitled *AWS Verification System* which provides an overview of how all the different elements of the AWS Verification Program interact to deliver a credible assurance to stakeholders on AWS claims.

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Fig.2 Life Cycle of the Standard

A   INTRODUCTION

The Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) is a global, non-profit organization dedicated to advancing water stewardship around the world. As part of this mission, AWS developed *The AWS International Water Stewardship Standard*. The AWS Standard was the result of an international, four-year, ISEAL compliant, multi-stakeholder process which responded to the growing need for evidence of robust water risk and impact mitigation efforts. It is built around the notion of implementing water stewardship at the site level in a way that understands and engages with the broader catchment to work with other water stakeholders to address shared water-related challenges and opportunities.

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AWS has developed a verification system for implementing the AWS Standard which is consistent with the ISEAL Assurance Code, providing consistency, rigour, competence, impartiality, transparency, and accessibility. A central feature of the AWS Standard System is the role of independent certification by third-party Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs).

AWS will implement the AWS Standard System in two phases: an initial phase will be used work out any kinks and ensure capacity is sufficient to meet system needs. For the second phase (Phase 2: 2017+), AWS will update the AWS Standard System and add improved functionality pending AWS member input. Throughout Phase 1, AWS will itself run the accreditation program. This time will be used to gain experience with the system and examine the potential of transferring the accreditation function to an independent accreditation body. Therefore, the present document refers to the AWS accreditation function as an 'interim' arrangement.

As an ISEAL member, AWS is committed to an equitable, open and transparent approach to developing its standard. Accordingly, the AWS Standard System follows ISEAL's *Standard Setting, Assurance, and Impacts Codes*. The AWS Standard is also intended to be complementary to existing systems such as ISO 14001. And AWS's approach – utilizing the competencies of independent third-party entities to assess compliance with the standard - draws heavily on existing international norms which apply to conformity assessment bodies (e.g. ISO 17065).

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B   SCOPE

This procedure applies to The Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS). It describes how AWS will develop, review and revise its Standards System.   This applies not only to the AWS Standard, but also to the associated Self Verification, Certification and Interim Accreditation Requirements.

In accordance with the ISEAL Standard-Setting Code, AWS Standards System Development Procedure seeks to include all interests and ensure that no one interest can dominate in the process of standards development, review and revision.

C   NORMATIVE REFERENCES

AWS Certification Requirements, Version 1.0, July 2015

AWS Self-Verification Requirements, Version 1.0, July 2015

AWS Interim Accreditation Requirements, Version 1.0, July 2015

AWS Glossary of Terms, Version 1.0, July 2015

AWS Theory of Change,

The AWS International Water Stewardship Standard, Version 1.0, April 2014

ISEAL Alliance Code of Good Practice: Setting Social and Environmental Standards v5.0, June 2010 ("ISEAL Standard-Setting Code")

ISEAL Alliance Code of Good Practice: Assuring Compliance with Social and Environment Standards v1.0 ("ISEAL Assurance Code")

ISO 17011:2004 Conformity assessment — General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies (§5.9, Complaints)

D   ASSOCIATED GUIDANCE

None

E   TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

All terms are defined in the AWS Glossary of Terms.

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1   GENERAL PROVISIONS

1.1   Standard Development Procedures

Aim: AWS follows transparent procedures that are improved over time.

1.1.1   This Procedure forms the basis of the standard development process under which the AWS Standards System is developed and revised.

1.1.2   This Procedure shall be made available to stakeholders, on the AWS website.

1.1.3   This Procedure shall be reviewed prior to a review of the AWS Standard or within five years of approval, whichever is sooner, and shall take comments from stakeholders about this Procedure into account.

1.2   Consistency Between Standards, water use protocols and tools.

Aim: AWS seeks to avoid duplication and to be consistent with standards that have overlapping scopes, and to incorporate water use protocols and tools, while not limiting innovation and improvement.

1.2.1   At the outset of a standards development process, AWS shall:

1.2.1.1   Identify and inform organisations that have developed international standards that include water stewardship provisions, as well as water use protocols and tools, of its intention to develop or revise the standard;

1.2.1.2   Seek input from them on the review, process and terms of reference for the revision of the standard; and

1.2.1.3   Encourage their participation in the Standards subsequent development.

1.2.1.4   Actively explore possibilities for unilateral or mutual recognition for parts or all of the system requirements.

1.2.2   In order to facilitate stakeholder engagement in the AWS Standards development AWS shall prepare an annual work programme that includes:

1.2.2.1   Contact information,

1.2.2.2   Any current standards development work,

1.2.2.3   Any standards adopted in the preceding period; and

1.2.2.4   Publish the annual work programme for the next year on the AWS website at the end of each year.

Guidance: The work programme does not need to be a separate document, e.g. it can appear as a page on the website.

2   STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT

2.1   Terms of Reference for the standard

Aim: For AWS to clearly articulate what the standard aims to achieve and why the standard continues to be needed.

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2.1.1   AWS shall develop or update the terms of reference (TOR) for the standard. These shall be included in the introductory pages of the standard.

2.1.2   The TOR shall include the following elements:

2.1.2.1   The applicability, including sectoral scope of the standard and the intended geographic application;

2.1.2.2   A justification of the need for the standard, including: an assessment of water related sustainability issues; an explanation of whether the standard will meet the expressed need; and documentation of other standards operating or in development that meet all or part of the expressed need;

2.1.2.3   Clear social, environmental and economic Outcomes that the standard seeks to achieve and how those are linked to the organization's intended change

2.1.2.4   *AWS Theory of Change*; and

2.1.2.5   An assessment of risks in implementing the standard and how to mitigate these, including: identification of factors that could have a negative impact on the ability of the standard to achieve its outcomes; unintended consequences that could arise from its implementation; and possible corrective actions that could be taken to address these potential risks.

2.2   Stakeholder Identification

Aim: For AWS to have an understanding of who its stakeholders are.

2.2.1   At the outset of a standards development process, the AWS shall update lists of sectors that have an interest in the standard and define key stakeholder groups within those sectors, based on the standard's scope and its social, environmental and economic outcomes.

2.2.2   Stakeholders shall be identified on both an international and regional basis, in order to determine that all regions are represented, whilst maintaining the international focus of the standard.

2.2.3 AWS shall:

2.2.3.1 seek to achieve representative participation in its standards development activities, as evidenced by records of stakeholder input; and

2.2.3.2   to this end, set participation goals for interest sector engagement that can be evaluated and updated over time.

Guidance: Key stakeholder groups include directly affected stakeholders (those who will be impacted by implementation of the standard) and may include indirectly affected stakeholders who have an interest in the application of the standard. Scope includes the sector and geographies to which the standard applies. As AWS has an international standard, it is important to maintain this focus, whilst reflecting regional perspectives.

2.3   Review process

Aim: For AWS to identify the scope of the revision in order to allocate sufficient time and resources to the next round of standard development.

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2.3.1   AWS shall conduct a review of the standard and its associated implementing documents, prior to initiating a revision process.

2.3.2   The review shall include:

2.3.2.1   a minimum thirty-day consultation of key stakeholder groups to identify areas of the standard that need review and potential revision; and

2.3.2.2   an analysis of all comments received from this consultation and during the time that the standard has been in operation.

2.4   Public Summary of the Standards Development Process

Aim: Stakeholders have the information they need to determine whether and how to participate.

2.4.1   A minimum of thirty days prior to the outset of a process for development of the standard, a summary of the process shall be made publically available that shall include:

2.4.1.1   summary of the TOR for the standard (2.1), including the proposed scope, objectives and justification of the need for the standard;

2.4.1.2   the areas identified for revision during the review process;

2.4.1.3   steps in the standard development process, including timelines and clearly identified opportunities for and means by which stakeholders can contribute; and

2.4.1.4   decision-making procedures, including how decisions are made and who makes them. This will generally follow the decision-making process described in the AWS Technical Committee Terms of Reference, as this is the body that will implement the Standards Development Process.

2.4.1.5   During this period and indeed once the revision process has commenced, stakeholders may suggest ways to improve the process. These shall be duly considered by the Technical Committee.

Guidance: The Public Summary is a concise overview for stakeholders to understand whether and how to engage. If the TOR (2.1) include all of the information outlined in this requirement, and if the TOR are made publicly available, then they can serve as the Public Summary. However, care should be taken to ensure the TORs are accessible to stakeholders.

2.5   Public Consultation

Aim: Stakeholders have sufficient time and opportunity to provide input on the standard and can see how their input has been taken into account.

2.5.1   The public consultation phase for standards development or revision shall include:

2.5.1.1   At least one round of 60 days for comment submissions by stakeholders.

2.5.1.2   A second round of consultation of at least 30 days for stakeholders to give feedback on whether their comments were understood and taken into account and to gain input on substantive, unresolved issues.

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2.5.1.3   Additional rounds of consultation, where substantive, unresolved issues persist after the consultation round(s), or where insufficient feedback was received.

2.5.1.4   Two rounds of public consultation should be included in planning for any standards development process.

2.5.2   Participation in the consultation process is open to all stakeholders; and

2.5.3   AWS proactively seeks the participation of key stakeholder groups.

Guidance: Participation of all key stakeholder groups cannot be ensured but AWS shall make efforts to engage all those key stakeholder groups identified in the stakeholder identification process (see 2.2).

2.5.4   Submissions from consultation periods.

2.5.4.1   AWS shall:

2.5.4.2   Compile all comments received during a consultation period in order to identify material issues;

2.5.4.3   Document how each material issue has been addressed in the standards development;

2.5.4.4   Make this document publicly available on the AWS website; and send it to all parties that submitted comments.

2.5.4.5   Make original comments received during the consultation period publicly available on the AWS website, with attribution to stakeholder groups, but withholding the identity of stakeholder.

2.6   Feasibility Assessment

Aim: Enterprises can implement the standard and assessors can efficiently and effectively evaluate compliance with it.

2.6.1   As part of the AWS Standards development, AWS shall assess:

2.6.1.1   The ability of enterprises to implement the requirements of the AWS Standard;

2.6.1.2   The auditability of the requirements in the standard and;

2.6.1.3   The effectiveness of associated AWS Certification and Accreditation Requirements in assessing conformance with the AWS Standard.

Guidance: This assessment can include consultation with CABs and enterprises applying the standard, field trials or audits, or impact or risk assessments as appropriate.

2.7   Decision-Making

Aim: Stakeholders see that their views are reflected in decision-making

2.7.1   Any Standards Development process shall be led by the AWS Technical Committee.

2.7.2   Membership of the AWS Technical Committee is:

2.7.2.1   open to all stakeholders; and

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2.7.2.2 shall be constituted by a reasonable balance of those stakeholders, including those that are directly affected.

2.7.3 membership criteria and application procedures for becoming a member are transparent and non-discriminatory. These are available on the AWS website.

2.7.4 The Terms of Reference for the Technical Committee include:

2.7.4.1 consensus-based decision making;

2.7.4.2 defined criteria to determine when alternative decision-making procedures should come into effect, in the event that consensus cannot be achieved; and

2.7.4.3 What the decision-making thresholds will be, whilst ensuring that no one stakeholder group or type can control decision-making.

NOTE: AWS is currently undergoing a review of its membership model. This will include the decision making structure, aiming to be inclusive of all stakeholder groups, whilst not allowing any one group to dominate in the decision making process.

Guidance: Consensus is defined as general agreement, characterised by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important stakeholder group.

2.8   Standards' Availability

Aim: The standard and associated requirements are accessible to interested stakeholders.

2.8.1 All approved standards and requirements shall:

2.8.1.1 be published promptly; and

2.8.1.2 be made available for free, in electronic format on the AWS website;

2.8.1.3 contain a summary of major changes from the previous version.

2.8.2 AWS shall make hard copies of public summaries, standards and other related materials available upon request at as low a cost as possible, and covering only reasonable administrative costs.

2.8.3 Standards and supporting documents shall each include:

2.8.3.1 contact information for AWS;

2.8.3.2 the formal status of the document;

2.8.3.3 that the official language is English; and

2.8.3.4 that in the case of inconsistency between versions, reference shall default to the official language version.

2.8.4 AWS shall seek to ensure that translations of the standard are available in additional languages where this supports the use of the standard.

2.8.5 Where AWS authorizes additional translations, it shall have oversight and responsibility for these translations.

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2.9   Review and Revision of Standards

Aim: The AWS Standard remains relevant over time and reflects current stakeholder understanding of good sustainability practices.

2.9.1   AWS Technical Committee, with the support of the AWS Technical Programme, shall:

2.9.1.1   review the AWS Standard including the Guidance Section and associated Certification and Accreditation Requirements at least once every five years for continued relevance and for effectiveness in meeting its stated objectives; and

2.9.1.2   if necessary, revise the AWS Standard, Guidance and associated Requirements within the five-year cycle, in line with the requirements in this section.

2.9.2   In order to maintain the stakeholder consensus achieved and support for the standard, as well as not to cause unnecessary disruption to those implementing the standard, suggestions for revision will need to be presented along with a compelling case for revision.

Guidance: A standard's review considers information gathered from stakeholder input, auditing results and organizational monitoring and evaluation, as well as new knowledge or practices that might require the standard to be updated. If the review concludes that changes to the standard are required, then a standards revision is carried out according to the process outlined in this Procedure. The Guidance that accompanies the AWS Standard is a living document and may be updated as and when new or revised guidance becomes available.

2.9.3   AWS Technical Programme shall:

2.9.3.1   make publicly available the planned timing of the subsequent review; and

2.9.3.2   include this information in the standard.

2.9.4   AWS accepts proposals at any time for revisions or clarifications to the standard.

NOTE: Please refer to the AWS Comments, Complaints and Appeals Procedure: 2.2 Concerns Regarding AWS.

2.9.5   In the case of non-substantive changes to the standard (e.g. to correct typographic errors or outdated references), AWS does not need to conduct a formal revision process but shall include notification of any changes in the AWS newsletter and mark each new version with a version number e.g. V2.1.

2.9.6   In the case of substantive changes to the standard, these shall be considered in the subsequent review and revision process.

2.9.7   Urgent substantive revisions to the standard (in-between regular revisions), shall:

2.9.7.1   Occur if substantive omissions are identified.

2.9.7.2   Follow the process for a regular Review and Revision process.

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2.9.8 Review and Revision of the AWS Interim Accreditation and Certification Requirements may take place at any point in the life of the Standard. Such changes may occur without triggering a full revision of the standard, so long as the change does not materially impact on the intent of the Standard.

Guidance: Substantive omissions include changes to the Standard that would require a change in practice by certified enterprises. Substantive omissions may be considered critical and trigger a revision process if the Technical Committee assess there to be a major risk to the integrity of the system. In this case a recommendation will be made to the AWS Board for decision.

2.10 Transition Period

Aim: Certificate holders, CABs and Accreditation Bodies have adequate time and notice to comply with any new requirements.

2.10.1 AWS shall note in the standard:

2.10.1.1 the date of a revision or reaffirmation of the standard; and

2.10.1.2 the transition period by which the revised standard will come into effect.

2.10.1.3 revised standards shall generally become effective as of 1st January each year.

2.10.1.4 Notice that a revised standard is being introduced shall be given to CABs and any Accreditation Body associated with AWS at least 3 months prior to this date.

2.10.1.5 In the first year, extended timelines may be given to existing certificate holders to come into compliance with changes to the standard i.e. Major Non Conformities may be given one year for compliance, rather than the usual three months.

2.10.2 AWS shall promptly inform its stakeholders of the revised standard and transition period, in particular Conformity Assessment Bodies, and will require them to inform certified enterprises and those who are in the process of certification.

2.11 Records

Aim: Stakeholders can refer to previous consultations to understand the basis for the standard's requirements.

2.11.1 AWS shall keep on file for at least five years, or at least two revision cycles, whichever is the longer period, the following records related to each standards development or revision process:

2.11.1.1.1 policies and procedures guiding the standard development activity;

2.11.1.1.2 lists of stakeholders contacted;

2.11.1.1.3 stakeholders involved at each stage of the process;

2.11.1.1.4 comments received and a synopsis of how those comments were taken into account;

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2.11.1.1.5 all draft and final versions of the standard; and

2.11.1.1.6 make these available to stakeholders upon request.

2.12   Resolving Complaints

Aim: Stakeholders have access to a transparent mechanism for raising concerns about the standard development process and having those concerns considered.

2.12.1   AWS shall make impartial and documented efforts to resolve procedural complaints related to standards development, through the AWS Comments, Complaints and Appeals Procedure.

Guidance: Procedural complaints are complaints about the standard development procedure (how the standard was set), as opposed to substantive complaints, which relate to the content of the standard and which should be taken into account through the regular standards' review and revision process. Refer to the AWS Comments, Complaints and Appeals Procedure for more information.

2.12.2   AWS shall disclose decisions taken on procedural complaints.

3   STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

3.1   Sustainability Outcomes

Aim: The standard only contains requirements that support achievement of the defined sustainability outcomes.

3.1.1   AWS shall state the defined social, environmental and economic outcomes clearly and explicitly in the standard. (see ISEAL Impacts Code)

3.1.2   AWS shall ensure in its standard that:

3.1.2.1   criteria are included to address all of the defined social, environmental and economic outcomes; and

3.1.2.2   only criteria that are relevant to meeting these outcomes are included.

Guidance: Making these links can be accomplished by including introductory language in each section of the standard indicating to which outcomes the criteria relate, or by noting this correlation beside each criterion. The AWS Standard V1-0 describes such outcomes in the Introduction, page 9.

3.1.2.3   AWS shall ensure that any claims made about the standard or about compliance with the standard are consistent with the defined social, environmental and economic outcomes. (see ISEAL Impacts Code 6.5 and ISEAL Claims Good Practice Guide).

Guidance: Claims made about the standard are a type of marketing claim that is used to promote an aspect of, or relationship with a standards system. An example would be an advertisement promoting

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association with a standard or standards system. Claims made about compliance with the standard usually result from a conformity assessment process.

Examples of assured claims include use of logos / labels / trust marks and claims of certification against a standard.

NOTE: A description of the claims that can be made is given in the AWS Self Verification Requirements and AWS Certification Requirements.

3.2   Performance Level

Aim: Requirements in the standard are set at a performance level that results in significant positive sustainability impacts.

3.2.1   The AWS Standard shall:

3.2.1.1   meet or exceed existing regulatory requirements; and

3.2.1.2   clearly reference relevant, existing national and/or international laws and regulations.

3.2.1.3   Address stakeholder concerns which exceed existing regulatory requirements, in order to address the AWS mission.

3.3   Consistent Interpretation

Aim: The standard is consistently interpreted and applied across its full geographic scope.

3.3.1   The AWS Standard shall be consistent with the following requirements:

3.3.1.1   only include language that is clear, specific, objective and verifiable;

3.3.1.2   be expressed in terms of process, management and performance criteria, rather than design or descriptive characteristics;

3.3.1.3   not favour a particular technology or patented item;

3.3.1.4   include definition of the scope to which the standard applies;

3.3.1.5   attribute or cite all original intellectual sources of content; and

3.3.1.6   not present administrative requirements related to assurance, claims or labels or other non-technical issues integrated with technical and/or performance requirements.

Guidance: 'Assurance' requirements can include scoring mechanisms for evaluating compliance, definition of mandatory and improvement requirements, policies on derogations from the standard, etc. 'Other non-technical issues' are issues such as requirements for participation in the scheme.

3.3.2   AWS shall prepare sufficient guidance on the standard to support consistent interpretation of its requirements.

Guidance: In cases where there is a detailed normative standard, additional guidance may not be necessary.

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3.3.3   The AWS Standard shall be used without national or regional adaptations.

3.3.4   National or regional guidance for the AWS Standard shall be as consistent as possible with standard's guidance and at least as stringent.

3.3.5   Disputes that arise from inconsistencies between the standard's guidance and local guidance shall always defer to the AWS Standard, including any associated interpretation.

3.4   Local Applicability

Aim: The standard is relevant in the local contexts where it is applied, based in part on input from local stakeholders.

3.4.1   The process to take into account local economic, social, environmental and regulatory conditions shall reflect the process at an international level, including stakeholder identification and engagement and input to the international standards development, in order that the international standard takes account of local conditions.

3.4.2   The national or regional level may augment the Guidance associated with the Standard at the international level in order to facilitate local implementation.

ALLIANCE FOR WATER STEWARDSHIP (SCIO)
Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation (ECCI), High School Yards, Infirmary Street, Edinburgh EHI 1LZ, Scotland
TEL: +44 (0)131 651 4690 | EMAIL: INFO@ALLIANCEFORWATERSTEWARDSHIP.ORG

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