



IRMA Issues Resolution System Procedure

Version 1.0

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Introduction

The Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) is the answer to a global demand for more socially and environmentally responsible mining. We envision a world where the mining industry respects the human rights and aspirations of affected communities, provides safe, healthy and supportive workplaces, minimizes harm to the environment, and leaves positive legacies. To achieve its vision, IRMA has built an assessment program.

Any party may bring forward any concerns they might have in relation to the IRMA program. The IRMA Issues Resolution System outlined in this document is designed to understand the issues that are brought to IRMA's attention and to get them resolved in an efficient and fair manner with the stakeholder raising the issue and with other relevant parties.

This document is normative and shall be published on the IRMA website. The pathways described in this document shall be used by all involved parties to raise or resolve issues. Where the document refers to 'IRMA', this means the IRMA Secretariat.

1. Overview of the IRMA Issues Resolution System

Outline of the Resolution Process

There are three steps in the IRMA Issues Resolution System:

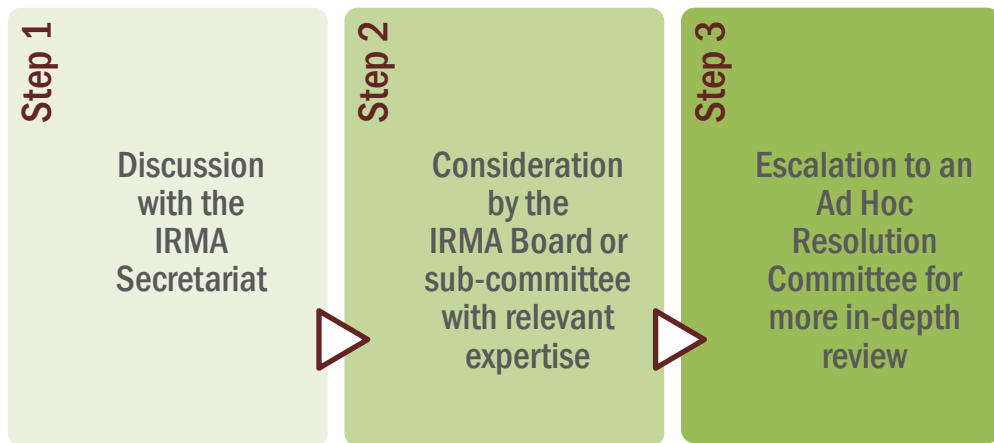
Step 1: Initial discussion of the issue with the IRMA Secretariat.

Step 2: Resolution using appropriate pathway. If the issue is not resolved during the initial discussion, a resolution pathway is selected depending on the type of issue. These pathways include investigation and consideration by the project/operation or audit firm giving rise to the issue, by the IRMA Secretariat, the IRMA Board of Directors, a relevant IRMA sub-committee or advisory group, or a combination thereof.

Stakeholders should note that the IRMA assessment program requires both assessed projects/operations and audit firms to have a publicly accessible complaints mechanism.¹

Step 3: Escalation to an Ad Hoc Resolution Committee. If the issue remains unresolved, an Ad Hoc Resolution Committee is formed if the stakeholder wishes to proceed with resolution. The stakeholder may ask for the support of an advisor in this process. Decisions by an Ad Hoc Resolution Committee are final and cannot be appealed.

¹ For projects/operations, stakeholders can find the requirements in Chapter 1.4 of the IRMA *Standard for Responsible Mining*. For audit firms, these requirements can be found in sections 8.1 and 9.8 of ISO 17021 and the same sections in the IRMA Audit Firm Requirements.



The three steps and the different resolution pathways are explained in detail in Sections 3 and 4, below.

Using the Issues Resolution System

Eventually, stakeholders will be able to raise issues via an on-line Issues Resolution Portal, which will be accessible through the [Complaints and Feedback](#) page of the IRMA website. In the interim, while that system is being developed, stakeholders are encouraged to use the Stakeholder Complaints Form available on the IRMA website.²

Alternatively, IRMA stakeholders may contact IRMA about an issue via phone, email, letter, or WhatsApp using the following contact details: *

Mail: Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA)
113 Cherry St, #74985
Seattle, WA 98104
United States of America

Email: issues@responsiblemining.net

Telephone: +1-301-202-1445

WhatsApp: +1-301-202-1445

Informing stakeholders about the Issues Resolution System

The contact details for raising issues with IRMA shall be published on the IRMA website. Efforts shall also be made to ensure that all IRMA stakeholders are made aware of the existence of the IRMA Issues Resolution System (e.g., through e-newsletters, outreach during IRMA assessments, etc.).

As resources allow, IRMA will provide instructions for its Issues Resolution System in languages other than English.

² IRMA website: Complaints and Feedback <https://responsiblemining.net/what-you-can-do/complaints-and-feedback/>

Assistance in raising issues

Stakeholders may appoint representatives or advisers to accompany them in raising their issue with IRMA.

Where stakeholders want to raise an issue with IRMA, but do not have sufficient knowledge of English, they may ask IRMA for translation or help in a language they understand. Enquiries in that regard may be sent to issues@responsiblemining.net. To help with the enquiry, stakeholders are advised to use an online translation platform such as <https://www.deepl.com/translator>.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Stakeholders may bring forth their issue confidentially and should inform IRMA upfront if they do not want to be identified to other parties, such as entities that are the subject of a complaint.

Although not encouraged, if stakeholders prefer to not share their identities even with the IRMA Secretariat, they may bring their issue forward anonymously. In such cases, however, stakeholders should make sure that they provide as much detail and supporting evidence and information as possible when they raise the issue, since IRMA will have no subsequent way of seeking clarity or further detail from them.

Safeguarding stakeholders' rights and freedoms

The IRMA Issues Resolution System shall not be used to substitute, circumvent or override the legal rights of any party to use judicial or non-judicial mechanisms to seek remedy or resolution for grievances related to IRMA.

Any retributions or reprisals against stakeholders raising issues in relation to the IRMA program shall not be tolerated by IRMA.

Conflicts of interest

All individuals involved in the investigation or decision-making on an issue shall declare any actual and potential conflicts of interest he/she/they may have or may be perceived to have in the proceedings, and shall disqualify themselves accordingly.

Conflicts of interest shall be understood as interests, activities or relationships of an individual that compromise or may appear to compromise the individual's impartiality or professional responsibilities.

Rejecting issues

IRMA may reject an issue if:

- It is based upon hearsay or is raised anonymously without any evidence
- There is compelling evidence that the issue raised is frivolous, malicious, trivial or generated to gain competitive advantage
- It is related to aspects that are not covered by the IRMA program (i.e., the IRMA *Standard for Responsible Mining* and the IRMA assessment system)

Ceasing resolution

IRMA may cease its attempts to find resolution if the stakeholder who raised the issue is not making a good faith effort to participate in the proposed resolution pathways.

Analysis of issues

All issues that are raised with IRMA shall be logged and analyzed (see IRMA Issues Log Template, [Annex A](#)). IRMA analysis of issues shall include:

- Clustering of issues by nature and by object
- Reviewing outcomes of resolutions
- Gauging levels of satisfaction of stakeholders raising issues

The analysis shall be used by IRMA to identify patterns and overarching issues, make conclusions about the effectiveness of the Issues Resolution System and to inform reviews of the IRMA program.

Reporting on issues

Summaries of the issues and of the resolutions and the total number of raised and resolved issues shall be published on the IRMA website. This shall be done in a manner that respects the confidentiality of stakeholders.

2. The IRMA Issues Resolution System

Step 1. Initial discussion of the issue with the IRMA Secretariat

The first step in the IRMA Issues Resolution System is to contact the IRMA Secretariat. Stakeholders may do so by filling in a complaint form available on the IRMA website or by phone, email, letter/mail, or WhatsApp using the contact details above.

When a stakeholder makes contact with IRMA, they should be prepared to let IRMA know:

- Their full name and contact details*
- The nature and context of the issue they would like to see resolved
- When or over what period of time a particular issue took place
- Who has been or is involved in the issue*
- What kind of evidence or additional information the stakeholder might be able to provide or reference in support of the issue
- Any steps the stakeholder has already taken to try to resolve the issue, and the outcome(s) of those efforts
- What process the stakeholder feels would be appropriate to address the issue.

As a first step, the IRMA Secretariat shall try to resolve the issue through an informal discussion with the person(s) raising the issue, even if the person(s) would like his/her/their name to remain confidential (i.e., not be shared with parties other than the IRMA Secretariat and others tasked to help resolve the issue).

* IRMA understands that a small number of people may wish to remain entirely anonymous (i.e., not disclose their name even to IRMA). In such situations, the IRMA Secretariat would still like the opportunity to speak with the person(s) raising the issue, if at all possible. For example, a person could provide a phone number to call or text, so that arrangements can be made for a follow-up phone call from IRMA.

If no arrangement is made to have an informal discussion, the IRMA Secretariat will still review a complaint. In such cases, it is strongly recommended that those filing the complaint provide as much detail and supporting evidence as possible. If there is little or no supporting information, and no way to contact a complainant to obtain additional details about the complaint, it may not be possible for IRMA to fully explore and/or resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the complainant.

Step 2. Resolution using appropriate pathway

The following table summarizes the main types of issues that are expected to be raised by stakeholders and the related resolution pathways, which are described in more detail further below.

Type of Issue	Description
1. Issues related to actions / inactions of a project/operation that has reached an IRMA achievement level	Concerns may be raised that a project/operation that has reached one of the IRMA achievement levels is not meeting one or more requirements of the IRMA Standard. Note that if the concern suggests an issue that may be immediately dangerous to life or health, IRMA shall divert from the described resolution pathway below, and engage with the project/operation directly, and, if necessary, also engage with relevant authorities.

Type of Issue	Description
	Resolution pathway: 1. Project/Operation 2. Audit Firm 3. IRMA 4. Ad Hoc Resolution Committee.
2. Issues related to actions / inactions of an audit firm	<p>Examples may include, but are not limited to: complaints³ against audit findings (e.g., failure to raise a nonconformity, incorrectly raising a nonconformity, incorrectly classifying a nonconformity as minor or major), issues with auditor behavior, with how audit procedures were implemented, lack of impartiality, etc.</p> <p>Resolution pathway: 1. Audit Firm 2. IRMA 3. Ad Hoc Resolution Committee</p>
3. Appeals ⁴ related to decisions made by an audit firm	<p>In the context of achievement level decisions, appeals may only be made by entities that were subject to the adverse decision. Other stakeholders can file complaints with CBs if they disagree with an achievement level decision. Appeals may be made against a decision to award a particular achievement level, to suspend, withdraw or re-issue an achievement level.</p> <p>Resolution pathway: 1. Audit Firm 2. IRMA 3. Ad Hoc Resolution Committee</p>
4. Issues related to IRMA policies or procedures	<p>Issues may relate to the content or interpretation of IRMA policies or procedures. Procedures and policies include, but are not limited to, assessment procedures, Standard development/revision procedures, IRMA governance policies, Membership policy, Audit Firm Requirements, Policy on Association, Claims policy, Issues Resolution Procedure, etc.</p> <p>Note: issues related to policies/procedures regarding project/operation assessment, if not resolved by the IRMA Secretariat, will not be elevated to a sub-committee of the IRMA Board, but rather, to an Ad Hoc Resolution Committee whose members have the appropriate expertise to assess and resolve such issues.</p> <p>Typical resolution pathway: 1. IRMA 2. Subcommittee of the IRMA Board 3. IRMA Board</p> <p>Alternative resolution pathway: 1. IRMA 2. Ad Hoc Resolution Committee</p>
5. Issues related to the IRMA Standard	<p>In every standard, there is some room for interpretation of the requirements and for differences in interpretation by stakeholders, including audit firms, IRMA-achieving projects/operations and those wanting to become IRMA-achieving projects/operations.</p>

³ A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, other than an appeal, by any person or organization, relating to the activities or lack of activities of an IRMA achievement holder, an audit firm, or an accreditation body, where a response is expected (Adapted from ISO/IEC 17000:2005).

⁴ An appeal is when a project/operation requests a CB to reconsider a decision the CB has made in relation to the project/operation (Adapted from ISO 17000 - Conformity assessment - Vocabulary and general principles).

Type of Issue	Description
	<p>In addition to interpretation questions, there may be concerns relating to the content of the Standard itself. Stakeholders may believe that key requirements are missing or that some aspects of the IRMA Standard are overly restrictive.</p> <p>Issues related to the content of the IRMA Standard may be submitted to the IRMA Secretariat at any time. All submissions will be recorded, and the issues addressed through scheduled, formal revision of the Standard, for which there is a separate Standards Development Procedure (available at: https://responsiblemining.net/resources/). Questions of interpretation shall be resolved through the development of guidance, which is described in Section 4.5, below.</p> <p>Resolution pathway: 1. IRMA 2. IRMA scheduled standard revision process</p>
<p>6. Issues raised against IRMA personnel</p>	<p>Concerns may be raised about technical aspects of the work of IRMA personnel, about their behavior, actions or inaction.</p> <p>If dialogue with the personnel who is causing the concern does not lead to a resolution, or if a stakeholder raising the concern prefers, these types of concerns shall be heard independent of the personnel in question.</p> <p>Personnel include IRMA Secretariat staff, contractors, committee members, or Board members.</p> <p>Resolution pathway: 1. IRMA personnel 2. IRMA Executive Director 3. Ad Hoc Resolution Committee</p>
<p>7. Other types of issues relating to the IRMA program</p>	<p>Stakeholders might raise issues that are not listed here. If such an issue is brought forward, IRMA may propose one of the listed pathways or define another pathway for resolution.</p> <p>Examples of ‘other’ types of issues may include, but are not limited to, improper use of claims or labels; complaints related to IRMA members and/or board members.</p> <p>Resolution depending on the issue brought forward</p>

Once the issue is clearly understood, a pathway for resolution shall be chosen and implemented (see Section 4, below) in consultation with the person that raised the issue and, if relevant, with other parties involved. When the steps for resolution are complete and any agreed actions have been taken, the issue shall be considered resolved and closed, unless the stakeholder wishes to take things further for consideration by an Ad Hoc Resolution Committee. When the issue is closed, a summary of the issue, of the resolution outcome and the taken actions shall be posted on the IRMA website, respecting confidentiality of stakeholders.

Step 3. Escalation to an Ad Hoc Resolution Committee

If all efforts to resolve an issue have been exhausted, stakeholders may raise the issue with an Ad Hoc Resolution Committee. The Committee shall be put together specifically to address their issue. It shall comprise three members and its composition shall depend on the nature of the issue. Representatives of the following parties might be members of the Committee:

- IRMA Board (see <https://responsiblemining.net/about/board>)
- IRMA subcommittees or advisory groups (consisting of mining and subject experts)
- IRMA member or partner organizations (see <https://responsiblemining.net/about/members-partners/>)
- Academia from fields relevant to the IRMA program
- Civil society (such as trade unions, human rights or environmental organizations)
- Specialists in overseeing audit firms and working with assessment programs

Conditions for being part of the Ad Hoc Resolution Committee shall be:

- Extensive knowledge on the IRMA program
- Expertise in the area that the issue is related to
- No conflict of interest in relation to the object of the issue (which could be an exploration company, a mine, a mineral processor, an audit firm, or IRMA personnel)

IRMA shall seek the stakeholder's consent to the suggested members of the Committee before confirming its final make-up.

Where possible, costs for investigating the issue should be shared between IRMA and the stakeholder that raised the issue. This shall be discussed and agreed with the stakeholder before the Ad Hoc Resolution Committee is formed. Examples of potential costs include, but are not limited to, hiring an advisor and/or interpreter to assist a stakeholder during the resolution process, site visits or research to support the Ad Hoc Committee's understanding of the issue.

Investigation by the Ad Hoc Resolution Committee shall be the final stage in the IRMA Issues Resolution System and decisions by the Committee cannot be appealed.

3. Resolution Pathway Procedures

The following section describes the different resolution pathways in detail:

1. Issues related to actions / inactions of an IRMA-achieving project/operation
2. Issues related to actions / inactions of an audit firm
3. Appeals related to decisions made by an audit firm
4. Issues related to IRMA policies or procedures
5. Issues related to interpretation of the IRMA Standard
6. Issues raised against IRMA personnel
7. Other types of issues relating to the IRMA program
8. Ad Hoc Resolution Committee

The timelines outlined below are goals, however, it is recognized that there may be circumstances that prevent timelines from being met (e.g., communications challenges, national or cultural holidays, or other issues). IRMA will strive to meet the timelines and if they cannot be met will inform relevant stakeholders of expected new timelines.

4.1. Issues related to actions / inactions of an IRMA-achieving project/operation

Overview

Concerns might be raised about a project/operation with an IRMA achievement level potentially not meeting relevant chapters or requirements of the IRMA Standard. There might also be concerns about a project/operation's performance in general. In these instances, IRMA shall require that the person raising the concern first tries to resolve the issue directly with the project/operation. The project/operation is best placed to explain what it is or is not doing about the issue, and why that might be the case. The IRMA Standard requires that every project/operation participating in IRMA must have an operational-level complaints and grievance mechanism for the effective resolution of concerns and disputes. The stakeholder shall be advised to use this mechanism first.

To assist the stakeholder in this, IRMA shall discuss the issue with the person concerned to help identify the nature of the issue in relation to the IRMA Standard and shall help the stakeholder locate the project/operation's complaints and grievance mechanism. IRMA shall, however, not intervene with the project/operation at this stage or give an indication as to whether it feels the project/operation has addressed the issue correctly or not.

If the issue is not resolved with the project/operation itself, the next avenue for resolution shall be the complaints mechanism of the respective audit firm (see <https://responsiblemining.net/what-we-do/assessment/mines-under-assessment/>).

IRMA shall only consider the issue again after it has been raised with the project/operation and the audit firm, and if neither have been able to resolve the issue satisfactorily through their processes. However, if the concern suggests an issue that may be immediately dangerous to life or health, IRMA shall divert from the described pathway and engage with the project/operation directly, and, if necessary, also engage with relevant authorities.

Process	
IRMA shall capture the initial concern in its issues log.	Within 1 week of receiving concern
IRMA shall help the person raising the issue identify which chapter or requirement of the IRMA Standard the issue relates to and, where appropriate, provide the stakeholder with additional information on the IRMA program to ensure they understand its objectives, scope and ways of operating.	
IRMA shall advise the stakeholder to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access the project/operation's complaints and grievance mechanism to try to resolve the concern • Trigger the audit firm's complaints mechanism if the issue is not resolved • Return to IRMA to seek further assistance if the issue is still not resolved to the person's satisfaction. IRMA shall also help locate the project/operation's complaints and grievance mechanism and the audit firm's complaints mechanism.	
IRMA shall complete its issues log to capture what has been done and shall consider the issue to be closed.	
IRMA shall publish a summary of the issue and of the resolution pathway on the IRMA website.	

Supporting documentation and references
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRMA Issues Log Template (Annex A) • IRMA Standard (Chapter 1.4 Complaints and Grievance Mechanism and Access to Remedy) • IRMA audit firm Requirements (Chapter 9.6 Maintaining verified achievement levels)

4.2. Issues related to actions / inactions of an audit firm

Overview	
<p>The IRMA Audit Firm Requirements and ISO 17021, upon which the IRMA requirements are based, ask that audit firms have public processes to receive, evaluate and make decisions on complaints.</p> <p>Where a stakeholder raises issues related to audit findings, auditor behavior, implementation of audit procedures etc., IRMA shall require that the stakeholder first raises the concern through the complaints mechanism of the respective audit firm.</p> <p>To assist the stakeholder in this, IRMA shall discuss the issue with the person concerned to help identify the nature of the issue in relation to the IRMA Audit Firm Requirements or the IRMA Standard, and shall help them locate the audit firm's complaints process. IRMA, however, shall not intervene with the audit firm at this stage, or give an indication as to whether it feels the audit firm has addressed the issue correctly or not.</p> <p>If the stakeholder feels that the issue has not been properly investigated by the audit firm or that the outcome of the complaints process is not adequate, they may come back to IRMA to seek further consideration of the issue. IRMA shall identify an appropriate resolution pathway, which might be resolution through an Ad Hoc Resolution Committee.</p>	
Process	
IRMA shall capture the initial concern in its issues log.	Within 1 week of receiving concern
IRMA shall provide the stakeholder with additional information on the IRMA program to ensure they understand its objectives, scope and ways of operating and shall help the stakeholder identify the complaints mechanism of the respective audit firm.	
IRMA shall advise the stakeholder to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trigger the audit firm's complaints process • Return to IRMA to seek further assistance if the issue is not resolved to the person's satisfaction. 	
IRMA shall complete its issues log to capture what has been done and shall consider the issues to be closed.	
IRMA shall publish a summary of the issue and of the resolution pathway on the IRMA website.	

<p>Once the audit firm has informed IRMA of the complaints process outcome, IRMA shall update its issues log and publish a summary of the complaints process outcome on its website.</p>	<p>Within 2 weeks of receiving the summary from the audit firm</p>
<p>Supporting documentation and references</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRMA Issues Log Template (Annex A) • IRMA Audit Firm Requirements and ISO 17021 (Chapters 8.1 Public Information and 9.8 Complaints) • IRMA Standard for Responsible Mining 	

4.3. Appeals related to decisions made by an audit firm

<p>Overview</p>	
<p>The IRMA Audit Firm Requirements and ISO 17021, upon which the IRMA requirements are based, ask that audit firms have processes to receive, evaluate and make decisions on appeals. They also ask that audit firms inform IRMA of a received appeal and send a summary of the appeals process outcome to IRMA.</p> <p>Where a project/operation appeals against a decision made by an audit firm to assess, not to assess, award or not award a certain achievement level to that particular project or operation, IRMA shall require that the project/operation raises the issue through the appeals process of the respective audit firm.</p> <p>At this stage, IRMA shall not intervene with the audit firm or give an indication as to whether it feels the audit firm has made the correct decision or not.</p> <p>If the project/operation feels that the issue has not been properly investigated by the audit firm or that the outcome of the appeals process is not adequate, they may come back to IRMA to seek further consideration of the issue. IRMA shall identify an appropriate resolution pathway, which might be resolution through an Ad Hoc Resolution Committee.</p>	
<p>Process</p>	
<p>IRMA shall capture the initial concern in its issues log.</p>	<p>Within 1 week of receiving concern</p>
<p>IRMA shall advise the project/operation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trigger the audit firm's appeals process • Return to IRMA to seek further assistance if the issue is not resolved to the project/operation's satisfaction. 	
<p>IRMA shall complete its issues log to capture what has been done and shall consider the issue to be closed.</p>	
<p>IRMA shall publish a summary of the issue and of the resolution pathway on the IRMA website.</p>	

<p>Once the audit firm has informed IRMA of the appeals process outcome, IRMA shall update its issues log and publish a summary of the appeals process outcome on its website.</p>	<p>Within 2 weeks of receiving the summary report from the audit firm</p>
<p>Supporting documentation and references</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRMA Issues Log Template (Annex A) • IRMA Audit Firm Requirements and ISO 17021 (Chapters 8.1 Public Information and 9.7 Appeals) • IRMA Standard 	

4.4. Issues related to IRMA policies or procedures

<p>Overview</p>	
<p>Issues raised in relation to the content or the interpretation of IRMA policies or procedures might show that a change to the respective policy or procedure would help improve the IRMA assessment program. In such a case, a proposed revision shall be developed by IRMA in consultation with the stakeholder that raised the issue and, where relevant, with other parties. In most cases, the proposed revision shall be reviewed by a sub-committee of the Board, and go to the full IRMA Board for potential approval. In the case of procedures related to project/operation assessment, the procedures will go to an Ad Hoc Committee that does not include Board members. This is to prevent perceived or real conflict of interest in having private sector leaders in IRMA adjudicating the revision of these procedures now that independent, 3rd-party assessment of a project/operation has commenced.</p>	
<p>Process</p>	
<p>IRMA shall capture the initial concern in its issues log.</p>	<p>Within 4 weeks of receiving the issue</p>
<p>Where appropriate, IRMA shall provide the stakeholder with additional information on the IRMA program to ensure they understand its objectives, scope and ways of operating.</p>	
<p>IRMA shall discuss possible revisions to the policy or procedure with the stakeholder and, where relevant, with other parties.</p> <p>If IRMA agrees that a change to the policy or procedure would improve the IRMA assessment program, IRMA shall draft revised wording.</p> <p>Where IRMA does not agree that a change would lead to improvement, the issue shall be considered closed and the stakeholder shall be advised that they may raise the issue through an Ad Hoc Resolution Committee. In such a case, IRMA shall complete its issues log to capture what has been done and shall publish a summary of the issue and of the resolution outcome on the IRMA website.</p>	
<p>IRMA shall present the proposed changes to the policy / procedure and associated implementation timelines to the IRMA Board subcommittee for review.</p>	

<p>The IRMA Board subcommittee may request further information or re-drafting, may reject the proposal, or may recommend that the proposed changes and timelines are put to the IRMA Board for approval.</p>	<p>Within 4 weeks of receiving the proposed changes</p>
<p>IRMA shall seek Board approval of the changes and timelines.</p>	<p>At the first or second IRMA Board meeting after receipt of the IRMA Board subcommittee recommendation (Note: IRMA Board meetings typically occur on a monthly basis)</p>
<p>As appropriate, IRMA shall publish the approved revised policy or procedure on its website and shall inform all affected parties of the changes and the date the policy/procedure becomes effective.</p> <p>IRMA shall inform the stakeholder that raised the issue about the changes and the implementation timelines.</p> <p>IRMA shall complete its issues log to capture what has been done and shall consider the issue to be closed.</p> <p>IRMA shall publish a summary of the issue and of the resolution outcome on the IRMA website.</p>	<p>Within 2 weeks of approval</p>
<p>Supporting Documentation and References</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues Log Template (Annex A) • IRMA policies and procedures 	

4.5. Issues related to interpretation of the IRMA Standard

<p>Overview</p>		
<p>Depending on the issue brought forward, guidance on how to interpret the IRMA Standard can be developed relatively quickly but shall be reviewed and approved by an IRMA standards advisory body or, in the absence of such a body, the IRMA Board before it becomes applicable for all projects/operations participating in IRMA.</p> <p>Questions on interpretation of IRMA requirements may come in during project/operation audits. Where this is the case, audit firms may classify them as 'urgent' to expedite the process for developing interpretation guidance and to not hold up the audit.</p> <p>All interpretation guidance shall be reviewed, and may be revised, during the scheduled, formal IRMA Standard review process.</p>		
<p>Process</p>	<p>Normal</p>	<p>Expedited</p>
<p>IRMA shall capture the initial concern in its issues log.</p>		

<p>Where appropriate, IRMA shall provide the stakeholder with additional information on the IRMA program to ensure they understand its objectives, scope and ways of operating.</p>	<p>Within 1 week of receiving the issue</p>	
<p>IRMA shall carry out an analysis of the issue in consultation with the person raising the concern and, potentially, with audit firms and projects/operations. The analysis shall include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> how IRMA interprets the requirement(s); how the requirement(s) are actually interpreted; the reasons for the actual interpretation; and possible additional guidance to ensure the requirement(s) is interpreted consistently. 	<p>Between 1 and 4 weeks of receiving the issue</p>	<p>Within 5 days of receiving an interpretation issue marked as 'urgent', IRMA shall draft interpretation guidance. If necessary, this shall be done in collaboration with the IRMA standards advisory body or the IRMA Board. Steps outlined in the column 'normal' do not apply</p>
<p>If it appears that the development of interpretation guidance is needed, IRMA shall draft such guidance.</p>	<p>Within 8 weeks of receiving the issue</p>	
<p>If the interpretation guidance requires technical review, it shall be presented to the IRMA standards advisory body (or the IRMA Board) for review and approval. That body may request further information or re-drafting, may reject the proposal, or may approve the draft interpretation as presented.</p>	<p>Within 4 weeks of receiving the interpretation guidance from IRMA</p>	
<p>If the draft interpretation is not approved, IRMA shall revise it in line with the direction given by the IRMA standards advisory body. The revised draft interpretation shall be returned to the IRMA standards advisory body (or the IRMA Board) for review and approval.</p>	<p>Within 4 weeks of non-approval of the initial guidance</p>	
<p>IRMA shall publish the approved interpretation guidance on its website and shall inform all affected parties of the changes and the date the guidance becomes effective.</p> <p>IRMA shall inform the stakeholder that raised the issue about the guidance and the implementation timelines.</p> <p>IRMA shall complete its issues log to capture what has been done and shall consider the issue to be closed.</p> <p>IRMA shall publish a summary of the issue and of the resolution outcome on the IRMA website.</p>	<p>Within 2 weeks of approval</p>	
<p>Supporting Documentation and References</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues Log Template (Annex A) IRMA Standards Development Procedure (Available at: https://responsiblemining.net/resources/) 		

4.6. Issues raised against IRMA personnel

Overview	
<p>IRMA personnel are committed to work professionally and respectfully and to fully implement IRMA policies and procedures. If this is perceived not to be the case, IRMA shall investigate such issues. If the issue cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the stakeholder who raised the issue, the stakeholder may raise it with the Chair of the IRMA Board or through an Ad Hoc Resolution Committee.</p> <p>Personnel include IRMA Secretariat staff, committee members, Board members, contractors, etc.</p>	
Process	
IRMA shall capture the initial concern in its issues log.	Within 1 week of receiving the issue
<p>The stakeholder raising the concern shall be asked, if possible, to raise and try to resolve their issue directly by discussing it with the person causing the concern. If this is not appropriate or has been tried and the outcome was not satisfactory, then the stakeholder shall be asked to contact the IRMA Executive Director. If the concern relates to the IRMA Executive Director, the person raising the concern may raise their issue with the Chair of the IRMA Board. Only if that does not lead to resolution will an Ad Hoc Resolution Committee be formed to address the issue.</p>	
<p>Unless the issue raised is with the Executive Director, the Executive Director shall discuss the concern with the personnel who is the subject of the issue raised or, where appropriate, shall delegate this to the individual's immediate supervisor. If the issue relates to an IRMA Board member, the Executive Director shall inform the Chair of the IRMA Board of the issue and discuss with them how best to address it.</p> <p>The Executive Director may take whatever additional action she or he, and, potentially, the Chair of the IRMA Board deem appropriate to understand the basis of the concern and to try to resolve the issue, subject to United States law and employer obligations and responsibilities.</p> <p>If the issue is with the Executive Director, the Chair of the IRMA Board shall take whatever action she or he deems appropriate to resolve the issue.</p>	Within 6 weeks of receiving the issue
<p>The Executive Director (or Chair of the Board) shall report back to the stakeholder that raised the concern as to the action that has been taken to try to resolve the issue. IRMA shall inform the stakeholder that they may raise the issue through an Ad Hoc Resolution Committee if the matter has not been resolved to the stakeholder's satisfaction.</p>	
<p>IRMA shall complete its issues log to capture what has been done and shall consider the issue to be closed.</p> <p>IRMA shall publish a summary of the issue and of the resolution outcome on the IRMA website.</p>	
Supporting Documentation and References	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues Log Template (Annex A) 	

4.7. Other types of issues relating to the IRMA program

Overview
<p>Stakeholders might raise issues that do not fit into one of the categories described above. Where this is the case, the IRMA Secretariat may propose one of the listed pathways or define another pathway for resolution.</p> <p>Issues in the ‘Other’ category might relate to improper use of IRMA claims or labels and resolution might be guided by trademark law. Further examples of ‘Other’ issues could relate to IRMA members or partners, for which the IRMA Policy on Association would be relevant in seeking resolution.</p>

4.8. Ad Hoc Resolution Committee

Overview	
<p>If none of the pathways above result in successful resolution of the issue, then the stakeholder that raised the issue may escalate it to an Ad Hoc Resolution Committee that shall be set up by IRMA specifically to address the issue.</p> <p>The actions taken under the Ad Hoc Resolution Committee may or may not resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the stakeholder that raised the concern. Regardless, the determination by the Ad Hoc Resolution Committee shall be final and cannot be appealed. This does not, however, prevent a stakeholder from seeking resolution or remedy through other judicial or non-judicial mechanisms (see Section 2 “Safeguarding stakeholders’ rights and freedoms”).</p>	
Process	
<p>IRMA shall capture the concern in its issues log or, where IRMA referred the issue to another party before, shall identify in its issues log which concern is brought back for consideration by an Ad Hoc Resolution Committee and shall update the issues log entry to reflect actions that have been taken since the issue was first raised.</p>	<p>Within 4 weeks of the issue being brought to IRMA</p>
<p>IRMA shall nominate at least four potential members for the Ad Hoc Resolution Committee. In choosing candidates, IRMA shall ensure that they are free from conflict of interest in relation to the object of the issue (which could be an exploration company, a mine, a mineral processor, an audit firm, or IRMA personnel). IRMA shall propose the candidates to the stakeholder that raised the issue. The stakeholder shall be asked to choose three of them to form the Ad Hoc Resolution Committee.</p> <p>IRMA shall inform the stakeholder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the Ad Hoc Resolution Committee's review process (as below) • That the Committee's decisions cannot be appealed • When the stakeholder might expect an outcome of the Committee's investigation. 	
<p>IRMA shall appoint the Ad Hoc Resolution Committee members and provide them with all relevant information on the issue requiring resolution, including any documents, records and other information that has been gathered and reviewed during other resolution pathways and earlier resolutions that were provided but did not satisfy the complaining party.</p>	

<p>The Ad Hoc Resolution Committee members shall each individually study the information provided. They shall get together by virtual or in-person means to discuss the issue and a potential resolution. The Committee shall take whatever action it deems appropriate to better understand the basis of the concern.</p>	
<p>The Ad Hoc Resolution Committee might conclude that further action that is consistent with IRMA policies and procedures and with the scope of the IRMA program could be taken to resolve the issue, or it might conclude that appropriate action to resolve the issue has been taken and that further action would be unlikely to resolve the issue.</p> <p>In cases where the Ad Hoc Resolution Committee cannot find agreement on conclusions, it shall seek advice from qualified experts. In other cases, seeking advice from qualified experts is optional. However, such experts shall not take part in decision-making and shall not be involved in any activity that constitutes a conflict of interest.</p>	
<p>The Ad Hoc Resolution Committee shall prepare a written report that describes its mutually agreed conclusions and, potentially, any actions and associated timelines that shall be taken to resolve the issue. The report shall document if there was disagreement between the Committee members and how disagreement was resolved. The Ad Hoc Resolution Committee shall submit the report to IRMA.</p>	<p>Within 3 - 12 weeks of the Ad Hoc Resolution Committee receiving issue, depending on the complexity of the matter.</p>
<p>IRMA shall review the report to confirm that any suggested actions are consistent with IRMA policies and procedures and with the scope of the IRMA program. Where this is not the case, IRMA shall provide feedback to the Committee for them to reflect in their report.</p>	
<p>IRMA shall submit the final report of the Ad Hoc Resolution Committee to the party that gave rise to the issue in the first place and to the party that raised the issue.</p> <p>Where the Ad Hoc Resolution Committee requests further action to be taken, IRMA shall explain to the party and to the stakeholder that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The requested actions must be satisfactorily completed before IRMA can consider the issue to be closed • If the required actions are not carried out, the party risks consequences such as termination of its approval as IRMA audit firm, suspension of its achievement level, or termination of its IRMA membership. 	
<p>Where relevant, IRMA shall verify that the requested actions have been satisfactorily completed. Once this is the case, IRMA shall inform the stakeholder that raised the issue and the Ad Hoc Resolution Committee accordingly.</p> <p>IRMA shall complete its issues log to capture what has been done and shall consider the issue to be closed.</p> <p>IRMA shall publish a summary of the issue and of the resolution outcome on the IRMA website.</p>	<p>Within 2 weeks of receiving the Ad Hoc Resolution Committee report or, where actions are requested, within 2 weeks of verifying</p>

	satisfactory action completion.
Supporting Documentation and References	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Issues Log Template (Annex A)• Ad Hoc Resolution Committee Terms of Reference (Annex B)	

Annex A: IRMA Issue Log Template

Issue Number:	
Date issue raised with IRMA:	Name of stakeholder raising the issue:
Description of the issue:	
Analysis of issue in terms of IRMA program requirements:	
Description of any actions taken by the stakeholder to resolve the issue prior to it being raised with IRMA, including parties involved in the issue:	
Pathway for resolution as agreed with the stakeholder, description of next steps:	
Outcome(s) of resolution:	
Date of IRMA determination that the issue is considered closed:	

Annex B: IRMA Ad Hoc Resolution Committee Terms of Reference

The goal of the Ad Hoc Resolution Committee (ARC) is to provide resolution on disputed issues in relation to the IRMA assessment program. Escalation to the ARC shall be the last resort once other pathways for resolution have been exhausted.

ARC members shall be proposed by IRMA to the party that raised the issue requiring resolution. In identifying candidates for the Committee, IRMA may choose members from the following parties:

- IRMA Board (see <https://responsiblemining.net/about/board>)
- IRMA subcommittees or advisory groups (consisting of mining and subject experts)
- IRMA member or partner organizations (see <https://responsiblemining.net/about/members-partners/>)
- Academia from fields relevant to the IRMA program
- Civil society (such as trade unions, human rights or environmental organizations)
- Specialists in overseeing audit firms and working with assessment programs

The qualities that IRMA will be seeking in ARC members shall include, but are not limited to:

- Support of the IRMA Vision and Mission
- Extensive knowledge on the IRMA system (or willingness to go through an IRMA training session)
- Expertise in the area that the issue is related to
- A willingness to seek fair and balanced resolutions
- Ability to make rational decisions based on the evidence provided
- Ability to think creatively about solutions to resolve conflicts
- Demonstrated ability or willingness to work in good faith in multi-stakeholder settings

Any prospective ARC member shall disclose to IRMA potential conflicts of interests to be considered for committee membership.

The Ad Hoc Resolution Committee shall follow table 8 of the IRMA Issues Resolution System in providing resolution.