

# Terms of Reference for Expert Working Group Members 2025

July 2025

## IRMA Overview

Mining and mineral processing are complex and intensive processes that causes environmental and social change no matter where they occur. The Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) envisions a world in which the mining and mineral processing industries respect human rights and the aspirations of affected communities; provides safe, healthy and respectful workplaces; avoids or minimizes harm to the environment; and leaves positive legacies.

Founded in 2006 by a coalition of nongovernment organizations, affected communities, mining companies, trade unions, and businesses using minerals and metals in their products, IRMA has developed a set of standards and a third-party independent verification system to measure social and environmental performance at mine sites (and has been testing similar systems for mineral exploration projects and mineral processing operations).

In June 2018, following two global public consultation periods on earlier drafts, IRMA released the *IRMA Standard for Responsible Mining V1.0* ("IRMA Standard" V1.0). The IRMA Standard is a comprehensive document with 26 chapters covering issues under the broad categories of business integrity, planning for positive legacies, and social and environmental responsibility. It is now the world's most comprehensive and rigorous shared definition of best practices for industrial -scale mining. It is also the only standard for this industry equitably led by affected communities, labor unions and NGOs working alongside private sector leaders.

The IRMA Standard serves as the basis of a voluntary assurance system offering independent third-party assessment and verification of environmental and social performance measures at industrial-scale mine sites around the world. In late 2019 and early 2020, IRMA-approved independent audit firms carried out the first audits of mines against the IRMA Standard. As of June 2025, 25 mines sites are now engaged in the third-party assessment system, 70 mine sites are self-assessing, and 4 audit firms are officially accredited by IRMA.

In 2022, IRMA began the process of reviewing its standards framework with the intention of creating greater efficiencies while integrating updates that maintain alignment with a wide range of international frameworks and best practices. In this effort we found it practical to integrate the following three standards into one combined standard:

- [IRMA Standard for Responsible Mining V1.0](#), published June 2018
- [IRMA Draft Standard for Responsible Mineral Processing V1](#), draft published June 2021
- [IRMA Draft Standard for Responsible Mineral Exploration and Development \(IRMA-Ready Standard\) V1](#), draft published December 2021

Combining these standards results in practical benefits including utility across a wider range of mining activities (e.g., mineral exploration, development, and processing), based on one common set of requirements. This simplifies capacity-building and implementation for operators that have projects and operations across multiple phases and types of operations (i.e., a company that runs both mining and exploration activities, or an integrated company with bot mining and processing sites). This also facilitates transition across, and continuous improvement monitoring over, the lifecycle of a mine, offering a consolidated roadmap towards operational excellence and long-term viability from early exploration to closure and post-closure, all with one Standard.

Finally, This unified Standard will also be subject to only one common periodic review that eases the burden on rights-holders and stakeholders engaging in review and comment processes.

Following the release of a 1<sup>st</sup> DRAFT of the IRMA Standard V2.0 in October 2023 for a 90-day public consultation, the IRMA Secretariat received more than 2,500 points of comments from 82 organizations, organized additional engagement with stakeholders and Indigenous rights-holders, and solicited complementary guidance from multiple topic-specific Expert Working Groups.

In July 2025, a 2<sup>nd</sup> DRAFT was published for a second 90-day public consultation.

## IRMA Expert Working Group dedicated to Tailings Storage and Mine Waste Facility Management

There are several issues related to the management of Tailings Storage and Mine Waste Facilities that were raised during the development of this 2<sup>nd</sup> DRAFT on which no consensus could be found across IRMA's equally-governed multi-stakeholder Board. And the diverging views could not be resolved prior to the release of the DRAFT (more details about the governance of IRMA is available [here on our website](#)).

Therefore, and as part of the revision process to the IRMA Standard, IRMA proposes to discuss and explore potential approaches within an IRMA **Expert Working Group dedicated to Tailings Storage and Mine Waste Facility Management**, to guide appropriate revisions to the IRMA Standard.

In populating this **Expert Working Group**, IRMA will seek to reflect a balance of stakeholder groups and interests. **Expert Working Group Members** will be expected to agree to a set of principles of engagement that will uphold the integrity of the process and promote IRMA's mission and vision; see Annex at the end of this document.

IRMA is seeking volunteers with expertise in various topic areas related to the management of Tailings Storage and Mine Waste Facilities to contribute as **Expert Working Group Members**, with the intention of developing recommendations on revisions to the IRMA Standard V2.0.

## Qualifications

Ideal candidates will have:

- Demonstrated expertise (academic, work-based, lived experiences) on the topics being discussed
- Ability to participate in respectful conversations with those whose opinions may differ from one's own
- Willingness to work creatively toward multi-stakeholder, consensus-based solutions
- Proficiency in English, if possible (although, if necessary, in order to find balanced representation on the committees, IRMA may be able to provide translators)
- A reliable internet, or phone connection. At the present time, due to budget restrictions, it is not expected that any in-person meetings will be held. All meetings will be held online, via Zoom.

## Scope of Work

**Expert Working Group Members** will be expected to review the relevant chapter(s) of the IRMA Standard (both the current V1.0, and the new 2<sup>nd</sup> DRAFT V2.0), including Guidance materials, and the questions posed. They are also expected to review the various discussion questions being posed prior to each working group meeting.

→ **Topics covered:** The topics to be covered include:

- Synergies and relationship with the GTMI (Global Tailings Management Institute);
- Requirements for Tailings Storage Facilities (TSFs) TSFs that are not classified as ‘Very High’ or ‘Extreme’ but with at least one potential loss of life;
- Robustness and appropriateness of ALARP processes, Dam Breach Analyses (including estimations of the potential volumes of tailings and water that could be released), and Dam Safety Reviews;
- Risk management regarding upstream TSFs;
- Potential safety ‘buffer’ zones and application of ALARP;
- The range of technical information and reports that could be made publicly accessible –by default– by companies, if any; and
- Emergency preparedness planning based on Dam Breach Analysis and risk assessments.

→ **Estimated preparation time:** 2 hours initial, and 30 minutes to 1 hour prior to each meeting, spread across a September-November 2025 period.

The number of meetings will vary, based on the complexity of the issues to be addressed, and the evolution of the multi-stakeholder discussions. After working group members have been selected, IRMA Secretariat will work with them to schedule the calls, aiming, if possible, to hold meetings on a consistent day of the week and time of day. However, depending on the global locations of the working group members, some flexibility in scheduling may be needed to accommodate all members.

→ **Estimated number of meetings:** Most likely between 2 and 4. Meetings will take place beginning in September 2025, and may extend into October or November, depending on availability of working group members and number of meetings required.

→ **Length of working group meetings:** Each working group meeting will be approximately 1.5 hours, unless participants in a group agree that they prefer longer sessions.

## Remuneration

**Expert Working Group** within IRMA are typically populated on a volunteer basis. However, if required to balance multi-stakeholder interests, stipends or honoraria may be offered to experts representing the community, NGO, or labor sectors. Requests for remuneration will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

## How to Apply

Please submit a short letter of interest, outlining how your expertise and interests relate with the topic of . Also include a CV/resume or supporting documentation of relevant experience and expertise.

Send your application to IRMA's Standards Director, Pierre Petit-De Pasquale at:

[pdepasquale@responsiblemining.net](mailto:pdepasquale@responsiblemining.net), with "**Expert Working Group on Tailings Storage and Mine Waste Facility Management**" in the subject line.

We will confirm receipt of all applications by e-mail. However, we will only follow up with candidates who have been selected to participate in the **Expert Working Group**.

## Application deadline:

31 August 2025

## ANNEX: IRMA Principles of Engagement for Expert Working Groups

The following principles have been adapted from those developed by IRMA Founding Members as a basis for participation in IRMA and/or initiatives or projects that flow out of IRMA:

1. We are committed to and recognize the value of a multi-sector process and solutions with the participation of all sectors.
2. We acknowledge that we must develop strategies and systems that add value for all sectors, recognizing that different sectors define value differently.
3. We recognize that while we may not always agree, we see value in finding solutions where we are able to find agreement. We are therefore committed to dialogue despite these disagreements or differences of opinion.
4. We are committed to a process that seeks to improve and advance best practices and standards.
5. We will seek to learn from and build upon current examples of site-based good practice as well as broader initiatives that are underway.
6. We will seek to identify ways to enable IRMA to recognize progress and improvements at existing operations, understanding that there could be, in some cases, inherent limits as to what can be achieved at these sites. We will seek to identify best practices for existing sites with complex and challenging issues that, if implemented, could enable those sites to achieve the highest Achievement Levels.
7. We recognize that in certain cases, whether or not there is governmental approval, due to potential impacts or other values or benefits, no mining or processing could be the best option. We seek to advance methodologies that allow such decisions to be made within a sustainable development context. We also recognize that we must pursue solutions that avoid simply leaving the mining of such sites to less responsible operators.
8. We will ground our suggestions related to standard setting and verification in sound science with regard to all stages of project development through closure and post-closure, giving careful consideration to identified risks, while recognizing that scientific uncertainty is not a reason for inaction, and respecting traditional knowledge, custom and values.
9. We agree that efficiency is essential. We seek to develop and advance criteria, targets, benchmarks and processes that integrate, whenever possible, existing tools, processes and resources, such as current reporting or auditing. We seek to build on existing knowledge and systems where applicable.
10. We recognize that it is essential to develop a system that enables mutually acceptable, credible, independent, third-party verification of compliance with standards, thresholds or performance targets. Accordingly, we seek to propose best practice solutions that can be verified through a process that includes direct observation and interviews by independent, third-party auditors with on-site staff, workers and affected stakeholders.