

Environmental Management System Certification Options

ISO 14001 can be used as the basis for self-certification, unaccredited certification or certification by a registrar that is accredited under the accreditation scheme established pursuant to the ISO CASCO standards (i.e. accredited certification).

ISO 14001 does not have to be used for certification purposes. It can be used by organizations who simply want to use some, or all, of the provisions of the standard for improving their environmental management system.

The ISO 14001:2015 standard will apply to “the environmental aspects that the organization determines is can control or can influence considering a life cycle perspective.” (from Section 1 of ISO/DIS 14001)

EMS Certification Pros and Cons

Option	Pros	Cons
Option #1 – No Certification	- This option provides the most flexibility in implementing the provisions of the standard – an organization can implement all the clauses or only those that it believes will provide business value. - Avoid the costs associated with obtaining certification from an external party.	- Cannot claim conformance to ISO 14001 unless all the requirements set out in the standard are met. - External parties are unlikely to place the same value on an organization’s use of ISO 14001 without 3rd party certification. - Implementing only selected clauses may reduce the value that could be obtained because the clauses of ISO 14001 are intended to be implemented as part of an integrated management system.
Option #2 – Self Certification	- Avoid the costs associated with obtaining certification from an external party, although there are still costs associated with having a self-certification audit program. - The organization has more flexibility in interpreted the requirements of ISO 14001 so they make sense for the organization and provide business value.	- Cannot claim conformance to ISO 14001 unless <u>all</u> the requirements set out in the standard are meet and the interpretation of the standard is reasonable. - External parties place less value on self-certification and there could be liability associated with self-certification if the claims of conformance are false.

Option	Pros	Cons
Option #3 – Unaccredited Certification	• The fact that an external party is performing verification audits adds visibility to the management system internally and creates increased organizational discipline. • Potential for more flexibility in interpreting the requirements of the standard than with accredited certification. The certification body does not have to meet the additional requirements and interpretations imposed by an accreditation body. • External unaccredited certification may be less expensive than accredited certification because the certification body does not have to pay the costs associated with accreditation – but it may not have the same credibility as accredited certification.	• There are additional costs associated with certification by an external party that would not be incurred with self-certification. • There is less flexibility in scheduling certification audits because external individuals are involved and they may not be available at the times that are most convenient for the organization. • Less flexibility in interpreting and implementing the provisions of the standard. The organization will have to live with the external certification body's interpretation of the requirements set out in ISO 14001. A significant difference of opinion could lead the certification body to withdraw its certification.
Option #4 – Accredited Certification	• External parties are likely to place the most value on accredited certification and sometimes supply chain partners make accredited certification a contractual requirement. • The organization may have increased confidence in the performance of the certification body because its processes and personnel are being periodically assessed by an accreditation body.	• Increased costs of obtaining certification because of the additional cost to the registrar of obtaining the accreditation. • Reduced flexibility in implementing the standard – not only does the organization have to comply with the interpretations and requirements of the ISO 14001 standard and the external certification body, but the certification process is also subject to the requirements and the interpretations of the accreditation body.

The information contained in this Quick Guide is to be used for informational and educational purposes only.

For more information about the use of ISO standards for certification purposes, go to <http://www.iso.org/iso/conformity-assessment>.

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