

Technical Advice on the Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement in Event Management for the ITCILO

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEO	Association of Event Organisations
AR	Augmented Reality
B2B	Business to Business
B2C	Business to Consumer
CBT	Competency Based Training
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GTT	Global Technical Team
HQ	Headquarters
IAPCO	International Association of Professional Congress Organisers
IGO	Inter-Governmental Organisation
ILO	International Labour Organisation
P&B	Program and Budget
ISO	International Standards Organisation
ITCILO	International Training Centre of the International Labour Organisation
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LIP	Learning Innovation Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPS	Net Promoter Score
PDCA	Plan, Do, Check, Act (Deming)
TORs	Terms of Reference
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
VR	Virtual Reality
XR	Extended Reality

INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The [International Training Centre](#) of the International Labour Organization is the training arm of the ILO, the Specialized Agency of the United Nations, which promotes social justice and human rights in the world of work. The ITCILO delivers both training services and non-training services to governments, employers' and workers' organisations and other national and international partners in support of decent work and sustainable development.

One of the non-training services offered by the Centre is the facilitation of meetings and events. The portfolio of these event management services has expanded rapidly in recent years on the back of non-traditional formats such as virtual fairs and online conferences. The portfolio is poised for further growth in 2022-23, as it is likely that particularly online events with a global audience will meet demand due to environmental and health and safety concerns but also cost considerations.

To consolidate and further grow its footprint in the segment for event management services in the coming years, ITCILO has sought expert advice on building a robust channel-specific quality assurance system founded in the quality principles promoted by the International Standard Organization. The consultants were requested to develop a baseline of the current quality assurance practices of the Centre in the field of event management services, to describe global good practice in quality assurance of events, to propose a results chain for event management services tailored to the context of work performed by the Centre and to identify tools to monitor and evaluate performance along the service delivery cycle.

The research team of three, included two people with long experience of event management, two people with experience of quality assurance and quality improvement, and three people with research skills.

The methodologies used in Part One of the report included Desk Research, using event related documentation from ITCILO, and interviews with a number of ITCILO staff involved in the management of events, and with the Director of Training. For Part Two, we drew on the research team's experience of event management, and of quality assurance and quality assurance systems, together with desk research into organisations and institutions which include event management as a key activity. This enabled us to draw out common principles for successful event management. Part Three of the report provides recommendations for ITCILO actions to establish a quality-led events management system, alongside the already successful quality-led training system.

Part One considers how the ITCILO manages events at present, and provides a critical review, using the findings of the documents shared, and the interviews with staff members. A key finding in this section is that there is little commonality between different teams, who each manage events in isolation from others. There is no central repository for good practice, nor any process

for sharing experiences, or lessons learned. There are examples of very good, and successful, event management practice within the ITCILO, but there does not appear to be a systemic approach to event management. The types of events managed by ITCILO vary widely, from massive international conferences with multiple partners and stakeholders, and thousands of participants, to small events with around 100, or fewer, participants. The wide variety of events managed by ITCILO adds to the difficulty of finding a common approach to event management. There are at least three dichotomies: large/small; internal /external; and B2B/B2C. Within these are gradations, and each of these has its own, different, challenges. Because there is no 'standard' system for managing events, different teams take different approaches, but there is no sharing of experiences across the organisation, and no forum to do so.

Part Two This section draws on a common understanding of good practice in event management around the world, and extracts the key stages of successful events:

- clarity of purpose, including KPIs to measure success;
- systematic planning of both the logistics, marketing and communication side, and the professional content and design;
- professional implementation of the event;
- and evaluation of the outcomes of the event.

This section contains considerable detail of the essential characteristics of each stage, and, where possible, relates it directly to the events work of ITCILO. The TORs for this report are to create results chain inputs, outputs, outcomes, impact, for events. General practice in event management includes immediate evaluation after the event, but very rarely is any systematic longer term evaluation undertaken to assess longer term outcomes or impact. For training events, all participants on a course have the same inputs, and the same goal in attending a course: to be able to do x. Success in the understanding of the content of the course can be clearly measured, by post course assessment, and measurable improvements in the participant's job performance in the longer term. This is not the case for most events, where each participant is likely to come with different goals, different expectations, and will take away very different learning sets, and probably new contacts, and new ideas. Finding a way to measure longer term outcomes from, and impact of, an event is more complex. This is something that is essential for ITCILO, and potential approaches are proposed in Part Three.

Part Three makes a number of recommendations, and proposes a way forward for ITCILO to develop and integrate quality systems into event management across the Centre's teams. These recommendations are built around a system of continual quality improvement for event management using Deming's Plan, Do, Check, Act paradigm, together with ISO standards, particularly ISO 21502¹ (Project, programme and portfolio management) within a project management process (purpose, planning, implementation, evaluation) as in Part Two above, and considering the outreach/engagement/conversion paradigm used by the advocacy and communications team.

¹ [ISO – ISO 21502:2020 – Project, programme and portfolio management – Guidance on project management](#)

Recommendation 1

We recommend developing a clear baseline for decisions on undertaking events. Details are in Part Three of the report.

Recommendation 2a

We recommend a central, events quality 'secretariat' is established to provide a central repository of reports on events, lessons learned, checklists, samples of evaluation forms, etc., and to provide further quality data analysis, updating of quality guidelines and disseminating these across the organisation.

Recommendation 2b

We recommend that an events 'centre of excellence' is established within ITCILO. This centre needs a person, or preferably a small team, with a particular role to manage and update the quality guidance for events, and to act as the centre of excellence for event management. Details are in Part Three of the report.

Recommendation 3

We recommend ISO 21502: Project, Programme, and Portfolio Management as the primary quality standard for events management. Other ISO standards can be used for particular aspects of an event. Relevant sections of ISO 21502, and others, for each of the process stages are given at the beginning of each stage below. These need to be reviewed internally to ensure that the proposed ISOs, and the proposed sections fully meet the needs of the ITCILO. Details are in Part Three of the report.

Recommendation 4

We recommend a quality assurance system for events which will answer a range of questions which impact on future events. Examples are given in Part Three of the report.

Recommendation 5

We recommend the establishment of a quality assurance system, embedded into the event planning, implementation and evaluation systems. This will enable ITCILO to assess each event against a set of appropriate criteria.

Recommendation 6

We recommend the development of a taxonomy of event types, of client relationships, and of budget considerations, of event format, and possibly other issues. These will provide a 'mix and match' analysis for many types of events, and the basis for measuring the quality of the event. Details are in Part Three of the report.

Recommendation 7

We recommend the development of a checklist of design considerations before detailed planning of an event begins. Details are in Part Three of the report.

Recommendation 8

We recommend development of a feedback loop that constantly updates the quality assurance system with innovative successful practice, and that can provide ‘warnings’ about where things can go wrong, or issues that need particular attention.

Recommendation 9

We recommend the development of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database for events. If ITCILO already has a general CRM database, we recommend a ‘tagging’ of appropriate contacts with an ‘Events’ tag, and specifying their areas of interest with regard to the thematic areas the different events address. Details are in Part Three of the report.

Recommendation 10

We recommend the establishment of a planning group, within the team organising the event, plus any external partners if appropriate. This group should meet regularly before the event to assess progress, and identify any issues as early as possible in order for them to be addressed in a timely fashion.

Recommendation 11

We recommend the development of common guidelines for event (non-content) planning. Non-content planning elements include: budget, stakeholders/partners, sponsors (if appropriate), communications and marketing, and logistics.

Recommendation 12

We recommend an initial programme outline is developed first, based on the purpose of the event, and proper consideration given to which speakers/moderators and what kind of formats are most appropriate for the expected participants. As well as getting the right speakers, the ‘flow’ of the conference also needs to be carefully considered. Details are in Part Three of the report.

Recommendation 13

We recommend that all speakers/moderators are briefed, not only on their part in the conference, but on the overall purpose of the conference, who the audience will be, where their contribution ‘sits’ in the overall form of the conference, and to consider what their presentation will contribute to achieving the event’s purpose, and the ‘learning’ they are expecting participants to gain from the speaker’s contribution.

Recommendation 14

We recommend that consideration is given to the participants who the event hopes to attract. Clear communication about the theme and topics of the event, and who is likely to most benefit from attendance, clearly identifying the outcomes for the different stakeholders, will ensure that participants know what to expect at the event. A targeted marketing and communications campaign which includes social and other media, and promotion through partner and other organisations will ensure that the largest number of potential participants are aware of the event.

Recommendation 15

We recommend that the registration process includes a set of questions for participants, which will provide important data for the event in question as well as future event planning and marketing, as well as leads for following up evaluation after the event. Details are in Part Three of the report.

Recommendation 16

We recommend the event team develop an evaluation strategy for each event which clearly develops and identifies indicators that can be monitored and tracked, pre, during and post the event. This will provide a clear picture of the performance and quality of the event that is delivered. Details are in Part Three of the report.

Recommendation 17

We recommend each event has a contingency plan for foreseeable hitches in the delivery of the event, with specific people responsible for particular areas to ensure a smooth event experience whereby any possible hitches go unnoticed by the participants and their event experience is considered a success. Details are in Part Three of the report.

Recommendation 18

We recommend that a 'standard' process for reviewing, and recording, both external and internal evaluations immediately after an event is developed, and held in a central 'secretariat' whose role is to both circulate learning from the event to the wider organisation, and to update the quality improvement guidance for event management across the organisation. Details are in Part Three of the report.

Recommendation 19

We recommend that longer term evaluation of events is initiated as standard practice. The evaluation form should be short, and easy to complete.

Recommendation 20

We recommend that following an event, and its initial evaluation, an evaluation 'exception' report is prepared (to a common format) by a senior member of the event team (and signed off by the person in charge). Details are in Part Three of the report.

Recommendation 21

We recommend that while event management remains devolved to the most appropriate teams, each team is equipped with quality 'toolkits' appropriate to the kind of event they are organising. Large international events will have more complex toolkits than, say, a small internal event. We recommend that development of the initial draft toolkits is devolved to the teams with most experience of a particular type of event.

Recommendation 22

We recommend the development of a clear and common strategy for the collation of meaningful data both pre- and post- event. Also a longer term evaluation strategy, which can identify common trends across events, in terms of connected impacts in the longer term, for example, inter- and intra-organisational collaboration, publication of research papers, promotion, job / role change linked to engagement in the event.

PART ONE: QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR EVENT MANAGEMENT SERVICES IN THE CENTRE: BASELINE ASSESSMENT

Brief description of the overall quality management system of the Centre

In October 2019 ITCILO produced a ‘Quality Management in the Training Department: A Description of Quality Assurance Processes for Training Services.’ The ITCILO benchmark their training services against ISO 29993². ISO standard 29993 is for learning services outside formal education. It was noted in conversation with members of the Learning Innovation Programme (LIP) that they refer to ISO 9001³ for Quality Management Systems in much of their work, and when they are organising events. The Office of the Director of Training communicated that they *‘also try to consider ISO 20700 for management of consultancy services.’*

This comment shows recognition that organising and holding other ISO standards for non-training activities, including events, requires other measures of quality than those required for creating and running training courses. We also learned during conversations that the LIP leads on large scale innovative events, but any one of the other ten teams of ITCILO can stage events, for ITCILO as well as for and with partners. There seems to be no agreed organisation-wide approach to organising, holding, and evaluating events, apart from the training paradigm. This is not usually appropriate, as some of our interviewees already recognise.

As a process, organising and holding events is very different to designing and running a training course, the primary activity of ITCILO. Events require different methods for assessing the quality of the preparation, the implementation, and evaluation of them. There is also the further complication of assessing longer term outcomes from an event, which are not as easily assessed as those of a training course. Currently, there is no systematic process for the collation of key data across all ITCILO events, such as registration, attendance, engagement, and evaluation. There are some examples of excellent practice in this area, e.g. the GTT event, but as any one of the 11 units can run their own events, and little sharing of experience, it is likely that the quality of events vary across teams.

² [ISO – ISO 29993:2017 – Learning services outside formal education – Service requirements](#)

³ [ISO – ISO 9000 family – Quality management](#)

There is no specific ISO suite for event management and planning, but there are potentially two additional ISOs that could be used to inform the quality system that is developed: ISO 21502 for Project, Programme and Portfolio Management and ISO 20121⁴ Sustainable Event Management. ISO 9001 Quality Management, and ISO 20700⁵ Consultancy Management can also be considered as relevant. Whilst none of these are directly applicable to the ITCILO events portfolio, there are some key elements that can be taken and considered in the development of a bespoke event quality management system for the ITCILO.

As the ISO 21502 states “Project management should be performed through a set of processes and methods that should be designed as a system and should include practises necessary for a specific project”. The same principle can be directly applied to event management with a standardised system for registration, attendance, engagement in specific sessions, pre-event and post-event participant and presenter feedback questionnaires to support the collation and interpretation of data.

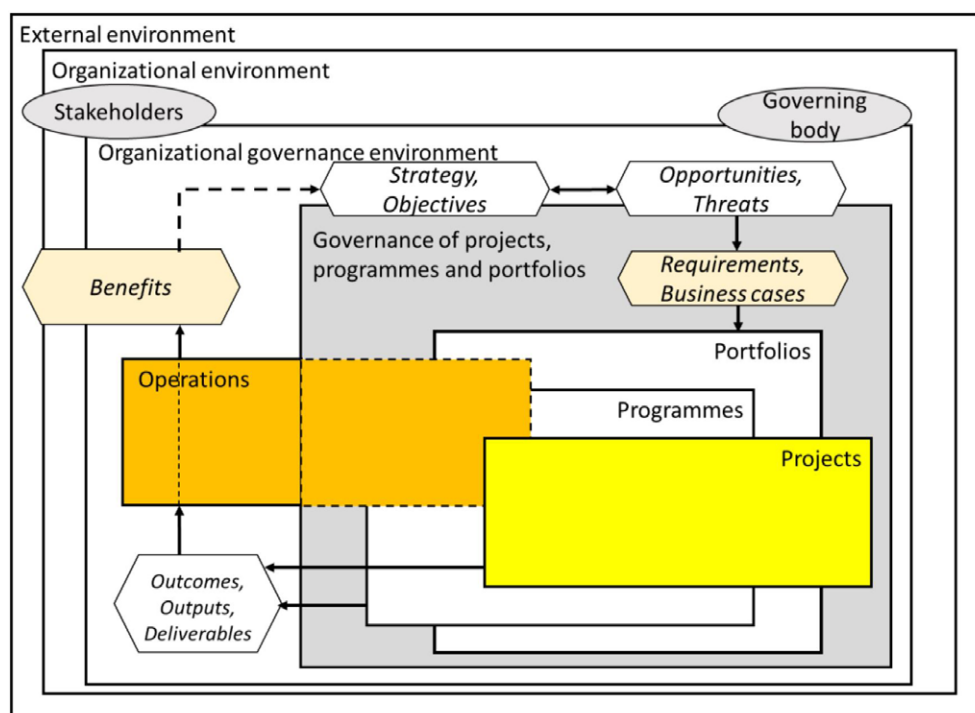
Equally the ISO 21502 presents a list of considerations “when aligning project management practises and systems [...]”:

- functional and physical organisational over other prevailing structures;
- conflicting procedures, processes, plans and systems;
- communication methods and cycles;
- technology availability and access;
- the context of operations of the organisation;
- balancing and optimising the social, economic and environmental characteristics;
- administrative and authorisation systems;
- sustainability and oversight requirements”.

Each of these have some weight and need for consideration in the planning and development of an event.

⁴ [ISO – ISO 20121 – Sustainable events](#)

⁵ [ISO – ISO 20700:2017 – Guidelines for management consultancy services](#)

FIGURE 1: THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT ISO CONTEXT⁶

The ISO 20121 in Sustainability in Event Management draws on the established ISO 9001 Quality Management Systems, and the ISO 14001 Environmental Management draws on *Deming's* Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA) approach and provides clear guidelines and considerations for developing a sustainable event.

The key objective of this report is to make recommendations on how the ITCILO can run a quality event and demonstrate and evidence its success. The ISO 21502, 20121 and 9001 can certainly inform the planning and processes that are needed to achieve consistency and rigour in the standard of event management and delivery. *Deming's* PDCA, Plan, Do, Check, action, although cited, is limited to the operational aspects of the project or system. As a result, there are real limitations in the ISOs when it comes to determining the relative success of each event. It is necessary therefore to draw on case studies (Part Two: pp. 44-49) and best practice from the event management sector (*ibid*) to inform the development of a clear evaluation strategy for ITCILO events. This event strategy would align directly to the overarching Results Framework informing specific KPIs for each event type and providing guidance on the data to be collated and presented as evidence to demonstrate achievement against the KPIs.

⁶ [The New ISO 21502 \(pmworldlibrary.net\)](https://www.iso.org/standard/72431.html)

Event management services

The ITCILO's document '*ITCILO 2022-23 programme and budget proposals*' highlights 'a new service mix' that says ITCILO plans on moving away from a

The new service mix illustrated

TRAINING	NON-TRAINING SERVICES		
STANDARD COURSES (including Master Programmes)	TRAINING PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT	TRAINING MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCIES	MEETING AND EVENT FACILITATION
CUSTOMIZED COURSES	PROJECT MANAGEMENT SUPPORT	COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY SERVICES	KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

single focus on individual capacity development, to include institutional capacity building for both ILO constituents and partner organisations. This change will increase the importance of the 'non-training' aspects of ITCILO's work. Meetings and events make up one of six 'non-training services'. Other non-training services include: training product development (project), training management consultancies (consultancy), project management support (project), communication and advocacy services (consultancy/project?), and knowledge management solutions (quality management). While all of these involve capacity building, none of them are training activities. Most of these activities fit into a project paradigm (ISO 21502) rather than a pedagogic one (ISO 29993). Another appropriate ISO standard would be for consultancy services (ISO 20700), and quality management (ISO 9001). The new service mix envisages:

- considerable growth in online training and digital learning;
- taking advantage of the scalability and extended outreach available through online approaches;
- integrating training (whether face-to-face or online) with advisory services;
- holding events and conferences which provide access to current thinking and innovation in particular fields, which can create a much more powerful intervention for change and improvement.

Event management is one of six non-training services, plus another two types of training services (Standard and Custom). The impression given in the document is that these are all 'separate' activities with no clear relation to each other. It is not immediately clear how the non-training activities are done, and how success or quality are measured. Using another non-training service as an example, the questions that could be asked about that would include the following.

For example, does another non-training service, 'Training Management Consultancies':

1. Have a defined team who undertake training management consultancies?
2. Have a dedicated secretariat, in charge of all operational and administrative aspects, and which brings in appropriate consultants from other parts of the organisation for particular tasks?
3. Gather teams and management from different parts of the organisation to work on a particular piece of work, and the team is then disbanded when the task is completed?
4. Allocate consultancy tasks completely to the most appropriate team in the organisation?

If ITCILO is to become a ‘learning organisation’, i.e. one that learns from experience, and seeks continuing quality improvement, the best option for training management consultancies would be the second one. Option one keeps all the expertise of training management consultancies in one small team. Option three offers no way of retaining the learning from a task within the organisation. The fourth option spreads different experiences across the organisation, but, like option three, these experiences are not shared consistently. Option two, through the secretariat, develops a corporate memory for the learning from all the consultancies undertaken, while drawing on the most appropriate experts for particular consultancy tasks.

This rather extended example illustrates a concern with the ITCILO approach to event management. Our understanding from documents, and from discussion with ITCILO team members, is that, currently, the approach is analogous to option 4 in the example above: different teams organise and hold events in their area separately, so broader learning on the processes and quality of holding events across the organisation may be lost.

In conversations with members of ITCILO staff, we learned a number of things about both the types and scale of ITCILO events. It is clear that events are of widely varied formats, and are usually one off, i.e. not annual or otherwise regular events.

The first clear distinction in ITCILO events is between internal (e.g. the GTT meeting), and those done for/with other UN bodies. (e.g. the UNV event). The second clear distinction is between small scale, local or regional events (e.g. Competency based training policy and strategy in the GCC), and large scale global events (e.g. the UNV event, and the upcoming child labour event in Durban). The third distinction is between Business to Business (B2B): events that are built around the needs of a paying institutional client, and Business to Consumer (B2C), where ITCILO markets an event directly to paying customers. The number of different stakeholders can also add complexity to these dichotomies, but as we learned in conversation with ITCILO staff, even small events can provide unforeseen levels of complexity, for example, cultural and political issues. It is clear that a ‘one size fits all’ solution to quality assurance in ITCILO events is an inadequate response.

However, it is also clear that there needs to be a common and consistent process to achieve quality in all ITCILO events. This is needed to give management and clients confidence that ITCILO event design, management and evaluation is of high and consistent quality. All events therefore need to follow a systematic approach through Deming’s Plan, Do, Check, and Act. Event purpose comes before Deming: *Why are we doing this event, and what beneficial changes will it bring? How will we measure whether or not we have achieved these changes?*

Example: Match to purpose

FIGURE 2: MATCH TO PURPOSE GRID: GCC CBT ONLINE EVENT

Match to Purpose	High	Medium	Low
B2B/B2C	B2B		
External/internal		External	
Large/Small			Small

FIGURE 3: MATCH TO PURPOSE GRID: GTT STRATEGY MEETING

Match to Purpose	High	Medium	Low
B2B/B2C	B2C		
External/internal	Internal		
Large/Small	Large		

The Match to Purpose analysis illustrates very clearly how individual events align to the ITCILO's overarching strategy and Results framework. Figure 3 above shows that the GTT large internal meeting was marked high in all three aspects of match to purpose. This is as it should be because the event attracted large numbers of staff to address the implementation of the organisational strategy.

The profile of the GCC event as presented in Figure 2 is more 'jagged': the content, (CBT) of the event is central to the ITCILO's purpose. Building a relationship with the GCC was useful, but not central to purpose, and because it reached comparatively few people, the event was a poor match to purpose. If the small audience had all been policy makers who would use the experience of the event to implement policy in their respective countries, then its match to purpose would be high. But there are no records or profiles of the participants, and nor any data on what has changed, if anything, since their attendance at the event. If, on the other hand, this analysis considered the financial viability of an event, then it is likely that the GCC event would score higher than the GTT event, as it brought in external revenue.

Different events will require different levels of planning, but all will require planning, and this will need to be recorded. The event itself will need to be evaluated internally: *did it go as planned? Were the participants satisfied? What have we learned from the planning and holding of this event? When will we contact the participants to assess whether the changes we sought are being implemented or integrated into their work?*

Within this general framework, different types of events will have different approaches, and different desired outcomes, but all events should be recorded in a common way, and circulated across the organisation (through a secretariat?) to ensure learning is organisation-wide. Some events will be less successful than others. They may need closer review to identify why they did not work as planned. Less successful events should be treated as learning opportunities. This is important if we want teams to give honest and critical evaluations.

Spectrum and scope of the portfolio

The previous section notes the very broad event portfolio that ITCILO has: from massive international events such as the Child Labour event in Durban, to much smaller regional policy focused events such as the GCC CBT policy event. The commonality of these two events is that they are both events involving external partners or clients. There are also undoubtedly large events, like the GTT event, and small events which focus on internal audiences.

Event management is a multi-faceted beast for ITCILO. An event like the Child Labour Summit in Durban involves a great deal of human and other resources, both within ITCILO, the local ILO office in South Africa, local contractors, and external partners.

The GCC competency-based training event was very different. In conversation with ITCILO staff, we noted there was a lack of any clearly defined planning process. The idea came from ITCILO; this led to discussions and further development between local ILO offices and the GCC in the region. The design of the event did not appear to take cultural and political relationships into account, lacked a clear definition of desired outcomes or measures, or any way to assess the success or otherwise of the event. There was also a much smaller number of participants than expected, and it has not (yet) led to further business from the client. When asked about the 'success', or otherwise, of the event, it was noted that different stakeholders would view the success differently. The ILO local offices viewed it as a success, as it built their relationships with, and within, the GCC. The GCC Executive Council viewed it as a success, as it allowed them to invite all its members to participate. The professional initiator of the event was rather disappointed with the participation numbers and results of the event, and also with the lack of future business resulting from it. The view was that participants probably felt they did not get what they were expecting. However, the two key stakeholders in assessing the success or otherwise of an ITCILO event are the organisation that paid for it, in this case the GCC, and the ITCILO, as the organisation that presented it. In this case, it appears that the GCC, the client, was pleased, the ILO local offices were pleased, but the ITCILO less so.

This makes a standardised method of evaluation of events more difficult. As part of the initial thinking about an event, the purpose needs to be clear to ITCILO, and although the client's purpose may be different, it has to align with ITCILO's purpose. As part of the planning process the ITCILO team needs to establish, for all stakeholders, what their desired outcome of the event is, which is the purpose of them engaging with it. During the registration process, participants

can also be asked what they expect to get out of the event, and this can be assessed against the participants' post-evaluation.

From conversations with ITCILO staff, we understand that ITCILO events are demand driven: requests come from internal and external organisations, but for ITCILO to agree to them, they must be in line with the ILO's mandate. Within the ITCILO, events have considerably fewer resources than training, and need to build up strength, particularly in the area of quality assurance. With the growing demand on the ITCILO to organise events, together with the income that it brings, additional investment and resources should be allocated to it. The next section looks more closely at the current state of processes to ensure quality in events management across the ITCILO.

Current processes and tools to quality assure event management services

Quality assurance for training in the ITCILO has a clear and coherent system. There is not the same clarity for events, and whilst the training paradigm can be adapted to an event management context it is not necessarily the best fit for this. There is no agreed quality assurance approach, processes or even principles, for the management of events. Including the definition of purpose, and desired outcomes of an event, there are at least five different areas of quality management to be addressed in event management:

1. the purpose of the event;
2. the design and planning process;
3. the process of developing relevant content, with appropriate presentations and speakers;
4. the management of the event itself;
5. the evaluation both immediately after the event, and the longer-term evaluation of outcomes.

Each of these areas will generate a great deal of data, which needs to be analysed, and where required, findings need to be used for improving the quality of future events. This is not yet happening in any systematic way.

Since different teams / people within different teams are assigned to different events, lessons learned are not shared as there is no process for doing so. Having a person, or small team, in the organisation who collects, manages and reviews the feedback on each event, according to a common format, and disseminates the key elements across the organisation, will create the beginning of a 'good practice', and 'things to avoid' set of guidelines for delivering events across the organisation. There are overall principles that apply to all events, despite the wide range of types of events the ITCILO undertakes.

General context

These comments are extracted from conversations with sector teams within ITCILO.

- There is no central body within ITCILO responsible for all events. Events are driven and managed by the appropriate sector teams, in all aspects: design and planning, stakeholder engagement, registration, marketing and communications, operations, etc.
- There was approximately Euro 750k in income from about 30 events in 2021, and already there is Euro 400k income logged for events in 2022. However, because there is little cross-organisation of events, most teams will be unaware of the total income derived from events across the organisation. There are also plans for significant growth in this area.
- All external events need to be full cost recovery and ITCILO is 75% funded by the services it provides.
- Currently, and mainly due to the pandemic, the majority of events take place online.
- There is no single model of events, and no template for event design. This is important to note, as the variety of different types of events presented by ITCILO means that a tight single approach would be impracticable. Our understanding is that for external events, a team will ask questions of the client, and then present a proposal for an event.
- The LIP team already has a design thinking 'tool kit', and would welcome a similar approach for event management, identifying key resources to support them. They would also welcome a typology of event types. These could be linked to outline procedures.
- There was also a suggestion that there should be a 'list' of all members of ITCILO who have specific event management experience and expertise. This list could form the core of an internal community of practice for events.
- The details of events, and related documentation, provided are currently very different from each other and the lack of consistency in presentation makes it very difficult to draw any common conclusions. Apart from the GTT event, there were examples of blank participant evaluation forms, but no analysis, or other evaluation documentation of the event. An important aspect for initiating a quality improvement system has to be accessible event data analysis, and the ability to extract patterns from this to inform quality improvement.

Design and planning

There are two broad sections within this:

Taking account of the professional and political context

The comments earlier on the CBT for GCC event suggests that this is not always given the consideration it deserves. Examples of considerations not taken into account for that particular event were:

- It should have had more Arabic/regional speakers.

- There was a complicated organisational process, with Invitations coming by letter from the GCC Executive Council; ITCILO working with local ILO offices to organise the event.
- There were cultural issues in the organisation and delivery.
- The ITCILO faced unexpected local political dynamics with this event.

Organisation of the event

The Durban Child Labour Event, will take place as a hybrid event and as such will bring its own complexity. It is hosted by the South Africa government and the organisation is shared between ITCILO and the local ILO South African office, who contract appropriate local suppliers and service providers. There was a suggestion that the ISO for project management could be used for events of this scale and complexity.

Particularly when working with partners there is real value in committees and checklists: clearly assigning tasks, roles and responsibilities and ensuring everything is covered. This may already be the case, but no evidence was offered.

It appears that there is good consideration given to this area, at least for large-scale external events. But it is possibly less true of smaller, and internal events, as demonstrated in the competency-based training policy and strategy for the GCC. In that case, the lack of a 'standard approach' to planning and working with outside organisations, made it difficult to navigate and fully understand the different obstacles until it was too late. A number of planning documents are reviewed below.

Planning

How to create an online event: [this article](#) reviews the preparation of the big UNV conference in 2020. This is a short, sharp set of tips which, with their steps to success, could help anyone planning something similar. However, they are short, and the success of the event was undoubtedly due to many more elements than the ones listed here. The tips and steps would be most useful to those already familiar with event design, preparation and management.

Digital Inclusion Summit: This is a promotional webpage about a [Digital Inclusion Summit, leaving no one behind | ITCILO](#), to be followed, a day later, by a [Knowledge Fair](#). The information is very clear: the front page highlights key features of the event, with a short 'problem statement' about the issue being addressed. Page two speaks of the power of digital inclusion, and the purpose and outcomes sought: '*a comprehensive framework of action...*', together with a list of who the summit is for. The next page summarises the programme themes, and mentions the following day's Knowledge Fair, and a link to register for that. The final page asks: "' Questions? We have the answers'" with links to FAQs and to "EMAIL US". This is a well designed and informative webpage.

GTT Meeting: The exit report of the 2021 Global Technical Team meeting of the Enterprises Department appears to be an example of the current, and developing, approach of ITCILO "to enhance the relevance and technical quality of ILO work and to...*'deliver as one'*". Beyond the

purpose and objectives, there is no report on how the organisers decided on the format the event would take. Were other approaches considered and dismissed, or is this approach one regularly used for this type of meeting? There is no reason why this aspect should necessarily be in the report, because it is a report on the event as it was. But the report could have provided some analysis of why the approach taken was deemed to be the best approach, and how that was demonstrated in the number of participants, engagement and overall success of the event, which could be useful for event planning in the future.

Developing and curating the professional content

There was very little evidence of the thinking involved in selecting speakers, session formats, programme flow, etc. This might be tacit knowledge held by some in the organisation, but unless it is surfaced and recorded, it is of little use across the organisation.

There was a suggestion that the ISO for learning process (ISO 29993) could be used for professional content of events.

The event itself

XR Focus for Skills Development: According to one respondent, XR Focus for Skills Development was a promotional event for the use of AR and VR in training. It was promoted to 3000 alumni of skills courses, other providers of courses, and through LinkedIn posts by different staff members of ITCILO. It attracted 600 registrations for the two days of presentations, and the greatest number of participants at any one time was 100. The respondent thought it was likely that these were essentially the same 100 participants attending all of the sessions. The organisers had anticipated more participants than the 600 who registered. This suggests that there may be an issue within ITCILO around marketing and promotion. A subject like augmented and virtual reality is likely to have a (potentially, at least) very wide audience, and should attract some press or influencer interest, as well as a broad range of individuals, academic institutions, corporate training providers and learning & development officers within corporate organisations as well as governments.

GTT Meeting: The report provides a review of the two parts of the meeting: a two-day online zoom meeting to review the new strategy outline, one day each to accommodate team members in different time-zones. The third day is an online exhibition of ILO '*approaches and tools to promote sustainable business practices*' on the platform vFair.

Immediate evaluations

Evaluations immediately after the event are done, but later evaluation is currently unsystematic. There is no process for sharing experience through the organisation beyond the immediate team. There is a community of practice on eCampus, focused on training, but it is not used for events. A formalised ITCILO events 'community of practice' for sharing good practice, in addition to the quality improvement process, is something that should be considered.

For the GTT Meeting, the purpose of the event is *‘to contribute to the achievement of Outcome 4 of the ILO P&B 2020-21 ‘(Sustainable enterprises as generators of employment and promoters of innovation and decent work’.* The immediate objectives were defined as *‘to jointly review the draft strategy...to identify the ‘levers’ for making it actionable and, to unlock synergy and scale effects... to promote sustainable enterprise practices’.* The immediate objectives are fairly clear. We can see that reviewing the strategy is something that can be measured, though how individuals understand the strategy, given their different environments, and presumably their different job objectives, may be more difficult. The second half of the objectives is less immediately clear. Are the ‘levers’ being sought universal, or are they location/team specific? What kind of synergy and scale is being sought? Again, is it universal, or between teams within a country or region? How can we measure whether or not this has been/is being achieved?

The output for the GTT meeting is given as *‘increased knowledge...of the strategy’.* This is certainly part of it, but is it sufficient? Is the output not also what is put here as the outcome: *‘an emerging consensus on strategy levers...’?* The meetings familiarised the participants with the strategy, and started them thinking about how the strategy can be implemented. If this is the case, the outcome would then be *‘agreed, and implemented, levers for operationalising the strategy’.* The impact will then become *‘more effective strategy implementation across the GTT’.* The outputs, outcomes and impact also need KPIs, and other measures to determine the success, in the longer term.

There were a number of examples of participant evaluation forms, but very limited documents analysing the results of these forms. The GTT event noted that many exhibitors (while happy with the event itself) were unhappy about the time and information available to them to prepare beforehand. This led to one-to-one training of exhibitors on how to use the online platform and their ‘booth’. It is not clear whether this was planned, or provided in response to exhibitors’ disquiet. This should be a learning point for future events, and explored further, but it was only mentioned in passing in the report.

Longer term evaluations

The authors found no current evidence that ITCILO undertakes longer term evaluations of the outcomes of their events.

PART TWO: GLOBAL GOOD PRACTICE IN THE QUALITY ASSURANCE OF EVENT MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Introduction

While a training course is usually approached with a pedagogic objective in mind, events are generally approached through a project management frame. Quality management should be integral throughout the whole process. It does not begin with the event itself: it begins as soon as the idea for the event is formed. There are a number of ISO standards that might apply to events:

- 9001: Quality Management Principles;
- 20700: Guidelines for Management Consultancy Services (relevant for managing events on behalf of external clients);
- 20121: Sustainable Event Management;
- 21502: Project, Programme and Portfolio Management;
- 29993: Learning Services Outside Formal Learning Services.

Unless quality management, based around appropriate standards, is integrated throughout the design, planning and management of the event, there is no way of properly assessing the quality of the event, nor of its outcomes. Recommendations for integrating ISO quality standards into ITCILO's event management processes will be provided in Part Three of this report.

'Events' cover a wide range of activities, from the Olympics and the World Cup, to an international conference, an organisation's small internal event, or even a dinner party. Despite the differences in scale, organisation requirements and budget, all of these activities share some central principles. All events:

- Need to have a purpose
- Need to be designed
- Need to be planned in detail
- Need to be well managed in implementation
- Need to be evaluated

Quality assurance of any event involves close management of each of these preparation stages, the content of the event, the management of the event itself, and of the post event evaluation. All of these, done well, and with any lessons learned recorded, provide an iterative path to ongoing improvement of all aspects of an organisation's event preparation, implementation and evaluation for future events.

Despite a broad agreement that these are processes to be followed in preparing and managing a successful event, there is a paucity of strong academic study of events. This is partly because of the wide range of activities that involve 'events' of different kinds, and partly because events are kinetic. An event, even an online event, is a dynamic social activity, and even if you are clear about your purpose and role in the event; different social interactions, different personal expectations of the event, and even what you think of the catering, or the signposting, will impact on what you take from the event.

This section of the report looks at good practice, in the quality management of events through four lenses:

1. Quality assurance in the process of the preparation of the event;
2. Quality assurance in the content, planned structures and activities of the event;
3. Quality management of the event itself; and
4. Quality assurance in the post-event evaluation processes.

In addition, we will consider differences between internal and external events, and smaller and larger events.

There is no single template, nor ISO standard, that leads to high quality events. This report looks at different facets of events, and distills tested ways to develop open systems which can improve and measure quality in the process, content, delivery and evaluation of events. It is fundamentally based around ISO 21502: Project, Programme and Portfolio Management, but the other standards also have a contribution to make at different stages. The focus on good practice in this section will inform the recommendations, linked to appropriate ISO standards, in Part Three of this report. These will provide an iterative system for ongoing improvement in the organisation's ability to measure, and therefore ensure, that all events are of high quality.

We have limited the task to what we believe covers the range of events that ITCILO are likely to organise. These are events that:

- Communicate a clear purpose to a clearly defined community likely to be interested in the topic(s).
- Inform, stimulate, develop a community feeling, and change practice beyond the event itself.
- Attract an appropriate community of people with a shared and, in different ways, informed, interest in the event's topic(s).
- Attract expert speakers, influencers and key industry people
- Provide opportunities to meet with others who have similar interests to their own, to learn about new research and development in their area, and to increase their understanding of the topics discussed.
- Are delivered in a financially sustainable manner, and comply with global standards of good governance for international public sector organisations.
- Attract between 100-5000 participants.

Being clear about the purpose, the content, the audience, the budget, at the very start of preparing an event, and having a clear quality driven process for the content and logistics preparation, content and logistics management of the event itself, and short and longer-term evolution of the event, using a set of quality driven processes, will contribute to the building of a robust, quality driven system for continuing improvement in the delivery of events by ITCILO. This approach, informed by both current practice in ITCILO (Part One), and by global best practice (Part Two), will be summarised in recommendations for action in Part Three of the report.

In addition, there are different aspects to be considered if the event is small or large, and if the event is an internally organised one, for the ILO broader community, or whether management of the event is commissioned by an external body, to meet their purposes, as well as those of the ILO.

A snapshot of the global events industry and a word about face-to-face, online, and hybrid conferences

Since early 2020, with the onset of COVID-19, there have been massive changes in the events industry. Most large-scale events were cancelled, or postponed during 2020, and in some cases like the Olympics, held in 2021, with the athletes competing, but no spectators. The inability of organisations to hold face-to-face conferences led to the dramatic increase in the development of online events. Organisers soon realised that these could be almost as effective as face-to-face conferences, and though they were technically complex to manage, could be run efficiently and at a considerably lower cost than traditional face-to-face events. Since then some face-to-face events have returned, but many of these have online elements, and it seems likely that in the future, the number of purely face-to-face events will reduce, and ‘hybrid’ events, with both face-to-face and online aspects, will increase in number. And online delivery will become the standard for many events.

There are, of course, many differences between face-to-face and online events, and hybrid conferences have their own additional challenges. Online events can attract many participants and presenters that would not be able to attend a face-to-face event. They are much cheaper to put on, and, technology permitting, can provide asynchronous access to presentations beyond the event itself. It is more difficult to create a sense of community with an online event, and there is less of an element of serendipity, (the fascinating person you sat next to at lunch) than a face-to-face event can permit. Hybrid events should be able to provide the advantages of both: the wider outreach available through online, together with the serendipity of face-to-face events. But they are more complex to manage successfully for both audiences.

Common elements for all events include:

- **Engagement:** early engagement with key partners and stakeholders so that all have a clear, and common view of what the event is to achieve, and their role(s) in making it a success. This will include issues of content and speakers; audience, participant invitations and promotion, event formats and accessibility (e.g. high level exclusive meetings alongside the event), accompanying exhibition, social activities; branding: whose logo goes where? And promotional activity: who

is responsible for which aspect? What is the message? Public relations, communications, influencers, social media walls and other issues around marketing including budget, channels, etc. need to have a clear integrated plan, with organisers, partners and stakeholders clear about their roles and responsibilities.

- **Clear purpose and design:** An event primarily needs to be designed to achieve its purpose. Within that, it also needs to be designed with the participants in mind, so that they have a clear path through the event. The content in the appropriate presentations/sessions needs to be clear, and contribute to the overall purpose of the event.
- **Technology:** All events rely on technology, and ensuring that the technology required for an event, and the expertise available to operate it, is available throughout the planning and the event itself is an essential consideration at the beginning.
- **Timing:** The success of an event can be determined by its timing. The scheduling of the event needs to consider the cultural and sectoral requirements of its target audience and contributors. In addition, consideration should also be given to other events that are regularly scheduled in the wider international events calendar.

There are a few organisations, whose role is to promote good practice in Event management:

- **International Congress and Convention Association.** This is a UNWTO affiliated organisation, which claims to be *'the global community and knowledge hub for the international association meetings industry'*. <https://www.iccaworld.org/abouticca/>
- **International Association of Professional Congress Organisers:** IAPCO is the international accreditation member-driven association for Professional Congress Organisers around the world. Its remit is to raise quality standards within the meetings industry. <https://www.iapco.org/about-iapco/>
- **Association of Events Organisers.** This is a UK based body whose focus appears to be on commercial 'fairs' more than conferences, but they have a code of practice and a set of professional standards which members adhere to. This can form the structure for developing a similar set of standards for ITCILO. [Best Practice & Professional Standards – AEO](#)
- **Institute of Event Managers** – another UK based organisation which focuses on professional development and accreditation for Events professionals. Again, while not directly relevant to much of ITCILO's work, it does provide a code of professional conduct for event organisers, [Headline: Code of Professional Conduct | Event Managers \(event-managers.institute\)](#), an accreditation process for a number of roles in event management, and this very useful 'functional map' for the skills needed in various aspects of event management. [Final-Functional-Map-for-Events-Sector-Approved-January-2014.pdf \(event-manager, s.institute\)](#)

General principles of quality assured event management

The following sections, based on conversations with staff at ITCILO and related documentation, our understanding of quality assurance considerations for event management, and a number of organisational examples, work on the premise that the quality management processes for all events share a common set of parameters, with different emphases in some aspects. For example, a

face-to-face event has a complete set of considerations around the venue, and management of movement between sessions, coffee and meal breaks, networking sessions, that online events do not. On the other hand, technical management, engagement, together with managing ‘zoom fatigue,’ become primary considerations in online events. Hybrid events combine the challenges of both types of event, together with the need to integrate them. So the considerations that follow work from the commonalities of all types of events, highlighting where these might differ for face-to-face, online and hybrid.

Quality assurance considerations and a quality improvement process

At its simplest, designing and planning an event involves a series of steps in a number of areas, of tasks that need to be done, and completed, usually in a logical order. These can be seen as a critical path: until you have the event approved appropriately by whoever needs to do so, have the right partners on board, and the budget agreed; practical planning of how the event will work can be nugatory. A quality management approach within an organisation, develops a set of processes that are common to all events the organisation is likely to hold. These approaches can, at minimum, provide consistency and coherency in applications for budget, and other, approvals, agreements with partners and other issues related to organisational process. At its best, quality management can also promote the identity / brand of the organisation planning the event, through the provision of a clear infrastructure to facilitate the planning, delivery and ongoing evaluation of the events. Appropriate protocols can also flag synergies across the organisation where perhaps activities could be joined, or intelligence and stakeholders shared to support the success of other teams’ events. This approach, based around ISO quality standards, provides guidelines or checklists for individual events. It also provides flexibility to incorporate any exceptions where the standard process is not appropriate.

Used well, such an approach should not form a ‘straitjacket’ for designing and planning an innovative event, but rather support the process and provide opportunity for effective evaluation and reflection throughout. The purpose of a quality management system is to embed continuous improvement into the overall system. So the goal is to develop an innovative approach that works well, captures excellent practice as well as lessons learned, which can be shared and incorporated into the overall system.

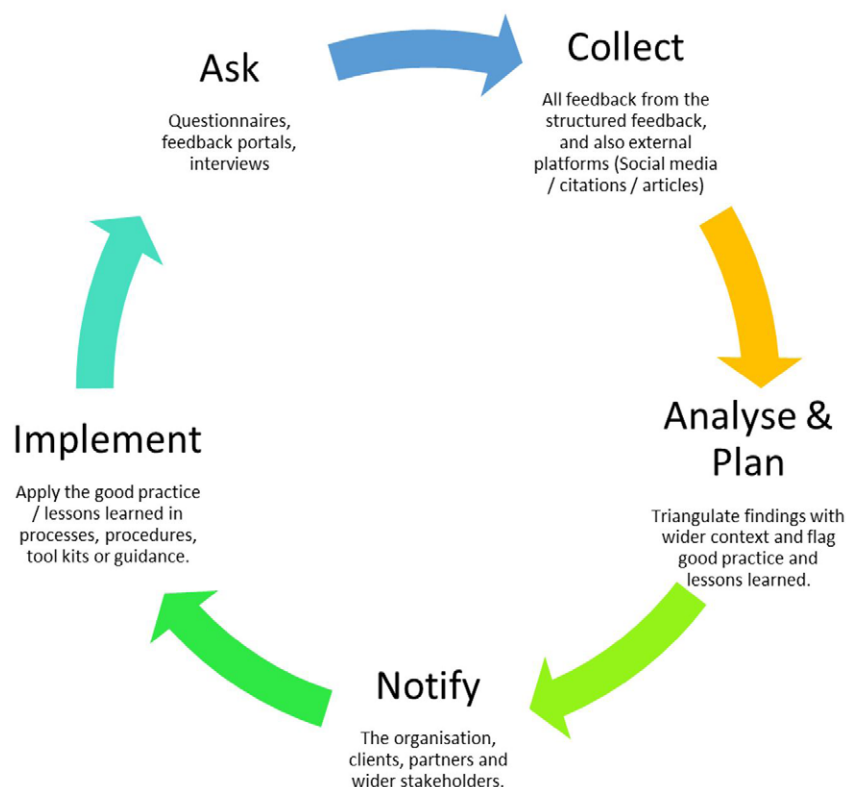
For the ITCILO, there appears to be a variety of approaches to approval, to client or partner requirements, to budgets available (and from where) for events. So a simple checklist would be inappropriate. A taxonomy of event types, of client relationships, and of budget considerations, of event format, and possibly other issues, could provide a ‘mix and match’ analysis for many types of events, and, with appropriate KPIs, the basis for measuring the quality of the event.

There are many purposes for quality assurance.

- **For internal purposes:** Did we reach our objective? (purpose/outcomes) how do we know if our events are successful? (evaluation measures) Are we spending our budget efficiently? (financial results) Are our events better than other similar organisations? (benchmarking)
- **For external purposes:** are our clients happy with our services? What feedback have they given us? Will they use us again?

A quality assurance system, embedded into the event planning, implementation and evaluation systems, will enable ITCILO to assess each event against a set of appropriate criteria. By itself, however, such a quality assurance system is insufficient, unless the data gathered is reviewed, interpreted, analysed and then used to disseminate successful approaches, and to address any shortcomings for future events. This second aspect is the 'quality improvement process'. It is the feedback loop that constantly updates the quality assurance system with innovative successful practice, and can provide 'warnings' about where things can go wrong, or issues that need particular attention.

FIGURE 4: THE FEEDBACK LOOP



Quality assurance for event process

Purpose

Events are always designed with a purpose in mind. These purposes can be many and varied. Some events are designed to inform, and even teach, others are designed to bring a group of people together to ‘solve a problem’. Some are to create a community, others are to promote a particular piece of research, or to ‘sell’ a particular product. Whatever the event, its purpose is almost always related to the purposes and/or strategy of the organisation planning it. This is an initial quality assurance question for any event.

How will this event serve our purpose, and/or contribute to our strategy?

The reply to this question should be clear, and should form an unspoken ‘strapline’ for the event and everyone involved in the event should know it. It should also provide a quick, clear and understandable answer to the question ‘*why are you holding this event?*’.

For all events a clear internal process to determine the event’s alignment to the organisation strategy and to flag any synergies or conflicts with other events across the organisation is essential.

Does the purpose meet the Client’s objective?

Communication is key to the success of any event and once internal approval has been obtained to design and create the event, understanding of the brief should be checked directly with the client. The purpose statement should be presented to the client and a discussion regarding their expectations of the event’s inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact should be recorded for evaluation purposes. This also provides an opportunity to manage expectations with insights and consideration of experience in the area, budget, timings and context.

The GTT Event February 2021 saw the largest international participation in the ILO’s Global Technical Team Meeting. This event had a clear internal purpose of developing understanding of the new strategy, and developing thinking and ideas for operationalising the strategy, through innovation in delivery. Two days of discussion were followed by a ‘practical’ day, where



participants could interact with colleagues using innovative methods. This event had a clear and easily communicable purpose, and the design of the event appears to make it easy to achieve that purpose.

While the GTT event represents a particular type of meeting: a large-scale global internal online meeting with a specific single purpose, a taxonomy of ‘types of events’ that are likely to fit within ITCILO purpose might include:

- Conferences;
- Exhibitions / Fairs;
- Workshops;
- Seminars / Webinars;
- Retreats (residential experiences for small groups).

And, within each type of event, delivery could be face-to-face, online, or hybrid.

Design

Design of any event will be based on finding the best way to achieve the event’s purpose. The design phase will have many things to consider, and for each, there should also be a clear answer to any ‘why?’ question:

- Face-to-face, online, or hybrid? E.g. Online: *Why?* Because in this case we want to reach a wide range of people who would be unable to attend a face-to-face event.
- When?: e.g. is there sufficient planning time? Is it at an appropriate time for the proposed audience? You don’t plan a European event to take place in August, or at Christmas. You do not time a global online event around European time zones.
- Where?: this is primarily for face-to-face events. You do not hold an event aimed at an African audience in Shanghai.
- Who? ...would we like to present? ...would we want to attend?
- Why?... would people want to present/attend?
- How? ...will we run the event? ...will we make it attractive to the people we want to attend?
- Do we have the skills, and financial/human resources to do the event well?

VIRTUAL SKILLS FAIR
SOUTH SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION
21-22 APRIL 2021

LOCATION: Online - VFair Platform LANGUAGE: Arabic, English, French, Spanish PRICE: Free

[REGISTER NOW](#) [DOWNLOAD INFORMATION NOTE](#)

Background to the Virtual Skills Fair (VSF)
A series of webinars were held in 2020 focussed on Skills Development thematic areas and on sectoral approaches. During these webinars, participants identified South South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) priorities for the development of:

- Quality apprenticeships,
- Skills need anticipation (focus on Skills for trade and economic diversification),
- Digital skills and digital transformation and
- Skills training in specific sectors

Although these may seem obvious questions, it is helpful to have these, and other considerations itemised so that the design team are at least considering them, and rationalising their choices. A checklist/tool kit for listing design considerations, can form part of the quality improvement system.

The Competency Based Training (CBT) event directed at the GCC states in April 2021 was tasked with an objective to extend ILO's influence and reach in skills development and competency-based training in the region. Whilst the event engaged with more than 100 participants it did not meet the expected 250 participants. On reflection cultural considerations played a large part, regarding visibility of key speakers, lack of Arabic language interpretation, and both limitations in terms of translation and perceived complexity of the technical platform by potential registrants. Identified ways to manage the outcome differently were to engage a local team of stakeholders to discuss and advise on the design and development of content for the event and the key considerations e.g. competency based training policy.

Deep discussion with local stakeholders is vital, because they may say 'we want an event for our people', and one may assume they know that the key to that is ensuring these people have a reason to attend, and that this is communicated efficiently. In this instance, we understood that an invitation was sent out, but was that enough? Often those requesting an event for their own target group, may assume that ITCILO will stage, and plan, and execute the event and everything will fall into place, without any effort on their part. Engagement of stakeholders (potential participants, partners) and a clearly targeted and repeated marketing campaign is a crucial element in a successful event. It is vitally important that partners discuss every single aspect of what goes into the planning of an event, and who is in charge of what aspect, and which steps go into the different processes. Otherwise everyone will just assume someone else is in charge and knows what they are doing. Then you get a situation where no-one is in charge, and crucial steps have not been undertaken.

The engagement of the right speakers/presenters is essential to secure the attendance and participation of delegates in the event. All participants and speakers/presenters invited should be aware of and receptive to the achievement of the event's purpose.

Where the event allows, a quality consideration at this stage of the event management process is profiling the target audience, not just by sector, but reflecting on roles, decision-making powers or influence and identifying key contributors to support the event.

Effective briefing through information provided prior to registration on the expected benefit to the individual participant who is considering attending the event can also enhance participation rates. Depending on the type of event this could be direct and tailored communications to the individuals e.g. calls, e-mails, or making use of mailing lists, creating e-flyers, video trailers, social media posts, a dedicated web page and links to these from other partners websites. Another aspect to consider is your client database and those of your partners. Regardless of how qualified the contacts are, it is important to keep in mind when marketing an event and the number of people you want to attract that typical return rates for direct email marketing campaigns are 0.5 to 2%.

Planning

‘Well begun, is half done’ is an old English saying which means if you begin something well, the rest of the task is much easier. This is especially true for events, where success is dependent on the quality of planning for the event, including considering what could go wrong, and having the capacity to ensure any contingencies can be dealt with during the event. The planning process also needs to be built into the quality management system.

Planning involves considering:

- the activity related to an event, e.g. venue;
- the tasks within the activity, e.g. contracting with the venue owners;
- the lead person in the team responsible for it. e.g. contracts manager;
- who s/he will be working with both within and outside the team. E.g. the contracts team, the venue management;
- timeline of key dates; e.g. that work on contracting the venue begins, and the deadline for signing the contract;
- comments: this allows progress, issues arising, how resolved, etc. These notes will enable future planning to take note of the issues as something to be aware of for future events.

The key areas of planning for an event are the following:

- **Budget:** how much will it cost? How much income can be generated? Do these add up to an acceptable answer?
- **Stakeholders/Partners:** do we have government or other partners who can contribute to making the event successful? Who? How can they help? etc. A Customer Relationship Management Database is invaluable for this. (see box)

Customer Relationship Management

A barrage of invites or messages from the same organisation for different events can seem at the least annoying and at worst present an incoherent, disorganised and dysfunctional management structure.

An effective single CRM system for the organisation that tracks and keeps colleagues informed of all communications and interactions with individuals can counteract that.

A CRM system has the potential to provide an opportunity to not only share contacts and provide introductions, but combine efforts in engaging contributors for a “series” of events identifying champions in key areas and flagging influential participants.

It also allows for appropriate categorising of the individuals, organisations according to their thematic interests so they only receive messages that are relevant to them. Furthermore, they can be filed according to what type of stakeholder they can be, e.g. participant, speaker, exhibitor, partner, network partner, media, a multiple of the above, etc.

TABLE 1: EXAMPLE OF STAKEHOLDER PLANNING TASKS

Identify stakeholders according to thematic areas and depending on the scope of the event – national, regional, continental, global
Examples of types of stakeholders
Governmental organisations
Civil society organisations
IGOs / NGOs
Trade organisations and the business community
Training organisations
Associations and their networks
Specialised & mainstream media

- **Sponsors (if appropriate):** Are there companies/organisations who would want to associate themselves with this event? What types/levels of sponsorship can be offered? Do budget projections depend on a certain level of sponsorship? There are commercial, logistical and ethical issues to consider around commercial sponsorship.

- A list of approved / acceptable sponsors, would further inform this process.
- An application form for new sponsors that captures information to reflect appropriately on the logistical and ethical issues.
- Template contracts / agreements for the levels of sponsorship with flexibility to incorporate innovative and new ways of sponsoring.

The suggested CRM system can further support the identification and engagement of sponsors, highlighting those sponsors that perhaps were deemed inappropriate at key events and those that were particularly good.

- **Communications and marketing plan:** Marketing is a key element in the success of any event. Questions for a communications and marketing plan include: Budget? Target audience? What channels? Timing of communications? Format of communications? The type and size of the event will play a really important role in defining the marketing plan and the formats and channels used. A retreat, for example, would need staged communications to present the event and determine interest amongst the identified groups and potentially they would dictate the timing based on their availability. A larger event such as the GTT conference would involve a much more complex, multi-faceted marketing strategy. Case studies / library / sample of different types of marketing communications for different types of events that have worked and why, could form an events marketing toolkit. For very large international events, communications and marketing services could be outsourced to a professional communications agency.

TABLE 2: EXAMPLE OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION PLANNING TASKS

Marketing & Communications Plan
Some examples of marketing actions
Prepare an overall marketing plan with key dates and actions
Identify all potential stakeholders
Plan strategic mail campaigns at different times with different messages highlighting calls for action
Contact organisations with larger networks to share the messages with their communities
Create banners and texts that are easy to share
Create buttons and banners for those already engaged to share that they are attending with their networks
Create newsletters on the event highlighting keynote speakers and different sessions
Have different messages for different types of stakeholders, eg participants, exhibitors, sponsors, partners
Some examples of communications actions
Prepare an overall communications plan with key dates and actions
Identify a list of all relevant media, eg trade publications, specialised media and blogs, tier 1 and tier 2 media outlets as well as local, national, regional, continental, global media depending on the requirements of the event
Prepare press releases and send these out when there is a newsworthy story and depending on the media type
If relevant, ensure a rapport with key journalists
Invite media to the event
Prepare a media briefing at the event
Prepare press kits which include press releases by key partners
Collect media clippings
Prepare a social media campaign and calendar
Create regular messages which call for engagement
Tag relevant influencers

- **Logistics:** registration (and payment) system? Venue (physical, or virtual); technology provision and systems; and for face-to-face events; room management; catering, signage, personnel needed for all of the above. Online will have different issues particularly in relation to technology requirements, communication methods within the platform for networking and ‘chat’ about sessions, and others. Examples of both planning guidelines are provided below.

TABLE 3A: EXAMPLES OF SOME LOGISTICS PLANNING TASKS (FACE-TO-FACE EVENTS)

Examples of logistics planning tasks (face-to-face events)
Workflow organisation guidelines
Conference workflow and timing, planning schedules and deadlines, registration planning, communication processes
Prepare briefings for different teams onsite
Venue Preparation
Make site visit(s)
Select Session Venues (and inform programme team)
Select Venues for other non programme activities
Select Office Spaces for Staff, Local Committee, Press and Sponsors
Select Venues for Speakers' Reception and Participant Events
Identify First Aid Room
Select location for Social Media wall
Confirm provided rooms and technology
Confirm capacities and furniture set ups
Develop Master Plan for comprehensive use of all conference space
Request restrictions and allowances confirmation for visual and branding
Request venue for Shuttle Desk
Develop plan for catering venues and confirm with venue management
Confirm Internet bandwidth and requirements for participant and exhibitor use
Develop security plan for venue
Confirm access allowance for staff, stand builder, exhibitors and participants
Technology Planning
Create overall technology needs plan
Source and confirm additional technology provider
Catering plan
Identify all catering needs
Source caterers if venue does not provide catering
Printing needs & merchandise
Source printers and final deadlines
Design conference materials
Ensure all are submitted by given deadlines
Programme team on site preparation
Prepare glossary for interpreters
Prepare briefing for room minders
Prepare envelopes for sessions and tent-cards
Prepare bios and masterplan for plenaries
Planning for onsite caring of the programme
Prepare folders for session managers

TABLE 3B: EXAMPLES OF PLANNING TASKS FOR ONLINE EVENTS

task*	responsible	start date	end date	status	remarks
Start					
Create a Google doc action list					
Meeting with internal team before event to assign tasks					
Agree on meetings timeline					
Coordinate pre and post event internal and external actions					
Communication and branding					
Create marketing and communication plan for first phase					
Create master text document and draft launch texts					
Review launch texts copy					
Finalise launch texts copy					
Select images/banners to use					
Brief designer					
Build website from scratch					
Publish event on website					
Publish social media posts on Twitter and LinkedIn					
Publish exhibitor/sponsor logos once booked on website					
Platform set up					
Research different platforms and select the best one					
Book a demo to understand the platform					
Meeting with internal team to discuss what should be included in the platform					
Set up the virtual event					
Add content/images					
Embed Zoom to the platform					
Create the different sessions to the agenda (mention if it's a recording or live session)					
Create polls in the different sessions					
Import accepted attendees					
Import accepted speakers					
Add speakers bio/photo					
Add pre-recorded sessions when needed					
Add agenda					
Create exhibitor/sponsor profiles and import them					
Add exhibitor/sponsor logos					
Create networking opportunities					
Meeting with internal team for test run					
Create a trouble shooting plan					

task*	responsible	start date	end date	status	remarks
Attendees					
Create attendee registration link					
Send email & registration link to invite attendees					
Determine reject, accept, and hold attendees					
Email attendees if accepted / rejected					
Invoice participants and follow up on payment					
Create attendee guidelines					
Exhibitors/sponsors					
Create invitation email					
Create booking form					
Send email to potential exhibitors/sponsors and follow up					
Start booking exhibitors/sponsors and sending invoices and follow up on payment					
Send exhibitors/sponsors their benefit chart and follow up with them					
Create exhibitor/sponsor guidelines					
Speakers					
Select speakers					
Draft speakers' email					
Invite and follow up with speakers					
Agree on speaker topic and time/date of workshop/session					
Speaker(s) booked and confirmed					
Ask speakers for bio and picture					
Collect pre-recorded sessions when needed					
Send speakers calendar invite with Zoom link					
Create netiquette slide for speakers sessions					
Create speaker guidelines					
Website					
Prepare draft agenda					
Feedback to draft agenda					
Finalize preliminary agenda					
Create agenda (mention if sessions are recorded or live)					
Add speaker bio/photo					
Upload exhibitor/sponsor logos					
Workshop/sessions set up					
Meeting with team for test run					
Meeting with speakers for test run					
Prepare questions if needed					
Agree on roles and responsibilities during event (running order)					

task*	responsible	start date	end date	status	remarks
Platform running					
Ensure platform is running smoothly (no bugs)					
Check different chats in case someone has issues					
Contact platform support via email/chat in case of any issues					
Workshops/sessions running					
Ensure correct people are added to the meeting					
Change roles (from panellist to co-host)					
Share screen with netiquette slide					
Check Q&A					
Check Chat					
Run polls					
Record event					
Edit recordings (trim)					
Upload recording on Vimeo					
Upload recordings on event platform					
Post-event					
Create feedback forms for attendees and exhibitors/sponsors					
Send feedback forms to attendees and exhibitors/sponsors					
Create post-event report					
Publish post-event report					

Event content

Speaker selection, and programme development: this is a core element of a successful event. This is the part that the participants will want to see, in order to decide whether or not to attend, and a key component of whether they will think the event was worthwhile or not. So, this requires some skill and experience in identifying, attracting and managing high quality speakers, ensuring that they have relevant expertise, planning relevant and engaging session formats, and provide a good experience for the participants, who are the second core element of a successful event. In most events, speakers are also participants, contributing as a presenter and then participating and actively engaging in other sessions. Clear communication and briefing with the event speakers regarding the objectives of their individual presentations, or the sessions they are speaking in, and the profile of the participants and expected knowledge and experience go a very long way to the success of their session and their own event experience. At the same time a positive experience on their part will contribute to the success and reputation of the event and can also help them build their professional network and profile.

TABLE 4: EXAMPLES OF SPEAKERS AND PROGRAMME PLANNING TASKS

Examples of speakers and programme planning tasks
Session themes and speaker identification
Identify the topics & types of the different sessions
Identify potential speakers for the different sessions / organise a call for submissions
Plan sessions for partners
Create a list of speakers and their status (accepted/ hold)
Speaker communication with exact details of their session and what they need to prepare
Inform speakers of available technological infrastructure
Collect presentations
Collect bios for the agenda
Creating the agenda
Creation of the first grid of the programme
Agreement of the first grid of the programme
Finalise all session titles and descriptions
Publish the programme online
Continuous update of the programme online
Replace speakers who drop out
Chairpersons / Moderators
Identify chairpersons and moderators
Contact them to ask if they want to be involved
Send them detailed information on their session and its intended outcomes
Introduce them to their speakers and ask them to plan their session together to achieve the outcomes

Participants: Participants will come if they are confident that the subject is of interest to them, that attendance will provide them with some kind of benefit (learning, finding solutions, networking, self-promotion, etc.). Excellent planning to attract an anticipated number of appropriate participants, through good communication via all the marketing and communication channels on what they can expect, who they will meet, together with an excellent programme with relevant content and speakers, is the core of a good event. Registration forms should include key questions to influence the event programme and content, inform post evaluation activities, but also provide key indicators for an initial review of the effectiveness of key content areas of the event, and a picture of the participants prior to the event:

- How did you hear about this event? *Identifies the most effective channels for engaging the participants*
- What is your main reason for attending this event? *Clarifies the participant's objectives and provides an opportunity to triangulate with the overall purpose of the event and the communications to make sure it is understood as intended.*

- Why did you choose this event? *Provides an indication of whether it is the themes and content, profile of speakers, brand recognition, or location, venue or platform.*
- Which sessions are you most interested in? *Provides an insight into the area of interest for that participant that can inform potential inclusion in future activities or events.*

The answers can form the baseline information for the immediate post event evaluation of the success of the conference for each individual participant. More immediately, they can feed into the planning of the event, to make adjustments to satisfy participants expectations.

The baseline can also constitute other measurable indicators that can also be identified and recorded prior to the event to measure outcomes and impact post event. These could be the number of connections in an associated online community, or where relevant, views or downloads of a specific project output. The event team should develop an evaluation strategy which clearly develops and identifies indicators that can be monitored and tracked, pre, during and post the event. This will provide a clear picture of the performance and quality of the event that is delivered. This could include the following:

- Monitoring use of event hashtags and associated hashtags;
- Articles in the media referencing the event;
- Social media connections to the ITCILO or LinkedIn event page;
- Social media profile checks of the contributors and speakers;
- Establishing the Net promoter score⁷.

This approach can go some way towards unpicking or explaining certain issues around events, for example where the number of participants at an event (face-to-face or online) are fewer than anticipated.

A pre-event evaluation exercise should be a particular focus in developing a quality improvement system.

Checklists for the event itself

Event organisers often say that once an event begins it takes on its own momentum, and they can relax. This is true to a limited extent. If the event has been well planned and organised, as above, it should run smoothly, and all participants and speakers, as well as the organisers and event team, have a shared interest in making the event a success. However, this does not mean guaranteed success.

An unexpected power-cut, can plunge the venue (or the online event) into darkness. Are there trained stewards to guide everyone out of the building? Has a method been put in place not dependent on the online conference venue, to inform all participants what has happened, and why they cannot access the event?

⁷ Net Promoter Score is a metric used in customer experience programs. NPS measures the loyalty of customers to a company. NPS scores are measured with a single question survey and reported with a number from -100 to +100, a higher score is desirable.

Badly planned catering is an issue more often met at larger conferences. Are there enough buffet stations, and sufficient food to feed all participants? Are the queues for food at a manageable level so all delegates can eat within the lunch hour provided?

Internet failure, laptop or projector failure, overcrowding of some sessions, and under-attendance at others are more common issues in many events. How quickly and efficiently they are dealt with can change people's attitudes to the conference and its organisation. The success, or otherwise, of a conference is measured not by how well the organisers think it went, but how well the participants think it went.

For online events: are there sufficient 'gaps' in the event to ensure there is no 'zoom fatigue'? Are there online spaces for networking? Is the platform easy to navigate? Is there a 'help' point where participant queries can be answered? Are the 'booths' in an online conference/fair venue attractive and easy to access? Does each booth have someone who can answer questions, and provide 'takeaway' resources?

FIGURE 5: WORKFLOW OF EVENT MANAGEMENT PROCESSES, AN EXAMPLE⁸

Plan and Market (Planning Phase) Goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Determine objectives → Select date and location/venue → Estimate budget and cost allocation → Create marketing and promotion plan → Sourcing of speakers and sponsors, registration and venue 	Metrics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Marketing efforts → Registration numbers → Ticket sales → Usage and engagement data from event app → Social media engagement → Analytics CRM and sales tools
Manage (Pre-Event) Goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Finalize logistics → Post-event transition → AV and speaker preparation → Finalize program → Purchase and prepare onsite materials → Internal and external event preparation 	
Execute (Event) Goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Volunteer management → Room checks → Event flow check → AV check → Discuss progress of conference → Review setups and checks for next day 	Metrics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Polls and feedback surveys → Usage and engagement data from event app → Social media engagement
Evaluate (Post-Event) Goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Clean-up → Post-event evaluations → Conduct internal debriefs → Preview billing and receipts → Write post-event report → Send letters of appreciation 	Metrics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Post-event surveys → Usage and engagement data event app → Social media engagement

⁸ [Evaluating Event Success: What to Measure And When – E... \(eventmobi.com\)](#)

Approaches to Post event evaluation

For any event, there are a number of different stakeholders who will wish to evaluate the event immediately after it is finished. All of these can contribute to the quality improvement process for the event organisers. There are four external evaluations, and many internal ones, that need to be taken into account in assessing the quality of the event and whether it achieved what was intended. Internal evaluations: 'lessons learned' need to be informed by external evaluations, and identify ways of improving the event process in the future.

External evaluations

- **Partners/Stakeholders:** Feedback from partners and stakeholders can determine how far they think their objectives (which are likely to be different to ITCILO objectives) in supporting the event have been met. The answer to this is likely to contribute to their decision on whether to support a similar event in the future as well as speak positively about their experience with the ITCILO and refer or recommend accordingly.
- **Sponsors:** (if appropriate) Sponsors' evaluation of the success or not of an event are likely to be measured in financial and profile terms. Did they get their brand promoted sufficiently at the event? Did they sign sufficient contracts, or gain sufficient leads to organisations/ individuals likely to buy their product/use their services? If they did, they are more likely to sponsor a similar event in the future
- **Speakers:** Did the speakers/presenters feel that they were talking at an event appropriate for them; that their session was well managed; that they made sufficient new contacts, and that it was worthwhile participating in the event? Do they have any suggestions for improvement? Would they present at a future ITCILO event? And, of course, would ITCILO want them to present at a future event?
- **Participants:** Did they enjoy the conference? Did it meet/exceed their expectations? Did they achieve the objective they stated in their registration form?

Internal Evaluations

All of the above evaluations will contribute to the overall evaluation of the event. But in addition to those, there has to be a number of internal evaluations based on the event team's assessment of the planned outputs, and what was actually achieved.

These will include:

- **Budget:** as expected? Better? Worse? Where were the assumptions wrong? What can be done to make it better in the future?
- **Stakeholders/Partners:** were they the right partners for the event? Were they happy with ITCILO? Was ITCILO happy with them? What of the future?
- **Exhibitors/Sponsors:** were they happy? Does the approach towards exhibitors and sponsors need to be changed? Were they the right exhibitors and sponsors for the event? Who else should be sought in future?

- **Speakers/presenters:** were they happy? Would ITCILO use them again? Were they the right speakers for the subject? Who else should be sought in future?
- **Moderators/ Chairpersons:** were they happy? Would ITCILO use them again? Were they the right moderators for the subject? Did they moderate the session well? Did they support an interactive session? Who else should be sought in future?
- **Participants:** was the expected number met? Were they the right group for the subject of the event? Were they happy? What needs to be changed in the organisation of events in future?
- **Logistics:** Was the venue appropriate? Were the suppliers reliable? Did they meet the expectations? What lessons have been learned from this event? What went well, and what went badly? What will be done differently next time?
- **Media partners:** Did they promote the event according to agreements and expectations? Did they attract the right target group? Were they a good fit for the event?
- **Internal teams and processes:** were the marketing and communication activities effective? Were all teams appropriately briefed and engaged to perform the anticipated tasks according to the objectives? Were the internal communication systems effective? Were the expectations set out clearly?

As well as those evaluations directed and created by ITCILO there are a number of other fora that can and should be monitored with regard to feedback. The use of software tools to aggregate data across social media platforms such as likes, comments, shares, mentions, hashtags to track all activity, and social networking connections with stakeholders, partners, presenters and participants to monitor any articles or feedback that arise from the event, as well as traditional press and media. Providing different promo codes across different platforms in the advertising of the event can track which are more successful and lead to the greatest click throughs or registration. All of these findings will contribute to assessing the quality of the event in all these areas; where there are innovative solutions that can improve the quality of future events; as well as highlighting issues where insufficient attention was paid, which also needs to be imported into the 'corporate memory' of how to manage events. This is discussed further below, in the section on quality assurance in institutional capacity building.

Examples of global good practices in the events industry

[Invisage.net](https://www.invisage.net) and Conferences i/o – Australian Event Management companies suggest the following approach to participants' evaluation of events:

- Easy to complete
- Short and to the point
- Tailored to the session – providing the information you want
- Set aside time within the event / sessions to complete the evaluation
- Incentivise completion of evaluations:
 - Raffle
 - Prize draw
 - Recognition of top evaluation performers

- Default anonymity for evaluations to prevent bias, with an option to identify themselves.
- Be seen to act upon the feedback, provide an update to participants with feedback highlights and how this will be addressed in future events / sessions.⁹

Event Management Software company EventMobi, suggests the following advice:

- Evaluation should form an important part of the planning process, so the team knows what they are measuring and what they need to find out and when.
- Participants should have access to evaluation opportunities throughout the event. This enables the team to identify any problems as soon as possible and address them, as well as provide a good indicator of the level of engagement of participants.
- Post event surveys should be sent as soon as possible.
- The surveys should include opportunities for participants to leave additional comments.
- The survey should also include the Net Promoter Score question – How likely are you to recommend this event, or these organisers to a colleague or friend?
- The Event Report should be published within 2 weeks of the event:
 - Infographics should be used where possible and appropriate.
 - For annual events a comparison against previous years to demonstrate progress, achievement, challenges, and concerns.
- The Event Report should include at least the following:
 - Event overview
 - Participant breakdown
 - Exhibitor / sponsor / contributor breakdown
 - Financial summary
 - Participant satisfaction – during the event and Post event
 - Marketing / Media overview
 - Recommendations for future events.¹⁰

Five studies in innovative practices in events management, looking at different aspects, can be found here: <https://www.eventmanagerblog.com/5-event-case-studies>

Longer term evaluation

So far, we have spoken primarily about how event organisers do their work, evaluate, quality-test and improve their practice through a continuous quality improvement process. General practice on evaluation of event management usually ends at the post-event evaluations, and quality is measured around the quality of the event itself. This can also help ITCILO to measure the ‘macro’ impact of the event itself, on the ILO ‘brand’: e.g. new business arising from the event, greater partner loyalty, etc.

⁹ [Best Practices for Session and Event Evaluation \(invisage.net\)](https://www.invisage.net/best-practices-for-session-and-event-evaluation)

¹⁰ [Best Practices for Evaluating Event Success – EventMob... \(eventmobi.com\)](https://www.eventmobi.com/best-practices-for-evaluating-event-success)

We have not yet discussed the impact of the event on the learning and practice of those who participate in an event. This appears to be something little studied, and is a difficult thing to assess. In the results chain used by ITCILO (input, output, outcomes, impact) this means evaluations stop at the outputs and initial outcomes. The longer-term outcomes of the event are less studied. ITCILO is interested in the longer-term outcomes and impact of an event: in changing how speakers, and participants do their daily work and how attending the event had a meaningful impact on the participants' professional lives or on their organisation's objectives.

A training course usually has a single objective, all course participants have the same input, they can be assessed on how far they have understood the content of the course at the end, and can be followed up later to see how far they have been able to integrate their learning within their work. If the 'event' has a single objective; 'people should know x,y and z by the end of the event', then it is actually a training course, and can be assessed in the same way as a training course would. The first two days of the GTT event might count as an event of this type.

For most events, with rare exceptions, this is not the case. There are no set learning outcomes for participation in an event (though there may be for individual workshops or sessions that are part of an event). All who attend create their own learning paths, by making individual choices regarding the learning options that are available to them. In addition, participants are likely to have different levels of experience and knowledge, and each participant is likely to be seeking an outcome from the event that is unique to them.

Some will treat the conference as a learning or professional development opportunity; others as a capacity building exercise for their teams. Some see it as a networking event, and attend to gain insights into new ideas, and access to experts and broader networks in their area of interest. Some use a conference or event to promote themselves, their research or their organisation to a specific and wider audience. Others may use a conference or event to launch a product, project, idea or even to find funding. There are a multitude of reasons why people choose to attend an event and not all have to do with a straightforward learning outcome.

An event can be the launching point for a wide variety of outputs and outcomes that may have been part of the planning for the event, but also others which the initiators and planners of the event may not have anticipated, but that are equally relevant. A results chain for this will have greater complexity. As mentioned earlier, asking participants at registration what they hope to take away from the conference in terms of learning, networking, potential partners, etc. can give a hook by which to ask people, both immediately after the event, and at a later stage, whether the event met or contributed to some change in the way they do things, or to their professional lives, or to their organisation's objectives.

Longer term evaluation of outcomes can be helpful in whether any specific 'real-life' improvements have happened as a result of the event. Some examples for these could be

- that an idea (or case-study or best practice) presented at the conference has been adapted in another context;
- two or more participants are now working together on a new project/idea/innovation;
- an initiative has gained more traction and a bigger audience

- a start-up has attracted funding and support;
- policy makers have been shown new evidence that they adopt to address solutions
- a new community of practice has been created.

Identifying, quantifying, and assessing such outcomes can be done, but it must be accepted that many of these kinds of outcomes would not necessarily be found in the purpose, or expected outcomes of the event itself. They arise from the dynamics of the event itself.

Measuring impact and the use of data

All quality assurance solutions are dependent on good data. Most organisations collect much more data than they utilise, the challenge is in interpreting the data and making it meaningful. Having a clear strategy for the collation of data both pre and post the event can provide a direct indicator and point for comparison to acknowledge any immediate achievements directly after the event. A good evaluation strategy will incorporate a long haul feedback system that can flag connected impacts in the longer term, for example, organisation collaboration, publication of research papers, promotion, job / role change linked to the engagement in the event. Even in the GDPR context there is a lot of data that can be collated, anonymised and reviewed to not only determine the event's success but to inform potential improvements to events and the evaluation systems in place. Essentially the data is collated based on four aspects of the event:

1. ITCILO / Partner's perspective
2. Exhibitors / contributors perspective
3. Participants' satisfaction
4. The facilities

The data collated on the above areas will provide a very initial indication of how successful the event was, in and of itself, in terms of each group's experience on the day(s) and how they felt about the event. At this point the outcome and impact of the event are not yet considered. However, the data gathered from this point (immediately post-event) can be cross referenced with the pre-evaluation questionnaires data to create a more accurate picture of the "success" of the day(s). Additionally, some assumptions can begin to be drawn from this feedback on the potential outcomes of the event, these can be identified and followed up at a later time through a targeted evaluation process. In the interim, social media and press can be tracked for additional and indirect outcomes that can be linked to the event e.g. newly established communities of practice, individual promotions, ITCILO course uptake in an associated area, or development of business.

As discussed above, determining the long term impact of an event is a difficult feat, especially considering the limited timeframe of engagement and providing tangible evidence to demonstrate the connection of that engagement to any actions or activities.

Tracking the impact of an event interaction 6 to twelve months after it has taken place to determine impact on initial consideration seems a particularly difficult task that is further compounded by the potential for unintended impacts. The development of virtual and online activities, the use of social

media and the building of event specific applications has made tracking of data and participant activities during events a more manageable option. Longer term, monitoring of continuing use of relevant hashtags, or following a sample of participants on social media can track ongoing discussions, both of the event, and of its themes.

In order for evaluation to take place, the objective(s) of the event need to be agreed and defined, with consideration of how achievement of these objectives can be determined. To measure the overall impact of an event, including unintended outcomes, the baseline needs to be established and key questions asked. Open questions can often unveil any unintended consequences of the event. Planning and consideration of the timing of and type of data collection interventions that are possible to provide appropriate measures, metrics and indicators should also be given and already feature heavily in the suggested KPIs for measuring an event's success. Table 5 below suggests key questions and types of data, further suggestions, information and resources can be found at better [evaluation.org](https://betterevaluation.org), a global collaboration aimed at improving evaluation practice and theory, this worksheet provides a good start point: [Describe – Compact.pdf \(betterevaluation.org\)](https://betterevaluation.org/docs/evaluation-planning/evaluation-plan).

TABLE 5: EVALUATION PLAN¹¹

Evaluation question	Data collection type	Measures / Metrics / Indicators	Timings
Did the event produce the intended results in the short, medium and long term? If so, for whom and to what extent?	Registration Polls Interviews Questionnaires Surveys Chat Reports Social media activity ¹² : • Likes • Comments • Shares • Mentions • Followers • Hashtags Specific Event App Network / connections made	Participant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographics – age / role / location • Unique visits • Registration – attendance conversion rates • Unique Chat interactions • Chat content – themes • Satisfaction of sessions / exhibitors • Relevance of sessions / exhibitors • Acknowledgement of any knowledge or lessons learned. • Intended application of any knowledge or lessons learned. • Actual application of any knowledge or lessons learned. • Extension of networks / contacts in numbers. • Referral of the event / resources presented through the event to colleagues. Exhibitor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographics: Organisation, type and sector. • # of visits to stand. • # of resources downloaded/ distributed. • # of contacts/ business cards collected. • # of leads followed up. • # of conversion of leads to business / partnerships. • Extension to network. • Any connections to other exhibitors. • Satisfaction with the event and its relevance to the area of business. • Referrals of the event / organisation to others Contributor / Speaker <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of attendees in individual sessions. • Perception and value of any discussions / interactions feedback. • Connections / network extension. • Follow-up to questions / interest in area of work. • Conversion of conversations to tangible outputs i.e. research papers, project proposals, partnership. 	Pre-Event During Event: Registration After each session Exiting the event 1 month later 6 months later 1 year later
What unintended results – positive and negative – did the event produce? How did these occur?			
What were the perceived barriers and enablers that made the difference between successful and disappointing results?			
How valuable were the results to the speakers and content stakeholders?			

¹¹ Adapted from: [Impact evaluation | Better Evaluation](https://betterevaluation.org/docs/evaluation-planning/evaluation-plan)

¹² <https://billetto.co.uk/blog/guide-to-evaluating-events/> suggests using a social media monitoring tool to aggregate all the data.

Case study GTT meeting

To demonstrate how this could be applied in practice, a detailed review of the Virtual GTT Meeting Report has been conducted below:

GTT meeting objectives

Overall objective: To contribute to the achievement of outcome 4 of the ILO P&B 2020-21 (Sustainable enterprises as generators of employment and promoters of innovation and decent work).

Immediate objectives:

1. Jointly review the draft strategy for the promotion of sustainable enterprises in order to identify the 'levers' for making it actionable;
2. To unlock synergies and scale effects in the work done by the Enterprises Department to promote sustainable enterprise practices

The Format:

1. A two-day online meeting using ZOOM to review the outline of the new strategy, timed in such a manner that GTT members from the different regions can participate during working hours within their respective time zones;
2. A one-day online exhibition of ILO approaches and tools to promote sustainable business practices using vFair.

The Evaluation:

Key questions	Data collected	Additional data needed
Days 1&2:		
Did the participants achieve increased knowledge about the architecture of the strategy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 175 Unique participants • 25 Repeat from HQ • Post Event survey to 200 participants 3 weeks after the meeting – 15.5% response rate (31 people) • 2 out of 3 participants actively engaged in the plenary sessions through verbal remarks or in the chat box • Tracking of recurrent references in webinar discussions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - processes, - priority groups, - sectors and themes, - cross cutting concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of staff in the Enterprises Department to get an understanding of the significance of 175 unique participants. • Demographics of the 175 unique attendees and the survey respondents i.e. role / grade and location to understand if there are any trends in engagement and attendance. • The source of the 2 out of 3 participants data who actively engaged in the plenary session is unclear. The use of Zoom would enable further review of all comments made verbally or in the chat box – potential for tracking to the participants demographics would flag potential organisation champions. • Equally a review of the zoom recordings and chat records of the activities over days 1 and 2 can provide a very clear picture as to the overall understanding of the strategy at the beginning and demonstrate any increased knowledge in participants from questions being asked and comments made throughout the event. It can also identify key themes and trends that emerged over the two days. • The post evaluation survey did not push for any impact indicators, a missed opportunity to identify any immediate actions that may have taken place as a direct result of the event and inform the longer-term evaluation strategy at 6 months. The following questions are suggested for the immediate post event survey: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - had their understanding and knowledge of the strategy increased? - had they learnt or taken away anything that they could apply to their work? - had they applied it to their work? - had they extended their network of contacts? - had they reached out and established effective working relationships with any colleagues who they had met through the meeting? • Tracking of recurrent references, there is no indication as to the number of the common themes that presented in the webinars, whether it was one participant or several making the same points. More detailed analysis of the Zoom recordings would confirm the pertinence and relevance of each recurrent reference.
Was greater understanding and collaboration achieved across departments?		
Were there any unintended outcomes?		
Were there any perceived barriers or enablers that directly affected the impact of the event?		
How valuable was the event to the exhibitors and contributors?		

Key questions	Data collected	Additional data needed
Day 3:		
How valuable was the event to the exhibitors and contributors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1300 people visited the agenda and event related information (20-25% of ALL ILO staff) 373 registered for the Knowledge Fair 123 registrants were not linked to the GTT Event coincided with ILO #connect Events Each visitor visited on average 3 booths – 938 visits One booth had 2070 visits Exhibitors received 641 messages through the chat Booth documents Booth swag Session views 38 webinars with 10-20 participants Post event evaluation 3 weeks after to determine satisfaction with the event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The conversion rate: 29% (50% is considered a good conversion rate for free online events¹³). Further analysis of the potential impact of #connect events on attendance. Breakdown of unique booth visits, documents and swag collected and context for location of the booths and organisation. Highlight the most relevant and engaging exhibitors for future reference. Chat function analysis to identify unique users, to whom and the nature / trends of the chat to determine knowledge, understanding and satisfaction of the fair. Post evaluation could have included identification of new networks and connections across teams, and application of resources in work.
Did the participants achieve increased knowledge about ILO approaches and tools to promote sustainable business?		
Were there any perceived barriers or enablers that directly affected the impact of the event?		

In brief, a lot of valuable data has been collated through the successful GTT Meeting and only the tip of it has been analysed and considered to determine the success of the event. Further drilling will be able to flag themes and trends in discussions which could directly inform the achievement of the outcome to reach a consensus on the strategy levers. An opportunity to inform a valuable report back to the participants as part of a further post event evaluation exercise to capture further thoughts and feedback as to the potential impact of the event. At the same time this approach would provide a sense of empowerment to the participants by demonstrating in a very tangible way that their voices have been taken forward.

Quality improvement process for institutional capacity building

Quality assurance processes and tools provide a clear method and approach to encourage reflection and evaluation of activities to improve them. These can come in various forms as work-flow charts, checklists, guidelines, templates and case studies. Essentially, they create standardisation of core tasks to underpin effective management and planning of events and provide a clear framework for the evaluation of results. Identification of a clear results chain for the types of activities under review, with diagnostic questions, templates and case studies are a valuable resource in any quality assurance system, resulting not only in quality events, but events that are aligned and consistent with the organisation's identity and overarching strategy.

¹³ [22 Important KPIs for Measuring Event Success – Bizzabo | Bizzabo](#) analysed proprietary data from almost 2,000 virtual events in their [2021 Virtual Event Benchmarks Report](#).

A quality assurance system underpinned by a culture of quality improvement, primarily through the application of the “Plan, do, check, act” cycle adopted by the ISO and referenced by ITCILO, and supported by a clear evaluation strategy, is core to the continuous innovation and development of the event provision. How this is developed and implemented is key not only to the continuous improvement in quality of the events at ITCILO but in the measurement of their success and impact.

In order to ‘embed’ quality assurance in event management, a clear process for recording evaluation of event management needs to be established, together with a process for entering the learning into the ‘corporate memory’.

An evaluation ‘exception’ report of the event, which need not be comprehensive, can be prepared by a senior member of the event team (and signed off by the person in charge). This does not list what went as expected, but lists only aspects of the event, whether in the planning, content, implementation or evaluation, where things were noticeably better than expected, and should enter the quality process as an example of ‘good practice’. Other aspects, where there were particular problems or where things did not go as planned, will be listed as areas to pay particular attention to in future events.

The purpose of these is not to praise or criticise the team organising the event, but to build up organisational understanding of how different kinds of events ‘work’ and which processes lead to success, and which to avoid in future.

Event management is the same as most things in life: the more you do it, the more you reflect on it, the better you become at doing it. But if you just do an event and move on without reflection, you will merely manage the next event the way you did the last one, without consideration of how it could be improved. People who manage events regularly often have intuitive, tacit knowledge of how to do events well, which can be effective if the organisation is small, and the number of events manageable. It is less effective in organisations with high employee turnover and in big organisations, where there are many different teams managing events, in different ways and with different results. The resulting lack of consistency can impinge on the overall reputation of the organisation. The option of having a single team managing all events in an organisation like ITCILO is probably impractical. The closest to that is the Learning Innovation Programme Team, but the disparities in:

- the scale of events: from global multi-stakeholder events hosting thousands of participants both face-to-face and online; to small events involving around 100 people in a particular country or region;
- the needs of internal events against those managed on behalf of a external client;
- and the differences in many aspects between B2B and B2C events.

mean that a single team for the whole organisation would not work.

For larger, and/or geographically dispersed teams, the most practical approach to quality assurance, is to devolve direct responsibility for delivery of an event to the most appropriate teams with some quality 'toolkits' appropriate to the kind of event they are organising. Underpinning this is a central 'centre of excellence'. This centre needs a person, or preferably a small team, with a particular role to manage and update the quality guidance for events, and to act as the centre of excellence for event management. This team will have responsibility across all teams to promote quality assurance in event management, and implement an ongoing quality improvement process. If there is scope for a bigger role, the centre of excellence can also provide training, internships, and advice to those in other parts of the organisation: different central teams, and different regional offices; whose roles include event organisation. This way, quality improvement becomes integrated into the organisation's event design, planning, implementation and evaluation cycle.

The next section, 'Recommendations and the way forward', will suggest a number of steps that ITCILO can take to better systemise the quality management of events across the organisation. This will propose a simple overall approach, with branching, and toolkits for different types of events, to provide a frame for events of a similar type. It will also propose an events' 'centre of excellence' and a community of practice, structured around the various elements of the events process.

PART THREE: RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Introduction

This part of the report builds on the findings of Parts One and Two. It takes the findings of the review of current practice on event management within the ITCILO, together with the consideration of best practice in event management, to develop a set of recommendations for embedding a quality led approach to event management across the whole of ITCILO. The key objective is to make recommendations on how the ITCILO can run a quality assured system for events and demonstrate and evidence their success.

The primary findings in Part One, are that there is little coordination on initiating, planning, managing, or evaluating events, and learning is not shared between teams. Events are seen as a subsidiary category of work within ITCILO, with training by far the larger workstream. However, in 2021 the income generated from events was €750,000, with higher targets sought for future years. This is not an insignificant sum. In Part Two, there are many examples of good practice in the processes of event management, which can be adopted and / or adapted by ITCILO. Good practice in event management usually ends when the event ends and is evaluated. The longer-term measurement of outcomes sought by ITCILO is not covered in event management literature. An approach to longer term evaluation, using the GTT event is covered in Part Two, pp. 48-51.

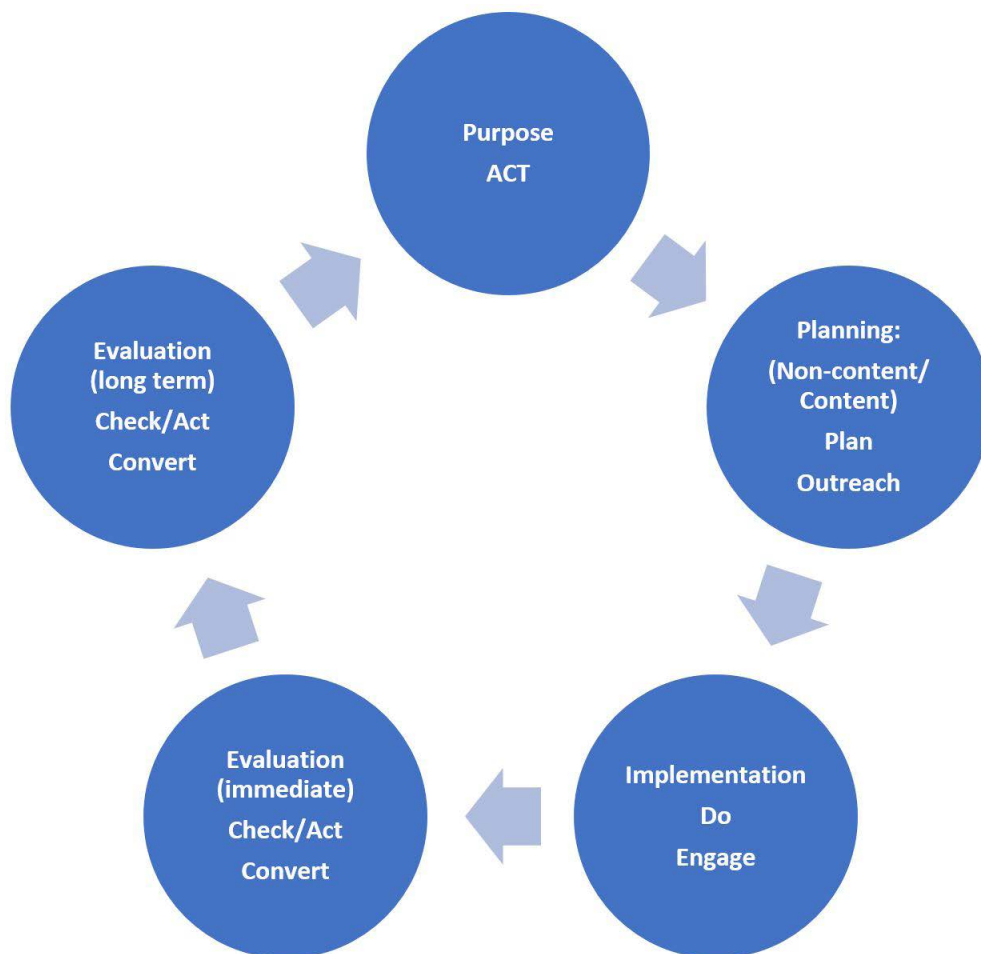
We have looked closely at the processes of planning, managing and evaluating events. However, there is a need for a system within ITCILO to coordinate, and share learning from, teams' management of individual events. We propose a way of doing this, in establishing an ongoing quality improvement process for events across ITCILO, through an events 'secretariat'.

The recommendations below are based on the ISO quality standards for Project Programme and Portfolio Management (21502), but will also fit within the Plan, Do, Check, Act paradigm already in place within ITCILO. Other relevant ISOs are referred to as well. For ease of reference, we base the recommendations around the process map used in Part Two:

- Purpose and design;
- Planning (non-content: logistics, marketing and communication, etc);
- Planning (content and formats);
- Implementation;
- Evaluation (immediate);
- Evaluation (longer term).

These six stages are matched to the PDCA paradigm, related ISO standards, and with the outreach, engagement, and conversion paradigm used by the advocacy and communications section of ITCILO. This is represented in figure 6 below.

FIGURE 6: INTEGRATION OF PDCA, OUTREACH/ENGAGEMENT/CONVERSION WITHIN A PROJECT CYCLE



Event management can be seen as both a linear process, from purpose through planning and implementation to evaluation. But it is also cyclical, where the learning gained during the linear process feeds into the next event management cycle, and so on. In order to do this, clear records must be kept of decisions at each stage of the process. ISO standards enable this to be done in a standardised way across the organisation. Each set of recommendations below aim to develop this process that can be used by every team in a wide range of event scenarios.

Recommendation 1

We recommend developing a clear base line for decisions on undertaking events. We propose that these are events that:

- Communicate a clear purpose to a clearly defined community likely to be interested in the topic(s).
- Inform, stimulate, develop a community feeling, and change practice beyond the event itself.
- Attract an appropriate community of people with a shared and, in different ways, informed, interest in an event's topic(s).
- Attract expert speakers, influencers and key industry people
- Provide opportunities to meet with others who have similar interests to their own, to learn about new research, innovation and development in their area, and to increase their understanding of the topics discussed.
- Are delivered in a financially sustainable manner, and comply with global standards of good governance for international public sector organisations.
- Attract between 50-5000 participants.

If an event does not reach all of these criteria, the assumption is that the opportunity will not be pursued. If the appropriate team feels that there are other, overriding, reasons why it is important to pursue this, then an appeal process can apply.

Recommendation 2a

We recommend a central events quality 'secretariat' is established to provide a central repository of reports on events, lessons learned, checklists, samples of evaluation forms, etc., and to provide further quality data analysis, updating of quality guidelines and disseminating these across the organisation. This could be supported by staff across ITCILO who are experienced/skilled in event management, and by a broader events 'community of interest' across the organisation.

Recommendation 2b

We recommend that an events 'centre of excellence' is established within ITCILO. This centre needs a person, or preferably a small team, with a particular role to manage and update the quality guidance for events, and to act as the centre of excellence for event management. This team will have responsibility across all teams to promote quality assurance in event management, and to implement an ongoing quality improvement process. As the quality improvement process develops, the centre of excellence can also provide training, internships, and advice to those in other parts of the organisation: different central teams, and different regional offices, whose roles include event organisation.

There is no specific ISO suite for event management and planning, but there are a number of related ISOs that can be used to inform the quality system for events within the ITCILO. There are a number of others that can contribute to a quality management system for ITCILO. These are:

- ISO 9001: Quality Management Principles
- ISO 20700: Guidance for Management Consultancy Services
- ISO 20121: Sustainable Event Management
- ISO 21502: Project Programme and Portfolio Management
- ISO 29993: Learning Services Outside of Formal Education Requirements

Recommendation 3

We recommend ISO 21502: Project, Programme, and Portfolio Management as the primary quality standard for events management. Other ISO standards can be used for particular aspects of an event. Relevant sections of ISO 21502, and others, for each of the process stages are given at the beginning of each stage below. These need to be reviewed internally to ensure that the proposed ISOs, and the proposed sections fully meet the needs of the ITCILO.

In addition to the relevant ISO requirements, each stage below also indicates which stage of the PDCA, and outreach/engagement/conversion paradigms we are referring to (see Figure 6 above).

Event Purpose and Design

TABLE 6: PURPOSE STAGE

Stage of Event	PDCA	ISO 21502	Other ISOs	Outreach/Engagement/Conversion
Purpose	Act (on learning from previous events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.18 Lessons learned • 6.3 Initiating a project • 7.11 Quality mgt. • 7.2 Planning • 7.3 Benefit Mgt • 7.4 Scope Mgt 	<p>9001</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-3 <p>20700</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 <p>20121</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4.1-4.5 Context • 5.1-5.3 Leadership <p>29993</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,5,6 	Outreach to (partners/stakeholders/suppliers)

The Purpose stage primarily looks at why ITCILO is doing this event. Does it fit clearly within ITCILO's purpose and strategy? Assuming it does, how will ITCILO measure its success? What are the criteria and KPIs? Who is the audience? What are the risks and benefits of holding this event? Does ITCILO have, or have access to, appropriate human and financial resources to do it well? As the quality system develops, the answers to these questions will also be informed by lessons learned from previous events.

Once these are clear, the next stage is to look at the best design approach for the event: we have previously identified three 'dichotomies' in the events ITCILO engages in: internal/ external, large/ small; Business to Business, or Business to Consumer. Where will this event fit in each of these?

Recommendation 4

We recommend a quality assurance system for events which will answer a range of questions which impact on future events, examples below.

- How do we know if our events are successful?
- Are we spending our budget efficiently?
- Are our events better than those of other similar organisations?
- Did we reach our objective?
- Are our clients happy with our services?
- Will they use us again?
- What feedback have they given us?

Recommendation 5

We recommend the establishment of a quality assurance system, embedded into the event planning, implementation and evaluation systems. This will enable ITCILO to assess each event against a set of appropriate criteria. This depends on not only gathering the necessary data to answer these questions, but also analysing and interpreting what the data is saying. This analysis is then used to disseminate successful approaches, and to address any shortcomings for future events.

Recommendation 6

We recommend the development of a taxonomy of event types, of client relationships, and of budget considerations, of event format, and possibly other issues. These will provide a 'mix and match' analysis for many types of events, and the basis for measuring the quality of the event. We recommend templates/guidelines are developed for each stage of event management, in relation to large/small, internal/ external, B2B or B2C. Different types of events: workshops, retreats, seminars, large scale events etc, can also develop guidelines directly relevant to them.

A taxonomy of ‘types of events’ that are likely to fit within ITCILO purpose might include:

- Conferences;
- Exhibitions / Fairs;
- Workshops;
- Seminars / Webinars;
- Retreats (residential experiences for small groups).

And, within each type of event, delivery could be face-to-face, online, or hybrid.

Recommendation 7

We recommend the development of a checklist of design considerations before detailed planning of an event begins.

Event Design: basic considerations

- *Face-to-face, online, or hybrid? Why?*
- *When?:* is there sufficient planning time? Is it at an appropriate time for the proposed audience?
- *Where?:* (face-to-face events only). Where is your anticipated audience?
- *Who?* Would we like to present? Would we want to attend?
- *Why?...* would people want to present/attend?
- *How will we run the event?* What can we do to make it attractive to the people we want to attend?
- *Do we have the skills, and financial/human resources to do the event well?*

Recommendation 8

We recommend development of a feedback loop that constantly updates the quality assurance system with innovative successful practice, and that can provide ‘warnings’ about where things can go wrong, or issues that need particular attention. See Figure 4 on page 24.

Recommendation 9

We recommend the development of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database for events. If ITCILO already has a general CRM database, we recommend a ‘tagging’ of appropriate contacts with an ‘Events’ tag, and specifying their areas of interest with regard to the thematic areas the different events address.

Planning (Non-content: logistics, marketing and communication etc.)

TABLE 7: PLANNING STAGE (NON-CONTENT)

Stage of Event	PDCA	ISO 21502	Other ISOs	Outreach/Engagement/ Conversion
Planning (Non-content)	Plan (non-content)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.5 Resource Mgt. • 7.6 Schedule Mgt • 7.7 Cost Mgt • 7.8 Risk Mgt • 7.9 Issues Mgt • 7.11 quality Mgt 	9001 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4, 6, 7 20700 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 20121 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6.1-6.2 Planning • 7.1-7.5 Support 29993 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 	Outreach to (partners/ stakeholders/ suppliers)

Details of good practice in (non-content) planning are given in Part Two, pp. 31-36.

Recommendation 10

We recommend the establishment of a planning group, within the team organising the event, plus any external partners if appropriate. This group should meet regularly before the event to assess progress, and identify any issues as early as possible in order for them to be addressed in a timely fashion.

Recommendation 11

We recommend the development of common guidelines for event (non-content) planning to include the activity, e.g. budget; the tasks within the activity, e.g. approval, allocation, management etc. lead person on budget issues, other team members and external partners involved, and roles; timeline of key dates, progress comments. The progress comments for each area should be updated e.g. each week, and exceptions reported to the planning team. Non-content planning elements include: budget, stakeholders/partners, sponsors (if appropriate), communications and marketing, and logistics.

Planning (Content and Professional)

TABLE 8: PLANNING STAGE (CONTENT AND PROFESSIONAL)

Stage of Event	PDCA	ISO 21502	Other ISOs	Outreach/Engagement/Conversion
Planning (content)	Plan (Content)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.5 Resource Mgt • 7.6 Schedule Mgt • 7.7 Cost Mgt • 7.8 Risk Mgt • 7.9 Issues Mgt • 7.11 Quality Mgt • 7.12 Stakeholder Mgt • 7.13 Comms Mgt 	9001 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4, 6, 7 20700 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 20121 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6.1-6.2 Planning • 7.1-7.5 Support 29993 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9, 11 	Engagement (1) (presenters/ chairpersons/ moderators etc.)

Details of good practice in (content) planning are given in Part Two, pp. 37-38. The structure and content of the event is a key element in determining its success. This, together with appropriate presenters, moderators and participants will be the primary determinants of the success of an event.

Recommendation 12

We recommend an initial programme outline is developed first, based on the purpose of the event, and proper consideration given to which speakers/moderators and what kind of formats are most appropriate for the expected participants. This is best done by people with a good understanding of the topic area, with skill and experience in identifying, attracting and managing high quality speakers/presenters, ensuring that they have relevant expertise and profiles, and will provide a good experience for the participants. As well as getting the right speakers, the 'flow' of the conference also needs to be carefully considered.

Recommendation 13

We recommend that all speakers/moderators are briefed, not only on their part in the event, but on the overall purpose of the event, who the audience will be, where their contribution 'sits' in the overall form of the event, and to consider what their presentation will contribute to achieving the purpose, and the 'learning' they are expecting participants to gain from their contribution.

Recommendation 14

We recommend that consideration is given to the participants whom the event hopes to attract. Clear communication about the theme and topics of the event, and who is likely to most benefit from attendance, clearly identifying the outcomes for the different stakeholders, will ensure

that participants know what to expect at the event. A targeted marketing and communications campaign which includes social and other media, and promotion through partner and other organisations will ensure that the largest number of potential participants are aware of the event.

Recommendation 15

We recommend that the registration process includes a set of questions for participants, which will provide important data for the event in question as well as future event planning and marketing, as well as leads for following up evaluation after the event. Examples are given below. The answers can form the baseline information for the immediate post event evaluation of the success of the event for each individual participant.

Examples of possible questions to participants at registration:

- How did you hear about this event? *Identifies the most effective channels for engaging the participants.*
- What is your main reason for attending this event? *Clarifies the participant's objectives and provides an opportunity to triangulate with the overall purpose of the event and the communications to make sure it is understood as intended.*
- Why did you choose this event? *Provides an indication of whether it is the themes and content, profile of speakers, the audience, brand recognition, or location, venue or platform.*
- Which sessions are you most interested in? *Provides an insight into the area of interest for that participant that can inform potential inclusion in the event being planned as well as in future activities or events.*

Recommendation 16

We recommend the event team develop an evaluation strategy for each event which clearly develops and identifies indicators that can be monitored and tracked, pre, during and post the event. This will provide a clear picture of the performance and quality of the event that is delivered.

A sample of indicators

- Likes, comments, shares
- Mentions
- Monitoring use of event hashtags and associated hashtags;
- Articles in the media referencing the event;
- Social media connections to the ITCILO or LinkedIn event page;
- Social media profile checks of the contributors and speakers;
- Establishing the Net promoter score¹⁴.

This approach can go some way towards unpicking or explaining certain issues around events, for example where the number of participants at an event (face-to-face or online) are fewer or greater than anticipated.

¹⁴ Net Promoter Score is a metric used in customer experience programs. NPS measures the loyalty of customers to a company. NPS scores are measured with a single question survey and reported with a number from -100 to +100, a higher score is desirable.

Implementation

TABLE 9: IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

Stage of Event	PDCA	ISO 21502	Other ISOs	Outreach/Engagement/Conversion
Implementation	Do (hold the event)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.12 Stakeholder Mgt • 7.13 Comms Mgt 	9001 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-3 20700 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 20121 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8.1—8.3 Operation 29993 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 	Engagement (2) (with speakers/moderators, partners, sponsors, exhibitors and participants, also through social media posts, with a wider audience beyond those participating)

Generally, if the event has been well planned and organised, all participants and speakers, as well as the organisers and event team, have a shared interest in making the event a success. However, it is important that clear actions and roles are agreed for dealing with any issues during the event. Basic precautions, like ensuring everyone knows what to do in case of fire, or other local danger (earthquake, bombs etc.) should be part of the briefing of all participants at an event. Likewise for online events, participants should be told what will happen if the event loses connection, etc.

Recommendation 17

We recommend each event has a contingency plan for foreseeable hitches in the delivery of the event, with specific people responsible for particular areas to ensure a smooth event experience whereby any possible hitches go unnoticed by the participants and their event experience is considered a success.

Contingency considerations

- Stewards for evacuating the building if needed.
- Communication with online participants outside the event platform in case of issues.
- Venue not prepared in time
- Speakers not showing up.
- Catering management.
- Tech failure in general, or in specific rooms/sessions.
- Overcrowding in sessions.
- Management of online networking spaces.
- 'Help desk' both at in person conferences, and online etc.
- Acts of God

Evaluation (Immediate)

TABLE 10: EVALUATION (IMMEDIATE)

Stage of Event	PDCA	ISO 21502	Other ISOs	Outreach/Engagement/Conversion
Evaluation (immediate)	Check & Act (internal review, external feedback, followed by review of systems through the quality improvement process)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.15 Reporting • 7.16 Info and doc. Mgt • 7.18 Lessons learned 	9001 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-3 20700 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 20121 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9.1-9.4 Performance Eval • 10.1-10.2 Improvement 29993 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 	Conversion (1) The evaluation stage is an opportunity to build on the relationship developed through the event, through, e.g. newsletter subscriptions, invitations to online interest group, etc.

Details of good practice in immediate evaluations are given in Part Two, pp. 40-43. For any event, there are a number of different stakeholders who will wish to evaluate the event immediately after it is finished, both internal and external. External evaluators include partners and stakeholders, sponsors (if appropriate), speakers and participants. Each of these will evaluate the success or otherwise of the conference in terms of their own desired outcomes from the event, which may differ from those of ITCILO internal evaluations.

All of these can contribute to the quality improvement process for the event organisers. There are four external evaluations, and many internal ones, that need to be taken into account in assessing the quality of the event and whether it achieved what was intended. Internal evaluations: 'lessons learned' need to be informed by external evaluations, and identify ways of improving the event process in the future. Internal evaluations will include reviews of the budget, the stakeholders, speakers, the moderators, and the participants. logistics, media partners and the work of the event team.

Recommendation 18

We recommend that a 'standard' process for reviewing, and recording, both external and internal evaluations immediately after an event is developed, and held in a central 'secretariat' whose role is to both circulate learning from the event to the wider organisation, and to update the quality improvement guidance for event management across the organisation.

Evaluation (longer term)

TABLE 11: EVALUATION (LONGER TERM STAGE)

Stage of Event	PDCA	ISO 21502	Other ISOs	Outreach/Engagement/Conversion
Evaluation (longer term)	Check & Act (follow up external evaluation to identify outcomes, planned and unplanned. Internal review of systems through the quality improvement process)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.15 Reporting • 7.16 Info and doc. Mgt • 7.18 Lessons learned 	9001 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-3 20700 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 20121 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9.1-9.4 Performance Eval • 10.1-10.2 Improvement 29993 12	Conversion (2) The second evaluation stage is an opportunity to further build on the relationships developed through the event, through, e.g. invitations to online interest groups, further events, etc.

Details of the issues in longer term evaluation are given in Part Two, pp. 43-44.

General practice on evaluation of event management usually ends at the post-event evaluations, and quality is measured around the quality of the event itself, i.e. the outputs. This is insufficient to address ITCILO's need for assessing the longer term outcomes, and impact.

An event can be the launching point for a wide variety of outputs and outcomes foreseen when planning for the event. But there are also other potential outcomes which the planners of the event may not have foreseen, but that are equally relevant. Longer term evaluation of outcomes are helpful in assessing whether any specific 'real-life' improvements have happened as a result of the event.

Recommendation 19

We recommend that longer term evaluation of events is initiated as standard practice. The evaluation form should be short, and easy to complete. Personal details, include the participants 'objective' in attending the event, and ask if this was achieved, partly achieved/not achieved. What has changed since you attended the event? To increase the number of responses, incentives could be provided:

- Discount on the next event.
- Prize draw / Raffle.
- Report on how immediate feedback has been taken forward and the purpose of the longer-term evaluation.

Otherwise, responses are likely to be limited to those who have a grievance or an issue.

Examples for KPIs for long term evaluation

- that an idea (or case-study or best practice) presented at the conference has been adapted in another context;
- two or more participants are now working together on a new project/idea/innovation;
- an initiative has gained more traction and a bigger audience;
- a start-up has attracted funding and support;
- policy makers have been shown new evidence that they adopt to address solutions;
- a new community of practice has been created.
- new business for ITCILO and/or its event partners arising from the event
- increased professional profile for ITCILO and/or its event partners arising from the event.

Quality improvement process for institutional capacity building

The practical recommendations given above for event management need to be underpinned by an organisation-wide Quality Improvement System. This is discussed in detail in Part Two, pp. 39. Quality assurance processes and tools provide a clear method and approach to encourage reflection and evaluation of activities to improve them. Essentially, they create standardisation of core tasks to underpin effective management and planning of events and provide a clear framework for the evaluation of results.

A clear results chain for the types of activities under review, with diagnostic questions, templates and case studies, results not only in quality events, but events that contribute to the organisation's identity and overarching strategy.

A quality assurance system underpinned by a culture of quality improvement, applying Deming's "Plan, do, check, act" cycle, supported by a clear evaluation strategy, is core to the continuous innovation and development. This requires recording evaluation of event management, together with a process sharing within the 'corporate memory'.

Recommendation 20

We recommend that following an event, and its initial evaluation, an evaluation 'exception' report is prepared (to a common format) by a senior member of the event team (and signed off by the person in charge). This lists only aspects of the event, whether in the planning, content, implementation or evaluation, where things were noticeably better than expected, and should enter the quality process as an example of 'good practice'. Other aspects, where there were particular problems or where things did not go as planned, will be listed as areas to pay particular attention to in future events.

Recommendation 21

We recommend that while event management remains devolved to the most appropriate teams, each team is equipped with quality ‘toolkits’ appropriate to the kind of event they are organising. Large international events will have more complex toolkits than, say, a small internal event. We recommend that development of the initial draft toolkits is devolved to the teams with most experience of a particular type of event.

Measuring impact, and the use of data

All quality assurance solutions are dependent on good data. Most organisations collect much more data than they use. The challenge is in collating and interpreting the data and making it meaningful.

Recommendation 22

We recommend the development of a clear and common strategy for the collation of meaningful data both pre- and post- event. We also recommend a longer term evaluation strategy, which can identify common trends across events, in terms of connected impacts in the longer term, for example, inter- and intra-organisational collaboration, publication of research papers, promotion, job / role change linked to engagement in the event.

The Way Forward

There are a substantial number of recommendations in this section, but they fall into two broad types. One relates to improving the quality of events through a more integrated and systematic approach to the management of events, and the second into establishing an ongoing quality improvement process for the management of events by ITCILO. Neither of these can succeed without the other.

ITCILO leadership will decide if and how these recommendations are implemented. We would propose, as a starting point, a staged approach to implementation of these recommendations. Each step below is dependent on the previous steps having been done.

- **Step one** is to decide which recommendations will be acted on, in particular, whether to use ISO 21502 as the basic quality measure closely linked to the PDCA system.
- **Step two** is to identify a small number of upcoming (different types of) events to pilot approaches to event management recommended in this report. This includes developing toolkits for different types of events, with associated KPIs and a close record of the processes in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the events. Individual event teams will probably require additional support to do this in the first instance, possibly by the proposed secretariat, see below. The quality documentation is to be updated after the events.

- **Step Three** is the establishment of a nascent ‘events secretariat’. This person/group will use the learning from the pilot events to develop a first draft of an event quality management documentation.
- **Step Four** is the socialising of the event documentation for use across the organisation. This ‘training event’ will also follow the quality guidelines being proposed.
- **Step Five** is the ongoing rollout and implementation of the new quality management approach.

It is envisaged that the time lapse between step one and step five would be between 4-12 months, depending on resources, number of events taking place, and other factors. Full ‘embedding’ of the approach is likely to take a further 12 months.

The proposed approach, if implemented, will encourage ownership by the different members of the ITCILO teams, providing clarity as to the purpose and objective of the events, in line with their own teams, roles and tasks. It will, in time, lead to not only consistency and coherency in the quality of events designed, managed and delivered by the ITCILO, but also enhance trust in the ITCILO brand and amongst partners as to the quality of the event provision. This will create a strong foundation to grow the events management activities in line with the overarching strategy.

ANNEXE 1: EVENTS CONSIDERED IN PART 1

In discussion with team members

Workshops on Promoting Competency Based Training policy and system in GCC countries

ILO global technical team (GTT) meeting

Child Labour Summit

XR FOCUS FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/stefano-merante_3d-vr-ar-activity-6868600997397299200-0Zuv

By online review

<https://www.itcilo.org/stories/ilo-hosts-first-ever-virtual-exhibition-sustainable-enterprises>

[How to create an online event in 2020 | ITCILO](#)

<https://www.itcilo.org/stories/teleported-from-your-chair>

<https://www.itcilo.org/stories/itcilo-innovation-day-2021-holograms-3d-screens-and-radio>

<https://www.itcilo.org/stories/why-social-media-mattered-unesco-futures-literacy-summit>

<https://www.itcilo.org/stories/itcilo-innovation-day-2021-holograms-3d-screens-and-radio>

An example of a retreat upfront staff survey <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SBSPQSF>

The satisfaction survey of the XR expo <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5V89T6F>

<https://www.itcilo.org/stories/how-create-online-event-2020>

A satisfaction survey of another retreat <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/dwtnewdelhi>

GTT Exhibition Visitors survey <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QHH5JMQ>

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QPR5MG7>

GTT Exhibitors survey <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QPG8TWL>

<https://www.itcilo.org/events/virtual-skills-fair>

<https://www.itcilo.org/about/teams>

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/stefano-merante_3d-vr-ar-activity-6868600997397299200-0Zuv

<https://framevr.io/>

ANNEXE 2: RELEVANT ISO NUMBERS FOR EVENTS

ISO 21502: Project, Programme and Portfolio Management

- 5.3 Continuous improvement of the project management environment
- 5.4 Alignment with organisational processes and systems.
- 6. Integrated project management practices:
- 6.2 Pre-project activities
- 6.3 Overseeing a project
- 6.4 Directing a project
- 6.5 Initiating a project
 - 1. Overview
 - 2. Project team mobilisation
 - 3. Project governance and management approach
- 4. Initial project justification
- 5. Initial project planning
- 6. Controlling a project
 - 1. Overview
 - 2. Progressive justification
 - 3. Managing project performance
 - 4. Managing the start and close of each project
 - 5. Managing delivery
 - 6. Closing or terminating a project

7. Management practices for a project

- 7.2 Planning
 - 1. Overview
 - 2. Developing the plan
 - 3. Monitoring the plan
- 7.3 Benefit management
 - 1. Overview
 - 2. Identifying and analysing benefits
 - 3. Monitoring benefits
 - 4. Maintaining benefits
- 7.4 Scope management
 - 1. Overview
 - 2. Defining the scope
 - 3. Controlling scope
 - 4. Confirming scope delivery
- 7.5 Resource management
 - 1. Overview
 - 2. Planning the project organisation
 - 3. Establishing the team
 - 4. Developing the team
 - 5. Managing the team
 - 6. Planning, managing and controlling physical and material resources.
- 7.6 Schedule management
 - 1. Overview
 - 2. Estimating activity durations
 - 3. Developing the schedule
 - 4. Controlling the schedule

7.7 Cost management

- 1. Overview
- 2. Estimating cost
- 3. Developing the budget
- 4. Controlling costs
- 7.8 Risk management
 - 1. Overview
 - 2. Identifying risk
 - 3. Assessing risk
 - 4. Treating risk
 - 5. Controlling risk
- 7.9 Issues management
 - 1. Overview
 - 2. Identifying issues
 - 3. Resolving issues
- 7.11 Quality management
 - 1. Overview
 - 2. Planning quality
 - 3. Assuring quality
 - 4. Controlling quality

ISO 21502:

- 7.12 Stakeholder engagement
 - 1. Overview
 - 2. Identifying stakeholders
 - 3. Engaging stakeholders
- 7.13 Communication management
 - 1. Overview
 - 2. Planning communication
 - 3. Distributing information
 - 4. Monitoring the impact of communications
- 7.14 Managing organisational and societal change
 - 1. Overview
 - 2. Identifying the need for change
 - 3. Implementing the organisational and societal change
- 7.15 Reporting
 - 1. Overview
 - 2. Planning reporting
 - 3. Managing reporting
 - 4. Delivering reports
- 7.16 Information and documentation management
 - 1. Overview
 - 2. Identifying which information should be managed
 - 3. Restoring and retrieving documentation

- 7.17 Procurement
 - 1. Overview
 - 2. Planning procurement
 - 3. Evaluating and selecting suppliers
 - 4. Administering contracts
 - 5. Closing contracts
- 7.18 Lessons learned
 - 1. Overview
 - 2. Identifying lessons
 - 3. Disseminating lessons

NB: 7.10 is Change control – and not considered necessary for event management.

ISO 20121: Sustainable Event Management

- 4. Context of the Organisation
- 4.1 Understanding of the organisation and its context
- 4.2 Understanding the need and expectations of the client / contributors / partners / delegates.
- 4.3 Determining the scope of the event sustainability management system
- 4.4 Event sustainability management system
- 4.5 Sustainable development principles, statement of purpose and values.
- 5. Leadership
- 5.1 Leadership and commitment
- 5.2 Policy
- 5.3 Organisational roles, responsibilities and authorities.
- 6. Planning
- 6.1 Actions to address risks and opportunities
- 6.2 Event sustainability objectives and how to achieve them.
- 7. Support
- 7.1 Resources
- 7.2 Competence
- 7.3 Awareness
- 7.4 Communication
- 7.5 Documented information

- 8. Operation
- 8.1 Operational planning and control
- 8.2 Dealing with modified activities, products or services
- 8.3 Supply chain management
- 9. Performance evaluation
- 9.1 Performance against governing principles of sustainable development
- 9.2 Monitoring, measurement, analysis and evaluation.
- 9.3 Internal audit
- 9.4 Management review
- 10. Improvement
- 10.1 Nonconformity and corrective action
- 10.2 Continual improvement.

ANNEXE 3:

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[ISO – ISO 29993:2017 – Learning services outside formal education – Service requirements](#)

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[ISO – ISO 20121 – Sustainable events](#)

[ISO – ISO 20700:2017 – Guidelines for management consultancy services](#)

[The New ISO 21502 \(pmworldlibrary.net\)](#)

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[How to create an online event in 2020 | ITCILO](#)

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<https://www.eventmanagerblog.com/5-event-case-studies>

Evaluation:

[Best Practices for Evaluating Event Success – EventMob... \(eventmobi.com\)](#)

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[Impact evaluation | Better Evaluation](#)

[Describe – Compact.pdf \(betterevaluation.org\)](#)

<https://billetto.co.uk/blog/guide-to-evaluating-events/>

Event management Associations:

International Congress and Convention Association: <https://www.iccaworld.org/abouticca/>

International Association of Professional Congress Organisers: <https://www.iapco.org/about-iapco/>

Association of Event Organisers: [Best Practice & Professional Standards – AEO](#)

Institute of Event Managers: [Headline: Code of Professional Conduct | Event Managers \(event-managers.institute\)](#)

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