



THREE ELEMENTS FOR SUSTAINING YOUR Environmental and Sustainability Management System (ESMS)



This is one of several FTA Environmental and Sustainability Management System (ESMS) Resource Series Library documents. For additional information regarding ESMS development, implementation and maintenance, please see the related ESMS resources available from FTA cited at the end of the paper.

3 MAIN ELEMENTS OF ESMS

It takes effort, as with any organizational initiative, to keep an ESMS up to date and alive over time. This paper provides information to assist you in the process of sustaining your ESMS by focusing on three main elements:

1

Element 1

Improve stakeholder engagement

2

Element 2

Improve training and awareness for people at all functions and levels of your organization

3

Element 3

Improve employee and contractor engagement

These tips, whether you have established your ESMS or are in the early stages of development, may help you achieve an improved level of performance. Awareness of the effectiveness of the ESMS is a hallmark of the ESMS team's responsibilities. You may have noticed some signs of changing support or participation in your ESMS. These signs might include missing targets or reporting requirements, increasing or repeated corrective action reports, training deficiencies, or low morale or lack of participation in ESMS related activities by employees. This paper is useful to evaluate and correct those and similar organization changes, thus keeping the ESMS program alive and vital.

A brief overview of ESMS concepts is contained in *Appendix I*, located at the end of this paper. The concepts explained in Appendix I include:

- **Concept 1** – Purpose of an ESMS (pg. 9)
- **Concept 2** – Achieving goals and targets (pg. 9)
- **Concept 3** – Commitment/vision/mission (pg. 9)
- **Concept 4** – Plan-Do-Check-Act Model (pg. 10)
- **Concept 5** – Steps to create an ESMS (pg. 10)



1

ELEMENT 1: Improve Stakeholder Engagement

Improve Stakeholder Engagement

Organizations need to focus on engaging those interested in their ESMS both internally and outside of the organization. Organizations need to consult with stakeholders whom can include, but may not be limited to, local community organizations, social services groups, units of federal, state and local governments, ridership, contractors, or regulatory bodies. Maintaining relationships and raising awareness among your immediate stakeholder community improves your standing in the community and may lead to new business. Personnel within the organization can identify the stakeholders and increase the efforts to comprehensively look at the groups and organizations both internally and externally that your organization's activities might impact. It is important to take into account the issues raised during stakeholder engagement when sustaining your ESMS.

Top management needs to identify some activities that assist in improving stakeholder engagement. Examples are listed below:

TASK 1

Create a new list to include the many stakeholder organizations that exist whether or not they are obvious stakeholders and particularly if you have narrowly defined stakeholders in the past. Below is an example list for you to consider:

- Employees and contractors
- Neighbors
- Organizations you work with
- Industries and suppliers
- Clients and customers
- Federal, state and local government officials
- Federal, state, regional and local government regulatory bodies
- Emergency response organizations
- Raw materials suppliers
- Non-government organizations (environmental groups)
- Local community groups
- Social service agencies
- Employees and contractors

TASK 2

Consider the associated issues based on your new list or ask stakeholders to define their concerns. Develop a chart and list the groups, their needs and expectations, risks and opportunities and legal requirements necessary to address the stakeholder needs. The following table is an example that can be used to identify and track stakeholder issues.



STAKEHOLDER AND ISSUES	EXTERNAL (E) INTERNAL (I)	OBLIGATIONS TO THOSE INTERESTED IN ESMS	THREATS	OPPORTUNITIES	LEGAL
Regulators	E	Meet compliance requirements	Permit violations, fines, shutdown	Voluntary participation in recognition programs	Yes – Stormwater, wastewater discharges, emissions
Local Community	E	Reduce environmental impact	Harm to community health, harm to reputation	Communication and collaboration programs to address impacts	Yes – Community right to know
Employees and Contractors	E/I	Good work environment, health, safety, training	Lack of participation, understanding of role, impact on environment	Communication, training, recognition	Yes – Safety and health, hazard communication
Customers	E	Safe and efficient transportation services	Decreased ridership, loss of reputation and confidence	Maintain open communication, provide consistent service delivery	No

The opportunities to engage stakeholders include actions by your organization to reduce air emissions, reduce energy consumption and reduce operating costs, reduce the generation of solid and hazardous waste, and focus on pollution prevention and recycling. The opportunities presented could include specific communication (brochures) or public service announcement to explain what you are doing and post progress reports to your website. In some cases, there are legal commitments such as “Community Right to Know” obligations which you can use to show compliance.

TASK 3

Redefine your list of Risks and Opportunities associated with the Internal and External Stakeholders (see table above).

TASK 4

Re-establish your goals and targets taking into consideration the updated stakeholder information.



2

**ELEMENT 2:
Improve Training
and Awareness**

Improve Training and Awareness for People at all Functions and Levels of Your Organization (Types of Training and Awareness Programs)

Operational training and awareness trainings are excellent means to improve the performance of the ESMS. Set up a training and awareness program work group with regular members representing various levels and functions within the organization who participate in program development to improve training and awareness. The training and awareness program work group identifies ways of sharing ESMS information. Sharing is accomplished through training initiatives that highlight key ESMS components such as the organization's mission/vision, goals and targets, and priority characteristics and influences. Have your training and awareness program work group ask and answer the following questions:

- How are personnel informed or made aware of ESMS?
- How are personnel trained to or made aware of the environmental/sustainability mission/vision?
- How are personnel trained on or made aware of characteristics and influences?

Tasks that assist in improving awareness and training are listed below.

TASK 1

Review the current mission/vision statement and determine if it is still applicable, or if it needs to be revised to accurately reflect the current ESMS. Develop a summary statement of your environmental mission/sustainability mission and values – this is a message that can be communicated to the public and all your stakeholders. Once approved by management, communicate the mission and values through methods determined effective for your organization. The methods can include brochures, handouts, electronic message boards, training presentation, cards or badges that each employee or contractor may carry with them.

For example, a business type card could be printed and given to employees with a message:

The Transit ESMS Team has set targets related to our goal to improve environmental performance. These targets include reductions or improved controls associated with:

- *Dust Control (Construction Site Controls)*
- *Waste Management (Solid, Hazardous Waste and Universal Waste)*
- *Sediment Control (Storm Water Runoff)*

TASK 2

Develop a summary list of your action plans related to operations and include your goals and targets. This list may also be communicated as stated above and will help remind employees and contractors of the importance of their role in achieving these goals and targets.



Summary Thoughts for Improving Training and Awareness

Senior management needs to clearly support and communicate goals and targets, and employees and contractors need to be trained on their responsibilities in meeting those goals and targets. Also, it is important for senior management to share successes with the entire organization. A significant amount of trust and buy-in by employees and contractors can be achieved if you solicit and recognize individual and team initiatives. Practices you can utilize to improve training and awareness:

- Prepare communications that summarize and clearly state your goals and targets.
- Focus training activities on employees and contractors related to their roles within each program area.

ELEMENT 3: Improve Employee and Contractor Engagement

Improve Employee and Contractor Engagement (the What and How of Engaging with Employees)

The training and awareness work group must identify multiple means of communication that encourage employee involvement and benefit your ESMS. The communication channels include daily shift meetings prior to start of shift, signage or educational posters, intranet communications, and training videos. The people closest to the process often have the best ideas, but many respond only when asked. Employee and contractor involvement and empowerment will ensure that the flow of ideas and feeling of working collectively toward your targets will keep the ESMS performance at the top of your employees' consciousness and facilitate improvement. Offering a simple incentive, a prize or a voucher, can encourage employees to volunteer information previously unavailable to your ESMS. Reward positivity and suggestions that help to improve performance. Publicize the results and encourage involvement. Take the time to celebrate the achievement, and make sure your employees recognize the importance of continually improving and achieving your goals and targets recognizing the benefit to both your organization and the environment.

Have your training and awareness program work group ask and answer the following questions:

- How do you ensure people are involved?
- How do you encourage and support the sharing of ideas from your employees?

Below is a suggested task to get you started on engaging employees and contractors.

TASK

Establish a list of activities to undertake:

- Use the communications strategy developed in Element 2 above to communicate to internal and external employees, contractors and community members information that summarizes and clearly states your goals and targets.



- Focus training activities on employees and contractors related to their roles within each department or shop area
- Accept ideas from employees and contractors and act as appropriate
- Evaluate all suggestions to determine worthiness and work to solve problems
- Recognize individual or team initiatives to encourage continued participation (rewards such as special recognition or financial incentives are often greatly appreciated by staff)
- Share the success with the entire organization.

Engagement helps your organization, helps your stakeholders, helps reduce your costs, and helps the environment. Finally, it gives your team the sense of achievement we all seek when we go to work.

Summary Thoughts on Improving Engagement

First, it is important to document your purpose to sustain your ESMS, clearly summarizing your goals and targets so that employees and contractors clearly understand what they need to focus on. Communication is key here.

Second, based on *Element 2 – Improve Training and Awareness* set out above, focus employee and contractor training on your goals and targets so that they understand their roles in accomplishing the goal and targets. Your expectation is that they will carry out their roles; and their expectation is that you will support their activities and provide the resources to accomplish the tasks.

Sustaining your ESMS requires discipline and depends on leadership skills to improve your ESMS. None of the tips above, in isolation, will help you sustain your ESMS but combined with other best practices, they will help you build an effective, efficient ESMS. Your benefits could be significant, as employee involvement can be the key to your workforce’s “buy in” to improving and sustaining the company’s environmental performance. Engaging as many of your employees and contractors as possible and sharing information and opinions across your team will help you build a strong ESMS and ensure that the flow of data back and forth facilitates review, improvement, and achievement. Engagement helps your organization, helps your stakeholders, helps reduce your costs, and helps the environment.

FINAL THOUGHTS



NEXT STEPS

To ensure you gain sufficient understanding of a comprehensive ESMS, it is recommended that you consider:

- Taking the introductory online course
[Click for more information on the online course.](#)
- Attending an FTA ESMS Institute with Virginia Tech when offered through FTA, to guarantee you are given the appropriate guidance and tools to successfully develop, implement, maintain and sustain an ESMS for your organization. Even though your organization may have gone through the institute years ago, the ISO 14001:2015 requirements are different, and you may have many new members in your organization who might benefit from the experience.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [FTA ESMS website](#)
Provides links to webinars, brochures, and resources from the ESMS Resource Series.
- [EPA website](#)
Provides information and resources related to Environmental Management Systems (EMSs).
- [International Organization for Standardization](#)
information, publications and products
- [American Public Transportation Association \(APTA\) sustainability resources](#)
- [Center for Environmental Excellence by AASHTO](#)
- [FTA ESMS Introductory Online Course](#)



APPENDIX I

ESMS Concepts Review and Reminders

The information provided below provides some background regarding the basic concepts needed for the development of an ESMS as well as a review of some of the key principles needed to have a successful ESMS.

It is important to continuously review the processes and guidance your organization established when you first developed your ESMS. The review includes the concepts you used to build your ESMS. The five concepts are summarized below.

Concept 1: Purpose of an ESMS

The purpose of an ESMS is to provide organizations with a structure to achieve established goals it sets for its environmental and sustainability management system. The ESMS structure consists of a set of processes and practices that enables an organization to reduce its environmental influences and increase its operating efficiency and effectiveness. An ESMS serves to support the organization in its pursuit to fulfill legal, statutory and regulatory commitments by performing assessments, developing processes and establishing goals, targets or metrics to meet the obligations and communicate environmental information to relevant interested parties. This is achieved through effective internal and external communication programs

Concept 2: Achieving Goals and Targets

A transit agency's role is to provide reliable mobility for the public. In doing so, the transit agency is responsible for operating efficiently and acting as good stewards of the limited public resources entrusted to them.

Concept 3: Commitment/Vision/Mission

The success of an ESMS depends on commitment from all levels and functions of the organization, specifically senior management. Organizations can leverage opportunities to prevent or mitigate adverse environmental influences and enhance beneficial environmental influences, particularly those influences with strategic and competitive implications. Senior management needs to have a clear vision/mission and must effectively communicate and integrate environmental and sustainability management into its business processes and business priorities.



Concept 4: Plan-Do-Check-Act Model

PLAN: Identify, develop and establish environmental goals/targets and processes necessary to deliver results in accordance with the organization's mission/vision.

DO: Perform the processes as planned with the intention of meeting established goals/targets.

CHECK: Monitor & Measure processes/actions to determine if they successfully meet established requirements.

ACT: Take action to constantly improve.

Concept 5: Steps to Create an ESMS

- **Make a business case** – The ESMS is built on the principle that environmental initiatives and operational efficiencies are mutually reinforcing.
- **Build an ESMS cross-functional team** – The ideal ESMS team is comprised of representatives from executive management, operations, engineering, planning, safety, human resources, communications, information technology, and supply chain management. Cross-functional support encourages accountability, ownership and responsibility
- **Engage employees at all functional levels** – Engage organization personnel through comprehensive training and awareness programs as well as a communication campaign that emphasizes the relationship between ESMS, personnel and the environment.
- **Communicate success** – Constant communications, especially postings of data and information about program performance, help personnel become more aware, stay engaged, and feel that they are integral to the success of the system.

