



FAQ:

GMIC and iCompli distributed a recent press release regarding development of certification of the APEX/ASTM Environmentally Sustainable Meeting Standards. The press release announced the opportunity for certification of suppliers to the level one requirement in the standards.

This FAQ will focus on the APEX/ASTM standard yet we wish to underscore that GMIC is an advocate of all proven tools and practices to advance sustainable practices for events- This includes support for APEX/ASTM and ISO 20121 as well as GRI, a global framework for reporting sustainability performance. GMIC has shared examples for how these tools can be used together. [Read more here on the historical design and collaborative process of these initiatives](#).

1) Did GMIC create a certification program?

No. GMIC's role is not to create the standard or the certification program, but to support members in building better organizations and events through advocacy and the sharing of best practices. With the release of the standards in 2012, GMIC believes a certification process is a critical factor in speeding their uptake and use. Our first step was to identify a credible, independent auditing organization who knows the standards and who demonstrated a sound process to provide third party certification.

2) What process did GMIC use to endorse a third party certification, and is it exclusive?

GMIC engaged key stakeholders; including subject matter experts, individuals involved in the standards development process, practitioners and external stakeholders to establish and review a set of internal criteria on 3rd party endorsement. GMIC followed internal policies for endorsement. While this relationship is not exclusive it is based on rigid criteria to ensure credible market place adoption and usage of the standards.

3) What is the difference between 1st, 2nd and 3rd party certification?

Here are the "official definitions" of the key terms from Unites States Conformity Assessment Principles document published by ANSI (American National Standards Institute),.

First, Second, and Third Party

The first party is generally the person or organization that provides the object, such as the supplier.

(GMIC – i.e. the Venue reviews the requirements and creates a self check list)

The second party is usually a person or organization that has a user interest in the product, such as the customer. (GMIC – i.e. a sustainability consultant, subject matter expert that has provides

guidance/advice/training, tec. to others for a fee and/or helping an entity become certified. Many of the GMIC member community fall into this category).

The third party is a person or body that is recognized as being independent of the person or organization that provides the object, as well as the user or customer of the object. (GMIC – i.e. iCompli).

4) Ok so what does certification mean?

Certification is a type of “conformity assessment” – a demonstration that specified requirements relating to a product, process, or have been fulfilled. As it relates to the ASTM Environmentally Sustainable Meeting Standards, it would be an assessment that an organization has met the criteria for the relevant standard.

Certification simply means that an independent third party has assured that specified requirements have been demonstrated.

Accreditation means that the third party has been formally assessed by a national standards body as to its competence to perform the certification.

5) What does this mean for the event? Why certify suppliers first?

- 1) First, a bit of historical background. Each standard can operate independently for specific sector requirements as well as collectively for the entire event. In each sector (i.e. venue, food and beverage, destination) there are planner requirements and supplier requirements in the categories of policy, staff management, waste, air quality, water conservation, and procurement and community partners. These standards were designed to be performance standards (specific measurable actions that suppliers and in some part planners had to do and achieve in order to be in compliance).
- 2) The difference for the APEX/ASTM standards is that the accountability is heavily weighted on the supplier’s ability to consistently achieve environmental performance metrics before and during an event. The critical touch point is the mutual accountability of suppliers and planners related to the sustainability goals of the event. However in analyzing the area of control, the suppliers have greater measurable control of the performance outcomes of the standards than do the planners.
 - Phase one of certification focuses on verifying that suppliers are in compliance with Level One of the relevant standard. This does not mean that the event planner has been certified or that the event itself has been certified.
 - Phase two will focus on certifying planners and events. Certification of suppliers allows a planner or organizer to say that they are using certified suppliers for its event. Suppliers can say that they have been certified by an independent third party to be compliance with the relevant standard for their sector

6) When will we be able to fully certify the event experience?

The Process for a full verification of events compliance has not yet to been determined.

7) How does this endorsement benefit GMIC members?

Independent third party certification means that suppliers now have a way to credibly demonstrate engagement in sustainable practices. Event planners can save time during the RFP process and work toward a more sustainable event by selecting certified suppliers. Consultants now have an additional business opportunity to assist suppliers and planners in assessing their sustainability performance vis a vis the standards, ie, conducting a “gap analysis” and then helping them close those gaps and achieve certification.

But more importantly, we’ve learned from the initial round of certifications that the process of getting certified in itself raises the level of sustainability performance of the suppliers – which is exactly what the standards were meant to do.

8) Is there training for planners in how to use these standards now? Yes, GMIC will provide a full day training on how to use the APEX/ASTM standards in practice from both a planner and supplier angle on **Saturday, April 6, 2013 as a preworkshop** to the [annual Sustainable Meetings Conference](#). Registration for this course will be live by February 22, 2013.