



A Summary of IUCN's Operational Guidelines for Business Engagement

The IUCN Operational Guidelines for Business Engagement offer critical support to the implementation of the IUCN Business Engagement Strategy, which provides a coherent framework for influencing business practices and a clear reference point as to the level of ambition expected from business engagements.

To have a meaningful impact on the ground may require IUCN to have some exposure to risk linked to high impact sectors. However, the Operational Guidelines provide a consistent approach to the management of risks associated with engaging business, as well as outline the opportunities between the different types of engagement.

These Operational Guidelines (version 3) were endorsed by the IUCN Council in October 2015. The Guidelines are available to IUCN Members and Partners through the Union Portal. Otherwise, they are available upon request - please contact: biobiz@iucn.org.

Following is a brief summary.

Applicability of the Guidelines

The Operational Guidelines apply to all engagements, from programmatic engagement aimed at transforming business practices, as per the IUCN Business Engagement Strategy, including funding (relating to sponsorship, licensing, donations); commercial use of IUCN data and procurement.

The Operational Guidelines shall be implemented by the IUCN Secretariat and IUCN Commissions. Also, National/Regional Committees of IUCN Members are strongly encouraged to follow the Operational Guidelines.

For joint IUCN partnerships, the relevant governance structures should determine which guidelines for business engagement are applied. Where other guidelines do not exist, the IUCN Operational Guidelines should serve as a reference point for decision making.

The four key Operational Guidelines for Business Engagement

The four key Guidelines that apply regardless of the business engagement type are:

Guideline 1: Align concept to relevant strategy/policy and consult

To maximize opportunities and reduce the likelihood of risky ad-hoc engagements, it is important that any engagement with a business entity aligns to strategies or policies that are relevant to the type of engagement.

Furthermore, in line with IUCN's remit as a membership organization and its commitments to social justice and equity, it is expected that relevant Members, Commissions, National and Regional Committees and Secretariat will be consulted on the complementarity of the proposed engagement, as well as perceived risks and opportunities, particularly with respect to any existing relationships with the business in question.

While consultation can often imply extra time and costs to agree to objectives and achieve results, the engagement concept and implementation are improved. Therefore, the requirement for an inclusive process is explicitly indicated in the processes set out in this document.

Guideline 2: Conduct a risk and opportunity assessment

The overall intention of the risk and opportunity assessment is to ascertain whether the opportunities to deliver a positive outcome for biodiversity through the project outweigh the reputational and management risks linked to the engagement with the business entity.

The questions in the Risk and Opportunity Screening cover issues that are critical including:

- Environmental concern
- Human rights concerns
- Extortion, bribery and corruption
- Labour concerns
- Negative influence on environmental standards and policies
- Specific concerns raised by IUCN Members

Further issues that are considered include:

- Corporate environmental policies
- Corporate social policies
- Corporate standards/systems
- Business leadership position
- Environmental footprint requiring action
- Engagements with other NGOs
- Coinciding countries of operation
- Significant resources for conservation
- Complementarity of priorities
- Executive level support
- Multi-stakeholder engagements
- Positively influence external environmental policies
- Free, Prior and Informed Consent
- Reporting guidelines followed, e.g. GRI guidelines

Guideline 3: Draft an appropriate contract

To strengthen the contracts between IUCN and business entities, some of the following specific provisions have been introduced as mandatory as a result of Congress resolutions and Council decisions. The following mandatory clauses should be included in any contract with a company:

- Communication and transparency
- Termination for convenience
- Liability and indemnification
- No assignment

Additional provisions should be given special consideration and inserted whenever possible, among which are the following:

- Confidentiality
- Intellectual property rights
- Governing Law and conflict resolution

Guideline 4: Disclose the engagement

IUCN is committed to the principle of transparency in process and decision-making as well as funding. With respect to business, this transparency is essential for maintaining the trust of IUCN's constituency and helps to manage risk by clarifying and making public the purpose and terms of a relationship and putting the business in public view regarding its commitments and actions.

IUCN requires public disclosure of the existence and nature of all its relations with the business on activities related to the IUCN Business Engagement Strategy and the IUCN Programme.

IUCN also encourages transparency from the businesses with which it engages, while at the same time recognizing that confidentiality may be necessary to permit the disclosure of some information to IUCN necessary for developing a workable and meaningful relationship (such as trade and commercial interests). IUCN also provides guidance to the business entity on how an engagement may be reported on.

These guidelines are applied and operationalised differently depending on the type of engagement, reflecting the different levels of potential reputational and financial risks associated with the respective types of business engagement.

More specifically, IUCN does not receive funding from companies in high risk/impact sectors unless IUCN is also engaging to transform business practices with that company. Projects that target business operations with no ambition of scaling up the engagement (e.g. within the business and/or sector/region) are discouraged.