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Quality management — Customer satisfaction — Guidelines for codes of conduct for organizations

Management de la qualité — Satisfaction du client — Lignes directrices relatives aux codes de conduite des organismes

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO 10001 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 176, *Quality management and quality assurance*, Subcommittee SC 3, *Supporting technologies*.

Introduction

0.1   General

Maintaining a high level of customer satisfaction is a significant challenge for many organizations. One way of meeting this challenge is to put in place and use a customer satisfaction code of conduct. A customer satisfaction code of conduct consists of promises and related provisions that address issues such as product delivery, product returns, handling of personal information of customers, advertising and stipulations concerning particular attributes of a product or its performance (see Annex A for examples). A customer satisfaction code of conduct can be part of an effective approach to complaints management. This involves:

a)   complaints prevention, by making use of an appropriate customer satisfaction code of conduct;

b)   internal complaints handling, for instances when expressions of dissatisfaction are received;

c)   external dispute resolution, for situations in which complaints cannot be satisfactorily dealt with internally.

This International Standard provides guidance to assist an organization in determining that its customer satisfaction code provisions meet customer needs and expectations, and that the customer satisfaction code is accurate and not misleading. Its use can:

⎯   enhance fair trade practices and customer confidence in an organization;

⎯   improve customer understanding of what to expect from an organization in terms of its products and relations with customers, thereby reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings and complaints;

⎯   potentially decrease the need for new regulations governing an organization's conduct towards its customers.

0.2   Relationship with ISO 9001 and ISO 9004

This International Standard is compatible with ISO 9001 and ISO 9004 and supports the objectives of these two standards through the effective and efficient application of a process to develop and implement a code of conduct related to customer satisfaction. This International Standard can also be used independently of ISO 9001 and ISO 9004.

ISO 9001 specifies requirements for a quality management system that can be used for internal application by organizations, or for certification, or for contractual purposes. A customer satisfaction code of conduct implemented in accordance with this International Standard (ISO 10001) can be an element of a quality management system. This International Standard is not intended for certification or for contractual purposes.

ISO 9004 provides guidance on continual improvement of performance regarding quality management systems. This International Standard (ISO 10001) can further enhance performance regarding codes of conduct, as well as increase the satisfaction of customers and other interested parties. It can also facilitate the continual improvement of the quality of products and processes based on feedback from customers and other interested parties.

NOTE   Apart from customers, other interested parties can include suppliers, industry associations and their members, consumer organizations, relevant government agencies, personnel, owners and others who are affected by an organization's customer satisfaction code of conduct.

0.3 Relationship with ISO 10002 and ISO 10003

This International Standard is compatible with ISO 10002 and ISO 10003. These three standards can be used either independently or in conjunction with each other. When used together, this International Standard, ISO 10002, and ISO 10003 can be part of a broader and integrated framework for enhanced customer satisfaction through codes of conduct, complaints handling and dispute resolution (see Annex B).

ISO 10002 contains guidance on the internal handling of product-related complaints. By fulfilling the promises given in a customer satisfaction code of conduct, organizations decrease the likelihood of problems arising because there is less potential for confusion regarding customer expectations concerning the organization and its products.

ISO 10003 contains guidance on the resolution of disputes regarding product-related complaints that could not be satisfactorily resolved internally. When disputes do arise, the existence of a customer satisfaction code of conduct can assist the parties in understanding customer expectations and the organization's attempts to meet those expectations.

0.4 Statements regarding conformity

This International Standard is designed to be used solely as a guidance document. Where all applicable guidance provided in this International Standard has been implemented, statements that a customer satisfaction code of conduct is planned, designed, developed, implemented, maintained and improved based on that guidance can be made.

However, any statements claiming or implying conformity to this International Standard are inconsistent with this International Standard, and it is therefore inappropriate to make such statements.

NOTE   Statements claiming or implying conformity to this International Standard are thus inappropriate in any promotional and communication material, such as press releases, advertisements, marketing brochures, videos, staff announcements, logos, slogans and catch lines for diverse media, ranging from print and broadcasting to Internet and multi-media applications, to product labels, signs and banners.

Quality management — Customer satisfaction — Guidelines for codes of conduct for organizations

1 Scope

This International Standard provides guidance for planning, designing, developing, implementing, maintaining and improving customer satisfaction codes of conduct. This International Standard is applicable to product-related codes containing promises made to customers by an organization concerning its behaviour. Such promises and related provisions are aimed at enhanced customer satisfaction. Annex A provides simplified examples of components of codes for different organizations.

NOTE 1   Throughout this International Standard, the term "product" encompasses services, software, hardware and processed materials.

NOTE 2   In this International Standard, the term "product" applies only to the product intended for, or required by, a customer.

This International Standard is intended for use by organizations regardless of type, size and product provided, including organizations that design customer satisfaction codes of conduct for use by other organizations. Annex C gives guidance specifically for small businesses.

This International Standard does not prescribe the substantive content of customer satisfaction codes of conduct, nor does it address other types of codes of conduct, such as those that relate to the interaction between an organization and its personnel, or between an organization and its suppliers.

This International Standard is not intended for certification or for contractual purposes, and it is not intended to change any rights or obligations provided by applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

NOTE 3   While this International Standard is not intended for contractual purposes, customer satisfaction codes of conduct promises can be included in an organization's contracts.

NOTE 4   This International Standard is aimed at customer satisfaction codes of conduct concerning individual customers purchasing or using goods, property or services for personal or household purposes, although it is applicable to all customer satisfaction codes of conduct.

2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 9000:2005, *Quality management systems — Fundamentals and vocabulary*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 9000:2005 and the following apply.

3.1
customer satisfaction code of conduct
code
promises, made to **customers** (3.4) by an **organization** (3.6) concerning its behaviour, that are aimed at enhanced **customer satisfaction** (3.5) and related provisions

NOTE 1   Related provisions can include objectives, conditions, limitations, contact information and complaints handling procedures.

NOTE 2   Hereafter in this International Standard, the term "code" is used in place of "customer satisfaction code of conduct".

3.2
complainant
person, **organization** (3.6) or their representative, making a **complaint** (3.3)

NOTE   This definition clarifies the definition given in ISO 10002, in that a representative can represent a person or an organization.

3.3
complaint
expression of dissatisfaction made to an **organization** (3.6), related to its products, or the complaints-handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected

[ISO 10002:2004, 3.2]

NOTE   Complaints can be made in relation to the **code** (3.1).

3.4
customer
organization (3.6) or person that receives a product

EXAMPLE   Consumer, client, end-user, retailer, beneficiary or purchaser.

NOTE 1   A customer can be internal or external to the organization.

NOTE 2   For the purposes of this International Standard, the term "customer" includes potential customers.

NOTE 3   Adapted from ISO 9000:2005, 3.3.5.

3.5
customer satisfaction
customer's (3.4) perception of the degree to which the customer's requirements have been fulfilled

NOTE 1   Customer **complaints** (3.3) are a common indicator of low customer satisfaction but their absence does not necessarily imply high customer satisfaction.

NOTE 2   Even when customer requirements have been agreed with the customer and fulfilled, this does not necessarily ensure high customer satisfaction.

[ISO 9000:2005, 3.1.4]

3.6
organization
group of people and facilities with an arrangement of responsibilities, authorities and relationships

EXAMPLE   Company, corporation, firm, enterprise, institution, charity, sole trader, association, government agency or parts or combination thereof.

NOTE   Adapted from ISO 9000:2005, 3.3.1.

4 Guiding principles

4.1 General

Effective and efficient planning, design, development, implementation, maintenance and improvement of a code is based on adherence to the customer-focused guiding principles set out in 4.2 to 4.9.

4.2 Commitment

An organization should be actively committed to the adoption, integration and dissemination of a code and the fulfilment of its promises.

4.3 Capacity

Sufficient resources should be made available for code planning, design, development, implementation, maintenance and improvement, and for managing them effectively and efficiently.

4.4 Visibility

A code should be well publicized to customers, personnel and other interested parties.

4.5 Accessibility

A code and relevant information about it should be easy to find and use (see Annex D).

4.6 Responsiveness

An organization should respond to the needs of customers and the expectations of interested parties in its code (see Annex E).

4.7 Accuracy

An organization should ensure that its code, and information about its code, are accurate, not misleading, verifiable and in compliance with relevant statutory and regulatory requirements.

4.8 Accountability

The organization should establish and maintain accountability for, and reporting on, the actions and decisions with respect to its code.

4.9 Continual improvement

Increased effectiveness and efficiency of the code and its use should be a permanent objective of the organization.

5 Code framework

5.1 Establishment

A code should be supported by an organizational framework for decision-making and action to use in code planning, design, development, implementation, maintenance and improvement. This framework involves resource assessment, provision and deployment needed to carry out the interrelated activities to fulfil code objectives (see Annex F). It also includes top management commitment, assignment of appropriate responsibilities and authorities, and training throughout the organization.

5.2   Integration

The code framework should be based on, and integrated with, the quality and other management systems of the organization, where appropriate.

6   Planning, design and development

6.1   Determine code objectives

An organization should determine the objectives to be achieved by the code.

NOTE   It is advisable that code objectives be articulated in such a manner that their fulfilment can be measured using performance indicators as identified by the organization.

6.2   Gather and assess information

Information should be gathered and assessed concerning:

⎯ the issues that the code is attempting to deal with;

⎯ how these issues arise;

⎯ how these issues could be dealt with;

⎯ how and to what extent these issues affect the organization's activities that are not related to the code;

⎯ how other organizations are dealing with these issues;

⎯ possible resource and other implications of dealing with these issues through use of a code;

⎯ statutory and regulatory requirements associated with dealing with these issues through use of a code.

NOTE   This information is intended to assist the organization in articulating the code's purposes and in determining an appropriate approach to code development and assessment that is aligned with the organization's other activities. Guidance on factors to consider in adopting a code prepared by another organization (e.g. an industry or professional association) is provided in Annex G.

6.3   Obtain and assess input from relevant interested parties

It is important for the organization to obtain and assess the input from relevant interested parties (e.g. customers, suppliers, industry associations, consumer organizations, relevant government agencies, personnel, owners) concerning code content and use (see Annex E).

6.4   Prepare code

Based on the information and input that the organization has gathered, the organization should prepare a code (see Annex H). The code should be clear, concise, accurate and not misleading, written in simple language, and should include:

⎯ the code's scope and purpose appropriate to the organization and its customers;

⎯ the promises made by the organization to its customers that can be fulfilled, and any limitations concerning those promises;

⎯ definitions of key terms used in the code;

— how and to whom enquiries and complaints about the code should be directed;

— a description of what action will be taken if the code promises are not fulfilled.

NOTE   Enquiries and complaints can pertain to both the content of the code and its use. See ISO 10002 and ISO 10003 for guidance.

In preparing the code, the organization should ensure that the code can be effectively implemented and that its provisions are not in violation of any statutory and regulatory requirements. Of particular relevance are statutory and regulatory requirements concerning deceptive or misleading advertising and prohibitions against anti-competitive activity. The organization should also ensure that the code's provisions take into account any other relevant codes and standards.

The organization should consider testing the code to determine the need for adjustments.

6.5 Prepare performance indicators

The organization should prepare quantitative or qualitative performance indicators designed to assist in understanding whether the code is successful in fulfilling its objectives.

NOTE   Performance indicators associated with a code can include grading or ranking from customer satisfaction surveys, or statistics regarding complaints and their resolution. Examples are given in Annex A.

6.6 Prepare code procedures

The organization should prepare code implementation, maintenance and improvement procedures, including how enquiries and complaints are dealt with. The organization should identify and deal with any obstacles to the effective use of the code, and identify any possible incentives that would assist in code implementation, maintenance and improvement. Procedures will vary depending upon the nature of the code and the organization that uses it. Procedures should be developed in accordance with applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

NOTE   Examples of activities that can be the subject of procedures include:

— communicating the code to customers;

— training relevant personnel on the code;

— resolving instances where code promises are not met;

— recording enquiries and complaints about the code;

— recording and evaluating performance of the code;

— using and managing records;

— disclosing of information regarding code fulfilment (see Annex I).

6.7 Prepare internal and external communication plan

The organization should develop a plan to make its code, and supporting information (e.g. feedback form), available to personnel and other parties involved in code application (see Annex I).

6.8 Determine resources needed

The organization should determine the resources needed to fulfil code promises and to provide adequate remedies in cases of non-fulfilment of the code (e.g. customer compensation). Resources include personnel,

training, procedures, documentation, specialist support, materials and equipment, facilities, computer hardware and software, and finances.

7 Implementation

The organization should manage implementation activities as planned, in a timely manner.

The organization should, at appropriate levels within the organization:

a) apply relevant procedures, and internal and external communication plans;

b) provide appropriate remedies to customers (e.g. compensation);

c) take necessary action to address cases promptly where the code provisions are not fulfilled; these actions can be initiated following a complaint about the code or as a result of information gathered by the organization regarding code performance.

The organization should record:

⎯ resource usage in code application;

⎯ the type of training and instruction regarding the code that personnel have received;

⎯ application of the internal and external communication plans;

⎯ handling of enquiries or complaints about the code, and remedial actions undertaken by the organization.

8 Maintenance and improvement

8.1 Collection of information

The organization should regularly and systematically collect information needed for the effective and efficient evaluation of code performance, including information, input and records described in Clauses 6 and 7.

8.2 Evaluation of code performance

The organization should regularly and systematically evaluate the performance of the code. This evaluation should include verification and analysis of fulfilment of overall code objectives and code promises.

Enquiries and complaints about the code or its use should be classified and analysed to identify systemic, recurring and single-incident problems and trends, and to help eliminate the underlying causes of complaints about the code.

NOTE   In addition, it is advisable that the organization takes steps to determine whether enquiries and complaints about products or processes that do not mention the code are nonetheless related to provisions of the code. These enquiries and complaints can reveal misapplication of code provisions.

To evaluate the impact of the code, information is needed on the situation prior to the code being launched, and at appropriate intervals afterwards. This information can be used not only to determine weaknesses in code design and implementation, but also to demonstrate results achieved (if any) and progress made through use of the code.

8.3 Satisfaction with the code

There should be regular and systematic action taken to determine customer satisfaction with the code and its use. This can take the form of random surveys of customers and other techniques.

NOTE   One method of evaluating customer satisfaction is the simulation of a contact of a customer with the organization concerning a matter addressed in a code, where this is permitted by law.

8.4 Review of the code and code framework

The organization should review the code and its framework on a regular and systematic basis in order to

a) maintain their suitability, adequacy, effectiveness and efficiency,

b) address significant instances of non-fulfilment of the code promises,

c) assess the need and opportunities for improvement, and

d) provide for related decisions and actions, as appropriate.

In conducting the review, the organization should include relevant information on:

— changes to the code and its framework;

— changes in legislation;

— changes in practices of competitors or technological innovations;

— changes in societal expectations;

— fulfilment of the code promises;

— status of corrective and preventive actions;

— products offered;

— actions decided at previous reviews.

8.5 Continual improvement

The organization should continually improve the code and code framework in order to increase customer satisfaction, using such means as preventive and corrective actions, and innovative improvements.

The organization should take action to eliminate the underlying causes of existing and potential problems leading to complaints, in order to prevent recurrence and occurrence, respectively.

NOTE 1   It is advisable that an organization using a code developed by another organization informs the other organization of any problems which arise during use.

The organization should:

— explore, identify and apply best practices in the structure, content and use of a code;

— foster a customer-focused approach within the organization;

— encourage code innovation;

— recognize examples of outstanding performance and practices related to the code.

NOTE 2   For additional guidance on a generic methodology for continual improvement, organizations can refer to ISO 9004:2000, Annex B.

Annex A
(informative)

Simplified examples of components of codes for different organizations

Table A.1 provides simplified examples of components of codes for different organizations.

Table A.1 — Simplified examples of components of codes for different organizations

Example of code component	Type of organization				
	Pizza delivery company	Medical clinic	Retailer association	Hotel	Train
Promise	"If the pizza is not delivered hot and within 30 minutes, the pizza is free."	"Patients will be told promptly of any delayed appointment, and given the option of another time."	"If scanned price of an item is higher than displayed price, the individual or business customer is entitled to receive the item free."	"If the guest is not satisfied with the service, the hotel will make every effort to make it right or the guest will receive a discount."	"If the train is late, the washroom is dirty or the service is discourteous, the customer will be reimbursed the price of the ticket."
Limitations on the promise, communicated to the customer	geographic, weather or traffic condition limits	emergencies disrupting regularly scheduled appointments	does not apply to behind-the-counter cosmetics and individually priced items	circumstances beyond the control of the hotel	severe weather conditions
Other code provisions	statement that cost of late pizza is not deducted from wages of pizza deliverer	statement of availability of doctors outside of normal hours	statement of code objective: "to maintain accurate scanner pricing"	statement of code objective: "complete guest satisfaction"	statement of code objective: "clean, punctual trains and courteous service"
Supportive information	how to make a complaint	how to make an enquiry	how to make an enquiry or complaint	how to get a discount	where refund can be obtained
Code planning, design, development and implementation activity	pilot test programme	customer service training	consult with members of the association	use focus groups to determine most appropriate remedy	educate personnel in dealing with public
Maintenance and improvement activity	conduct survey, and make changes to code wording as a result	evaluate complaint data	involve consumer organizations in review of data	revise marketing campaign	change procedures for cleaning wash rooms
Performance indicators	percentage of on-time deliveries	percentage of patients informed	percentage of mis-priced items	percentage of dissatisfied guests	percentage of passenger complaints

Annex B
(informative)

Inter-relationship of ISO 10001, ISO 10002 and ISO 10003

Figure B.1 illustrates the organization's processes related to code of conduct, complaint handling and external dispute resolution.

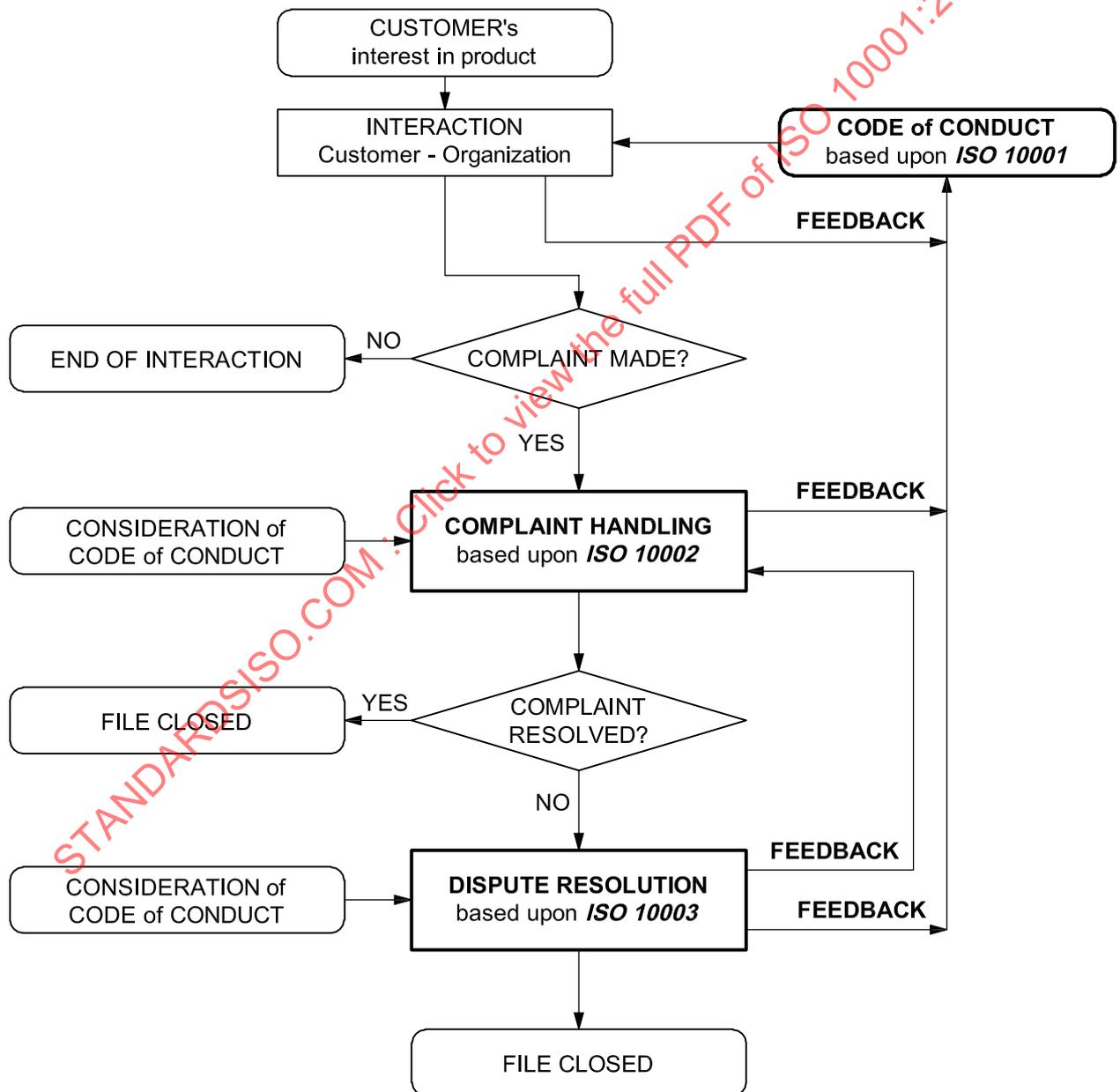NOTE   A complaint can be initiated by a customer or another complainant.

Figure B.1 — Inter-relationship of ISO 10001, ISO 10002 and ISO 10003

Annex C
(informative)

Guidance for small businesses

This International Standard is intended for organizations of all sizes. However, it is recognized that many small organizations will have limited resources for planning, designing, developing, implementing, maintaining and improving a customer satisfaction code. The examples below highlight key areas where organizations can focus their attention to achieve an appropriate code, with suggestions for action in each.

— Examine the codes used by other organizations and determine whether they could be useful to your organization.

— Consider adhering to an established code (e.g. participate in a code programme run by an industry or professional association).

— Ask customers and business colleagues what they would most like to see as a promise to the customer.

— Consider what changes to the current operations of the organization would be necessary to effectively and efficiently fulfil the code promises, including relevant procedures, training, new staffing, changes to facilities, new equipment or communications.

— Consider how your organization could measure whether or not it has been effectively and efficiently fulfilling its promises.

— Test how well the code works on a trial basis before finalizing it and making it widely known.

— Put in place a simple procedure for customers to enquire or complain about the code or its implementation.

— Consider participating in an external dispute resolution programme.

— Review applicable laws and regulations (e.g. consumer protection laws).

— Communicate to customers, through signs, advertisements and other means, that a code is in operation.

— Regularly review how well the organization is fulfilling its promises, by asking customers and business colleagues their views on the code and its implementation, and make changes to ensure that the code is still suitable, adequate, effective and efficient.

Annex D
(normative)

Guidance on accessibility

An organization should make its code and supportive information (e.g. complaints form) available to its customers, personnel and other interested parties. An organization should take into account the range of potentially interested persons (which can include children, older persons, people with different abilities). Consequently, information and assistance concerning the code should be made available in whatever languages or formats are used in the information pertaining to the products when offered or delivered, so that customers who wish to refer to the code are not disadvantaged. An organization participating in a code programme of another organization (e.g. an industry or professional association) should make its programme accessible by referring customers and other interested parties to the other organization.

Information should be written in clear and unambiguous language, and it should be available in alternative formats suitable for existing and potential customers, such as audio, large print, large raised letters, Braille, by email or on an accessible website.

NOTE   An alternative format describes a different presentation or representation intended to make information accessible through a different modality or sensory ability. By providing all input and all output (i.e. information and functions) in at least one alternative format (e.g. visual and tactile), more people, including some with language/literacy problems, can be helped. Presentation factors that can affect legibility and ease of understanding include

⎯   layout,

⎯   print colour and contrast,

⎯   size and style of font and symbols, and

⎯   the choice and use of multiple languages.

See ISO/IEC Guide 37.

Annex E
(normative)

Guidance on input from interested parties

The organization should identify interested parties and listen to their views. The organization should:

a) consider the range of methods available for obtaining input, including public meetings, focus groups, questionnaires and surveys, advisory committees, workshops and electronic discussion groups;

b) determine the financial and human resources associated with obtaining input from interested parties.

For the process of obtaining input from interested parties to be effective, organizations should:

⸺ articulate the purpose of the process (including objectives, scope of the process, and what the end outcome will look like);

⸺ determine the timelines for the process appropriately, such that they will allow interested parties to participate, and include some flexibility for unforeseen developments;

⸺ involve the appropriate interested parties;

⸺ ensure that the confidentiality of information from parties providing input is maintained, where appropriate;

⸺ ensure that the appropriate mechanisms for obtaining input are being used and that this is appropriately funded;

⸺ ensure that the ground rules of the process are understood and accepted by the parties.

Upon completion of the process of obtaining input from interested parties, the organization should use the results in subsequent code planning, design, development, implementation, maintenance and improvement activities. The organization should communicate to interested parties how the results of this process have been used. An evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the process for obtaining input from interested parties should be undertaken.

Annex F
(informative)

Code framework

Figure F.1 illustrates the organizational framework for decision-making and action to use in code planning, design, development, implementation, maintenance and improvement.
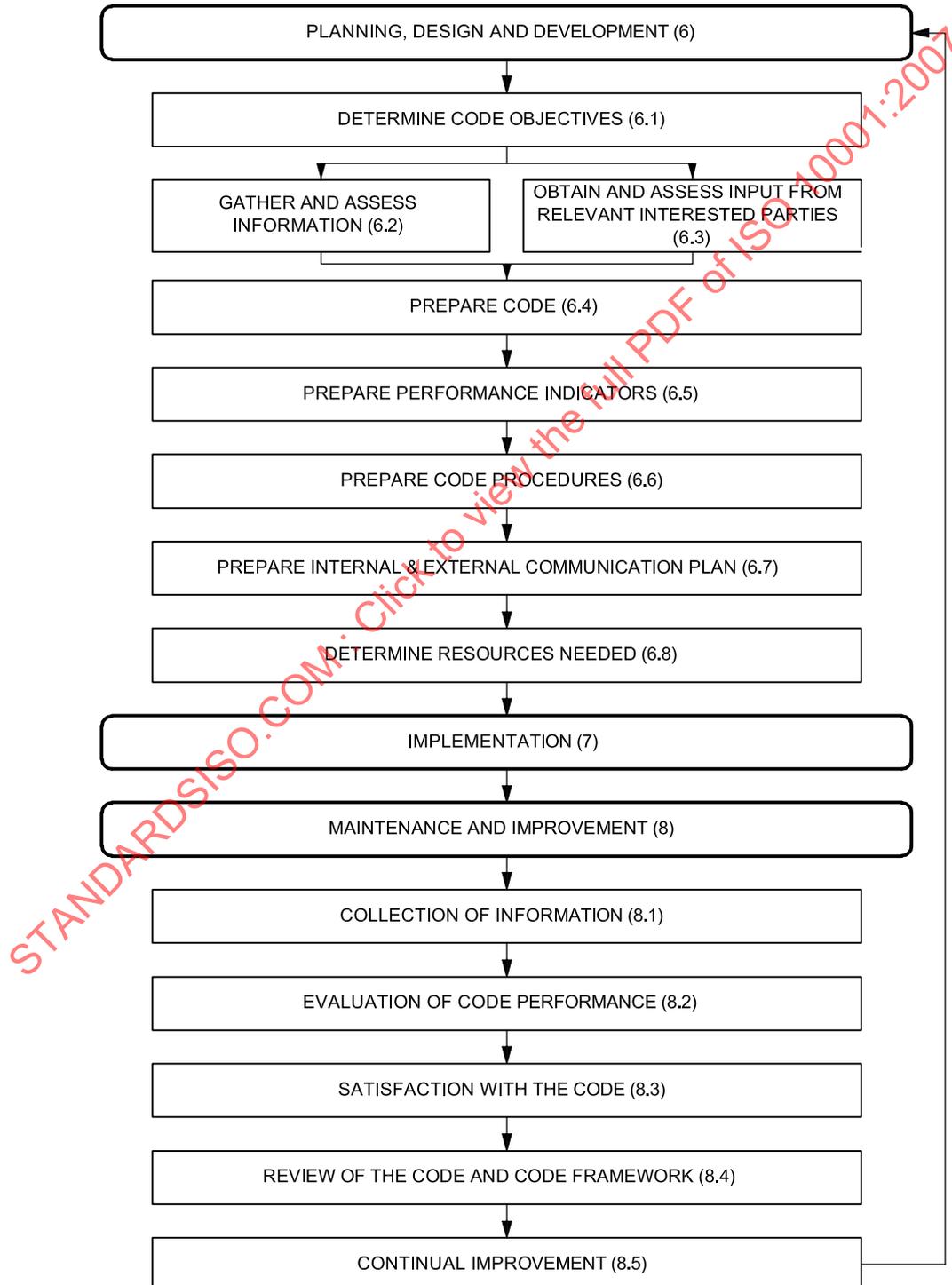

Figure F.1 — Code framework

Annex G
(informative)

Guidance on adopting a code provided by another organization

An organization can consider adopting a code prepared by another organization (referred to as a "code provider") or participating in a code provider's programme. Factors to consider are those listed below.

— Is the code appropriate and suitable for the organization?

— What is the reputation of the code provider (e.g. is it well regarded by customers, other businesses and governments; does the code provider have significant influence on the sector)?

— What process did the code provider undergo in designing and developing the code? Was it open to all interested parties? What has been the experience of other organizations with the code provider and its code?

— Does the code have a high profile in the marketplace?

— What are the costs and benefits of participation in the code provider's programme?

— Does the code provider monitor and ensure that the code is followed and, if so, how?

— Is the code mandatory for the organization adopting the code and what are the consequences of not following it?

— Does the code provider have sufficient resources to ascertain incidents where the code is not followed and to respond to them?

— What training does the code provider make available to its staff and to those who choose to follow the code?

— What incentives (and disincentives) are given by the code provider to encourage organizations to follow the code?

— What information is to be disclosed to the code provider by the organization adopting the code?

— What information does the code provider disclose to the public, to government and to organizations that adopt the code (e.g. monthly, quarterly, bi-annual or annual reports)?