



# UL 880

## Standard for Sustainability for Manufacturing Organizations

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Standard for Sustainability for Manufacturing Organizations, UL 880

First Edition, Dated November 2, 2011

### **Summary of Topics**

***This revision includes the following:***

#### ***Revisions to the EPP Performance Indicator 23.4***

#### ***Editorial Revisions***

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**First Edition**

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1 General

1.1 The most often cited definition of sustainability is human activity conducted in a way that meets “the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”<sup>1</sup> In the marketplace, the term is used to address ideas and emerging systems of thought that include corporate social responsibility, corporate citizenship and environmental responsibility.

1.2 Sustainability has become an increasingly important business focus across all market sectors in both developed and developing economies due in part to growing recognition of, and sophistication in assessing, the real costs of externalities – that is, the negative environmental and social impacts attributable to everyday business activities such as the manufacturing and selling of products, the delivery of services, and other normal business operations. Moreover, the business world is changing to respond to emerging social and market forces that value companies that consider the effects of their operations, products and services on the environment and community. The ability to integrate environmental and social responsibility into business operations is fast becoming an indicator of good management, decreased risk, and the path to enhanced reputation. Achieving greater sustainability is becoming an important business driver that helps companies remain competitive and enhance their reputations among customers, shareholders, suppliers, employees, and the public at large.

1.3 However, while organizations have made progress over the last few decades in addressing their sustainability impacts, organizational sustainability as both a process and objective remains ill-defined. Without a standardized process for assessing and rating organizations, those who seek to evaluate the sustainability of organizations are hampered by skepticism borne of real or perceived “greenwashing” and confusion about what it means to be a sustainable business.

1.4 UL 880 seeks to address this gap by establishing a standardized assessment of organizations through an independent, third-party-verified process. UL and GreenBiz Group, the developers of UL 880, believe that adoption of such a process globally will facilitate the establishment of corporate sustainability practices as “business as usual”, and, eventually, will enable companies and their stakeholders to align day-to-day sustainability practices with aspirational goals and objectives.

### 2 The Standard

2.1 UL 880 provides enterprise-level sustainability requirements that are applicable across sectors and national borders. It covers a full spectrum of sustainability issues – governance for sustainability, environmental performance, work force practices, customer and supply chain practices, and community engagement and human rights practices. These requirements recognize the pioneering models of voluntary sustainability reporting frameworks such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI); international guidelines that address elements of organizational sustainability, such as International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 26000, Guidance on Social Responsibility; and a wide range of other standards and guidelines that address specific elements of sustainability. It provides credit to companies adhering to these organizational sustainability frameworks and rewards best practices in a series of indicators that must be verified by authorized independent third-party verifiers, and certified to be included in the UL 880 organizational registry.

<sup>1</sup>United Nations. 1987. Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, General Assembly Resolution 42/187, 11 December 1987.

2.2 Developing requirements that address an organization's impacts across multiple sustainability-related concepts is inherently complex. Building upon the century of rigor at Underwriters Laboratories in establishing standards for product safety, the UL-GreenBiz Group team set out to create a standard that is comprehensible, capable of being consistently applied, credible, measurable and relevant to companies and their stakeholders. The result is a standard containing comprehensive corporate sustainability requirements for manufacturing organizations covering five domain topics – governance for sustainability, environment, work force, customers and suppliers, and community engagement and human rights – four categories of indicators – prerequisite, core, leadership and innovation – that are organized into four types – inventories and baselines, policies and procedures, performance, and reporting. Combined, this matrix provides a comprehensive, consistent, yet flexible framework that is applicable across diverse manufacturing organizations while helping companies who become certified under these requirements to differentiate themselves from their peers.

2.3 While the UL 880 framework provides much-needed consistency in assessing sustainability efforts across manufacturing organizations, measuring sustainability performance is difficult. Measuring performance is challenging even in arenas outside sustainability, such as finance, where there is a well-developed history of metrics and measurement. The complexity increases when it comes to sustainability, where there is often an enormous gap in understanding how an organization's business decisions and operations translate into positive or negative social and environmental impacts.

2.4 With this in mind, UL 880 is designed with a process of capturing performance data and incentivizing participating organizations to set targets and have their performance against those targets verified. In this manner, it is the intent of UL 880 to encourage organizations to develop performance data and reporting, such that over time these requirements will better enable organizations to link their organizational practices and performance to environmental, social, and financial objectives pertinent to not only their organization, but to broader objectives. In other words, UL 880 seeks to build a bridge between an organization's immediate needs with the needs of future generations.

### 3 Statement of Principles

3.1 The following core principles have guided the development of UL 880 indicators:

- a) **Aspirational and Achievable** – UL 880 establishes criteria that promote the adoption of best practices, but that are feasible to achieve.
- b) **Verifiable** – UL 880 criteria are written such that the verification and certification process is repeatable and consistent when rating different organizations within the same sector and when rating the same organization from one year to the next.
- c) **Leverages Existing Standards and Guidance** – A number of leading organizations have developed standards or guidelines that cover specific attributes of organizational sustainability. Whenever possible and appropriate, UL 880 should incorporate these by reference, with a priority given to company-wide, global, verifiable standards and reporting protocols.
- d) **Transparency and Disclosure** – Disclosure has become a core tenet of sustainability and good organizational governance. Disclosure in the context of UL 880 means that the text of the Standard will be available to all. In addition, these requirements are designed to help move organizations toward the goal of greater transparency in their own disclosure of sustainability-related risks and opportunities.

e) **Precautionary Approach** – The “Precautionary Principle”<sup>2</sup> concept has been introduced to encourage companies, government entities, organizations, communities, scientists, and others to take measures to reduce harm to human health and the environment from their activities when the potential for those activities to cause harm is not fully known. The “Precautionary Approach” is a decision-making process that requires a thorough exploration and careful analysis of a range of alternatives, as well as a duty to take anticipatory action to prevent harm. Any gaps in scientific data uncovered by the examination of alternatives will provide a guidepost for future research, but will not prevent the taking of protective action. These requirements seek to reward organizations that apply this concept in their business operations. In UL 880, this Approach pertains to Indicators 22.1□ Environmental Site Assessments (when identifying environmental risks and issues), and 24.2□ Product Design – Life Cycle Program Incorporation (core).

f) **Achieving Actual Improvements** – Companies certified under UL 880 should demonstrate tangible reductions in environmental and social impacts across their operations.

g) **Continuous Improvement** – The requirements of UL 880 should be dynamic and reflect current and leading thinking, practices and systems with the objective of assisting organizations in continually improving sustainability performance.

3.2 These requirements establish a uniform system for rating and certifying manufacturing organizations across a spectrum of environmental and social performance characteristics. These requirements are also intended to provide a roadmap for company and organizational sustainability by establishing verifiable criteria for certification.

<sup>2</sup>Derived from Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, published in a report on the work of the UN Conference on Environment and Development, otherwise known as the Earth Summit or Rio Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. Geneva: UNCTAD, 1992). United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, *Report on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development: Annex I. Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*.

## 4 Scope and Intended Users

### 4.1 Definition of Manufacturing and Organization Size

4.1.1 UL 880, the Standard for Sustainability for Manufacturing<sup>3</sup> Organizations, is designed to cover the unique sustainability-related issues faced by large<sup>4</sup> and medium-sized organizations that fabricate tangible goods such as components, machines, source materials, or final products for sale to other organizations or directly to consumers.

### 4.2 Geographic Applicability

4.2.1 UL 880 contains many indicators based on North American guidance and best practices, equivalent indicators may be applied for manufacturing companies located outside of North America that seek certification to these requirements.

### 4.3 Intended Users

4.3.1 UL 880 is intended to enable procurement officials, customers, trading partners, investors, employees, and the public at large to consider company environmental and social performance in decision-making, thereby elevating the importance of these issues to organizations. It is intended for use by stakeholder groups including, but not limited to:

- a) Product manufacturers;
- b) Service professionals;
- c) Government and municipalities;
- d) Customers;
- e) Current and prospective employees;
- f) Suppliers;
- g) Regulators;

<sup>3</sup>Manufacturing: For the purpose of UL 880, manufacturing business activities pertain to involvement in market sectors including, but not limited to aerospace, automotive/transportation, industrial goods, chemicals, electrical and electronics, food and beverage, textiles and wearing apparel, heavy machinery and machine tools, medical equipment, pharmaceuticals and biotech, wood products and furniture, plastics and rubber, and remanufacturing, including independent and contract remanufacturing.

<sup>4</sup>Large Organizations: UL and GreenBiz Group realize that small businesses face unique sustainability challenges and opportunities that are not reflected in the current standard. For that reason, the threshold for verification and certification under UL 880 is above the size standards defined by the US Small Business Administration (SBA) as the upper limit for small business concerns. ULE will consider certifying organizations defined as "small" by the SBA on a case-by-case basis when an organization's market share or involvement in the supply chain of others suggests a larger organizational profile in its industry than its annual receipts or employee headcount indicate. See (<http://www.sba.gov/contractingopportunities/officials/size/index.html>) for more information.

- h) Non-governmental organizations;
- i) Environmental professionals;
- j) Policymakers;
- k) Academics; and
- l) Investors.

## 5 Architecture

### 5.1 Domains

- a) **Governance for Sustainability** – Including sustainability strategic planning, board oversight, internal stakeholder engagement, ethics policies, and creating the infrastructure and fostering the behaviors that create a culture of sustainability in the organization.
- b) **Environment** – Including product stewardship, sustainable resource use, environmental management systems, energy efficiency and carbon management, materials optimization, facilities and land use, habitat restoration, and waste prevention.
- c) **Work Force** – Including professional development, workplace integrity, employee satisfaction and retention, workplace health and safety, and employee health and well-being.
- d) **Customers and Suppliers** – Including fair marketing practices, product safety, customer support and complaint resolution, and sustainable supply chain management, monitoring and improvement.
- e) **Community Engagement and Human Rights** – Including community impact assessment, community investment, and human rights issues.

### 5.2 Baseline Year

5.2.1 Organizations seeking certification to these requirements shall use the common baseline year of 2005. This baseline year shall be applicable across all domains and indicators. Any reference to a baseline year used in this Standard shall refer to this baseline year. An exception shall be made for manufacturers that have launched operations after 2005 or that started collecting sustainability related data after 2005, in which case the Applicant shall establish an appropriate baseline in collaboration with the assessor. The Applicant shall reestablish its baseline if significant changes occur within the organizational boundaries applicable to the assessment. Examples of such changes include, but are not limited to the following:

- a) Acquiring or merging with another company;
- b) Divesting assets or resources; or
- c) Changing the mix of product and resources within the organizational boundaries.

### 5.3 Organizational Boundaries

5.3.1 In order to assess and verify an organization against these requirements, the Applicant and the verification entity shall agree on organizational boundaries via a thorough scoping process. These requirements will adopt the “control approach” – that is, an understanding of what aspects of its operation it directly or indirectly controls – for establishing the outer limits of an organization’s boundaries for purposes of assessment and verification. This control approach can take the form of either financial control or organizational control. As defined by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol developed by the World Resources Institute and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, “A company has financial control over the operation if the former has the ability to direct the financial and operating policies of the latter with a view to gaining economic benefits from its activities.”<sup>5</sup> In the case of operational control, “A company has operational control over an operation if the former or one of its subsidiaries has the full authority to introduce and implement its operating policies at the operation.”<sup>6</sup> In order to simplify and clarify the organizational boundary assessment process, an equity share approach shall not be considered appropriate for these requirements.

5.3.2 For the purpose of certification to UL 880, an organization shall set its boundaries to include, at a minimum, its enterprise headquarters and global policies and one complete business unit, including all associated facilities or subsidiaries. The boundaries of the organization’s certification shall be a required element in communicating its certification results. These boundaries shall be applicable across all domains and indicators unless explicitly stated otherwise.

### 5.4 Indicators

5.4.1 UL 880 seeks to encourage the continuous improvement of assessed organizations through a four-step process of collecting data, establishing policies and procedures based on an analysis of that data, establishing and meeting performance targets that contribute to improved sustainability performance, and disclosing specific results achieved to stakeholders. To help convey this structure, each indicator has been marked as one of the following four types:

- a) **Inventories and Baselines** – denoted by the symbol:  $\Delta$

The measurement and aggregation of data with a defined starting point and a methodology for continued collection and maintenance.

- b) **Policies and Procedures** – denoted by the symbol:  $\square$

Operational processes and norms.

- c) **Performance** – denoted by the symbol:  $\diamond$

<sup>5</sup>The Greenhouse Gas Protocol: A Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard. The World Resources Institute and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, p. 18

Measurable progress against goals set by the organization. For the purpose of this Standard, conformance to performance indicators is based on demonstrated improvement against previously established goals, articulation of new goals going forward, and in future years, verification of performance against those new goals. Performance against future goals shall be confirmed during recertification years.

These indicators are designed to promote and measure internal continuous improvement. As such, they measure an Applicant's performance against its own previous performance.

d) **Reporting** – denoted by the symbol: ○

Information to stakeholders about particular actions taken and results achieved by the organization.

5.4.2 For a list of all indicators and their associated points, please see Appendix AC.

## 5.5 Weighting of Domains

5.5.1 UL 880 includes a comprehensive set of environmental, social, and governance sustainability indicators across five domains. This Standard does not include financial indicators, the third leg of the triple bottom line. Such issues are covered by sources of financial data that do not bear repeating in this Standard.

5.5.2 Points have been allocated to indicators based on type (described under 5.4) and an estimate of level of effort and effect on a company's sustainability operations. The combination of indicator types and point allocations result in a distribution of points by domain illustrated in Table 5.1 as follows:

**Table 5.1**  
**Point Allocations and Percentage Weightings**

Environmental		Social		Governance	
Environment	456	Work Force	140	Governance and Sustainability	97
		Customers and Suppliers	235		
		Community Engagement and Human Rights	75		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>456</b>		<b>450</b>		<b>97</b>

## 6 Certification Requirements

### 6.1 Required and Optional Indicators

#### 6.1.1 General

6.1.1.1 Each domain includes prerequisites, core indicators, and leadership indicators, for a total of 1,003 possible points across all domains.

6.1.1.2 An Applicant shall first meet all prerequisites to be considered for certification. Those that do shall be certified for their sustainability efforts by meeting the requirements of one of the following:

a) **Focus Area Certification** – Applicant shall achieve points in at least each core indicator (though it need not achieve all available points in any individual core indicator) in select domains. There are four Focus Area certification options. An Applicant shall achieve three Focus Area certifications before seeking Full Certification.

- 1) Environment only;
- 2) Governance for Sustainability plus Work Force;
- 3) Governance for Sustainability plus Customers and Suppliers; and
- 4) Governance for Sustainability plus Community Engagement and Human Rights; or

b) **Full Certification** – Applicant shall achieve points in at least each core indicator (though it need not achieve all available points in any individual core indicator) across all five domains.

#### 6.1.2 Prerequisites

6.1.2.1 Prerequisites are required indicators. Applicants shall meet all eight prerequisites, identified in Table 6.1 below, in order to be considered for certification under these requirements. There are no points associated with prerequisites.

**Table 6.1**  
**Prerequisites**

Domain	Prerequisite
Governance for Sustainability	10☐ Sustainability Policy (prerequisite) 14.1☐ Ethics Policies (prerequisite) 14.3☐ Environmental and Social Legacies (prerequisite)
Environment	17.2☐ EMS (prerequisite)
Work Force	26☐ Work Force Requirements (prerequisite) 29.2☐ Occupational Health and Safety (prerequisite)
Customers and Suppliers	32.2☐ Green Claims and Truth in Advertising (prerequisite)
Community Engagement and Human Rights	37☐ Human Rights Requirements (prerequisite)