

Engaging with the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance

What is and why IRMA?

In 2006, [a coalition](#) of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses that purchase minerals and metals, labor unions, affected communities, and mining companies came together, with support from philanthropy, to create the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA).

The goal was to establish a “multi-stakeholder and independently verified responsible mining assurance system that improves social and environmental performance and creates value for leading mine sites.” IRMA originally started as a partnership between Tiffany & Co and Earthworks, an environmental NGO, meant to help with the ethical sourcing of diamonds, and soon it grew to many other organizations, metals, and industries.

IRMA can now be used to independently assess any industrial-scale mine against a set of standards for all mined materials. IRMA sets their vision as having “a global mining industry that respects the human rights and aspirations of affected communities, provides safe, healthy and supportive workplaces, minimizes harm to the environment, and leaves positive legacies.” Their mission is to then create financial value for verified mines to “achieve best practices and share this value with the businesses that purchase material from these mines.”

There are other global mining standards that exist such as the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) standard, but what sets IRMA apart is the broad set of stakeholders involved in setting their standards. Beyond just participation from industry partners, it is unique in the space for

bringing in organized labor, environmental NGOs, and community-based groups.

One of the BlueGreen Alliance’s founding members, the United Steelworkers (USW), are also a founding member of IRMA and has a seat on the IRMA board. As the union representing the largest number of miners in the United States and Canada, USW prioritizes responsible mining within its own [principles](#).

IRMA Standards Update

Beginning in 2023, IRMA began the process of updating their original standards created in 2018 and issued a first draft for IRMA v2.0. In 2025, IRMA approved the release of a 2nd DRAFT IRMA Standard v2.0 for a second [90-day consultation period](#), which is an invitation to stakeholders and Indigenous rights-holders to engage and offer feedback to further improve the new draft.

Who does IRMA Certify?

The IRMA Standard is designed to apply to all types of industrial- or large-scale mining (including surface, sub-surface, and solution mining), and all mined materials (e.g., minerals and metals) with the exception of energy fuels (e.g. uranium, thermal coal, oil, or gas).

While the IRMA Standard has no defined minimum for the scale of mine, it is not designed to be applicable to small-scale mining.

There are currently [27 mines](#) worldwide engaged in the IRMA independent audit process.

IRMA Governance

IRMA is governed by a Board of Directors with two representatives from six sectors: mining companies, companies that purchase mined materials, non-governmental organizations, affected communities, organized labor, and investment and finance. Where a sector has more than five IRMA members, the two representatives are chosen in two ways: one representative is elected from within sector membership, and one is Board-selected. When five or fewer members are in a sector, both representatives are Board-selected.

How does IRMA work?

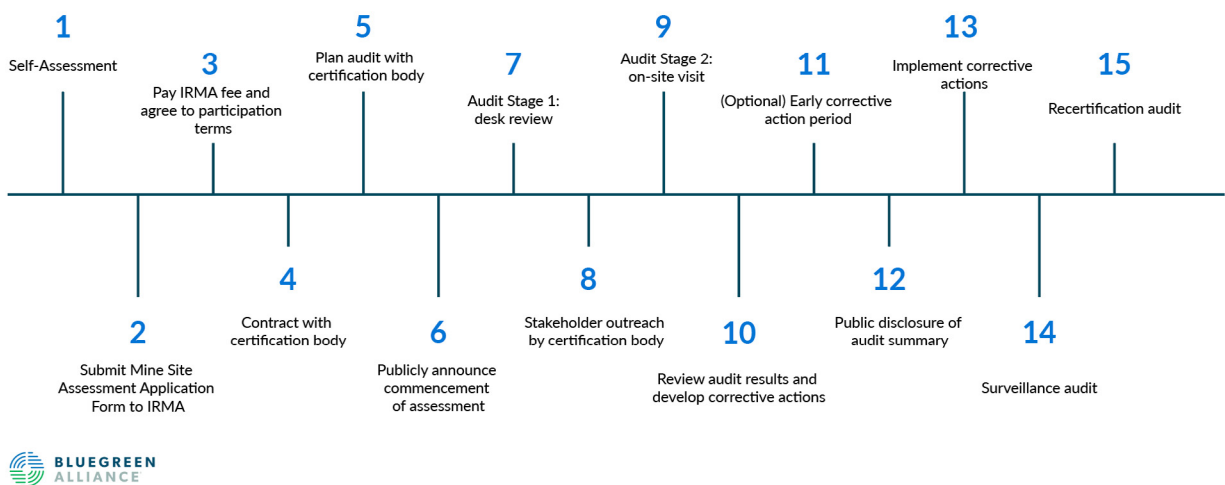
The [203-page IRMA Standard for Responsible Mining](#) (the IRMA Standard) is designed to achieve four overarching principles.

- Principle 1—Business Integrity**
INTENT: Operating companies conduct business in a transparent manner that complies with applicable host country and international laws, respects human rights and builds trust and credibility with workers, communities, and stakeholders.

- Principle 2— Planning and Managing for Positive Legacies**
INTENT: Operating companies engage with stakeholders from the early planning stages and throughout the mine life cycle to ensure that mining projects are planned and managed to deliver positive economic, social, and environmental legacies for companies, workers and communities.
- Principle 3— Social Responsibility**
INTENT: Operating companies engage with workers, stakeholders, and rights holders to maintain or enhance the health, safety, cultural values, quality of life, and livelihoods of workers, and communities.
- Principle 4—Environmental Responsibility**
INTENT: Operating companies engage with stakeholders to ensure that mining is planned and carried out in a manner that maintains or enhances environmental values and avoids or minimizes impacts to the environment and communities.

The [37-page Assessment Manual for Mines](#) provides details on how to meet the intent of these four principles through the 15-step certification process.

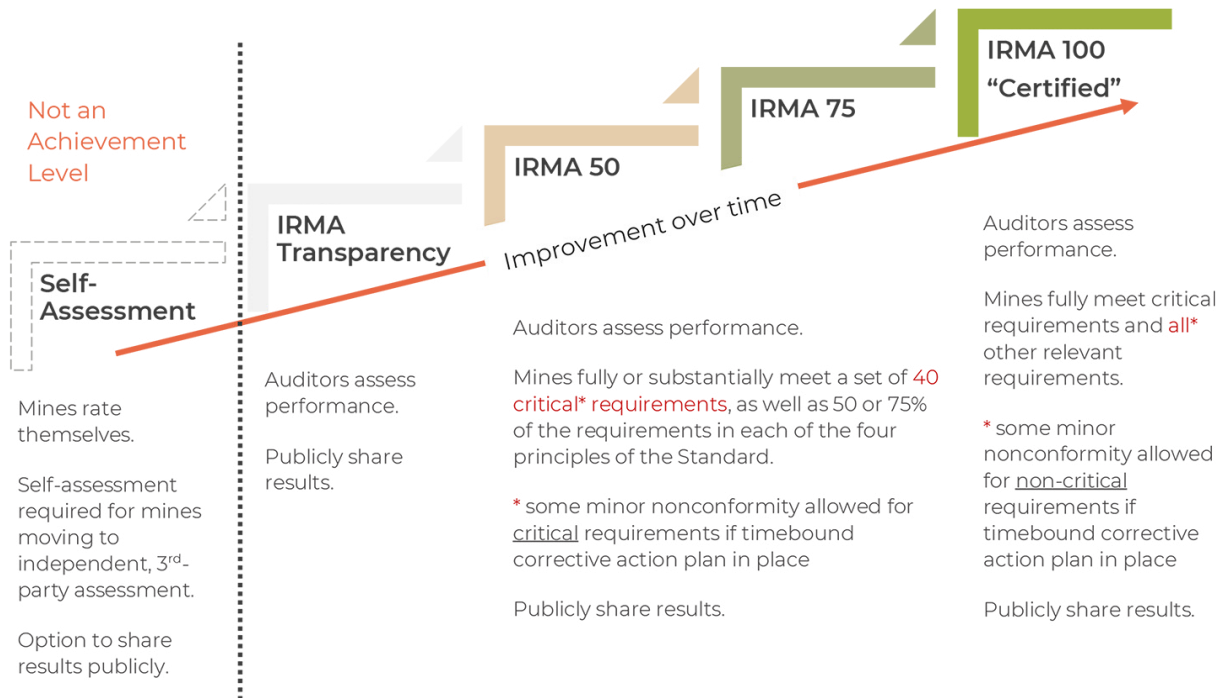
Figure 1. 15-Step IRMA Certification Process



IRMA also lays out the following independent third-party assessment process for the pre-audit, audit process, and next steps for a mine undergoing potential certification.

There are also various levels of certification available from IRMA, ranging from Transparency, IRMA 50, IRMA 75, and IRMA 100.

Figure 2. IRMA Certification Levels



How to Use IRMA for Community Benefits from Mining Projects: Highlights from the Standard

How can we engage and work to ensure community benefits and buy-in on new mining projects?

- IRMA standard 2.3.2.2. states that “For new mines, broad community support shall be determined through local democratic processes or governance mechanisms, or by another process or method agreed to by the company and an affected community (e.g., a referendum). Evidence of broad community support shall be considered credible if the process or method used to demonstrate support:
 - Occurred after the operating company carried out consultations with relevant stakeholders regarding potential impacts and benefits of the proposed mining project;
 - Was transparent;
 - Was free from coercion or manipulation; and
 - Included the opportunity for meaningful input by all potentially affected community members, including women, vulnerable groups and marginalized members, prior to any decision or resolution.”
- IRMA standard 2.3.3.1. states that “The operating company, in collaboration with affected communities and other relevant stakeholders (including workers and local government), shall develop a participatory planning process to guide a company’s

contributions to community development initiatives and benefits in affected communities.” And IRMA standard 2.3.3.3. states that “If requested by the community and not provided by the appropriate public authorities, the operating company shall provide funding for mutually agreed upon experts to aid in the participatory process.”

- IRMA standard 2.3.3.4. states that “Efforts shall be made to develop:
 - Local procurement opportunities;
 - Initiatives that benefit a broad spectrum of the community (e.g., women, men, children, youth, vulnerable and traditionally marginalized groups); and
 - Mechanisms that can be self-sustaining after mine closure (including the building of community capacity to oversee and sustain any projects or initiatives agreed upon through negotiations).”

How can we make sure indigenous communities, often harmed by projects, are valued stakeholders in the IRMA process?

- IRMA standard 2.2.1.1. states that “The operating company shall have a publicly available policy that includes a statement of the company’s respect for indigenous peoples’ rights, as set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples.” and IRMA standard 2.2.1.2. states that “The operating company shall ensure that indigenous peoples potentially affected by the company’s mining-related activities are aware of the policy.”
- IRMA standard 2.2.2.1. states that “The operating company shall conduct due diligence to determine if the host government conducted an adequate consultation process aimed at obtaining indigenous peoples’ informed consent prior to granting access to mineral resources. The key findings of due diligence assessments shall be made publicly available and shall include the company’s justification for proceeding with a project if the State failed to fulfill its consultation and/or consent duties.” And IRMA standards

2.2.2.2. states that “New mines shall not be certified by IRMA unless they have obtained the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of potentially affected indigenous peoples.”

- IRMA standard 2.2.2.4. states that “If indigenous peoples’ representatives clearly communicate, at any point during engagement with the operating company, that they do not wish to proceed with FPIC-related discussions, the company shall recognize that it does not have consent, and shall cease to pursue any proposed activities affecting the rights or interests of the indigenous peoples. The company may approach indigenous peoples to renew discussions only if agreed to by the indigenous peoples’ representatives.”

How can we push for the best environmental stewardship possible for mining communities and that local environmental law is followed for projects?

- IRMA standard 2.1.1.1. states that “An Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA), appropriate to the nature and scale of the proposed mining project and commensurate with the level of its environmental and social risks and impacts, shall be completed prior to the commencement of any site-disturbing operations associated with the project.”
- IRMA standard 2.1.2.1. states that “Prior to the implementation of the ESIA process the operating company shall ensure that there has been wide, public announcement of the project proposal and the associated ESIA process, and that reasonable and culturally appropriate efforts have been made to inform potentially affected and interested stakeholders in potentially affected communities about the proposed project.”
- IRMA standard 2.1.7.1. states that “The operating company shall develop and maintain a system to manage environmental and social risks and impacts throughout the life of the mine.”

- IRMA standard 4.1.1.1. states that “The operating company shall develop a policy for managing waste materials and mine waste facilities in a manner that eliminates, if practicable, and otherwise minimizes risks to human health, safety, the environment and communities.”
- IRMA standard 4.2.1.3. states that “The operating company shall conduct its own research and collaborate with relevant stakeholders to identify and address shared water challenges and opportunities at the local and regional levels, and shall take steps to contribute positively to local and regional water stewardship outcomes.”

What avenues exist for communities to make sure that land is remediated after a mine closure?

- IRMA standard 2.6.2.1. states that “Prior to the commencement of mine construction activities the operating company shall prepare a reclamation and closure plan that is compatible with protection of human health and the environment, and demonstrates how affected areas will be returned to a stable landscape with an agreed post-mining end use.”

What safeguards exist around community health and safety, and emergency preparedness/response?

- IRMA standard 2.5.2.1. states that “The emergency response plan shall be developed in consultation with potentially affected communities and workers and/or workers’ representatives, and the operating company shall incorporate their input into the emergency response plan and include their participation in emergency response planning exercises.”
- IRMA standard 3.3.1.1. states that “The operating company shall carry out a scoping exercise to identify significant potential risks and impacts to community health and safety

from mining-related activities. At minimum, the following sources of potential risks and impacts to community health and/or safety shall be considered:

- General mining operations;
 - Operation of mine-related equipment or vehicles on public roads;
 - Operational accidents;
 - Failure of structural elements such as tailings dams, impoundments, waste rock dumps
 - Mining-related impacts on priority ecosystem services;
 - Mining-related effects on community demographics, including in-migration of mine workers and others;
 - Mining-related impacts on availability of services;
 - Hazardous materials and substances that may be released as a result of mining-related activities; and
 - Increased prevalence of water-borne, water-based, water-related, and vector-borne diseases, and communicable and sexually transmitted diseases ((e.g., HIV/ AIDs, tuberculosis, malaria, Ebola virus disease or others) that could occur as a result of the mining project.”
- IRMA standard 3.3.3.1. states that “The operating company shall document and implement a community health and safety risk management plan that includes:
 - Actions to be taken to mitigate the significant risks and impacts identified during its risk and impact assessment and
 - Monitoring that will be conducted to ensure that measures to prevent or mitigate impacts remain effective.”
 - IRMA standard 3.3.5.1. states that “The operating company shall collaborate with relevant community members and stakeholders, including workers who live in affected communities and individuals or representatives of vulnerable groups, in:
 - Scoping of community health and safety risks and impacts related to mining;
 - Assessment of significant community

health and safety risks and impacts related to mining;

- Development of prevention or mitigation strategies;
- Collection of any data needed to inform the health risk and impact assessment process; and
- Design and implementation of community health and safety monitoring programs.”

How can we ensure that workers’ rights are respected by mining companies?

- IRMA standard 3.1.2.1. states that “The operating company shall respect the rights of workers to freedom of association and collective bargaining.”
- IRMA standard 3.1.2.3. states that “The operating company shall engage with workers’ representatives and workers’ organizations and provide them with information needed for meaningful negotiation in a timely manner.”
- IRMA standard 3.1.2.5. states that “The operating company shall remain neutral in any legitimate unionizing or worker-organizing effort; shall not produce or distribute material meant to disparage legitimate trade unions; shall not establish or support a company union for the purpose of undermining legitimate worker representation; and shall not impose sanctions on workers’ organizations participating in a legal strike.”

How can we make sure worker and community health and safety is being ensured at a mine site?

- IRMA standard 3.2.1.1. states that “The operating company shall implement a health and safety management system for measuring and improving the mining project’s health and safety performance.”
- IRMA standard 3.2.5.1. states that “The operating company and workers’ representatives on a joint health and safety committee, or its equivalent, shall perform regular inspections of the working environment to identify the various hazards to which workers may be exposed, and to evaluate the effectiveness of occupational health and safety controls and protective measures.”

What type of access exists for grievances against the company and potential remedies?

- IRMA standard 1.3.3.1. states that “Mining project stakeholders shall have access to and be informed about a rights-compatible grievance mechanism and other mechanisms through which they can raise concerns and seek recourse for grievances related to human rights.”
- IRMA standard 1.4.1.1. states that “The operating company shall ensure that stakeholders, including affected community members and rights holders (hereafter referred to collectively as “stakeholders”) have access to an operational-level mechanism that allows them to raise and seek resolution or remedy for the range of complaints and grievances that may occur in relation to the company and its mining-related activities.”

CURRENT IRMA MEMBERSHIP

Mining: Albemarle Corporation, Anglo American plc, Arcadium Lithium (formerly Livent), SQM Salar SpA

Mining Exploration / Development: American Battery Technology Company (Pending), Arafura Resources Ltd. (Pending), Australian Mines Limited (Pending), Eurobattery Minerals AB (Pending), IperionX Limited (Pending), Lepidico Limited (Pending), Lithium Americas Corp. (Pending), Neometals Ltd. (Pending), Piedmont Lithium (Pending), First Tellurium Corp. (Pending), Torngat Metals Ltd. (Pending).

Purchasing: Apple, Ascend Elements, Automotive Cells Company, BMW Group, Cisco, Fairphone, Ford Motor Company, General Motors Company, Google, HP Inc., Intel, Jiangsu Zhenjiang New Energy Equipment Co., LTD (JZNEE), Jungheinrich, Lucid Group, Inc., Mejuri, Mercedes-Benz Group AG, Microsoft Corporation, Munich Electrification, Nothing, Ørsted, Polestar, Renault Group, Rio Grande, Inc., Rivian, Schaeffler Group, Stellantis, SSE plc, Tesla, Inc., Tiffany & Co., Titan Wind Energy (Germany), Vivara, Volkswagen AG, ZincFive, Inc.

Non-Governmental Organizations: Alliance for Tompotika Conservation (ALTO), Auriga Nusantara, Centre for Environmental Governance, Center for Science in Public Participation, Centro de Movilidad Sostenible (CMS), Climate Recovery Plan, Earthworks, Earthqualizer, Fauna & Flora International, Forest Watch Indonesia, Foundation for Community Driven Development, Geology in the Public Interest, Gila Resources Information Project, Good Governance Africa, Great Basin Resource Watch, Green Advocates, Human Rights Watch, IUCN Netherlands, Mighty Earth, North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers, Oxfam America, PACT, Population and Development Initiative (PDI) Tanzania, PuSPAHAM Association, Rivers Without Borders, Satya Bumi, Settle Ghana, Terragraphics International Foundation, Transport & Environment, Voices (formerly Society for Threatened Peoples), Yayasan Aliansi Konservasi Alam Towuti (AKAT), Zimbabwe Environmental Law Organisation (ZELO)

Labor: CNV International, IndustriALL Global Union,

Federasi Pertambangan dan Energi (FPE) Sindicato de Trabajadores Albemarle Salar (Albemarle Salar Workers Union), SITRAMINA Antapaccay, United Steelworkers, Zimbabwe Diamond and Allied Minerals Workers Union (ZDAMWU)

Communities: Bakwena Ba Mogopa Community Development Foundation, Batani Foundation, Fakawèle Project, Girjas Sami Village, Karri Karrak Aboriginal Corporation, The Kompas Peduli Hutan Foundation (KOMIU), National Native Title Council, Wagyl Kaip Southern Noongar Aboriginal Corporation

Finance: Mirova, NEI Investments, Quilter PLC, Royal London Asset Management

Processors Working Group Participants: BASF, Green Lithium, Heraeus Precious Metals, Italtreppio, Qiangong Rare Earth Group Co., Ltd., SAM Precious Metals, SRE Vietnam Co., Ltd., Umicore SA/NV, Viridian Lithium

(Companies participating in the Processors Working Group have committed to: upholding IRMA's Principles of Engagement, contributing to the finalization of IRMA's Standard for Responsible Mineral Processing, and encouraging their mining suppliers to engage in IRMA through a third-party audit. While participants in the Processors Working Group are not IRMA Members, a path to membership will be reviewed after the IRMA Standard for Responsible Mineral Processing is finalized.)

Standard Setters, Consultants, Expert Services, and Other Organizations: Acevedo Santini Bettercoal, CEDHA (Fundacion Centro de Derechos Humanos y Ambiente), Ceres Crane Ridge Analytics, DAMS SRL, Fairlötet, Haris Azhar Law Office, Horus, Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB), International Chromium Development Association (ICDA), IWIM, Konesens Development, On Common Ground Consultants Inc., OSHEMS, Parkway Corporate Limited, Partner Africa, PetroShore Compliance, The Responsible Jewelry Transformative, ResponsibleSteel, SLR Consulting (formerly RCS Global Group), Tethys: Trans-Eurasian Gateway, Ulula, Women in Mining Africa, Women In Mining (WIM) Central, America, Women in Mining Chile, Women in Mining Nigeria (WIMIN)