The latest International Standard ISO 26000:2010 – Guidance on Social Responsibility, was launched yesterday by SPRING Singapore at a seminar to introduce the new standard to the business community.

What is ISO 26000

ISO 26000 provides social responsibility guidance for all types of organisations, such as MNCs and big corporations, SMEs, non-governmental organisations and government agencies.

As the world moves towards an age of radical transparency, organisations and stakeholders become increasingly aware of the need for socially and environmentally responsible behaviour. ISO 26000 is thus a timely and relevant guide to help organisations understand what social responsibility is and what they need to do to operate in a socially responsible way.

ISO 26000 is not for certification

It is important to note that ISO 26000 contains voluntary guidance and is not for use as a certification standard like ISO 9001 or ISO 14001. It is stressed in the guidance that:

ISO 26000 is not a management system standard. It is not intended or appropriate for certification purposes or regulatory or contractual use. Any offer to certify, or claims to be certified, to ISO 26000 would be a misrepresentation of the intent and purpose and a misuse of this International Standard. As ISO 26000 does not contain requirements, any such certification would not be a demonstration of conformity with this International Standard.

However, one of the speakers at the seminar, Assistant Professor Eugene Tan, Member of the National Working Group on Social Responsibility and Lecturer in SMU’s School of Law, said that ISO 26000 could evolve into a de facto technical standard and organisations may
be required by business partners to demonstrate that they “endorse” or “support” ISO 26000. He pointed out that Denmark has introduced its own national standard – DS 26001 that is based on ISO 26000 and is certifiable.

Outline of ISO 26000

The outline of ISO 26000 is shown in the table below:
Principles of social responsibility
ISO 26000 highlights the 7 principles of social responsibility:
1. Accountability
2. Transparency
3. Ethical behaviour
4. Respect for stakeholder interests
5. Respect for the rule of law
6. Respect for international norms of behaviour
7. Respect for human rights

**Core subjects of social responsibility**

ISO 26000 addresses 7 core subjects of social responsibility as shown in the graphic below:

![Social responsibility: 7 core subjects](image)

**How to use ISO 26000**

An overview of ISO 26000 and the relations between the various clauses are shown in the following graphic (click on image to enlarge):
One of the speakers at the seminar, Ms Esther An, Head (Corporate Social Responsibility) and Deputy General Manager, Corporate Affairs, City Developments Limited (CDL), shared with the audience on how CDL aligned their CSR practices with ISO 26000. The CDL management and CSR committee went through the following process:

1. Understand more about ISO 26000 – its history, requirements and implications. Conduct internal training for staff.
3. Identify areas of strengths and weaknesses, and gaps which are relevant to the organisation.
4. Develop action plans to align practices with ISO 26000 and close the gaps.

Ms An shared that CDL’s CSR efforts has helped to enhance branding and create goodwill, and allow the company to be well-positioned for changes.

Other speakers at the seminar encourage the audience to use ISO 26000 for integrating social responsibility into their organisations. Assistant Professor Tan believes that ISO 26000 can be a valuable differentiator and organisations can gain first-mover advantage by being ISO 26000-ready.

If your organisation is interested in ISO 26000, you can find out more information at the ISO website, buy the standard at the Singapore Standards eShop, or join Singapore Compact as a member to access CSR resources and events.

Images credit: ISO