



ISEAL Community Member System Overview

Organisation Name	GEO Foundation for Sustainable Golf
Year	2022
Version	1.0

1) The **STRATEGIES** our system employs to meet its sustainability objectives

GEO Foundation defines its sustainability objectives as: 1) More industry bodies adopting & promoting sustainability strategy & solutions; 2) Greater understanding and embedding of sustainability into golf operations; 3) Credible evidence of golf's continually improving performance across water, energy, community, pollution-prevention, supply chain, waste management, habitat & biodiversity; 4) Consistent, credible, transparent reporting; 5) More governments adopting balanced sustainability policies for golf; and 6) More tournaments, sponsors, players, and golf media to advocate and contribute to sustainability.

In support of these objectives, GEO Foundation takes the following strategies: 1) Partnerships with associations & federations to educate and engage golf facilities; 2) Allow regionalisation; 3) Collaborative expert working groups & open consultations; 4) Analyse sustainability trends, needs and innovations to inform strategy & solutions for golf; 5) Harnessing technology and integrated metrics; 6) Following ISEAL codes; 7) Industry-facing campaigning; and 8) Government & public relations.

Strategic partners that collaborate with GEO Foundation in the continuous development of the sustainable golf standard and its approaches include universities, professional sports groups, agronomy and ecology organizations, and golf industry professionals. GEO Foundation publicly discloses its top stakeholder groups at the following:

- Sustainability Connections (<https://sustainable.golf/partners/sustainability>)
- Innovators and Service Providers (<https://sustainable.golf/partners/network/solutions>)
- Partners and Sponsors (<https://sustainable.golf/partners/golf>)

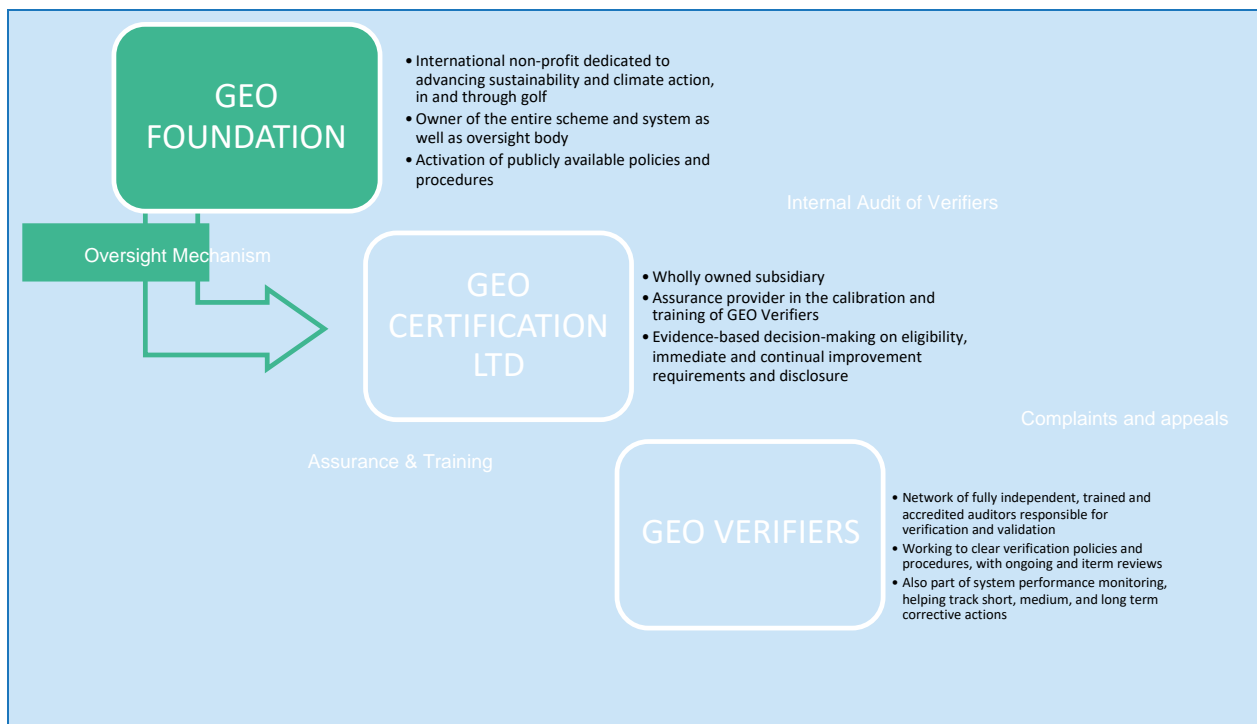
2) A description of the **STANDARD and TOOL** that our system has developed

In order to allow for the promotion of sustainable golf, the GEO Foundation as scheme owner has defined a standard to address the most material social and environmental issues impacting and impacted by golf facilities, developments, and tournaments. GEO's Standard for Sustainable Golf is divided into three primary sections: Nature, Resources, and Community. Within each of these sections, Annual Data is criteria for quantitative sustainability metrics, while Practices allow for qualitative evaluation of sustainable approaches. For instance, the Resources section will address the proportion of materials recycled as well as the approaches taken to extend the lifecycle of materials used. This methodology allows for monitoring of performance overtime while recognizing existing best practices or areas of improvement.

As the primary tool for measuring performance against the golf sustainability standard, GEO Foundation developed OnCourse, an online programme for self-reporting. The components of OnCourse are directly aligned to the standard and the sections. Submitted responses pass through GEO Certification Ltd, the assurance provider, to identify any potential queries and critical data to be verified by GEO auditors. The results of these audits are reviewed through assurance processes by GEO Certification Ltd, who shares the performance and impacts with GEO Foundation to promote continuous improvement over time.

3) How we maintain **RESPONSIBILITY** for decisions taken about and by our system

Systematically, GEO Foundation serves as the scheme owner and oversight body for the organization, while GEO Certification Ltd provides the assurance of certification conducted by third-party auditors (verifiers). GEO Foundation defines the assessment procedures and requirements, which are then passed down to GEO Certification Ltd to ensure proper training of auditors and calibration of assessment results. In turn, GEO Certification Ltd monitors and reports key performance metrics back up to GEO Foundation. These metrics address both assurance that certification procedures are followed by the verifier network as well as a monitoring and evaluation system to understand the impacts of certified facilities, developments, and tournaments.



4) How our system's design demonstrates a **COMMITMENT TO IMPROVEMENT**

There are four primary pathways that promote GEO's commitment to improvement:

- 1) **Engagement** – With the creation of the OnCourse online platform, GEO allowed for golf entities around the world to comprehensively and consistently assess their sustainability performance. This dynamic web application is adaptable for regional priorities, translations, and any other emerging issues identified through GEO Foundation's engagement channels. Through its data collection process, GEO Foundation maintains an ever-expanding and evolving database of sustainability indicators and leading best practices.
- 2) **Data Governance** – GEO Foundation established its data management system to utilise the most effective metrics in evaluating its standard criteria through OnCourse and verification processes. Regular reviews of the data inventory, including tracking of trends and stakeholder feedback on their materiality, ensures that the data used in assessments and assurance purposes is as comprehensive and impactful as possible. The data management system also addresses accessibility by defining roles in stewardship and security in data sharing.
- 3) **Assurance & Oversight** – The annual internal audit by GEO Certification Ltd assesses the conformity of the certification system and associated strategies. This feeds into a Management Review which allows GEO Foundation to identify strengths, potential risks, and areas of improvement in the standard criteria and verification procedures.
- 4) **Monitoring & Evaluation** – To ensure the objectives of the golf sustainability standard are actualized, GEO Certification Ltd also monitors data in relation to the impacts of certification and standard criteria. The key impact areas defined by GEO Foundation are to minimize climate change, conserve biodiversity, transform supply chains, protect and enhance environmental quality, and generate valued and diverse socio-economic benefits for local people.

5) How our standard or tool is monitored and reviewed to ensure its **RELEVANCE**

Many of the core strategies of GEO Foundation are created to ensure the relevance of the standard for sustainable golf and its evaluation tools. For instance, partnerships with associations and federations engages golf facilities and tournaments, along with establishing expert working groups and open consultations. These approaches to stakeholder engagement analyse sustainability trends, needs and innovations to inform strategy and solutions for golf. Additionally, GEO Foundation has also taken part in materiality studies to review its standard criteria and other potential factors in generating sustainable social and environmental impacts through golf.

In addition to stakeholder engagement, the results of certifications and subsequent data lakes are utilised by GEO Certification Ltd in monitoring and evaluation procedures. Not only does this include the criteria used in certification decisions, but it also incorporates any complaints, appeals, or exceptions. The GEO Complaints and Appeals Procedure provides a publicly available mechanism to report any perceived inconsistencies in certification results, assurance processes, or oversight mechanisms. At least once per year, all of this data is collated and reported to GEO Foundation to conduct a formal review towards continuous improvement in the accuracy and effectiveness of the standard and certification processes. Part of the annual review by GEO Foundation includes any potential implication for the information system management, such as publicly available policies and disclosures.

Not only does GEO Foundation promote stakeholder engagement, it also encourages information sharing through publicly disclosing many of its policies and reports. For instance, the GEO Assurance Management Overview is available online, along with its Risk Assessment and Verifier Code of Conduct (<https://sustainable.golf/about/credibility/assurance>). Moreover, the OnCourse online platform is free to use and publicly available (<https://sustainable.golf/oncourse/>). To showcase the results of its certification process and recognise leaders in sustainable golf, GEO Foundation also publishes certification reports on its website (<https://sustainable.golf/directory/>).

6) How the standard or tool is **IMPLEMENTED**

GEO Foundation values maintaining the standard for sustainable golf in a way that is consistent and continuously driving social and environmental impacts. A key component of that is ensuring that the standard, its criteria, and all supporting processes are actionable and understandable. The assurance procedures designed by GEO Foundation and executed by GEO Certification Ltd are the primary methods for reviewing this consistent interpretation and application.

The first step for ensuring consistency in certification results is the pre-verification check by GEO Certification to identify mandatory queries for verifiers. Once a facility, development or tournament provides their initial data (i.e. self-reported OnCourse online questionnaires), GEO Certification Ltd conducts a comparative analysis to highlight any potential misinterpretations of evaluation criteria. Similar qualities (e.g. regions, course size, age, etc.) and performance over time are factors to benchmark response thresholds, allowing for inconsistencies to be flagged as required for further verification. External stakeholders also have the opportunity to report potential inconsistencies within certification decisions through the Complaints and Appeals process, available through the GEO website.

To review the consistency of certification processes and results from a comprehensive perspective, each year GEO Certification Ltd conducts an internal audit. As part of this assurance process, GEO Certification Ltd ensures that the Verifier Network are interpreting the certification audit procedures consistently. This includes reviewing that all steps of the verification process are followed, reports are produced according to standard guidelines, and certification recommendations align to the evidence cited. The results of the annual internal audit are reported by GEO Certification Ltd up to GEO Foundation to adapt any guidelines, processes or evaluation criteria accordingly as part of its oversight mechanism. Based on any subsequent changes and to further promote uniformity in how evaluations are conducted, GEO Certification Ltd will then provide the Verifier Network with updated communications, reminders, and trainings.

In order to ensure more long term consistency between the claims made by GEO Foundation and its objectives, GEO Certification Ltd is also responsible for the monitoring and evaluation system. The purpose of this system is to assess the impacts of certification awards to facilities, developments, and tournaments towards promoting sustainability through golf. As part of the GEO Data Inventory, indicators for sustainable performance are identified to give quantitative and qualitative understanding to the effectiveness of certification. The monitoring and evaluation of these indicators is an important feedback loop to GEO Foundation in its maintenance of the standard criteria and assessment methodology. An annual management review allows for aggregation of the monitoring and evaluation findings, assurance audits, and certification data to promote consistency and continual improvement of the sustainable golf standard.