Conduct of Evaluations

The YEG Evaluation Service

The YEG Evaluation Service has considerable experience assessing a wide spectrum of ventures from the individual peer-led to corporate providers of one or two expeditions or large 300+ venture concerns from within the charitable/voluntary sector and by large corporations operating on a global basis.

The Evaluation Service is open to all who seek its help and operates on two levels:

- *Single Venture Conformity*: for one-off expeditions or small Venture Providers delivering one or two ventures each year – these come predominantly from the charitable and educational sectors;
- *Corporate Conformity*: for large Venture Providers operating multiple ventures overseas – these range from charitable to commercial providers based in the UK or overseas.

An Evaluation is intended to assist a Venture Provider in two ways:

- the Evaluation tests the Provider's ability to demonstrate and self-declare its Conformity in full to BS 8848;
- it offers the Provider an opportunity to consider, and possibly continually improve, the quality and effectiveness of its processes and of its provision, both real and as may be perceived by clients and other interested parties.

The Evaluation Service, as a body providing external validation:

- has aligned its evaluation procedures to conform to the higher requirement of a body with BS/ISO/IEC 17021 accreditation that has auditing of BS 8848 within its scope;
- always has its Evaluation Panels led by a BSI/EN/ISO 9001:2008 trained and qualified Quality Management Systems Lead Auditor;
- has other Panel members likewise qualified, or if not, conversant with and practiced in the ISO 9001 auditing procedures;
- produces a clear unambiguous report from an Evaluation that identifies any non-conformities and positive lines of action for the provider to amend its procedures.

The YEG Evaluation Service draws upon the considerable background and proven expertise of the membership in the makeup of its Evaluation Panels. The Service is administered by an Evaluations Co-ordinator, also with a solid background in the expedition and travel sector. It operates under the overview of the YEG Committee.

The YEG Evaluation Service undertakes a formal Annual Review that considers lessons learnt from the past year, developments within the sector, and their effects on the Service in the forthcoming year.

YEG also operates an expedition advice service for the young and inexperienced who are perhaps endeavouring to organise their first venture together with a Mentoring Service to assist organizations seeking advice prior to making a self declaration of Conformity to BS 8848 or undertaking a corporate evaluation. The Mentoring Service, which operates in the strictest confidence, is entirely separate and independent of the Evaluation Service.

The Evaluation

Purpose

The formal objective of an Evaluation is explicitly to provide an independent, other party, Statement of Conformity as reassurance to the Provider, be it an individual or a Corporate Organization, that its own Self Declaration of Conformity to British Standard BS 8848 is well founded at the time of the Evaluation.

BS 8848:2014 "*Specification for the provision of visits, fieldwork, expeditions, and adventurous activities outside the United Kingdom"* is a specification of the British Standards Institute, the body recognised by the UK Government as the National Standards Body.

The Evaluation is also intended to offer the Provider an opportunity to consider, and possibly continually improve, the quality and effectiveness of its processes, both real and as may be perceived by clients and other interested parties.

Informed Consent of Participants

To help ensure informed consent by participants and other stakeholders in any venture, YEG requires Providers to include in their venture pre-booking publicity a clearly displayed statement for all to read that "any adventurous venture involves exposure to accepted elements of risk, challenge and adventure greater than those normally encountered in everyday life. Whilst such activities are subject to exacting safety management processes by the Provider, it cannot be guaranteed that all possibility of resultant injury to participants, or others, is eliminated".

Such a clear statement of risk has an associated benefit to Providers in that it draws attention overtly to this important matter and that responsibly managed participant safety is of the highest priority to the Provider at all times.

Confidentiality of Evaluation

Both YEG and the evaluated Provider agree to total confidentiality regarding the proceedings and information given and received in the framework of the Evaluation process, unless release of any such information is previously agreed in writing by both parties. This agreement is mutually binding in all cases except in regard to information that is required to be disclosed for legal reasons. Such disclosures shall be restricted entirely to other parties legally entitled to such information. Both YEG and the Provider shall inform each other immediately in writing of the material and the recipient parties of such necessary disclosures.

The Evaluation Service Audit Team

The YEG Evaluation Service is supported by an Audit Team whose experience of auditing within the Overseas Youth Sector is second to none. Members' experience covers in depth the essential areas of leadership and management, business, overseas travel to remote areas together with audit and inspection competence.

The Team currently comprises four Principal Auditors, all of whom have completed and passed the ISO 9001 Lead Auditor course run by BSI. They are backed by Support Auditors of similar background, but who have not yet undertaken the ISO 9001 Lead Auditor training and assessment.

All Audit Team members act in an entirely voluntary capacity and without personal remuneration.

All YEG Evaluation Panels undertaking either an initial Individual Venture or Corporate Full Audit of Conformity will consist of a Principal Auditor as Chairman, plus at least one other member who may also be a Principal Auditor or a Support Auditor.

Interim Reviews of Corporate Conformity will be staffed by a Principal Auditor and Support Auditor.

The Evaluation Service has access to Subject Matter Experts and Venture Activity Specialists to provide assistance as considered necessary depending on the detailed nature of ventures to be considered within the framework of an Evaluation. Advice from these will be sought as appropriate if an Evaluation Panel Chairman so decides.

It is important to emphasise that the Evaluation Service is able to provide a continuity of service by auditors who understand and appreciate the business and operational demands of the Provider being evaluated.

Conduct of the Evaluation

An Evaluation, as conducted by YEG, is not simply a pass-fail assessment of the evaluated Provider's activities. The Evaluation is undertaken by probing adherence to both the spirit and detail of all elements of BS 8848 regarding all spheres of activity to which the Provider's name relates, and for which Conformity to the Standard is to be declared.

The audit process used is structured to undertake a robust, in depth, assessment of the Provider, but at the same time it is one based on common sense born of the Panel's deep knowledge and long experience of the sector.

For every Evaluation, prior to undertaking an audit, biographies of all proposed Evaluation Panel members will be submitted to the Provider for scrutiny and acceptance regarding possible individual conflicts of professional interest. In the absence of any negative response form the Provider, it is presumed that all Panel members are fully acceptable participants in the Evaluation.

At the conclusion of an audit visit, the Panel Chairman will give a verbal description of the findings. This will be followed by the full written Evaluation Report and formal decision of YEG regarding Conformity to BS 8848.

Single Venture Conformity: A YEG Statement of Conformity to BS 8848 is given to a particular venture from the date of Evaluation for the remaining life time of the venture on the understanding that no aspects of the venture relating to Conformity to BS 8848 are altered subsequently. The Statement is not transferable to any other venture.

Corporate Conformity: The Evaluation process considers a Provider's probable medium term stability and thus its ability to maintain future Conformity. Normally for this reason, the YEG Statement of Conformity for Corporate Providers is valid for three calendar years from the date of the initial Full Audit of Conformity which usually will have been conducted at the premises of the Provider.

Additionally at its discretion, YEG will make yearly interim visits to the organization to conduct short Interim Reviews of Conformity. The purpose these is to review the effect of any organizational or procedural changes on accreditation, and to review incidents and near misses, together with appropriate actions, arising since the last audit.

Assessment methodology

For both Single Venture and Corporate Provider Conformity assessments, the Evaluation Panel will be concerned to determine if the Provider's processes or activities include any 'major', or 'minor', non-conformities to BS 8848.

A major non-conformity would automatically require the Panel Chairman to determine that the Provider had been unable to demonstrate adherence to the requirements of BS 8848.

Individual minor non-conformities would not lead, in themselves, to rejection by the Panel. However, were these to indicate a pattern of significant non-conformity in any area covered by BS 8848, or be too numerous to leave the Panel satisfied as to the reliable quality of the Provider, rejection could result.

The Provider will be required to undertake corrective action regarding all minor non-conformities recorded in the Evaluation Report within a timescale determined by the Panel to achieve Conformity. All corrective actions taken will be scrutinized and judged by the Evaluation Panel Chairman.

During the course of the Evaluation, the Panel may also note 'Observations'. These are not to be considered as non-conformities and are not, in themselves, prejudicial in any way to the Provider's standing regarding Conformity to BS 8848. They are intended as comments based on the Panel's experience that may be of assistance to the Provider in further developing its strategy regarding BS 8848, or possibly pointers to matters for the Provider to keep under review in case circumstances change, and where a situation might arise in consequence that could lead to a non-conformity of some form in the future.

Single Venture Conformity Assessment:

At least three weeks before an agreed Evaluation, but preferably longer, the Venture Provider must submit a completed Individual Venture Evaluation Application Form and ideally other supporting information, which in all circumstances must be subsequently submitted not later than at the Evaluation interview.

The Evaluation Panel will interview the Venture Provider, the Venture Leader (who may be the same person) and other members of the expedition as deemed necessary by the Panel.

The details of the venture as provided in the Individual Venture Evaluation Application Form and any supplementary documentation submitted will be assessed by the Panel to determine that there is sufficient evidence that the venture plans meet all the requirements of BS 8848. Particular emphasis will be placed on satisfactory evidence that the plans are for a venture of an agreed and understood level of risk and safety and appropriate to the needs and abilities of the participants and within the competence and the experience of the Leadership Team. This will include consideration of the venture risk analysis and management systems (RAMS), major incident plan, communications plan, makeup of the full Leadership Team, in-country arrangements, insurance, environmental concerns, and the value of the venture to participants in terms of personal development.

Corporate Conformity Assessment:

The initial Full Audit of Conformity relies upon the Provider's self assessment against the Standard as articulated by the Provider in the BS 8848 Conformity Workbook. This shall be submitted at least three weeks before the agreed date of the full audit.

Following receipt of the Conformity Workbook, and about ten days before the agreed date, an Audit Plan will be submitted to the Provider.

The form of audit used by Evaluation Panels follows the generally accepted practice of documenting and assessing the procedures and internal operational controls of the Provider as used to ensure Conformity against the Standard and then undertaking a random sample of the expected procedures to demonstrate explicitly that the sample conforms to the Provider's procedures and to the Standard. Should the random sample be unsatisfactory, a further, larger, sample would be undertaken.

As part of the initial assessment of the expected procedures, the Panel will generate an understanding of the business, and its place in the sector. Once the procedures and policies are understood, the audit will then expect to take a random selection of just one completed venture and check it off, clause by clause, for Conformity with the Standard. Should an area of non-conformity arise, the Panel would wish to take other random samples to ascertain whether the non-conformity is an exception, or regular practice.

Interim Reviews of Conformity are conducted against an Audit Plan submitted prior to the visit together with material submitted by the Provider regarding the topics covered in the Plan and any other information the Provider considers to be of significance regarding its Conformity to the Standard.

The Panel will consider first the findings of the previous audit, actions taken in relation to any recorded corrective action plans and Observations. It will also wish to consider the effects of any organizational or procedural changes on its Conformity and to review incidents and near misses, together with appropriate actions, arising since the last audit. In addition, the Panel may elect to look in greater depth at a selected aspect of provision, for instance at leadership selection, participant training, or a simulated incident response scenario.

All Conformity assessments:

At the end of any audit, the Panel Chairman will give a verbal report and openly discuss the findings as at that time. The Chairman will also agree corrective action plans regarding any identified non-conformities. The expected content, subject to moderation, of the formal written report and its time of delivery will also be outlined.

In particular, the Provider will be advised that if it subsequently fails, for whatever reason, to conform to the Standard, it must immediately remove all logos or statements implying Conformity from the public domain and inform all existing clients and its workforce under any form of contractual relationship that this is so. It will also inform YEG of the matter immediately and provide YEG with a full corrective action plan.

The Provider will be reminded of its overarching obligations associated with Self Declaration of Conformity to BS 8848 and how any YEG Statement of Conformity may be used.

The Provider must indicate that any Declaration of Conformity to the Standard they may make is entirely theirs. They have used an 'other party' to give them assurance that all ventures achieve this – to the requirements of the Standard, not of the 'other party'. The Self Declaration must not imply that the quality of provision is laid down in any way by the 'other party', in this case YEG.

Any Self Declaration the Provider may make must conform to this requirement not to imply YEG's responsibility in its place. It is a fundamental underlying principle of BS 8848 that the organisation claiming Conformity with the standard is fully accountable for all elements of a venture, as well as any that are outsourced to a third party provider, including travel and accommodation.

Audit reporting by the Panel

When the formal Evaluation Report has been received and accepted in writing, the Provider may act publicly on its findings. It should be noted that whilst typographical and spelling errors can be corrected the factual content of the report will not be open for any form of suggested adjustment.

Following a successful Evaluation, the YEG Evaluation Service will issue a formal Statement of Conformity, and a Conformity logo, updated annually, for display in the Provider's promotional media.

Appeal by Provider against decision

Should a Provider wish to appeal against any of the findings of the formal report attempts should be made to resolve the matter in the first place with the Chairman of the Evaluation Panel.

If the concerns still remain unresolved, the details of the matter should be communicated by the Provider to the Chair of the Young Explorers' Group who will appoint an independent Appeal Panel of three members of the YEG to review the case. At least one member of this Panel will be a qualified ISO 9001 Lead Auditor. No member of the Appeal Panel shall have been involved in the disputed Evaluation. The decision of the Appeal Panel will be final.

Disclaimer by YEG

The opinions, advice and Statement of Conformity are given by YEG to the Provider on the basis of information and evidence made available by the Provider. The YEG cannot be held responsible by others for such opinions, advice and Statement of Conformity, nor for the outcome of any specific venture that may operate under the Provider's Self Declaration of Conformity to BS 8848. Parties wishing to rely upon such a Declaration must satisfy themselves of its appropriateness.

Evaluation Fee

The currently applicable Schedule of Fees for Evaluation is published on the YEG website.

Single Venture Evaluations:

The fee payable for a Single Venture Evaluation is due in full immediately on delivery of the formal report, regardless of the findings. In the case of a subsequent resubmission following a failure to demonstrate Conformity, a full fee will be charged again.

Corporate Evaluations:

The fee payable following a Corporate Initial Full Audit is due in full on delivery of the formal report, regardless of the findings.

If the Initial Full Audit was successful, YEG may, at its sole discretion, offer the Provider the opportunity to pay by annual instalments as indicated in the Schedule, each payable on the anniversary of the initial audit.

In the event of a failure to conform at the Initial Full Audit, the full fee is payable immediately. Should that Provider, after payment of the full fee due, subsequently wish to resubmit an application, the second Initial Full Audit will be charged at the rate indicated.

The fee structure is based on an Initial Full Audit visit being completed in a single day. If, for whatever reason, it should be necessary to continue for a second day, a further fee, as per the Schedule of Fees, will become payable immediately.

Should a Provider prematurely terminate their contract with YEG, or at any time fail to maintain Conformity to BS 8848, as deemed by YEG, any outstanding instalments will become payable immediately.

Insurance

The YEG Evaluation Service maintains Professional Indemnity insurance cover at levels appropriate for its activities.