



System Overview

May 2026

1. **Strategies** used by IRMA to achieve sustainability outcomes

Industrialized societies rely on mined materials to function. From household electronics to vehicles, from batteries to renewable energy systems, products that are used daily come from material mined from the Earth. Mining provides investment and financial opportunities for host countries, and important employment and income for local communities. However, the exploration, extraction, and processing associated with mined materials also can negatively impact human rights and the environment on which people depend.

The Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) envisions a world where the mining industry respects the human rights and aspirations of affected communities; provides safe, healthy, and supportive workplaces; minimizes harm to the environment; and leaves positive legacies.

To achieve this vision, IRMA uses three main strategies:

- The *IRMA Standard for Responsible Mining* and the *IRMA Chain of Custody Standard for Responsibly Mined Materials*.
- A third-party independent assurance system.
- Equal multi-stakeholder governance for the IRMA standards and system, where IRMA is governed equally by six houses, unique among mining standards and making IRMA the most trusted mining standard and system across these houses, particularly among civil society.

Together, these strategies are implemented to achieve IRMA's sustainability outcomes in the mining sector which are grouped into these categories:

- Business Integrity
- Planning and Managing for Positive Legacies
- Social Responsibility
- Environmental Responsibility

2. **Standards and tools** used by IRMA to meet its objectives

Primary tools used by IRMA are its multi-stakeholder developed standards and third-party assurance system. The *IRMA Standard for Responsible Mining* (IRMA Standard) provides an internationally recognized shared definition of what constitutes best practices in social and environmental responsibility for mineral exploration, extraction, and processing. The IRMA Standard serves as the basis for a comprehensive system that is intended to create transparency into mining's impacts, and to improve practices across supply chains through independent verification.

Fundamentals of the IRMA Standard are:

- It is the world's most rigorous and detailed standard for mining, stronger than any country's laws. It is not a pass-fail standard and creates a pathway for continuous improvement (see Section 4).
- It can be applied across industrial scale mines¹ anywhere in the world, such as in lithium, nickel, gold, copper, iron ore, platinum and more. Exceptions include: thermal coal, oil and gas, uranium, and deep sea mining.²
- Assessment is at the mine-site level, not at the company level. Individual mines are audited and receive scores. The public results of each audit provide a significantly greater level of detail compared to other industry-driven and governed standards.

The *IRMA Chain of Custody Standard for Responsibly Mined Material* (IRMA Chain of Custody Standard) provides baseline requirements for tracking material coming from verified IRMA-audited mines through the downstream processing of minerals into products, all the way to the end consumer, enabling entities within the supply chain and end users to make credible claims about IRMA-audited material.

¹ While artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) is not in the scope of the IRMA Standard, we do have a chapter in the Standard that has requirements for large-scale mines who interact with, or have the potential to interact with, artisanal and small-scale mining due to proximity or through commercial relationships such as sourcing ore or minerals from these smaller entities.

² See [IRMA's Deep Sea Mining Position](#) (2022).

3. How IRMA maintains **responsibility** for the decisions made by and about its system

IRMA's Board of Directors is made up of two seats each in the following sectors 1) NGOs, 2) labor unions, 3) mining-affected communities, 4) mining companies, 5) companies who purchase mined materials, and 6) companies who finance and invest in the mining sector at the company or project level. The Board may also have up to three non-voting at-large members. The [current Board composition](#) can be found on our web site. Unless otherwise determined by the Board of Directors, all working groups and committees of IRMA, whose work shall result in recommendations to the Board, also ensure balanced representation by each of the sectors above.

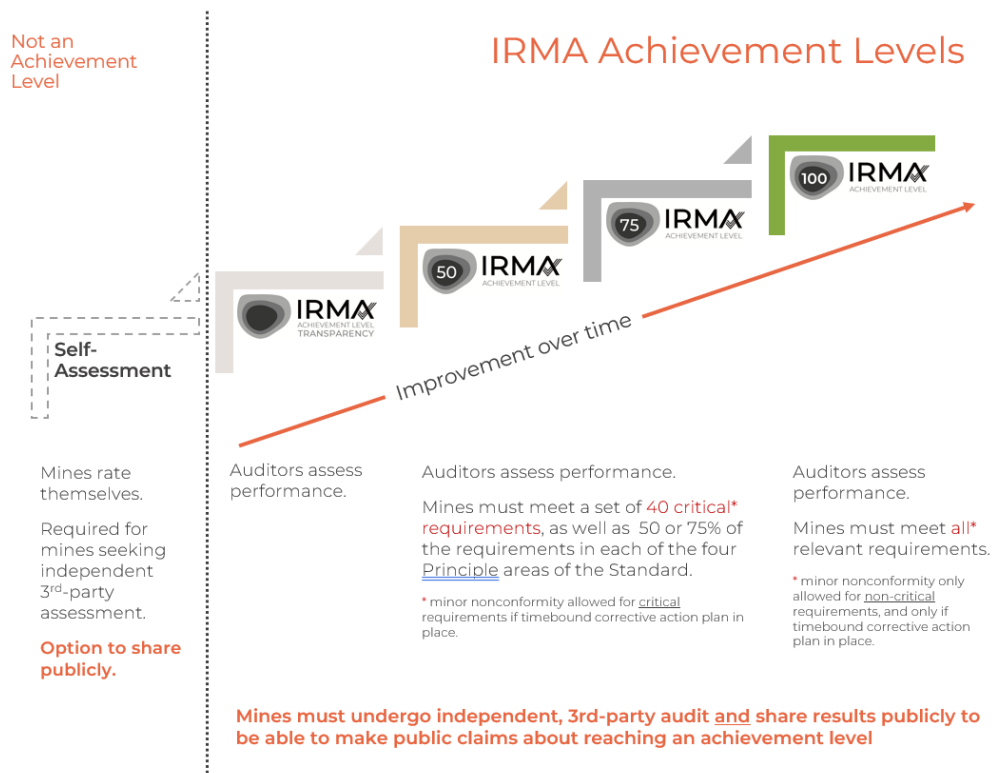
Decisions are made by and about the IRMA system through the IRMA Board of Directors and based on the IRMA Bylaws. Board members strive to make decisions by consensus. Where they cannot achieve this, they agree to vote. However, any vote that results in two "no" votes from the same sector does not pass and the issue must go back to the full group for further discussion and resolution. This means that a topic cannot pass if one or more IRMA house is fundamentally opposed.

Decisions related to IRMA standards, their content and finalization are also made by the Board and based on the IRMA Bylaws. IRMA's standards revision process aims to follow international best practices including public consultation, robust stakeholder engagement, and public summaries of comments received. Following this process, the IRMA Board of Directors shall approve and adopt a standard if it affirms that the standard development process was adequate and the standard is consistent with the specifications that the IRMA Board of Directors approved when the standard development or revision process was initiated; or not approve the standard if it deems otherwise.

4. How the IRMA system demonstrates a commitment to improvement

The IRMA Standard aims to define, recognize, and incentivize best practices for environmental and social responsibility in mining and mineral processing. IRMA recognizes that this is a high standard that has not been described in regulatory frameworks in many countries, and many mining and mineral processing companies may not have seen market value or market differentiation for going beyond a base level of performance. Consequently, IRMA has developed a scoring tool that allows for a richer sense of performance than simply “pass/fail” and furthermore allows for in-depth understanding of performance in each chapter of the IRMA Standard.

The graphic below shows how the IRMA Standard drives continuous improvement.



5. How the Standard is monitored and reviewed to ensure **relevance**

The IRMA Standard is revised at least every five years. The IRMA Standards Development Procedure requires that within five years after the approval date of a standard (or within five years after any substantive revisions to the approved standard) IRMA shall carry out a formal, publicized comment period of sixty days. However, as world events happen, society's expectations and best practices evolve, IRMA standards can be partially revised or have some addenda added as we learn and improve the standard in real time. For example, when the Brazil mine tailings disaster occurred in January 2019, IRMA re-convened the committee for that chapter (waste and materials management) to re-assess the criteria considering the tragedy and what was being learned at the time.

One significant change from the 2018 IRMA Standard 1.0 to the revised version 2.0 is that the requirements will now apply to all phases of the mineral development life cycle, including exploration, project development, permitting, construction, mining and processing operations, reclamation and closure, and post-closure. The IRMA Standard recognizes the different requirements assessed at different phases of the life cycle.

Version 1.0 of the IRMA Standard was written by the IRMA Secretariat and released in 2018 after a robust public consultation process in 2014 and again in 2016 that resulted in more than 2,100 comments and recommendations that informed its content. The 2018 release of version 1.0 also was based on two field tests of the IRMA Standard in Zimbabwe and the United States.

IRMA Standard 2.0 is being developed by the IRMA Secretariat through a similar public consultation process that has engaged diverse stakeholders and Indigenous rights holders around the world, resulting in over 2,500 comments from 82 organizations. In this review and revision process, more than 20 different companies piloted the draft requirements for exploration and development or for mineral processing. In addition, over 140 diverse experts representing more than 100 organizations from 23 countries engaged in 10 topical working groups to provide suggestions to inform and catalyze the IRMA Standard revision process.

The IRMA Chain of Custody Standard was informed by engagement of several companies that tested draft expectations, some of these through mine to market pilots. IRMA held a 90-day public consultation on Draft 2.0 of the IRMA Chain of Custody Standard from October 2023 to January 2024. This draft was informed by pilots and comments on Draft 1.0 of the IRMA Chain of Custody Standard (2020). The public consultation on second draft resulted in 79 comments from 9 organizations.

IRMA welcomes comments and input on IRMA standards at any time at: comments@responsiblemining.net.

6. How IRMA Standards are **implemented**

The IRMA Standard is implemented through an independent, third-party [assessment](#) (audit) of a mining operation that provides the transparency that enables deepened dialogue between the mine site, the workers, communities, and Indigenous rights holders potentially affected at the site level, and other stakeholders.

Audits to the IRMA Standard are authorized to take place in all countries, in accordance with the IRMA Assurance System. Operations considered illegal in the country where they take place cannot be audited.

Detailed IRMA audit reports are independent evaluations of a mine's environmental and social performance. These reports allow communities, customers, investors, and even the mining company's headquarters to gain information they need to understand what's going well at each site—and what may require more attention. A third-party assessment under the IRMA Standard is part of a step-by-step process toward continuous improvement.

The IRMA Chain of Custody Standard is implemented through third-party [assessment](#) of the audited entity's management systems and relevant documentation and records, to evaluate conformance with the IRMA Chain of Custody Standard Conformance Requirements to source and/or supply IRMA-audited material. The assessment against the IRMA Chain of Custody Standard is available to entities using IRMA-audited materials along mineral value chains, including smelters, traders, refiners, fabricators, manufacturers, and end brands buying, processing.