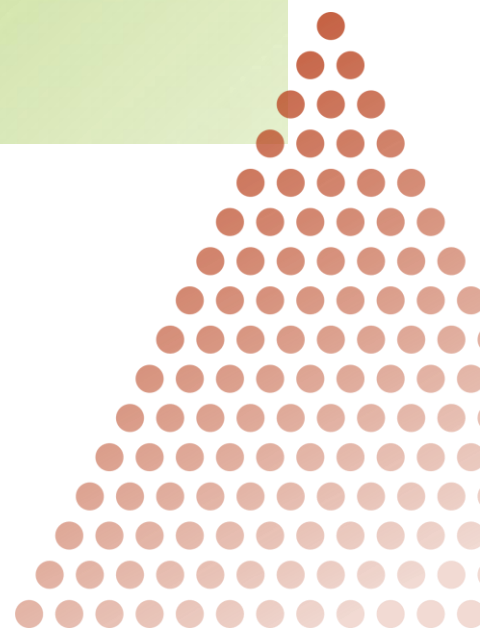
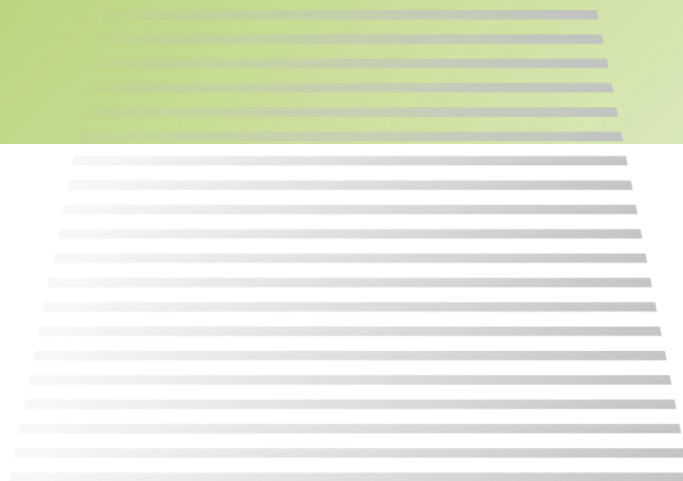


# ASI Data and Research Guiding Framework

Version 1 – August 2023



## Contents

<b>Contents</b> .....	2
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	3
<b>2. Objectives of D&amp;R activities</b> .....	3
<b>3. Priority topics that D&amp;R activities seek to address</b> .....	4
<b>4. Current Scope of D&amp;R activities</b> .....	5
<b>5. D&amp;R planning – overview</b> .....	5
<b>6. Ethical research approaches</b> .....	6
<b>7. Collecting and analysing data and information</b> .....	7
<b>8. Internal dissemination and learning to support continual improvement</b> .....	8
<b>9. External reporting and dissemination</b> .....	9
<b>10. ‘Meta’ communications</b> .....	10
<b>Appendix 1: ASI Strategy</b> .....	11
<b>Appendix 2: List of Indicators regularly reported on</b> .....	12

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## 1. Introduction

The Aluminium Stewardship Initiative (ASI) was incorporated in 2015 to drive responsible production, sourcing and stewardship of aluminium. ASI's Certification Program was launched in December 2017, with 'Beyond Certification' activities commencing in 2022.

ASI's Data and Research workstream is cross-cutting across the organisation, and aims to monitor, evaluate and learn (MEL) from both our interventions as a multi-stakeholder initiative, and the broader context in which we operate.

This Data and Research (D&R) Guiding Framework sets out the key elements for:

- Planning and designing D&R projects and activities
- Carrying out data collection and analysis
- Identifying actionable insights and learning
- Communicating results

Other relevant ASI references that complement this Guiding Framework include:

- ASI Strategy, which includes the theory of change and supporting narratives: one-page summary at <https://aluminium-stewardship.org/about-asi/strategy> (and Appendix 1)
- Anti-Trust Compliance Policy - [https://aluminium-stewardship.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm\\_uploads/2017/10/ASI-Antitrust-Compliance-Policy-02-2021-.pdf](https://aluminium-stewardship.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2017/10/ASI-Antitrust-Compliance-Policy-02-2021-.pdf)
- ASI Data Publication Policy - <https://aluminium-stewardship.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ASI-Data-Publication-Policy-1-2020.pdf>
- ASI IT & Data Governance Handbook (internal)
- ASI Risk Assessment and Management Plan (internal)

## 2. Objectives of D&R activities

The objectives of ASI's Data and Research activities include to:

- a) Monitor progress and performance of ASI workstreams
- b) Evaluate specific activities and/or outcomes
- c) Address learning questions about priority topics
- d) Continue to improve the effectiveness of ASI as a multi-stakeholder initiative
- e) Publish accessible information for stakeholders on D&R activities to:

- i. share how these inform improvements in ASI's workstreams and/or
- ii. inform stakeholder practices, capacity and decision-making.

### 3. Priority topics that D&R activities seek to address

ASI has defined its four critical and inter-connected Sustainability Priorities as:



Cross-cutting with these broad topics, key learning questions include:

#### **A. How do ASI's standards, assurance and certification processes drive change against these sustainability priorities?**

- How could outcomes be improved?
- Are there unintended or unexpected outcomes?
- What are the learning and capacity needs for members, auditors, and stakeholders?

#### **B. What is the performance and progress of certified entities and members over time?**

- Do non-conformances catalyse continuous improvement?
- How can this inform future standards and guidance updates?

#### **C. How can ASI's Beyond Certification activities build capacity for stakeholders, particularly Indigenous/Local Peoples?**

- How can rights-holders be empowered?
- How can diversity, equity and inclusion be addressed?

#### **D. Are ASI's overall strategies, governance, management and controls effective?**

- Are they supporting ASI's theory of change in practice?
- How can they be improved?
- How can ASI synergise with and/or complement broader efforts aimed at sustainability priorities?

#### 4. Current Scope of D&R activities

ASI's vision and mission is focused on the global aluminium value chain, extending from bauxite mining through to downstream use sectors as well as recycling within a holistic material lifecycle approach.

The current scope of D&R activities covers ASI Members, Performance Standard and Chain of Custody Certified Entities, Beyond Certification projects, as well as partnerships- and governance-related activities, from the inception of ASI to the present.

#### 5. D&R planning – overview

In D&R planning, we are guided by the potential opportunities to contribute to one or more of the following areas:

- Addressing sustainability priorities: climate, circularity, nature-positive and/or human rights
- Understanding how the Certification program is being implemented, how this is evolving, and how it should improve
- Identifying future Standards and Guidance revision opportunities (including matters relating to assurance and claims)
- Contributing to learning, capacity building and/or practice improvement Beyond Certification for participants in the aluminium value chain and its broader stakeholders
- Embedding or responding to broader changes, including regulation, technology, stakeholder needs, and industry challenges
- Considering causality where relevant, and whether it is possible to attribute any observed changes to ASI.

When designing D&R activities and projects, we consider:

- Data sources and methodologies to ensure quality and integrity
- Resources needed (human and financial)
- Opportunities to embed metrics into our digital platforms
- Ethical research principles when there are human participants
- Risk management as appropriate

- Target audiences (external and internal) and appropriate dissemination channels to suit their needs
- Timelines and deliverables

Information on D&R plans, activities, projects are maintained on an internal **Trello** board to enable the broader ASI team to track, contribute and collaborate.

Individual Trello cards are used to map out general frameworks and context, current activities and progress/requests, future ideas and recurring analyses.

Information should include:

- a) The topic/s and learning questions being addressed
- b) The activities, data sources, and methodologies that will be used to answer these questions
- c) When outputs are planned to be made public and in what format/s
- d) Internal actions or next steps during or after the activity or project

Collectively, this information enables multi-year planning. ASI aims to generate findings and learnings on all four sustainability priorities within a 5 year period.

## 6. Ethical research approaches

ASI commits to an honest, ethical and conscientious research culture. The values of respect, research merit and integrity, fairness, and societal benefit are central to this approach.

For research involving human participants, ASI will implement processes to:

- Consider the risks and benefits of the research to participants
- Consider whether the benefits justify the risks
- Enable the participants' voluntary and informed consent
- Enable consent to be renegotiated or withdrawn

ASI works directly with Indigenous/local and land-connected communities through its D&R program. An ethical research approach aligns with Indigenous/traditional knowledge traditions that articulate how to act in the right spirit, with integrity and with respect for Country and for all living things (<https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/code-ethics>).

For research with Indigenous/local/rural communities, ASI will also implement processes to:

- Enable Indigenous-led research and projects
- Support effective Indigenous/local/rural engagement, collaboration, and participation, valuing their perspectives
- Recognise, respect and elevate Indigenous/traditional knowledge and data
- Contribute to individual and community capacity-building and learning
- Connect to Indigenous/traditional lands and waters and their ongoing governance

A range of detailed codes and guidelines on research ethics in the Australian context that inform ASI’s D&R work are found at: <https://www.arc.gov.au/about-arc/program-policies/research-integrity/codes-and-guidelines>

Collaborators and participants are welcome to raise any questions or concerns about D&R activities through the ASI Complaints Mechanism: <https://aluminium-stewardship.org/complaints-mechanism>

## 7. Collecting and analysing data and information

ASI collects a wide range of data and information, as set out in Table 1 below.

<p><b>Ongoing submission pipeline embedded in ASI processes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership Applications</li> <li>• Auditor Accreditation Applications</li> <li>• Assurance data (including audit reports) in elementAL</li> <li>• Chain of Custody Material Flow data</li> <li>• Claims approvals</li> <li>• educationAL modules completion scores and rates</li> <li>• Complaints</li> </ul>
<p><b>Proactive collection processes to seek additional insights, evaluations or stakeholder input</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys (including annual governance survey, ongoing certification survey)</li> <li>• Qualitative data collection methods (including interviews, focus group discussions, observation)</li> <li>• Consultation processes (including for standards revisions)</li> <li>• Witness assessments and other site visits</li> <li>• Field work activities</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluations conducted by third parties and commissioned by ASI</li> </ul>
<b>Data sharing across organisations and accessed in public domain</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literature reviews</li> <li>• Data shared with ASI through collaborations between parties</li> <li>• Public access data from organisations, institutes, platforms etc.</li> </ul>

*Table 1 – Types of data and information collected by ASI*

Data and information collection is done with various frequencies (e.g. one-time only, continuous, periodic) and is dependent on the needs of the D&R activity and broader ASI program.

Methodologies for analysis will depend on the relevant data sources and may be quantitative and/or qualitative in nature. Iterative and/or action research methods may also be appropriate in some community contexts.

Published analyses and insights shall describe the methodologies and data sources, both positive and negative findings, any limitations to the analysis, and any recommendations for improvement or further research.

## **8. Internal dissemination and learning for continual improvement**

ASI's D&R program – including indicators, projects, research, analyses and evaluations – is designed to support better practice and learning. To catalyse learning within ASI – particularly through its Secretariat and governance bodies – internal sharing and reflection is key.

D&R activities may provide clear and unambiguous insights. At times, however, the implications may be unclear, or projects may not be able to deliver what was planned. Reflections on project management, methodology and controllable vs uncontrollable factors will inform what, if any, next or future steps could be taken.

Internal dissemination channels include reports and presentations to Secretariat meetings and workshops, and governance groups including the Board, Standards Committee, Working Groups and the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Forum. These occur regularly through the year. Data and Research updates are a standing item in the Board's meeting agenda.



Feedback and lessons learned are used to input into improvement opportunities through:

- Future D&R activities
- Standards and Guidance update and revision cycles
- Learning updates (educationAL)
- Assurance processes (including elementAL)
- Management reviews
- Strategy development and progress reporting

## 9. External reporting and dissemination

External communications are also a critical part of ASI’s D&R program, to enable broader stakeholder insight, learning, action and/or feedback.

A wide range of D&R activities and outcomes are published on the ASI website and shared with stakeholders through various channels. Some are communicated regularly or periodically, while others are via a one-time only report.

Table 2 summarises key external dissemination channels:

Type	Channel	Description
<b>Data access</b>	<a href="#">Outcomes Dashboard</a>	Program progress indicators
	<a href="#">Public Dashboard</a> in elementAL	Database-level access to ASI audit reports and metrics
	<a href="#">ASI Certification Map</a>	Location-level access to ASI Certified operations
<b>Analyses and evaluations</b>	<a href="#">D&amp;R Insights</a>	Articles published in our member and/or public newsletters and on the ASI website
	<a href="#">Outcome/Impact Evaluations</a>	Commissioned from external researchers
	<a href="#">ASI Chain of Custody Material Flows</a>	Visualised in the context of global aluminium supply and demand

	Member stories	Short case studies of changes made by ASI Members
	Other project reports and publications	Internal, external and/or collaborative
<b>Interactive discussions and presentations</b>	<a href="#">"45mins on..."</a>	ASI regular webinar series
	Community workshops	To provide culturally appropriate access to insights and outcomes at a community level
	Learning modules on educationAL	To distil D&R outcomes into learning channels
	Conferences and events	Share D&R activities and outcomes with diverse audiences
	Annual General Meeting	Members have the opportunity to receive reports and ask questions of the Board and Secretariat.

ASI's Antitrust Compliance Policy sets out the circumstances in which advice from the ASI Legal Committee and/or independent legal counsel is needed regarding publication of any commercially sensitive information.

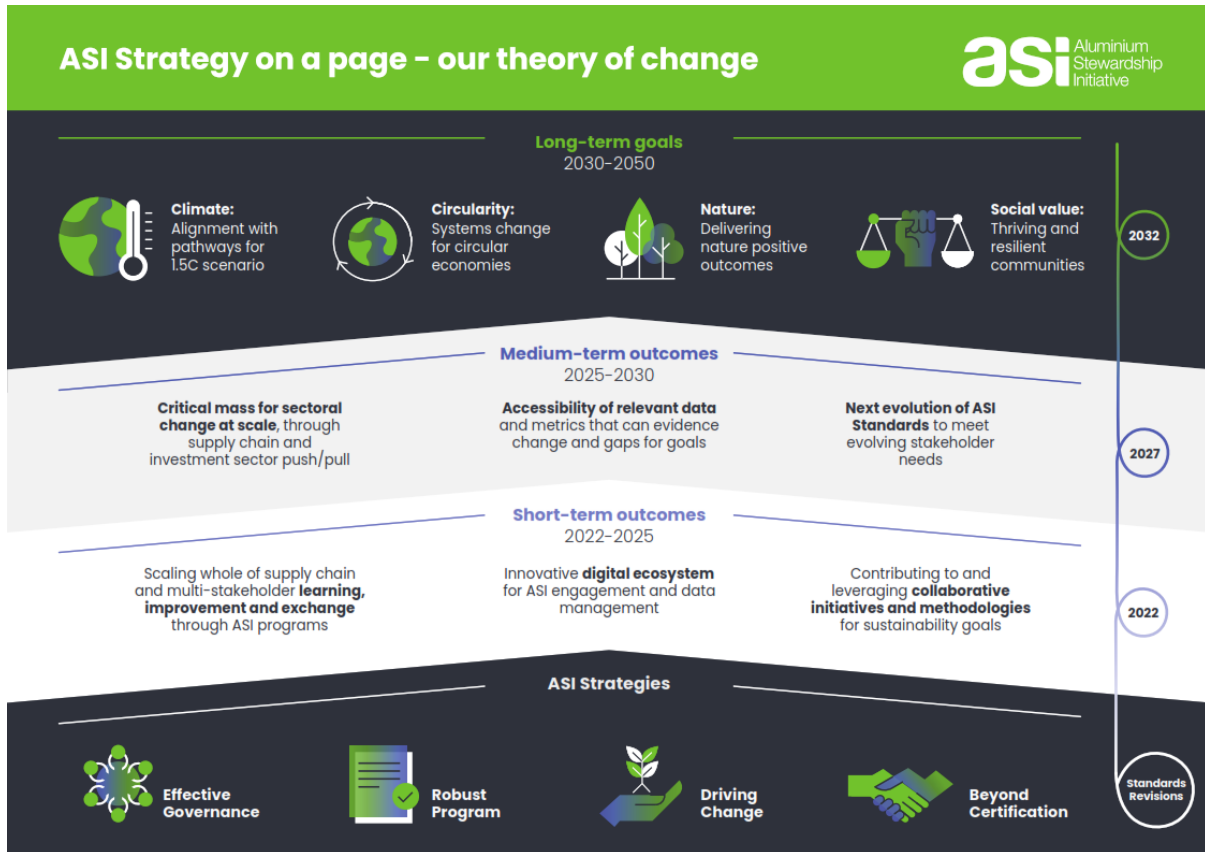
## 10. 'Meta' communications

In addition to project and activity level communications, ASI will publish the following higher-level information about the D&R program through its website and/or opt-in newsletters:

1. This Guiding Framework
2. A plan of D&R activities
3. A list of indicators being regularly reported on (Appendix 2)
4. Opportunities for stakeholder feedback on D&R activities and outputs
5. From January 2024 and every 2 years from then, a short summary of findings, learnings and recommendations from D&R activities, and a management response that includes an explanation of the changes and improvements that have been and will be made as a result.

## Appendix 1: ASI Strategy

ASI Strategy and Theory of Change below identifies and defines the intended long-term goals of the organisation, with the short-term (2022-2025) and medium-term (2025-2030) outcomes being worked towards in support of these.



## Appendix 2: List of Indicators regularly reported on

An indicator is something that provides evidence of change – it is however not the desired change itself.

The table below sets out ASI’s program-level indicators which we currently report publicly against. These connect primarily to the desired short-term outcome of:

- **Scaling whole of supply chain and multi-stakeholder learning, improvement and exchange through ASI programs**

Indicators marked with \* show those that are also in the [ISEAL Common Core Indicators](#).

Indicator	Strategic intent	Potential unintended consequence
<b>1. Growth in ASI members by membership class, size and location.</b>	ASI membership is inclusive and diverse.	Increased governance and management complexity.
<b>2. Growth in certified entities/facilities overall and by supply chain activity (both Standards).*</b>	Sufficient scale of uptake, with both historically high and low performers, can contribute to sectoral transformation.	More heterogeneous group of implementers, including greater gaps to reach standards and greater program risk.
<b>3. Growth in flow of Chain of Custody (CoC) Material, in the context of global supply and demand.</b>	Enabling flow of performance assurance and sustainability information through (certified) supply chains.	Obstacles to material or information flow can be challenging to address.
<b>4. Number and identity of countries where certified entities produce.*</b>	ASI certification can be equitably accessed across a range of geographical regions.	Increased support demands across languages and diverse contexts.
<b>5. Number of audit firms and country coverage.</b>	There is sufficient availability of competent and experienced auditors.	Growing demand for auditors in developing economies presents challenges.
<b>6. Number and nature of non-</b>	Non-conformance incidence feeds into	Non-conformances are seen as a negative

<b>conformances, including by Standard, by principle, by criteria, and by severity rating.</b>	ongoing learning, assurance and standards programs.	instead of an improvement and change opportunity.
<b>7. Progress of corrective actions for non-conformances.</b>	Longitudinal trends for addressing non-conformances highlight changes that can be attributed to ASI.	Slow progress may undermine confidence in the program.
<b>8. ASI educationAI uptake – numbers of auditors; members and stakeholders.</b>	Deliver learning programs that are of value.	Must be complemented by qualitative feedback and needs assessments.
<b>9. Existing recognised certifications held by ASI certified entities, leveraged for ASI certification.</b>	Harmonisation and recognition reduce unnecessary duplication for ASI participants.	Non-conformances from other certifications will also be highlighted in published ASI audit reports.
<b>10. Total number of people working in ASI Performance Standard facilities*</b>	Understand scale of Certification uptake in people-based terms.	Homogenous worker experiences cannot be assumed.
<b>11. Feedback on ASI Certification (certified entity survey).</b>	Understand drivers, benefits and challenges for ASI Certification.	Self-selected sample may not be representative over time.
<b>12. Feedback on ASI governance (member survey).</b>	Annual review of the effectiveness of the Board and Standards Committee, and general opportunities for ASI participation.	As ASI grows, not all members are interested in the governance of the organisation.
<b>13. Case studies of good practice, improvements and corrective actions.</b>	Share outcomes, knowledge and inspiration for changes in the aluminium value chain.	Reluctance from some members to communicate publicly on sensitive issues.

<b>14. Number of countries where products with on-product ASI Claims are sold.*</b>	Customer and consumer awareness of ASI program.	Majority of ASI information on website available in English. (Auto-translate options under investigation).
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Additional indicators may be added during future revisions of this Framework, as internal systems and digital platforms continue to develop.