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**Sustainable Leather Foundation  
Standard for Public Relations and Communications**

**Reference:** FSG11.1  
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**Peer Reviewed by:** XXX  
**Accredited by:** XXX

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## **FSG11 PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS STANDARD AND BENCHMARK**

**Summary:** The SLF Public Relations and Communications Standard provides the context, definitions, and methodology around public relations and communications in the leather industry. This document gives the facility under audit the principles and general expectations, but it is not exhaustive and recognises that there will be differences within regions for national and local laws.

Where there are matters of interpretation in relation to the standard, applicable laws or organisational norms, the auditor will assess in favour of the employees in that facility.



## 1. Scope

1.1 The *SLF Public Relations and Communications Standard and Benchmark* specifies guidance for the development of policies and procedures surrounding public relations, communications, and marketing practices within the organisation. This standard encompasses direction on the requirements of a formalised structure of communication governing the internal and external communications of an organisation.

1.2 A Public Relations and Communications structure is an integral part of promoting a cohesive, transparent community that sustains and reinforces the organisational strategy, operational targets and environmental, social and governance (ESG) opportunities.

1.3 The *Public Relations and Communication Standard and Benchmark* is intended to ensure that SLF certified facilities are aware of the necessary systems required to build, implement, and manage public relations and communications structures for optimal alignment of stakeholders, performance, and engagement.

## 2. Normative references

The following referenced documents are useful in the understanding of this document and are provided for further guidance. In the case of dispute these references form the core of the evidence in support of the Standard used here:

CMA Guidance on Environmental Claims on Goods and Services<sup>1</sup>

Harvard Law School Forum on Corporate Governance – Principles of Corporate Governance<sup>2</sup>

## 3. Terms and definitions

3.1 **RD&I (Research, Development & Innovation):** Activities within a business that involve the investigation, testing and implementation of new product, process, or organisational ideas. An example would be the Product Development team focused on activities creating new products.

3.2 **Third-Party Auditor:** An independent contractor or service entity conducting a certified audit outside of SLF and the organisation involved.

3.3 **Ethical and Statutory Commitments:** Requirements and/or guidance set by governing or international bodies that are the foundation of good public relations and communications practices.

3.7 **Marketing Communication:** External verbal or written communication published by the organisation for the purposes of selling to, promoting, or communicating with their customers, the public, and/ or their supply chain.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-claims-code-making-environmental-claims>

<sup>2</sup> <https://corpgov.law.harvard.edu/2016/09/08/principles-of-corporate-governance/>



## 4. Principle

4.1 The principle of the *SLF Public Relations and Communications Standard and Benchmark* is based upon the need for responsible organisations to develop formalised structures systems to standardize public relations and communications for the accurate representation of their organisation and engagement with stakeholders. The establishment of a Public Relations and Communications structure is intended to provide a systematic approach to communications management by:

- 4.1.1 Facilitating opportunities to proactively engage internal and external stakeholders
- 4.1.2 Applying a systematic approach to communication, encouraging positive engagement
- 4.1.3 Formalizing an ethical approach to a communications plan, policy, and procedure
- 4.1.4 Ensuring that marketing communications are validated against corporate and regulatory requirements
- 4.1.5 Developing a structure that is linked with the organisation’s corporate ESG strategy

4.2 The Public Relations and Communications Standard is based on internationally recognised best practices that outline the core systems of corporate governance. A key aspect of corporate governance is the standards in which organisations communicate internally and externally. As communication is a function of each area of an organisation, specific communication guidance can be referenced within each of the SLF Standards and Benchmarks provided in SLF’s Technical Library.

4.3 The Public Relations and Communications procedure will be most effective with alignment directly related to the conformities, obligations, and requirements of the organisation’s legal, regional and customer requirements for its facility, service, product, and operations. The *SLF Public Relations and Communications Standard and Benchmark* provides an outline for the method of creating a system, however it is up to the organisation to apply a risk-based approach, seeking confirmation of its environmental obligations and requirements prior to audit and certification.

## 5. Procedure

5.1 The facility will provide data and documentation that demonstrates an effective management system to meet the requirements of the *SLF Public Relations and Communications Standard and Benchmark* as follows:

- 5.1.1 Formalised structure for communication in relation to general employees, SLF/third party auditors, local community, international leather industry, customers, suppliers, and concerned individuals.
- 5.1.2 Customer feedback process handled through management review and linked to RD&I process
- 5.1.3 Implemented structure for customer data protection
- 5.1.4 Plan, policy, and procedure for external marketing communications and aligned with corporate ESG
- 5.1.5 Marketing claims/goals/targets compliant with regulatory or legal requirements

5.2 The measurement of total operational performance may differ throughout the leather industry based upon which part of the leather-making process the facility takes part in. Please reference the following SLF Explanatory Notes & Templates for specifics on communication guidance. These documents are located



in the “Technical Library” within the Partner Only Resources area of the website and are designed to support either in preparation for audit or for improvement measures:

<https://sustainableleatherfoundation.com/partner-only-resources/technical-library>

- 5.2.1 FSG7.1 Process Control and QA V1.0 – reference to ISO9001, Section 7.4 Communications (provides excellent guidance on structures for formalised communication structures)

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