



How to use it:

Guidance for organizations using ISO 9001:2026



What is ISO 9001?

Organizations succeed when they consistently deliver what customers need while adapting to changing expectations, new risks and emerging opportunities. ISO 9001 provides the framework to do exactly that.

As the internationally recognized standard for quality management systems (QMS), ISO 9001 helps organizations improve the way they operate. It provides a structured approach to managing quality across every aspect of the business. By helping organizations understand their context, manage risks and opportunities, strengthen leadership and improve processes, it supports the consistent delivery of products and services that meet applicable requirements while enhancing customer satisfaction.

ISO 9001:2026 builds on the strengths of the 2015 edition. Rather than introducing major new requirements, it clarifies existing ones, reinforces key concepts, such as quality culture, ethical behaviour and resilience, and reflects the changing needs and expectations of stakeholders. The result is a standard that remains relevant, practical and effective for organizations operating in a changing world.

What benefits will it bring to my business or organization?

Every organization is different, but the benefits of implementing ISO 9001 are often similar. A well-designed QMS helps organizations operate more consistently, make better decisions and continually improve their performance.

It can help you:

- Assess your organization's context, including internal and external issues that can affect your ability to achieve intended results
- Consider whether climate change is relevant to your QMS
- Decide which needs/expectations of relevant interested parties your QMS should address
- Establish clear objectives
- Put customers first, making sure you consistently meet their needs and strive to exceed their expectations
- Promote a culture of quality, integrity and ethical behaviour throughout your organization
- Work more efficiently by ensuring that processes are aligned, understood and effectively managed
- Improve consistency, productivity and control internal costs

-
- Meet applicable statutory and regulatory requirements
 - Identify and address risks before they affect the ability to achieve your objectives
 - Proactively seek and take action to realize opportunities
 - Strengthen resilience in the face of disruption, supply chain pressures, technological change, and evolving customer expectations
 - Expand into new markets, where ISO 9001 is often a prerequisite for doing business



What is quality management all about?

ISO 9001 is built on seven core quality management principles that help organizations create value for customers and other interested parties. Applying these principles makes it easier to implement, maintain and improve your QMS.

1 Customer focus

Every successful organization starts with its customers. Understanding what they need today, and anticipating what they will expect tomorrow, helps build lasting relationships and long-term success. Meeting customer requirements is essential, but so is maintaining their trust. This means responding to evolving expectations for reliability, responsiveness, transparency, ethical behaviour, digital interaction and continuity of supply.

2 Leadership

Leadership sets the direction for the organization and creates the conditions for success. Effective leaders provide a clear sense of purpose, communicate objectives and help people understand how their work contributes to achieving them. They foster an environment in which quality is embedded in business processes, while promoting a culture of integrity and ethical behaviour.

3 Engagement of people

Your QMS is only as effective as the people who put it into practice. When employees are competent, empowered and engaged, they are better able to contribute towards quality objectives, including customer satisfaction, ethical behaviour and continual improvement. They should also have the skills and confidence to use information, data and digital technologies effectively in their day-to-day work.

4 Process approach

Organizations achieve better results when they manage activities as connected processes rather than isolated tasks. People and processes do not exist in a vacuum. Understanding how they fit together and how they depend on resources, suppliers, infrastructure, information and technology helps improve consistency, efficiency and resilience. The process approach also enables organizations to factor in disruptions, outsourced activities, digital tools and other factors that may affect their ability to deliver products and services consistently.

5 Improvement

Organizations that regularly review their performance, and respond to changes in their internal and external contexts, are better equipped to meet customer needs and adapt to new challenges. This is especially important in a fast-changing business environment. Improvement can take many forms – from small, incremental changes to breakthrough innovation. It may involve improving processes, making better use of data, strengthening resilience, enhancing the customer experience, or learning from nonconformities, audits, complaints and feedback.

6 Evidence-based decision making

Good decisions are based on reliable evidence. By collecting and analysing accurate, relevant data, organizations are more likely to make informed decisions and achieve their intended results. In today's digital environment, this means ensuring that data and information are accurate, reliable and available when needed, while recognizing the limitations and potential bias of data, analytics and automated tools.

7 Relationship management

Today's businesses and organizations do not work in isolation. Managing relationships with customers, suppliers, partners, regulators, employees and external service providers helps improve collaboration, resilience and long-term performance. It also enables organizations to better understand evolving needs and expectations, such as those related to climate change, sustainability and ethical behaviour, and respond to them effectively.

More information on quality management principles, including practical guidance on how to apply them, can be found in ISO 9000, which sets out the fundamentals of quality management.



How do I get started?

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to implementing ISO 9001. Every organization starts from a different place, but all can benefit from the practical guidance ISO provides. Resources include Annex A of ISO 9001:2026, which clarifies the intent of the requirements, and other supporting standards such as ISO 10010 on quality culture or ISO 10013 on documented information.

The following tips will also help to get you started:

Tip 1

→ Understand your organization's context

Start by understanding the context in which your organization operates. Identify the internal and external factors that could influence your ability to achieve your objectives and consistently deliver quality products and services. These may include market conditions, customer expectations, legal and regulatory requirements, technology, resources, supply chain pressures, organizational culture and climate-related issues.

Next, identify the interested parties that can affect your QMS or be affected by it, such as customers, regulators, employees, suppliers, owners, partners, certification bodies and the wider society. Determine their needs and expectations, then decide which of these your QMS should address.

Tip 2

→ Understand what you are trying to achieve

Why do you want to implement ISO 9001? Think about your organization's context, your objectives and the outcomes you want to achieve. When implemented effectively, a QMS based on ISO 9001 can bring many tangible benefits, including more consistent products and services, greater efficiency and increased customer satisfaction. It can also provide the foundation for securing new business, entering new markets and supporting your organization's long-term success.

Tip 3

→ Make sure top management is actively involved

Everyone in the organization has a role to play, but success starts with leadership. Top management needs to set a clear direction, provide the necessary resources and demonstrate its commitment by making quality part of everyday business. When senior leaders champion customer focus, a quality culture, ethical behaviour and continual improvement, the QMS becomes a driver of better performance across the organization.

Tip 4

→ Identify your key processes

Every organization relies on a series of connected processes to deliver products and services. Identify the processes that are critical to achieving your quality objectives and meet customer requirements.

For each process, ask yourself:

- What is it intended to achieve?
- What are its inputs and outputs?
- How does it interact with other processes?
- Who is responsible?
- What resources are needed?
- What controls should be in place?
- How will you measure and monitor performance?
- What risks and opportunities need to be addressed?

The answers to these questions will serve as the basis of your QMS.

Tip 5

→ Address risks and opportunities

Think about what might prevent your QMS from achieving its objectives, as well as what could help it perform even better. Identify risks such as process failures, customer dissatisfaction, supply chain disruption, resource constraints, competence gaps, regulatory changes, climate-related issues, data integrity or external providers.

At the same time, look for opportunities to improve your QMS, deliver more consistent products and services, and enhance customer satisfaction. Opportunities might include entering new markets, improving processes, enhancing the customer experience, making better use of digital tools, and strengthening collaboration.

Tip 6

→ Use evidence to monitor performance

A QMS only creates value if you know how well it is performing. Monitor and review it regularly using information that reflects its effectiveness, such as process performance, audit findings, nonconformities, customer feedback, complaints and management review outputs. Use this evidence to make informed decisions and improve your organization's performance.

Tip 7

→ Improve continually

A QMS is never “finished”. It is a continual cycle of planning, learning and action, with each stage building on the last. Regularly review your organization's context, your planning and the effectiveness of your QMS. Learn from experience, take action and make continual improvement a part of the way you work.

How is the standard structured?

ISO 9001 follows the harmonized structure used across all ISO management systems standards (MSS). This makes it easier to integrate with other MSSs, such as ISO 14001 and ISO 45001.

The standard is structured in ten clauses:

- Clauses 0–3: Introduction, scope, normative references, terms and definitions
- Clause 4: Context of the organization
- Clause 5: Leadership
- Clause 6: Planning
- Clause 7: Support
- Clause 8: Operation
- Clause 9: Performance evaluation
- Clause 10: Improvement

ISO 9001:2026 retains the familiar structure of previous editions while clarifying and updating selected requirements.

You can preview Clauses 0 to 3 on the <https://www.iso.org/obp> Online Browsing Platform (OBP).

What is new in the 2026 edition?

If your organization is using ISO 9001:2015, the good news is that the 2026 edition builds on what you already know. Rather than introducing major new requirements, it clarifies existing ones, strengthens key concepts and makes the standard easier to understand and apply.

Key updates include:

- Greater emphasis on leadership, quality culture and ethical behaviour
- Clearer distinction between risks and opportunities
- Closer alignment with other ISO management system standards
- A new Annex A explaining the intent of requirements and commonly used terms
- Simpler, clearer language throughout the standard

Most organizations will not need to make significant changes to their QMS. However, they should review how their current system addresses the updated requirements, particularly leadership's role in promoting a quality culture and ethical behaviour, change management and the distinction between risks and opportunities.

How can I get certified to the standard?

Certification is optional. The real value of ISO 9001 lies in implementing a QMS that reflects the intention of the requirements. Certification can nevertheless bring important business benefits. It provides customers and the wider value chain with confidence that the QMS conforms to the requirements of ISO 9001, and may also help organizations access markets or contracts where certification is required.

If you've decided to get certified, the next step is to choose a certification body. Although ISO does not carry out certification itself, there are many reputable certification bodies around the world that do.

When selecting a certification body, look for one that:

- Has auditors with knowledge and experience in your area of activity
- Complies with the relevant conformity assessment standards
- Can clearly explain its certification process, including how audits are planned, certification decisions are made and surveillance audits are conducted

Take the time to compare several certification bodies before making your decision.

If you're already certified to ISO 9001:2015, your conformity assessment body – the organization responsible for assessing and certifying your QMS – can help you understand the changes introduced in ISO 9001:2026 and plan a smooth transition.

What is accreditation?

When a certification body is accredited, it has been assessed by an accreditation body and found to be competent to carry out certification in accordance with the relevant International Standards. In other words, while certification provides confidence that your organization's QMS meets the requirements of ISO 9001, accreditation provides confidence in the certification body itself.

Choosing an accredited certification body provides an additional level of confidence in the certification process and the certificate issued, giving customers and other interested parties greater assurance that your certification has been carried out by a competent organization.

To find an accredited certification body, contact your national accreditation body or consult the [Global Accreditation Cooperation Incorporated \(Global ACI\)](#).



Looking to go further?

ISO 9001 is the cornerstone of the ISO 9000 family, but it's only one part of a broader set of standards designed to help organizations build, improve and sustain effective quality management.

Whether you're implementing your first QMS, driving continual improvement or strengthening your audit programme, these complementary standards provide practical guidance to help you achieve your goals.

→ ISO 9000

New to quality management? ISO 9000 introduces the concepts, principles and terminology behind ISO 9001, helping your organization understand, implement and maintain your QMS with confidence.

→ ISO 9004

ISO 9004 aims to embed quality throughout the organization. While ISO 9001 focuses on achieving customer satisfaction through quality products and services, ISO 9004 broadens that focus to every aspect of the business – from leadership and strategy to culture and relationships – creating the conditions for stronger performance and sustained success.

→ ISO 19011

Regular audits help ensure your management system remains effective over time. ISO 19011 provides practical guidance on planning, conducting and improving management systems audits, supporting both internal audits and external conformity assessment activities.

For an overview of the full ISO 9000 family and related standards, visit ISO's dedicated [web page](#).

 **NBN**



NBN

Jozef II-straat 40 box 6

1000 Brussels

T. +32 2 738 01 11

www.nbn.be