IS Essentials FAQs

(Version 24 June 2024)

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General

Q: What is IS Essentials?

A: IS Essentials is a sustainability rating tool for infrastructure assets with a capital value of $5-100m and covers the Design and As Built phases. It is tailored to suit all types of infrastructure, including rail, road, water, energy, airport, port and social infrastructure.

Q: What are the benefits of undertaking an IS Essentials rating?

A: Doing an IS Rating ensures *verified* social, environmental, economic and governance outcomes for the infrastructure project – across the asset lifecycle.
It helps proponents to prioritise and achieve their organisational sustainability targets at a project level and helps generate the data to track impact. The process will help your project identify the highest priority sustainability issues for your project's context and stakeholders, i.e., where the most impact is likely to be achieved ("measure what matters"). The insights and data gained through the process can support ESG reporting and help attract sustainable finance.

The IS ratings process helps organisations build and improve sustainability capabilities, policies and tools and as such can have a legacy beyond the project that is undergoing the rating.

Q: How is the IS Essentials tool reduced in scale and complexity compared to the ISC's larger project tool?

A: IS Essentials is reduced in complexity through reducing the number of credits required to be undertaken and reducing the requirements within each credit. Only high materiality credits are screened in to ensure the project can focus on what is most important to them - see Materiality Assessment section below. The ISC has also produced a number of templates for IS Essentials projects, to further reduce the scale and complexity of the work required for a Rating submission. Finally, IS Essentials will be the first digital ratings tool. It uses our new IS Ratings Portal that provides more guidance during the rating process and access to a Resource Centre with intelligent search capabilities for projects to use.

Q: What elements of the Rating are digitalised?

A: IS Essentials is the first IS rating tool to use ISC's new IS Ratings Portal. The portal covers most aspects of doing a rating including Materiality Assessment, Design and As Built phase credits and managing evidence. A new Resource Centre with intelligent search capabilities built-in enables easy access to information while working on a rating. The portal replaces several of the tools currently used in completing a rating, including the Scorecard in Excel, Credit Summary Forms in Word and SharePoint folders.

Requirements

Q: What is an ISAP and why do we need one for the IS Essentials project?

A: An ISAP is an Infrastructure Sustainability Accredited Professional. This person is usually responsible for preparing the project's rating submission for verification. ISAPs have completed an IS for Professionals Pathway, undertaking training in the implementation of the IS Rating Scheme and completing the end of pathway exam (ISAP accreditation). ISAPs receive regular updates to the IS Rating Scheme and are invited to IS Update webinars and annual training days. ISAP accreditation must be maintained annually through the ISAP renewal process.
There must be a named and current ISAP on your project. If your organisation does not have a certified ISAP, please talk to us about training options.

Q: Is there any IS Essentials specific training available?

A: Yes, from June 2024 IS Essentials modules are included as part of IS Design and As Built training

Q: I am currently accredited in IS v2.1 D&AB, what are my options?

A: You can access the IS Essentials training modules free of charge for the month of June 2024. From July 2024, there will be a fee to undertake IS Essentials modules.

Q: I am currently accredited ISAP (IS v1.2 D&AB, Planning or Operations). What training should I undertake?

A: You are required to undertake the new IS Design and As Built training. The new D&AB training is specific to IS v2.1 and includes IS Essentials modules.

Q: *This is my first time undertaking IS for Professionals Pathway training,* **OR** *my ISAP accreditation has expired. What training should I undertake?*

A: You are required to undertake IS Rating Skills and IS Design and As Built training. IS Essentials modules is included as part of IS Design and As Built training.

Q: *What internal resourcing is required to deliver an IS Essentials Rating?*

A: An IS Essentials rating is an opportunity to drive real change, innovation and impact in sustainability. Doing an IS Essentials rating requires commitment across the organisation to align around a joint goal, to drive outcomes and to build capability. Whilst the ISAP leads the process, they will require support from various collaborators within and outside the organisation.
As with all IS rating tools, the effort depends on several factors including the number of credits and levels being targeted by the project, the processes and policies already in place, and the experience level of the team. For organisations new to IS ratings, we recommend focusing on a limited number of credits that are material for the organisation and attempting to target those for maximum impact.

Q: *Does an organisation need to be an ISC member to deliver an IS Essentials Rating?*

A: Whilst not mandatory for delivering an IS Essentials rating, ISC membership gives your organisation access to number of financial benefits such as reduced ratings fees and discounts on training and events. It also enables your organisation to actively participate in the development of the ISC's offerings and provides access to a wide network of experts that can help you progress faster on your sustainability journey.

Project Registration

Q: *What are the timelines for registering a project?*

A: The best time to register a project is prior to procurement stage. Please reach out to us at info@iscouncil.org if you would like to discuss your project prior to registration.

Q: *We have already completed our design, can we still apply for a rating?*

A: This may be possible. Please get in touch with ISC at info@iscouncil.org to discuss.

Q: *Who should be registering the project, the proponent or the project?*

A: Either a project proponent or the project designer/contractor may register the project for the IS Essentials. The decision may come down to contractual responsibility and ultimately who owns the rating.

Rating Process

Q: How will the ISC support the ratings process?

A: You will have an assigned IS Project Manager to help guide you through the process. After an initial Kick-Off meeting, there are regular touch points (usually monthly) to help you understand where you are and what the next steps are in the process. You can also refer to the road map, the IS Essentials Technical Manual for rating process guidance and detailed information on credits, and the Submission Guidelines for practical tips and lessons learned.

Q: What is the Materiality Assessment?

A: The materiality assessment will help your project identify the highest priority sustainability issues for your project's context, i.e., where the most impact is likely to be achieved ("measure what matters"). The relevant credits will be identified through answering a number of project related questions, and their relative weighting for the overall rating will be determined. You will need to provide evidence to support your materiality answers.

Q: How many credits do I need to address in my submission?

A: There are no compulsory or mandatory credits in the IS Essentials tool. The number of credits that are screened in during the materiality assessment, and hence able to be targeted, depends on the project CAPEX (see table below).
There are 10 'permanent' credits which are pre-determined and are automatically screened in. 'Additional' credits are automatically screened in based on the materiality allocated to each credit during the materiality assessment. Credits with a materiality of 3 and 4 are screened in, up to a maximum of the upper limit for the applicable Capital expenditure band. If there are insufficient materiality 3 or 4 credits to reach the lower limit of the capital band, the next highest weighted credit will be screened in until the lower limit is achieved. In addition, the project can choose to target further 'Elective' credits regardless of their capital band. A total of 110 points will be distributed across the permanent and screened in credits. The IS Essentials Technical Manual contains 34 credits in total.

Capital Band	'Permanent' Credits Screened in	'Additional' Credits Screened in	Total Credits Screened in		'Elective' Credits Screened in
			Lower Limit	Upper Limit	
$5 to < 20M	10	0 - 5	10	15	*voluntary*
$20 to < 50M	10	5 - 10	15	20	*voluntary*
$50 to 100M	10	10 - 15	20	25	*voluntary*

Q: After doing the Materiality Assessment – what credits and score should we target?

A: As with all IS rating tools, the screened in credits the project elects to target is entirely at the project's discretion.

Choosing appropriate target credits and potential target score is one of the key early steps in ensuring the rating tool helps your project deliver positive outcomes. Your targets might be an overall score, a rating level (e.g. Bronze, Silver) or an outcome for a particular category or credit. You may have specific contractual requirements or KPIs to meet. Consider project resources, budget and time constraints when choosing what to focus on. It doesn't always make sense to target a very high score or to target every screened in credit, especially where the organisations and project team involved are new to IS ratings.

Q: How does the verification process work?

A: The IS Essentials verification process is similar to the verification process for the v1.2 and v2.1 of the IS Design & As Built Rating tool, with a third-party verifier utilized. The verification process comprises 2 rounds, however in IS Essentials there is only one verifier.

Where can I find out more?

IS Essentials Training (link to respective ISC website)

IS Essentials Case Study – Channel Beacons (link to PDF)

IS Essentials for Local Governments (link to PDF)

IS Ratings and IS Essentials for Water Infrastructure (link to PDF)

IS Essentials Website (link to ISC website)

If you have any further questions or would like to discuss your project, please get in touch with the ISC at info@iscouncil.org