Drivers, Benefits and Challenges of ASI Membership and Certification: ASI Certification Survey 2021

February 2022

Executive Summary

This report provides an analysis of the results from an ASI survey that was sent to all members in the Production and Transformation and Industrial Users Membership classes who achieved ASI Performance Standard and Chain of Custody Standard Certification between 1 January 2018 and 23 November 2021. The aim of the survey was to seek feedback from these members on the drivers, benefits and challenges for ASI Certification, and 40 responses were received from 106 individuals contacted (38% response rate).

The key drivers for joining ASI and achieving ASI Performance Standard Certification were found to be multiple for most respondents. This signals that ASI is used to fulfill a range of different roles simultaneously. Most companies joined ASI to improve on/or demonstrate their responsible business practices, meet stakeholder expectations and gain competitive advantage. The responses indicated a market-driven commitment, with ASI Certification an important credential to be able to credibly participate in certain markets.

ASI Chain of Custody Certification (CoC) was mainly sought to implement responsible sourcing, and to meet customer and/or supplier demands. CoC Certification adds a further layer of legitimacy by connecting performance claims to products. Around one quarter of respondents chose 'to make claims' as a reason for seeking CoC Certification, with other members more focused on visibility and traceability up the supply chain rather than the marketing aspect of claims.

Overall, ASI Certification was largely seen as positive for one's business, with two main aspects:
1) Demonstrating sustainable practices to stakeholders
2) Improvements in business practices resulting from the ASI Certification Process.

The ASI Audit process was seen predominantly as a 'straightforward' to 'moderate' process, though time-consuming. There was some feedback regarding the potential for auditor knowledge to improve in some cases. As part of the revised ASI Standards roll-out in 2022, new and revised training is being developed, with ASI taking a data- and feedback-led approach to developing training where it is most needed.

The Self-Assessment, undertaken to prepare for the ASI Audit, was most commonly perceived as a 'moderate' process. Qualitative feedback can be categorised into two sections:
1) Resources required, including time needed for gap assessment and training of staff
2) ASI's elementAl platform, ASI's online assurance platform

Areas of improvement for ASI identified or informed through this survey included:
- Development of a 'communications toolkit' for members
- Development of training modules on how to complete the Self-Assessment and in relation to the Chain of Custody Standard
- Ongoing improvements and support for members in elementAl, ASI's online assurance platform, and
- An ongoing development and refining of the Standard Guidance to improve implementation support.

Contents

Introduction

Analysis of a survey of ASI Performance and Chain of Custody Standard Certified Entities between 1 January 2018 and 23 November 2021 has yielded several focus areas for ASI in the coming months and years, particularly with respect to simplification of the Standards, improved Learning and training for Entities and Auditors and refinement of Assurance processes. These are critical areas for improvement, particularly as ASI Membership and Certifications are approaching a period of significant growth.

The Certification Survey provides an opportunity for Certified Members to share feedback on the ASI Certification process, its strengths and challenges, and the broader value that ASI is perceived to deliver. Responses to this survey will be used as part of a culture of continual improvement across the organization, including Standards, Assurance, Learning, Data and Research, Partnerships and ASI's Enabling Resources including communications.

Methodology and Limitations

The survey, carried out between 23 Nov and 6 Dec 2021, comprised a Multiple Choice Questionnaire with free text options, allowing for the collection of quantitative and qualitative data. A copy of the survey is available in Appendix 1.

The survey was designed in four sections in order to seek feedback on:
(1) the drivers for ASI Certification,
(2) the perceived value of ASI Certification,
(3) the challenges of Certification,
(4) changes to Entity systems as a result of ASI Certification.

Survey questions were developed by the ASI Secretariat and made available to potential respondents in English and Chinese via the web-based SurveyMonkey platform.

This first survey round was sent out retrospectively to all Entities that achieved Certification (against Performance Standard and/or Chain of Custody Standards) between 1 January 2018 and 23 November 2021, to the person who is listed in elementAl, ASI's online Assurance platform as the main contact person for the Self-Assessment for the latest version of each Certification, taking into account multiple revisions of Certifications (i.e. recertifications/surveillance audits etc.). This is because they would usually be the most involved in preparing for the Certification process and the Self-Assessment and thus have on-the-ground knowledge and insights about that particular Certification scope.

In total, 40 respondents replied to the survey, representing 38% of the eligible 106 respondents contacted. Answers to every question were required for the respondent to proceed to the next page of questions, therefore, the percentages gathered are all based on a response rate of 40 respondents, (except for Q.8 and Q.9, where 1 respondent didn't finish the survey), unless specified otherwise.

62% of respondents provided qualitative feedback in the form of at least one comment. However both quantitative and qualitative feedback provide useful information and their analysis can help ASI to improve its various workstreams under its Standards, Assurance, Learning and Membership functions.

Respondents could choose to provide their contact details for follow-up, and 36% of the total respondents did so. The option of anonymity was provided to ensure that respondents felt able to answer freely, including negative feedback where relevant, without being identifiable. As a result, survey responses are not broken down by geography, supply chain activity or other potentially identifying variable.

The Certification survey remains open for responses and since November 2021, is shared with ASI members with each Certification issued. Periodic analysis and reporting will take place on at least an annual cycle. ASI will continue to publish periodic reports on the outcomes from member surveys on its website.

Qualitative Insights

62% of respondents left at least one comment, and the key themes articulated through the free text comment responses from respondents were:

Drivers for joining ASI and getting Certification: Customers/Companies

One of the main reasons for seeking ASI Certification is to meet stakeholder or customer expectations and/or requests. This is a concept we are calling 'licence to market': that the assurance brought by ASI Certification enhances the 'credentials' of members in their supply chain relationships. These market access dimensions encompass regulatory and customer expectations, but also a general 'trust' of doing business with counter-parties and the legitimacy that comes with it. Responses indicate that having ASI Certification is enhancing the ability participate in certain markets.

Efforts needed for the Certification process

Some responses noted the time and resources required to gather and organise evidence of conformance with the Standards, and for internal training of staff to inform the Self-Assessment process. Suggestions for areas of additional support, Guidance and learning were noted, particularly in relation to the Chain of Custody (CoC) Standard.

Figure 1 below illustrates the most used words in all comments section of the survey, weighted by their occurrence.

Figure 1 – WordCloud illustrating the most commonly used words in comments, weighted by occurrence

1.   Drivers for companies to join ASI and seek Performance Standard Certification
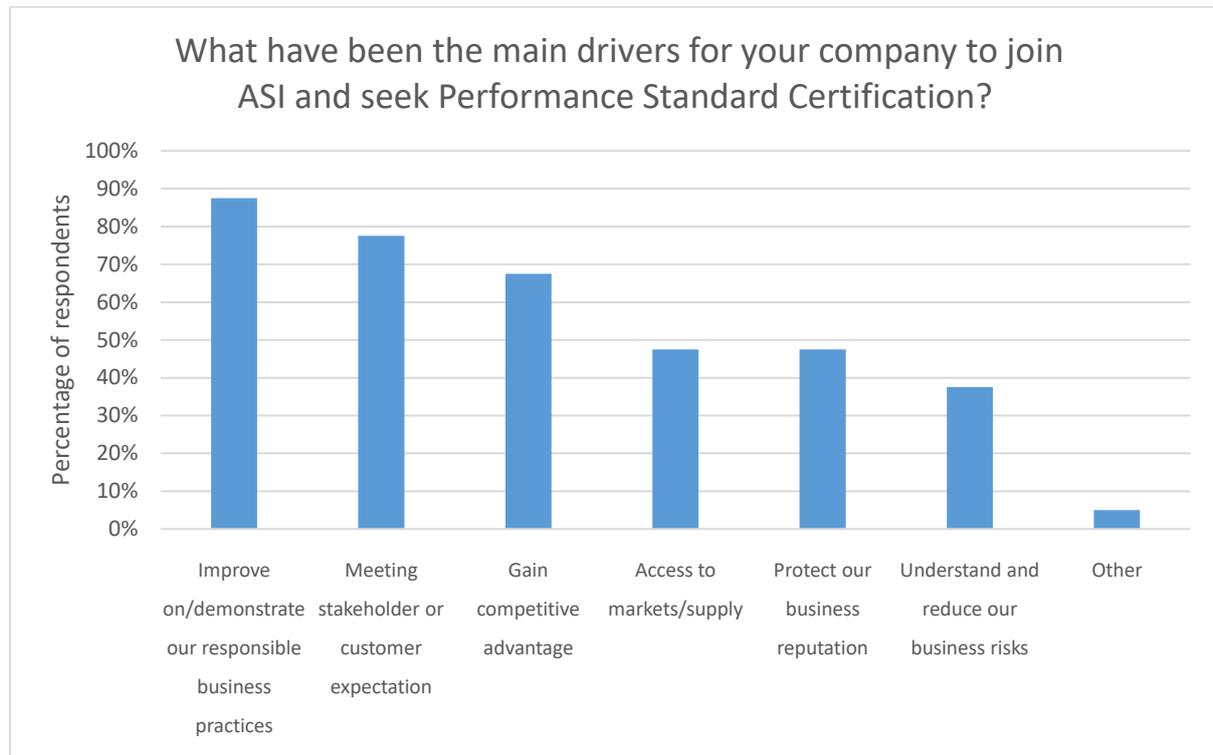

Figure 2- Drivers for companies to join ASI and seek Performance Standard Certification

Entities were given the option to choose more than one driver and what is clear is that the survey is at least asking the right question. Indeed, few (2) chose the "Other" option, and these two respondents selected all other drivers as applicable to them too.

Overall, the top drivers for companies to join ASI and seek ASI Performance Standard Certification chosen are to improve on/demonstrate responsible business practices and to meet stakeholder or customer expectations.

Gaining competitive advantage also scored highly, but never appeared on its own as a response – it was always in conjunction with another driver.

These seem to indicate an outward-facing commitment, aligned with the notion of 'licence to market': ASI Performance Standard Certification is seen as a sort of 'ticket-to-play': an important credential to be able to credibly participate in certain markets. A study conducted by CM Group on Demand Scenarios for ASI Aluminium[1] found that indeed there is a growing view among stakeholders that independent certifications by 3rd party organisations such as ASI will play an influential role in driving positive change. Given the lack of any credible alternative for the aluminum value chain, ASI is well placed to leverage this dominant market position.

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[1] CM Group (2021). Demand Scenarios for ASI Aluminium. https://aluminium-stewardship.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CM-Demand-Scenarios-for-ASI-Aluminium-01102021.pdf

Companies do not seem to join ASI to solely 'understand and reduce business risk' (this option was always chosen conjunctly with other drivers), but rather to keep abreast of increased requirements of responsible sourcing and competitively position oneself within the industry.
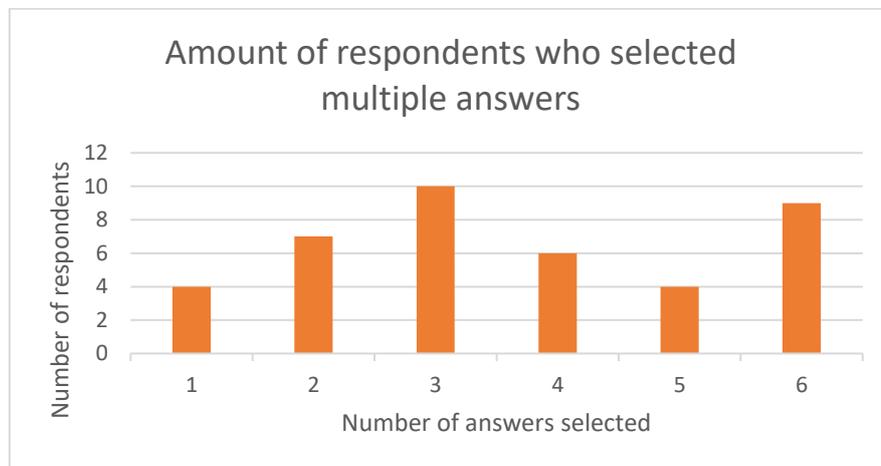
<figure>

Amount of respondents who selected multiple answers

A bar chart. Y-axis: "Number of respondents", ranging 0 to 12. X-axis: "Number of answers selected", values 1 to 6.

- 1: 4
- 2: 7
- 3: 10
- 4: 6
- 5: 4
- 6: 9

</figure>

Figure 3 – Amount of respondents who selected multiple answers when identifying Drivers to join ASI and seek Performance Standard Certification

As Figure 3 shows, most respondents chose multiple drivers when responding to this question. This signals that Certifying members are using ASI to fulfill a range of different roles simultaneously: they need ASI to be positioned in the market as a leading standard so that credibility is upheld for their suppliers/customers and for the broader aluminum industry. Certification ought to provide the assurances required by multiple stakeholders. At the same time, companies use it not only to improve on but also to *demonstrate* their responsible business practices. Part of that demonstration is the communication of it to stakeholders.

ASI's role in this environment is to create and uphold well-articulated and meaningful Standards that improve business practices, and that people all along the supply chain can trust. ASI's role is also to help members *articulate* these commitments and the achievements that have been met, the impact it has on the ground, and convey that they are to be trusted to do business with.

Quotes from the comment section included:

'ASI Certification is a good proof point that the business is serious'

'To show our suppliers that we are committed and that they also should be'

ASI action/improvement areas:

- ASI is developing a 'communication toolkit' that allows members to clearly state their position on responsible business with ASI Certification, and what Certification means about how the company does business.

2. Drivers for different types of companies to seek ASI Chain of Custody Standard Certification
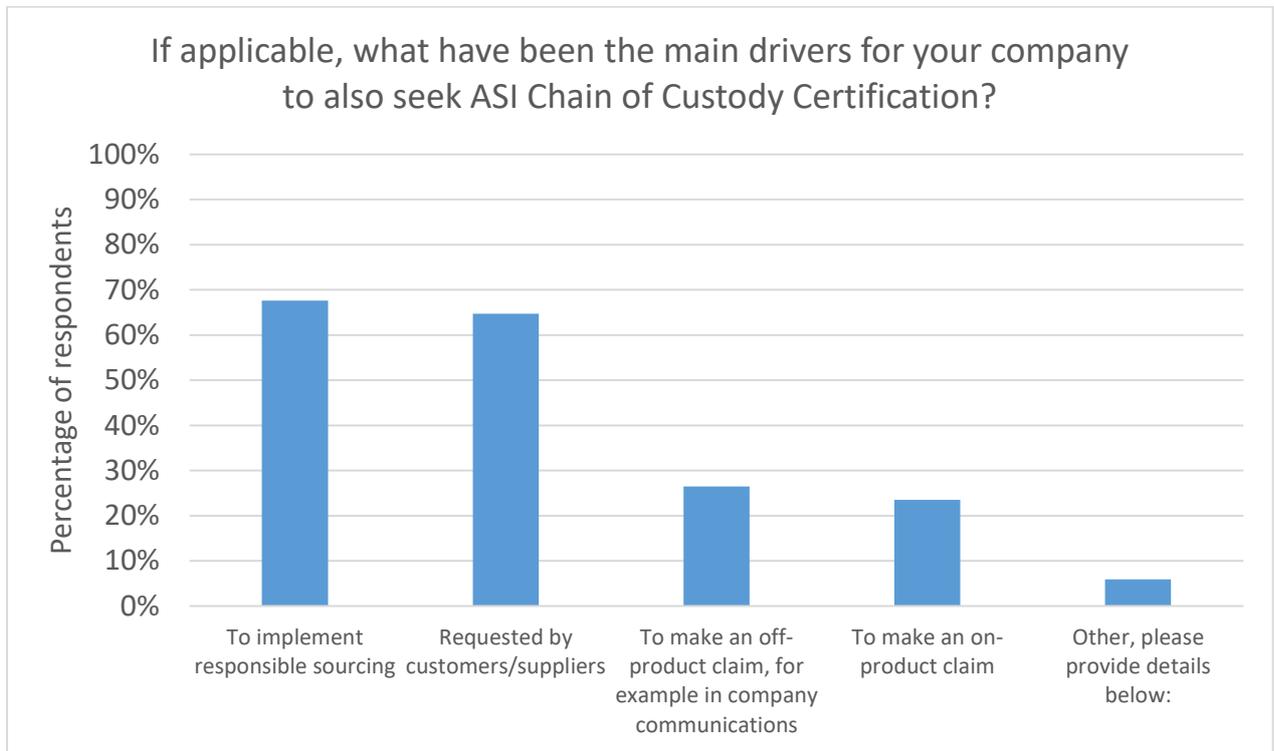

Figure 4- Drivers for companies to also seek ASI Chain of Custody Standard Certification

For the 34 out of 40 respondents for whom this question was applicable (those with ASI CoC Certification or planning on achieving it), the main drivers to seek ASI CoC Certification were to implement responsible sourcing and to meet customer and/or supplier demands (for responsible sourcing). This again highlights ASI Certification as a 'licence to market', while indicating that some may see market opportunities in being a first or early adopter. The Performance Standard appears to be a first layer of legitimacy, while having CoC Certification strengthens that further.

Only a quarter of respondents who achieved CoC Certification stated that the reason was to make claims. An on-product claim is any claim that is either affixed to or associated with a product at point of sale to the consumer. Of the 11 people who selected 'to make a claim', just 2 selected *only* 'to make an on-product claim'.

One respondent perceived the current demand for their ASI Material to be very limited, and that ASI CoC Certification lacks relevance. It was not deemed worth undergoing CoC re-certification by that Entity.
Overall, the main driver for CoC Certification seemed to be to create a link between companies so that they have the assurance that they are acquiring responsibly sourced aluminium, rather than making claims.

This indicates that Member's attention may be more focused on ensuring visibility and traceability up the supply chain than the marketing aspect of an on or off-product claim. There is a growing expectation that the entire supply chain becomes certified, and the focus is about assurance that things are 'done right'.

The high response rate for 'requested by customers/suppliers' might also indicate that members might not see it as an onus or obligation until someone up the value chain requests it. 60% of respondents who indicated the CoC Standard to 'implement responsible sourcing', conjunctly chose 'requested by customers/suppliers'.

Quotes from the comments section included:

'Gain competitive advantage – or at least maintaining parity with competitors'

'To deliver eco-social positive products'

'Performance Standard provides the pinpointed improvement areas – CoC provides the sales opportunities'

ASI action/improvement areas:
- ASI should continue to raise awareness of the value of driving sustainable practices and traceability, and the role that CoC Certification can play to support that.

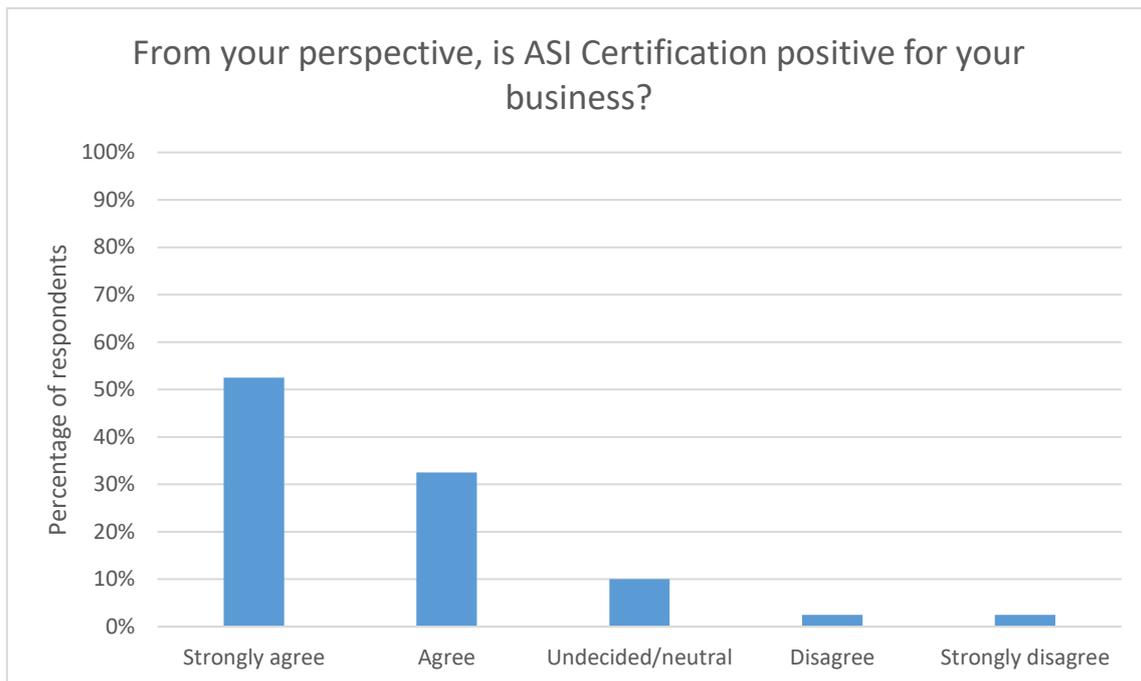## 3.   Changes and improvements driven by ASI Certification

Figure 5- Perceived value of ASI Certification

The majority of respondents have identified that they have derived benefit from ASI Certification, with 85% of all participants 'agreeing' or 'strongly agreeing' that Certification was positive for their business.

The value derived from ASI Certification as identified in the qualitative comments throughout, and from the quantitative responses to the first two questions, stemmed primarily from 2 broad aspects:
1) Demonstrating sustainable practices to external stakeholders (suppliers, clients, and the broader aluminum industry)
2) The improvement in business practices that results from the ASI Certification process (i.e. improved product development processes)

Quantitative and qualitative responses highlighted that:

A critical way in which ASI positively benefited businesses was improvement in practices. 64% of respondents confirmed there had been changes made to their business practices through ASI Certification, with a further 18% noting changes in progress, a total of 82%. In terms of timing, 38% of respondents noted these improvements had occurred in preparing for Certification, 8% as a result of corrective action for non-conformances, and 35% as 'both'. This highlights the critical nature of the Self-Assessment process in identifying gaps that need addressing to meet the ASI Standards, as well as the audit process in identifying areas for corrective action.

Key areas for improvement identified in the comments section include: Human Rights due diligence, Sustainable Development generally, product development processes (sustainability and environmental consideration being increasingly embodied in design practices, development of infrastructure/skillset for Life cycle Assessment), due diligence processes, water management

Practices, transparency and public consultation, and Sustainability Reporting. Most of the companies who identified these sorts of improvements selected 'to improve on business practices' in the first question, indicating that ASI is catalysing practice and performance improvements in the short term. With ASI's Standards bringing a comprehensive approach to sustainability issues for this sector, ideally continually broadening uptake will support longer term and larger scale structural change in the aluminium value chain.

For a few (2) companies with other sustainability-related initiatives already in place, ASI Certification wasn't perceived to have an added value for their own business. For these companies, the main reasons chosen to join ASI was for 'access to markets/supply' and assurance that they can then take forward to their own customers. For a small number of companies with extensive experience in other certified management systems and/or developed frameworks in place, improvements introduced by the ASI Standards are perceived as slight or marginal for their own business.

Challenges in maintaining ASI Certification in future: While 70% of respondents foresaw no challenges, 20% responded that there were challenges, with a further 10% unsure. Three out of the 9 comments related to the updated Standards requirements and the complexity of implementation it is anticipated to introduce, and 2 comments related to the issue of general assurance workload.

ASI action/improvement areas

- The value of ASI Certification appears to be tangible in terms of these improved business practices. Value will be maintained over time by regular ASI Standards and Guidance revisions that keep pace with stakeholder expectations, offer clear and constructive assistance to Members to fulfil their commitments to implement the Standards, and drive continual improvement.
- ASI Certification has '*opened conversation at the global level about expectations and improvements needed*' (comment section). Responsible sourcing is becoming an imperative, and members are using their Certification to set those discussion in motion. As this is a key driver for both company benefit from a voluntary standard, and thus broader impact, ASI's multi-stakeholder governance and convening role will continue to be important.

4.   General feedback areas
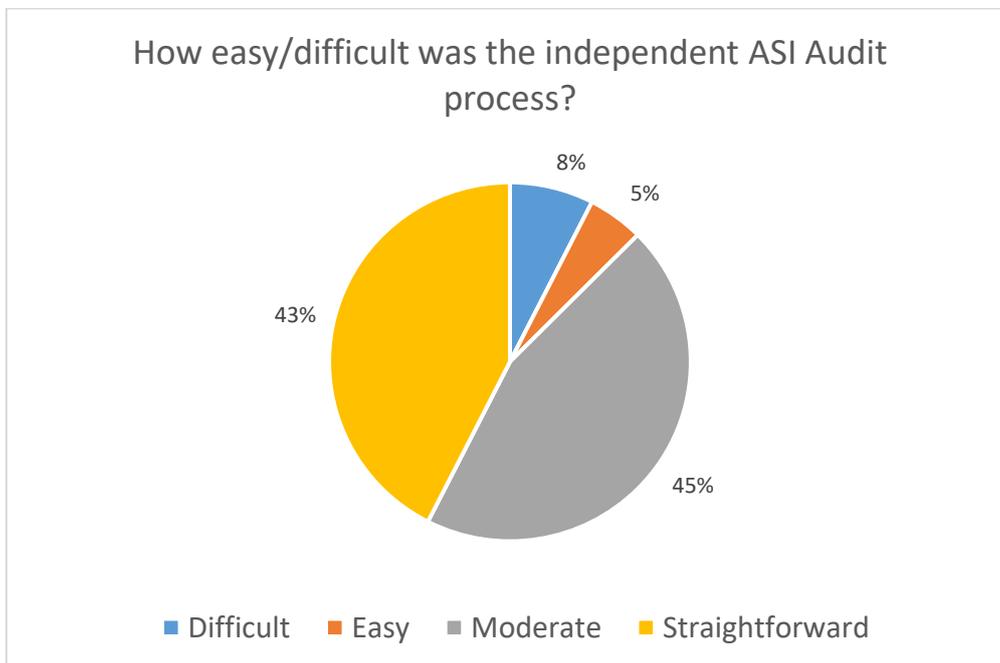
A. ASI Audit process

Figure 6 – Perceived difficulty of the independent ASI Audit process

The auditing process was predominantly (87.5%) seen as a straightforward to moderate process, although it was felt by three respondents (in the comments) to be time-consuming. Length of time required for an audit is based on a risk level, and companies with a low overall maturity rating will require more on-site time. This is embedded within ASI's Assurance program and is designed to support a risk-based audit approach.

Qualitative responses to this and other questions suggests that - apart from the temporal aspect - the main challenges lie not with the audit process itself, but rather the preparation for it: understanding the standard requirements, preparing the documentation, implementing new systems and practices where relevant, working with the Assurance platform, equipping the Auditors and Members with solid understanding, and so on. These are areas where ASI can certainly continue to improve support for these processes, as discussed below, but ultimately these processes do require some effort – making ASI Certification an achievement.

B. Assurance and auditors

Answers regarding auditor knowledge and capacity varied. Some comments stated that understanding of auditors was still building as the ASI program rolled out: *'feeling that auditors have been learning about ASI at the same pace as the leading companies'*, where another was pleased with the services thus far.

ASI action/improvement areas:

- Delivering calibration training for auditors where there are identified gaps or inconsistencies.
- As part of the roll-out of the revised ASI Standards in 2022, new and revised training is being developed, with ASI taking a data- and feedback-led approach to develop training where it is most needed, identified either by auditors themselves or through exam results and oversight processes.

C. ASI Self-Assessment

When preparing for your ASI Certification, how easy/difficult was it for your business to conduct the Self-Assessment?

- 20%
- 8%
- 3%
- 70%
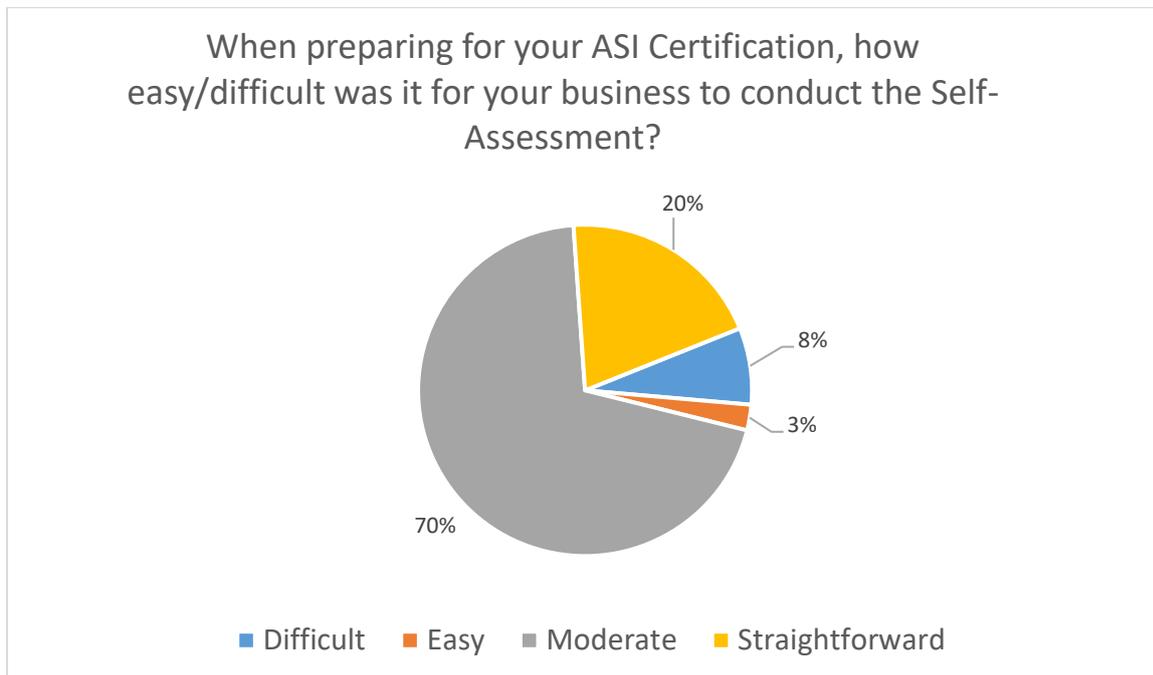
■ Difficult ■ Easy ■ Moderate ■ Straightforward

Figure 7 – perceived difficulty of conducting the Self-Assessment

The majority of respondents found the Self-Assessment process to be moderate to straightforward. Only one respondent found the process to be 'easy'.

Two main themes came out of the comments section regarding the Self-Assessment:

1) Resources required. The time for individuals to complete internal gap assessments and training of staff on new systems and topics were noted in comments. The need for internal collaboration across multi-faceted requirements (such as with the Chain of Custody Standard) also required time and resources.

2) ASI's elementAl platform. While only 8% found the Self-Assessment process difficult, some respondents found ASI's assurance platform slow and difficult to work with (identified in 5 individual comments). Other issues identified as a barrier included: repetition of requirements and IT security issues (inability to upload/share sensitive information due to company settings).

ASI action/improvement areas:
- Continue to streamline the elementAl platform and work directly with members who are facing challenges through the Help Desk.
- Delivering targeted training to enhance Members' understanding of the process and capacity to carry out a Self-Assessment.

D. Standards

> *'The CoC was much more complex and needed far more internal cross-team working'*

> *'It's not easy to understand what the standard really means'*

The Chain of Custody Standard was identified several times as a more challenging standard to understand, particularly in the context of existing systems. For example, one comment identified the issue of there being varying customer expectations and documentation, coupled with the challenge of working with an existing Systems Applications and Products (SAP) system. Another comment identified preparing their ASI CoC approach as an anticipated challenge for their Business.

From the comments provided, specific training modules or Guidance that could be useful are:
- A training video on the CoC Mass Balance system with a worked example that slowly explains eligible inputs and calculations generated.
- Clarification in setting up the CoC system, such as how to build an effective Management System and how much documentation is required.
- Continue development and updates of ASI Guidance on how to evidence conformance, including for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). An SME Working Group was established in 2021 to contribute to this process.

ASI action/improvement areas:
- ASI needs to ensure that the new and revised Standards and associated rollout resources are communicated clearly and succinctly.
- Training module revisions and new developments will take into account the issues noted above.
- Gathering insights into what areas of the ASI Standards need further improvement or clarification will be done through ongoing standards, oversight and monitoring processes. Regular Guidance updates, including targeted Guidance for specific sectors or situations, are envisioned.

E. Benchmarking and Harmonisation

One respondent commented on the issue of duplication of work, in having to get certified by different sustainability standards. They noted that overall sustainability assurance workload has increased, with customers demanding different responsible sourcing processes. This results in a low perceived added value and answering the same questions from multiple auditors.

ASI actions/areas of improvement:
- Benchmarking and harmonisation activities are increasingly relevant in the context of proliferating initiatives, and increased bandwidth for Partnerships is an important shift for 2022 as these processes are resource intensive.
- ASI maintains and circulates monthly a Log of External Standards and Schemes to its members, and lists recognitions by and of ASI on the website. ASI maintains a prioritization process to determine which external Standard or Scheme is most urgent to undergo a benchmarking assessment.

Conclusion

This survey provided ASI with valuable feedback from Certified Members on the Drivers, Benefits and Challenges of ASI Membership and Certification. A number of key points and messages were identified, and will inform the relevant ASI workstreams and ensure continual improvement and relevance of the ASI Program – these are summarized in Appendix 3.

The first survey round provided a snapshot of Certifications during the period from program launch in December 2017 to November 2021. The survey remains open and is shared with each ASI Certification notification, and periodic analysis and reporting will take place on at least an annual cycle. This should provide the ability to understand trends over time.

ASI will also consider setting up a similar survey for other non-Certifying Membership classes to get a better understanding of the perceived benefits of ASI Membership and certification from their perspective.

Appendix 1 – Certification Survey

ASI Certification Survey 2021

Introduction

Welcome to the ASI Certification Survey 2021.

After more than 3 years of implementing its Certification Program, ASI is conducting an internal research project to understand what the drivers, benefits and challenges are for different types of companies seeking ASI Performance Standard (PS) and Chain of Custody (CoC) Standard Certification.

You are receiving this survey because you are listed in elementAl as a main contact for an ASI Certification achieved between 1 January 2018 and 23 November 2021.

This survey gives you the opportunity to share your experiences of the ASI Certification process and should take around 10 minutes to complete.

ASI will handle all the data confidentially.
A report with aggregate and anonymized results from the survey will be published on the ASI website. We thank you in advance for your time and responses.

Step 1 - Drivers for ASI Certification

* 1. What have been the main drivers for your company to join ASI and seek Performance Standard Certification?

Please tick all that apply

☐ Improve on/demonstrate our responsible business practices

☐ Gain competitive advantage

☐ Access to markets/supply

☐ Protect our business reputation

☐ Meeting stakeholder or customer expectation

☐ Understand and reduce our business risks

☐ Other, please provide details below:

[ ]

2. If applicable, what have been the main drivers for your company to also seek ASI Chain of Custody Certification?

Please tick all that apply

☐ To implement responsible sourcing

☐ Requested by customers/supplier

☐ To make an off-product claim, for example in company communications

☐ To make an on-product claim

☐ Other, please provide details below:

[ ]

Step 2 - Value of ASI Certification

* 3. From your perspective, is ASI Certification positive for your business?

◯ Strongly agree   ◯ Disagree

◯ Agree   ◯ Strongly disagree

◯ Undecided/neutral

Please add other details or comments below. For example, what have been some of the benefits of ASI Certification? Are there some expected benefits that have not yet been realised? Have the outcomes been different for the Performance Standard or Chain of Custody Standard? (optional)

[   ]

* 4. When preparing for your ASI Certification, how easy/difficult was it for your business to conduct the Self Assessment?

◯ Difficult

◯ Moderate

◯ Straightforward

◯ Easy

Please add other details or comments below (optional)

[   ]

* 5. How easy/difficult was the independent ASI Audit process?

◯ Difficult

◯ Moderate

◯ Straightforward

◯ Easy

Please add other details or comments below. For example, this could relate to finding a suitable auditor, scheduling an audit, auditors becoming familiar with your business, or other aspect (optional)

[   ]

22

Step 3 - Challenges of certification

* 6. Have there been any specific challenges or obstacles (internal or external) faced by your company in seeking or achieving ASI Certification?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Unsure

Please add other details or comments below. For example, if you faced challenges, what were these and how have you worked to overcome them? (optional)

[ ]

* 7. Do you foresee any challenges in maintaining your ASI Certification in the future?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Unsure

Please add other details or comments below (optional)

[ ]

Step 4 - Changes as a result of ASI Certification

* 8. Have there been any changes or improvements to business practices or outcomes as a result of the ASI Certification process?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Unsure
- ○ In progress

Please add other details or comments below (optional)

[   ]

* 9. When did these occur?

- ○ Prior to/in preparation for the ASI Certification audit
- ○ As a result of correction action for non-conformances
- ○ Both
- ○ Neither

Please add other details or comments below (optional)

[   ]

* 10. If you have identified improvements, may ASI follow up with you in the form of a scheduled interview for the development of a Story of Change for publication on the ASI website?

We have been collecting anecdotal evidence and feedback from ASI Members as to how their implementation of the ASI Standards and process of Certification has created change in their activities and real impact on the ground. See for more details: https://aluminium-stewardship.org/asi-launches-story-of-change-series/

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

11. Do you have any general feedback for ASI? For example, suggestions for new learning modules, Guidance, data analyses or any other improvement idea?

[   ]

12. Your survey response can be anonymous. However, if you would like to be in touch with ASI to develop a Story of Change (Q10above), or to enable us to discuss your feedback further, please include your contact details below.

Alternatively, you can email us directly at info@aluminium-stewardship.org

Name	
Company	
Email Address	

Appendix 2 – Quantitative data – tables

Question 1 – What have been the main drivers for your company to join ASI and seek ASI Performance Standard Certification? Please tick all that apply (Multiple Choice)

	Improve on/demonstrate our responsible business practices	Meeting stakeholder or customer expectation	Gain competitive advantage	Access to markets/supply	Protect our business reputation	Understand and reduce our business risks	Other
Number of respondents	35	31	27	19	19	15	2
Percentage of respondents	88%	78%	68%	48%	48%	38%	5%
Number of comments:	2						

Question 2 – If applicable, what have been the main drivers for your company to also seek ASI Chain of Custody Certification? Please tick all that apply (Multiple Choice)

	To implement responsible sourcing	Requested by customers/suppliers	To make an off-product claim, for example in company communications	To make an on-product claim	Other, please provide details below:
Number of respondents	23	22	9	8	2
Percentage	68%	65%	26%	24%	6%
Number of comments	2				

Question 3 – From your perspective, is ASI Certification positive for your business?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided/neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Number of respondents	21	13	4	1	1
Percentage	53%	33%	10%	3%	3%
Number of comments	7				

Question 4 – When preparing for your ASI Certification, how easy/difficult was it for your business to conduct the Self-Assessment?

	Difficult	Easy	Moderate	Straightforward
Number of respondents	3	1	28	8
Percentage	8%	3%	70%	20%
Number of comments	11			

Question 5 – How easy/difficult was the independent ASI Audit process?

	Difficult	Easy	Moderate	Straightforward
Number of respondents	3	2	18	17
Percentage	8%	5%	45%	43%
Number of comments	6			

Question 6 – Have there been any specific challenges or obstacles (internal or external) faced by your company in seeking or achieving ASI Certification?

	Yes	No	Unsure
Number of respondents	14	22	4
Percentage of respondents	35%	55%	10%
Number of comments	12		

Question 7 – Do you foresee any challenges in maintaining your ASI Certification in the future?

	Yes	No	Unsure
Number of respondents	8	28	4
Percentage of respondents	20%	70%	10%
Number of comments	9		

Question 8 – Have there been any changes or improvements to business practices or outcomes as a result of the ASI Certification process?

	Yes	No	In progress	Unsure
Number of respondents	25	6	7	1
Percentage	64%	15%	18%	3%
Number of comments	8			

Question 9 – When did these occur?

	Prior to/in preparation for the ASI Certification audit	As a result of correction action for non-conformances	Both	Neither
Number of respondents	15	3	14	7
Percentage	38%	8%	35%	18%
Number of comments	2			

Appendix 3 – Summary of ASI actions/areas of improvement

Communications

- ASI is developing a 'communication toolkit' that allows members to clearly state their position on responsible sourcing with ASI Certification, and what Certification means about how the company does business. i.e. *having ASI Certification means that Business is conducted according to a high level of integrity and Compliance, and that we have committed to sound management of our environmental, social and governance processes*, and in turn what it means to do Business with them.
- ASI should continue to raise awareness of the value of driving sustainable practices and traceability, and the role that CoC Certification can play to support that. A key principle of ASI is that *all* supply chain activities have a role to play in advancing sustainability, through their own activities as well as responsible sourcing.

Standards

- The value of ASI Certification appears to be tangible in terms of these improved business practices. Value will be maintained over time by regular ASI Standards and Guidance revisions that keep pace with stakeholder expectations, and drive continual improvement. ASI needs to ensure that the new and revised Standards and associated rollout resources are communicated clearly and succinctly

Learning and Assurance

- Delivering calibration training for auditors where there are identified gaps or inconsistencies.
- As part of the roll-out of the revised ASI Standards in 2022, new and revised training is being developed, with ASI taking a data- and feedback-led approach to develop training where it is most needed, identified either by auditors themselves or through exam results and oversight processes.
- Delivering targeted training to enhance Members' understanding of the process and capacity to carry out a Self-Assessment. Particular areas noted were communicating the steps and processes to complete the Self-Assessment, and ensuring that companies have a solid understanding of what it takes to complete it successfully.
- Continue to streamline the elementAl platform and work directly with members who are facing challenges through the Help Desk.

Benchmarking and harmonization

- Benchmarking and harmonisation activities are increasingly relevant in the context of proliferating initiatives, and increased bandwidth for Partnerships is an important shift for 2022 as these processes are resource intensive.
- ASI maintains and circulates monthly a Log of External Standards and Schemes to its members, and lists recognitions by and of ASI on the website. ASI maintains a prioritization process to determine which external Standard or Scheme is most urgent to undergo a benchmarking assessment.