

Voluntary Consensus Standard

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Discussion

A voluntary consensus standard is a type of standard developed or adopted by a [Voluntary Consensus Standards Body](#) through a voluntary consensus standards development process.

The process includes:

- Openness to interested parties
- Meaningful participation on a non-discriminatory basis
- Balance among represented interests
- Documented and publicly available procedures
- Adequate notice and review opportunities
- Fair consideration and resolution of conflicting views
- An impartial appeals process
- Consensus that does not require unanimity

The term voluntary describes the standards development system and the non-governmental origin of the standard. It does not mean that every use of the standard remains optional. A law, regulation, procurement instrument, contract, or organizational policy may require conformance with a voluntary consensus standard.

Under United States federal standards policy, agencies use voluntary consensus standards instead of government-unique standards when such use is consistent with applicable law and practical for the agency's requirements.

Definition

Standard developed or adopted by a voluntary consensus standards body through an open, balanced, due-process-based, appealable, and consensus-based process.

Source

* National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act of 1995, Public Law 104-113 * Office of Management and Budget, Circular A-119: Federal Participation in the Development and Use of Voluntary Consensus Standards and in Conformity Assessment Activities * National Institute of Standards and Technology, Federal Policy on Standards

Note

Voluntary does not mean non-binding. An authority may incorporate a voluntary consensus standard into a regulation, procurement requirement, contract, conformance profile, or organizational policy.

OMB Circular A-119 distinguishes voluntary consensus standards from government-unique standards and from other private-sector standards that do not satisfy all attributes of the voluntary consensus process.

A standard does not qualify as a voluntary consensus standard solely because industry participants use it widely or because its content is publicly available.

Example

A federal agency may incorporate a suitable voluntary consensus standard into a procurement specification instead of developing a government-unique technical standard.

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