

Independent Impact Protocol

The protocol governing the Independent Impact Platform

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1 Introduction

Independent Impact is a platform for reporting and quantifying all conceivable anthropogenic impact on natural and social environments. It enables unparalleled public verifiability of impact claims, as well as unmatched consistency in cross-domain accounting. It intends to usher in a new class of standards, activities and tokenised assets for which there is currently no non-web3 alternative.

The platform empowers companies, project developers, and other stakeholders to leverage Web3 technology without having to manage the technical overhead. It is designed to be used for:

- carbon, biodiversity and water projects in both the compliance and voluntary markets
- company ESG and CSR activities and programmes
- outcomes-based governance

This document details the Independent Impact Protocol that governs the platform.

2 Glossary

Action A discrete operation that a user or agent may perform on the Independent Impact Platform, such as clicking a button, opening a link, or publishing an artefact.

Activity As defined in the [Anthropogenic Impact Accounting Ontology](#). An event that is intentionally orchestrated by an agent. In the context of Independent Impact, an activity is a real-world undertaking intended to affect the state of a natural or social environment.

Activity owner The agent who is primarily responsible for the occurrence of an activity and, therefore, primarily accountable for its impact.

Adjudicator An agent appointed or authorised to resolve a dispute concerning work submitted in relation to a bounty, review, claim, activity, or other platform artefact.

Agent As defined in the [Anthropogenic Impact Accounting Ontology](#). A person, organisation, or other entity that bears some form of accountability for the occurrence of another thing. On the platform, users become agents when they contribute information, artefacts, reviews, or are otherwise associated with an impact activity.

Anthropogenic impact An effect on a natural or social environment that results from human activity.

Artefact A piece of information, documentation, evidence, data, methodology, instrument, review, or other submitted material that is created, uploaded, referenced, or evaluated on the platform.

Bounty A task-based opportunity published on the platform in which compensation is placed in escrow and made available to one or more eligible agents who complete specified tasks within defined time periods.

Bounty creator The agent who creates a bounty, defines its tasks, allocates compensation, sets any eligibility requirements, and places the required funds in escrow.

Bounty panel The group of agents who have claimed seats on a bounty and are responsible for completing the tasks associated with that bounty. The term is interchangeable with “mission team”.

Bounty period The full period during which a bounty is active, consisting of the team or panel assembly phase, the mission or task phase, and the dispute resolution phase.

Claim As defined in the [Claim Ontology](#). A statement made by an agent about a thing, including statements about activities, states, impacts, indicators, methodologies, instruments, artefacts, or the relationship between them.

Compliance market A market in which actors create, purchase, use, retire, or otherwise participate in impact-related credits, claims, offsets, or instruments in the context of a legally mandated scheme.

Conduct Reputation (CR) The reputation score used by Independent Impact to represent an agent’s conduct on the platform, including their helpfulness, reliability, respectfulness, sustained participation, and adherence to platform rules.

Conduct standard A formally defined set of principles, rules, and behavioural expectations that distinguishes acceptable from unacceptable conduct within a specified context.

Conflict of interest A situation in which an agent has a direct or indirect interest that may compromise, or reasonably appear to compromise, their independence, impartiality, or objectivity when evaluating, verifying, reviewing, or deciding on a matter.

Dispute resolution phase The final phase of a bounty period during which disputes concerning submitted work may be raised, assessed, and resolved before compensation is paid out.

Environment As defined in the [Anthropogenic Impact Accounting Ontology](#). The natural, social, built, economic, institutional, or other context within which an activity occurs and whose state may be affected by that activity.

Escrow A mechanism by which funds pledged for a bounty are locked in a smart contract or equivalent controlled mechanism until the relevant conditions for payment, return, or redistribution have been met.

Impact As defined in the [Impact Ontology](#). The effect that an activity has on the state of an environment.

Impact accounting standard A formally defined set of principles, criteria, and rules that specifies how the effects of human activities are to be identified, measured, assessed, reported, and verified.

Impact claim As defined in the [Anthropogenic Impact Accounting Ontology](#). A claim concerning the effect of an activity on the state of an environment.

Impact standard A formal framework that defines principles, criteria, permissible methods, and constraints for the design and implementation of activities of which the primary objective is to improve the state of a natural or social environment.

Indicator As defined in the [Impact Ontology](#). A convention used to describe, express, compare, or evaluate the state of a thing or environment.

Instrument As defined in the [Anthropogenic Impact Accounting Ontology](#). A thing used to perform an activity, but which is neither an input to the activity nor an output of the activity. Instruments may include physical tools, software, devices, questionnaires, models, sensors, templates, or other means used to perform, measure, support, or evaluate an activity.

Knowledge and Skill Reputation (KSR) The reputation score or set of scores representing an agent's recognised knowledge and skills within one or more domains of expertise.

KSR domain A defined area of knowledge or skill in which agents may gain or lose Knowledge and Skill Reputation, such as marine conservation, air quality offsets, statistical sampling, project design validation, or adjudication.

Methodology A formally defined and systematically structured set of rules, procedures, and techniques that governs how specific tasks or processes are to be carried out in order to achieve consistent, reproducible, and verifiable outcomes.

Mission phase The phase of a bounty period during which members of the mission team perform the tasks they have undertaken to complete and submit the required deliverables.

Mission team The group of agents who have claimed seats on a bounty and are responsible for completing the bounty's tasks. The term is interchangeable with "bounty panel".

Platform The Independent Impact Platform.

Project As defined in the [Anthropogenic Impact Accounting Ontology](#). A collection of activities executed to achieve a specific goal. Unless expressly distinguished, the Protocol uses "activity" and "project" interchangeably for conciseness.

Protocol The Independent Impact Protocol, being the set of rules, principles, definitions, and governance requirements that governs the operation of the Independent Impact Platform.

Reputation A platform-recognised measure of an agent’s conduct, knowledge, skills, experience, or trustworthiness, used to determine eligibility, permissions, incentives, and constraints on the platform.

Review bounty A bounty created for the purpose of reviewing a claim, item of information, artefact, activity, methodology, instrument, indicator, or other subject specified by the bounty creator.

Review panel The mission team of a review bounty.

Seat A defined opportunity or position on a bounty’s mission team that may be claimed by an eligible agent. Each seat corresponds to one or more responsibilities or deliverables associated with the bounty.

Smart contract escrow A smart contract-based mechanism used to hold bounty funds until the conditions for payout, return, or redistribution have been satisfied.

Spot An alternative term for a seat on a bounty’s mission team.

Standard A formally defined set of principles, criteria, and rules that establishes requirements, methods, or expectations for how a particular activity, process, measurement, behaviour, artefact, or outcome is to be performed, assessed, or interpreted.

Standard of expertise A formally defined set of criteria used to determine and differentiate levels of knowledge and skill within a particular domain.

Standards body An organisation, institution, governance body, or other recognised entity responsible for defining, maintaining, operating, or administering one or more standards on the platform.

State As defined in the [Impact Ontology](#). The condition of an environment, thing, or system at a specific point in time.

Task A defined piece of work to be performed by an agent, including work specified as part of a bounty, review, methodology, activity, or other platform process.

Team assembly phase The phase of a bounty period during which eligible agents may claim seats on the bounty’s mission team.

Trainee review A review submitted by an otherwise ineligible or insufficiently reputed agent for training purposes, to be assessed by an eligible reviewer as part of the platform’s knowledge-sharing and reputation-building mechanisms.

User A person who accesses the Independent Impact Platform. A user becomes an agent when they contribute information, artefacts, reviews, or otherwise become associated through recorded information with an impact activity on the platform.

Voluntary market A non-compliance market in which actors voluntarily create, purchase, use, retire, or otherwise participate in impact-related credits, claims, offsets, or instruments outside of a legally mandated scheme.

Web3 A class of distributed digital technologies, including blockchains, distributed ledgers, smart contracts, semantic frameworks, and decentralised data systems, used to support verifiability, transparency, auditability, and tamper resistance.

3 Overview of concepts

Independent Impact shares the worldview of the Anthropogenic Impact Accounting Ontology Suite (AIA OS). In simple language this means that the world, from the perspective of the Impact Accounting Platform, consists primarily of agents, activities, instruments, environments, states, indicators, impacts, methodologies, standards, and claims:

- a. Agents are people who do things.
- b. Activities are the things that those people do.
- c. Instruments are the tools that the people use for their activities.
- d. Environments are the spaces within which the people perform their activities.
- e. A state is a condition of an environment at a specific point in time.
- f. An indicator is a convention that people use to describe the state of an environment.
- g. Impacts are the effects that people’s activities have on their environments.
- h. A methodology is a guide for how to perform a specific activity.
- i. A standard is a guide for deciding which things (e.g., indicators, methodologies, or activities) are acceptable.
- j. Claims are statements that people make about things.

The above statements serve as a mere introduction to the fundamental concepts and terms that readers will encounter throughout the rest of the document. There is a lot more to each concept than what is communicated by the statements above, and readers are encouraged to peruse the AIA suite of ontologies to enhance their understanding of these and related concepts. The suite consists of four ontologies, namely:

- (a) The [Impact Ontology](#), which defines the core concepts for understanding impact in general. It defines terms such as “event,” “state” and “indicator” and explains how they relate to one another.
- (b) The [Claim Ontology](#), which lays the foundation for understanding and describing claims, i.e., statements about things, and the substantiation of those statements.
- (c) The [Information Communication Ontology](#), which provides a rudimentary framework for understanding how information (such as a report about an event) is communicated.
- (d) The [Anthropogenic Impact Accounting Ontology](#)(AIAO), which is the highest-level ontology of the suite. AIAO draws upon and extends concepts from the Impact Ontology, the Claim Ontology and the Information Communication Ontology to provide the essential framework for describing and understanding how humankind’s activities impact our world.

Some additional remarks on terminology:

- (a) In this document the term “action” refers to a thing that a user can do on the digital Independent Impact platform, e.g., clicking a button, or publishing an artefact. The term “activity” should be understood as defined in AIA, i.e., an activity undertaken by an agent in some real-world environment to effect some specific, beneficial impact in that environment (a reforestation activity, for example).
- (b) In this document the term “activity” also implies “project” and vice versa, unless explicitly stated otherwise. This is purely for conciseness. A project is, as per AIAO, really a collection of activities that are executed to collectively achieve some specific goal.
- (c) To “own” an activity means to be primarily responsible for the occurrence thereof, and therefore primarily accountable for its impact.

4 Principles

The Independent Impact Standard is anchored by the following principles:

1. **Open, but meritocratic** Everyone should be allowed and empowered to contribute to common goals for good. Engaging in climate action or biodiversity conservation should not be something reserved for large companies with extensive “ESG” budgets or compliance regulations to meet. Smaller companies, organisations and individual citizens, with good intention, knowledge and skills, should be empowered to contribute in their respective capacities to humankind’s work towards a better world for all. Activity on the platform is, however, governed through meritocracy (“give credit where credit is due”).
2. **Guidance, not prescription.** Incentivise and penalise transparently, but do not inhibit communally beneficial action through fixed, overly burdensome prescriptions or disproportionate administrative burdens.
3. **Immutable, yet accesible.** Use proven distributed technologies to protect artefacts and transactions, while making every action maximally auditable. Anyone, even those with limited technical skills, should be able interrogate activities, credentials, and impact claims in depth.

The platform is designed to give effect to these principles. For example: a. Anyone can engage with the platform, but a comprehensive reputation system ensures that more opportunities are available to agents who maintain good conduct and who improve their knowledge and skills.

b. An agent can start to report on their activities at any point in time – they do not need to complete a process of validation and registration of their activities first; an extensive scoring system, however, ensures that activities conducted according to high standards are clearly distinguishable from activities that do not uphold similar standards.

c. All information provided about activities, and any changes made thereto, along with the authors of the information and the changes, are captured in a publicly accessible, semantic, ledger with a queryable history.

For a deep, technical overview of how the platform enforces these principles, refer to the “Technical Implementation” chapter.

5 Standards

5.1 General

A standard is a formally defined set of principles, criteria, and rules that establish requirements, methods, or expectations for how a particular activity, process, measurement, or behaviour is to be performed, assessed, or interpreted. Standards are designed to promote consistency, and thereby comparability, across different actors and contexts.

The Independent Impact Platform recognises several types of standards. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- impact standards
- standards of expertise
- conduct standards
- financial accounting standards
- impact accounting standards
- quality standards
- measurement precision standards

These categories are not mutually exclusive; a single standard may fall within multiple categories (for example, an impact standard may incorporate elements of an impact accounting standard).

Any standards body may operate one or more standards on the platform, provided that it complies with the requirements set out in this chapter.

5.2 Standards of expertise

A standard of expertise is a formally defined set of criteria used to determine and differentiate levels of knowledge and skill within a particular domain. It establishes the expected capabilities associated with different levels of proficiency, thereby providing a basis for the consistent assessment, validation, and recognition of individuals' capabilities.

A standards body that wishes to operate a standard of expertise on the platform must provide the platform with the following artefacts for the standard:

1. A glossary or formally defined concept scheme, including a clear definition of each of the domains of knowledge or skill with which the standard is concerned.
2. Measures for evaluating an individual's knowledge or skill against the standard.
3. Clear instructions on how an individual can improve their knowledge or skill relative to the standard.

5.3 Impact standards

An impact standard is a formal framework that defines the principles, criteria, permissible methods, and constraints for the design and implementation of activities of which the primary objective is to improve the state of some environment (whether natural or social).

A standards body that wishes to operate an impact standard on the platform must provide the platform with the following artefacts for the standard:

1. A set of principles.
2. A glossary or formally defined concept scheme, including a clear identification of the type of activities (e.g., wetland restoration or child immunisation) with which the standard is concerned.
3. Measures (typically in the form of structured questions to be answered) to guide activity owners towards adherence to their principles.

4. Measures (typically in the form of structured questions to be answered) to guide reviewers in their evaluation of an activity’s adherence to the standard’s principles.
5. The levels of knowledge and skill required by agents who wish to design and/or implement activities, or who wish to formally evaluate activities’ adherence to the impact standard. The required levels of knowledge and skill shall be defined with reference to a standard of expertise provided by the standards body, or provided by another standards body and already in operation on the platform.
6. Measures for evaluating the acceptability of indicators, if relevant.
7. Measures for evaluating the acceptability of methodologies, if relevant.
8. Measure for evaluating the acceptability of instruments, if relevant.

The Independent Impact Platform does not prescribe any specific impact accounting standard; it does, however, use the Libratum Standard as its default impact and impact accounting standard.

5.4 Impact accounting standards

An impact accounting standard is a formally defined set of principles, criteria, and rules that specify how the effects of human activities are to be measured, assessed, and reported. It provides a consistent basis for evaluating impacts, ensuring comparability and credibility across different actors, activities, and contexts.

A standards body that wishes to operate an impact accounting standard on the platform must provide the platform with the following artefacts for the standard:

1. A set of principles.
2. A glossary or formally defined concept scheme.
3. Measures (typically in the form of structured questions to be answered) to guide activity owners towards adherence to their principles.
4. Measures (typically in the form of structured questions to be answered) to guide reviewers in their evaluation of an account’s adherence to the standard’s principles.
5. The levels of knowledge and skill required by agents who wish to formally evaluate the adherence of impact accounts to the impact accounting standard. The required levels of knowledge and skill shall be defined with reference to a standard of expertise provided by the standards body, or provided by another standards body and already in operation on the platform.
6. Measures for evaluating the acceptability of indicators, if relevant.
7. Measures for evaluating the acceptability of methodologies, if relevant.
8. Measure for evaluating the acceptability of instruments, if relevant.

The Independent Impact Platform does not prescribe any specific impact accounting standard; it does, however, use the Libratum Standard as its default impact and impact accounting standard.

5.5 Conduct standards

A conduct standard is a formally defined set of principles, rules, and behavioural expectations that governs the actions and interactions of agents within a specified context. It establishes clear criteria for distinguishing acceptable from unacceptable conduct, and provides a consistent basis for the assessment, enforcement, and, where applicable, incentivisation or sanctioning of behaviour.

The only conduct standard in operation on the platform is Independent Impact’s own reputation-based conduct standard. No other conduct standards are accommodated. For more information on the II conduct standard, please refer to the chapter on “Agents.”

6 Agents

6.1 General

In the context of Independent Impact, the term “agent” is used in accordance with its definition in [AIAO](#): “A thing that bears some form of accountability for the occurrence of another thing.”

6.2 Agents v. users

Users of the Independent Impact platform are classified as “agents” when they contribute information, artefacts, or reviews, or when they are otherwise associated through recorded information with an impact activity on the platform.

Users who only read or view information, and for whom no such association exists, are not classified as agents, as their impact is not known to the platform.

6.3 Agent reputation system

The actions and behaviour of agents on the platform are governed by an elaborate reputation system. There are two primary domains in which an agent can have reputation, namely Knowledge & Skills and Conduct. All reputation is primarily gained and lost through actions and consequent events.

6.3.1 Knowledge & skills reputation

Each standards body operating on the platform is responsible for drafting or identifying the standard of expertise according to which they will manage agents’ Knowledge & Skills reputation (KSR). Such a ruleset includes the subdomains into which they divide the Knowledge & Skills domain (if any), the actions through which agents can gain and lose KSR, and the amount of KSR required for certain tasks.

Subdomains of the Knowledge & Skills reputation domain, where they exist, represent different areas of expertise, such as “Marine Conservation,” “Air Quality Offsets,” “Project Design Validation” or “Statistical Sampling.”

KSR can be gained in several ways, such as through the verification of education or experience credentials, through receiving upvotes on a response posted to a help forum question, or through the contribution of a methodology. KSR can similarly be lost in several ways, such as by providing inaccurate information, receiving downvotes on a response to a help forum question, or losing a formal dispute. KSR can also be lost through time-based decay. KSR cannot drop below zero.

Agents primarily use their KSR to earn income. For example, a review bounty will typically specify a minimum amount of reputation that an agent must have in a particular KSR domain in order to pursue the bounty.

6.3.2 Conduct reputation

An agent’s Conduct reputation (CR) score represents how active, helpful and respectful they have been on the platform to date. Unlike KS reputation, the Conduct reputation (CR) domain is solely managed by Independent Impact.

CR ruleset is designed to incentivise thoroughness, reliability, respectful behaviour, and sustained activity on the platform, while penalising bias, misinformation and disrespectful behaviour.

CR is gained through collaboration, positive contributions and good conduct. For example, casting a vote on the reliability of a newly proposed methodology will let an agent gain one

CR point. When an activity owner requests a review of some aspect of their activity, they will also gain one CR point. If an agent asks a question on the help forum and at least three other agents “upvote” it as an important question (or one that they have too), the asking agent will be granted a CR point.

CR is primarily lost through undesirable behaviour. If, for example, an agent posts a response to a question on the help forum, and at least three other agents “downvote” it as a rude, irrelevant or deliberately misleading response, they will lose a CR point. If an agent claimed a seat on a bounty panel, but later cancels their seat, they can lose several CR points. Similarly, if an agent publishes a review request and then cancels it later, they will lose CR points. As with KSR, CR can also be lost through time-based decay.

An agent’s CR balance can drop below zero if they engage in more undesirable behaviour than desirable behaviour. If an agent’s CR balance drops below zero, their account will automatically be suspended from performing certain actions until their CR balance has sufficiently recovered (either through time-based decay toward zero, or through the agent performing some “good” actions again – among the actions that they are still allowed to perform). If an agent’s CR balance drops below a critical, negative threshold, the agent’s account will be fully suspended completely from all platform activity until their CR balance has recovered sufficiently through time-based decay.

CR functions similar to shares in that agents with positive CR will be eligible for “dividends” paid out quarterly on a portion of the platform’s profit.

The full list of actions and the amount of CR gained or lost through each will be specified in a future appendix to this protocol. The list of CR thresholds and the actions that they suspend or open up will similarly be provided as an appendix to a subsequent version of this protocol.

7 Activities

7.1 Definition

In the context of Independent Impact, the term “activity” is used in accordance with its definition in [AIAO](#): “An event that is orchestrated by an agent.” In simple language this means that an activity is a something that an agent does on purpose.

7.2 Eligibility to create or request activities

Any user of the platform possessing a positive, non-zero Conduct Reputation (CR) score may create or request the creation of a new activity.

7.3 Types of activities

The platform supports the creation and management of activities related to anthropogenic impact across a wide range of contexts. These may include, but are not limited to, voluntary carbon offset initiatives, compliance market mechanisms, charitable contributions, and corporate ESG or CSR programmes.

7.4 Requirements for activity creation

Any agent creating a new activity must provide, at a minimum, the following:

1. The objective of the activity.
2. The standard against which their activity should be evaluated.

7.5 Evaluation of activities

The evaluation of activities is governed by the standards bodies to which such activities are relevant. Each standards body shall define:

1. The dimensions by which activities are judged (e.g., likelihood of achieving its intended impact, and risk mitigation measures).
2. The methods and criteria by which those dimensions are assessed.

Accordingly, the Protocol does not prescribe a universal evaluation framework for activities, but instead delegates this responsibility to standards bodies and standard-specific governance mechanisms.

7.6 Reputation implications

The effects of creating or requesting activities on an agent’s Conduct Reputation (CR) and Knowledge and Skill Reputation (KSR) scores shall be specified in a future revision of the Protocol.

8 Indicators

8.1 Definition

In the context of Independent Impact, the term “indicator” is used in accordance with its definition in the [Impact Ontology](#): “A convention for indicating the state of a thing.” Indicators provide a structured means by which states and state observations can be expressed, compared, and evaluated across contexts.

8.2 Eligibility to create, propose, or request indicators

The Protocol permits broad participation in the development of indicators. Any agent possessing a positive, non-zero Conduct Reputation (CR) score may create, propose, or request the creation of a new indicator. No minimum Knowledge and Skill Reputation (KSR) requirements apply to such actions. This approach is intended to encourage the continuous evolution of the indicator ecosystem.

8.3 Requirements for indicator definition

Any agent creating or proposing a new indicator must provide, at a minimum, the following:

1. A unique title for the indicator.
2. A clear and unambiguous definition of the indicator.
3. The unit of measure to use for the indicator.
4. The purpose of the indicator.
5. A rationale justifying the indicator’s relevance to the states or impacts it is intended to describe.

8.4 Evaluation of indicators

The evaluation of indicators is governed by the standards bodies to which such indicators are relevant. Each standards body shall define:

1. The dimensions by which indicators are judged (e.g., validity, reliability, and sensitivity).
2. The methods and criteria by which those dimensions are assessed.

Accordingly, the Protocol does not prescribe a universal evaluation framework for indicators, but instead delegates this responsibility to standards bodies and standard-specific governance mechanisms.

8.5 Reputation implications

The effects of creating, proposing, or requesting indicators on an agent’s Conduct Reputation (CR) and Knowledge and Skill Reputation (KSR) scores shall be specified in a future revision of the Protocol.

9 Methodologies

9.1 Definition

In the context of Independent Impact, a methodology is a formally defined and systematically structured set of rules, procedures, and techniques that govern how specific tasks or processes are to be carried out in order to achieve consistent, reproducible, and verifiable outcomes. An impact accounting methodology in particular specifies how activities, states, or impacts are to be identified, measured, quantified, reported and verified, ensuring that results are comparable and aligned with the objectives and requirements of the relevant standard(s).

9.2 Eligibility to create, propose, or request methodologies

The Protocol permits broad participation in the development of methodologies. Any agent possessing a positive, non-zero Conduct Reputation (CR) score may create, propose, or request the creation of a new methodology. No minimum Knowledge and Skill Reputation (KSR) requirements apply to such actions. This approach is intended to encourage the continuous evolution of the methodology ecosystem.

9.3 Requirements for methodology definition

Any agent creating or proposing a new methodology must provide, at a minimum, the following:

1. **Definition and scope.** A description of the methodology, including its purpose, intended use cases, and the activities, states, or impacts to which it applies.
2. **Underlying principles and assumptions.** The conceptual basis of the methodology, including any scientific, technical, or normative assumptions on which it relies.
3. **Defined methods and procedures.** A structured description of the methods to be applied, including step-by-step procedures where applicable, and how these methods are to be executed.
4. **Data requirements and inputs.** Specification of the data required to apply the methodology, including data sources, formats, quality requirements, and any constraints or limitations.
5. **Calculation and transformation rules.** Any formulas, models, or logical rules used to derive outputs from inputs, including how intermediate and final results are produced.
6. **Outputs and units of measure.** A definition of the expected outputs of the methodology, including the indicators or metrics produced and their respective units of measure.
7. **Validation and verification approach.** A description of how the correct application of the methodology and the reliability of its outputs can be assessed or verified.
8. **Limitations and applicability boundaries.** Known limitations, uncertainties, and conditions under which the methodology may or may not be valid.
9. **Rationale and justification.** An explanation of why the methodology is appropriate for its intended purpose, including any references to existing standards, scientific literature, or best practices.

9.4 Evaluation of methodologies

The evaluation of methodologies is governed by the standards bodies to which such methodologies are relevant. Each standards body shall define:

1. The dimensions by which methodologies are judged (e.g., conceptual soundness, reliability, and completeness).
2. The methods and criteria by which those dimensions are assessed.

Accordingly, the Protocol does not prescribe a universal evaluation framework for methodologies, but instead delegates this responsibility to standards bodies and standard-specific governance mechanisms.

9.5 Reputation implications

The effects of creating, proposing, or requesting methodologies on an agent's Conduct Reputation (CR) and Knowledge and Skill Reputation (KSR) scores shall be specified in a future revision of the Protocol.

10 Instruments

10.1 Definition

In the context of Independent Impact, the term “instrument” is used in accordance with its definition in [AIAO](#): “A thing used to perform an activity, but which is neither an input to the activity, nor an output of the activity.”

10.2 Eligibility to contribute or request instruments

The Protocol permits broad participation in the contribution and development of instruments. Any agent possessing a positive, non-zero Conduct Reputation (CR) score may contribute or request the creation of a new instrument. No minimum Knowledge and Skill Reputation (KSR) requirements apply to such actions. This approach is intended to encourage the continuous evolution of the instrument ecosystem.

10.3 Requirements for instrument definition

Any agent creating or proposing a new methodology must provide, at a minimum, the following:

1. A description of the instrument.
2. The instrument’s purpose and intended use.
3. The rationale for the instrument and the instrument’s relevance to its intended use.

10.4 Evaluation of instruments

The evaluation of instruments is governed by the standards bodies to which such instruments are relevant. Each standards body shall define:

1. The dimensions by which instruments are judged (e.g., accuracy, precision, durability, and efficiency).
2. The methods and criteria by which those dimensions are assessed.

Accordingly, the Protocol does not prescribe a universal evaluation framework for instruments, but instead delegates this responsibility to standards bodies and standard-specific governance mechanisms.

10.5 Reputation implications

The effects of contributing or requesting instruments on an agent’s Conduct Reputation (CR) and Knowledge and Skill Reputation (KSR) scores shall be specified in a future revision of the Protocol.

11 Bounties

11.1 General

A bounty on the II platform is very similar to its real-world counterpart: it is a sum of money locked up in a smart contract along with a description of one or more tasks that must be executed by an agent who wishes to receive the money. Bounties can be published for many things, such as gathering data, reviewing information, or creating an indicator. Bounties are typically open, which means that any agent who meets the requirements stated by the creator of the bounty can participate in its pursuit.

Where bounties on the II platform differ from their traditional counterparts is the limitation that they place on the number of agents who can pursue a bounty at once. A bounty for a small task will typically allow only one agent to pursue it at any given point in time; a bounty for a group of tasks may allow multiple agents at once, but the agents will typically be required to collaborate, instead of compete. The purpose of this limitation is two-fold:

1. Incentivise thoroughness over speed.
2. Prevent wastage of human resources.

Note The agents who pursue a bounty are referred to as the “mission team” or “panel” of the bounty. These two terms are interchangeable, and will be used as such throughout the remainder of this document.

Below is the full set of rules that govern the creation of and participation in bounties on the Independent Impact platform:

1. Any agent with a positive Conduct Reputation score can create a bounty.
2. The sum of money (typically, but not necessarily, in the form of Hbar) pledged as compensation for successful completion of the tasks will be deducted from the account of the creator of the bounty at the time of creation and will be placed in a smart contract escrow.
3. The bounty period is divided into three subperiods or phases:
 - a. the team/panel assembly phase;
 - b. the mission/task phase; and
 - c. the dispute resolution phase.

The dates that mark the start and end of each of the phases must be clearly specified by the creator of the bounty upon publication of the bounty. The dispute resolution phase must be at least seven days in length, but not longer than 30 days.

4. A bounty can be created for a single task or for multiple tasks.
5. Where multiple tasks are specified for a bounty, the creator of the bounty must clearly specify how the compensation will be divided among the tasks.
6. The number of places (also referred to as “seats” or “spots”) available on a bounty’s mission team will be determined by the number of tasks of the bounty. Each task will have at least one seat. A bounty owner may, however, choose to open multiple seats for a specific task if they want multiple, independent submissions of the task’s deliverable (e.g., the author of a document may want their work to be reviewed by at least two different people).
7. The creator of a bounty may, but is not required to, specify some minimum KS or CR reputation requirements that an agent must fulfil to be eligible to claim a seat on the bounty panel.

8. An agent who wishes to participate in the pursuit of a bounty signals their intent by claiming a seat on the mission team. As soon as a seat is claimed, the seat will no longer be available to other agents.
9. If reputation criteria were specified for a specific seat, an agent can only claim that seat if they meet those requirements.
10. An agent can claim multiple seats on a mission team, provided that they meet the minimum reputation criteria for each of the seats claimed. An agent cannot, however, claim more than one seat for the same task.
11. There is a limit to the number of bounties that an agent can pursue simultaneously across the Independent Impact platform. The number set as the limit will be determined during future tests.
12. An agent can cancel their claim on a bounty seat, but will lose CR by doing so:
 - a. If an agent cancels their seat claim during the team assembly phase or within the first quarter of the mission phase, they will lose one CR point.
 - b. If an agent cancels their seat claim in the second quarter of the mission phase, they will lose two CR points.
 - c. Cancelling a seat during the third quarter of the mission phase, will cost an agent three CR points.
 - d. A seat cancellation during the fourth quarter of the mission phase will cost an agent four CR points.

A seat cannot be cancelled during the dispute resolution phase.

13. An agent can transfer their bounty seat claim to another agent if it becomes apparent to them that they will not, due to circumstances beyond their control, be able to fulfil their responsibilities on time (i.e., before the end of the mission phase). If the transfer occurs before the end of the second quarter of the mission phase, the original holder of the seat will not lose any CR; if the transfer occurs after the end of the second quarter of the mission phase, the original holder of the seat will lose one CR point. A seat transfer cannot occur during the dispute resolution phase.
14. An agent can only transfer their mission team seat to an agent who:
 - a. meets the reputation criteria for the seat, if such were specified;
 - b. does not hold seats on more than two other mission teams at the time of the transfer; and
 - c. formally agrees to the transfer.
15. An agent who has transferred their seat on a mission team to another agent will not receive any compensation at the end of the bounty period, regardless of when or why the transfer occurred; the new agent (i.e., the agent to whom the seat has been transferred) will be singularly and entirely eligible for the compensation reserved for the seat.
16. A bounty can be cancelled by its creator, but the creator will lose CR, and potentially some of their escrowed funds, by doing so.
 - a. If cancelled during the team assembly phase or during the first quarter of the mission phase, the creator will lose one CR point; if cancelled during the second quarter, they will lose two CR points; if cancelled during the third quarter, the creator will lose three CR points; if cancelled during the final quarter, the creator will lose four CR points.

- b. An agent who had held a seat on the mission team for at least one quarter of the mission phase by the time the bounty was cancelled by the creator will receive 25% of the compensation that was escrowed for them; an agent who had held a seat on the mission team for at least two quarters of the mission phase by the time the bounty was cancelled by the creator will receive 50% of the compensation that was escrowed for them; an agent who had held a seat on the mission team for at least three quarters of the mission phase by the time the bounty was cancelled by the creator will receive 75% of the compensation that was escrowed for them. Any funds left in escrow after the mission team has been duly compensated will be returned to the account of the bounty creator.

A bounty cannot be cancelled during the dispute resolution phase.

- 17. Each agent who holds a seat on a bounty's mission team must submit their work before the mission deadline specified by the creator of the bounty.
- 18. Where multiple agents are present on a bounty panel, the agents are encouraged to communicate with each other during the mission phase of the bounty, in the interest of complementing each other's experience, knowledge and skills. Each seat holder will, however, only be able to submit deliverables for the seat(s) that they hold.
- 19. If an agent with a seat on a mission team fails to submit their work on time, the failure will be treated as a seat cancellation; the agent will therefore lose CR according to the seat cancellation rules specified above, and will not receive any compensation.
- 20. A bounty is by default open to all agents on the platform, meaning that the seats on the mission team will be given to the first eligible agents who claim them. The creator of a bounty can, however, choose to follow an invitation-only approach, meaning that seats on the mission team will only be available to agents who were specifically invited by the creator of the bounty.
- 21. If a bounty reaches the end of its team assembly period and none of the seats on the mission team has been filled, the bounty will automatically be cancelled by the platform. The creator of the bounty will not lose any CR, and any escrowed compensation will be returned to the account of the creator.
- 22. If a bounty reaches the end of its team assembly period and only some of the seats, but not all, have been filled, the creator of the bounty will have the following options:
 - a. Republish the bounty with new dates for the different phases, and possibly also with some adjustments to the reputation requirements and the size of the reward.
 - b. Continue with the bounty, allowing the existing mission team to move into the mission phase of the bounty period. Rewards for unfilled seats will be returned to the creator of the bounty at the end of the bounty period.
 - c. Cancel the bounty. In this case, neither the creator of the bounty nor any of the mission team members will lose any CR, and the full bounty will be returned to the account of the creator.
- 23. If the creator of the bounty has serious concerns about or objections to the work delivered by one or more members of the mission team, they can open a formal dispute that will be adjudicated by a qualified agent.
- 24. An agent who wishes to act as an adjudicator of a certain dispute must have more KSR than both the plaintiff and the defendant in the KSR domains relevant to the bounty task in dispute. The adjudicating agent must also hold some adjudication reputation points (the exact amount is yet to be determined).

25. The bounty will be paid out to the mission team at the end of the dispute resolution phase of the bounty period.
26. The creator of a bounty will earn CR proportionate to the duration of the bounty and the size of the reward. The exact formula for calculating the bounty creator's CR gain will be provided in a future version of this Protocol.

Note Every bounty will have its own discussion topic to facilitate communication between the creator of the bounty and the mission team, and also between the members of the mission team as they collaborate on the task at hand. Only the creator of the bounty and the mission team will be able to post to the discussion topic, but the topic will be publicly visible.

11.2 Review bounties

An agent can publish a bounty for the review of some claim, information or artefact. Such bounties, referred to as review bounties, will be subject to the rules provided above as well as the following additional rules:

Note The mission team of a review bounty is referred to here as the “review panel.”

1. A review bounty must clearly specify the subject of the review, e.g., “The statistical robustness of activity XYZ’s planned sampling strategy for impact monitoring,” or, “The impact monitoring plan of project ZBA.”
2. A review bounty must clearly state the mandate of the review, i.e., whether the objective is to validate, to verify or both.
3. A review bounty must specify the standard against which the review should be carried out.
4. The creator of the review bounty must specify at least one minimum KSR requirement for at least one relevant KSR domain that must be met by agents who wish to act as reviewers.
5. Every reviewer must sign a declaration of conflicts of interest.
6. An agent cannot review information contributed by or related to them or their activities.
7. Due compensation will be paid for an eligible review regardless of the outcome of the review.
8. Every task on a review bounty provides the opportunity to one “ineligible” agent (i.e., an agent with not enough relevant reputation points to be eligible for claiming the task’s seat) to submit a training review. The trainee’s review must be reviewed and graded by the holder of the seat in question. The grade assigned to the trainee’s review by the holder of the seat (i.e., the “eligible” or “expert” reviewer) will determine the amount of reputation points that the trainee reviewer will gain in each of the KSR domains relevant to the task in question.
9. A seat holder who fails to grade the trainee reviewer’s review will lose CR points proportionate to the resource intensity of the task. The exact formula for the calculation of the amount of CR that will be lost will be provided in a future version of this Protocol.
10. Submission of a deliverable (e.g., a review) is final. A seat holder can only submit one deliverable per task - they cannot submit multiple ones during the course of the bounty. Only if their deliverable is disputed and subsequently rejected will they be given the opportunity to submit a new deliverable for the task; they will, however, not be paid for either their original submission or their post-dispute submission. If they choose not to submit a new deliverable post-dispute, they will lose Conduct Reputation in addition to the K&S Reputation that they had already lost by virtue of losing the dispute.

Note It is advisable to restrict the scope of a review bounty as much as possible. A review with a broad scope will necessarily span several knowledge domains (i.e., reputation domains), which may lead to a large number of reviewers having to collaborate on the review. The more reviewers per bounty, the more complicated the coordination among them.

Note The trainee seat of the review system is a feature that cannot be “turned off” or prevented by the creator of the review bounty. It is an essential component of the Independent Impact platform and is tied to our strong belief that knowledge and skills should be shared with those who are willing to learn.

12 Anti-gaming mechanisms

The Platform implements a set of technical and governance mechanisms designed to detect, deter, and mitigate attempts by agents to manipulate outcomes, misrepresent information, or otherwise undermine the integrity of the system.

12.1 Unique account requirement

Each user shall be permitted to maintain only a single account on the Platform. Account creation shall be subject to an identity verification process sufficient to establish uniqueness of the user. The creation or use of multiple accounts by the same user for the purpose of influencing outcomes, including but not limited to self-review, collusive behaviour, or reputation manipulation, is prohibited.

12.2 Access and session controls

The Platform implements controls to prevent abnormal or suspicious concurrent access patterns, including excessive simultaneous sessions or device usage inconsistent with normal user behaviour. Specific thresholds and enforcement mechanisms may be defined and updated by the Platform without requiring amendment to this Protocol.

12.3 Rate limiting of actions

User actions on the Platform may be subject to rate limits in order to prevent spam, automated manipulation, or other forms of abusive behaviour. Applicable limits, including thresholds, time windows, and enforcement rules, shall be defined in an appendix or supporting specification and may be updated over time.

12.4 Reputation boundaries and constraints

The Platform enforces minimum and maximum bounds on Conduct Reputation (CR) scores. Standards bodies responsible for Knowledge and Skill Reputation (KSR) systems are required to define corresponding bounds and constraints within their respective standards.

Mechanisms are implemented on the Platform to prevent disproportionate or artificially accelerated changes in reputation scores.

12.5 Conflict of interest restrictions

Agents are not allowed to evaluate, verify, or otherwise act in a decision-making capacity over activities, claims, indicators, methodologies, or instruments in which they have a direct or indirect interest, unless such involvement is explicitly disclosed and permitted under an applicable standard.

The Platform may require disclosure of relationships and may restrict actions where conflicts of interest are detected.

12.6 Anti-collusion measures

The Platform implements mechanisms to detect and mitigate coordinated behaviour among multiple agents intended to manipulate outcomes, including but not limited to reciprocal reviews, coordinated voting, or reputation inflation schemes. Such mechanisms may include pattern analysis, network analysis, and anomaly detection techniques.

12.7 Provenance and auditability

All material actions performed on the Platform are recorded with sufficient detail to enable auditability, including attribution to the responsible agent and relevant timestamps. This ensures that actions can be traced, reviewed, and, where necessary, challenged.

12.8 Progressive trust and permissioning

Access to certain high-impact actions may be restricted based on an agent's Conduct Reputation (CR), Knowledge and Skill Reputation (KSR), or other trust signals. This reduces the ability of newly created or low-reputation accounts to exert disproportionate influence on the system.

12.9 Monitoring, detection, and enforcement

The Platform continuously monitors for indicators of gaming, manipulation, or abusive behaviour. Where such behaviour is detected, the Platform may take enforcement actions, including but not limited to:

- temporary or permanent suspension of accounts
- invalidation of actions or outcomes
- adjustment of reputation scores
- referral to governance or dispute resolution processes

12.10 Evolution of anti-Gaming mechanisms

Anti-gaming mechanisms shall be subject to ongoing review and improvement. The Platform and relevant governance bodies may introduce new mechanisms or refine existing ones in response to emerging threats, without undermining the core principles set out in this Protocol.