

Setting up

Establishing a new Engineers Without Borders organisation



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Please see appendices for the record of document changes.

Welcome to the global Engineers Without Borders movement

We are a community of engineers from around the world that believe we should be doing more to address social and environmental injustice. We have been working for over 40 years to contribute to communities in need - in our own countries and beyond our own borders. We carry the name Engineers Without Borders (or translated equivalents) and today, our presence reaches across all major global regions; Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Middle East, Europe, North, South and Central America.

Engineers Without Borders International supports Engineers Without Borders organisations that are committed to working together and delivering demonstrable benefit to the world.

If you're reading this, there is most likely not an Engineers Without Borders in your country and you've made the bold decision to explore what is involved in setting one up. We're excited to work with you on this journey and will support you to achieve this goal so that together we can deliver a more sustainable and equitable future for all.



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Introduction

Launching a new Engineers Without Borders (EWB) organisation and using the EWB brand comes with responsibilities to the global movement and a duty to uphold standards of operation agreed upon by all Engineers Without Borders Member Associations that are part of the global network facilitated by EWB International..

This guidance document has been prepared by Engineers Without Borders International to help those considering launching a new Engineers Without Borders organisation to reflect on their alignment, capacity and readiness, as well as to provide a practical step-by-step insight into what is involved in the process.

Once you've read this guidance, if you wish to take the next step and express an interest in setting up a new Engineers Without Borders organisation, [please complete this Expression of Interest form](#).

By completing this expression of interest, you are indicating that you are committed to establishing a nationally registered non-governmental / non-profit organisation in your country in alignment with Engineers Without Borders International guidance.

About Engineers Without Borders International

Incorporated in 2002, Engineers Without Borders International (EWB International) exists to provide support and coordination to the global Engineers Without Borders movement. To date, the network has benefitted from shared funding opportunities, global convening events and support for collaborative initiatives across more than a few countries. Together we can achieve even greater collective impact against today's most pressing challenges, and accelerate progress for a sustainable and equitable future.

Member Associations

National EWB organisations that are Member Associations of the global network facilitated by EWB International benefit from being part of a united brand. This creates opportunities for them to:

- Contribute to the global EWB voice on issues relevant to our core goals
- Work with other EWB organisations on shared initiatives
- Access better practice knowledge, insight and resources
- Be part of global funding and resourcing opportunities
- Continue to build and shape the global EWB movement including shaping the standards held by EWB International through voting and co-design activities

See the current list of [Member Associations](#).

What's involved?

Establishing a new Engineers Without Borders organisation is a significant commitment. You'll be working towards setting up a registered non-governmental / non-profit organisation in your country that is part of a wider global movement of aligned organisations who share the Engineers Without Borders name (or translated equivalents).

If you become approved as a Startup Member Association, Engineers Without Borders International will provide you with support and guidance to become a fully fledged non-governmental / non-profit organisation recognised as an Approved Member Association of Engineers Without Borders International.

To help you understand what will be involved and to structure this document by chapter numbers, Fig. 1 gives an overview of the whole process from expressing an interest to becoming approved as a Startup Member Association, and then the next steps to establishing as a registered organisation in your country and becoming an Approved Member Association of Engineers Without Borders International.

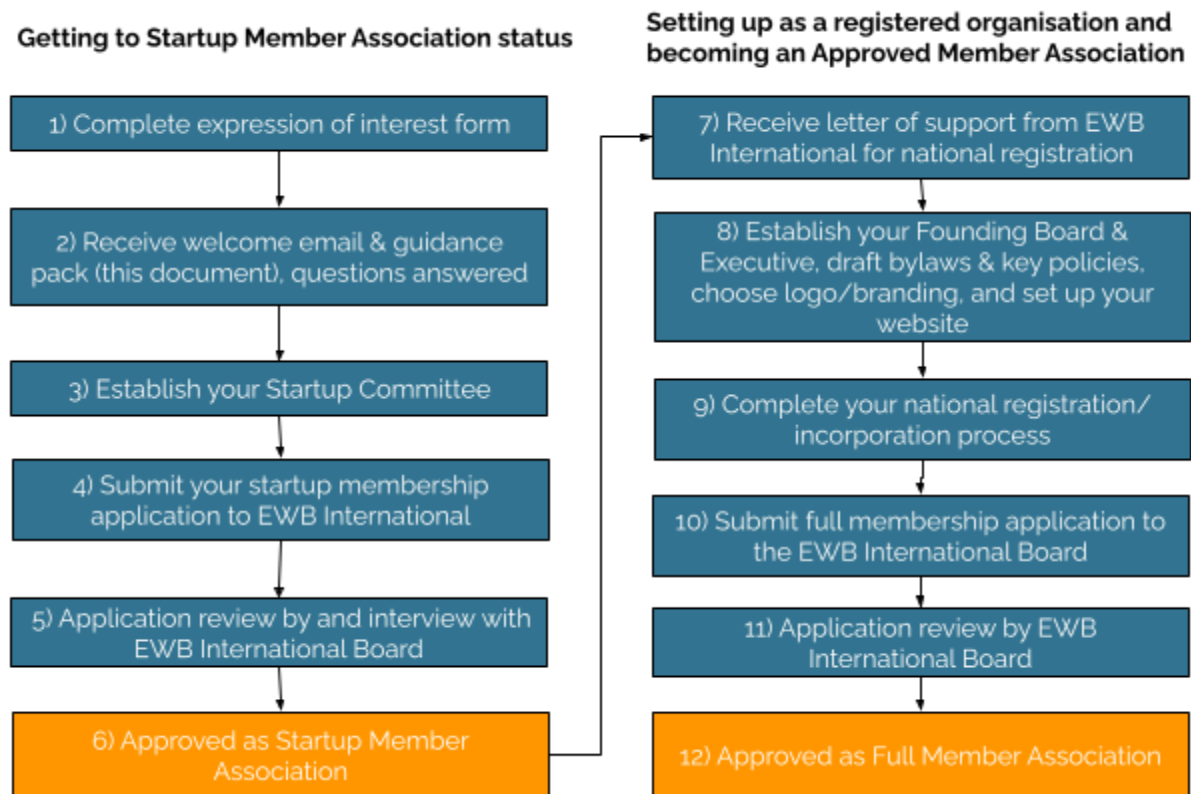


Fig. 1 - Membership flowchart

The approximate duration of steps 1-6 is three to six months total. The duration of steps 7-12 is six (minimum) to twelve months total. We acknowledge that factors such as local government processing times can cause variation in these estimates.

1. Completing the Expression of Interest form

By making an expression of interest, you are informing EWB International that you believe you are ready to lead the foundation of a new EWB organisation. Other individuals that subsequently contact us interested in setting up in the same country will be directed to you. A copy of the expression of interest form is available in Appendix A so that you know what information to prepare.

2. Receive welcome email & guidance pack (this document), questions answered

Following submission of your expression of interest, a representative from Engineers Without Borders International will contact you to see how you're getting on. In the expression of interest form, you have the opportunity to ask questions that an EWB International staff member will answer.

3. Establish your Startup Committee

Experience has shown that one person cannot run a successful EWB organisation alone. Therefore EWB International asks you to establish a startup committee that comprises people with diverse skills and expertise. The minimum viable number of people is five.

4. Submit your startup membership application to EWB International

When you and the startup committee are ready, you will be invited to complete the application form to become a Startup Member Association. A copy of the application form is available in Appendix B so that you know what information to prepare.

5. Application review by and interview with EWB International Board

This form will be reviewed by the EWB International Board of Directors, then you will be invited to an interview with members of the board. These interviews are conducted quarterly unless there is a strong need to expedite. You will have a chance to present about yourselves and your goals, then the board members will introduce themselves and ask questions to get to know you better.

6. Approved as Startup Member Association of EWB International

The final, official decision on your startup member status will be made by the EWB International board of directors during a subsequent board meeting. Once you are approved, your organisation will be added to the website list, two members of your organisation of your choice will be invited to join the global EWB movement WhatsApp community, and you will receive a formal certificate of your membership status. You also get access to the EWB Google Drive with links to templates and webinar recordings among other resources.

7. Receive letter of support from EWB International for national registration

You can use this letter when you approach your country's government about registering to show that you have the support of the international EWB community.

8. Establish your Founding Board & Executive, draft bylaws & key policies, choose logo/branding, and set up your website

See Appendix C for bylaws help, and check if your country has an entity that helps NGOs set up their legal framework.

9. Complete your national registration/incorporation process

See Appendix D for help with establishing a nationally registered nonprofit.

10. Submit full membership application to the EWB International Board

The application includes the following requirements: A letter requesting the board of EWB International to grant the status of full member, information about any important changes that have taken place since you submitted the startup application form, your plan for the next 12 months (not more than one page), and proof of national registration (documents). Once the global EWB charter is established, new EWBs will be required to sign on.

11. Application review by EWB International Board

12. Approved as Full Member

Considerations

Throughout the process described above, we ask you to reflect on considerations associated with the following three key questions:

- **Alignment:** How well aligned is the startup committee with the core mission, goals and values of the global Engineers Without Borders movement?
- **Capacity:** How well equipped is the startup committee to set up, establish and and run a new Engineers Without Borders organisation?
- **Readiness:** What has the startup committee already put in place and what still needs to be done?

Alignment

To determine how well aligned you/the startup committee are with the core mission, goals and values of the global Engineers Without Borders movement, reflect on the following considerations:

- What do you think is the purpose of the Engineers Without Borders movement?
- What motivates you / the startup committee to establish an Engineers Without Borders in your country?
- What goals are you hoping to achieve by establishing an Engineers Without Borders? For example, what problems are you hoping to solve / what issues are you looking to address / what opportunities are you seeking to unlock?
- What values/principles are important to you / the startup committee in how you deliver on those goals?
- How do you envision your new Engineers Without Borders contributes to the global Engineers Without Borders movement? Now, and in five years time.

Capacity

To determine how well equipped are you/the startup committee are to set up, establish and and run a new Engineers Without Borders, reflect on the following considerations:

- Who else is participating in the startup committee; how many of you are there?
- What experience, skills and diversity of perspectives do you bring / are you bringing together and how does this set you up for success in establishing a new Engineers Without Borders organisation?
- What other skills and resources do you anticipate you will need to deliver on your goals in the next few years?
- What is your strategy for securing funding, and for recruiting the talent you need?
- What is in place that gives you the confidence that you can launch a new organisation and that it will still be functional in a year? In five years?

Readiness

To understand what have you/the startup committee already put in place and what still needs to be done, reflect on the following considerations:

- Why is now the right time to set up an Engineers Without Borders in your country?
- Have you researched the process in your country for registering a non-profit / equivalent and checked whether Engineers Without Borders has already been registered previously or not?
- When reflecting on the problems/issues you have highlighted that underpin the goals you have stated, what are the key reasons you believe this problem / issue still exists and is not being addressed?
- In what way do you think your intended actions will make the problem better?
- In what way do you think your intended actions could make the problem worse?
- What gaps do you see in your launch team's capacity that you would like to address before launch?
- What are the five risks you anticipate are most likely to occur, and carry the gravest consequence if they did as you launch your Engineers Without Borders?
- What are your next steps to prepare the application for Engineers Without Borders International Startup Membership
- If you are granted Startup Member Association status by Engineers Without Borders International, what will be your next steps?

Your next steps

Now you've read the guidance on what's involved, reflect on whether setting up a whole new Engineers Without Borders organisation is the challenge for you.

If it is - great! Head over to the [expression of interest form](#) and let us know.

If it isn't - that's also great. You've taken the time to consider what's involved, reflected on your own capabilities and capacity and taken the positive decision that this isn't for you. We hope you might still be interested in the global Engineers Without Borders movement so make sure that you're signed up to the [Engineers Without Borders International newsletter](#), to hear about upcoming opportunities. Who knows, maybe there will be an Engineers Without Borders near you in the future.

Appendices

See the following pages for the appendices.

Appendix A: The expression of interest form

This form is to be completed if you are interested in establishing a new Engineers Without Borders organisation. Following completion of the form, a representative of Engineers Without Borders International will follow up with you to discuss the next steps.

[Go to the form](#)

About you
1. Full name
2. What should we call you? e.g. when we send you an email how would you like us to say 'Dear ...'?
3. Email
4. Current employment status: Employed / self-employed / unemployed / student / retired
5. Name of employer / your affiliated organisation
6. Your role
Establishing a new Engineers Without Borders
7. Country you wish to establish an Engineers Without Borders organisation in (drop down list)
8. Is this your main country of residence?
9. If not: a. Where is your main country of residence? (drop down) b. What is your affiliation with the country you wish to establish an Engineers Without Borders organisation in?
10. What motivates you to establish an Engineers Without Borders organisation in this country?
11. What are you hoping to achieve with Engineers Without Borders? For example, what problems are you hoping to solve / issues are you looking to address? What are your specific plans for achieving those goals in the short and long term?
12. Do you already have a group of interested individuals to form the startup committee? Yes/No a. If so, how many of you are there?
13. What experience, skills and diversity of perspectives do you bring / are you bringing together and how does this set you up for success in establishing a new Engineers Without Borders organisation? Do you possess or have access to someone who possesses the following experience: humanitarian/engineering/nonprofit management?
14. Why is now the right time to set up an Engineers Without Borders organisation in this country?
15. What are your next steps for building and growing the organization after receiving approval?
16. What questions would you like answered next (max of five)?

Appendix B: The Startup Member Association application form

This form will be provided to you via email when you are ready to submit an application to Engineers Without Borders International to be reviewed for Startup Member Association status. Following completion of the form, you will be informed whether your application has been successful or not and the next steps.

The startup committee
About you: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Your full name2. What should we call you? e.g. when we send you an email how would you like us to say 'Dear ...'?3. Your current employment status: Employed / self-employed / unemployed / student / retired4. Name of your employer / your affiliated organisation5. Your role at employer / affiliated organisation6. Email7. Is this the same email address we should use to direct all enquiries about the startup Engineers Without Borders? Yes/No8. If not, what email address should we use?9. Postal address10. What is your motivation for establishing an Engineers Without Borders?11. What skills, expertise and experience do you bring to the startup committee that will contribute to the success of establishing the organisation? Who from your startup committee possesses the following experience: humanitarian/engineering/nonprofit management? About the rest of the startup committee: <ol style="list-style-type: none">12. How many other individuals are currently involved in the startup committee?13. Do all / most of the startup committee reside in the country you wish to establish an Engineers Without Borders organisation? (Yes/No)14. If not all of the startup committee reside in this country, how many do? For each individual: <ol style="list-style-type: none">15. Full name16. What name should we use in future correspondence with this individual?17. Current employment status: Employed / self-employed / unemployed / student / retired18. Name of employer / affiliated organisation19. Role at employer / affiliated organisation20. Email21. What skills, expertise and experience does this person bring to the startup committee that will contribute to the success of establishing the organisation? Additional startup support <ol style="list-style-type: none">22. Describe any other skills, expertise and experience you have involved in establishing this new Engineers Without Borders organisation, e.g. support you are receiving from other organisations.
Alignment
<ol style="list-style-type: none">23. What does the startup committee believe is the purpose of the global Engineers Without Borders movement? What are your expectations from EWB International and the global movement?24. What motivates the startup committee to establish an Engineers Without Borders in your country?25. What goals are you hoping to achieve by establishing an Engineers Without Borders? For example, what problems are you hoping to solve / what issues are you looking to address / what opportunities are you seeking to unlock?26. How do these goals align with those of the global Engineers Without Borders movement as stated by Engineers Without Borders International?27. What values/principles are important to the startup committee in how you deliver on those goals?

28. How do these values/principles align with those of the global Engineers Without Borders movement as stated by Engineers Without Borders International?
29. How do you envision this new Engineers Without Borders contributes to the global Engineers Without Borders movement? Now, and in five years time.

Capacity

30. How does the experience, skills and diversity of perspectives you are bringing together set you up for success in establishing a new Engineers Without Borders organisation?
31. What other skills and resources do you anticipate you will need to deliver on your goals in the next few years?
32. What is your strategy for securing funding, and for recruiting the talent you need?
33. What gives you the confidence that you can launch a new organisation and that it will still be functional in a year? In five years?

Readiness

34. Why is now the right time to set up an Engineers Without Borders in your country?
 35. Have you researched the process in your country for registering a non-profit / equivalent and checked whether Engineers Without Borders has already been registered previously or not?
 36. When reflecting on the problems/issues you have highlighted that underpin the goals you have stated, what are the key reasons you believe this problem / issue still exists and is not being addressed?
 37. In what way do you think your intended actions will make the problem better?
 38. In what way do you think your intended actions could make the problem worse?
 39. What gaps do you see in your launch team's capacity that you would like to address before launch?
 40. What are the five risks you anticipate are most likely to occur, and which carry the gravest consequence if they did happen as you launch an Engineers Without Borders?
 41. If you are granted Startup Member Association status by Engineers Without Borders International, what are your next steps?
42. What questions would you like answered next (max of five)?

Appendix C: Guidance on nonprofit bylaws

The below information *in cursive* serves as a guidance on what should be included in a nonprofit's bylaws. EWB International does not provide legal advice.

What Are Bylaws

Bylaws are rules set out by the organisation which govern the internal operation of the organisation and its board. The board of directors will use the rules laid out by the bylaws as a guide when setting out policies.

Bylaws are legally binding and, in some countries, having clearly laid out bylaws is a legal requirement. Having bylaws is also often a requirement when applying for tax exemption. Bylaws are also extremely beneficial when setting up the organisations policies thus drafting a set of bylaws is extremely useful.

Bylaws can roughly be equated to high-level policies and most relate directly to the function of governing board and the boards relationship to its members. Bylaws also help to manage interests amongst the board members.

Essential Structure and Layout of Bylaws

Several drafts of your organisation's bylaws may be necessary to reach a final draft.

The headings below will assist you in drafting your bylaws and understanding the purpose of each section.

The exact requirements for the organisation's bylaws may vary slightly country to country when applying to your national tax authority for tax exemption.

Name of the Organisation

This will be the official name of the organisation as on the registration documentation for the organisation.

The Principal Location of the Organisation

The location you will store all of the organisation's policies and records as well as the primary location stated in your company registration documentation.

The Organisation's Purpose

Basic outline of the mission statement of your organisation and the focus of the organisation geographically and demographically.

Outline of the Board Structure

The maximum number of directors or board members and the hierarchy of the board

List of Board Members and Their Roles In the board

List the roles of all board members and a description of what their role is on the board e.g., President, Secretary, Treasurer

Conflict of interest policy

A policy regarding the process for overcoming potential conflicts between a board member's interests and the interests of the organisation as a whole. In the interest of avoiding unfair

personal gain for an individual board member. E.g., advising the board to use a company they own to perform a service.

Procedure for Electing new members and removing members

A clear outline of what the requirements are for being a member of the board and the process for adding and removing a member from the board if it becomes necessary and the grounds for removal.

Term Limits of board members (If applicable)

Set out the maximum amount of time a member can be in a given position on the board. This may not always be applicable in every organisation.

Schedule for major board meetings

The schedule for regular, organisation specific and annual board meetings.

Procedure for Giving Notice of Board meetings

How board members will be notified about board meetings, time limitations regarding meetings and the procedure related to setting up or adjusting meetings.

Document Retention and Destruction policy

How long board records will be held for and how they will be destroyed or disposed of when that period has elapsed.

Quorum Requirements

The number of board members and which specific board members whom need to be present to make a board decision

Sub-board committees

A list of committees formed under the board detailing the committee's purpose and the members of the committee and their role in the committee. Additionally, this should include the process for creation and dissolution of committees.

Compensation policy for board members

One of the requirements for tax exemption prohibits board members from drawing anything more than a reasonable amount which is usually outlined in a given countries tax legislation.

Date Selected for end of Fiscal Year

The date on which your company has selected to end their financial year, this is usually outlined in the registration documentation for your organisation.

Limitation on activities

This outlines the limit on the organisation's engagement with various stakeholders including the government for example in most countries when applying for tax exemption a non-profit organisation forfeit's its ability to engage in any political activity and depending on the country limitations are placed on financial lobbying

Rules for amendments to the Bylaws

An outline of rules and regulations for amending any of the bylaws.

How dissolution of the organisation would be handled

An outline of how the board will carry out dissolution of the company if it becomes necessary.

Appendix D: Guidance on establishing a registered nonprofit

The following information *in cursive* outlines a typical process to establish a nationally registered organization. It will differ from country to country so be sure to check the route to registration in the country in question. EWB International does not provide legal advice.

GATHER AND ELECT INITIAL KEY POSITIONS: Persons registered as "Incorporated Trustees" Elect a board of directors and any other key roles you can fill. These members should have strong financial, legal and technical skills in order to best serve the organisations establishment and growth

Board of Directors These are your key competent individuals which were established in the start-up guide. These individuals often selected for their expertise in law, business, marketing, fundraising, etc. The board of directors are often volunteers in a non-profit and as such do not receive compensation. Key board positions: • Chairperson/ President • Vice-chairperson/ Vice-president • Treasurer • Secretary

Responsibilities • Set Rules and Regulations • Oversee Financing • Strategic Planning • Hiring of executive staff • Overall mission and vision of the organisation. • Attend quarterly board meetings • Attend the annual general meeting which should be held within 6 months from the closing date of the financial year • Attend extraordinary general meetings to deal with urgent matters for the organisation

IDENTIFY KEY DRIVERS Define the following key points • Purpose • Vision • Mission • Value proposition

DRAFT ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION The articles of incorporation are drafted to describe the legal acknowledgement that they intend to form an organisation and how power will be assigned to the board and provide proof of accountability to all stakeholders.

DRAFT BYLAWS The Bylaws provide a set guide and rule set for how the organisation will be structured and coordinated. This should be available to all members for reference to adhere to.
• Purpose/Mission • Registered Office of the NGO • Members and qualifications and length of memberships • Board size, responsibilities, structure • Structure and timing of board meetings • Subsequent roles and remit • Committee Structures

REGISTER WITH YOUR GOVERNING BODY

INITIAL BOARD MEETING • Establishing portfolio managers • Clarify organisational structure and how the board functions • Member journey from university to professional • Preliminary projects Establish an Accounting system Establish a payment and accounting system for recording donations, grants and sponsorships and how those funds are disseminated. Develop Key Organisational Plans and Strategies • Fundraising • Marketing • Reporting • Recruiting

Appendix E: Frequently asked questions

Getting Started

1. **Where do I find people to form a startup committee?** By finding a local team of committed individuals to form a startup committee you will significantly increase your chance of success. Think about what expertise will set you up for success. These may be people you already know or people you recruit using appropriate communication channels (e.g. LinkedIn, locally relevant talent platforms).
2. **Could you provide guidance on the ideal team composition of the startup committee?** We encourage a diverse range of expertise - think about what expertise will set you up for success. This should likely include humanitarian, engineering, and nonprofit management expertise.
3. **What support can the global EWB network provide during the early stages?** All organisations within the global EWB network had to start small, so they can answer your questions once you are a start-up member organisation.
4. **What potential partners (e.g. local organizations, government agencies, universities, businesses) should we collaborate with to maximize the impact of our projects?** This is up to you as long as you prioritise due diligence. There is a great diversity in the type of partners with whom the national EWBs work.

Finance

5. **What will be the financial responsibilities of the national EWB towards EWB International (are there any annual charges)?** There are currently no financial responsibilities of the national EWBs towards EWB International. However, several national EWBs aim to support EWB International with 0.5% of their annual budget, and other national EWBs provide in-kind support such as staff capacity.
6. **Could you introduce us to foundations/funders who could support us?** Generally, each national member organisation is responsible for its own funding. However, EWB International forwards opportunities to the global network when they present themselves, and there is a fundraising peer group which you can join.

Collaboration

7. **Is it possible to collaborate with other national EWBs within the global network?** Yes, this is one of the main benefits of being part of the global network. Please reach out to EWB International if you would like an introduction to a specific organisation.
8. **Will there be any support from other countries for engineers to volunteer in their countries and vice versa?** Volunteer exchanges can likely be arranged, but there is no such program in place at the moment.
9. **What types of activities and programs does EWB International organize to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing among its members?** EWB International helps facilitate working groups for collaborating toward a specific outcome/output, peer groups for mutual knowledge sharing, and webinars for learning opportunities.

Projects

10. **Can you share best practices and lessons learned from other EWB chapters, particularly those in similar regions or with similar project focuses?** EWB International is working on collecting and publishing relevant case studies.
11. **Does EWB International run their own projects?** EWB International serves as the global secretariat for the global EWB network. We do not run projects like a national EWB organisation typically does.
12. **How does Engineers Without Borders measure the long-term success and sustainability of its projects?** EWB International is facilitating the creation of a framework for impact measurement.

Requirements

13. **Is there a publicly available code of conduct describing EWB's principles and practices?** EWB International is facilitating the creation of a charter document which will include such information.
14. **Are there specific guidelines for structuring a national EWB's leadership and operations?** See Appendix C for guidance.
15. **What are the specific legal and regulatory requirements for setting up an international NGO or EWB chapter?** See Appendices C and D for guidance.

Appendix F: Record of document changes

Document change(s)	Date
All pages. Document creation.	August 2022
Review and revision by EWB International board subcommittee.	May 2025