

## A government you can trust

by Carlos Gadsden,  
IWA 4 International Secretary<sup>1)</sup>

As an institution, ISO has become a symbol of one of society's most valuable assets: reliability. The International Workshop Agreement 4 (IWA 4:2005, *Quality management systems – Guidelines for the application of ISO 9001:2000 in local government*) is an important example. This agreement makes for the first time in the history of ISO a direct incursion in local and international government management.

IWA 4 provides local governments with guidelines for the voluntary application of ISO 9001:2000, *Quality management systems – Requirements*, without adding, changing or modifying the standard. Its aim is to help governments achieve reliability, and as such constitutes a tool of enormous importance.

### Trust grows from below

One of the great challenges that societies face today is the need to develop and maintain their citizens' confidence in their governments and institutions. Local governments have an important role to play in creating sustainable communities where quality, cost-effective and consistent public services successfully promote sustainable economic prosperity and social justice. These goals can be achieved by deploying and interacting with national and regional policies in a consistent and compatible way.

It is also possible for local governments to provide stability and promote governance when these are lacking at a regional or national level. A high quality performance of the municipal government can correct and improve public policies originating at different government levels. Through local governance integrity we can build stronger region-

1) The author, Carlos Gadsden, is the IWA 4 International Secretary. Some parts of this paper were published in the IWA 4 introduction with the invaluable help of Nigel Croft and in Política Digital (May 2007) [iwalg@osimx.com](mailto:iwalg@osimx.com)



9 November, 2006, Mexico – From left, ISO Secretary-General, Alan Bryden; IWA 4 Secretary, Carlos Gadsden; IWA 4 Vice-Chair, Deputy Carlos Madrazo at the IWA 4 in local governments presentation to the Federal Deputies Commissions on Strengthening Federalism and Economy.

al, national and global governments<sup>2)</sup>, and the entire system can become democratically stronger. This type of coherent approach will help build reliable and consistent governments at all levels. IWA 4 is in this way opening a new paradigm in the field of political sociology.

### A call for quality

Local governments worldwide are experiencing higher levels of democracy and pluralism. Although the needs and expectations of local citizens can vary significantly around the world, this trend requires that governments increase their ability to carry out their mandates in an effective and transparent way. To achieve this, local governments need to effectively manage the available resources and processes, and work together as a system.

With a quality management system, a local government can direct its activities to satisfy the needs and expectations of the local community. Such a system consists of an organizational structure together with the planning, processes, resources and documentation needed to achieve quality objectives and provide continual improvement of the products and services that are delivered.

2) "Through the local" refer to "Desde lo Local", a "bottom-up" decentralization approach which in México has become a national governmental program.

### "ISO has become a symbol of reliability."

ISO 9001:2000 has gained widespread acceptance as a good basis for the establishment of quality management systems. Its effective implementation constitutes an excellent tool for local governments to reassure local citizens that their needs and expectations are fully understood and met on a consistent basis and in a timely manner.

IWA 4 has been developed to provide local governments worldwide with a consistent approach to quality management. One of its aims is to "translate" the technical language of ISO 9001:2000 into a more user-friendly language for people involved in local government. The intent is to stimulate and facilitate their use of ISO 9001:2000 in an integral way. Although some local government organizations may already have partially implemented ISO 9001:2000 for specific services, the objective of IWA 4 is to promote its use throughout the whole range of services they provide, including any contingency requirements.

Certification is not necessary to achieve a local government's objectives of reliability, responsiveness and transparency, although this might be encouraged by regional or national government initiatives. Nor should conformity to ISO 9001:2000 be regarded as a final objective in itself – once a local government is delivering consistent, conforming services to the local community, it should

look beyond conformance to performance. It can then, for instance, consider the application of ISO 9004:2000 and/or other excellence models, such as the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), to improve its overall efficiency.

The relative stages in the implementation of a quality management system and the role of this document can be seen schematically in **Figure 1** opposite.

## Processes and outcomes matter

The innovation of IWA 4 is that it addresses:

- the integral management of all the processes a local government should develop in order to be considered reliable by its citizens;
- the involvement and commitment of top local authorities (political and technical, under the lead of the mayor) with the quality management process of the local government;

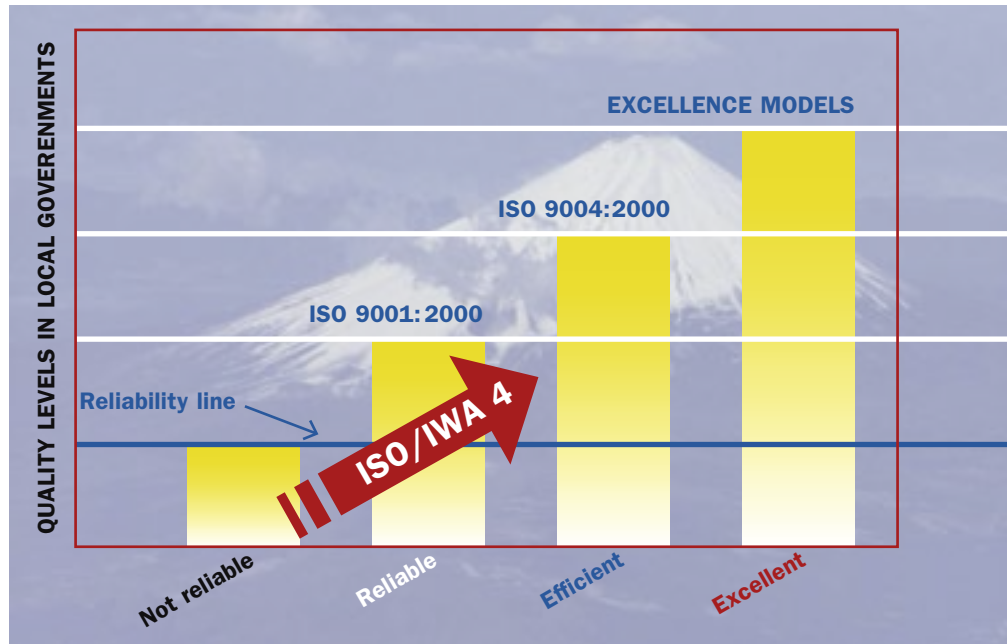
## About the author



**Carlos Gadsden** is the Secretary of the team that developed IWA 4. Director of the *Organización de Servicios Interdisciplinarios (OSI)*, a consultant firm, he has over 20 years of

experience in local governments and inter-governmental relations issues. As a quality management and organizational development consultant since 1981, he has worked with more than 100 enterprises and institutions. He was General Director of the National Institute for Federalism and Municipal Development (INAFED), an institution which is in charge of the inter-governmental relations between the federal and municipal governments in Mexico, his native country. He was also president of the Inter American Network of the Highest Authorities in Decentralization and Local Governments (RIAD) of the Organization of American States (OAS).

E-mail [iwalgl@osimx.com](mailto:iwalgl@osimx.com)  
Web [www.osimx.com](http://www.osimx.com)



**Figure 1** - Schematic diagram to show the positioning of this IWA 4 guidance.

- the need to define outcomes first, in order to establish and connect the processes required to achieve them; and
- the measurement and verification of the 39 indicators of standard management which, according to experience and common sense, local governments “cannot afford not to meet”.

The annexes in IWA 4 provide:

- examples of services and associated processes that local governments should strive to provide (annex A); and
- a simple methodology to assess their degree of effectiveness and maturity (annex B).

## Unanimous approval

IWA 4 is the result of a carefully drafted proposal delivered by Mexico for an international workshop agreement, following long and thorough research based on experiences from the past 20 years.

Eighty-two participants, from 18 different countries, discussed and unanimously approved the IWA document for local governments in May 2005. It was published in October 2005, becoming the fourth international workshop agreement issued by ISO.

## Watch out for red

Annex B is the most relevant tool of the document. It is inspired by the United Nations 21<sup>st</sup> Local Agenda, and based on “From the Local Agenda” – a document developed by the Mexican government through the National Institute for Federalism and Municipal Development (INAFED) in cooperation with other actors.

**“Today, one of the great challenges is the need to maintain citizens’ confidence in their governments.”**

In Mexico, this methodology has been applied to over 300 municipal governments. It uses a traffic-light type graphic, based on 39 indicators that every local entity should meet to be regarded as reliable (**Figures 2 and 3**, overleaf). It is scored as follows:

- Green light = compliance;
- Yellow light = halfway compliance;
- Red light = poor performance.

The latter exhibit those features that prevent local governments from being reliable. For example, in the case of solid waste disposal, open-sky dumps will

## Main Focus

score red, but fenced and guarded open-sky city dumps would be rated yellow. To achieve the green of reliability the minimum standards need to be met, in this case, a controlled, fenced, and guarded city dump complying with environment protection standards, and running a sufficiently efficient collection system.

### “Through integrity in local governance we can build stronger regional, national and global governments.”

On the other hand, in this example, waste separation is beyond minimum reliability and, although desirable, it is not required by the system. Annex B focuses solely on achieving minimal or basic reliability to create a strong base for further improvement. If this level is not reached, a local government will have difficulty implementing related initiatives. In this particular case, it would have a serious problem with waste separation programs and repercussions for the environment.

IWA 4 will be reviewed next year (2008) to improve and adjust it to the needs of any local government, so that its minimum principles can be met in any part of the world. This will create

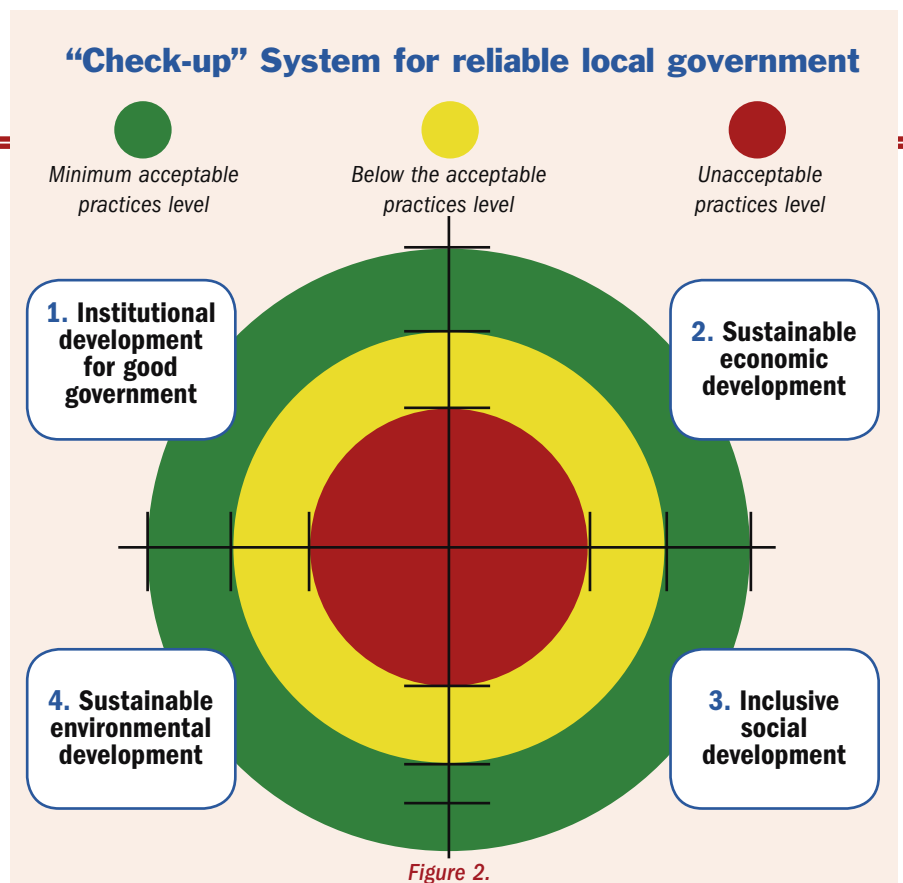


Figure 2.

three more years of international experience, since the instrument will be tested by several local governments in ISO member countries. The result will be a more polished document, meeting the requirements of an International Standard for local governments which choose to achieve reliability.



## Global application

In addition to the original versions published by ISO in English and French, there is an official Spanish version, reviewed in 2005, and approved in 2006 by the Spanish Translation Task Group of ISO technical committee ISO/TC 176, *Quality management and quality assurance*. Italian and Arabic versions are waiting to be officially approved.

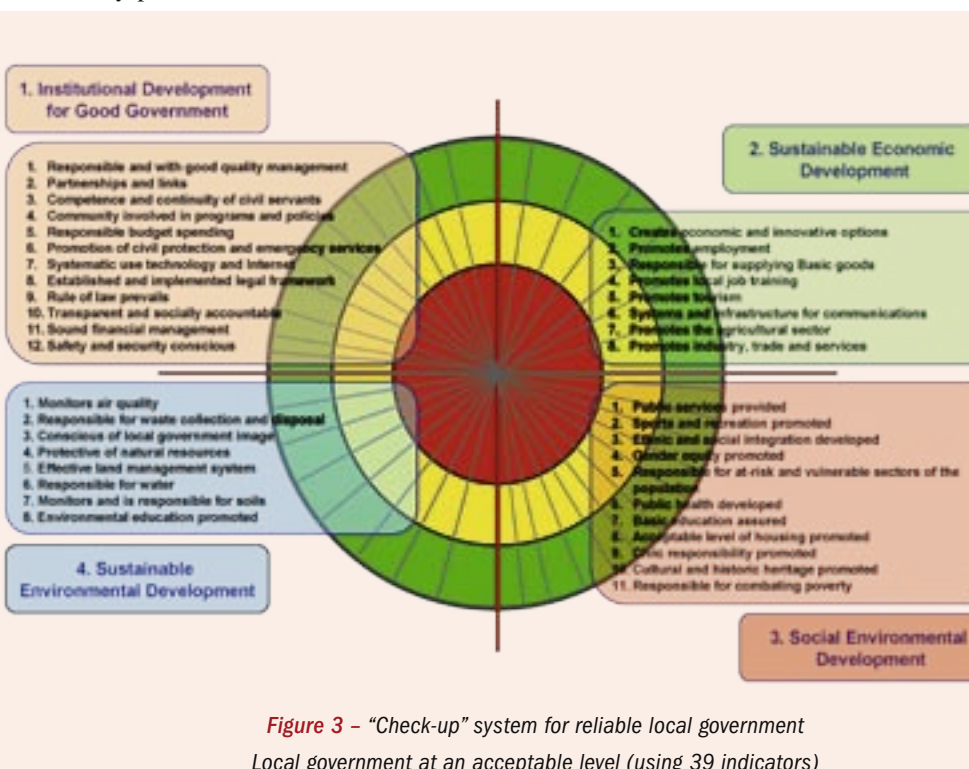


Figure 3 - “Check-up” system for reliable local government

Local government at an acceptable level (using 39 indicators)

A Reliable Government International Recognition has been set up based on IWA 4, and supported by the World Council for Quality<sup>3)</sup>. It was granted to the local government of Irapuato, Mexico, in May 2007. This recognition will be promoted by national networks, together with different stakeholders involved, in order to work towards sustainable management systems.

Among them, Microsoft for example, has developed a free Web site to enable local governments – through a digital access to the Internet – to carry out a self-assessment, verify this diagnosis with hard evidence, and develop a quality management plan.

IWA 4 has been adopted in many countries<sup>4)</sup>, among them Spain, Mexico, Italy and Egypt, which have already published their own national norms or guidelines (UNE in Spain, and NMX in Mexico), or are in the process of doing so.

The application of IWA 4 is explicitly promoted by an association of local governments in Scotland, as well as by the *Instituto Latinoamericano de Aseguramiento de la Calidad (INLAC)* in Latin America. It would be useful for the IWA 4 Secretariat to learn about other existing experiences<sup>5)</sup>.

I quote here a reflection made by Francesc Martinez, city manager of the municipality of San Fost de Campsenelles, Barcelona, regarding IWA 4:

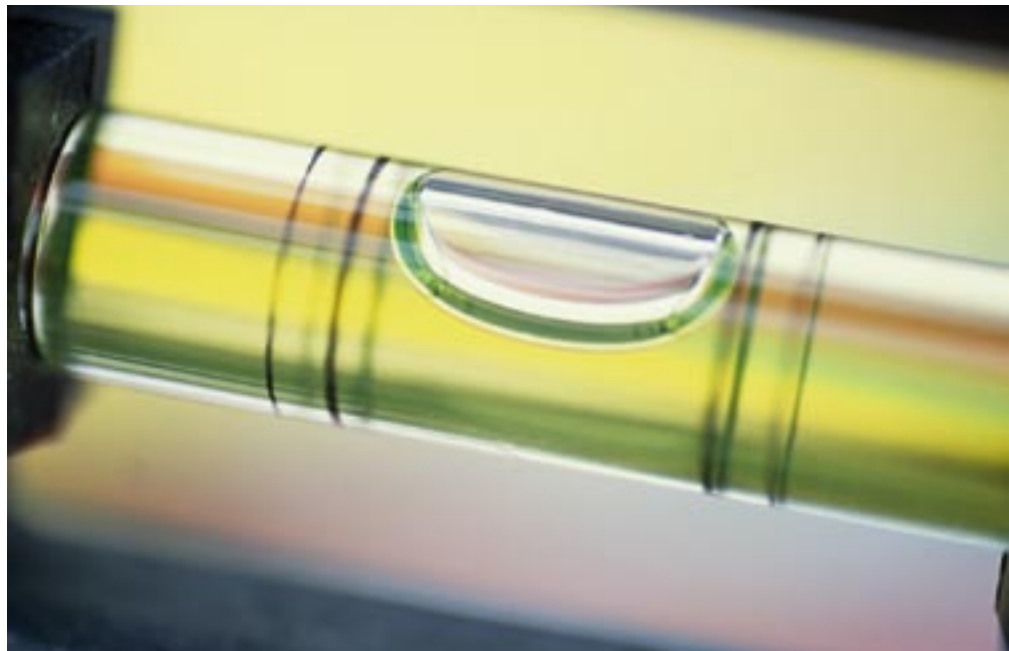
“The assessment we have undertaken – and we have informed this to the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces’ Main Council – reveals the convenience of ‘riding the IWA 4 car’, since it is by far, with its perfectible aspect, the best or maybe the only tool for the encouragement of continuous improvement and reliability of local administrations”<sup>6)</sup>.

3) [www.inlac.org](http://www.inlac.org)

4) IWA 4 is currently in use in several Latin American countries, and in Egypt, Italy, Scotland, Spain and Russia, among others.

5) [www.osimx.com](http://www.osimx.com) and [iwagl@osimx.com](mailto:iwagl@osimx.com)

6) See the extract of the evaluation document by Fernando Monar, currently the Quality General Director of the Spanish Autonomic Government of Balearics in [www.calidad.org/public/articles/1138533997\\_monar.htm](http://www.calidad.org/public/articles/1138533997_monar.htm)



## Management system standards can play greater role in better regulation

by Lord Lindsay, Chairman of the United Kingdom Accreditation Service

**T**he desire for better regulation seems to be a common theme for government these days.

In the United Kingdom, the Better Regulation Commission (BRC – [www.brc.gov.uk](http://www.brc.gov.uk)) was formed early in 2006 to give independent advice to the British Government on action to reduce unnecessary regulatory and administrative burdens. The BRC continues the work of the Better Regulation Task Force which had been carrying out a similar function for a number of years.

The BRC has a high profile and reports directly to the Prime Minister. Part of its work is to challenge departments and regulators to ensure that regulation, and its enforcement, accord with the five principles of good regulation – proportionality, accountability, consistency, transparency and targeting. The

BRC is starting to make a real impression in influencing the shape of legislation in the United Kingdom.

At the European level, the European Commission has launched a programme to reduce the volume of European legislation and simplify that which remains. The Commission sees better regulation as a key factor in business competitiveness, growth and employment performance.

As part of my work on the BRC, I have encouraged greater consideration of the role standards and accredited conformity assessment can play in support of lighter touch regulation or even as a self-regulatory alternative to legislation.

There are numerous examples where legislation is supported by accredited laboratory testing, such as for water quality and food safety, and inspection, such as surveying for asbestos. It is clear that accredited testing and inspection to recognized standards play a key role in a modern legislative framework.

### Environmental field

But I believe that management systems standards can contribute as well and this too has been part of our considerations. Probably the best current example is in the environmental field where environmental management systems (EMS) are now recognized as