Summary explanation of both ISO 14001 and BS 8901 standards

ISO 14001

First published in 1996, ISO 14001 applies to all organisations and specifies the actual requirements for an Environmental Management System. It is considered to be the corner stone of the ISO 14000 series; it is the most well known and is a 'specification standard' meaning it can be certified against by an external Certification Body.

BS 8901

Similarly, BS 8901 is also a specification standard and is considered to be the cornerstone of the BS 8900 series of Sustainability Management. It is a new standard, published in its final form in 2009, and is being pioneered by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) as the standard to achieve should an organisation wish to maximise their chance of successfully tendering for London Olympics 2012.

BS 8901 applies specifically to the Events Industry (venues, events management companies, event clients and all related supply chains). In comparison to ISO 14001 there is a much stronger focus on social and economic issues (such as procurement, supply chain management and resource use), although both standards are written to ensure they can be adapted to the culture and requirements of the organisation (i.e. it is the organisation that gives voice to the system and not the other way round). Both standards require objective auditing and the identification of KPI's to measure, monitor and management performance against set targets and, in BS 8901's case, the organisation's stated principles of sustainable development (inclusivity, integrity, stewardship and transparency).

Table 1- Comparison Matrix ISO14001 and BS8901: 2009

Environmental Standard ISO14001	Sustainability Standard BS8901:2009
Generic Business	Events Industry Specific
Integral process	Integral process
Social aspects not primary focus	Social aspects a primary focus
Supply chain – not primary focus	Supply chain an essential criterion
Life Cycle ref generic impact	Life Cycle in terms of the event
Objective auditing (KPI's)	Objective auditing (KPI's)
PDCA (Plan Do Check Act)	PDCA