



A Guide for Higg BRM

HOW TO GET STARTED

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
2. BEST PRACTICES.....	4
STEP 1: Week 1 – SELECT A FACILITATOR.....	5
STEP 2: Week 2 – ASSIGNING QUESTIONS TO SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT(S).....	5
STEP 3: Week 2 – SET A TIMELINE	6
STEP 4: Week 2 – SET UP A SHARED FOLDER FOR SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS.....	6
STEP 5: Week 3 – TRAINING/INTRODUCTION.....	7
STEP 6: Week 4 – TRACK PROGRESS UNTIL FINAL REVIEW	8
3. CLOSING, NEXT STEPS AND CELEBRATION	10
4. HELPFUL LINKS	10

1. INTRODUCTION

Hi there!

Great to have you here and we are excited that you are about to start the journey of completing the Higg Brand & Retail Module (BRM)! The following pages will give you the best possible conditions to be successful when conducting the assessment.

As you move along you will notice that it can at times feel overwhelming and difficult to engage your team members in completing the necessary tasks. If this happens it is important to remember the reason why you have chosen to do the assessment and how it will contribute to the future goals of your company.

The main purposes of the Higg BRM are to:

- Create an integrated approach to measure environmental and social/labor performance across your entire value chain operations (owned and operated as well as supply chain).
- Offer insight into your business operations and supply chain by providing actionable data.
- Help establish and strengthen your company's social/labor and environmental programs from a management system approach.
- Enable rapid learning through identification of sustainability hot spots, critical issues and improvement opportunities.
- Help you to be more transparent with your business partners with self-assessed and verified results.
- Catalyze sustainability education and provide clear guidance.
- Drive improvements over time through benchmarking of environmental and social sustainability performance.

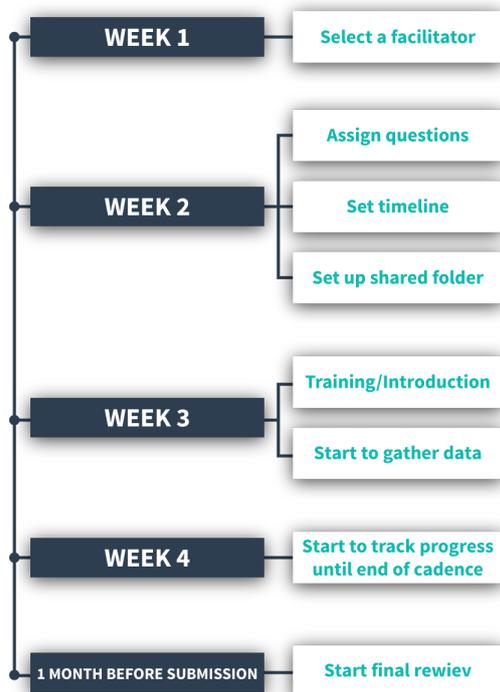
This resource has been developed by [AMRA](#) for the Sustainable Apparel Coalition

2. BEST PRACTICES

Before getting started, please review the six steps below that will make the process of filling in the tool easier.

If you already worked on last year's assessment, it would still be beneficial to review the below steps in addition to using the tool's [data roll forward feature](#).

This feature will enable data to be rolled forward from the previous year's posted module into the current module. Companies can then review last year's data and use this internal conversation as a starting point for the current module, making sure to take into account any changes that have taken place since then.



STEP 1: Week 1 – SELECT A FACILITATOR

If you are reading this, you may already be the person in charge of completing the Higg BRM for your company — your role will be called the *facilitator*. If you haven't already appointed a person to be the facilitator, make sure to appoint one right away. You are going to need one person to be the point of contact within your organization for the 4-6 weeks it will take you to complete this assessment.

The facilitator must have a clear mandate from the management in order to request the relevant people's time to help complete the BRM as accurately as possible. He or she is ideally someone who knows the organization well and understands the overall layers and structures of the company. It is not necessary but beneficial if this person belongs to your sustainability organization, if you have one.

If you are a company with multiple brands, it can be useful to have one person per brand who is your main point of contact.

Before doing anything else, the facilitator should read the following resources:

- [An introduction to Higg BRM](#)
- [Getting Started](#)
- [Higg.org Platform – Step-by-Step Instructions](#)
- [Data Collection Guide](#)

This will give you a good introduction to the tool, the process, the documents and the time frames that need to be adhered to in order to complete the assessment in a timely manner.

STEP 2: Week 2 – ASSIGNING QUESTIONS TO SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT(S)

Filling in the Higg BRM requires teamwork; it is not possible for one person alone to complete the tool. Therefore, the facilitator's first major task will be to decide who should answer which questions.

This is done by going through the tool in full and assigning each question to the most suitable person in the organization—we call that person a *subject matter expert*, (*SME*). This may sound like a tedious task but if you spend the time doing it upfront, it will save you a lot of time in the long run.

When going through the tool, the facilitator should preferably do this together with one or two other colleagues from the organization. One of these people must have knowledge about the company and the roles and responsibilities within it. It is advisable to download the Excel template from Higg.org when assigning the questions. You will find the instructions [here](#).

Important note: The Company Profile section must be filled out completely and all primary questions should be answered with a “yes” in order to download the full Excel report.

At the same time, keep the following 2 documents at hand:

- 1) **Data Collection Guide:** [This guide](#) will help you understand which documents could help answer each section.

- 2) **How to Higg Guide:** When the question's scope is not immediately understood please refer to the *How to Higg Guide*, either [online](#) or as a [PDF](#). It provides guidance for each question and will become your best friend over the next few weeks.

For some companies, it will be important to share the questions with their management or legal team before they share them with the subject matter experts. This is because some questions can be regarded as confidential and are not allowed to be shared publicly.

If you need to engage with any internal teams regarding data privacy before completing the Higg BRM, please review the platform's [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).

STEP 3: Week 2 – SET A TIMELINE

Before getting started, it is important that you set a few fixed dates that you and/or your team members need to adhere to in order to carry out the assessment. Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC) has set the cadence for the 2020 Higg BRM from **1 March through 30 June 2021**. The assessment will have to be completed within this time frame.

STEP 4: Week 2 – SET UP A SHARED FOLDER FOR SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

This will be especially important if you are going to complete the Higg BRM assessment every year and are planning to get it verified. Before starting, make sure to set up a place where all of your supporting documents can be stored and saved. Ideally, supporting documents should be saved in folders set up to mirror the structure of the Higg BRM (i.e., separate folders for each section/sub-section of the tool). This exercise may take some time, but it will help tremendously with your future Higg BRM submissions in case the person responsible for the Higg BRM within your organization changes.

STEP 5: Week 3 – TRAINING/INTRODUCTION

Once the right people have been identified – those who can help you to best answer the questions – it is important to explain to them the purpose, timeline and other important parameters of the Higg BRM in order to get their buy-in. This is best done in a presentation by the facilitator to all of the subject matter experts at the same time.

Depending on the size of the company you work for, it may be a good idea to notify the direct managers of the subject matter experts about the upcoming task(s) you will be asking their team member to participate in, as well as the estimated time and effort that may be required to complete the task(s).

The length of this first presentation should not be longer than 90 minutes.

A proposed agenda for the training could contain:

- *The purpose of completing the Higg BRM*
- *The goal for you as an organization in completing the tool*
- *Who is SAC and Higg Index*
- *The Chapter Overview of Higg BRM (found below)*
- *The process of completing the BRM*
- *Where to find support*
- *Where to store supporting documents*
- *Verification information and the overall timeline*

During the training the facilitator can offer examples to illustrate how to properly answer a question by providing sufficient supporting evidence in the comment area.

To help you put together your initial presentation, SAC provides training materials that you can reference [here](#) on SAC Connect which includes the “SAC Introduction” and “Higg BRM 101”.

During the training, it is important for everyone to understand that their answers will be reviewed by internal teams, business partners outside of your organization (when the BRM is shared on the Higg.org platform) and by a third-party verifier, so being accurate and keeping track of the rationale behind all answers and documents is crucial.

You will need to provide your team login access to the Higg.org portal either during or after the training where the Higg BRM assessment will be completed. Here you will have two options:

1. Everyone is working on the Excel worksheet and the facilitator is the only one to fill in the on-platform module (in which case everybody does not need a platform log-in); or
2. Every SME receives individual access, which then needs to be set up in Higg.org before the training. In this case make sure to review the access level on the platform [here](#).

As a facilitator, the level of support you will need to provide to individual SMEs will vary. For some, you will need to help them fill in the questions step by step, either over the phone or in a meeting. For others you will be able to simply share the login information and they will be fine on their own. This usually depends on their level of experience completing assessments.

Remember that your attitude as the facilitator will matter a lot during this training. If you are positive and enthusiastic about the assessment process, your team members will be too!

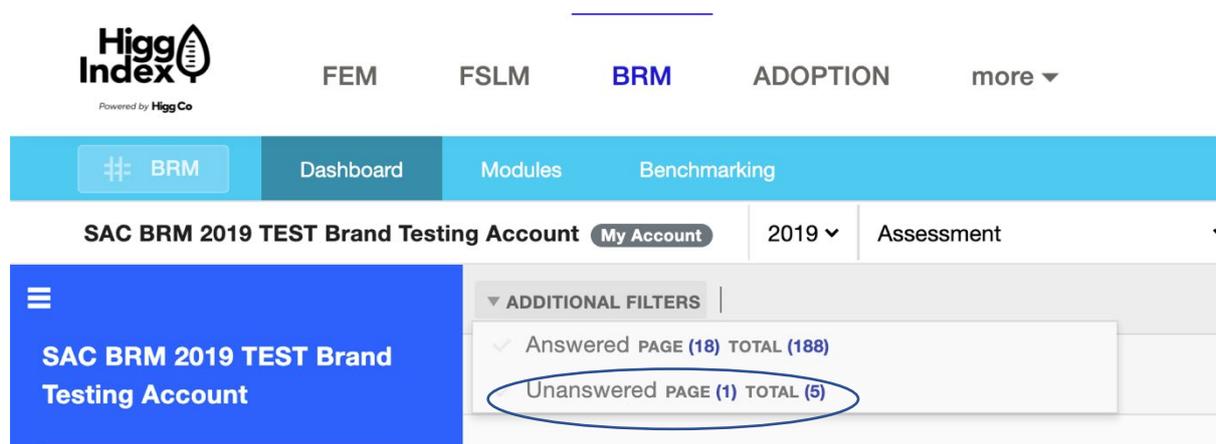
STEP 6: Week 4 – TRACK PROGRESS UNTIL FINAL REVIEW

On average it takes companies 4-6 weeks to complete the assessment. As soon as the introduction meeting has been held it is important to regularly track the progress of the assessment through the end of the Higg BRM cadence.

As a facilitator, it helps if you set up regular review meetings with the people filling in the assessment to check on progress and understand if they have any questions. This way if there are any challenges or issues you can intervene early in the process and offer support. Ideally this is planned in a shared calendar.

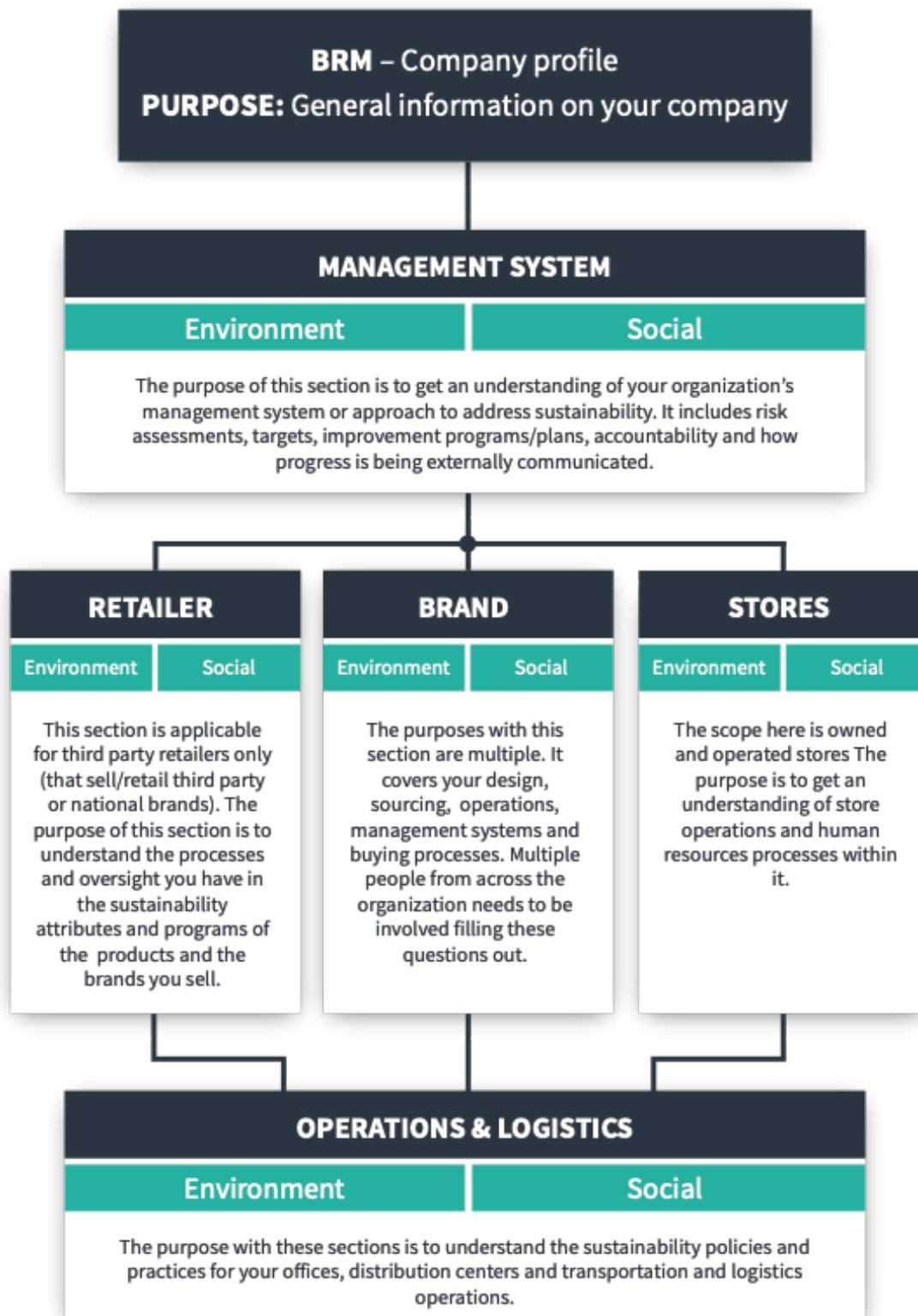
As a best practice it is also recommended that when filling in the tool, detailed comments referencing the supporting document(s) are added at the question level for every positive answer. This will help the facilitator validate the assessment during the final review and will save time when undergoing verification.

And as a final activity before submitting the assessment, we suggest that you as the facilitator review the entire assessment to make sure all answers are completed accurately. Remember to use the “unanswered question” filter function to make sure that you and/or your colleagues have not unintentionally left any unanswered questions.



CHAPTER OVERVIEW

To help ease the process a bit, a chapter overview of each section has been provided below. This can either be shared during the training or given to the SMEs to read as they fill in the tool.



3. CLOSING, NEXT STEPS AND CELEBRATION

After the submission and verification are completed, make sure the result does not just become a dusty object left forgotten on the shelf, instead see this as the point when the real work of transforming your company into something extraordinary begins. You should use the Higg BRM results as a baseline and thereafter set targets for year-on-year improvements. A great way to get started is to review the critical issues and opportunities dashboard on Higg.org and the [supporting resources](#) on setting a baseline and targets. Share the goals widely and let this be a carrot for the whole organization.

Competing with your peers/other retailers is of course always healthy, but please also consider that we are in this together and only when we share our experiences and lessons learned can we begin the important process of innovating together – this is when we will see real transformation in our industry.

Finally, it is time to celebrate! You have all put in a lot of time and hard work to get to this point, and in the end, you have succeeded! You and your team should be proud of yourselves and it is important that you celebrate the win. Celebrate as you see fit for your company but recognize that you have already taken a crucial step forward in the process of becoming a more sustainable company.

Good luck on this journey! It is companies like yours that will move the entire industry towards increased transparency and more sustainable practices!

4. HELPFUL LINKS

The overview of all the links that have been referenced throughout this document:

Getting Started

- [An introduction to Higg BRM](#)
- [SAC Introduction & Higg BRM 101](#)
- [Getting Started](#)
- [Higg.org Platform – Step-by-Step Instructions](#)
- [Data Collection Guide](#)

Supporting Resources

- How to Higg Guide: [Online](#) or [PDF](#)
- [Setting Baselines and Targets](#)

On Platform Features

- [Data roll-forward feature](#)
- [Excel download](#)

Data Security and Privacy

- [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)