Occupational Health and Safety Management System - ISO and COR

**Background:**

Construction industry participants are now beginning to see the effects of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) on public construction procurement. Most notably, the provision which prohibits public procurement bodies from including “Canadian Content” rules which may exclude foreign construction suppliers (i.e. COR). As a result, public buyers currently including COR as a prequalification requirement (i.e. national standard) have defined ISO as an equivalent occupational health and safety management system (i.e. international standard). The introduction of an equivalency has raised concerns about whether ISO is truly a parallel system and what, if any, differences exist.

**Cost Comparison (Audit):**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | COR – A | COR – B | ISO – BSI | ISO - Intertek |
| No. Sites | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| No. Interviews | 30 | 30 |  |  |
| External Audit (Days) | 8 | 7.5 |  |  |
| Year 1 | $11,164 | $10,254 | $28,200 | $14,500 |
| Year 2 | $350 | $350 | $10,200 | $5,400 |
| Year 3 | $350 | $350 | $10,200 | $5,400 |
| 3 Year Total | **$11,864** | **$10,954** | **$48,600** | **$25,300** |

\*Audit quotation based on construction company with 280 workers

\*3-year COR audit cost range $11,000 - $12,000; 3-year ISO 45001 audit cost range $25,000 - $48,00

**Key Messages:**

* **Audit Tool:** ISO and COR both use ISO 19011 guidelines as the audit tool; therefore, both systems require evidence of verification of implementation in the same manner via the same audit tool.
* **Prescriptive vs. Outcome Based:** The COR audit is a prescriptive audit, whereby the program and tools clearly outline what is expected of a firm to confirm that they have a health and safety management system which meets the hazards and risks associated with their work and further, that this system is being consistently applied in their workplace and projects. ISO 45001, rather, is a standard and require workplaces to determine how to create a system to meet the requirements of a standard.
* **Function of ISO vs IHSA (Certification):** The IHSA is the exclusive certification body and the only entity to review and process internal and external audits. ISO, however, develops International Standards, such as ISO 14001, but does not participate in the certification process nor does it issue certificates[[1]](#endnote-1). This is all done by external certification bodies (i.e. Registrars). There are accredited (formal recognition that a certification body operates according to international standards) and non-accredited certification bodies.
* **Scope of Certification**: one of the key differences between COR and ISO Certification, is that COR is based on the company’s WSIB Account (i.e. transparency on the business activities); whereas, companies requesting ISO Certification may select *components* of their business to “certify” (i.e. a business may certify the whole organization, specifically identified functions of the organization, specifically identified sections of the organization, or one or more functions across a group of organizations). In order to have valid equivalency, it is important to ensure the scope of the ISO audit is representative of the company’s primary business activities. Unfortunately, however, ISO does not mandate this representativeness, rather the onus is on the Certified company to accurately and appropriately define the scope of the certification, and to ensure it is not *misleading* in any way.
* COR developed based on number of employees and number of sites, while ISO considers risk in addition to the previously noted elements.

1. <https://www.iso.org/certification.html> (“ISO develops International Standards but does not operate any schemes for assessing conformity with them. ISO 9001:2000 and ISO 14001:2004 certificates are issued independently of ISO by more than 750 certification bodies worldwide, although the organization does develop voluntary standards and guidelines to encourage good practice by these certification bodies and by the accreditation bodies that approve the latter as competent.”) [↑](#endnote-ref-1)