



**UEBT**  
SOURCING<sup>®</sup>  
WITH RESPECT

## **UEBT Outcomes and Impacts Communications**

Staff guidance for checking of content for accuracy and credibility in communications

**April 2021**

## UEBT Outcomes and Impacts communications

### Staff guidance for checking of content for accuracy and credibility in communications

UEBT aims to ensure that when it communicates about the outcomes or impacts of its work, or about the outcomes or impacts of our members that is linked to their engagement in ethical source practices or other UEBT engagement, that the communications is relevant, accurate and based on actual findings.

Whenever any communications product is created that establishes a link between UEBT programmes and services and a particular social or environmental outcome or impact, a checklist must be fulfilled before the product can be published. This corresponds to external communications products such as external stories, interviews, evaluation studies and other performance reports, among other products. This is not related to technical communications such as guidance documents or fact sheets to support companies with their ethical sourcing.

A procedure is followed that ensures that key staff - covering four different areas that collaborate for effective and accurate outcomes and impact communications - are aware of the contents and have signed off on the contents.

*Who must sign off on outcome and impacts communications – one member from each team is sufficient*

- Leadership Team
- Impacts Team
- Communications Team
- Assurance Team (sub-team of certification, verification, membership or other assurance programme will depend on which programme linkage is in the communications.)

*When is additional sign off required:*

The following are instances when additional sign off, outside of the UEBT staff, is required:

- *Approval by the UEBT member company* – when the focus of a communications product that talks about the outcomes or impacts of the work of a company, such as in a study or a story concerning them, UEBT must ensure that the member company has been given sufficient time to review and approve the communications.
- *Approval by the peers/researchers* – when the communications is done in collaboration with other organisations, including other standards, research institutes and similar.

- *Approval by the UEBT Board* – at times there may be a significant impact or outcome of UEBT’s work that concerns reputational risk or another significant issue that is being raised in the communications product. This for example could include communications about negative or significant unintended impacts, or the responses to a report or study that have required a revision or management response of an impacts study. The member of the Leadership Team signing off on the communications will be responsible for raising certain communications to the Executive Director for possible Board review if needed. The Impacts team member should also provide this level of oversight and bring the potential product to the Executive Director for Board review. In general, any communications product that describes any of the following outcomes or impacts should be shared with the Board before publication:
  - > Reports and studies showing significant negative outcomes or impacts from UEBT programmes or services
  - > Reports and studies showing significant unintended outcomes or impacts, particularly where harm has come to people or biodiversity
  - > Reports and studies that illuminate an issue that could bring reputational risk to UEBT or one or more of its members or one or more of its close partners
  - > Reports and studies where the impacts or outcomes shown are significant or surprising in other ways so as to warrant Board understanding of the issues that arise from the study or report (e.g. where the outcomes or impacts shown might require an urgent or immediate shift or change in UEBT strategy).

*Procedure for checking the outcome or impacts communications:*

- One person from each of the teams above suffices for approval and checking. Since UEBT is a small organisation and people can be busy or traveling, three out of the four team areas can sign off and this is also considered sufficient for publication. Two out of three is sufficient if the impact or outcome is not linked to a UEBT assurance programme. The approval of the impact team is always needed.
- The assurance team member is only required to check if the outcomes or impacts information is linked to a UEBT assurance programme. This person can be substituted by the impacts team member if needed.
- Sign off can be via email – covering the checklist below – or a 15 min meeting can be held if there are issues that need to be discussed
- The Communications team initiates the meeting at the time of final studies/written piece and ensures sign off. The communications team will also share what part of the check list is already considered as checked or not applicable and why.
- The scope for the committee is on external communications that take the form of impact and outcome information. These may include the following:
  - > Studies reports
  - > Fact sheets (summaries) on studies

- > Other publications on the outcomes or impacts of UEBT
- > Other publications on the outcomes or impacts of what companies are doing as part of their engagement with UEBT
- > Ingredient stories
- > Leading voices interviews

The scope is NOT related to secondary claims or communications of impact made by businesses, UEBT members and etc. In other words, this is not the same as the UEBT Claims Committee (which is made up of only Communications, Claims and Leadership Teams). Claims are handled separately by the UEBT Claims and Labelling Policy or by writing to [claims@uebt.org](mailto:claims@uebt.org)

*The checklist:*

Before publication the relevant staff will check that the following seven (7) things are in place (some may be more or less relevant depending on whether it's a story or a case study). Note that the Assurance person is primarily focused on checking or letting other staff know whether a publication is OK with respect to item number 7 below.

The communication product is truthful, accurate and based on substantiated evidence, namely:

1. The goal of the communication product and, when relevant, the questions it aims to answer are clear
2. The communication is written in clear language that is not vague or liable to misunderstanding or misinterpretation
3. When relevant, the communication product properly addresses the outcomes, impacts, and unintended effects deriving from UEBT programmes and services as well as the extent to which they are linked to those or other contextual factors
4. Data sources and approaches/methodologies used to compile the communication product are clear and reliable and, when applicable, limitations are specified
5. When relevant, supporting information and clarification is available on request and contacts are provided of those who are responsible for the communication product and that can provide support
6. Key partners or subjects in the study have been consulted on the communication product, their comments are included, and they have given permission and/or sign off for the information to be shared (see also the section on when UEBT members need to approve a story or study about their work)
7. The study or story, if claiming outcome or impact, has a magnitude that warrants the publicity (e.g. certified or verified compliance or other significant change that is measurable) (Assurance)