Governance, Accreditation and Claims System of the AIPH Green City Standard

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1. Overview

AIPH

The International Association of Horticultural Producers, AIPH, was established in 1948. In 2013, AIPH was incorporated in Brussels as an international non-profit association. The Structure, purpose and management of AIPH is set out in a formal Charter AIPH-Charter.pdf. Membership, Board and Committee structures are set out in the AIPH Regulations AIPH-Regulations.pdf, adopted in 2014. Structural decisions regarding AIPH are made at the General Meeting (GM) to which all members are invited. Elections and nominations for the President and Vice-President of AIPH, as well as for Committees Chairs and regional representatives all take place at the GM. There are up to two GMs a year. Structures, Committees, Charter & Regulations • AIPH

AIPH Green City Standard

The governance structure for the AIPH Green City Standard is designed to ensure transparency, inclusivity, and alignment with best practices, supporting its robust development, implementation, and continuous improvement. As outlined in table 1, the governance arrangements involve a range of interconnected bodies, each with distinct roles that work collaboratively to ensure the AIPH Standard's credibility and effectiveness.

The **Steering Committee** provides oversight and strategic direction, ensuring alignment with up-to-date sustainability systems best practice, managing resources, and approving key deliverables. It is central to the governance structure, with two-way communication channels to all other bodies to facilitate coordination and decision-making. The **Technical Working Group**, reporting to the Steering Committee, develops indicators, scoring systems, and accreditation criteria while receiving feedback from the **Stakeholder Advisory Group** to ensure their outputs are practical and inclusive. The Stakeholder Advisory Group also engages with the **Pilot City Network** to validate and refine the framework based on the diverse contexts of participating cities.

The Pilot City Network connects directly with both the Stakeholder Advisory Group and Technical Working Groups, providing real-world data and insights to refine the framework, accreditation processes, and claims systems. These feedback loops ensure that the AIPH Standard remains practical, effective, and globally relevant.

Independent Evaluators, operating outside the collaborative development loop, assess cities impartially during the accreditation process and report findings directly to the Steering Committee to uphold integrity and objectivity. The **Independent Review Panel**, also reporting to the Steering Committee, resolves disputes and maintains fairness throughout the governance process.

The **Accreditation and Claims System** is integral to validating cities' achievements, with clear pathways for recognition through impartial evaluations. The **Global Recognition Mechanism**, including initiatives such as the AIPH World Green City Awards, celebrates accredited cities and elevates their visibility on the international stage, reinforcing the AIPH Standard's ability to drive transformative urban greening outcomes.

Together, these bodies and mechanisms interact through structured communication and feedback loops, ensuring the ongoing improvement and global impact of the AIPH Green City Standard (see figure 1).

Table 1. Governance bodies involved in the development and management of the AIPH Standard.

Body	Composition	Function
Steering Committee	AIPH leads, external experts, city reps.	Oversee framework development, testing, promotion, accreditation, & claims while managing resources & ensuring alignment with sustainability system best practice.
Stakeholder Advisory Group	Local governments, NGOs, businesses, etc.	Provide feedback, ensure inclusivity, highlight risks, & validate the relevance of the framework, accreditation, & claims systems.
Technical Working Group	Subject experts in urban greening, certification, and sustainability.	Develop indicators, scoring systems, accreditation criteria, & claims guidelines while aligning the framework with global best practices.
Pilot City Network	Cities from diverse geographic, economic & cultural contexts.	Test & validate the framework, accreditation processes, & claims systems while providing real-world feedback & sharing lessons learned.

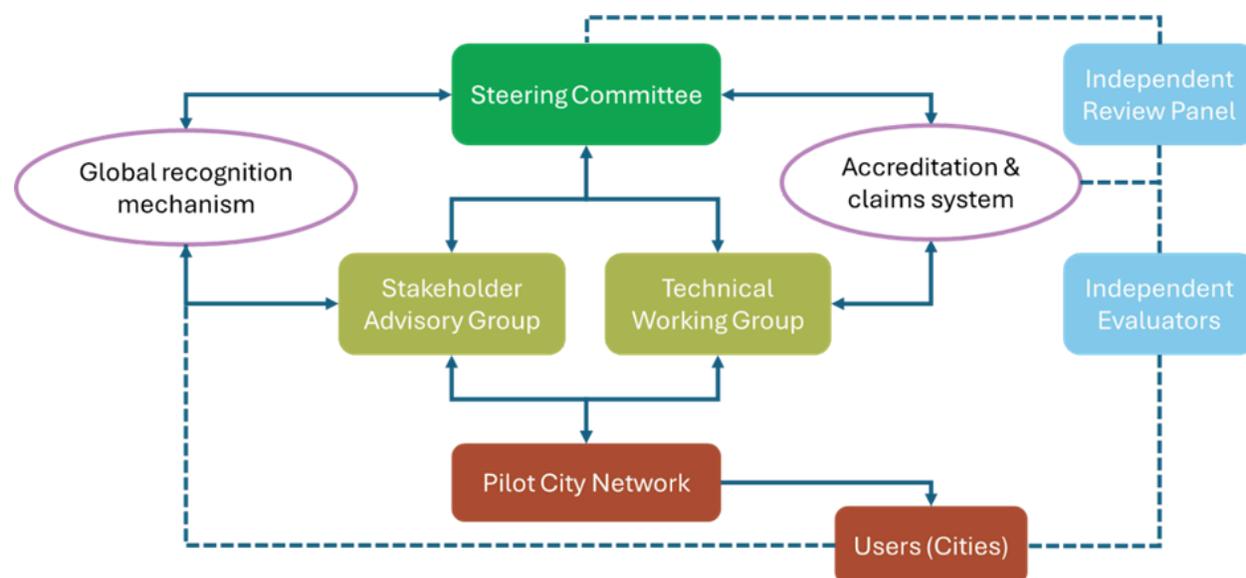| Independent Review Panel	Neutral experts appointed as needed.	Handle grievances & disputes impartially, ensuring credibility in the framework, accreditation, & claims systems.
Independent Evaluators	Qualified experts without conflicts of interest.	Conduct impartial assessments of cities' performance against the AIPH Standard's criteria to verify claims.

Figure 1. Governance arrangements for the AIPH Standard.

2. Steering Committee - Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Steering Committee provides strategic oversight and decision-making to ensure the successful development, testing, promotion, and implementation of the AIPH Green City Standard, in alignment with sustainability system best practice and AIPH's mission.

Composition

3–5 members, including:

- AIPH leads;
- External experts in urban sustainability and governance; and
- Representatives from pilot cities.

Roles and Responsibilities
- Oversee the development, implementation, accreditation, and claims systems of the AIPH Standard;
- Ensure alignment with AIPH's strategic objectives and sustainability system best practice;
- Approve drafts and key deliverables, including technical frameworks and guidelines;
- Manage resources, timelines, and risks;
- Provide oversight for the Accreditation System, Claims System, and Global Recognition Mechanism; and
- Address high-level disputes in collaboration with the Independent Review Panel.

Meetings
- Frequency: Quarterly, with additional meetings as needed.
- Decision-making: Consensus-based where possible, with voting as a fallback.

3. Technical Working Group - Terms of Reference

Purpose
The Technical Working Group develops the technical content and methodologies of the AIPH Green City Standard, ensuring scientific rigor, practicality, and alignment with global best practices.

Composition
3-5 members including subject experts in:
- Urban biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- Climate adaptation and resilience;
- Urban planning and design; and
- Data evaluation and certification processes.

Roles and Responsibilities
- Develop indicators, scoring systems, and benchmarks for the AIPH Standard;
- Design accreditation criteria and claims guidelines;
- Align the framework with global standards and best practices;
- Provide technical input to ensure the feasibility of the framework during pilot testing; and

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- Respond to feedback from the Stakeholder Advisory Group and Pilot City Network to refine methodologies.

Meetings
- Frequency: Monthly during active development phases.
- Reporting: Provide regular updates to the Steering Committee.

4. Stakeholder Advisory Group - Terms of Reference

Purpose
The Stakeholder Advisory Group ensures the AIPH Standard remains relevant, inclusive, and stakeholder-sensitive by providing feedback and validating its practical application.

Composition
Representatives from:
- Local governments (primary users);
- NGOs and advocacy groups;
- Businesses; and
- Urban networks.

Roles and Responsibilities
- Review and provide feedback on drafts, including framework design and implementation plans;
- Highlight risks, equity issues, and practical challenges from diverse stakeholder perspectives;
- Validate the relevance of accreditation and claims systems;
- Advise on strategies to promote collaboration across sectors and departments; and
- Act as ambassadors to promote the AIPH Standard within their networks.

Meetings
- Frequency: Twice per year, with additional consultations as required.
- Engagement: Participate in workshops, surveys, and focus groups.

5. Pilot City - Terms of Reference

Purpose

To test, validate, and refine the AIPH Green City Standard through practical application, ensuring its relevance and effectiveness across diverse urban contexts.

Key Responsibilities

- Implementation: Implement the AIPH Standard and provide feedback to AIPH within a 3-month period.
- Engagement:
  - Participate in a kickoff meeting to establish objectives and expectations.
  - Join a midway check-in to discuss progress and challenges.
  - Attend two 1-hour feedback sessions to share insights and suggestions for refinement.
- Feedback: Provide qualitative and quantitative feedback on the AIPH Standard's practicality, relevance, and potential improvements.
- Collaboration: Share case studies and data to inform best practices.
- Coordination: Assign a dedicated focal point to liaise with the AIPH team.

Time Commitment

- Estimated 3-5 working days over a 3-month period.

Benefits

- Gain early access to the AIPH Standard and contribute to its development.
- Receive expert support throughout the process.
- Achieve international recognition for your leadership in urban sustainability.

Outcome

Pilot cities will play a pivotal role in shaping the final AIPH Standard and will be acknowledged accordingly through AIPH's global network and programmes.