



 **Sedex²**
Virtual Assessment

An overview of our new assessment tool

Introduction

The Sedex Virtual Assessment is a due diligence tool where an auditor assesses the performance of a site remotely using technology and video conferencing.

Sedex is launching this new tool in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic which has led to delays in audits, restrictions on movement of people, and health concerns with in-person and on-site auditing of facilities. In response to this, Sedex has sought to develop an assessment product which responds to these challenges, but which will continue to provide value in a post-COVID world too. The tool has been developed in consultation with several members, Affiliate Audit Companies (AACs) and key stakeholders.

Some key characteristics:

- ✓ Based on the SMETA audit methodology
- ✓ Core clauses maintained
- ✓ Can be undertaken in 2 or 4-pillar format

We are taking a soft-launch approach in acknowledgement that this is an innovative new method for use in a social auditing context, and we will be refining the product as we learn from its implementation.

The Sedex Virtual Assessment will be conducted by vetted and approved Affiliate Audit Companies

Sedex Virtual Assessment is not automatically available to all Affiliated Audit Companies (AACs) who are Sedex recognised to conduct SMETA audits. Our existing AACs will need to go through a second stage of vetting to be recognised to conduct these assessments.

For information on which Affiliate Audit Companies have been approved to date please see: <https://www.sedex.com/our-services/sedex-virtual-assessment/>

The Virtual Assessment process

Where you wish to undertake a Sedex Virtual Assessment, it is **essential** that you consult with any customers. You will need to gain their agreement that they will accept the Sedex Virtual Assessment. It is also **highly recommended** that you discuss and agree how this would impact any pending or upcoming SMETA audit schedules.

The Sedex Virtual Assessment follows the steps below:



Assessing a site's suitability

Sedex Virtual Assessments are not appropriate to be conducted at all sites. Once an assessment has been requested, the approved Affiliate Audit Company will need to determine if this site meets the established criteria and is suitable to proceed.

The Site Suitability Checks fall into three categories; **Essential Parameters**, **Direct Worker Engagement Capabilities** and **Conditional Considerations**.

For a Sedex Virtual Assessment to proceed, the site must be able to meet **all** of the requirements set out in the **Essential Parameters** section (as detailed below).

Technologies

To be eligible to undergo a Sedex Virtual Assessment the assessed site must have:

- Stable and reliable Wi-Fi network and mobile network with secondary options should either of these fail
- A smartphone or tablet with a working camera and microphone which is connected to a mobile network at a minimum for the site tour with high enough resolution to allow for clear visibility of small details (minimum 8 megapixel rear camera)
- The software downloaded that will be used to conduct the assessment which can be installed on all equipment used during the assessment (smartphone/tablet/laptop/desktop)

The site must also confirm that:

- They agree to the live sharing of GPS coordinates of the site on the day of the assessment via the method agreed with the Affiliate Audit Company

Site Commitment

The assessed site will need to provide the Affiliate Audit Company with:

- Formal acceptance of the full assessment process
- Commitment to supply requested documentation for preparation ahead of the assessment date
- A detailed site map which covers all areas of the site as dictated by the business license including any external areas i.e. onsite parking, dormitories etc

Site History

If the AAC is aware of the below from any part of their business, a Sedex Virtual Assessment will not be able to take place:

- Any known issue with site transparency, coaching or bribery

Operational Aspects

The site must confirm the below for a Sedex Virtual Assessment to be able to take place:

- All areas of the site must be able to be visited, unless it is forbidden for mobile phones to enter parts of the site due to combustion issues or for sensitive commercial reasons.
- There is internet connectivity across all areas of the site.
- The site is running at sufficient capacity for the auditor to be able to gain a full picture of the site and the diversity of its workforce on the day.

In addition to the above criteria, AACs may wish to define further requirements to decide if a Sedex Virtual Assessment is appropriate; however, this would be in addition to the above and be at the AAC's discretion.

Once the essential parameters have been reviewed the AAC will need to determine the site's **Direct Worker Engagement Compatibility**. To have a Virtual Assessment, either group worker interviews or Direct Worker Reporting (or both) will be needed. If neither of these are possible, then the Sedex Virtual Assessment cannot happen.

The **Conditional Considerations** form a final layer of review for the Affiliate Audit Companies. The information gathered here can be used by the auditor to inform how the assessment is done on the day (such as open non-compliances, workforce characteristics, site layout), including the approach to worker interviews.

Integration with Direct Worker Reporting:

When group worker interviews cannot be included within the assessment (or when a site/buying organization would like to gain further insight into worker experiences) then Direct Worker Reporting or Worker Voice tools must be used to support the assessment.

What is Direct Worker Reporting? The main aim of Direct Worker Reporting (DWR) is to provide a listening and feedback channel between suppliers and workers. It offers anonymous insight from workers to their management about working conditions and wellbeing (e.g. by answering questions received on a phone). In the context of a Sedex Virtual Assessment, the assessment takes place between two Direct Worker Reporting call cycles and the auditor has access to the results. These can be used to contextualise a virtual assessment and introduce discussion points between auditor and supplier as well as supporting suppliers in identifying key concerns for workers, and the effectiveness of management practices.

Sedex Fees

Sedex will apply the same fees as for a SMETA audit - £50.00 for a member and £150.00 for a non-member for the Sedex Virtual Assessment. These fees are charged directly to our AAC partners.

For information on the fees applied by the Affiliate Audit Companies, please contact them directly.

Further Resources:

<https://www.sedex.com/our-services/sedex-virtual-assessment/>

Sedex eLearning: Training and Resources >> SMETA >> Sedex Virtual Assessment

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