

GUIDANCE FOR MEETING THE COMPLIANCE CRITERIA REQUIRED FOR PATHWAY 2

The following guidance outlines the components of Grievance Mechanisms and Whistleblower Protection Policies needed to comply with B Lab's standards:

Grievance/Complaints Mechanism

The Grievance/Complaints Mechanism needs to meet the following requirements to be accepted:

- The company publishes on its website a grievance form and/or other means for stakeholders to contact them to raise a grievance. These may include:
 - a general email address for all queries
 - a whistleblower or ethics hotline
 - business-to-business contract clauses with dispute resolution provisions
 - "Open-door" or "speak up" policies for workers
 - suggestion or feedback boxes, or other worker voice tools
 - direct stakeholder engagement
 - worker committees
 - a customer services department
 - trade unions and industrial relations processes
 - consumer complaints mechanisms
 - Code of Conduct requirements for supplier mechanisms
 - audit processes, including worker interviews
 - community outreach and engagement.
- The company provides stakeholders who submit a grievance with information about its grievance process, which includes:
 - Grounds for accepting a grievance
 - Grievance process steps and targeted deadlines for managing a grievance
 - How a resolution will be facilitated
- The company responds to stakeholder grievances by either:
 - Regularly communicating each step and its outcome in the process for seeking a resolution to the grievance and confirming when a resolution to addressing the grievance has been achieved OR
 - Providing a rationale as to why the issue raised was not accepted as a grievance.
- The company describes the processes and controls in place to protect stakeholders who raise grievances from any form of retaliation.

Additional Guidance Documents:

- [People and planet in business: A simple guide to how small and micro companies can start or strengthen their due diligence](#) (Fairtrade International, B Lab) [\[EN\]](#)
- [Remediation and Grievance Mechanisms \(Business for Human Rights\)](#) [\[EN\]](#)
- [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) [\[CHI\]](#) [\[DE\]](#) [\[EN\]](#) [\[ES\]](#) [\[FR\]](#) [\[PL\]](#)

Whistleblower Protection Policy

The Whistleblower Protection Policy needs to ensure stakeholders' protection from any form of retaliation for using the Grievance/ Complaints Mechanism. This means implementing measures to enforce confidentiality and assess potential risks to stakeholders. The policy needs to include:

- The company's commitment to protecting whistleblowers from retaliation;
- Consequences in case retaliation of whistleblowers is identified;
- Mechanisms in place to ensure whistleblower protection.

Other best practices include:

- Informing those raising grievances about who will need to be involved or informed at the outset
- Seeking consent before sharing information with additional parties
- Maintaining confidentiality regarding the outcome of the process
- Enhanced training for those handling the grievance procedure
- Enforcing disciplinary action in cases of confidentiality breaches
- Collaborating with independent third parties to assess risks for vulnerable stakeholders.

References that can be shared with the company:

- UNESCO's whistleblower protection policy [\[EN\]](#) [\[FR\]](#)
- The ICC whistleblowing and whistleblower protection policy (International Criminal Court) [\[EN\]](#)