



## GRIEVANCE REDRESS MECHANISM ASESORAMIENTO AMBIENTAL ESTRATÉGICO

### Introduction

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Asesoramiento Ambiental Estratégico (AAE) is a Uruguayan Environmental Consultancy Firm, established in 2012, providing advice to Organizations, Communities, Governments and Private Sector, interested in improving their environmental performance without compromising their growth aspirations and following the highest quality international standards and in line with all new international developments. AAE is committed to proven environmental and social standards and is determined to provide the best experience to its clients and build long-term relationships. For this reason, AAE has created a simplified system to receive feedback from its clients.

### Objective

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The main objective of developing a Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) for AAE is to provide an accessible and transparent means for handling complaints from clients, organizations or individuals related to the services provided by AAE staff and its associated consultants. This GRM is designed to ensure that clients and any other organization or individuals have a voice in the delivery of our services and that their concerns and complaints are addressed in a timely and effective manner.

### Scope

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This GRM is set to address grievances related to all services provided by AAE core members and associated consultants around the world through online and in-person activities, including field visits. It covers complaints related to the delivery of our services, compliance with our Environmental Policy Statement; Stakeholder Engagement and Gender Policy Statement; and Code of Ethics; and other issues that may arise in the delivery of our services.

### Our social and environmental policies

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AAE promotes best practice environmental and social standards in accordance with our values. Please see our policies, statements and procedures [here](#).

### Principles

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The following principles guide the operation of the AAE's GRM:

- **Transparency and Accessibility:** AAE's GRM is transparent, information about the process is publicly available and the GRM is accessible to all clients, regardless of their personal characteristics such as race, color, national or regional origin, religion, age or disability, and sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

- **Responsiveness and Participation:** Grievances are addressed in a timely and effective manner and claimants are provided with information and opportunities to participate in the GRM process.
- **Fairness:** Grievances are assessed objectively and impartially, and the outcomes are based on evidence, while maintaining confidentiality.
- **No retaliation:** AAE strives to create a climate that is free from retaliation and disapproves of any form of retaliation against those who report complaints in good faith.

To address the principle of transparency and accountability, the features and functioning of this GRM will be informed on AAE's website and communicated through AAE's social media. The targets of this communication are our staff, clients, and the stakeholders with which our consultants and staff will be interacting during the implementation of our activities.

## Procedure

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The AAE's GRM process consists of the following steps:

### Step 1: Grievance receipt and registration

- Grievances can be submitted through various channels, including website, email (complaints@aae.com.uy), phone, or in-person to the AAE's core members and associated consultants.
- The grievance will be registered and acknowledged within 10 working days of receipt.
- If the complaint is outside the scope of AAE, the claimant may be advised to turn to external judicial or administrative mechanisms.

### Step 2: Grievance assessment and investigation

- The Head of Environment Law department at AAE (Head of EL) will review the grievance to determine whether it falls within the scope of the GRM.
- If the grievance is deemed to be within the scope of this GRM, an investigation will be initiated to gather evidence and evaluate the issues related to the grievance.
- The investigation will be led by the Head of EL and in those cases that it requires in depth investigation a team of independent and impartial person/s who have no conflict of interest with the grievance will be hired and led by the Head of EL.
- Conclusions from the investigation will be ready within 3 months of the registration of the grievance.

### Step 3: Grievance resolution

- Based on the investigation, The Head of EL will propose, within one month of the conclusion of the investigation, a resolution to address the issues raised in the grievance.
- The resolution will be shared with the claimant for their feedback.
- If the resolution plan is agreed, AAE will implement the necessary actions to address the grievance.

- In case there are discrepancies between the claimant and The Head of EL regarding the resolution, the case will be referred to the Directors of AAE.

#### **Step 4: Follow-up and monitoring**

- AAE will monitor the implementation and the timeline fulfillment of the resolution, and report on the progress to the claimant.
- AAE will regularly review the GRM process to identify any lessons learned and areas for improvement.

**Important:** The use of the AAE's GRM does not impede access to national or local judicial or administrative remedies. In addition, if the GRM receives a criminal complaint, AAE is obliged to inform the competent authorities in the country.

### **Reporting**

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AAE will maintain records of all grievances received, including those resolved through the GRM. A summary of the grievances and their outcomes will be made publicly available on an annual basis, while maintaining the confidentiality of user data.