



SMETA for Service Providers

A guide for buyers

SMETA
Sedex Members Ethical Trade Audit

Audit ID	Score	Percentage	Status
AD4181318651	●	25%	Audit
AD418131842	●	45%	No audit
AD4181318321	●	75%	N/A
AD418131764	●	15%	Audit

Absenteeism
Male/female ratio 3:1

Targeted social auditing for higher-risk service providers with distributed workforces

Service providers are essential to global supply chains, yet their workers are often among the most exposed to labour and human rights risks. Cleaning, security, catering, facilities management, waste management and transport services commonly rely on dispersed workforces operating at client sites, on irregular shifts, or under shared supervision.



Desktop assessments and conventional single-site audits do not fully capture these realities.

SMETA for Service Providers adapts the world's most widely used social audit methodology to provide credible, practical assurance where workers deliver services away from a single employer-controlled site.

A risk-directed approach to due diligence






Sedex supports buying companies and service providers to identify, prioritise and address labour risks in a proportionate way:

- 1 Risk identification**
Sedex's risk assessment tools highlight inherent labour risks associated with service types, countries and operating models.
- 2 Risk screening**
The Sedex Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) for service providers enables structured disclosure of workforces details, policies, systems and practices, with automated risk-scoring.
- 3 Independent assurance**
SMETA for Service Providers provides in-depth, on-the-ground verification where risks are higher or where additional assurance is required.





This approach supports targeted auditing, focusing resources where they are most needed.

Why audit higher-risk service providers?

Higher-risk service models can increase worker vulnerability due to:

-  Limited client visibility of pay, hours and grievance mechanisms
-  Deployment across multiple client sites
-  Shared supervision between service provider and client
-  Use of subcontractors and labour intermediaries
-  Night work, lone working and irregular or variable hours

Auditing service providers helps buying companies:

-  Meet human rights due diligence expectations under the UN Guiding Principles and OECD Guidance
-  Identify labour risks not visible through desktop assessments
-  Reduce duplicated audits across multiple clients
-  Drive consistent labour standards across service contracts

At the same time, SMETA audits provide service providers with clear, tailored corrective actions and practical guidance to strengthen management systems, improve consistency across client sites, and address risks early – supporting more stable, compliant service delivery for both parties.



What is SMETA for Service Providers and who is it for?

SMETA for Service Providers is an adaptation of **SMETA 7.0** that can be used to audit organisations whose workers:

- Deliver services at one or more **client sites**, or
- Operate across **transport depots, yards or routes** under central management

It maintains alignment with SMETA while introducing tailored guidance on sampling, workplace requirements and accountability.

Key features



Designed for distributed workforces

Audits cover the service provider's local management office and a risk-based sample of work locations, including selected client or transport sites.



Clear accountability boundaries

Where working conditions are controlled by the client, these factors are recorded transparently without unfairly allocating responsibility to the service provider.



Fit-for-purpose health & safety assessment

Alternative workplace requirements apply where clients control the physical environment, focusing on task-specific risks, training, PPE, supervision and coordination.



Subcontracting transparency

Assessment of how subcontractors are selected, communicated with and monitored, with expanded sampling where subcontracted labour is significant.



Flexible audit options

Available as 2-pillar, 3-pillar or 4-pillar audits, with defined remote auditing elements where appropriate.



Shareable audit results

A bespoke SMETA audit report and Corrective Action Plan Report (CAPR) can be shared with multiple clients through the Sedex platform.



How does the audit work in practice?

SMETA for Service Providers applies a pragmatic, flexible approach to reflect different service delivery models, while maintaining consistency and credibility.

The standard audit model includes

- 1 Pre-audit planning**
Scope confirmation, workforce mapping and risk-based sampling of sites, workers and subcontractors.
- 2 Management office assessment**
Review of policies, procedures, roles, training and monitoring against how services are delivered in practice.
- 3 Site visits and worker interviews**
Visits to selected client or transport sites, observation of work activities and confidential worker interviews.
- 4 Issue identification and reporting**
Non-conformances raised where service provider requirements are not met; client-controlled factors recorded transparently in a specially adapted SMETA audit report.
- 5 Corrective action and follow-up**
Findings are uploaded to Sedex, with corrective actions agreed, tracked and verified.

A more accurate picture of working conditions

SMETA for Service Providers recognises that labour risks do not stop at the factory gate. By adapting social auditing to service delivery realities, it supports buyers and service providers to protect workers, clarify accountability and drive meaningful improvements.

One methodology. Clear accountability. Better outcomes for workers.