



# GAIN Standard

Requirements for certification with  
guidance for use

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First Edition – 2020

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## FOREWORD

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GAIN stands for Green Artist Information Network, and was formed in 2019 in Seattle, Washington.

GAIN was created to connect venues, artists, fans, and anyone else wanting to collaborate, share ideas, and look for opportunities to create a greener music industry.

This standard was drafted by Joseph M. Aubert, President and Founder of GAIN.

GAIN is not affiliated with any external certifications, organizations, companies, or bodies, whether mentioned in this standard or not, including: ISO, LEED, Green Restaurant Associate, B-Corp, etc.

GAIN is not affiliated with any organization that produces, sells, or maintains any product or service listed in this standard.

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## INTRODUCTION

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Live music venues provide a valuable service to both artists and the surrounding community by offering a fully-equipped space in which they can come together and share in an artistic experience.

For decades, the operation of a venue has been relatively unchanged, and little attention has been paid to their overall environmental impact. But venues actually consume a great deal of resources, produce large amounts of solid waste and noise pollution, and pull a significant influx of people into the area, all of which impacts the surrounding community, the environment, and most tangibly, the venue's bottom line.

In order to survive in an increasingly-challenging market, venues must look for ways to stay competitive and discern themselves from the pack, by cutting costs, investing in the long-term, and ensuring the customer experience is consistently and noticeably better than that of their corporate competitors. This is where the GAIN Certification comes in.

For venues that are GAIN Certified, these improvements will be built into the core of the business, with reductions in waste and energy usage saving money, improvements in facilities and crowd management creating a better, more comfortable experience, and strategic investments in the long-term viability of the venue ensuring that customers will be seeking out the venue's unique offerings for years to come.

This document outlines the policies and certification criteria that will allow you to begin your journey to GAIN Certification, but in order to truly realize the benefits of this offering, please reach out to GAIN to begin exploring ways the advanced levels of GAIN Certification can help your venue.

# 1 SCOPE




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This standard is intended only for indoor concert venues, clubs, performing arts venues, etc. where the main purpose of the business is live musical performances (i.e. not intended for theaters, cinemas, bars/coffee shops that host music, stadiums, outdoor amphitheaters, or festivals), henceforth known as “the/a venue.”

Within the document, the terms “shall,” “will,” and “must” denote a hard requirement for certification; the terms “should” and “may” denote suggestions that are not required for certification.

## 2 CERTIFICATION CRITERIA

### 2.1 RUBRIC

	Clean	Sustain	Overdrive
			
General	-Set sustainability objectives and MoE	-Physical improvement to product and processes	-External certifications -Improvements to industry and surrounding community
Power and Energy	-Energy-saving practices -LED lights, motion sensors -Provide energy-efficient house amps	-Upgrade to energy-efficient sound board and equipment -Upgrade stage lighting -Upgrade HVAC	-Attain LEED certification -Ensure sustainable energy source -Install solar panels -EV charging stations
Food Services and Waste	-Compostable flatware -Recycling -Compostable hand towels -Dedicated smoking areas	-Single waste receptacle -Bar-driven recycling -Purchasing and food sourcing requirements -Electric hand-dryers -Video screens instead of posters	-Attain Green Restaurant Association Certification
Process Improvement	-Ensure dedicated gear storage space for bands -5S venue-owned equipment -Org charts with clear delegation of responsibilities -Queuing practices -Merch table location and flow -Show times and communication	-Documented processes for stage setup, changeover, teardown. -Equipment storage space demarcated, shadow-boards, labels, etc. -Performance evaluation	-Attain B-Corp certification -Open-sourcing of processes -Evaluation of other venues

## 2.2 LEVELS OF CERTIFICATION

A venue will have been considered Certified at a particular level when it has:

1. Set specific goals and objectives for each of the four categories, falling within the scope of said level; AND
2. Taken tangible steps towards achieving said goals; AND
3. Completed all goals and criteria in the preceding level.

The Goals and Objectives must fulfill the SMART criteria – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely.

For example: A venue can be considered Clean Level when it has set both short- and long-term goals, AND begun taking action on goals that fall within the scope on the Clean Level, like replacing light bulbs or ordering compostable cups.

A venue can be considered Sustain Level when it has set long-term goals; AND begun taking action on goals that fall within the scope of the Sustain Level, like formally committing resources towards upgrading the sound board or HVAC system; AND completed all goals and objectives that fall within the scope of the Clean Level.

A venue can be considered Overdrive Level when it has completed all goals and objectives that fall within the scope of Clean and Sustain levels; AND EITHER: begun the process to achieve a third-party certification; OR begun taking action towards improving, influencing, educating, and/or empowering your industry and/or surrounding community. Examples of the latter will be specific to your area or wishes, but can include things like: Installing EV charging stations to encourage emissions-free travel; install solar panels and sell excess energy back to local utilities; hold community education events to entertain and empower local youth to act sustainably; partner with other local venues to lobby the local government on sustainability concerns; the sky is the limit!

A venue can pursue separate goals that fall under the scope of different levels at the same time, however, all goals under the lowest unachieved level must be completed before the venue can be certified at the next level.

### 2.2.1 Clean

Basic level. Changes to operations, purchasing, energy usage, etc. for shorter-term gains, without changes in building construction or utilities.

Clean level is the beginning of your journey, and demonstrates to your customers that the venue is committed to sustainable operations. All of the criteria in the Clean level can be completed on your own, without the assistance from a GAIN Rep, using just the information provided in the GAIN Standard. Because of this, all of the required criteria listed in this level must be completed – where possible and applicable – in order to advance to Sustain level.

In this phase, the venue will set their short- and long-term sustainability goals, up to and including the external certifications listed in the Overdrive level. The venue may choose to stay at Clean level and enjoy the lower level benefits provided therein, but to really see the benefits of the GAIN Certification, the venue should plan to pursue at least a Sustain level.



### 2.2.2 Sustain

Intermediate level. Updates to sound systems, HVAC, building construction, etc. for longer-term gains.

The Sustain Level is where the real change begins. The criteria outlined for the Sustain level will require significant investments of both time and money, but will result in the greatest long-term realization of sustainable benefits. The solutions for the Sustain level are much more personalized and goal-oriented; rather than just meeting specific criteria outlined here, you will work with your GAIN Rep to set SMART goals that are most relevant to your needs, and will measure your progress within the level against these goals. That said, there is still some universal criteria that needs to be achieved for advancement.

The Sustain level will require the assistance of a GAIN Rep to achieve. You will need to complete at least one goal in each of the four categories to complete this level.

*NOTE: Within this standard, criteria falling within the scope of the Sustain level will be italicized. This information will only be made available to a venue after they have committed to advanced certification with GAIN.*

### 2.2.3 Overdrive

Advanced level. Looking beyond four walls of operations to influence local community and industry towards a greener future.

Overdrive level is the extra step from sustainable business to sustainable *influencer*. Venues wishing to achieve Overdrive level must achieve at least one external certification as called out in the GAIN Standard (e.g. LEED, Green Restaurant Certification, B-Corp), AND commit to a service project that positively impacts the venue's surrounding community and/or industry.

Overdrive level goals are highly specific to the venue and will require the assistance of a GAIN Rep to achieve (see **7. Overdrive Level** for more information).

### 2.2.4 Logo Usage

Achieving a level according to the criteria in 2.2 allows the venue to use the corresponding logo, the GAIN name, and associated terms and descriptions, on signage and marketing materials. The venue must receive written permission from a GAIN Rep specifying the level of achievement that the venue is allowed to use.

All usage of GAIN properties is subject to review by any GAIN Rep and must be revised or removed upon request.

## 2.3 GAIN REP

A dedicated representative from GAIN that will help you achieve your sustainability goals. GAIN Reps are knowledgeable in the areas of both Sustainability and live music, and will leverage that knowledge to yield the greatest impact to your Triple Bottom Line – People, Planet, and Profits.

Your GAIN Rep will help your venue:

- Establish your sustainability goals and objectives;
- Map the path towards achieving those goals;
- Research and propose solutions to for your sustainability needs;

- Monitor your progress and report on your results;
- Capture, standardize, and monitor processes and documentation;
- Achieve additional third-party certifications, e.g. LEED, B-Corp, etc.
- Stay within your proposed budget.

With a GAIN Rep driving the certification, you can be as involved as you want: Use their advice to make decisions at every step of the way, OR give them a budget, goals, and a timeline and they will take it and run, keeping you updated regularly throughout the process.

## 3 GENERAL

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### 3.1 CONTEXT

This section outlines the basic requirements for all venues formally pursuing GAIN Certification.

### 3.2 GOALS

The venue shall set sustainability goals and objectives. These goals must follow the SMART format:

- a) Specific – Clear, concise, and unambiguous;
- b) Measurable – Has a clear measurement of success and a method for tracking progress;
- c) Attainable – Realistic, within your power to accomplish;
- d) Relevant – Aligns with the larger goals of the business;
- e) Timely – Has a deadline.

### 3.3 MEASURE OF EFFECTIVENESS

The venue shall establish a metric by which to evaluate progress. This metric must be supported by data and have a specific target that constitutes success.

### 3.4 SCORING

A GAIN Rep will work with the venue to establish goals that will allow for level advancement. Completion of goals – and the associated certification advancement – will be at the discretion of the GAIN Rep.

### 3.5 RECORD KEEPING

The venue shall keep and maintain any and all records, metrics, invoices, formal communications, and/or other documentation related to certification.

## 4 POWER AND ENERGY

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### 4.1 CONTEXT

**Energy** is the publicly-provided utility source, and **Power** is the energy required to operate the equipment needed to put on the performance.

### 4.2 FIXTURES

The venue shall:

- a) Upgrade all light bulbs, fixtures, appliances, displays, etc. to energy-efficient alternatives;
  - These may include – but are not limited to:
    - LED light bulbs;
    - Compact Florescent Lamps – CFLs;
    - Smart power strips;
    - Smart thermostats;
    - Rechargeable devices (rather than disposable batteries).

### 4.3 PRACTICES

The venue shall:

- a) Implement power-saving best practices, including – but not limited to:
  - Turning off lights when room is empty;
    - May consider installing occupancy sensors or timers for intermittently-used rooms.
  - Turning off – and unplugging – all unused equipment;
    - May use smart power strips in instances where this is not feasible.

### 4.4 FACILITIES

*The venue shall upgrade its facilities and equipment to the most energy-efficient standards (with assistance from GAIN Representative), including – but not limited to:*

- a) *Sound board;*
- b) *PA and sound equipment;*
- c) *Stage Lighting;*
- d) *Windows;*
- e) *HVAC;*
- f) *Water heater;*
- g) *Hand dryers;*
- h) *Kitchen/bar appliances;*
- i) *Insulation and weatherization;*
- j) *Office equipment.*

*The venue shall ensure regular maintenance is performed on facility and appliances as needed.*

*The venue shall have an energy audit conducted of their facilities. Many utility companies offer these for free, and they will help you understand your energy needs and opportunities for improvement. Your GAIN Representative can help set this up for you*

## 5 FOOD SERVICE AND WASTE

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### 5.1 CONTEXT

**Food Service** includes both food and beverage service (i.e. bar service). Not all venues serve food but most have some form of bar or beverage service.

**Waste** is the unusable remains or byproduct of a product, process, or offering. These include, with some overlap between them:

- Solid waste – Non-liquid, non-organic waste – plastics, paper, metals, glass, etc. May include recyclable materials.
- Liquid waste – Dirty or unusable water or other organic liquids.
- Organic waste – Food and garden waste, compostable items. Can include used compostable foodware.
- Recyclables – Rubbish that can be converted into products to be used again. Plastics (per SPI labeling), metal, paper, and glass can all be recycled. Includes compostable materials.
- Hazardous waste – Any material that may contain harmful properties and requiring special handling or disposal procedures. Must be segregated from other types of waste and materials.

### 5.2 FOOD SERVICE

The venue shall:

- a) Follow all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, ordinances, etc. regarding food handling and waste disposal;
- b) Not use any polystyrene foam products;
- c) Use bulk condiment packaging (i.e. no individual packages);
- d) Only offer straws when requested – Compostable straws;
- e) Reduce offerings to limit amount of unused ingredients;
  - a. May consider utilizing a digital inventory tool to track perishables
- f) *Locally, and seasonally, source food and ingredients;*
- g) *Install water purification system and bottle filling station(s);*
- h) *Partner with local food banks or shelters to donate unused food.*

### 5.3 WASTE

The venue shall:

- a) Go paperless for all ticketing, invoicing, payroll, handbills, etc.;

- b) Designate outdoor smoking area (according to local laws and regulations) and provide receptacles for butts – clean area and empty receptacles nightly;
- c) Use compostable hand towels;
- d) *Install low-flow water fixtures and toilets;*
- e) *Install hand dryers instead of hand towels;*
- f) *Install water reclamation system for rainwater/grey water etc.;*
- g) *Replace paper posters for upcoming shows with energy-efficient video screens;*
- h) *Only purchase products that are recyclable and/or compostable.*

#### 5.4 SINGLE WASTE RECEPTACLE

*The venue should strive to offer a single waste receptacle (compost) in the House area. By removing the decision of which receptacle the customers may use, the venue also removes the labor and personnel needs for sorting out recyclables from trash, as well as reducing amount of landfill waste and associated costs. This is achieved by:*

- a) *Only purchasing compostable foodware;*
- b) *Bartenders pour all cans and bottles into compostable cups (recycle behind bar);*
  - o *Also a safety item – prevents bottles and cans from becoming projectiles.*
- c) *Strong signage and visual indicators for customers;*
- d) *Reusable cup promotion – Sell branded reusable cups onsite and offer discounts on drinks when used.*

## 6 PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

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### 6.1 DELEGATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

The venue shall maintain written documentation outlining the work statement and responsibilities of each staff role.

The venue shall maintain an Organizational Chart outlining the employee reporting structure and chain of command.

### 6.2 SET TIMES

The venue shall follow all local laws, regulations, and ordinances regarding sound/noise pollution and assemblage, and set times shall reflect this.

Set times should:

- a) Include times for both Doors and Performance;
- b) End before midnight on weekdays;
  - o If all-ages performance, set times shall end before 11 PM.
- c) Not include an excess of bands (i.e. more than 4) for an evening performance, depending on the allocated time for the show.

## 6.3 EQUIPMENT STORAGE

### 6.3.1 Context

The venue shall have dedicated storage space for both venue-owned equipment – **Equipment Storage Area (ESA)** – and artist-owned equipment – **Instrument Storage Area (ISA)**.

### 6.3.2 Equipment Storage Area

The Equipment Storage Area (ESA) shall:

- a) Be separate from the ISA;
- b) Be properly demarcated with visual cues and labels;
  - All equipment stored within shall be labeled as venue property;
- c) Be organized according to 5S principles;
- d) Contain an inventory list of all venue-owned equipment;
  - Inventory should be audited against list at regular intervals;
- e) Have a segregated area for non-working equipment;
  - Equipment should be individually labeled as non-working;
- f) *Contain a Shadow Board of tools and equipment.*

### 6.3.3 Instrument Storage Area

The Instrument Storage Area (ISA) shall:

- a) Be on venue property (i.e. not include the artists' cars);
- b) Be separate from the ESA;
- c) Allow instruments to be easily loaded on and off stage;
- d) Be secure – Unable to be accessed by audience-members or persons outside the venue.
- e) *Be properly demarcated with visual cues.*

The ISA Should:

- f) Include an area for each band to keep their instruments separate;
- g) Consider **backlining** stage setups to reduce changeover time;
- h) *include area where a band can set up their instruments before their set;*
  - *May also include an area where a band can breakdown their instruments after a set.*

To reduce clutter in the ISA, the venue should consider purchasing house-provided instruments for the artists to use during their set, such as guitar/bass amps and a drum set.

## 6.4 MERCHANDISE TABLE

### 6.4.1 Context

Also called “Merch Table,” where artists can sell t-shirts and other memorabilia.

### 6.4.2 Merch Table

The venue's merch table shall:

- a) Be in a location with natural ingress and egress flow that does not obstruct access to the house, bar, venue exits, restrooms, etc.;

- b) Have room for all artists' merchandise;
- c) Have at least one person running it at all times;
- d) Include a table and t-shirt rack.

The Merch table should:

- e) Be situated in such a way that customers waiting in line can see the merchandise;
- f) Accept cash and cards;
- g) Disallow drinks to be placed there to reduce spillage.

*The venue should partner with a local printing business to allow artists to order merch ahead of time, cutting down on shipping and fuel costs for the artist.*

## 6.5 QUEUING

Queues – or lines – of people shall:

- a) Not obstruct any publicly-accessible area, e.g. sidewalks;
- b) Not obstruct any emergency exits or emergency vehicle parking;
- c) Not obstruct the natural flow of people through the area, e.g. house, bar area, hallways, restrooms.
  - o Queues should hug the walls wherever possible.

## 6.6 COMMUNICATION:

### 6.6.1 Artists

The venue shall contact the artists in advance of their show in order to:

- a) Communicate the venue's procedures for load-in/out;
- b) Propose set times;
- c) Communicate procedures for sound check;
- d) Request the artists' stage setup and needs;
- e) Communicate any other necessary information for the operation of the venue and show.

### 6.6.2 Customers

The venue shall make available to its customers the following information:

- a) Concert calendar with upcoming events;
- b) The approximate time for Doors;
- c) Approximate time for beginning of performance (i.e. initial set time);
- d) Approximate set times for each artist;
- e) Any changes to the lineup or schedule;
- f) Information about the artists performing in a lineup. This information may include, but is not limited to:
  - o Artist bios;
  - o Links to artist websites and/or social media;
  - o Music samples;
  - o Photos of artists.

## 6.7 PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

*The venue shall identify – and document – the individual processes needed to ensure the smooth operation of the venue and performances.*

- *The Process Documentation shall:*
  - a) *Be legible;*
  - b) *Be accessible to those who need it to perform their job function;*
  - c) *Be kept current with the process;*
  - d) *Be periodically reviewed for accuracy.*
- *Examples of processes that may be documented (to be determined with help from GAIN Representative):*
  - e) *Instrument load-in;*
  - f) *Stage setup and teardown;*
  - g) *Set changeover;*
  - h) *Merch table setup and operation;*
  - i) *Ticket sales and checking;*
  - j) *Security guidelines.*

## 6.8 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

*The venue shall perform a regular evaluation of the documented processes. These evaluation may include – but are not limited to:*

- a) *Process audits;*
- b) *Value-stream mapping (VSM);*
- c) *Progress on Sustainability Goals and Objectives.*

# 7 OVERDRIVE LEVEL

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Venues wanting to pursue Overdrive level certification must work with their GAIN Rep to set goals that fall within the scope of this level. These goals will be specifically tailored to the unique needs and wants of the venue and its surrounding community, and will be established on a case-by-case basis.

Generally, to achieve Overdrive level certification, a venue must commit to either pursuing an external sustainability-focused certification, AND commit to a community- or industry-level service project

## 7.1 EXTERNAL CERTIFICATION

The venue's GAIN Rep will help decide which external certification is right for the venue to pursue, and will help facilitate the process of achieving certification.

Certifications that may be pursued include, but are not limited to:

- B-Corporation;
- LEED:
  - O+M for existing buildings;
  - ID+C for updates to commercial interiors;



- BD+C for new construction;
- Green Restaurant Association;
- Green Seal;
- WasteWise;
- Any other sustainability- or environmentally-focused certification, to be discussed with your GAIN Rep.

## 7.2 SERVICE PROJECT

The venue shall consult with its GAIN Rep about what types of project are right for the venue to pursue, and will help facilitate the process of completing the project. The project should be something that the venue would not have pursued during the normal course of operations, AND must positively impact the venue's surrounding local community and/or the music industry in some way.

Examples of service projects that may fulfill the criteria for certification:

- Green roof;
- Installing solar panels on venue property;
- Installing Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations on venue property, or nearby;
- Public events to educate the community on sustainability and environmental friendliness;
- Lobbying local governments in favor of sustainable policies;
- Sponsoring collaborations with local or national industry partners for information-sharing;
- Volunteering on local public-works projects, such as building or maintain a public park.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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**Artist** – Performing artist; used interchangeably with **Band**.

**Band** – Group of performing artists; used interchangeably with **Artist**.

**Backline** – The practice of setting up multiple bands' instruments on stage at the same time to reduce set change time. This is usually done by setting up the last bands' instruments first, then setting up preceding bands' instruments in front of them.

**Backstage** – An area behind, beside, or near the **stage** that is inaccessible to the audience.

**Customers** – Any person that is attending, has attended, or may attend, an event at the venue.

**Doors** – The time the venue opens for customers.

**Equipment** – Any *venue-furnished* gear used during the performance – generally includes microphones, cables, stands, monitors, but also includes house-furnished amplifiers, drum sets, tables, etc. Different from **Instruments**, which are artist-owned.

**Front-of-House (FOH)** – Area where sound and light controls and personnel are located.

**Green Room** – Area backstage for bands and artists to hang out. Sometimes contains venue-provided refreshments. Can sometimes contain **Instrument Storage Area (ISA)**.

**House** – Area in front of the stage where the audience congregates. Also where the Sound Board and Sound Engineer are located. (See also **Front-of-House**)

**Instruments** – Any *artist-furnished* gear used during the performance. Different from **Equipment**, which is venue-owned.

**Instrument Storage Area (ISA)** – Designated area where artists can store their equipment before and/or after their performance.

**Lineup** – A schedule of artists performing on a given date.

**Merch** – Short for “merchandise;” artist-furnished memorabilia.

**Merch Table** – Merchandise table, where artists can sell t-shirts and other memorabilia.

**Set** – A designated length of time in which an artist performs. May or may not include setup time.

**Set Time** – The time at which a new Set begins. May or may not include setup time.

**Sound Check** – The process of checking volume levels of a band by the Sound Engineer before a set.

**Stage** – Designated area where artists perform. Faces the audience, or “house,” and usually raised for better sightlines.

**Venue** – An indoor space, club, performing arts venue, etc. where the main purpose of the business is live musical performances. For the purposes of this document, the term “venue” will also include the employees of the business.