IF Sustainability Case Study
CREATING SUSTAINABLE GOLF COURSES
The world faces significant challenges across a wide spectrum of economic, social and environmental matters. The Olympic Movement has both an opportunity and a duty to actively contribute to the global sustainability debate in line with its vision of “Building a better world through sport”.

With this in mind, and in response to recommendation 5 of Olympic Agenda 2020 (“Include sustainability within the Olympic Movement’s daily operations”), the IOC conducted the International Federations (IF) Sustainability Project in 2016. This allowed the IOC to obtain an overview of IFs’ sustainability initiatives; identify common topics, good practices and mutual challenges; and share information. One of the Project’s outcomes was a series of case studies, illustrating how IFs are actively contributing towards a more sustainable world.

As part of the IOC’s objective to profile the role of the Olympic Movement in sustainability through the aggregation of information and collective reporting, it was agreed that the identification and sharing of IF sustainability case studies should be continued. These case studies form part of the enhanced support system provided to the Olympic Movement through the IOC Sustainability Strategy.

Each case study is aligned with one or more of the IOC’s five sustainability focus areas: infrastructure & natural sites; sourcing & resource management; mobility; workforce; and climate. The studies are also aligned with one or more of the United Nations’ (UN) framework of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This framework is pivotal for the Olympic Movement since in September 2015, the UN General Assembly confirmed the important role that sport can play in supporting the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs.

The UN’s 17 SDGs provide a common framework for organisations to explain how they plan to contribute to sustainable development and tackle the key global sustainability challenges. The IF case studies attest to the fact that the Olympic Movement contributes to the achievement of many of these.

“Sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development. We recognise the growing contribution of sport to the realisation of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives.”

Paragraph 37, UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Each IF sustainability project contributes to one or more of the IOC’s sustainability focus areas and one or more of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

THE IGF AND ITS DELIVERY PARTNERS ARE WORKING TO HELP DRIVE SUSTAINABILITY IN AND THROUGH GOLF

As detailed in its Sustainability Statement, endorsed in 2012 by over 150 golf associations around the world, the International Golf Federation (IGF) regards safeguarding the environment as a top priority. Golf courses are often located in ecologically rich landscapes, and their construction is increasingly under pressure from land and water scarcity and environmental regulations.

For this reason, the IGF and many of its members and partners have been working with the sustainability solutions of GEO Foundation and the United States Golf Association (USGA) “Green Section” to integrate sustainability into new golf facilities and major championships.

GEO SUSTAINABILITY SOLUTIONS
GEO is an internationally recognised not-for-profit body that provides a credible and accessible system of sustainability standards and support programmes such as:

- **OnCourse**
  - Helps courses and tournaments capture, assess, improve and promote sustainability.
  - Provides the industry with a system for data collection and reporting.

- **GEO Certified**
  - The international mark of credible sustainability in golf courses and tournaments.
  - Recognised by ISEAL, the global body for credibility and assurance in sustainability systems.

OBJECTIVES
The collaboration between the IGF and its delivery partners aims to:
- Integrate sustainability into new golf designs and developments.
- Help golf facilities incorporate sustainable principles, practices and technology into daily business decisions, course preparation and operations.
- Conduct high-profile golf events in an environmentally responsible manner.
- Create social legacies.
- Strengthen the image, profitability and growth of golf.

“GOLF IS THE ONLY SPORT TO HAVE REPRESENTATION, VIA GEO, IN ISEAL. FOLLOWING OUR STANDARD-SETTING CODE SHOWS A COMMITMENT TO TRANSPARENCY AND HELPS ENSURE THAT THE STANDARD WILL PRODUCE POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS.”
MARTYN COLE,
ISEAL ALLIANCE CREDIBILITY MANAGER
WORKING WITH THE USGA
The USGA Green Section helps golf courses in the USA to become more economically and environmentally sustainable through four primary programmes:

1. Research
   More than USD 40 million given to funding research with the aim of advancing the long-term viability of golf through sustainable resource management and environmental protection.

2. Course Consulting Service
   One of the world’s leading agencies devoted to sustainable golf course turf grass.

3. Education and Outreach
   Articles, videos, webcasts and other multimedia materials providing education on sustainability.

4. Championship Agronomy
   Active support for course preparations from agronomists at all USGA championships.

EVALUATION
By partnering with GEO and the USGA, the IGF combines leadership and expertise to embed sustainability into golf.

The IGF-GEO partnership and initiatives such as the GEO certification of the Olympic Golf Course in Rio have contributed to ensuring that the sport is effectively engaged in sustainability, and is creating social change through golf. The IGF is also working towards ensuring golf plays a leading role in the delivery of the Tokyo 2020 Sustainability Plan.

The IGF’s long-term objective is for more countries to adopt golf’s international sustainability system, and accelerate the uptake of sustainable practices by IGF members and partners.

LESSONS LEARNED
- Partnering with a credible, specialist organisation can help you focus on advocacy, vision and engagement.
- Robust and scalable sustainability solutions are key to creating partnerships with governments and NGOs, and to changing public perceptions.
- Using major championships can help showcase your sport’s sustainable practices.