



WageMap - Frequently Asked Questions

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FAQ 1: What is the overall role of WageMap?

WageMap is a consortium of living wage data and service providers that have come together to drive alignment across living wage methodologies and frameworks. WageMap's mission is to support the achievement of living wages for workers globally, through two core reinforcing components:

- **Establish a Living Wage Reference Standard:** Develop a universally accepted Living Wage Reference Standard through a standard-setting process - with reference to the ISEAL Code of Good Practice.
- **Create a public dataset of globally comparable, locally specific, estimates:** Assess existing publicly available national and global living wage estimation methodologies against the Living Wage Reference Standard needs and determine a single living wage estimate value that is most applicable and representative in a specific geography.

In recent years, we have seen growing recognition of the living wage as a critical response to multiple crises. While an increased appetite for action is welcome and necessary, confusion arising from a proliferation of new initiatives and conflicting approaches to estimating has proved an overwhelming barrier. At the heart of this challenge lies an urgent need for stronger collaboration, inclusivity and consensus-building around shared principles. In its role as a facilitator to standardize living wage data, WageMap aims to address these three barriers that are blocking global adoption of living wages:

- **No Universal Standard:** The language surrounding living wage estimates is often technically complex and inconsistent. There is also no standardized or universally accepted method to calculate a living wage leading to market distortion and disparities in compensation and working conditions.
- **No Clear Comparability:** The ongoing debate largely centers on determining the 'right numbers', with no definitive consensus. Additionally, supply chain actors often do not have the same access to the living wage data, resulting in inconsistent living wage standards across the supply chain.
- **Weak Implementation Capacity:** Current efforts to close the living wage gap by employers and civil society are often more focused on figuring out which data to use rather than how to close living wage gaps. By creating a living wage reference standard, WageMap allows employers and other stakeholders to focus their efforts more on implementation.

Creation of a stakeholder-consulted Living Wage Reference Standard will help fulfil these needs and give voice to a wide range of views from living wage experts across the global movement. These include representatives of workers' organizations, civil society, country- and region-specific alliances, and academics. Policymakers, employers and investors will also be consulted in their role as parties seeking guidance on how to integrate living wages across their own operations, as well as promoting implementation through their channels of influence. By developing a draft Living Wage Reference Standard and incorporating feedback from multi-stakeholder dialogue, WageMap aims to achieve consensus on best practice that helps set a common vision for the global movement and embeds a culture of inclusivity. This process will be carried out in reference to the [ISEAL Code of Good Practice](#).

FAQ 2: How does WageMap plan to develop the Living Wage Reference Standard?

The Living Wage Reference Standard serves as a compass, guiding living wage data providers, and implementation organizations toward continuous improvement in living wage calculations. The Standard aims to build external confidence through a stakeholder-consulted, consortium-agreed standard that ensures global comparability and local relevance for consistent living wage implementation.

The standard will define best practices for elements such as categories and methodologies for calculating living wage estimates, reliable cost-of-living data collection and verification, and consistent technical definitions and data architecture.

The standard will be developed in line with ILO principles and will be informed by research and three stakeholder consultation rounds. See the [timeline](#) for an overview.

We are proactively addressing barriers to participation for underrepresented groups to ensure inclusivity. All feedback will be publicly available (or summarized), with clear documentation on how material issues were considered in refining the standard.

FAQ 3: How do the founders of WageMap keep neutrality in development of the Standard?

The WageMap consortium follows a set of principles that allow for the neutrality and objectivity of the Living Wage Reference Standard-setting process. These principles include:

- 1. Evidence-Based Decision Making:** Prioritize evidence-based insights in all decisions, minimizing political influences. Involve both external and internal experts to ensure a well-rounded perspective on each issue.
- 2. Multiple Perspectives:** Consider multiple perspectives on any given topic or question to inform decisions. Ensure that the ultimate goal remains the guiding principle throughout the decision-making process. Concretely, this means the draft Standard is open to written and verbal feedback in three different public consultation rounds. We are proactively addressing barriers to participation for underrepresented groups to ensure inclusivity. All feedback will be publicly available (or summarized), with clear documentation on how material issues were considered in refining the standard.
- 3. Adherence to Academic Standards:** Apply rigorous academic norms, such as the principle of hearing both sides (*audi alteram partem*), forming and revising hypotheses, and maintaining scholarly integrity.
- 4. ISEAL Code of Good Practice:** WageMap refers in its standard-setting processes to the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Sustainability Systems, effective from 1 March 2024. This adherence ensures that WageMap's procedures are transparent, credible, and impartial, fostering stakeholder trust in the development process.
- 5. Diverse Consortium Membership:** The WageMap consortium comprises a broad spectrum of organizations within the living wage movement, including BSR, Loughborough University Centre for Research in Social Policy, Living Wage For US, Inc., Living Wage Foundation, NewForesight, and WageIndicator Foundation. This diversity ensures that no single approach or perspective dominates the standard's development, promoting a balanced and neutral outcome. WageMap actively ensures and encourages external participation during public consultations, inviting input beyond consortium members to reflect a broad range of expertise, perspectives, and interests in the standard-setting process. This commitment to inclusive engagement further reinforces neutrality and credibility.

FAQ 4: How is WageMap different from the growing multitude of living wage initiatives that currently exist?

There currently is no Living Wage Reference Standard that aligns methodologies and estimates. Various attempts have been made to bring actors together and kick-start this process. WageMap builds on these efforts. Our collaborative approach to development of a Living Wage Reference Standard is inclusive of all data providers and methodology owners and helps ensure that views of the wider movement are represented.

WageMap intends to act as a convener and facilitator of the discussions between living wage data and service providers that are needed to achieve some level of alignment across all stakeholder groups. WageMap builds off of existing attempts to align methodologies through providing:

- An opportunity for leading living wage data and service providers to learn from each other and strengthen their methodologies and approaches
- Clarity for employers on the recommended living wage estimates to use for each location

FAQ 5: What methodologies can be assessed against the Living Wage Reference Standard?

All living wage benchmarking or estimation methodologies with publicly available living wage data, which align with the criteria of the Living Wage Reference Standard, can be included in WageMap.

FAQ 6: How will Living Wage methodologies be assessed against the Living Wage Reference Standard? And who will manage that process?

WageMap will develop a Living Wage Assessment Procedure that will determine who, when, and according to what criteria living wage methodologies are assessed. Development of this procedure is part of the Living Wage Reference Standard-setting process and will be shared for input during the second and third consultation process, set to take place between January and June 2025. This means that as of now (March 2025), it is still to be determined how methodologies will be assessed and by whom.

To mitigate the conflict of interest, none of the methodology owners within the WageMap consortium will be involved in the assessment of living wage estimates that are included in the WageMap.

FAQ 7: Who are the organizations behind WageMap? What gives them the mandate?

WageMap is a collaboration of six organizations dedicated to creating alignment across the living wage movement on methodologies for estimation. They include Business for Social Responsibility, Living Wage Foundation, Living Wage for US, Loughborough University, NewForesight, and WageIndicator Foundation. The founding members recognize from their work the need to drive alignment on living wage methodologies. Rather than attempting to establish WageMap as the leading authority on living wage, the group recognizes itself as only a small part of a wider movement working together for the greater good. As part of establishing the Living Wage Reference Standard, numerous stakeholders will be engaged to ensure that the standard reflects the views of the broader living wage community.

The WageMap consortium is open to other organizations who would like to participate.

FAQ 8: Do all methodology owners have to align with all criteria in the Living Wage Reference Standard in order to be published on the Wage Map?

No. It is unlikely that any methodology currently complies fully with all criteria set out in the Living Wage Reference Standard. However, the process of measuring estimates against the Standard and publishing those that are most aligned will help create a 'race to the top'. The exact assessment process has not yet been decided and will be part of the Living Wage Reference Standard-setting process (Aug'24 until Jul'25).

FAQ 9: Who funds WageMap? What is the role of the funders in developing the standard?

WageMap is funded through corporate contributions from Launch Partners - Hershey, Mondelez, and an undisclosed partner; Member - Target Corporation, and Sponsors -ISS World, among others. These organizations provide financial support through fixed commitments or individual agreements. Additionally, WageMap's six founding partners—BSR, Loughborough University Centre for Research in Social Policy, Living Wage For US, Inc., Living Wage Foundation, NewForesight, and WageIndicator Foundation—contribute in-kind resources to support its mission.

FAQ 10: How does WageIndicator Foundation's publication of its global living wage estimates relate to what WageMap is doing?

WageIndicator produces the largest global living wage dataset. By publishing their living wage estimates there is now greater transparency on what workers should be paid, empowering workers and trade unions to better advocate for a living wage in their particular location. This is a major milestone with regards to the number of locations that now have publicly available living wage estimates.

WageMap intends to review publicly available living wage estimates. Given that WageIndicator has the largest database there are likely going to be many locations where their estimates will be the only available datapoint.

FAQ 11: Which stakeholder groups are you aiming to engage through this process?

There is growing momentum in the global living wage movement, reflected in the range of stakeholders committing to closing the gap. WageMap intends to engage the following stakeholder groups:

- **Governments:** Governments worldwide are promoting living wages in response to advocacy, while the International Labour Organization recognized the concept of a living wage and committed to assisting member states in closing the gap.
- **Platforms:** Platforms are uniting diverse actors from business, government, and civil society to collaboratively advance the global living wage movement, highlighting a shared commitment to equitable labor practices.
- **Consumers:** Consumers are becoming more conscious of ethical purchasing decisions, actively supporting legislation and brands that commit to paying living wages, thereby influencing market dynamics towards fairer labor practices.
- **Civil society:** Non-profit organizations at local and global level hold the capacity to form powerful alliances and accelerate implementation of living wage through various projects, programmes and campaigns.
- **Unions and workers' organizations:** WageMap acknowledges that it plays no role in wage-setting processes. Our dataset of living wage estimates can be used as a tool to support collective bargaining. The voice of workers is a critical component of our Living Wage Reference Standard.
- **Academics and data providers:** WageMap particularly encourages data providers to participate in discussions facilitated by our Technical Working Group on a range of themes related to estimation of living wages.
- **Businesses and Employers:** Businesses and employers are at the forefront of implementing living wage policies, recognizing the long-term benefits for employee well-being and brand reputation. Employers contribute by developing and testing tools and services that facilitate living wage implementation and reporting while integrating these principles into global reward strategies.
- **Investors:** Investors play a crucial role in shaping corporate behavior, not only by providing finance but also through stewardship activities that set business incentives. By promoting socially sustainable business models, investors can steer companies toward stronger living wage commitments. As living wage considerations become increasingly embedded in new regulations, investor influence is becoming a key driver of corporate action in this space.

FAQ 12: What data will be made publicly available through WageMap?

The living wage estimates most aligned with the Reference Standard will be accessible through an interactive map, allowing users to explore the most aligned figures by hovering over different regions.

FAQ 13: How can I contribute to WageMap?

There are several ways to contribute to the WageMap mission to support the achievement of living wages for workers through standardizing living wage data worldwide. We welcome:

- Join the consortium as a partner - Organizations in the living wage estimation space are welcome to join the consortium as an active partner.
- Financial contributions to the Living Wage Reference Standard-setting process.
- In-kind contributions through input, shared communication papers, presentations and webinars
- Other support

Contact our PMO Joost Backer (joost.backer@newforesight.com) for more information.