Technical Committee – Terms of Reference

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The ISEAL Alliance sets the framework conditions for voluntary standards systems to deliver on their social and environmental objectives. ISEAL Credibility Tools, including our Codes of Good Practice, provide guidance to standards systems to support the effective implementation of their systems. Given the high level of interest and uptake of these tools, it is important that the process by which they are developed and maintained is robust and transparent.

The Technical Committee is a permanent body that is responsible primarily for technical oversight of the ISEAL Codes and other Credibility Tools. It replaces the role of the Code Steering Committees as well as the Code oversight function of the Stakeholder Committee. It has the authority to make decisions to approve the content of new and revised Codes, deferring to the ISEAL Board for a final decision based on the quality of the process followed. This is in line with ISEAL procedures and our Standard-Setting Code.

The Technical Committee brings together representatives from both ISEAL members and external stakeholders and is constituted by appointed individuals with strong overall understanding of sustainability standards. The Committee is an advisory body to the ISEAL Board of Directors and reports to them through the ISEAL Secretariat and Committee Chair. Expenses associated with participation in the Committee are covered by ISEAL. The following Terms of Reference provide a detailed description of the structure and functioning of the Technical Committee.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Technical Committee shall have responsibility for the following activities:

- Recommendations on commissioning needs justification studies for new Codes of Good Practice and other ISEAL Credibility Tools. Needs justification studies will consider issues such as expressed need, urgency, existing landscape, and financial implications;
- Recommendations to the ISEAL Board on the development of new Codes and on revision of existing Codes;
- Oversight of the development of Terms of Reference for new Codes of Good Practice;
- Monitoring the Code development or revision process and signing off on drafts during the consultation process;
- Recommendation for approval of new and revised Codes based on both the content of the standard and on the extent to which the development process complies with the ISEAL Code Development Procedure;
Composition and Terms

The Technical Committee is composed of up to 9 individuals, of which, at least 1/3 are Full or Associate Members of ISEAL. Members of the Committee are appointed by decision of the ISEAL Board. Terms of 3 years are staggered initially so that up to one third of members complete their terms each year. Terms are renewable by mutual consent of the Committee and the ISEAL Board, up to a maximum of 3 consecutive terms.

The Committee should maintain the following balance in composition:

- Full or Associate Members (up to 3)
- Other standards systems representatives (1 to 2)
- Independent standards systems experts (1 to 2)
- Other stakeholders (e.g. business, government, producers) (2 to 3)

Selection Criteria

Committee members are chosen by the ISEAL Board on the basis of the following criteria:

- Technical knowledge of standards systems structures and operating practices
- Current understanding of ISEAL’s Codes and Credibility Tools
- Commitment to ISEAL’s vision and strategic framework
- Geographic and gender balance
- Availability and ability to work in English

Decision-Making and Meetings

Members of the Technical Committee represent themselves and not their organisations. The Committee seeks to make decisions by consensus. Where consensus cannot be reached, the Committee makes decisions based on a super-majority of 75% of Committee members. Consensus is defined here as the lack of sustained opposition by more than one member of the Committee. Committee members with opposing views can register minority opinions to accompany recommendations made to the ISEAL Board.

Quorum for the Committee is at least 2/3 of committee members, rounded up to the nearest person, including at least 2 ISEAL Members.

The Technical Committee appoints a Chair and Secretary by simple majority vote at its first in-person meeting. The terms of the Chair and Secretary are two years and are renewable up to a maximum of three consecutive terms. The Chair is invited by the ISEAL Board of Directors to participate in ISEAL Board meetings where relevant to ensure clear communication between the Technical Committee and the Board of Directors.

The Technical Committee meets twice a year in advance of the ISEAL Board meetings, or as needed. At least one meeting will be in person with the other meetings being virtual. Board members can attend Committee meetings as observers only. The Committee may hold additional meetings as it deems necessary and as budgetary considerations allow. Expenses associated with participation on the Committee will be remunerated by ISEAL.

The work of the Technical Committee is coordinated by the ISEAL Secretariat, in close collaboration with the Committee Chair, who is responsible for facilitating the work of the Technical Committee.