

## The challenge

In 2017 the ISEAL Innovations Fund invited proposals for projects that support sustainability standards to become better data managers. In 2018 the focus of the fund will shift to support projects that are more narrowly aimed at solving specific challenges confronting the standards community. Our first challenge for 2018 will look at testing new approaches to **significantly increase the adoption of sustainable practices in multiple sectors across a region or jurisdiction.**

## Project eligibility criteria

The proposed challenge requires consideration of how sustainability standards, together with other sustainability tools and actors could work together to scale adoption of sustainable practices within a region. We have deliberately not been prescriptive in proposing the development of a credible landscape standard although that is one solution. Projects could equally be about addressing the enabling conditions in a particular geography such as the role of governments, or about private sector incentives for the adoption of sustainable practices. The following are possible areas for project proposals:

- Facilitating or supporting multi-stakeholder platforms in a region by building on their experiences with standard-setting processes and consensus building.
- Helping to identify the incentive structures that will support producers/enterprises to continue improving over time within a specific geography or region.
- Providing the infrastructure to support capacity building activities in a region and introducing new tools such as peer learning networks to strengthen capacity.
- Adopting new streamlined approaches to verification that shift the focus from auditing to data management, risk analysis, and participatory monitoring.
- Ensuring the rigour and credibility of landscape approaches by advising on appropriate verification frameworks and traceability solutions.
- Contributing to the definition of landscape monitoring metrics and adapting existing monitoring and evaluation programmes to support data gathering and management.

Please note that the [Guiding Principles](#) of the ISEAL Innovations Fund also apply to challenge grants

The fund will look to award small (CHF 50,000 to 100,000), medium (CHF 200,000 to 300,000) and large grants (CHF 450,000 – 550,000). Maximum project duration is 1, 2 and 3 years, respectively. Matched funding is required for all projects according to the fund's [Eligibility Criteria](#).

Challenge projects should include a field testing or implementation component. Priority will be given to proposals that have a field component focused on one or more of the following priority countries: Colombia, Peru, Vietnam, Ghana, South Africa, Morocco, Tunisia, Indonesia, and Kyrgyzstan.

## Project selection process

**Phase 1 – IDEA DEVELOPMENT:** The fund team will reach out to the senior staff of ISEAL members before 20<sup>th</sup> May to discuss the challenge. ISEAL members interested in leading a project should let the fund team know as soon as possible by writing to [fund@isealalliance.org](mailto:fund@isealalliance.org). ISEAL will make the following channels available for member discussions around these ideas: the ISEAL Digital Innovations Working Group meeting (23<sup>rd</sup> May), topic tables at the ISEAL Community Day (27<sup>th</sup> May), dedicated Slack channels and in-person workshops. ISEAL members wishing to be considered for the proposal

development phase should submit a brief concept note by 22<sup>nd</sup> June. The selection of projects will be based on discussions with members of the Grant Decision Making Committee.

**Phase 2 – PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT:** Projects will be notified by 30<sup>th</sup> June if they have been selected for this phase. Eligible projects looking for a grant amount above CHF 200,000 will be awarded scoping grants of up to CHF 15,000 to support the development of a full project proposal. All project proposals are due by 1<sup>st</sup> October.

**Phase 3 – FINAL DECISION:** The Grant Decision Making Committee will meet in October to award challenge grants.

### Background and useful resources

Underlying this challenge is a recognition of the importance for sustainability standards of finding scalable solutions. It is policy-makers that have traditionally turned to 'place-based' approaches to manage sustainability, while businesses focused on 'greening' their individual supply chains. As companies look to scalable solutions to meet their ambitious and time-bound supply chain commitments, there is increased interest and potential in broader solutions to address the multiplicity of factors driving unsustainable production practices in a specific landscape. The novelty of the landscape approach compared to traditional rural development lies in the links to global supply chains and the commitment by national and international companies to drive this development through their supply chains.

It is clear that in order to support landscape-level transformation, sustainability standards systems will need to look beyond certified production units. However, there are many roles that standards systems can play, building on their leadership in areas like stakeholder engagement, stepwise approaches, verification and outcomes measurement.

In 2016 ISEAL summarised the various initiatives underway to increase the applicability of standards systems at a landscape-level in the context of corporate commitments to zero deforestation. This report<sup>1</sup> also offered an analysis of the necessary components of a landscape approach, and explored different ways in which standards systems can help companies fulfil sustainability commitments through landscape approaches, including the convening of multi-stakeholder platforms, the creation of new assurance models, and the use of stepwise approaches. The results of this research were presented in a public webinar later that year.<sup>2</sup>

Momentum behind 'placed based' approaches has continued to grow as companies look for ways to manage other sustainability risks in their sourcing regions. Last year, ISEAL shared reflections on the new opportunities opening up to dISEAL members.<sup>3</sup> The briefing note looked at the main drivers behind new 'land-based' approaches, presented as 'conversation starters' for ISEAL members to reflect on their relevance for their own systems.

The reality is that sustainability standards already employ many strategies in addition to certification to drive positive change on the ground. These strategies get whole sectors and geographies engaged on a sustainability journey. With support from GIZ and SECO, the ISEAL Innovations Programme has been actively looking into the scaling potential of these strategies. The findings of this research will be published in a new members' report coming out in May 2018.

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<sup>1</sup> Mallet et al 2016. ISEAL Report: How sustainability standards can contribute to landscape approaches and zero deforestation commitments. (Community-only resource, accessible at: <https://community.isealalliance.org/online-community/resources/how-sustainability-standards-can-contribute-to-landscape-approaches-and-zero-defore>).

<sup>2</sup> ISEAL public webinar 2016. Recording available at: <https://community.isealalliance.org/online-community/resources/iseal-webinar-how-sustainability-standards-can-contribute-to-landscape-approaches-a>

<sup>3</sup> ISEAL 2017. ISEAL Strategic Insights Briefing: Scaling Sustainability: Interactions between standards systems and landscape and jurisdictional approaches (Community-only resource, accessible at: [https://community.isealalliance.org/system/files/private/ISEAL\\_Briefing\\_Regional\\_Sourcing\\_FINAL%201Aug17.pdf](https://community.isealalliance.org/system/files/private/ISEAL_Briefing_Regional_Sourcing_FINAL%201Aug17.pdf))