ISEAL Community Member Application Procedure

Version 1, Effective 2 November 2020

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Introduction

ISEAL is the global membership association for sustainability standards and similar systems and we welcome applicants for ISEAL Community Member status. Organisations who join ISEAL are making a commitment to continually improve their systems and create greater sustainability impacts through actively participating in ISEAL's learning, collaboration, and innovation activities.

Scope and Purpose

Sustainability systems that meet the *ISEAL Community Member Requirements* are eligible to apply for ISEAL Community Member status.

The *ISEAL Community Member Application Procedure* has been designed to be a collaborative process between applicants and ISEAL. It sets out how and when:

> 〉 You can apply for ISEAL Community Member status

> 〉 We will support you through the process

> 〉 We will use the information that you make available to us

> 〉 Decisions will be taken about your membership

Please view this procedure together with the *ISEAL Community Member Requirements* as well as the further supporting documents identified below.

Participating in open and active dialogue with ISEAL in advance of application, and through this process, will enable us to work together to make progress in line with the timelines described in this procedure. You are strongly encouraged to contact membership@isealalliance.org to discuss your interest in becoming an ISEAL Community Member in advance of initiating the application procedure.

ISEAL always welcomes feedback on this process. To tell us about your experience, please contact us by email at compliance@isealalliance.org.

Primary Roles and Responsibilities

Applicants for ISEAL Community Member status

Applicants for ISEAL Community Member status (hereafter 'applicants') participate in open and active dialogue with ISEAL through the application process. In the context of this procedure, they are responsible for:

> 〉 Providing accurate information in a timely manner

> 〉 Using the results of the application assessment to develop an annual plan to address the most important areas for improvement against the *ISEAL Codes of Good Practice*

> 〉 Refraining from any claims regarding the status of their relationship with ISEAL

ISEAL Secretariat

The ISEAL Secretariat (hereafter 'secretariat') works with applicants to support them in understanding how their system meets the *ISEAL Community Member Requirements* and in identifying priority areas for improvement. In the context of this procedure the secretariat is responsible for:

〉 Providing applicants with accurate and impartial feedback that is clear and understandable

〉 Making recommendations on ISEAL Community Member status to the ISEAL Membership Committee based on an assessment of the evidence that the applicant meets the eligibility criteria and is committed to improving their systems, building trust and demonstrating transparency as defined by the *ISEAL Community Member Requirements*

ISEAL Membership Committee

The ISEAL Membership Committee is comprised of ISEAL member representatives appointed by the ISEAL Board. The committee's responsibilities include:

〉 Making recommendations on ISEAL Community Member status to the Board based on the quality of the process followed

〉 Annually appraising the secretariat's application of this procedure

〉 Hearing appeals and making recommendations to the ISEAL Board

ISEAL Board

The ISEAL Board is comprised of ISEAL member representatives and is responsible for the decision to approve or refuse ISEAL Community Member status.

Terms and Definitions

System overview

A report that provides a comprehensive and accessible overview of an applicant's system, specifically:

〉 The **STRATEGIES** a system employs to meet its sustainability objectives

〉 A description of the **STANDARD or TOOL** that the system has developed

〉 How the system maintains **RESPONSIBILITY** for decisions taken about and by its system

〉 How the system's design demonstrates a **COMMITMENT TO IMPROVEMENT**

〉 How the standard or tool is monitored and reviewed to ensure its **RELEVANCE**

〉 How the standard or tool is **IMPLEMENTED**

Once an applicant has achieved ISEAL Community Member status, system overviews will be made available to all other ISEAL Community Members.

Improvement plan

A plan developed and agreed by the applicant with the support of the tools and feedback provided by the secretariat, that identifies:

〉 The priority areas for system improvement

- ⟩ Improvement objectives and how they serve to support closer alignment with the desired outcomes of the *ISEAL Codes of Good Practice*

- ⟩ Key planning and execution milestones

Once an applicant has achieved ISEAL Community Member status, their improvement plans will be made available to all other ISEAL Community Members.

ISEAL Codes of Good Practice Gap Analysis Tool

A tool is designed to allow an applicant to self-assess against the desired outcomes of the *ISEAL Codes of Good Practice*. It serves to support applicants in understanding the level of development of their system and to identify key areas for improvement. It is not a compliance assessment and an applicant self-assessment cannot be used as the basis for any claim related to the ISEAL Code of Good Practice.

Member Comment Period

A 20-day window where ISEAL sends information about the applicant to all ISEAL Community Members and invites any feedback on the applicant's commitment to the *ISEAL Community Code of Conduct*.

Basic scope and reach data

Data provided by an applicant against common indicators that support ISEAL's collective understanding of the contribution of member systems to improving sustainability.

Headline claim

The claim that can be used once an applicant achieves ISEAL Community Member status.

Day

A working day in the jurisdiction of the parties involved.

Supporting documents and references

The following documents are available to support you when applying for ISEAL Community Member status:

- ⟩ *ISEAL Community Member Requirements*

- ⟩ *ISEAL Community Code of Conduct*

- ⟩ *ISEAL Member Claims Guidelines*

- ⟩ *ISEAL Membership Committee Terms of Reference*

- ⟩ *ISEAL Data Policy: Data related to Community Member and compliance requirements*

- ⟩ *ISEAL Assurance Code of Good Practice*

- ⟩ *ISEAL Impacts Code of Good Practice*

- ⟩ *ISEAL Standard-Setting Code of Good Practice*

- ⟩ *ISEAL Fee and Application Schedule*

Procedure

The timeline for this procedure is approximately six months from receipt of an application to final decision. This is contingent on the applicant meeting all the deadlines outlined in the procedure.

To help us work together towards a specific decision date, we have three application deadlines each year. These are approximately:

> ⟩ April

> ⟩ June

> ⟩ October

We publish specific application deadlines in the *ISEAL Fee and Application Schedule* at the end of September in the preceding year.

Please carefully review this procedure in advance of submitting your application and ensure the availability of key staff as highlighted within the procedure.

Applying

To confirm your intent to apply, please contact us at least 15 days in advance of your chosen application deadline by email at compliance@isealalliance.org. We will acknowledge your email within 5 days and arrange for an introductory call with the team who will be assessing your application. At the same time, we will grant access to an individualised Dropbox folder. This folder will only be accessible to the main contact for your organisation and to ISEAL staff responsible for supporting the application. It will serve as the working folder to host all materials that support your application.

1) You should complete and sign the ISEAL Community Member Application Form and upload it to the Dropbox folder along with your supporting evidence in advance of the application deadline. Please ensure you notify us by email at compliance@isealalliance.org once you have submitted your documents.

2) We will conduct an initial review of the information that you have submitted within 10 days and either:

    i. confirm that your application is complete, or

    ii. request further clarification if necessary, or

    iii. in certain cases, recommend that the process is paused

    Where further clarification is required, and to support us in timely management of this procedure, you will be asked to provide this within 5 days of any request for further information.

    Where we recommend that the process is paused, we will contact you to arrange a meeting to discuss the rationale and next steps.

3) Once we have confirmed that your application is complete, you will be:

    i. issued with an invoice for the ISEAL Community Member Application Fee in accordance with the *ISEAL Fee Schedule*, and

    ii. given access to the *ISEAL Codes of Good Practice Gap Analysis Tool* which we ask you to complete and upload within 20 days of receipt

At the same time, we will notify key contacts at all ISEAL Community Members of your application and provide them with your system overview. They will be invited to provide feedback on your commitment to the *ISEAL Community Member Code of Conduct* during a 20-day comment period. Feedback from members must be supported by substantiating evidence.

Assessment

4) Any substantive concerns that we receive through the comment period will be shared with you in writing. You will have the opportunity to address this feedback and will be asked to respond within 10 days of us sharing any concerns with you. You will be asked to outline how you intend to adapt or change your approach to ensure that you can fulfil a commitment to abide by the *ISEAL Community Code of Conduct*. Depending on the context, it is possible the application will not proceed until the adaptations or changes are fully implemented.

5) We will conduct a detailed assessment of the following information against the *ISEAL Community Member Requirements*:

    i.   your application and supporting evidence, and

    ii.   your gap analysis, and

    iii.   your response to any member feedback received on your commitment to the ISEAL Community Code of Conduct

We will provide you with written feedback outlining any outstanding areas for clarification within 20 days of closing the comment period.

To support us in the timely management of this procedure, we kindly ask you to review our feedback and provide any outstanding clarification within 5 days of it being requested.

6) The secretariat will arrange a meeting to discuss areas of your system prioritised for improvement within the next 12-month period.

To support us in the timely management of this procedure, we kindly ask you to be available to participate in the meeting within 5 days of us providing you written feedback.

7) Within 10 days of this meeting, we request that you submit a draft improvement plan that identifies key improvement activities and milestones that you will seek to undertake within 12 months of becoming an ISEAL Community Member.

Decision making

8) We will collate all information supplied in your application and provide a summary of the process and a recommendation to the Membership Committee at the date of their next meeting.

9) The Membership Committee will verify that the process was followed and provide a recommendation to the ISEAL Board.

10) The ISEAL Board will review the recommendation and will take a decision on whether to accept your Community Member application at the date of their next meeting. The Board's decision is final.

11) We will contact you to inform you of the Board decision within 5 days and at the same time:

    i.   ask that you submit your first annual improvement plan.

ii.   issue a pro-rated invoice for your membership fees in accordance with the *ISEAL Application and Fee Schedule.*

iii.   Invite you to an onboarding meeting where we will address our joint communications and how we will work together to ensure you benefit from your membership

12) On receipt of your improvement plan and membership fee payment, we will confirm your status as an ISEAL Community Member. We will then make the necessary information about your system available to the public and to ISEAL Community Members (as defined in the *ISEAL Community Member Requirements*).

Appeals

Where an applicant disagrees with the secretariat's decision not to recommend ISEAL Community Member status, both the applicant and secretariat are encouraged to seek agreement or resolution through dialogue. Where this is not possible, members may lodge a formal appeal to the ISEAL Membership Committee.

The ISEAL Membership Committee is responsible for hearing and deciding on appeals and their decision is final.

1) Appeals must be submitted to the secretariat within 30 days of the member receiving notification of the decision not to recommend ISEAL Community Member status. Submissions should clearly state that a formal appeal is being lodged, explain the nature of the appeal, and include all documented evidence to support the appeal.

2) The secretariat will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within 5 days.

3) The secretariat will notify the ISEAL Membership Committee and forward to the Committee all information received from the appellant within 15 days of acknowledging receipt.

4) The Committee will assess the submitted information within 40 days and determine whether to uphold or overturn the decision of the secretariat and will inform the secretariat.

5) The secretariat will contact the appellant within 10 days to inform them of the decision.