



ISEAL Community Member Requirements

Version 1, Effective 2 November 2020

Introduction

ISEAL is a membership organisation of sustainability standards and similar systems. Through participation in ISEAL's learning, collaboration and innovation activities, members strive to continually improve their systems to create greater sustainability impact.

This document sets out the requirements an organisation must meet to become an ISEAL Community Member and to maintain that status.

Qualifying as an ISEAL Community Member

To qualify as an ISEAL Community Member, an organisation must demonstrate that they meet the following eligibility criteria in accordance with the *ISEAL Community Member Application Procedure*:

- 1) An eligible organisation must:
 - a) Be registered as a legal entity and shall declare to ISEAL its corporate structure and annual incomes
 - b) Have a sustainability-focused mission
 - c) Define a voluntary standard, performance level, or improvement pathway (e.g., KPIs and targets) relative to one or more sustainability topics
 - d) Undertake monitoring, verification or assurance of its standard, performance level, or improvement pathway
 - e) Manage claims related to its standard(s), performance level(s) or improvement pathway(s)
 - f) Have a conflict of interest policy or policies that applies to its governance and decision-making bodies, staff and, consultants
- 2) An eligible organisation must make the following information publicly available and provide this to ISEAL as a system overview:
 - a) Its theory of change (defined sustainability outcomes and strategies for achieving these)
 - b) Its standard(s), performance level(s), or improvement pathway(s)
 - c) A description of its monitoring, verification or assurance system
 - d) A description of its claims model and the claims it allows
 - e) Its income sources and its governance structure
 - f) A description of stakeholder engagement in the development and revision of both its theory of change and its standard, performance level or improvement pathway
- 3) An eligible organisation must have a publicly available complaint or dispute resolution mechanism

- 4) An eligible organisation must undergo a gap analysis against the Standard-Setting, Assurance and Impacts Codes and provide a clear rationale where elements of a Code do not apply to its model or system
- 5) An eligible organisation agrees that should they be approved as an ISEAL Community Member, ISEAL will make the following information publicly available:
 - a) Basic scope and reach data
 - b) Status of participation in the compliance programme (i.e. assessed, not assessed) and the allowed claims
- 6) An eligible organisation agrees that should they be approved as an ISEAL Community Member, ISEAL will make the following information available to other Community Members:
 - a) System overviews
 - b) Entry assessments against ISEAL's Standards-Setting, Assurance and Impacts Codes
 - c) Annual improvement plans against ISEAL's Codes and annual progress reports against these plans

Approval as an ISEAL Community Member

Once approved as an ISEAL Community Member, an organisation must:

- 7) Pay ISEAL's annual membership fees
- 8) Abide by the *ISEAL Community Code of Conduct*
- 9) Abide by the *ISEAL Member Claims Guidelines*
- 10) Promptly notify ISEAL should the organisation fail to maintain adherence to the eligibility criteria
- 11) Promptly notify ISEAL of any criminal or civil proceedings made against the organisation or of any other significant change in activities or circumstance that could affect the reputation of the organisation or of ISEAL membership as a whole. Examples of such changes could include the detection of widespread system failure or fraud, allegations against the organisation of discriminatory or abusive practices, etc.

Maintaining ISEAL Community Member status

To maintain ISEAL Community Member status, organisations must demonstrate they meet the following improvement criteria in accordance with the *ISEAL Community Member Monitoring Procedure*:

- 12) An ISEAL Community Member must submit annual improvement plans against ISEAL's Codes of Good Practice, annual reports of progress against those plans, and annual updates of the system overview
- 13) An ISEAL Community Member must provide ISEAL with annual basic scope and reach data against agreed indicators
- 14) An ISEAL Community Member must implement a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system that meets the following requirements within the first three years of participation as a Community Member:
 - a) The organisation designates at least one person responsible for implementation of the M&E system
 - b) The organisation has procedures in place to protect confidential and proprietary data

- c) The organisation has procedures in place to address any legal barriers to the use of relevant data for the implementation of the organisation's M&E system
- d) The organisation provides and publicizes opportunities for stakeholders to comment on at least the following aspects of the M&E system and documents the results of this consultation:
 - i. The intended impacts and outcomes of the sustainability system
 - ii. The unintended effects of the sustainability system (both positive and negative), including the most significant and potentially damaging negative unintended effects
 - iii. The scope and boundaries of the M&E system
- e) The organisation defines and documents the intended long-term social, environmental or economic impacts of the sustainability standards system or tool
- f) The organisation defines and documents the short and medium-term social, environmental or economic outcomes they expect to see as a result of their standard, performance level, improvement pathway, or other strategies
- g) The organisation identifies the strategies that the sustainability system employs to contribute to its intended outcomes and impacts
- h) The organisation illustrates or describes the causal pathways that explain how identified strategies are expected to contribute to the intended outcomes and impacts
- i) The organisation compiles, analyses and produces reports on the results observed through performance monitoring at least once per year for internal purposes
- j) Within the first three years of joining ISEAL as a Community Member, the organisation conducts, commissions or otherwise undergoes at least one in-depth outcome or impact evaluation. Subsequent evaluations are conducted annually
- k) The organisation includes at least the following information in performance monitoring reports and reports of outcome and impact evaluations:
 - i. The purpose of the evaluation or analysis and the guiding evaluation questions
 - ii. (For outcome and impact evaluations) Names of people involved in conducting the evaluation, their qualifications, and their connection to the entity or system being evaluated
 - iii. Methodology (e.g. what data was collected; specific methods used to gather data; thresholds employed; sampling; data manipulation; how data was analysed; and conclusions drawn)
 - iv. Findings and conclusions, including both positive and negative effects
 - v. Any limitations of the evaluation or analysis (including limitations or uncertainties in the data, and assumptions)
 - vi. (For outcome and impact evaluations) How the context (e.g. internal and external factors) might have affected the results of the intervention
 - vii. Recommendations, where appropriate