ISEAL Credibility Principles revision
Summary of feedback on version 1.2
About this document

This document summarises how feedback on the second draft of the revised Credibility Principles (version 1.2) was incorporated into the final document (version 2).

We would like to thank all the respondents who took time to share feedback in this round of consultation. We believe that your input and suggestions have made the principles clearer and stronger.

More information on the Credibility Principles revision can be found on this [web page](#).
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About the ISEAL Credibility Principles and revision

Since launching in 2013, ISEAL's Credibility Principles have become an international reference for the foundations of credible practice for sustainability standards.

The Credibility Principles were reviewed in 2019 to determine if they needed to be revised to remain useful to stakeholders. The review concluded that the Credibility Principles did need updating to ensure they remain relevant in our changing sustainability landscape.

A revision of the Credibility Principles took place in 2020, which included two rounds of consultation.
Credibility Principles second consultation

A consultation on the first draft of the revised principles (version 1.1) was held from May to July 2020. Feedback was incorporated into the second draft (version 1.2) and the second public consultation was held.

The consultation:
› ran from 18 November to 24 December 2020 (with feedback submitted until the 31 December also considered)
› received over 150 comments from 51 respondents
› gathered input through an online survey
Who participated?

Respondent stakeholder groups

› The majority of respondents represented consultants and researchers or standards and standards-like systems.

› Companies and producer groups were better represented in this round of consultation compared to the first round.
Who participated?

Respondent locations

› 21 countries were represented.
› The countries with the highest number of respondents were Colombia (8), the United States (7), South Africa (5) and the United Kingdom (5).
Total stakeholder reach through consultation process

› 189 feedback responses were gathered.
› 33 countries were represented.
Summary of feedback and changes made
General feedback and changes

› There was a good level of overall satisfaction with the importance and the clarity of the principles as well as with the changes made in response to feedback on version 1.1.
› At the same time, some principles were less clear than others and further efforts to improve clarity were an important focus in the preparation of version 2. We tried to use simpler language, reducing the use of technical language and minimising dependency on the use of definitions to where this was essential.
› As with version 1.1, there was uncertainty about the suitability of the term ‘organisation’ for the owner of the sustainability system. The principles now talk about the ‘sustainability system’.
› We also reordered the principles in response to feedback about the flow of the principles.
General feedback and changes, continued

› As in the first round of consultation, we did have suggestions for content that is more suited to the level of technical detail provided in the Codes of Good Practice. We have noted and do appreciate these contributions to our thinking about the Codes.

› We did have some suggestions to compress the content into fewer principles and yet other feedback to divide the content into more principles, but in the interest of continuity with version 1 we did continue to restrict ourselves to ten principles.

› There was also feedback about the importance of communicating about the intended use and purpose of the principles, as well as suggestions about the kind of materials that would support the application of the principles to a wider range of systems. This is feedback that will inform how we approach further work related to the principles following publication of version 2.
Sustainability impacts

Summary of feedback received

› Generally positive feedback was received with particular appreciation for the emphasis on materiality and for the inclusion of remediation.
› Some suggestions to include further details that are better suited to the Codes or guidance materials was received.

Summary of changes made

› No significant changes were adopted in response to feedback; however, the Steering Group also determined that the reference to systemic impacts (previously found in Collaboration) had a more logical fit in Sustainability impacts and so this was integrated here.
Accuracy

Summary of feedback received

› There was some confusion about what the principle means and further feedback that the use of the word “Accuracy” as the name of the principle is not a good fit.

Summary of changes made in response to feedback

› The principle was reworded to reduce confusion.
› It was renamed from “Accuracy” to “Reliability” to better communicate the meaning of the principle (based on suggestions also received in the first round of consultation).
› There were no other significant changes.
Measurable progress

Summary of feedback received

› Overall, there was a need for more clarity. In particular, the phrases that were incorporated from the definition of “tool” were confusing.
› Data collection itself is not demonstrating progress. Analysis also needs to be part of the principle.

Summary of changes made in response to feedback

› Changes focused on improving clarity by significantly rewording the principle.
› References to analysis were integrated.
Collaboration

Summary of feedback received

› Positive feedback was received on this principle.
› Suggestions were received to change the language about duplication of efforts to recognise that duplication can also be linked to innovation or that collaboration is not always possible.
› This principle may be harder to measure or evaluate than others.

Summary of changes made in response to feedback

› The principle was reframed to place a positive emphasis on seeking alignment (instead of focusing on reducing duplication).
› In addition, the Steering Group determined that the reference to systemic impacts would be more logical in Sustainability impacts and this is now primarily referenced there.
Added value

Summary of feedback received

› Some positive feedback was received on the principle and improvements in this version
› At the same time, a number of respondents continued to have issues with the principle. There was also one suggestion to reintroduce Accessibility as a stand-alone principle.
› Some of the phrasing and choice of language remained unclear. In particular, introducing the term producers rather than continuing to use the term users was confusing.
› It was not focused enough on what is in the organisation’s control.
› It was not direct or explicit enough about the meaning of some parts. As a result, there was not enough distinction between this principle and the general societal benefits generated by Sustainability impacts.
The Steering Group did consider whether to limit the focus to accessibility but decided to focus on improving the principle. The rationale for this included findings from the earlier review about the need to address added value / equity and fairness / the business case for producers.

The statements that were more focused on the rationale for the principle or that were providing examples were withdrawn to ensure consistency between principles.

The changes focused on making the intent and meaning of the principle more explicit. These changes included renaming the principle to “Value creation”, directly referencing the importance of the business case for participation, and reintroducing the reference to a viable business model (from version 1).
Stakeholder engagement

Summary of feedback received

› Respondents commented that there are improvements in this version of the principle.
› The importance of stakeholder diversity should be referenced.
› There were also editorial suggestions made to strengthen the principle.
› The “why is it important” statement was not resonating for some respondents.

Summary of changes made in response to feedback

› The statement about importance was broadened to better reflect the scope of the principle.
› A direct reference to stakeholder diversity was introduced.
› In response to feedback about the term and definition, the reference to disadvantaged stakeholders was reframed to make the responsibilities of the organisation clearer.
Continual improvement

Summary of feedback received

› Positive feedback was received on the new title and previous revisions but there were also editorial improvements requested to bring further clarity.

Summary of changes made in response to feedback

› Editorial improvements were made to support clarity
Impartiality

Summary of feedback received

› Positive feedback was received on the improvements in this version along with further editorial suggestions.

Summary of changes made in response to feedback

› Editorial improvements were made.
Truthfulness

Summary of feedback received

› Positive feedback was received but there were also editorial improvements requested, particularly in the section that talks about claims being proportional to the nature of the system.
› Evidence that substantiates claims should be publicly available and easy to understand.

Summary of changes made in response to feedback

› The importance of having information that substantiates claims publicly available and the importance of being able to check claims were made clearer.
› For clarity’s sake, we have avoided talking about claims being proportional. Despite general aims to avoid negative framing, it is clear that “proportional” was not conveying its intended meaning and we have gone back to talking about claims being “not misleading.”
Transparency

Summary of feedback received

› Positive feedback was received on the importance of this principle.
› Suggestions for editorial improvements were also received.

Summary of changes made in response to feedback

› Editorial improvements were made.
Next steps
Next steps

› Following the consultation, feedback was considered by the Steering Group and incorporated into a final draft. The Steering Group recommended this final draft to the ISEAL Technical Committee based on the quality of the content (considering the terms of reference for the principles and the aims of the revision).

› The Technical Committee recommended this final draft to the ISEAL Board of Directors based on the quality of the content and the quality of the revision process.

› At their meeting of 28-29 April 2021, the ISEAL Board of Directors approved that this final draft be published as version 2 of the Credibility Principles as recommended by the Technical Committee, noting the adequacy of the revision process and that the Credibility Principles version 2 satisfy their terms of reference.

› The ISEAL Credibility Principles version 2 is now available on the ISEAL website.
Thank you!