

ISEAL Code of Good Practice: revision and integration

Steering Group – Terms of Reference – July 2021

Scope

These terms of reference cover the formation, responsibilities, aims and operation of the Steering Group with respect to the revision of the requirements of the ISEAL Codes of Good Practice and the integration of these requirements into one holistic Code of Good Practice.

Responsibilities

The Steering Group is an advisory body whose main responsibility is to contribute to the revision of relevant Code content and the integration of the Codes. Specific technical responsibilities of the Steering Group include:

1. Reviewing and providing input to the pre-release drafts of the revised and integrated Code
2. Reviewing consultation feedback and seeking to resolve outstanding issues in the drafts
3. Providing a recommendation for approval on the final draft of the ISEAL Code of Good Practice

The Steering Group is also asked to raise awareness of, and drive participation in, the global consultation to revise the Codes.

Decision-making

The Steering Group makes a recommendation to the Technical Committee about the quality of the final draft of the integrated ISEAL Code of Good Practice at the close of the consultation.

The Technical Committee then decides whether to recommend the Code to the Board. This decision is based on the quality of the process followed and whether the content satisfies the Terms of Reference for the integrated Code.

The Board then makes a final decision on whether to approve the integrated Code for publication. This is based on consistency with the terms of reference for the Code and the quality of the process followed.

Aims of the revision and integration process

The revision and integration of the Codes provides opportunities to improve the value of the Codes and Code compliance by looking at system credibility in a holistic way.

The revision and integration process aims to:

- update Code content to reflect changes in the sustainability landscape
- address findings from the review of the Standard-Setting and Impacts Codes
- strengthen the connection between the Credibility Principles and the Codes

- expand the scope of an integrated Code to include essential good practices in claims management
- address key aspects of governance, retaining the good practices that are currently included in the Codes and integrating the good practices that are requirements for ISEAL Community Members
- more effectively support adoption and implementation of the Codes
- rationalise Code requirements (by reducing redundancy, better calibrating the expected performance levels, and creating clearer and stronger linkages in interconnected areas of performance)
- support improvements to ISEAL's Code compliance programme, where the burden of compliance is reduced while maintaining rigour.

Membership

The Steering Group will consist of 9-12 members with expertise in credible and effective sustainability systems.

Members represent their own views and the interests of the stakeholder group they represent. They do not represent their organisations. Membership will include representation from the following interests:

- Sustainability standards systems
- Similar sustainability systems adopting innovative models
- Organisations offering monitoring, verification or assurance services (including certification and accreditation bodies)
- Expert technical consultants
- Non-governmental organisations
- Users of sustainability systems (e.g. businesses, producer associations) and other interested parties (e.g., governments, multilateral agencies)

No more than 1/3 of Steering Group members will be employees of ISEAL members.

Application and appointment process

Several members of the ISEAL Technical Committee may volunteer to serve on the Steering Group. Further members of the Steering Group will be selected by ISEAL through an application procedure.

In addition to ensuring a balance of stakeholder interests, the following criteria will inform the selection and appointment of Steering Group members:

- Holistic knowledge of sustainability systems and technical expertise in at least one of the following system functions: standard-setting, assurance, monitoring and evaluation, claims or legal compliance
- Knowledge of and technical expertise in innovations in sustainability systems and/or expertise in the changing operating context for systems
- Current understanding of ISEAL's Codes and Credibility Principles
- Commitment to ISEAL's mission
- Geographic diversity and gender balance
- Ability to work in English

- Availability to participate in the approximately 4-6 virtual meetings outlined in the anticipated schedule below. Each meeting involves preparatory reading and reflection.

Members are required to agree to the Chatham House Rule and complete a conflict of interest declaration at the outset of their service on the Steering Group.

Membership in the Steering Group is for the duration of the Code revision and integration process which will run for approximately 18-24 months (estimated timeline: Nov 2021 – May 2023). Should a member need to resign from the Committee, ISEAL may appoint a suitable replacement.

Operations and meetings of the Steering Group

The ISEAL Senior Manager, Membership & Services or a proxy ISEAL representative nominated by the ISEAL Senior Manager, Membership & Services will act as facilitator of the Steering Group and project manager.

The Steering Group will meet through virtual meetings. The proposed schedule of meetings is as follows:

- Nov 2021 – Meeting to kick-off the process; this includes briefing members of the Steering Group on the review findings and consultation plan
- Jan/Feb 2022 – Meeting to review first draft of the revised Code prior to consultation
- Sept/Oct 2022 – Meeting(s) (1-2) to consider the feedback from the first round of consultation and review the second draft
- Feb/Mar 2023 – Meeting(s) (1-2) to consider the feedback from the second round of consultation and review the final draft for recommendation

Additional virtual meetings may be scheduled as necessary.

Time costs to participate in virtual meetings will not be reimbursed and there are no per diems or honoraria associated with membership on the Steering Group.

The Steering Group seeks to make decisions by consensus, with consensus defined as the absence of sustained opposition. When consensus cannot be reached, the Steering Group reverts to decisions by vote with a 75% majority required.

Meetings will be held under the Chatham House Rule – that is, that the notes will record statements made but will not be attributed. Outcomes of the discussions may be made publicly available unless the discussion is specifically noted to be ‘internal only’ or if the speaker asks for their comment to be ‘off the record’.

Further information

Please contact Caitlin Peeling, ISEAL’s Senior Manager, Membership & Services with any questions on these terms of reference: caitlin@isealalliance.org.

Annex 1: ISEAL Code of Good Practice: Terms of Reference

Objectives and Scope

The ISEAL Code of Good Practice is a normative reference that operationalises the ISEAL Credibility Principles. The Code defines credible management of the components of a sustainability system* where these components include standard-setting, assurance, claims, and impacts (monitoring, evaluation, and learning).

**A sustainability system is the collective set of decisions and activities carried out by an organisation to*

- *establish standards or similar tools focused on one or more sustainability issues*
- *measure, monitor or verify performance or progress against these tools*
- *allow for claims*