ISEAL Code of Good Practice

First consultation draft: summary of requirements against the ISEAL Credibility Principles

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Covering note

About the Code revision and integration process

ISEAL’s Codes of Good Practice provide a globally recognised framework, defining practices for effective and credible sustainability systems. We are currently revising and integrating the ISEAL Impacts, Standard-Setting and Assurance Codes, along with essential practices from the ISEAL Sustainability Claims Good Practice Guide, into one single Code of Good Practice.

The revision and integration process aims to strengthen the connection between the Credibility Principles and the Codes, and update Code content to reflect developments in the sustainability landscape, taking a holistic view of what a credible and effective sustainability system looks like. The Code applies to standards and certification schemes as well as a wider range of sustainability systems such as improvement monitoring programmes, ratings systems, etc.

We encourage you to review the orientation document for more background on the draft Code.

About this document

This document presents the desired outcomes of the draft Code requirements against each of the ISEAL Credibility Principles, allowing stakeholders to view the relationship between the draft Code and the principles. Some requirements are relevant to more than one principle and may be repeated. Please note that this document does not include the full requirements. It is focused on the desired outcomes and principles only.

You can review the draft Code requirements and their desired outcomes by chapter in a separate document.

Or you can view the full draft Code in an excel file. The excel file contains the requirements and their desired outcomes, as well as some additional information. The excel identifies the relationship between each requirement and the Credibility Principles, and it includes the change log that tracks back the draft requirements to the previous Codes and Guide, summarising key changes.

Your feedback during the consultation

Your feedback on the consultation draft will allow us to assess whether

› the desired outcomes are clear and relevant
› the requirements are likely to achieve the desired outcomes
› the structure of the Code is likely to support adoption of the requirements

We hope you will provide feedback by reviewing the Code and then completing the survey, and/or by providing comments on individual requirements in the excel file.

We are also hosting a series of consultation events and we hope to see you there!

Further information on the review and revision process is available on the consultation page.
Sustainability impacts

A credible sustainability system makes a difference where it matters.

A credible sustainability system has a clear purpose to drive positive social, environmental, and economic impacts and to eliminate or remediate negative impacts. It defines and clearly communicates its scope, its specific sustainability objectives, and its strategies for achieving these objectives (its theory of change). The system focuses on the significant sustainability impacts in its scope. It seeks to address the root causes of sustainability issues and deliver wider or systemic impacts. It reflects current scientific evidence and international norms when relevant. It is adapted to local or sector-specific conditions where this helps improve impact.

Relevant requirements

1.1 Sustainability impacts and strategies (theory of change): The scheme has a clear purpose and strategies to drive sustainability outcomes and impacts.

1.2 Analysis informing focus: The scheme makes informed decisions about how to focus its work.

1.3 Input to scheme focus: Stakeholder input and lessons from scheme implementation inform the scheme’s focus.

1.4 Partnerships and cooperation: Partnerships and cooperation improve scheme efficiency and impacts.

1.5 Responsibility for theory of change: There are clear lines of responsibility for developing and maintaining the theory of change.

1.6 Socialising the theory of change: Staff, leadership and external partners are committed to implementing the scheme’s strategies.

1.7 Public information about the theory of change: Stakeholders have access to relevant information about the scheme’s purpose and strategies.

1.8 Review of the theory of change: The theory of change remains relevant over time.

5.6 Remediation: Stakeholders can rely on the scheme to act in line with its defined role in remediation.

6.3 Terms of reference: The scheme owner has clearly articulated what the standard aims to achieve and why the standard is needed.

6.7 Standards review and revision: The scheme owner ensures the standard remains relevant over time.

6.17 Standards structure and content: The standard is designed to achieve material sustainability outcomes.
**Collaboration**

A credible sustainability system works with others to create change.

A credible sustainability system identifies governments, businesses, and civil society organisations, including other sustainability systems, that are working towards shared sustainability objectives. It actively seeks alignment and respectfully pursues collaboration with others. It establishes partnerships and shares learnings to improve its efficiency and its direct or systemic impacts.

**Relevant requirements**

1.4 Partnerships and cooperation: Partnerships and cooperation improve scheme efficiency and impacts.

3.5 Aligning monitoring indicators: The scheme owner aligns with others on what is measured to support a better understanding of collective impacts.

6.4 Consistency between standards: The scheme owner aims to avoid duplications and seeks consistency with other schemes.

6.21 Standards equivalence: Other standards recognised by the scheme are meaningfully equivalent to the scheme’s standard.

7.13 Assurance equivalence: The assurance results of other schemes that are recognised by the scheme can be trusted.

**Value creation**

A credible sustainability system adds value

A credible sustainability system strives to create value that fairly rewards the effort and resources that it takes for users to participate in the system. It has a viable business model, and it operates efficiently, minimising costs for users and reaching more users by reducing other barriers to access. It supports users to implement its tools, and it empowers users by demonstrating a clear business case for participating in its system.

**Relevant requirements**

6.4 Consistency between standards: The scheme owner aims to avoid duplications and seeks consistency with other schemes.

6.14 Feasibility assessment: The scheme owner assesses the feasibility and value of the standard.

7.5 Performance insights: The assurance system delivers value to clients.
Measurable progress

A credible sustainability system can demonstrate the difference it is making

A credible sustainability system has tools that are relevant to achieving its sustainability objectives, and these tools allow progress towards objectives to be measured over time. It collects and analyses the data it needs to measure, understand, and demonstrate the progress its users are making towards these objectives.

Relevant requirements

3.1 Guiding framework for monitoring, evaluation, and learning system: The scheme owner has a guiding framework that underpins its monitoring, evaluation, and learning system.

3.2 Monitoring, evaluation, and learning system objectives: The scheme owner has monitoring, evaluation, and learning objectives that are clearly defined.

3.3 Evaluative questions: The monitoring, evaluation, and learning system answers priority evaluative questions.

3.4 Monitoring, evaluation, and learning policies and procedures: The scheme owner has procedures to guide consistent and effective implementation of the monitoring, evaluation, and learning system.

3.5 Aligning monitoring indicators: The scheme owner aligns with others on what is measured to support a better understanding of collective impacts.

3.6 Public information about monitoring, evaluation, and learning: Stakeholders have access to outputs and information about how the monitoring, evaluation, and learning system operates.

4.1 Data information management system: The scheme owner manages its data and information so that it can be used effectively.

4.2 Data and information sources: The scheme owner has access to sufficient data to gain insights about sustainability performance and scheme integrity.

6.7 Standards review and revision: The scheme owner ensures the standard remains relevant over time.

6.8 Data informing review: The scheme owner has an informed picture of the effectiveness of the standard and where this can be improved.

6.10 Urgent substantive changes: The scheme owner has a robust approach to urgent substantive changes.

6.17 Standards structure and content: The standard is designed to achieve material sustainability outcomes.

7.3 Assurance policies and procedures: The scheme owner has documented operating policies and procedures that support consistent implementation of the assurance system.

7.6 Assessment methodology: The scheme owner has designed each type of assessment for consistent implementation.

7.9 Decision-making protocol: Non-conformities are determined consistently.

7.10 Remediation of non-conformities: The remediation of non-conformities is robust, consistent, and aligned with the scheme’s theory of change.

7.11 Group assessment: Assessment of groups and their internal management systems is robust and consistent.

7.12 Group non-conformities: Consequences of non-conformities for group members and group management are robust and consistent.
**Stakeholder engagement**

*A credible sustainability system listens and learns.*

A credible sustainability system is inclusive and non-discriminatory. It empowers stakeholders to participate in decisions and hold the system to account. It involves a balanced and diverse group of stakeholders in decisions that will affect them. It strives to understand the context and perspectives of stakeholders who have been under-engaged or under-represented, and it creates opportunities to ensure their participation in decision-making. It provides clear and transparent feedback on stakeholder input and concerns. It has fair, impartial and accessible mechanisms for resolving complaints and conflicts.

**Relevant requirements**

1.3 Input to scheme focus: Stakeholder input and lessons from scheme implementation inform the scheme's focus.

5.1 Stakeholder identification: The scheme owner understands who its stakeholders are.

5.2 Opportunities for stakeholder input: Stakeholders have a range of opportunities to contribute to the scheme.

5.3 Contacts for stakeholders: Stakeholders know who to contact with their feedback or queries.

5.4 Under-represented stakeholders: The scheme supports under-represented stakeholders to contribute to the scheme.

5.5 Mechanisms for stakeholder input: Stakeholders are easily able to provide feedback to the scheme owner that will be taken into account.

5.7 Scope and design of dispute resolution system: The scheme has impartial and accessible mechanisms in place for resolving complaints and conflicts.

5.8 Operations of dispute resolution system: The dispute resolution system is robust and transparent.

6.1 Standards policies and procedures: The scheme owner ensures that its development and maintenance of standards is predictable and consistent.

6.5 Public summary: Stakeholders have the information they need to determine whether and how to participate.

6.6 Stakeholder input: The scheme owner responds to stakeholder input.

6.11 Public consultation: Stakeholders have sufficient time and opportunity to contribute to the standard's development and revision.

6.12 Balanced participation: The scheme ensures that consultation processes enable participation from a cross-section of stakeholders.

6.13 Responding to comments: Stakeholders can see what input was received and how it has been taken into account.

6.15 Balanced decision-making: Stakeholders can see that their views are represented in decision-making.

6.16 Consensus decision-making: Decision-making processes about the content of the standard are transparent and aim for consensus.
6.19 Contextual relevance: The standard is relevant in the contexts where it is applied, based in part on input from relevant stakeholders.

8.8 Mechanism for reporting misuse: Stakeholders can report the misuse of claims.

**Transparency**

**A credible sustainability system earns trust by being open and honest.**

A credible sustainability system makes important information publicly available and easily accessible, while protecting confidential and private information. It enables stakeholders to understand and evaluate the system’s processes, decision-making, results, and impacts. Stakeholders have the information they need to actively participate in decisions or raise concerns.

**Relevant requirements**

1.7 Public information about the theory of change: Stakeholders have access to relevant information about the scheme’s purpose and strategies.

2.8 Public information about scheme governance and operations: Stakeholders have access to relevant information about scheme governance and operations.

3.6 Public information about monitoring, evaluation, and learning: Stakeholders have access to outputs and information about how the monitoring, evaluation, and learning system operates.

3.7 Reporting and sharing analysis: The scheme and its stakeholders have access to relevant analysis.

3.8 Quality of analysis: Publicly shared outputs are relevant and of good quality.

3.10 Reporting and sharing improvements: Stakeholders have access to information about how the scheme is improving.

5.8 Operations of dispute resolution system: The dispute resolution system is robust and transparent.

6.2 Public information on standard-setting: The scheme owner makes its standard and key information about the standard’s development and maintenance freely available.

6.5 Public summary: Stakeholders have the information they need to determine whether and how to participate.

6.10 Urgent substantive changes: The scheme owner has a robust approach to urgent substantive changes.

6.13 Responding to comments: Stakeholders can see what input was received and how it has been taken into account.

6.22 Document control: Stakeholders can identify when the standard was last updated and when it is in effect.

7.4 Public information on assurance: Stakeholders have access to relevant information about how the assurance system operates.

8.2 Public information on claims: Stakeholders have access to relevant information about how the claims system operates.

8.6 Supporting information: Stakeholders can find more information when claims are made by the scheme’s clients.
Impartiality

A credible sustainability system is impartial

A credible sustainability system identifies and avoids or mitigates conflicts of interest throughout its governance and operations, particularly when it comes to assessing its users’ performance. Transparency and stakeholder engagement help ensure the system’s integrity can be trusted.

Relevant requirements

2.4 Good governance: The scheme owner implements good governance practices.

5.7 Scope and design of dispute resolution system: The scheme has impartial and accessible mechanisms in place for resolving complaints and conflicts.

6.12 Balanced participation: The scheme ensures that consultation processes enable participation from a cross-section of stakeholders.

6.15 Balanced decision-making: Stakeholders can see that their views are represented in decision-making.

6.16 Consensus decision-making: Decision-making processes about the content of the standard are transparent and aim for consensus.

7.15 Responsibility for outsourcing: The quality and integrity of outsourced assurance activities is maintained.

7.17 Impartiality and conflicts of interest: Risks to the integrity of assurance are managed.

7.18 Impartiality in the assessment: Clients are supported to improve their practices without compromising the impartiality of assessments.

7.19 Impartiality of interpreters and technical experts: Interpreters and technical experts act impartially.

7.20 Impartial decision-making: Multiple personnel in decision-making strengthens impartiality.

7.21 Oversight mechanism: The scheme owner ensures that assurance for the scheme is competent, and assessments are accurate.

7.22 Independence of oversight: There is independent oversight of the scheme's assurance.

7.23 Authority for oversight: The oversight mechanism has the authority to maintain the integrity of assurance.
Reliability

A credible sustainability system provides trustworthy assessments of users’ performance

A credible sustainability system designs its tools so that these can be consistently implemented and assessed. It ensures assessments of users’ sustainability performance are competent and accurate, and that these assessments support any claims it allows users to make.

Relevant requirements

2.1 Management system: The management system supports high-quality, consistent, and transparent implementation of the scheme.

2.2 Responsibility for systems components: There are clear lines of responsibility for implementing and maintaining policies and procedures.

2.3 Transition periods: Clients and external partners have adequate time and notice to comply with any new requirements.

2.5 Risk management: The scheme owner actively manages threats to the integrity of its scheme.

2.6 Contractual measures: The scheme owner uses contractual measures to manage risks to the integrity of its scheme.

2.7 Personnel competency: Staff and external partners are competent.

4.3 Data quality and integrity: The scheme owner controls the quality and integrity of the data and information it manages.

4.4 Records and document control: The scheme owner controls the integrity of documents and records.

4.5 Data governance: Ownership and governance of data is clear.

4.6 Data confidentiality: Confidential and proprietary data is secure.

4.7 Data legality: Scheme data and information can be used effectively.

6.1 Standards policies and procedures: The scheme owner ensures that its development and maintenance of standards is predictable and consistent.

6.14 Feasibility assessment: The scheme owner assesses the feasibility and value of the standard.

6.18 Local applicability: The standard is applicable across the range of contexts within its scope.

6.19 Contextual relevance: The standard is relevant in the contexts where it is applied, based in part on input from relevant stakeholders.

6.20 Interpretation and implementation guidance: The standard is consistently interpreted and applied across its scope.

6.21 Standards equivalence: Other standards recognised by the scheme are meaningfully equivalent to the scheme’s standard.

7.1 Assurance model: The scheme has an assurance model that is fit for purpose.

7.2 Traceability: The scheme’s approach to traceability is fit for purpose.
7.3 Assurance policies and procedures: The scheme owner has documented operating policies and procedures that support consistent implementation of the assurance system.

7.4 Public information on assurance: Stakeholders have access to relevant information about how the assurance system operates.

7.6 Assessment methodology: The scheme owner has designed each type of assessment for consistent implementation.

7.7 Risk-based assessment: The intensity of assurance activities is informed by the level of risk presented.

7.8 Sampling protocol: Sampling implemented during assessments is robust and consistent.

7.9 Decision-making protocol: Non-conformities are determined consistently.

7.10 Remediation of non-conformities: The remediation of non-conformities is robust, consistent and aligned with the scheme's theory of change.

7.11 Group assessment: Assessment of groups and their internal management systems is robust and consistent.

7.12 Group non-conformities: Consequences of non-conformities for group members and group management are robust and consistent.

7.13 Assurance equivalence: The assurance results of other schemes that are recognised by the scheme can be trusted.

7.14 Internal audits: Assurance providers are competent to carry out assessments for the scheme.

7.15 Responsibility for outsourcing: The quality and integrity of outsourced assurance activities is maintained.

7.16 Competency evaluation: Assessment personnel remain competent.

7.17 Impartiality and conflicts of interest: Risks to the integrity of assurance are managed.

7.18 Impartiality in the assessment: Clients are supported to improve their practices without compromising the impartiality of assessments.

7.19 Impartiality of interpreters and technical experts: Interpreters and technical experts act impartially.

7.20 Impartial decision-making: Multiple personnel in decision-making strengthens impartiality.

7.21 Oversight mechanism: The scheme owner ensures that assurance for the scheme is competent, and assessments are accurate.

7.22 Independence of oversight: There is independent oversight of the scheme's assurance.

7.23 Authority for oversight: The oversight mechanism has the authority to maintain the integrity of assurance.

7.24 Competence of oversight personnel: Oversight staff are competent to assess scheme assurance.

7.25 Accreditation: Accreditation bodies meet industry standards for competence.

7.26 Proxy accreditation: The scheme owner ensures that any proxy accreditation is reliable.

8.7 Misuse of claims: The scheme owner mitigates the misuse of claims.

8.9 Responsibility for claims system: The scheme owner is responsible for the role that external partners play in the claims system.
Truthfulness

A credible sustainability system’s claims and communications can be trusted.

A credible sustainability system substantiates its claims. Any claims the system or its users make are clear, relevant, and can be checked. They enable customers and other stakeholders to make informed choices. The scope and design of the system is accurately reflected in any claims, ensuring these are not misleading. Claims about sustainability impacts are backed up with data and evidence that is publicly available.

Relevant requirements

5.6 Remediation: Stakeholders can rely on the scheme to act in line with its defined role in remediation.

7.1 Assurance model: The scheme has an assurance model that is fit for purpose.

7.2 Traceability: The scheme’s approach to traceability is fit for purpose.

8.1 Claims policies and procedures: The scheme owner has documented policies and procedures that ensure the claims system is implemented consistently.

8.2 Public information on claims: Stakeholders have access to relevant information about how the claims system operates.

8.3 Quality of allowed claims: Allowed claims are clear, relevant, and accurate.

8.4 Substantiation of claims: Allowed claims are substantiated.

8.5 Claims approval: The scheme owner controls claims made by clients.

8.6 Supporting information: Stakeholders can find more information when claims are made by the scheme’s clients.

8.7 Misuse of claims: The scheme owner mitigates the misuse of claims.

8.8 Mechanism for reporting misuse: Stakeholders can report the misuse of claims.

8.9 Responsibility for claims system: The scheme owner is responsible for the role that external partners play in the claims system.

Continual improvement

A credible sustainability system keeps improving

A credible sustainability system regularly reviews its objectives, its strategies, and the performance of its tools and system. It evaluates the impacts and outcomes of its activities. It applies the lessons learned to improve. It responds to new evidence, stakeholder input, and external changes, adapting its strategies to improve its impacts and remain fit for purpose.

Relevant requirements

1.5 Responsibility for theory of change: There are clear lines of responsibility for developing and maintaining the theory of change.
1.8 Review of the theory of change: The theory of change remains relevant over time.

2.1 Management system: The management system supports high-quality, consistent, and transparent implementation of the scheme.

2.2 Responsibility for system components: There are clear lines of responsibility for implementing and maintaining policies and procedures.

2.3 Transition periods: Clients and external partners have adequate time and notice to comply with any new requirements.

2.5 Risk management: The scheme owner actively manages threats to the integrity of its scheme.

3.1 Guiding framework for monitoring, evaluation, and learning system: The scheme owner has a guiding framework that underpins its monitoring, evaluation, and learning system.

3.2 Monitoring, evaluation, and learning system objectives: The scheme owner has monitoring, evaluation, and learning objectives that are clearly defined.

3.3 Evaluative questions: The monitoring, evaluation, and learning system answers priority evaluative questions.

3.4 Monitoring, evaluation, and learning policies and procedures: The scheme owner has procedures to guide consistent and effective implementation of the monitoring, evaluation, and learning system.

3.7 Reporting and sharing analysis: The scheme and its stakeholders have access to relevant analysis.

3.8 Quality of analysis: Publicly shared outputs are relevant and of good quality.

3.9 Learning and improvement: The scheme owner uses outputs from its monitoring, evaluation, and learning activities to adapt its strategies, to improve scheme implementation and scheme integrity, remaining fit for purpose.

3.10 Reporting and sharing improvements: Stakeholders have access to information about how the scheme is improving.

4.1 Data and information management system: The scheme owner manages its data and information so that it can be used effectively.

4.2 Data and information sources: The scheme owner has access to sufficient data to gain insights about sustainability performance and scheme integrity.

5.2 Opportunities for stakeholder input: Stakeholders have a range of opportunities to contribute to the scheme.

6.6 Stakeholder input: The scheme owner responds to stakeholder input.

6.8 Data informing review: The scheme owner has an informed picture of the effectiveness of the standard and where this can be improved.

6.9 Non-substantive changes: The scheme owner can easily make non-substantive changes to the standard.

7.14 Internal audits: Assurance providers are competent to carry out assessments for the scheme.