Findings from 2019 review of the ISEAL Credibility Principles

Introduction

In 2013, ISEAL launched the *Principles for Credible and Effective Sustainability Standards Systems* (Credibility Principles) – a set of core principles that provide an international reference for defining the foundations of credible practices for sustainability standards. They are a means for communicating the core values that lie behind credible standards and have also served as a reference point for interpreting ISEAL's Codes of Good Practice and for framing the desired outcomes of Code requirements. The Credibility Principles were developed through an extensive global consultation with the guidance of an international multi-stakeholder Steering Committee.

In 2019, ISEAL carried out a review of the Credibility Principles. The review aimed to:

- determine if the Credibility Principles require revision

- understand how the Credibility Principles have been used and adopted

- ensure the best approach to communicating the Credibility Principles to meet stakeholder needs

- understand changes in the landscape and trends

- understand usability of the Credibility Principles and any possible changes to scope or objectives

The outcome of the review determined that there is a need to revise the Credibility Principles, which will take place in 2020. This document details the activities carried out as part of the review and the findings.

Review activities

In reviewing the Credibility Principles, ISEAL conducted activities including:

- discussions with key stakeholder groups including ISEAL Stakeholder Council, ISEAL Technical Committee and Indian-based staff of standards organisations

- externally commissioned research on the current landscape of frameworks used to evaluate credible sustainability standards

- an online consultation regarding the use and relevance of the Credibility Principles

- interviews with members of the Steering Committee for the development of the principles

- findings from analysis of the ISEAL Codes of Good Practice

Key findings

Key findings from the review include:

- the Credibility Principles have continued relevance and can play an important role in raising awareness and improving credible practice in a growing and diversifying landscape of sustainability standards and tools

- the approach to updating the principles should ensure they remain a useful and effective communications tool; this will require some improvements to format, presentation and language

- the scope of application should be extended to include both sustainability standards and other types of sustainability systems and the broader relevance of the principles should be highlighted

- some content requires updating, and additional content should be considered (some areas identified for consideration included data quality and added value for users)

- guidance on the application of the principles (or case studies illustrating their application) should be supplementary to the principles and more easily refreshed and adapted than the principles themselves

- that the Credibility Principles are not intended to be used as a normative reference should be emphasised

- the objective of the Credibility Principles should be directly related to the purpose of ISEAL as an organisation and it should be clearer that the principles represent intended outcomes of the ISEAL Codes

Decision to revise the Credibility Principles

The findings of the review informed the ISEAL Technical Committee's decision to proceed to revision of the Credibility Principles. The ISEAL Board has approved the revision process that will be carried out in 2020. Read more about the revision here.

Contact

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