SEG ISEAL Communications Policy

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on external communications to the SEG Community to be compatible with ISEAL membership requirements.

2. Applicability

2.1 This policy is to be applied from the date at the top and bottom of this document.

2.2 This policy shall apply to:

a) All forms of communication, i.e. printed documents, electronic, published on websites, Twitter, Facebook and other social media, letters, external emails.
b) All 'external communications', i.e. to any person or organisation outside of SEG employees and SEG Leadership Team
c) Members of the SEG Board, SEG standard certificate holders and SEG members (here after termed the 'SEG Community').

3. Wording Policy

3.1 To be compliant with the ISEAL Member Requirements and ISEAL Claims Credibility Good Practice Guide, great care must be taken in wording used in our external communications with regards to:

a) Our ISEAL membership, and what it means
b) Claims about the effectiveness of the SEG programme – particularly about specific achievements of the SEG standard and the supporting system
c) Other ISEAL members

3.2 What cannot be stated

3.2.1 Other ISEAL Members

a) Mention of other ISEAL members should ideally be avoided
b) If they must be mentioned then (1) agreement of the wording should be made with a representative of that organisation, and a record made of that correspondence, and (2) that agreement should be referenced with the ISEAL secretariat in order to aid approval of the communication.

3.2.2 Our ISEAL Membership

The SEG Community <u>cannot say</u>:

a) That SEG is a member or full member of ISEAL
b) That SEG's membership has any equivalence or comparability with any other ISEAL members

3.2.3 Claims about the SEG Standard System

Claims cannot be made about the effect or impact of the SEG standard (or associated and supporting systems) that cannot be supported with evidence.

3.3 What can be stated

3.3.1 Our ISEAL Membership

We can:

a) Say that we 'are an Associate member' of ISEAL'
b) Claim to 'have been assessed against the baseline criteria of ISEAL's Codes of Good Practice'
c) Claim to be 'working to continually improve our system by taking part in ISEAL's learning, collaboration and innovation activities'.

3.3.2 Claims about the SEG Standard System

Claims can only be made about the impact of the SEG standard and its supporting system that can be verified through evidence. Some claims will be independently verified as per clause 8.5 in the ISEAL Impacts Code.

3.3.3 Other ISEAL Members

Other ISEAL members can only be referenced when (1) agreement of the wording has been made with a representative of that organisation and a record made of that agreement and (2) that reference approved with the ISEAL secretariat.

4. Procedure

The following procedure shall be applied to all communications:

4.1 SEG Communications

SEG personnel shall observe the following:

a) All SEG developed external communications are to be screened by the SEG standard owner, David Bunt <u>and</u> the SEG Head of Communications, Norbert Jeronimus
b) No external communication is to be published without the approval of both of them
c) They will review the communication to ensure compliance with the wording policy above
d) Where there is any doubt or ambiguity, SEG will consult with the ISEAL secretariat on the suitability of the wording of a communication. If there is still doubt, or there is no reply in the required time, the uncertain wording will not be included
e) Where there are potential conflicts with another organisation, SEG will consult and seek guidance from the SEG secretariat on how to best manage that conflict and how to word any external communications.

4.2 SEG Community Communications

Members of the SEG Community shall observe the following:

a) Any reference to SEG's ISEAL membership shall comply with section 3. Wording Policy, above
b) If in doubt, it must first be approved by <u>either</u> the SEG standard owner, David Bunt <u>or</u> the SEG Head of Communications, Norbert Jeronimus
c) No member shall refer to other members of ISEAL unless it is in relation to their own relationship with that organisation.

5. Guidance to SEG Community Members

5.1 This policy will be translated into French, Dutch and German within 2 weeks of its publication.

5.2 It will be distributed to members of the SEG Community by email and published on our website in the SEG Standard System.

5.3 For any queries or further guidance, please contact the SEG standard owner, David Bunt, or the SEG Head of Communications, Norbert Jeronimus.
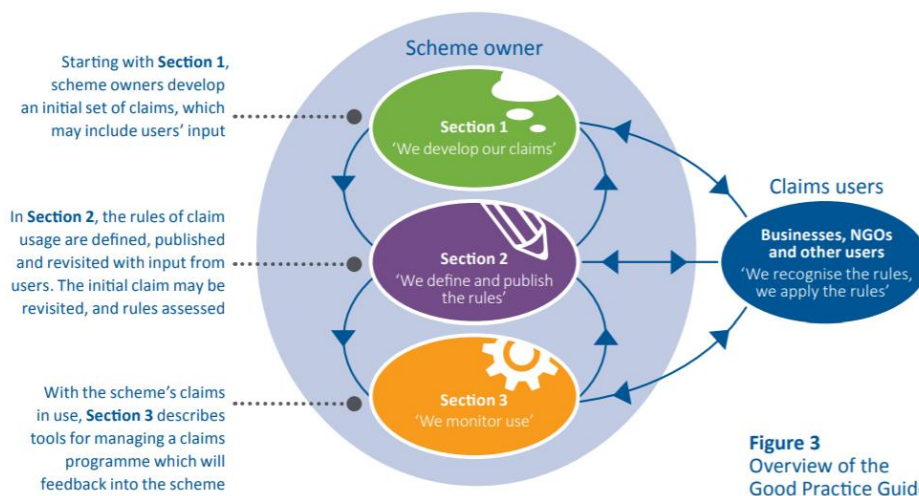
6. Claims

6.1 A claim is defined as (1) a message used to set apart and promote a product, business or service with reference to one or more of the three pillars of sustainability, i.e. social, economic and/or environmental or (2) the impact of a sustainability programme.

6.2 Any claims shall be made in keeping with the ISEAL Impacts Code and the ISEAL Claims Credibility Good Practice Guide

6.3 SEG Community members shall read and understand both before making claims in their external communications

6.4 The main objective of the Claims Credibility Good Practice Guide is to improve the credibility of claims about sustainability standards systems, to lead to greater uptake and trust in those claims. It is neatly conveyed in Figure 3 of the Guide:

Starting with **Section 1**, scheme owners develop an initial set of claims, which may include users' input

In **Section 2**, the rules of claim usage are defined, published and revisited with input from users. The initial claim may be revisited, and rules assessed

With the scheme's claims in use, **Section 3** describes tools for managing a claims programme which will feedback into the scheme

Scheme owner

Section 1
'We develop our claims'

Section 2
'We define and publish the rules'

Section 3
'We monitor use'

Claims users

Businesses, NGOs and other users
'We recognise the rules, we apply the rules'

Figure 3
Overview of the Good Practice Guide

6.5 We have made some immediate changes to the SEG Claims and Labelling Guide and published on the SEG website. In 2020, as we continue to progress the ISEAL programme, we will continue to review the SEG Claims and Labelling Guide to apply the ISEAL Claims Credibility Good Practice Guide with more thoroughness.

6.6 We have changed the content of the SEG Standard Certificate to reflect suitable claims, and the content of covering letters to certificate holders to make it clearer about what claims can be made.

6.7 We present the SEG Standard Overview as an example of a series of claims made about the SEG standard that has been approved by ISEAL.

6.8 We will write to all SEG certificate holders to provide updated clarity on claims they can make within 31 days of the publication of this Policy.

7. Implementation

7.1 This policy shall be communicated according to a separate Implementation Plan. The SEG Community will be reminded about the policy and all SEG standard system documents annually, or sooner as updates are published.

7.2 Breaches of this Communications Policy

Breaches of this policy are to be considered as very serious. They have the risk of damaging the reputations of SEG, ISEAL and other ISEAL members. They will be managed according to our Disciplinary Procedure.

8. Review

8.1 This policy shall be reviewed by 31 May 2022, or sooner according to feedback and experience.