

SSC Steering Group Meeting

Date:	26 July 2023 09:00-11:00 (BST)
Attendees:	10 attendees (7 Steering Group; 3 Secretariat)

Summary – agenda, notes, decisions

1. Open / agenda

The Secretariat provided an update on the budget and actions since the last meeting.

2. Roadmap and strategy next steps following the all member workshop on 17 July 2023

The Steering Group reflected that the all-member workshop was a very positive and well structured experience. It was discussed that there is a large disparity in the level of experience between SSC members, with member companies at different stages of their sustainability journey, highlighting the need for alignment and ‘consistency’ as valuable assets of the SSC. The Codes were described as the SSC’s most significant assets, which set the SSC apart, and their creation was a great achievement in reaching agreement on a variety of complex issues. Based on the outputs of the workshop, a summary was shared with a proposed structure of strategic focus areas and activities for the SSC.

- It was noted that there were a large number of topics discussed during the workshop, and to be effective it is essential that the SSC can focus its activities on a smaller number where it can help drive real impact.
- It was agreed that the Codes need to be reviewed / revised and always need to stay relevant and up to date. This process should involve all members. A small working group should be established to review the content of the Codes including terminology (e.g., responsibly sourced, sustainably sourced).
- The initial structure for the workplan was discussed and agreed. Priority focus areas should include the Codes, guidance on other topics, and capacity building / upskilling where appropriate. These areas will link to collaborative and engagement work with other actors. Advocacy and innovation are of interest but are lower priority areas in the short-term. The Secretariat should proceed to develop further structure to these focus areas and a list of priority activities for review and refinement.

3. Membership – application, compliance, Affiliates

Process flows were proposed for membership applications and compliance. Affiliate membership terms were proposed following the decision at the previous Steering Group meeting and discussions with stakeholders and existing members in scope.

Regarding membership applications, it was felt that the applicant should provide written answers to a set of questions, and these criteria should form the basis for Steering Group assessment and approval.

There was some discussion around tiered membership to reflect the stage of the sustainability journey, but overall it was felt this is contrary to the inclusiveness that the SSC wants to promote.

- It was agreed that the Steering Group should approve applications based on objective criteria including prospective applicant’s alignment with the SSC scope and remit. The membership application flow should be revised to clearly reflect this and added to the Terms of Reference (ToR).
- It was noted that multiple organisations have expressed interest in joining the SSC but until the application process is finalised and the ToR updated, these applications should all be put on hold.
- It was agreed that the membership conditions in the ToR should include a requirement for timebound compliance with the Codes, and positively representing the SSC externally.
- The proposed compliance flow and Affiliate membership terms were approved and should be added to the ToR.

4. Implementation Report

The questions, outputs, and outcomes from the 2017 and 2020 Implementation Reports were reviewed following the previous Steering Group meeting. The consultancy who performed the 2020 Report was also approached for a quote. Issues around cost, scope, and timing (in the context of impending change) were raised. More streamlined reporting options were suggested, such as a self-reported questionnaire with supporting evidence.

- It was agreed that an additional membership condition should be added to the ToR regarding the requirement for a timely response to information requests for the Implementation Report.
- The scope of the Implementation Report should be reduced. The exact form, scope and purpose will be confirmed at a future meeting.
- It was decided that the Implementation Report should follow the work on the SSC’s strategy, workplan, and membership processes. It was suggested that the data collection could commence after a relaunch in early 2024.