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Procedure for Development and Modification of RSB Standards

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Objective and summary

The objective of **RSB-PRO-15-001** is to describe how RSB standards are developed and modified. The process outlined in this document is intended to be open and transparent in compliance with the ISEAL (International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labeling) Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards.

The ultimate authority for approving development and modification of RSB standards is the RSB's multi-stakeholder Assembly of Delegates based on recommendations from the RSB Board of Directors. The Secretariat is empowered to handle minor modifications and is the entity that oversees the standards development and modification process, including consultation, field testing, and preparation of draft documents, in consultation with the Standards Working Group.

Comments on and review of this document

Any party can make comments on the procedures described in this document by writing to the RSB Secretariat (info@rsb.org). The Secretariat will undertake a regular review of this document every five years, or earlier if deemed necessary by the Secretariat or RSB Board of Directors. The review shall take into account any comments received, the actual working practices of the Secretariat, and any changes to the ISEAL Code of Good Practice.

Main changes from the previous version (RSB-PRO-15-001 version 3.0)

- a. References to the RSB Services Foundation were either removed or replaced by "RSB Secretariat", since the activities of the RSB Services Foundation were transferred to the RSB Secretariat as of February 1, 2014

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PROCEDURES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND MODIFICATION OF RSB STANDARDS

A. Scope

The procedures outlined in this document are valid for all existing and future RSB standards.

RSB standards are documents describing the normative requirements that operators must follow to be certified by an RSB-accredited certification body. They also include definitions of technical terms, including methodologies used to calculate scientific values used in the standards.

B. Proposing a modification or a new standard

A proposal to introduce new standards and/or adapt or modify content of the existing standards can be made by:

- RSB-certified operators,
- Certifying bodies or auditors working with the RSB Standard,
- Accreditation Bodies,
- RSB Secretariat
- Members of the RSB, through RSB Chambers, the RSB Board of Directors (BoD), or the RSB Assembly of Delegates (AoD), or
- The RSB Secretariat based on its own initiative or feedback received from the general public.

A proposal can be made at any time. All proposals shall be made in written form to the RSB Secretariat, and shall clearly:

- a. identify the specific portion of the standard to be modified or the type of standard to be introduced;
- b. outline the rationale for the proposal and the stakeholder groups that could potentially be affected by the proposal; and
- c. where relevant reference background papers and, previous decisions or discussions by the RSB.

A specific feedback form is available for stakeholders to submit proposals for modification (See Annex I).

C. Secretariat evaluation of proposals

The Secretariat shall review and evaluate all proposals. The Secretariat shall identify if these require a minor, interim or major modification as outlined below.

D. Minor modifications process

Minor modifications are modifications to the standards such as improving or clarifying the language or providing guidance notes that do not fundamentally change the content of a criterion or principle. The Secretariat may make minor modifications to standards at its discretion. The Executive Secretary of the Secretariat shall approve the modifications and notify the Chair of the RSB Board of the modifications. The Secretariat shall distribute the new standard with a summary of modifications to RSB Members, the ISEAL Alliance, the European Commission and publish it on the RSB website. RSB Members may object to minor modification within one week (seven days) from the publication date. In absence of objection, modifications will be considered approved.

The RSB Secretariat shall distribute the new standard with a summary of modifications to participating operators, certification bodies, accreditation bodies and training coordinators.

E. Interim modifications of standards

Interim modifications of RSB standards are quickly required to facilitate the immediate implementation of the RSB standard and certification system. Such modifications may be approved by the BoD upon recommendation by the Secretariat and shall be considered as interim measures of limited duration. RSB Members may object to interim modifications within one week (seven days) from the publication date. In absence of objection, interim modifications will be considered approved.

If relevant, interim modifications should go through the full consultation process for permanent inclusion in corresponding standards and procedures no longer than 24 months after approval by the BoD. Interim modifications of standards are described in the RSB Standard on Requirements for Adaptation during the Start-up Phase (RSB-STD-80-001).

F. Major modifications and new standards development process

Major modifications are modifications of the standards that change the definition of a term or content of a requirement, criterion or principle and thus require a formal consultation and approval by the Assembly of Delegates. This process is described below.

1. Work plan for major standards modifications and new standards development

At least once a year, the Secretariat shall present to the RSB Board of Directors (BoD) a work plan describing the required developments and modifications of standards. This work plan may build upon recommendations received from a broad range of stakeholders (See Section B). It shall be in line with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice and include a brief description of the standard(s) concerned by the modifications, its scope, objectives and rationale.

If the Secretariat deems that a proposal requires urgent action, the Secretariat may ask the Board for approval of a new work plan outside of this yearly schedule. In the interim, the Secretariat will propose to issue an interim modification in accordance with the process described in Section E.

2. Standards Working Group (SWG)

In order to support the Secretariat with major standards modification or new standards development project, the RSB Board of Directors may nominate a Standards Working Group (SWG) to oversee the standards development and modification process described in this document, and make recommendations to the Board of Directors. The SWG shall include two to seven RSB Members (one max per chamber), independent experts (outside RSB membership) and representatives from the Secretariat. The SWG shall strive to achieve a balanced representation of opinions and expertise in order to anticipate divergences, which are normally observed at the chamber level, and thus consolidate potential consensus.

A Board member shall serve as the Chair of this Working Group. In developing its recommendations, the SWG shall strive to achieve consensus. If established, the Terms of Reference of the SWG shall be available from the RSB Secretariat upon request.

3. Development of draft Terms of Reference

After the RSB BoD has approved the work plan presented by the Secretariat, the Secretariat shall develop a Terms of Reference, which describe:

- the scope, objectives, justification, risks of implementing standards modifications/developments,
- an assessment of risks and unintended consequences in implementing the standard and how to mitigate for these,
- the timeline, and
- the consultation and decision-making process, field-testing requirements and advisory services (e.g. consultants and/or a technical committee) needed for the consultation.

It shall also identify key stakeholders, opportunities for stakeholders to engage in the consultation, and participation goals. The Terms of Reference can cover more than one standards modification or development at a time and should follow ISEAL's Code of Good Practice.

The Terms of Reference shall be reviewed by the SWG before public comment and approval by the BoD.

4. Communication of standards development process

After approval of the work plan by the BoD, the decision to modify or develop new standards and the draft Terms of Reference shall be officially announced to all RSB Members, on the RSB website and copied to the ISEAL Alliance. The RSB Secretariat shall inform participating operators, certification bodies, accreditation bodies and training coordinators.

The announcement shall include:

- a brief, clear description of the scope and objectives of the proposed standard;
- the justification of the need for modification(s)/development(s);
- the contact point at the RSB for further information;
- the estimated timeline for completion of the proposed standard; and
- a statement that the process will be in compliance with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards.

The Secretariat shall also inform each party that recommended standards modification(s) or development(s) what the action (or non-action) on their proposal will be and the rationale for the decision.

The draft Terms of Reference shall be open for stakeholder comment for a two-week period. The Secretariat shall receive all comments and decide if they would require major or minor changes to the Terms of Reference. Minor changes may be incorporated by the Secretariat at its sole discretion. The BoD shall approve major changes. The final Terms of Reference shall be published on the RSB website once approved by the BoD.

5. Preparation of consultation documents

The RSB Secretariat and the SWG shall prepare relevant documents, including the proposed standard, for consultation. Technical advisors (consultants or technical committees) and users of the RSB standards (e.g. Participating Operators, certification bodies, etc.) may provide input into the development of these draft

documents. The BoD shall approve the composition and Terms of Reference of any such groups or mandate the SWG to approve it.

The Secretariat shall recommend a date for when the updated / new standard will come into force (usually 3-6 months to allow for translation and, if necessary, the development of indicators of compliance with the standard of concern). The Secretariat shall also clarify the implications for currently-certified operators and recommend a procedure for how they can maintain certification after the new standard becomes effective.

6. *Public Consultation*

Public consultation shall be organized for any development or major revision of the following standards¹:

- RSB Principles & Criteria (RSB-STD-01-001)
- RSB Greenhouse Gas Methodology (RSB-STD-01-003-01)
- RSB Fossil Fuel Baseline Calculation Methodology (RSB-STD-01-003-02)
- RSB Glossary of Terms (RSB-STD-10-001)
- RSB Standard for certification of biofuels based on end-of-life-products, by-products and residues (RSB-STD-01-010)

Public consultation is not required for any other RSB Standard, Procedure or Guidance document. The consultation documents shall be posted to the RSB website, and circulated to stakeholders and interested parties, for a public comment period of at least 60 days. During this time, the general public shall be free to comment on the proposed standard. The Secretariat shall also proactively seek out key stakeholders, ensure that disadvantaged groups are able to participate, and consider different ways that stakeholders can participate in the consultation based on ISEAL's Code of Good Practice.

After the public comment period has ended the Secretariat shall post a synthesis of comments received to the RSB website without attributing their origin. During this process, the Secretariat, in consultation with the SWG, may decide to disregard certain comments, for example, when these are not relevant to the scope of consultation, or if similar suggestions were already discussed and decided upon in the past. The synthesis of comments received shall include a justification describing why certain comments were disregarded.

If there are major objections to the revised proposal, the Secretariat, in consultation with the SWG, shall endeavor to suggest an improved draft and post it on the website for a second period of public comment of 60 days. The second public comment period may be shortened but shall be at least 30 days. Justification for the shortened comment period shall be publicly explained (for example, on the RSB website).

If there are no major objections to the content, the Secretariat, in consultation with the SWG, can decide not to hold a second round of consultation. Any other justifications to cancel a second round of consultation shall be presented to the BoD.

¹ Following ISEAL's Code of Good Practice, one or two rounds of public consultation shall be organized for "all standards that promote improvement in social and environmental practices and that are operating at the international, regional, national or sub-national level".

After the second public comment period, the RSB Secretariat shall post a synthesis of comments received to the RSB website. Based on the comments the Secretariat, in consultation with the SWG, shall revise the proposed standard in preparation of RSB Members consultation and final approval. During this process the Secretariat, in consultation with the SWG, may decide to disregard certain comments, for example, when these are not relevant to the scope of consultation, or if similar suggestions were already discussed and decided upon in the past. The synthesis of comments received shall include a justification describing why certain comments were disregarded.

7. RSB Chamber Consultation

After the second round of public consultation, the RSB Secretariat shall integrate the comments received during the public consultation into the draft documents and open a consultation period for all RSB Chambers to make comments on the proposed standard. Such consultation period may include in-person meetings, teleconferences and email exchanges.

Chambers shall seek consensus on the proposed standard with or without modifications. If consensus cannot be achieved, additional rounds of Chamber consultation may be organized by the Secretariat, followed by a voting procedure whenever required (See *RSB Articles of Association*). Alternatively, a Chamber may decide to propose several options to the decision of the Assembly of Delegates.

After the Chamber consultation, the Secretariat and the SWG shall revise the proposed standard to reflect the comments received during Chamber consultation. The final draft shall be sent to the BoD for review.

8. Optional field testing

Based on the recommendation of the BoD or SWG, a field test of the revised or new standard may occur either during or after the consultation process to understand its applicability in one or more real-world operations. RSB Secretariat should execute the field test, pending sufficient resources; RSB Secretariat will oversee the process.

A summary report shall be produced from the test that includes:

- a. a description of the project in which the pilot was conducted,
- b. a statement as to whether the proposed standard is practical and applicable in a real-world setting; and
- c. recommendations for further modifications to the draft standards to incorporate the findings of the field test.

9. BoD recommendation for approval

After consultation and field testing, the Secretariat and the SWG shall present the proposed standard along with a summary of the consultation process, comments, any field test results, to the BoD. The BoD shall confirm to the Assembly of Delegates that the proposed standard was developed in compliance with this procedure and ISEAL code of conduct.

10. Approval process

The final recommendation of the BoD on the proposed standard shall be presented to the RSB Assembly of Delegates (AoD) along with accompanying materials as described above. The Assembly may then:

- a. approve the proposed standard as written;
- b. approve the proposed standard with amendments;
- c. reject the proposed standard; or
- d. request the RSB Secretariat / SWG to continue to work on the standard through another round of member consultation ;

If the AoD approves the proposed standard, the Secretariat shall publish the final standard including its effective date and implications for currently-certified operators, and inform the SWG, RSB members, and other stakeholders.

If the Assembly requests a further review process or significant modifications, it shall state the reasons and may suggest what steps it considers necessary in order to address its concerns. The Secretariat/SWG may submit a proposal to the BoD on how to address the issues raised by the AoD.

1. New standards development

A proposal to create an additional standard is treated as a major modification and follows the approval and development process as described below.

G. Automatic reviews of standards

Even if no proposals for making modifications have been put forward, RSB standards are automatically reviewed every five years to comply with ISEAL's Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards. These automatic reviews shall follow the consultation and approval procedures described below for major modifications. The official review cycle should be included in the standards at the time of their publication.

H. Other Secretariat duties regarding standards-setting

The Secretariat shall maintain all relevant written records related to the process including proposals, draft and final standards, consultation documents, parties consulted, field test results, SWG minutes, and RSB Board decisions for five years. Any public document shall remain available upon request for five years.

The Secretariat shall keep the RSB BoD and AoD informed of all standards processes and progress through regular updates.

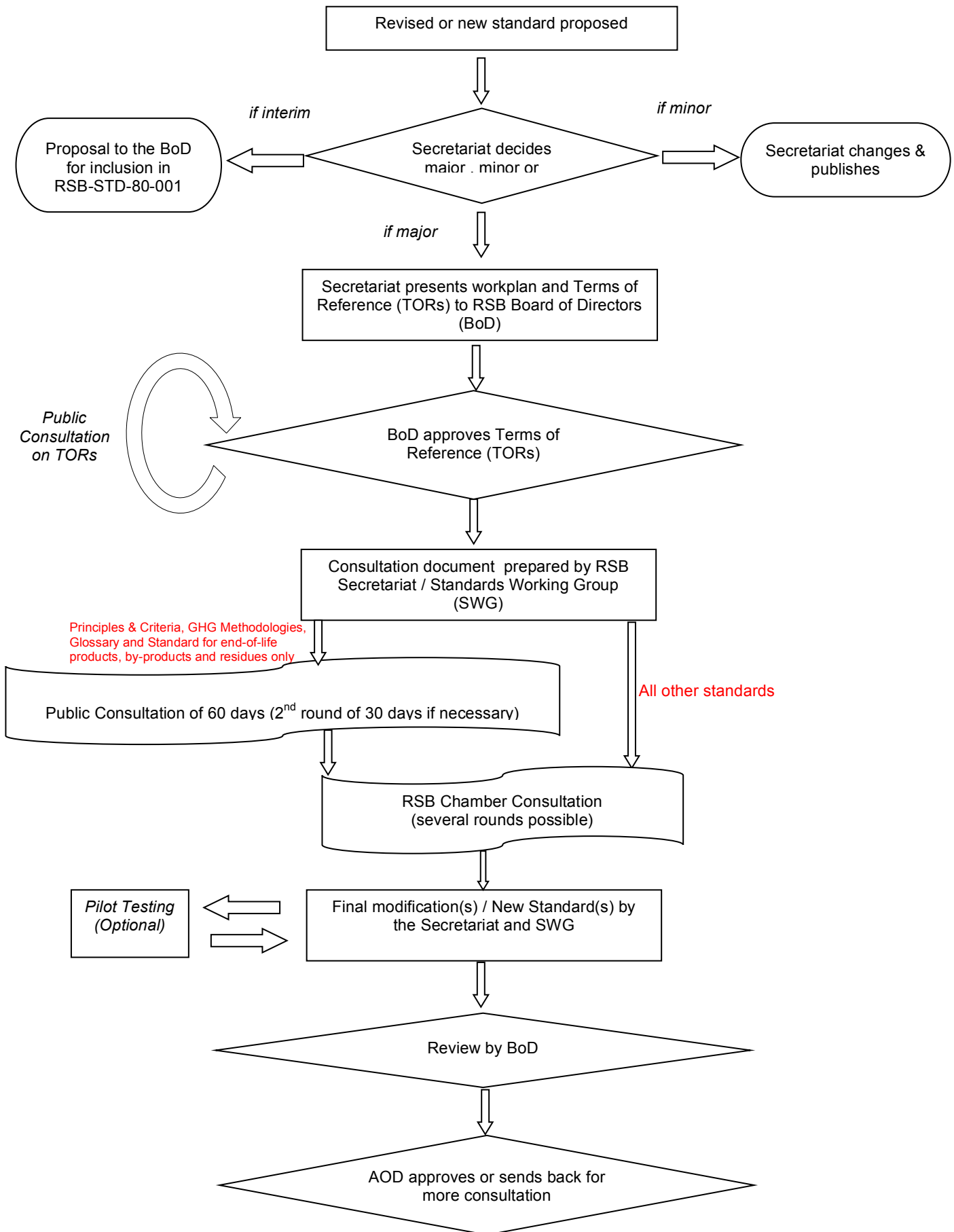


Figure 1: Summary of the Standard Development/Modification Process

ANNEX I – RSB Feedback Form

A. RSB FEEDBACK FORM

Name : Organisation Type: Government / Inter-gov
Organisation :
Contact details (please include email address): RSB Member
Certified Operator
Accredited Auditor

Nature of the feedback: RSB Standard

WHICH RSB DOCUMENT DOES YOUR FEEDBACK REFER TO?

Example : RSB-STD-01-001 (Principles and Criteria)

WHICH SECTION(S) OF THE DOCUMENT DOES YOUR FEEDBACK REFER TO?

Example: Criterion 10.a; Section G.2.3.1; etc.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ISSUE

Examples:

- The requirement is inapplicable in the context of...
- A new requirement is needed to address...
- The paragraph is in contradiction with...

SUGGESTED TEXT (IF APPLICABLE)

RATIONALE / BACKGROUND

Example: Reference in literature, report, regulation, other standard, etc.

GUIDANCE ON IMPLEMENTATION (IF APPLICABLE)

Example:

- This requirement shall only be required from large scale operators
- Specific guidance to auditors is needed to accompany this modification
- This modification also needs to be included in the RSB Tool

ADDITIONAL REMARKS

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- I want my feedback to remain anonymous (RSB might publish a summary or excerpts from the consultation)
- I want a direct reply from RSB Secretariat (all feedback are considered for inclusion in revised versions)
- I want to receive information about RSB Membership and/or RSB Certification
- I want to subscribe to the RSB Newsletter

Thank you for your contribution to the improvement of the RSB Standard!

Please return this form

Via post:

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Switzerland

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