

## Evidensia Advisory Council

### Terms of reference

June 2025

#### OVERALL PURPOSE

Evidensia's mission is to put evidence at the center of corporate sustainability decisions. We aim to ensure credible research influences corporate and government choices on sustainable production and sourcing. We do this through the Evidensia platform ([www.evidensia.eco](http://www.evidensia.eco)), which provides easy access to research and insights, as well as through outreach, events, and partnerships. Our activities include public learning events, presentations, roundtables, briefings, and research projects.

To ensure that Evidensia delivers value to key user groups, it is important that its work be informed regularly by inputs from different stakeholders. This provides a way to gather intelligence, information and perspectives on evidence needs, key issues, concerns, knowledge gaps and so on. Regular interaction with various stakeholders is also important to inform how Evidensia can work in partnership with others to achieve its long-term mission of informing sustainability action with science and evidence. Lastly, Evidensia needs to take external advice to make sure our approach and activities are credible, rigorous, transparent, and effective in meeting our goals (see Annex 1).

The Evidensia Advisory Council provides a space for stakeholder perspectives to help guide our long-term vision. This document outlines its scope, and responsibilities.

#### SCOPE OF THE COUNCIL

The Evidensia Advisory Council is an advisory body that gathers input from key stakeholders involved in market-based sustainability approaches. It helps assess the value and uptake of Evidensia's work, stay informed about evolving evidence needs, and explore partnerships with aligned organisations.

ISEAL leads the council's management and coordination. While the council does not make formal decisions, its recommendations are strongly respected by the Evidensia team, and consensuses between council members are likely to be adopted.

#### TEMPORARY ADVISORY & WORKING GROUPS

The Evidensia programme often needs targeted and time-sensitive advice aligned with project needs or technical subject matter expertise. To accommodate this need, smaller, temporary, advisory/working

groups will be set up throughout the year. Council members will be invited to join to lend their expertise to specific issues.

These advisory or working groups will be convened as required but not more than monthly and not less than quarterly. Series of working group sessions will be time limited, not lasting longer than a year.

### **TERM OF COUNCIL MEMBERS**

It is intended that members of the Council will hold a term of two years to begin with (July 2025 – June 2027). At the end of this term, members will be given the choice to stay on or give up their seat to bring in new members.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF COUNCIL MEMBERS**

The primary expectation from Council members will be to participate in bi-annual meetings of the Evidensia Advisory Council which will be a space for members to:

- discuss progress on Evidensia’s mission, strategy, activities and impact on stakeholders
- provide feedback on the Evidensia platform, activities and engagement including feedback on content and value to stakeholders
- provide intelligence on evidence and impact information needs from the perspective of the organisation and sector they represent
- deliberate on other strategies and activities to improve evidence uptake by key stakeholder groups
- review and approve Evidensia’s overall research approach, methodology and activities

As part of the temporary working groups, Advisory Council members may be approached to support on activities such as:

- volunteer to trial and test any new features that are developed for Evidensia from the standpoint of user value and utility
- provide advice on future direction and business models the Evidensia partnership may explore to ensure sustainability of the platform
- support in identification of key events and communication channels to support Evidensia’s outreach and engagement goals, enabling Evidensia to increase its reach

### **MEMBERSHIP & SELECTION CRITERIA**

The Advisory Council will have 10-15 members who represent diverse stakeholder groups, target audiences and actors working in the space of market-linked sustainability. Members will represent their own views and the interests of the stakeholder group they represent. They do not represent their organisations, though they can present the views of their company or organization.

Membership to the Council is open to individuals who first and foremost have an interest in Evidensia’s goal of using evidence to inform sustainability policy and practice. In addition, the following criteria will guide the nomination and selection of representatives:

- interest in Evidensia’s mission, overall purpose and activities as a platform and partnership at the intersection of research, evidence, and practice

- practical knowledge of market-based sustainability tools and approaches, and/or knowledge of innovations in sustainability systems
- knowledge of, or engagement with, funders and other partners who can expand Evidensia's sphere of influence and the reach of Evidensia's work
- ability to commit time to this Council and its activities on a regular basis as detailed below in 'operations and time commitment'
- availability and ability to work in English

The Evidensia Advisory Council replaces the earlier tri-partite governance model, which included the Stakeholder Council, the Steering Committee, and the Research Council.

### TIME COMMITMENT & OPERATIONS

Council members make a commitment to dedicate sufficient time for the following activities:

- One to two (1-2) Council meetings per year, held virtually unless otherwise agreed. These will be roughly two (2) hours in duration.
- Reading and reviewing material and preparing reflections for discussion ahead of Council meetings
- The possibility of participating in up to 6 additional working group sessions throughout the year.

The minimum commitment in a working year for an advisory council member to attend meetings would be 2 hours (one annual meeting), and the maximum commitment would be up to 10 hours (up to 6 monthly meetings as part of a temporary working group, and attendance of up to two full Advisory Council meetings).

As lead implementation agency, ISEAL will be responsible for developing agendas and leading the Advisory Council meetings. Minutes of each meeting will be shared with the Council.

### RENUMERATION

Members participate on a voluntary basis and shall not be remunerated for serving on the Council except where reimbursement is made in accordance with Evidensia/ISEAL's policy for reasonable expenses incurred while in the service of the Council, e.g., any travel where in-person meetings are desired.

### CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

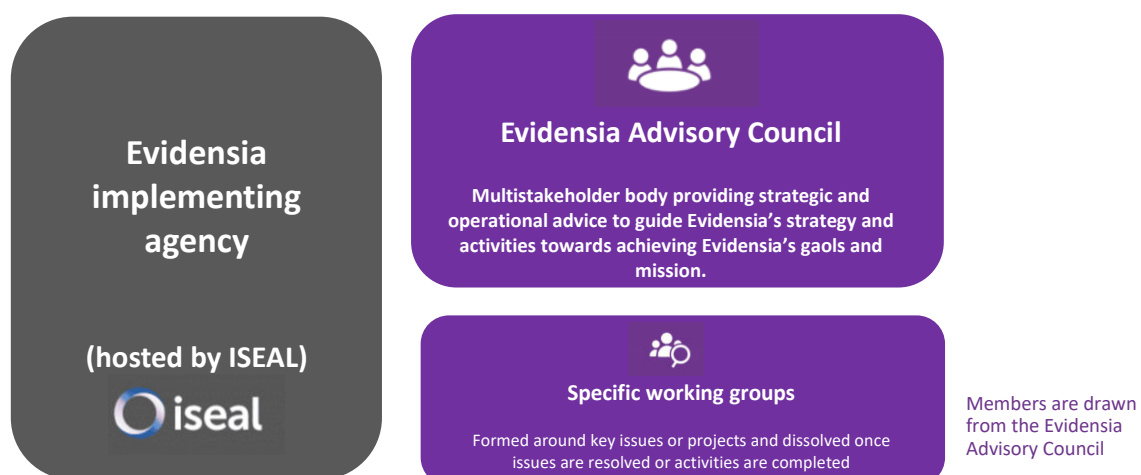
The Advisory Council will operate according to the [Chatham House Rule](#). Accordingly, members will have full authority to share the non-confidential substance of discussions and papers, but they shall not report or attribute the comments of individuals or their affiliations outside of meetings, whether conducted face-to-face or virtually.

Council members are expected to express any suspected conflicts of interest as they arise, and individuals can be excused from the discussion or abstain from participating in decision-making in such an event.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

For queries, please contact Naomi Black, Evidensia lead and ISEAL's Associate Manager, Impacts and Evidence: [naomib@isealalliance.org](mailto:naomib@isealalliance.org)

## ANNEX 1: OVERVIEW OF EVIDENSIA'S GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



## ANNEX 2: DETAILED ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ADVISORY COUNCIL & WORKING GROUPS

Activity type	Implementing agency (ISEAL/Evidensia team)	Advisory Council (AC)	Temporary Working groups (TWG)
1. Evidensia vision, mission and Theory of Change and overall strategy	Co-accountable & implements	Co-accountable & advises	N/A
2.1. Platform regular maintenance	Accountable & implements	N/A	N/A
2.2. Platform enhancement and new features	Accountable & implements	Advises	N/A
3.1. Evidensia research approach and activities	Accountable & implements	Advises	Advises
3.2. New Evidensia systematic review methodology	Accountable & implements	Advises	Advises
4.1. Branding	Accountable & implements	N/A	N/A
4.2. Communications and promotions	Accountable & implements	Supports	Advises
5.1. Regular financial management	Accountable	N/A	N/A
5.2. Fundraising and	Accountable &	Advises & supports	N/A

<b>funding strategy</b>	implements		
<b>5.3. Non-grant income models</b>	Accountable & implements	Advises	Advises
<b>6. Outreach and uptake</b>	Accountable & implements	Supports	Advises
<b>7. Governance</b>	Accountable & implements	N/A	N/A
<b>8. Monitoring and evaluation</b>	Accountable & implements	Supports	Advises

**(Co-)Accountable:** Is accountable for the workstream, holds mandate for key decisions and approvals, ultimate authority on this line of work

**Advises:** provides inputs, ideas and feedback when sought on specific activities in this workstream

**Supports:** has a role in supporting with the implementation of some activities in this workstream, as requested by Implementing Agency

**Implements:** programme delivery team takes charge of implementing activities, once consensus is reached or Implementing Agency has made decision

### ANNEX 3: EXAMPLE SCHEDULE OF ENGAGEMENT

**AC: Advisory Committee WG: Temporary working group**

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
<b>FULL AC</b>	X					X						
<b>TWG SERIES 1</b>		X			X			X			X	
<b>TWG SERIES 2*</b>			X	X	X				X	X	X	
<b>TWG SERIES 3</b>				X							X	

*\* Participants in working group 2 would not participate in other working group series*

### ANNEX 4: EVIDENSIA'S MISSION & THEORY OF CHANGE

**Evidensia's mission:** To put evidence at the heart of sustainability actions and decisions.

Evidensia's goal is to ensure that credible research and evidence positively influences corporate and government decisions regarding sustainable commodity production and sourcing.

Theory of Change:

### Evidensia’s Theory of Change

