

## **SFI External Review Panel Operating Outline January 11, 2024**

*The following represents a set of operating guidelines that the Panel has agreed will remain general, serving primarily to help focus attention on emerging operational issues that we should address directly rather than just “let happen.” In addition to helping Panelists look at important aspects of the Panel’s operation, this document can be shared with potential Panelists or members of the public who inquire as to how the Panel functions.*

### **Operating Year**

The Panel’s annual operating cycle is generally tied to the annual *Sustainable Forestry Progress Report* issued by SFI. Panelists’ terms of office will begin on July 1 and end on June 30. For Work Plan and Budget purposes, the Fiscal Year will be January 1 - December 31 to conform to SFI’s planning and budget cycle.

### **Annual Review Meeting**

To meet the deadlines for release of the Annual Report, the Panel will hold an Annual Review Meeting in the fall, at which time the Panel will:

- \* Review the data, data analysis, interpretations, and draft text of the Report.
- \* Provide comments and suggestions for changes to SFI.
- \* Develop ideas or issues to be included in the Panel’s Letter to the Public (which is included as an integral part of the report.) if a letter is to be included—dependent on format of the report.

### **Annual Letter**

Following the Annual Review Meeting, the Panel will prepare an Annual Letter to the Public (if the SFI progress report format allows), to be published as part of the SFI Annual Progress Report. The Letter will, to the extent possible, represent the full consensus and agreement of the Panel. All Panelists who agree in full with the Letter will agree to have their names and organizational affiliations printed with the Letter. Organizational affiliation shall be listed for identification purposes only, and not to indicate organizational review and/or approval of the Annual Report or the SFI. If agreement on the contents of the Letter cannot be reached, Panelists retain the right to withhold their signature. Panelists may request, if they desire, inclusion of a “minority view” in the Letter if consensus cannot be reached.

### **SFI Annual Conference Meeting**

Typically, the ERP will meet a second time each year during the SFI annual conference which is held in various locations throughout the United States and Canada. The conference provides ERP members with an excellent opportunity to network within the SFI community and gain valuable insights into SFI activities.

**A Panel Business Meeting will typically be held in conjunction with the annual conference meeting, at which time the Panel will:**

- \* Elect Panelists to fill Panel terms in the upcoming year (to begin July 1).
- \* Elect Officers (Chair and 1-2 Vice-Chairs) for the upcoming year.
- \* Review and approve plans for providing staff support (Executive Secretary) in the upcoming year.
- \* Review progress in carrying out the current Work Plan and provide general guidance for the development of a tentative Work Plan and Budget Request for the upcoming year.
- \* The Incoming Chair will appoint a Nominating Committee for the upcoming year.

### **Panel Participation in SFI events.**

Panelists may be invited to participate in SFI meetings, and other events to explain the Panel’s role in providing outside review to the SFI Sustainability Standards and expanding on the Panel views expressed in the Annual Letter. Some of that activity will be centered around the official release of the report, and Panelists who have participated in the prior year’s activities will remain active until the end of the year following the Report’s release so that they can remain officially engaged with the discussions of the past year’s activities.

### **Panel Reports to SFI and the Public**

The Panel may commission or produce reports during the year that are addressed to issues relevant to the SFI Sustainability Standards. All such reports shall be a consensus product of the Panel, representing the views of the Panel as a whole, rather than the views of individual Panelists. When Panelist affiliations are shown, it will be made clear that this is for identification purposes, not to suggest organizational support for Panel positions. Items upon which consensus is impossible may, when appropriate, be presented as unresolved questions within the Panel. The goal of all such reports, however, is to provide readers with those positions upon which the Panel is agreed.

Special issue or subject matter reports will be prepared under the guidance of the Executive Secretary (or other coordinator assigned by the Chair), and, if appropriate, a Task Force assigned by the Chair. Such special studies, particularly if they involve matters of operating procedure within the SFI Sustainability Standards, will be coordinated with the committees, task forces, or staff assigned by SFI to study the issue. The Panel's final report may be in the form of a recommendation to the SFI Board of Directors

### **Field Reviews and Reports**

In carrying out its independent review activities, the Panel may schedule field visits to SFI participants. The primary purpose of such reviews will be to develop insight into the adequacy of SFI Sustainability Standards reporting criteria, performance measures, and procedures. Panelists may, without objection, designate staff members or associates to represent them in a field review. Participating reviewers will prepare a full report for each Field Review, which shall be circulated to the full Panel, the organizations involved in the review, and the relevant SFI committees or task forces.

### **Additional Meetings of the Panel**

The Panel may schedule additional meetings if needed to carry out Panel business. Such meetings shall be at the call of the Chairman. Panelists will be notified in advance of any scheduled meeting, and efforts will be made to schedule meetings when attendance can be maximized. Where feasible, opportunities for telephone or video conferencing will be established for those Panelists who are unable to attend in person. Normally, the Panel will have two (2) full meetings per year, including the Annual Meeting.

### **Work Plan**

The Executive Secretary will develop an Annual Work Plan which, upon review by the entire Panel, will be submitted to SFI as the basis for an annual budget request. Timing of the Work Plan and budget request will be established by the SFI annual planning cycle, to assure that the Panel's proposals are available to SFI when they are needed for review. The Work Plan, once concurred by SFI, will become the basis for Panel activity and the work of the Executive Secretary. Amendments in the Work Plan will be submitted to SFI for review and comment.

### **Budget and Accounting**

SFI may, at its discretion, provide accounting services for the Panel. Fund accounting information will always be available to the Panel and the public.

### **Executive Secretary**

Coordination of Panel activities will be provided by a designated Panelist, or an outside consultant, serving as Executive Secretary. This position functions as a Secretariat to the Panel, providing the staff and supporting services needed to facilitate Panel functions, reports, and activities. Activities are approved by the Panel at its Annual Meeting, and oversight during the year is provided by the Chair. Compensation of the position is provided by SFI under a consulting arrangement suitable to both SFI and the Executive Secretary.

The Executive Secretary will be responsible for maintaining a full and complete record of activities, publications, reports, and materials. All such files are to remain the property of the Panel, available to Panelists on request, and transferable to a new Executive Secretary when one is designated. SFI maintains a complete historic archive of Panel records.