

Materials Program Development Process at the International Living Future Institute

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1. Introduction

Living Future’s vision is to cultivate a society that is socially just, culturally rich, and ecologically restorative. To advance this vision, we continually refine definitions of sustainability and regeneration by establishing clear, measurable, and meaningful targets that can influence not only the building industry and organizations, but also policy. Our programs play a critical role in setting these targets and supporting best practices and innovations across the industry. Through our work, Living Future strives not only to minimize negative impacts but to create positive social, cultural, and environmental benefits for all.

In establishing requirements, Living Future draws upon the best available science, technical expertise, and the broad Living Future community of practitioners and advocates. We rely on technical advisors; continuous feedback from manufacturers, project teams and community members; and aligned efforts and partnerships worldwide. Our approach is informed by expert guidance rather than by a consensus-based process.

Our programs are grounded in demonstrated performance and operational data rather than projections or modeled performance. Through these programs, we aim to create ripple effects that result in improved health, climate, and equity outcomes. Participants in our programs help change regulations, expand expectations, and demonstrate what is possible. Transparency, information sharing, and advocacy are essential tools for transformation and are integral to our program requirements.

2. Living Future Materials Programs

- Living Product Challenge [2.0 Standard](#) + [Handbook](#) (launched September 2018)
- Declare [2.0 Manufacturer's Guide](#) (launched February 2020)

3. Guiding Principles

Living Future's programs and Program Manuals are grounded in the following guiding principles:

- **Socially just, culturally rich, ecologically restorative:** Living Future's vision is clearly and robustly expressed in all Standards.
- **Transparency and information sharing:** Open communication and shared knowledge are essential to transformation.
- **Best-available science and technical expertise:** Requirements are informed by current research, technical expertise, and the Living Future community of practitioners and advocates.
- **Demonstrated performance:** Achievement is based on actual, verifiable performance rather than modeled outcomes or stated intent.
- **Holistic and meaningful requirements:** When considered together, Standard requirements produce holistic, positive outcomes. Requirements strive to be clear, concise, attainable, documentable, verifiable, objective, and broadly applicable across product types and markets.
- **Continuous improvement:** Standards model a framework for continuous improvement that drives demonstrable positive impact.

- **Advocacy:** Program design advances broader industry, policy, and cultural transformation.

4. Governance

4.1 Living Future Organizational Structure and Roles

4.1.1 Board of Directors

Living Future's Board advises on organizational strategy, financial oversight, level of investment in program development, network, guidance, and connections.

4.1.2 Chief Executive Officer

The CEO advises on the overall direction of the program, market strategy, connection to resources and partners, field building, and approves high-level program development direction.

4.1.3 Vice Presidents of Programs

Living Future's work is organized by program type—buildings, organizations, products, and community—each led by a Vice President. Vice Presidents oversee both program administration and program development staff. They ensure a clear separation between these functions to prevent undue influence from clients on technical decisions and to support each group's success. Vice presidents help with prioritization, staff + resource allocation, contracts, grants, and decision making as needed.

4.1.4 Program Implementation Staff

Program implementation staff support the operation and growth of all programs through customer support, customer success, business development, and industry thought

leadership. They collect questions and feedback from clients, which may inform future program updates.

4.1.5 Program Development Staff

Program development staff maintain and update Living Future’s programs in alignment with our guiding principles. They follow an internal process that includes soliciting and integrating advice from internal and external stakeholders. Feedback from participants is routed through program implementation staff and considered for ongoing updates. While many stakeholders—including technical advisory groups—provide input, final decisions on program language and requirements rest with Living Future program development staff.

5. Conflicts of Interest

Living Future is in the process of implementing a Conflict of Interest (COI) policy and an associated process for risk assessment and mitigation. See Appendix A for full details on the planned policy, processes, and COI survey.

6. Funding Sources

Living Future may seek philanthropic grants, sponsorships, or other funding to support research, program development, and implementation activities. Funding relationships are evaluated to ensure alignment with Living Future’s mission and to protect the independence and integrity of program criteria and certification decisions. Funding agreements do not grant funders authority over technical content, program requirements, certification determinations, or governance processes. Where appropriate, Living Future evaluates potential conflicts of interest and may decline or structure funding to mitigate perceived or actual influence. Program development decisions remain under the authority of Living Future, and funders do not participate in standards drafting or approval unless explicitly engaged through established, transparent stakeholder processes. To safeguard independence and prevent undue influence, Living Future follows the practices outlined in Appendix B.

Living Future transparently shares all supporters, sponsors, and funders contributing more than \$100 on our [website](#).

7. Stakeholders

7.1 Consultants

Living Future contracts consultants when specialized expertise is needed to conduct research on emerging topics or to propose new or modified program frameworks. For each engagement, Living Future develops a written scope of work that defines the scope of influence, stakeholder engagement responsibilities, expected deliverables, and project timeline. Consultants serve in an advisory and drafting capacity; final program decisions remain with Living Future.

To identify potential consultants, Living Future shares the scope of work with technical advisors, partners, and other professional networks. For some engagements, the opportunity may also be announced publicly through Living Future's newsletter or website.

Consultants are selected based on demonstrated technical credibility, experience with standards or framework development, and ability to deliver high-quality work within the proposed timeline and budget. Living Future also considers independence and potential conflicts of interest. Where relevant, consultants may be asked to disclose financial or organizational relationships that could influence their objectivity.

Draft outputs developed by consultants are reviewed and revised by internal staff and/or advisory groups prior to piloting, adoption or public release.

7.2 Technical Advisors (TAs) and Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs)

Living Future's community of practice is essential to shaping technical development and maintaining transparency and leadership across our programs.

TAG members and TAs are selected from applicants responding to public calls. Diversity and balance in background and experience are prioritized. Current members are listed on our website.

TAGs consist of subject matter experts across chemistry and toxicology, climate, environmental, and equity impacts of materials, as well as product manufacturers, program assessors and verifiers, practitioners in the data ecosystem and more. They support the continuous development and implementation of Living Future programs and help ensure alignment with current research and user needs.

TAG Scope Limitations

TAG members may offer input and recommendations but do not:

- Govern or make decisions about Standards
- Write requirement language
- Approve amendments, modifications, alternative adherence paths or equivalencies

7.3 Broader Stakeholders

In addition to TAs and TAGs, Living Future periodically engages peers and stakeholders for review and feedback. These include:

- Building owners
- Architects, engineers, designers, and construction professionals
- Product manufacturers
- Third-party verifiers and assessors
- Partner nonprofit organizations
- Data platforms
- Subject matter experts
- Other relevant groups

8. Program Development Procedure

8.1 Program Development Scope

There are four pathways for Program Manual creation or revision, representing different degrees of change:

8.1.1 Handbook Update (Quarterly)

- Expands or updates clarifications
- Adds or modifies exceptions
- Revises calculations or documentation requirements
- Updates glossary
- Corrects typos, grammar, links

8.1.2 Minor Update (e.g., 2.0 → 2.1)

- Clarifies and improves Imperative, Indicator, or program requirement intent
- Adds compliance pathways consistent with requirements
- Adds or removes approved third-party tools and equivalencies

8.1.3 Major Update (e.g., 2.1 → 3.0)

- Changes Imperative/Indicator requirements or metrics
- Adds, removes, or combines Imperatives/Indicators
- Adds or changes certification pathways
- Changes Standard structure

8.1.4 New Standard (e.g., creation of version 1.0)

- Creates a new program about a topic not covered by other Living Future programs
- Creates a new structure of Imperatives or Indicators
- Creates a new set of pathways for certification

8.2 Development Criteria

The need for a Standard update is assessed based on:

- **Barriers to Adoption/Success:** Requirements that are unachievable or ineffective.
- **Harmonization:** Misalignment within or across Living Future Standards, or opportunities to integrate with external certifications.
- **Market Opportunity:** Whether new pathways could unlock impactful new market segments.
- **Market Evolution:** Changes in technology, policy, data, or social understanding.
- **Time Since Last Issuance:** A contributing factor, not a primary driver, with routine review intervals described below.

The decision to pursue a minor or major update depends on the nature of required changes and staff capacity, as detailed in the Revision Types table.

8.3 Standard Update Process

8.3.1 Investigation

Discovery

All updates begin with a Discovery phase, which includes gathering information, assessing needs, and determining whether a Standard requires revision or if a new standard is needed.

Timing

Each Standard is reviewed at regular intervals—initially two years after the previous version’s release—to determine whether an update is warranted and what type. Review intervals may vary by program.

A review may also be triggered by updates to related programs.

Additional Considerations

If an update or a new standard is needed, timing depends on staff capacity, availability of expertise, strategic priorities, and funding.

8.3.2 Revision

Planning

If moving forward with an update, Living Future identifies the update's scope, roles, deliverables, timelines, and resource needs. This may include identifying whether focus groups, advisory groups, or TAGs are needed and whether to conduct pilot testing.

Development

This phase includes research, stakeholder input, defining metrics and thresholds, drafting updates, and developing the revised Program Manual.

Review

Living Future staff, advisory groups, auditors, peer reviewers, and the broader community review draft content. Public review is included in every Standard update.

Typical Reviewers

- Living Future leadership and staff
- Technical Advisors, Verifiers, Assessors
- Members and stakeholders (manufacturers, owners, AEC professionals, etc.)
- Aligned organizations
- Broader public

Public Consultation

Drafts are posted on the Program Development webpage for at least 20 business days, with broad outreach via the website, newsletters, and social media.

8.3.3 Implementation

Publish

Once finalized, the updated Program Manual is published and communicated, along with transition timelines and updates to registration and certification systems. Educational materials and events accompany the launch.

Support

After launch, Living Future provides customer support, develops FAQs and supplemental guidance, maintains feedback loops, and offers educational and technical support.

8.3.4 Receiving Ongoing Feedback

Feedback is continuously collected from project teams, organizations, manufacturers, research findings, technical experts, and internal departments. This ongoing input informs minor updates and future revisions.

8.3.5 Piloting

Draft requirements may be pilot tested through volunteer programs to explore feasibility, gather market feedback, and refine requirement language. Pilot testing may occur before or concurrently with public comment.

9. Complaints and Appeals

Living Future is developing a Complaints and Appeals policy and associated process. See Appendix C for details.

10. Third-Party Management

10.1 Third-Party Verification for Declare and the Living Product Challenge

For programs such as Declare and the Living Product Challenge, Living Future may approve qualified third-party verifiers to support product review and label verification activities.

Third-party verifiers must meet defined eligibility criteria, including demonstrated technical expertise, relevant professional experience, completion of required Living Future training, and adherence to independence and impartiality safeguards.

In Declare 2.1 (planned launch in July 2026), verifiers will be required to maintain documented operational practices aligned with applicable sections of ISO/IEC 17065 (Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services), including mechanisms for safeguarding impartiality, personnel competence management, documentation of evaluation activities, and confidentiality of records. Formal accreditation to ISO/IEC 17065 is not required; however, conformance to relevant principles must be demonstrated.

Living Future maintains oversight of approved verifiers through:

- Staff review of initial verified labels
- Ongoing sampling of verified labels
- Annual audits

- Required agreements and professional membership standards

Living Future retains final program authority. Active and approved verifiers are publicly listed in the relevant program manuals and on program webpages. Detailed qualification requirements and oversight procedures are outlined in the applicable program manuals.

11. Glossary of Terms

- **Program:** In the context of this document, ‘program’ refers to Living Future’s individual Certifications and Labels.
- **Standard:** This refers to the central tenets of any Living Future program, including its vision, structure, and core program elements (Petal intents, Imperative intents and requirements, benchmarks, etc.), regardless of whether the program outcome is a Certification or a Label. These tenets constitute the defining parameters of each numbered version of the Standard.
- **Handbook:** Handbook refers to a program resource that supplements the Standard by providing more in-depth guidance on requirements, including clarifications, sample calculations, exceptions, documentation requirements, resources, case studies, and more. The Handbooks are part of the Program Manual.
- **Label:** Living Future’s Declare program results in a label as the mark of achievement. Labels include a summary of product information for the purposes of disclosure and transparency. The Declare label shows the level of achievement in relation to the Red List.
- **Program Manual:** Program Manual refers to the consolidated program resources, including the Standard + Handbook documents, and as applicable, other supporting resources.
- **Petal:** Petal is the term Living Future uses to denote seven performance categories through which we organize our challenge programs (e.g. LPC).
- **Imperative:** This is the term Living Future uses for a group of related requirements under a Petal. This also refers to certification levels within LPC.

- **Category:** This is the term Living Future uses for the seven assessment areas in the Just program.
- **Indicator:** This is the term Living Future uses for required components of the Just program, but is also used in some of the materials programs under development.
- **Certification:** In the context of Living Future programs, this refers to the process and outcome of successfully completing a Challenge program and requires going through an audit process performed by a third party. Any resulting award is made public, but specific data submitted during the certification process is not.
- **Technical Advisory Group (TAG):** TAGs are made up of volunteer partners that represent industry leadership and deep technical expertise in relevant topic areas who weigh in on decisions pertaining to the development or implementation of Living Future's program requirements.

Appendix A: Living Future Conflict of Interest Policy for Standard Development

1. Purpose

This policy ensures that all standards development activities are conducted with integrity, transparency, and impartiality by identifying and managing real, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest.

2. Scope

Applies to all participants in standards development: Living Future staff, board, technical advisors, reviewers, sponsors, funders, market engagement advisory groups, consultants, or contractors.

3. What Counts as a Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest exists when personal, financial, intellectual property (IP), or organizational interests could influence—or appear to influence—objective participation. Types include:

- **Financial:** employment, investments, fees, or other monetary ties.
- **IP:** patents or applications relevant to the standard.
- **Organizational:** advocacy that directly benefits an employer or sponsor.
- **Personal:** close relationships affecting judgment.

4. Disclosure Requirements

- All participants must submit a COI Disclosure Form before engaging in work.
- Disclosures must be updated whenever circumstances change.
- Relevant COIs will be shared with leadership and the working group when needed.

5. Managing Conflicts of Interest

Depending on severity, one or more of the following measures may be taken:

- **Disclosure Only:** Participant continues with full participation.
- **Restrictions:** Participation allowed but with limits (e.g., no editing roles).
- **Recusal:** Participant removed from specific discussions or decisions.
- **Removal:** Participant removed from the group if impartiality cannot be maintained.

Participants with relevant IP must disclose it and commit to FRAND (Fair, Reasonable, and Non-Discriminatory) licensing if the technology becomes essential to the standard.

6. Balanced Participation

Leaders must maintain balanced representation across stakeholder groups to prevent dominance by any single organization or interest.

7. Documentation

All disclosures and mitigation decisions must be recorded in meeting minutes and retained according to organizational policy.

8. Violations

Failure to disclose or comply with mitigation actions may result in removal from the relevant role or removal from the group.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form

1. Participant Information

Name:

Organization:

Role (e.g. Technical Advisor, Consultant, Board member):

2. Financial Interests

List any employment, investments, consulting, honoraria, or other financial relationships relevant to the standard.

3. Intellectual Property Interests

List patents, patent applications, or other IP relevant to the standard.

4. Organizational Interests

Describe any organizational advocacy or sponsorship relevant to the standard.

5. Personal/Family Interests

List any personal relationships that might present a COI.

6. Additional Information

(Optional)

Certification:

I certify that the information provided is accurate and complete.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B: Living Future Sponsor + Funder Influence Management for Standard Development

1. Purpose

To ensure that sponsors and funders do not exert undue influence over program or standards development. Decisions must remain independent, transparent, and fact-based.

2. Key Principles

- **Independence:** Living Future staff and technical advisory groups make decisions without sponsor or funder control.
- **Balance:** No single stakeholder group dominates the technical groups.
- **Transparency:** Sponsor or funder contributions and relevant communications are documented.
- **Fair Process:** All stakeholders participate under the same rules.

3. Sponsor + Funder Participation Rules

Sponsors or funders may:

- Provide funding or in-kind support.
- Suggest topics or areas of interest.
- Participate as regular committee members.
- Submit comments during reviews.

Sponsors or funders may not:

- Influence or pressure technical decisions.
- Condition funding on specific outcomes.

4. Decision-making Expectations

- Technical decisions are made by staff, not sponsors.

- Technical advisory membership must reflect diverse stakeholder groups.

5. Conflict of Interest (COI)

- All members disclose COIs annually or when they change.
- Members with conflicts must recuse themselves when appropriate.
- A COI register is maintained for transparency.

6. Financial Separation

- Funding activities are handled by administrative staff, **not** technical staff.
- Sponsors cannot buy influence or preferential treatment in decisionmaking

7. Documentation & Transparency

- Meeting minutes, decisions, and revisions are recorded.
- Sponsor- or funder-related communications are logged when relevant.
- Rationales for major decisions must be documented.

8. Oversight & Reporting

- A Living Future vice president from a separate department monitors compliance.
- Concerns about undue influence can be reported confidentially.
- Retaliation against reporters is prohibited.

9. Consequences for Violations

Possible actions include:

- Sponsor or funder sanctions, up to termination of agreement.
- Removal of advisory members or revocation of participation.

Appendix C: Living Future Complaints & Appeals Management for Standard Development

1. Purpose

To ensure concerns about process, conduct, or decisions are handled fairly, transparently, and consistently.

2. Definitions

- **Complaint:** A concern that a process, rule, or code of conduct has not been followed.
- **Appeal:** A formal request to review a specific decision made by a committee or governing body.

3. When to File

File a complaint if you believe:

- Procedures were not followed
- A meeting was handled improperly
- Conduct violated policy or ethics

File an appeal if you believe:

- A decision was incorrect or improperly reached
- Your comments were not addressed

4. How to Submit

Submit via:

- Email: [materials.governance@living-future.org]

Include:

- Your name & affiliation
- Description of issue
- Relevant dates, documents, or evidence
- Desired resolution (optional)

5. What Happens Next

Step 1 — Acknowledgment

You receive confirmation and a tracking ID within 5 business days.

Step 2 — Initial Review

The Governance or Appeals Officer checks eligibility and assigns reviewers.

Step 3 — Investigation / Panel Review

A neutral panel consisting of the Vice Presidents, CEO, Operations officer, and a Board member reviews documents, conducts interviews if needed, and evaluates compliance with procedures.

Step 4 — Decision

A written decision is issued within 30–60 days (timeline may vary by case).

The decision will include:

- Findings
- Rationale
- Any corrective actions

6. Confidentiality & Fairness

- All submissions are handled confidentially.
- Reviewers must be independent of the issue.
- Conflicts of interest must be disclosed and managed.
- Retaliation is strictly prohibited.

7. Possible Outcomes

- Correction of procedural errors
- Reconsideration of a decision
- No action (if rules were followed)
- Recommendations for process improvements
- Disciplinary actions (if conduct rules were violated)