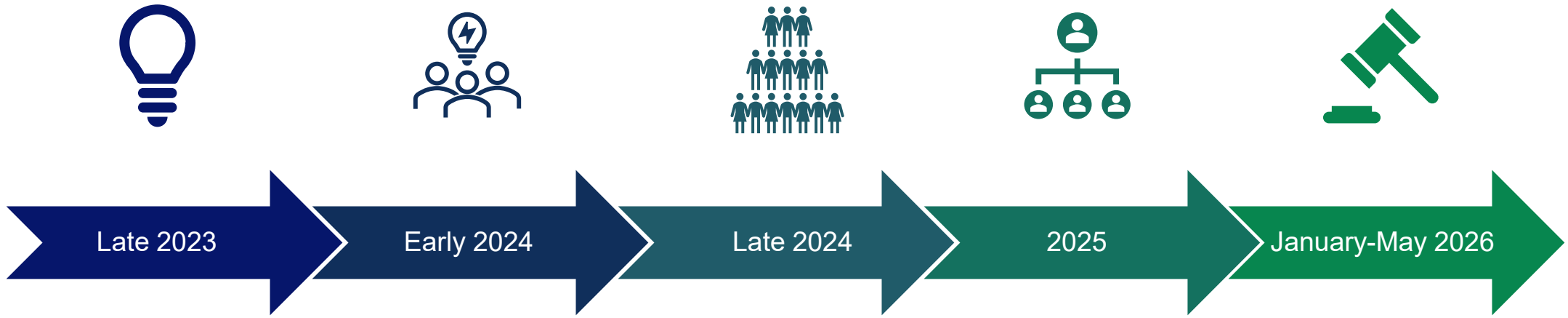
The Trust Seal

A society-led, community-governed signal of trustworthy science



Trust Seal Initiative – Where it Started

Consensus from hundreds of leading scientists.



Late 2023
A community-led idea emerged at a FASEB-organized summit of 35 biological and biomedical scientists – a visual trust indicator, a “trust seal” for journals

Early 2024
Additional summits held to clarify viability and develop consensus in community of need and specifics

Late 2024
Working group assigned to validate concept, develop vision for governance and shared ownership, and work to align stakeholders

2025
Detailed analysis and outreach to potential societies leads to BioCore, LLC launch: an independent organization with two purposes, one is Trust Seal

January-May 2026
Implementation: initiated formal outreach to align and create Trust Seal Committee and governance in the biological and biomedical sciences

What Drives Trust?

Trust in science in an era of misinformation.

As we developed this vision, conversations with hundreds of scientists resulted in five qualities that drive trust; independent research largely aligns with our five qualities.

A trustworthy journal is one you can rely on when you can't check the work yourself.

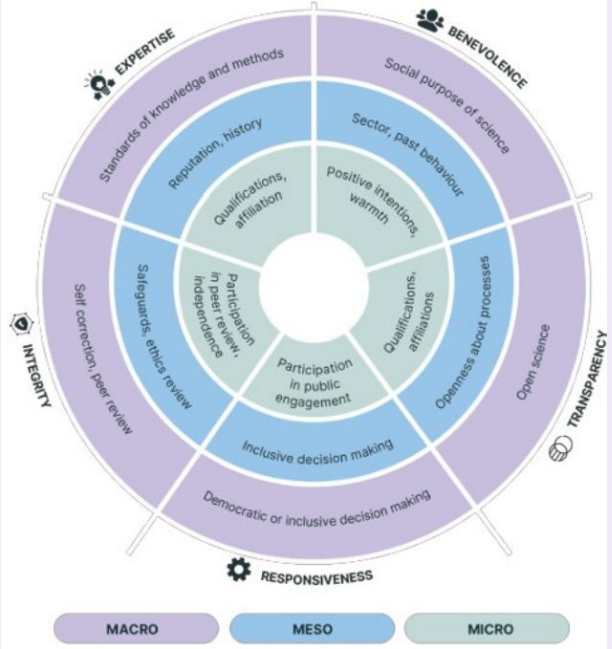
Competent: Has the expertise to examine claims and ask difficult questions

Independent: Conflicts are removed; no money or power decides the outcome

Sincere: Presents findings as they are, calibrated and without selectivity

Self-correcting: Acknowledges errors publicly and quickly

Transparent: Open about policies, processes, people, structures, and money



Independent research agrees. RAND Europe's five dimensions: expertise, benevolence, transparency, responsiveness, and integrity.

Source: RAND Europe for Wellcome, Public Trust in Science.

BioCore
A SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING CONSORTIUM

Why a Trust Seal?

Societies across disciplines face these common challenges.

Across the wider publishing landscape, almost anyone can now:

- Launch a journal
- Choose a title close to an established one
- Assign DOIs
- Register an ISSN

A society's name alone is no longer enough to signal trust.

What every proxy is missing

Journal name, publisher, ISSN, DOI, ORCID, indexing, and Impact Factor all identify a journal. None verifies how it actually works.

Verification

Pressures societies and their journals also report

- AI-generated & fabricated content
- Questionable publishing practices
- Rising submission volume
- Limits of indexing & metrics
- Judging work outside one's field
- Politicization & misinformation

Why Scholarly Societies Should Lead

Societies are uniquely positioned to define and uphold the standards that earn trust.



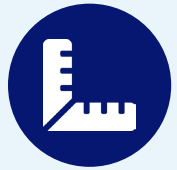
Our mission, our responsibility

Trust in science is central to why societies exist



We represent communities

Scientific communities, not individual publishing businesses



We set disciplinary norms

Societies establish the standards their fields follow



We collaborate across models

Working across publishers and business models



We serve the whole ecosystem

An interest in integrity beyond our own portfolios

Societies represent the communities that create, review, and rely on research. That is why trust standards should start with us.

Trust Starts with the Community

Societies are best placed to lead this initiative as they represent the researchers who create, review, and rely on science, the targeted behaviors lie with this community.

Domain-specific: To be meaningful, journal standards must reflect how each field works.

Author-side: The behaviors standards target sit largely with authors and their communities.

Community-created: Researchers adopt standards they helped write, and dismiss those written by outsiders.

Built together: No single society can create a meaningful, cross-disciplinary trust signal on its own.

Lessons from past initiatives

Those that took hold were:

- ✓ Clear in purpose
- ✓ Simple to understand and adopt
- ✓ Led from within the community

Those that struggled were:

- ✗ Expanded beyond their purpose
- ✗ Seen as driven from outside

BioCore
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Who the Trust Seal Serves

A shared signal for everyone who relies on research.

Authors
Choosing where to submit with confidence

Institutions & Librarians
Guiding researchers and handling integrity cases

Policymakers & AI Tools
Machine-readable signals of rigorous practice



Readers & Reviewers
Trusting work beyond their own expertise

Funders
Knowing where funded research is published

The Public
Confidence in the science behind everyday decisions

While authors are the initial audience, we can't serve just one group. Societies have a role, and a higher calling, to serve broad audiences and do our part to address what affects trust in science.

A Trust Seal: A New Framework for Trustworthy Science

Guiding authors and readers to trusted scientific sources.

- A visible indicator telling authors and readers that a publication has adopted community-defined best practices for trust, plus machine-readable metadata that travels with the content to inform AI tools
- Policies and practices set and governed by each research community: biological and biomedical sciences first, with other disciplines now exploring the model
- Evaluation rubric agreed by an independent, community-led committee, with standards that evolve as the research environment changes

1 Define Standards

2 Apply Screening

3 Publish Indicators



Integrity

Trust

Reproducibility

From What Drives Trust to a Trust Seal

Ensuring the Trust Seal delivers on the drivers of trust.

What drives trust	RAND Europe dimension	Examples of how the Trust Seal will deliver
Competent	**Expertise**	**Disciplinary expertise:** societies set field-appropriate standards, and rigorous peer review is demonstrated, not just stated
Independent	**Integrity**	**Independent evaluation:** those who set the standards do not evaluate journals, and conflicts are disclosed and managed
Sincere	**Benevolence**	**Trusted identification:** clear accountability for who stands behind a journal, including its publisher, editors, reviewers, and editorial board members
Self-correcting	**Responsiveness**	**Rigorous process:** corrections and retractions handled openly; seals are time-limited and renewed as standards evolve; provisional status for journals working toward a Trust Seal
Transparent	**Transparency**	**Visible, verifiable status:** policies, processes, and people are shared openly, and Trust Seal status is verifiable and machine-readable

RAND Europe dimensions shown as the closest match; RAND also places self-correction under integrity.

What a Trust Seal Means

A recognition of demonstrated practices, not a verdict on a publication.

The Trust Seal IS

- A recognition of demonstrated publishing practices
- Defined and governed by each research community
- Built on existing guidance (COPE, ICMJE, discipline standards)
- A living standard that evolves with the changing landscape
- Machine-readable, so the signal travels with the content

The Trust Seal IS NOT

- A verdict on journals that do not (yet) hold it
- A guarantee that every article is error-free
- A replacement for indexing, COPE, or discipline guidelines
- A ranking or impact metric
- One-size-fits-all across disciplines

The purpose and principles of the Trust Seal are shared publicly.

Expanding Across Disciplines

Societies from many fields are exploring a shared, society-led approach.

September 2026 summit co-convened by BioCore and three scholarly societies. **Every participant chose to continue the conversation.**

20 societies invited

14 attended the summit

9 fields represented

Biological & biomedical
Trust Seal Committee in place

Medicine & clinical
7 invited
3 attended

Physics
3 invited
3 attended

Chemistry
2 invited
1 attended

Mathematics
3 invited
3 attended

Engineering
2 invited
1 attended

Geosciences
1 invited
1 attended

Social sciences
1 invited
1 attended

Multidisciplinary
1 invited
1 attended

Proposed starting point: a common set of standards across all fields, refined by discipline-specific subgroups beginning with biological & biomedical, physical sciences, and medicine.

Building a Coalition

BioCore has met with organizations across the scholarly ecosystem.

60+

organizations engaged

across the scholarly ecosystem

plus hundreds of scientists through summits, working groups, conference presentations, webinars, and one-on-one meetings

Scholarly societies & society publishers

Life, physical, math, engineering, earth, clinical & social sciences

Commercial & university publishers

Large and small, across business models

Research integrity bodies & experts

Including COPE and national integrity organizations

Standards & infrastructure organizations

Including the NISO Trust Markers Working Group

Publishing associations & advocates

Professional and trade associations

Libraries & discovery services

Stewarding and sharing the scholarly record

National academies of science

In the United States and internationally

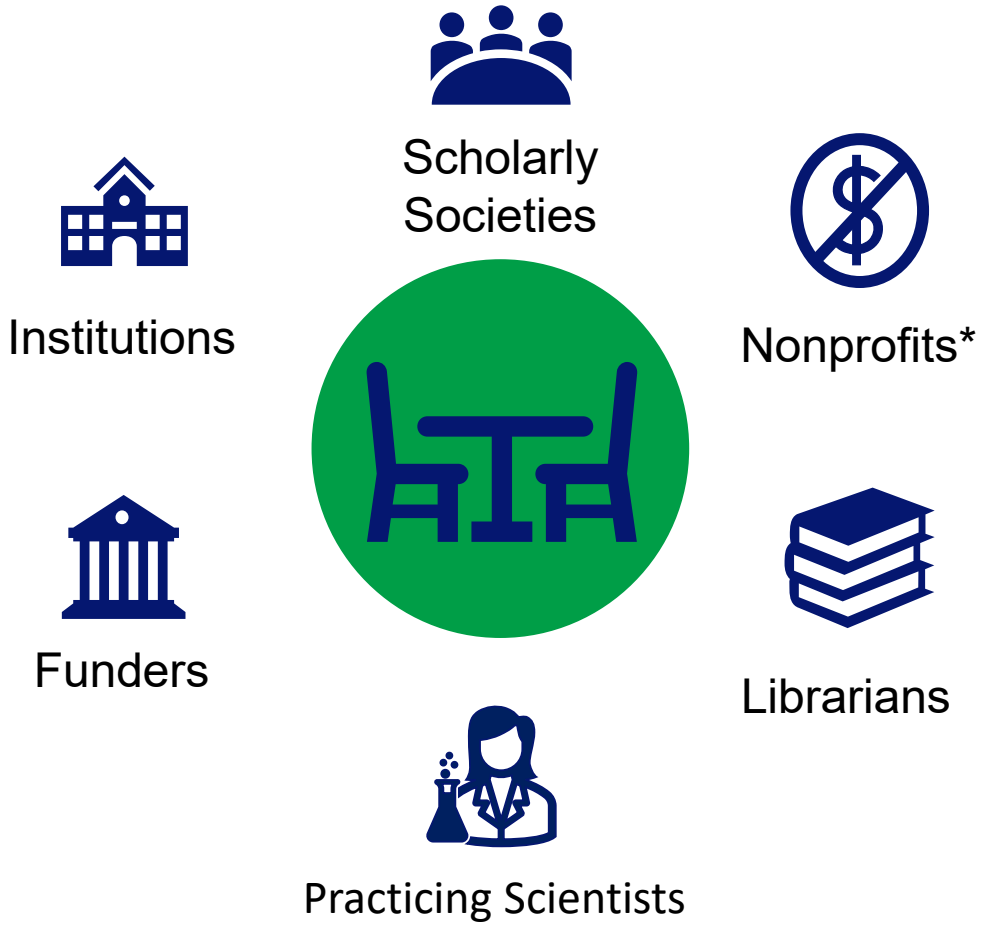
Industry analysts & advisors

Scholarly publishing market and strategy experts

Conversations do not imply endorsement. Formal participants are listed on the Committee and Endorser slides.

Governance and Membership

Trust Seal Committee members and voting rights for the biological/biomedical community.



Trust Seal Committee

- Will include one designated representative from each Supporting Member organization.
- Subject Matter Experts will contribute specialized expertise to help guide standards development.
- **Diverse representation is a priority**, with committee composition reflecting geographic diversity, disciplinary breadth, and expertise across the biological and biomedical community.
- Committee convened: **Summer 2026**

**Nonprofit organizations that are not publishers.*

Biological and Biomedical Trust Seal Committee

ASM

ASPET® Transforming Discoveries Into Therapies

EMBO

FASEB Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology

FEBS

New Phytologist Foundation

SEBM Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine

SfRBM Society for Redox Biology and Medicine — Advancing SCIENCE | Shaping CAREERS

Trauma Shock Shock Society Est. 1978 Sepsis

SSR Society for the Study of Reproduction

Subject Matter Experts

COPE Trustee

VPR, Office of Research Policy and Integrity, Stanford University

Endorsers

WILEY

Levels of Support

Shaping standards, sharing expertise, and championing adoption.



Supporting Members

- Scientific societies and nonprofit organizations that support the Trust Seal mission.
- Independent subject-matter experts who provide specialized knowledge to shape standards that are practical and impactful.



Endorsers

- Organizations that support and promote the Trust Seal mission.
- Help expand visibility and adoption but do not serve on the Trust Seal Committee or evaluate journals.

How Trust Signals Fit Together

Complementary efforts with a shared goal.

Shared definitions & metadata: How trust markers are defined, described, and displayed across platforms

e.g., NISO Trust Markers Working Group

Publication-level evaluation: Whether a publication has demonstrated rigorous practices

Trust Seal (society-led); other emerging programs including a publisher-initiated effort with ISC oversight

Article & record-level signals: What happened to an individual article or contributor record

e.g., Publication Facts Label, ORCID trust markers, correction notices

Integrity guidance: The underlying expectations for ethical publishing

e.g., COPE, ICMJE, discipline reporting standards

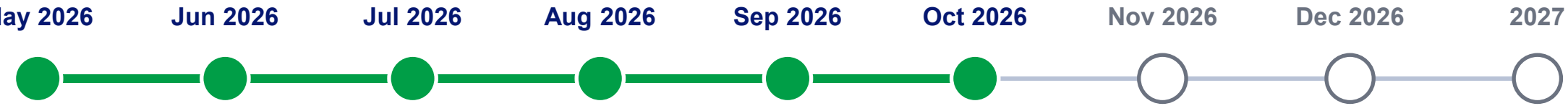
Our approach

- Keep governance with the research communities whose work is evaluated
- Collaborate rather than duplicate, so publications are not burdened and readers are not confused
- Align with shared definitions as they emerge

Trust Seal Initiative – Timeline

Where we are and what comes next.

Since May 2026: Biological & Biomedical Trust Seal Committee has made progress on rubric development



May 2026

Public announcement

Biological & biomedical Trust Seal Committee formed

24 meetings

8 supporting members

Jun 2026

Recruitment of Subject Matter Experts and additional societies

9 meetings

Jul 2026

4 new Supporting Members added

Committee scoping questionnaire issued

3 meetings

12 supporting members

Aug 2026

Trust Seal Committee convenes

7 meetings

Sep 2026

Cross-disciplinary summit

ALPSP conference presentation

9 meetings

14 society summit

Oct 2026

Progress on evaluation rubric

4 meetings

Nov 2026

Cross-disciplinary working group meets

Coming next

Dec 2026

UKSG Online Conference session on trust

Coming next

2027

First Trust Seals awarded in biological & biomedical sciences

Coming next

Interested to Learn More?

We invite you to join our table and have a voice.



Join our table

Help shape a society-led signal of trustworthy science, and make sure your community has a voice in it.

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