Position: Volunteer Research Assistant with the International Network for Seed-based Restoration (INSR)

Project: “Review of international native seed certification schemes”

Context

Seed certification schemes are systems to document and label seed lots with accurate information on passport data (taxon identification; initial germplasm collection; cultivation and multiplication history) and seed quality (viability, dormancy, and purity). In recent decades, the rapid growth of ecological restoration practice around the world has created global demand and use of commercially traded native seeds. A healthy commercial seed trade depends upon reliable, trustworthy, and transparent mechanisms to protect collectors, producers, merchants, and consumers/users. Seed certification schemes of varying levels of jurisdiction and regulation, provide this support by certifying the quality and veracity of seed lots. Several certification schemes have already been developed around the world by different entities (private, public and NGO sector) but further research is needed to know how many exist, how they are defined, what they require.

Activities and aim of the project

The aim of this volunteer project is to collate and review all available information on existing certification schemes for native seed, at the global level. Anticipated research methods are literature review; online research; email, phone, and survey communications.

Specific tasks are:

● To develop a database of certification schemes listing their details (e.g. country, developing and regulating entity, criteria, external audit entity, top-down or bottom-up; etc.)
● To record the research methods and the sources and references for data in the database;
● To highlight common elements and differences between schemes;
● To interact with INSR Board and members, and key stakeholders in order to obtain essential information;
● To communicate regularly with INSR Board members to provide updates on the progress;
● To produce a report (5 pages maximum) of the research methods, data, results, conclusion, and key recommendations on development principles for certification.

Output and products

The Research Assistant will summarize the results of this research in a report (five pages maximum). Novel findings from the report will be archived by INSR for their consultation and use and, if relevant, will be integrated into a chapter of the forthcoming publication International Standards for...
Native Seeds and into conference presentations, for which the research assistant will be a contributing author.
The Research Assistant will gain valuable experience and skills in conducting and summarizing a literature review and associated data.
The Research Assistant will learn about global native seed certification schemes and stakeholders. Through this project the Research Assistant will contribute to improving the understanding of native seed certification schemes which improve the quality and outcomes of seed-based restoration.

Terms & Conditions

This is an unpaid, volunteer project, for one research assistant.
The volunteer must be a current member in good standing of SER/INSR.
Proficiency in spoken and written English is required.
The work can be done from any location.
The volunteer must provide her/his own computer systems and access to the internet.
The project and volunteer will be guided and supervised by Dr Marcello De Vitis with input from the seven additional members of the INSR Board and will require regular consultation with INSR Board members and key stakeholders.
The volunteer agrees on the use by INSR of the report and the findings therein for dissemination and research purposes, after notification to the volunteer and acknowledging the volunteer’s authorship. The project duration is for 13 weeks, from 1 March 2019 to 31 May 2019. The workload is expected to be ~ 8 hours per week for an estimated total commitment of 104 hours. Prior to beginning the project, the successful candidate will sign a Letter of Agreement with the Society for Ecological Restoration, Inc. (SER).

Application process

To apply, send a one-page cover letter and your CV, including publication record, to info@ser-insr.org before 21 February 2019, 13:00 GMT.