

## **ISLA Connects**

### **SFT Awards Submission**

#### **Background**

The ISLA Connects brand was conceived in 2023 in consultation with the ISLA Board of Directors and supported by ISLA's DE&I Steering Group. Our mandate is to leverage ISLA's position as a leading industry body to develop a talent pipeline and cultivate a securities financing industry where all members can bring their unique skills, perspectives, and experiences to advance the industry.

#### **Original Ambition**

The original ambition for ISLA Connects, which still underpins the initiative today, was to provide a forum for ISLA member firm representatives employed in the securities financing industry to connect, and to enable ISLA to reach market participants who may not have the opportunity to interact with us via ISLA working groups or attend our annual conferences or other regional events. Therefore, one of the first initiatives we launched was heavily discounted attendance to our flagship European conference to qualifying delegates. This enriched the delegate profile both in terms of experience and seniority but also made the event more accessible to those employed in local offices of member firms. As part of the conference agenda, we focused on dedicated networking events with attendees representing the full range of our membership across the securities financing value chain.

#### **Shifting focus**

In 2024, we launched our Educational Briefings, partnering with member firms to host topic specific deep-dives, followed by structured networking. The sessions allow attendees, who may not be that close to the topic in their day-to-day work, to build their knowledge and apply this within their organisation or role.

We held 5 Educational Briefings across London and Frankfurt, covering a range of topics including, data, Basel III, and securities lending legal documentation, amongst others. These sessions welcomed over 172 attendees, the majority of whom were previously unknown to ISLA, and representing over 50 ISLA member firms across a range of roles, tenure, and seniority, including apprentices, trade assistants, graduates, analysts, post trade, and collateral specialists.

#### **Future Plans**

We are witnessing an incredible amount of change in the industry. With this change comes the need for innovative mindsets to drive new solutions. To address this need, we recognise the importance of attracting and cultivating new talent and skills, as well as enabling seasoned market participants to further develop their skillsets. Through ISLA Connects, we can expose attendees to a broad range of industry defining topics and themes, forge cross industry

relationships, and ultimately drive our industry forward by helping to develop the next generation of leaders, decision makers, critical thinkers, and public speakers. From an ISLA perspective, our hope is that they will maintain their relationship with ISLA through our Working Groups and through industry events to help shape the future of securities finance.

Looking ahead, we have plans to increase the number of Educational Briefings every year as well as launch ISLA Connects in America through ISLA Americas. The need to encourage and promote the next generation of talent is a global challenge, and we are incredibly excited to see this model expand into different regions.

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### Testimonials

*"ISLA Connect brings tremendous value to the industry by uniting new joiners early in their professional journey. It helps them build their network, gain industry knowledge, and access potential mentoring opportunities. Furthermore, it fosters a sense of community and collaboration among industry professionals, which can lead to long-lasting professional relationships and career growth which we all will benefit from".* **Keren Halperin, Share Gain**

*"ISLA connects has really changed the game when it comes to industry events, especially for newcomers. It provides a welcoming space where people can learn, meet new faces, and be their true selves. Its all about creating a safe and supportive environment for those just starting out or those that may have not had the opportunity to attend industry events in the past. Even though the events are smaller in size, they've helped attendees build valuable connections that they can take with them to larger conferences.*

*What once felt like a room full of strangers now feels a lot less intimidating as people have already established contacts and faces to approach, making those big events feel more approachable"* **Georgia Williams, Deutsche Bank**

*"As Chair of the ISLA Board of Directors, I am delighted to provide a testimonial in support of ISLA Connects, an industry initiative with a mission to drive greater inclusion across the Securities Finance industry. Since its inception in late 2022, ISLA Connects has successfully executed an extensive series of educational events for member firms, as well as structured networking opportunities aimed at those who are either new to Securities Finance or looking to develop new skillsets. These efforts have been instrumental in inspiring emerging talent and supporting the development of the future talent pipeline for our industry, spanning the entire Securities Finance value chain.*

*The commitment and impact of all who have driven ISLA Connects is truly commendable, specifically: Tina Baker has spearheaded the ISLA Connects initiative with tireless determination, supported by the commitment of the members of the ISLA DEI Working Group, who have all worked hard to bring the vision of ISLA Connects to life, along with the ISLA Marketing, Events & Communications team led by Sejal Amin, who have been instrumental in supporting the execution of focused ISLA Connects events, as well as ISLA CEO Andrew Dyson and the Board of Directors, who have endorsed and supported the growth of ISLA Connects – collectively, we are extremely proud to see this initiative flourish and achieve material positive impact for the future of the industry."* **Ina Budh-Raja, ISLA Board Chair & BNY**

*“As someone who has been in securities finance for a couple of years now and attended multiple events, I truly believe that the ISLA connects educational briefings are one of the most valuable experiences I have attended. It’s a unique event that not only supports new entrants to the market but also provides immense learning opportunities.*

*What I enjoy most about these events are the perfect blend of education and networking. The educational panels are well thought through, featuring industry experts who have been able to explain complex areas of securities finance in an easy to digest way. This is very important because it makes the events accessible to every new entrant, even if they don’t have any exposure to the topic in there day to day work. The structured networking component of these events is where this event truly shines, it’s rare to find an event that facilitates connections so effectively. The networking sessions are thoughtfully organised to bring people together in a way that feels natural and ensures you are always meeting someone new. These connections have given me a fresh perspective on the industry. I couldn’t recommend these events enough to every new entrant in the securities finance industry.”* **Joe Jackson, Northern Trust**