



**Gold Standard<sup>®</sup>**  
for the Global Goals

**CORE DOCUMENT**

# PRINCIPLES & REQUIREMENTS

---

**PUBLICATION DATE 12.11.2024**

**VERSION v. 2.0 – Effective 5.12.2024**

**NEXT PLANNED UPDATE 5.12.2025**

## CONTACT DETAILS

The Gold Standard Foundation  
International Environment House 2  
Chemin de Balexert 7-9  
1219 Châtelaine Geneva, Switzerland  
Tel +41 22 788 70 80  
Email [help@goldstandard.org](mailto:help@goldstandard.org)

---

## SUMMARY

This document provides the mandatory Principles & Requirements that all Gold Standard projects must conform to.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1 </b>	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE, SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1	EFFECTIVE DATE .....	3
1.2	SCOPE.....	3
1.3	APPLICABILITY.....	4
<b>2 </b>	<b>CERTIFICATION TYPES.....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	GOLD STANDARD CERTIFIED PROJECT DESIGN .....	4
2.2	GOLD STANDARD CERTIFIED PROJECT.....	5
2.3	STACKING.....	5
<b>3 </b>	<b>GENERAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4 </b>	<b>ELIGIBILITY PRINCIPLES AND REQUIREMENTS .....</b>	<b>7</b>
	Principle 1: Contribution to Climate Security & Sustainable Development .....	7
	Principle 2: Safeguarding Principles .....	11
	Principle 3: Stakeholder Inclusivity .....	11
	Principle 4 : Demonstration of Real Outcomes .....	13
	Principle 5 : Financial Additionality & Ongoing Financial Need .....	15
<b>5 </b>	<b>PROJECT CYCLE .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>6 </b>	<b>PROJECT DOCUMENTATION AND TECHNICAL REQUIREMENT.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>7 </b>	<b>NON-CONFORMITY .....</b>	<b>30</b>
	<b>ANNEX A - DESIGN CHANGE APPROVAL PROCEDURE.....</b>	<b>31</b>
	<b>ANNEX B – CONFLICT AND EMERGENCY ZONES .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>1 </b>	<b>Scope and Applicability .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>2 </b>	<b>Approval Procedures .....</b>	<b>32</b>

# 1 | EFFECTIVE DATE, SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

## 1.1 | EFFECTIVE DATE

1.1.1 | Gold Standard for the Global Goals is effective for all projects seeking Gold Standard Certification as of 05<sup>th</sup> December 2024. For projects applying previous versions of Gold Standard please refer to the [Transition Requirements](#).

## 1.2 | SCOPE

1.2.1 | The Principles & Requirements set out in this document are applicable to all Project Developers and the Projects or Programmes\* for which Gold Standard Certification is sought. It also represents the Requirements against which [Gold Standard Validation and Verification Bodies](#) (hereafter VVBs) shall Validate or Verify the Project, in conjunction with the [Validation & Verification Body Requirements](#) and any applicable Conformity Criteria.

*\*Note that for brevity, the standard refers to Projects throughout the text; this may be read as Projects, Programmes or interventions unless explicitly stated.*

1.2.2 | The Requirements shall be applied as per the relevant sections contained within this document and those associated or referenced.

1.2.3 | From time to time Gold Standard may issue updates, changes, clarifications or corrections to the Requirements. These shall be published to the [Gold Standard Website](#). Gold Standard provides notice of all such changes and specific dates for implementation and applicability. It is the responsibility of the Project Developer to remain up to date and to apply all such updates as required for its Project by checking the rule updates section in the [Gold Standard Website](#), regardless of whether a notification of change has been received.

1.2.4 | Stakeholders may submit suggested updates, edits, changes or additions to Gold Standard for the Global Goals by sending an email to [help@goldstandard.org](mailto:help@goldstandard.org). Such requests shall be considered as per the [Standards Setting Procedure](#). Gold Standard reserves the right to accept or reject such submissions at its own discretion.

1.2.5 | In some circumstances Gold Standard allows modules or elements from other, partner or endorsed Standards (for example [Fairtrade](#), [FSC](#), [CDM](#)) to be considered as evidence that may be used to demonstrate conformity to certain Gold Standard Requirements. In such cases the Gold Standard Requirements still apply but, to help streamline processes and for practicality, shared evidence may be provided.

1.2.6 | The Gold Standard rules are interpreted in accordance with the Standard's core principles of fairness, reliability, conservativeness and pragmatism.

### 1.3 | APPLICABILITY

- 1.3.1 | All Projects shall apply the [Principles & Requirements](#) and any associated documents.
- 1.3.2 | All Projects shall also apply the [Activity Requirements](#) related to the project type – unless stated otherwise. If no Activity Requirements exist for the proposed project type, then the Requirements shall be as per this document.
- 1.3.3 | In addition to 1.3.1 and 1.3.2, Projects that seek issuance of Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products shall also follow the applicable Gold Standard Approved [Impact Quantification Methodology](#) and related [Product Requirements](#).

## 2 | CERTIFICATION TYPES

This section provides an overview of the types of Gold Standard Certification outcomes. It should be read in conjunction with the [Claims Guidelines](#) which provides further guidance as to the application and communication around Gold Standard Project and Impact Certification.

### 2.1 | GOLD STANDARD CERTIFIED PROJECT DESIGN

- 2.1.1 | Gold Standard Certified Project Design status is achieved by successfully undergoing Validation and Design Review (Design Certification), which means:
- (a) The project design and planning has met Gold Standard for Global Goals Requirements, including [Safeguarding Principles](#), [Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement](#), and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) requirements and has developed a compliant Monitoring Plan.
  - (b) The project design, monitoring plan and ex-ante impact assessment have been validated by an accredited, approved third party VVB.
  - (c) Following this, the project has been reviewed by Gold Standard and is subject to an over-arching independent review by the Gold Standard [Technical Advisory Committee \(TAC\)](#) and [NGO Supporters](#).
  - (d) It does not mean or imply that any impacts have been realised or will be realised or have been verified by a VVB or certified by Gold Standard.
  - (e) To certify that impacts have been realised, a project shall undergo Performance Certification.

## 2.2 | GOLD STANDARD CERTIFIED PROJECT

2.2.1 | Gold Standard Certified Project status is achieved by successfully undergoing Verification and performance review (Performance Certification), which means:

- (a) The project has followed a Monitoring Plan approved at the time of Design Certification and has submitted [Monitoring Report](#) for Verification.
- (b) The project and its Certified SDG Impacts have been validated and verified as required by an accredited, approved third party VVB.
- (c) Following this, the project has been reviewed by Gold Standard and is subject to an over-arching independent review by the Gold Standard [Technical Advisory Committee \(TAC\)](#) and [NGO Supporters](#).
- (d) Any Certified SDG Impacts stated to have been achieved are real.
- (e) A project may be issued Certified Impact Statements and Products such as Gold Standard Verified Emission Reductions (VERs). This is subject to successful Performance Certification of the Project's conformity to applicable Gold Standard Impact Quantification Methodology and Product Requirements.
- (f) The Project is also able to promote its claims in accordance with the [Claims Guidelines](#).

2.2.2 | All projects from Listed status and beyond, including Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products are captured on the Gold Standard [Impact Registry](#) and are publicly and transparently available to all to review.

## 2.3 | STACKING

2.3.1 | Project Developer may potentially pursue any number and combination of Certified Impact Statements or Products, provided that:

- (a) All Requirements in this document and in the applicable Gold Standard approved Methodology and/or Product Requirements are fully met.
- (b) The Methodology and/or Product Requirements do not stipulate that the issuance of a given combination of Impact Statements and Products is ineligible under Gold Standard. Such details are confirmed within the specific guidelines, Impact Quantification Methodologies or Product Requirements.
- (c) All necessary legal terms and conditions are fully executed and complied with. It is noted that certain Product Requirements may impose particular legal requirements/come with Product-specific terms and conditions and other legal documents, that shall be completed.

2.3.2 | Project Developers and funders/buyers of Impact Statements and Products shall adhere to the [Claims Guidelines](#) as appropriate to the status of the Project. This defines and directs the use of claims made in relation to Gold Standard Certification.

2.3.3 | It is possible to change the project design after Design Certification to include more Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products as part of the Project (Annex A). However Impact Statements or Products for previously issued monitoring periods cannot be retroactively issued, unless stated otherwise in Activity or Product Requirements.

### 3 | GENERAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

1.1.1 The following General Eligibility Criteria applies to all projects seeking Gold Standard Certification:

- (a) **Types of Project:** Eligible projects shall include physical action/implementation on the ground. Pre-identified eligible project types are identified in the Eligibility Principles and Requirements section.
- (b) **Location of Project:** Projects may be located in any part of the world.
- (c) **Project Area, Project Boundary and Scale:** The Project Area and Project Boundary shall be defined. Projects may be developed at any scale although certain rules, requirements and limitations may apply under specific Activity Requirements, Impact Quantification Methodologies and Products Requirements.  
In order to avoid double counting the Project shall not be included in any other voluntary or compliance standards programme unless approved by Gold Standard (for example through dual certification). Also, if the Project Area overlaps with that of another Gold Standard or other voluntary or compliance standard programme of a similar nature, the project shall demonstrate that there is no double counting of impacts at design and performance certification (for example use of similar technology or practices through which the potential arises for double counting or misestimation of impacts amongst projects).
- (d) **Host Country Requirements:** Projects shall be in compliance with applicable Host Country's legal, environmental, ecological and social regulations.
- (e) **Contact Details:** As part of the Project Documentation the Project Developer shall provide (i) name and (ii) contact details of all Project Participants; AND in case of an organisation (iii) the legal registration details and (iv) documentation by the governing jurisdiction that proves that the entity is in good standing (defined as being a legal or other appropriate entity registered in or allowed to operate within the required jurisdiction and with no evidence of insolvency or legal/criminal notices placed against it or any of its Directors). Gold Standard retains the right (at its own discretion) to refuse use of the Standard where reputational concerns are highlighted.
- (f) **Legal Ownership:** Full and uncontested legal ownership of any Products that are generated under Gold Standard Certification, (for example carbon credits) shall be demonstrated. Where such

ownership is transferred from project beneficiaries this must be demonstrated transparently and with full, prior and informed consent (FPIC).

Note that for certain Project types there is a requirement for full and uncontested legal land title/tenure to be demonstrated. These are contained within specific Activity or Product Requirements. All projects shall immediately report to Gold Standard any land title/tenure disputes arising.

- (g) **Other Rights:** As well as legal title and ownership, the Project Developer shall also demonstrate where required uncontested legal rights and/or permissions concerning changes in use of other resources required to service the Project (*for example, access rights, water rights etc.*). Any known disputes or contested rights must be declared immediately to Gold Standard by the Project Developer and resolved prior to further project implementation in affected areas.
- (h) **Official Development Assistance (ODA) Declaration:** All Project Developers applying for project activities located in a country named by the OECD Development Assistance Committee's ODA recipient list and seeking Gold Standard Certification for carbon credits shall declare the Official Development Assistance (ODA) support. The Project Developer shall follow the [GHG Emissions Reduction & Sequestration Product Requirements](#) and submit the declaration at the time of Design Certification.

## 4 | ELIGIBILITY PRINCIPLES AND REQUIREMENTS

4.1.1 | In order to achieve Certification with Gold Standard, all Projects shall contribute to the Vision and Mission of Gold Standard, applied specifically through the following Eligibility Principles and Requirements.

### **Principle 1: Contribution to Climate Security & Sustainable Development**

- Projects shall be of a type pre-identified as eligible or shall submit to Gold Standard for approval of eligibility.
- Projects shall define their Baseline Scenario and Project Scenario.
- Projects shall contribute positively to Climate Security & Sustainable Development. These positive impacts are considered against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

4.1.2 | By successfully following these requirements and procedures:

- (a) The Project is demonstrated to either be of an eligible type under Gold Standard for the Global Goals or has sought and obtained approval from Gold Standard to proceed as a new project type.

- (b) The Project demonstrates its proposed contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals, meaning at least an impact on SDG 13 plus two other SDGs.
- (c) The Project includes the above points (a & b) in its Project Documentation, including the Monitoring & Reporting Plan.

**(a) ELIGIBLE PROJECT TYPES**

- 4.1.3 | A Project type is automatically eligible for Gold Standard Certification if there are Gold Standard approved Activity Requirements and/or Impact Quantification Methodologies associated with it or it's referenced in the Gold Standard Product Requirements. These are published to the Gold Standard website and shall be followed where provided for a given Project type.
- 4.1.4 | For Project types that are not automatically eligible, a Project Developer may submit to Gold Standard for approval. This shall be done, at a minimum, as part of the Preliminary Review, though it is recommended to engage with Gold Standard earlier to establish the criteria and requirements for approval.
- 4.1.5 | Project types applying for Gold Standard approval are referred to the Gold Standard Vision and Mission. The Project Developer shall demonstrate how the Project would contribute to these and how the Gold Standard for the Global Goals Requirements would be met in their application for approval.
- 4.1.6 | In reviewing a new Project type for approval, Gold Standard may establish new Requirements to be met by the Project in order to achieve Design Certification and ongoing Certified Project status. Where required, Gold Standard shall engage expert peer reviewers to establish these requirements, at the Project Developer's expense.
- 4.1.7 | Gold Standard does not support Project types associated with geo-engineering or energy generated from fossil fuel or nuclear, fossil fuel switch, or any project that supports, enhances or prolongs such energy generation. In certain cases, concerning energy efficiency involving fossil fuels (*for example, LPG stoves*), an exception is made and captured in the relevant Activity Requirements, Approved Methodology and/or Product Requirements.

**(b) ELIGIBLE PROJECT TYPES**

- 4.1.8 | The Project shall define both the Baseline and Project Scenarios. These are defined as follows:
  - (a) **Baseline Scenario:** The Baseline Scenario is defined as the reasonable, conservative scenario that would exist in the absence of the project. While setting the Baseline Scenario, the Project Developer shall consider the relevant applicable legislation and how effectively these are enforced.



- (b) Project Scenario:** The Project Scenario is defined as the scenario that will exist once the Project is implemented and operational.

Note that while not defined as a scenario, a consideration of the implementation and decommissioning phases (where relevant) of the project is also an important requirement within the [Safeguarding Principles](#) and [Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement](#) procedures.

- 4.1.9 | The defined Baseline and Project Scenarios shall be included in the project documentation and used to inform the other Principles outlined in this Section.
- 4.1.10 | Certain Impact Quantification methodologies allow projects to account Suppressed Demand scenario when establishing a baseline. In such cases, the application of Suppressed Demand baseline is limited to Small Scale Projects (as defined in the relevant Activity Requirements, Product Requirements and/or Methodology). Where a Suppressed Demand baseline is applied, it is not possible to 'stack' Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products as the definition of baseline may be contradictory.
- 4.1.11 | For Projects seeking Certified Impact Statements and/or Products, Gold Standard rules allow for the consideration of several potential design scenarios in the project documentation, as long as all aspects of each potential scenario are discussed in a satisfactory way. For example, additionality shall be demonstrated for each one of the potential scenarios, and stakeholder inputs must be gathered for each potential scenario. Other relevant aspects include the scale of the project, the validity/applicability of the applied methodology, and the assessment of sustainable development criteria including Safeguarding principles assessment. All potential scenarios must be Validated by the VVB and the actual scenario must be chosen before the first Verification.

**(c) CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE SECURITY & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.1.12 | All Projects shall demonstrate a clear, direct contribution to sustainable development, defined as making demonstrable, positive impacts on at least three [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), one of which must be SDG 13 (defined herein as Emissions Reductions or Removals and/or Adaptation to climate change). These are referred to as SDG Impacts.
- 4.1.13 | SDG Impacts shall be a primary effect – an intentional, direct effect of the project and shall not be 'one off' or an effect generated in design, construction, distribution, start-up or decommissioning of the Project.
- 4.1.14 | The Project shall identify the potential SDG Impacts provided by the Project by comparing the Project Scenario to the Baseline Scenario (note that

multiple baseline scenarios may be relevant depending on the SDG impacts and/or methodologies followed). The SDG Impacts shall be demonstrated as making a positive effect beyond what would reasonably be expected to occur in the Baseline Scenario.

- 4.1.15 | The Project shall identify the relevant monitoring indicators and/or monitoring parameters and define the monitoring approach in the [Project Design Document](#) to inform future [Monitoring Reports](#)
- 4.1.16 | To demonstrate SDG impacts, the Project may choose any of the following options
- (a) **Option 1** – For identified SDG Impacts the Project Developer shall review the SDG targets and indicators from the relevant National SDG Indicators, or in their absence, the latest internationally adopted version or the latest version ‘under consideration’ where indicators are not yet fully adopted. The Project Developer shall select the most relevant SDG targets and indicators to the chosen SDGs or propose indicators with justification and information that, when combined, demonstrate how the Project positively impacts the chosen SDGs and corresponding targets.
  - (b) **Option 2** – Follow a Gold Standard Approved SDG Tool for the demonstration of SDG Impacts.
  - (c) **Option 3** – Follow a [Gold Standard Approved Methodology](#), published or referenced via the Gold Standard website. These are typically used by Project Developers to achieve issuance of Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products.
- 4.1.17 | For option 3, any one or more of the minimum three SDG Impacts chosen by the Project Developer may be undertaken by following a [Gold Standard Approved Methodology](#). Project Developers may submit a methodology for review and approval by Gold Standard. Refer to the [Impact Quantification methodology approval procedure](#) for details. Note that it is possible to develop a Project and a Methodology concurrently.
- 4.1.18 | Projects shall seek Expert Stakeholder opinion and recommendation for certain SDG Impacts. Those SDGs requiring Expert Stakeholder opinion are pre-identified in specific Activity Requirements and [Safeguarding Principles and Requirements](#), though Gold Standard reserves the right to require an Expert Stakeholder comment or an adjustment of the SDG Impact claimed to safeguard credibility. For new project types, these shall be decided upon by Gold Standard prior to or during Preliminary Review. When, Expert Stakeholder opinion and recommendation is required, the Project Developer shall demonstrate that the Expert Stakeholder has confirmed that the impact is real and that any recommendations have been considered and incorporated into the project design.

## Principle 2: Safeguarding Principles

Projects shall conduct a Safeguarding Principles Assessment and conform to Gold Standard [Safeguarding Principles and Requirements](#).

4.1.19 | By successfully following these Requirements and Procedures:

- (a) The Project completes a Safeguarding Principles Assessment as per [Safeguarding Principles and Requirements](#) to define the relevance of the different Requirements to the Project (note, further guidance is also provided in specific Activity Requirements).
- (b) The Project demonstrates how all relevant Requirements are met.
- (c) The Project includes above points (a & b) in the [Project Design Document](#), including the Monitoring & Reporting Plan.

### (a) CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE SECURITY & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

4.1.20 | Referring to the Gold Standard [Safeguarding Principles & Requirements](#) document – all Projects shall undertake an upfront assessment against the Gold Standard Safeguarding Principles and implement their Project in accordance with the stated requirements. The assessment shall apply to the Project Scenario, although assessment questions and Requirements involve a comparison to the Baseline Scenario(s) and/or the implementation or decommissioning phases of a Project.

4.1.21 | A number of Safeguarding Principles require the opinion and recommendations of an Expert Stakeholder. These are pre-identified in the [Safeguarding Principles & Requirements](#) Procedure and in relevant Activity Requirements.

4.1.22 | The Safeguarding Principles Assessment and evidence of conformity to the associated Requirements shall be included in the [Project Design Document](#), including the proposed monitoring parameters in the Monitoring & Reporting Plan. The Monitoring & Reporting Plan shall capture any parameters that are required to be monitored and reported upon and/or reassessed in the future, in line with the [Safeguarding Principles & Requirements](#). This shall be used to inform the ongoing [Monitoring Reports](#), Verification and Performance Review.

4.1.23 | The [Monitoring Report](#) shall include reporting on Safeguarding Principles and the associated monitoring parameters, as applicable.

## Principle 3: Stakeholder Inclusivity

Projects shall identify and engage Relevant Stakeholders and seek Expert Stakeholder input where necessary in the design, planning and implementation of the Project.

Project design shall reflect the views and inputs of stakeholders and ongoing feedback shall be sought, captured and acted upon throughout the life of the Project.

4.1.24 |By successfully following these Requirements and Procedures:

- (a) The Project demonstrates how it has identified, engaged and consulted with relevant stakeholders. Where required, expert stakeholders are engaged in the process.
- (b) The Project demonstrates the records of the consultation and how the outcomes of the consultation have positively influenced the project design and implementation.
- (c) The Project demonstrates that stakeholder concerns have been addressed and any disputes have been resolved.
- (d) The Project demonstrates that an appropriate system for the ongoing capture, recording and responding to stakeholder concerns is developed.
- (e) The Project includes the above points (a to d) in the [Project Design Document](#), including the Monitoring & Reporting Plan.

#### **(a) STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT**

4.1.25 |All Projects shall conduct Stakeholder Consultation and an ongoing engagement process. The Stakeholder Consultation shall be conducted in accordance with the requirements outlined in this section and [Gold Standard Stakeholder Consultation & Engagement Requirements](#).

4.1.26 |The Stakeholder Consultation shall comprise of a minimum of two rounds of consultation including one mandatory physical meeting and one stakeholder feedback round lasting for at least two months and these consultations shall be open to anyone wishing to attend.

4.1.27 |The Project Developer shall identify and inform all relevant (local, affected and interested) stakeholders, including relevant local and national authorities, the Gold Standard Secretariat and all Gold Standard NGO Supporters active in the host country of the Project.

4.1.28 |The Stakeholder Consultation shall be conducted prior to the start date of the Project. If the Consultation is conducted after the start date, the Project Developer shall provide further explanation of how comments received during the consultation are taken into account and implement a Grievance Mechanism in line with the [Stakeholder Consultation & Engagement Requirements](#).

4.1.29 |The Project Developer shall share the information on the Project's objective, scale and duration, contribution to sustainable development and compliance with safeguards to ensure that stakeholders are actively involved in the Project from the beginning thus enabling stakeholders to influence the project design and implementation.

- 4.1.30 | In addition to seeking the views of relevant (interested and affected) stakeholder inputs, certain Safeguarding Principles and SDG Impacts may require the opinion and recommendations of Expert Stakeholders. These are stated in specific Activity Requirements or in the [Safeguarding Principles & Requirements](#). The Project shall demonstrate how the opinions and recommendations of Expert Stakeholders are incorporated into the project design. The feedback from Expert Stakeholders may be sought any time during the project design and consultations, but it is recommended that they are sought during the first phase of consultation.
- 4.1.31 | Where a given Safeguarding Requirement, SDG Impact or other topic requires the input of independent Expert Stakeholder(s), this appointment shall be made directly by the Project Developer. A signed statement from the appointed Expert Stakeholders confirming that they have no conflict of interest or other financial interest in the Project, Project Developer or associated organisations shall be provided to Gold Standard.
- 4.1.32 | Expert Stakeholders are not necessarily required to attend face-to-face consultation meetings but must be provided with sufficient information to form opinions and recommendations concerning the Project. Unedited written feedback from Expert Stakeholder(s) along with evidence as to how the feedback has been addressed and incorporated into the Project design shall be provided for Validation.
- 4.1.33 | Where the VVBs and/or Gold Standard deem it necessary, further queries shall be raised with the Expert Stakeholder who shall be retained by the Project Developer accordingly.
- 4.1.34 | The Project shall have a formal input, feedback and grievance mechanism in place and the grievance mechanism shall be discussed during the Stakeholder Consultations as per [Stakeholder Consultation & Engagement Requirements](#).
- 4.1.35 | The project shall prepare the Stakeholder consultation report of the consultation process, including consultation feedback and how this was incorporated into the design of the Project. The Stakeholder consultation report shall be submitted to Gold Standard within three months of the event (though this date may be after the Project Start Date).
- 4.1.36 | The [Monitoring Report](#) shall include an update on stakeholder feedback received during the period and any actions taken in response. It shall also review the relative successes and failures of the ongoing stakeholder feedback mechanism and any proposals for improvement.

#### **Principle 4 : Demonstration of real outcomes**

Projects shall:

- Design and develop an upfront [Project Design Document](#) (PDD), incorporating a Monitoring & Reporting Plan.
- Undergo Design Certification (comprising Validation and Design Review).
- Undertake monitoring in accordance with the Monitoring & Reporting Plan and produce Annual Reports and [Monitoring Reports](#).
- Undergo Performance Certification (comprising Verification and Performance Review) in order to achieve Gold Standard Certified Project status and to issue Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements and Gold Standard Certified Products where sought.
- Undergo Gold Standard Design Certification Renewal in order to remain at the Certified Project status and to continue to seek Gold Standard Certified Products and Impact Statements where sought.

4.1.37 | This Principle represents the Gold Standard Project Cycle and the timescales and frequency for Certification. Refer to Project Cycle Section for requirements and procedure for Design Certification, Performance Certification, and Design Certification Renewal including the third party VVB audit.

4.1.38 | By successfully following the Procedures and applicable Requirements included the Project Cycle Section, the Project demonstrates real and verified outcomes and are able to issue the relevant Certified Impact Statements and/or Products.

**(a) PROJECT START DATE**

4.1.39 | The Project start date is the earliest date on which the Project Developer has committed to expenditures related to the implementation of the Project. This does not include the purchase or option to purchase the land upon which a Project is intended to take place

4.1.40 | Examples of the start date may include the date on which contracts have been signed for equipment or construction/operation services required for the Project. Minor pre-project expenses, such as the contracting of services/payment of fees for feasibility studies or preliminary surveys, shall not be considered in the determination of the start date as they do not necessarily indicate the commencement of implementation of the Project. For distributed technology projects, the start date is the date of implementation of the first unit under the project.

4.1.41 | Note that the Project start date definition and requirements may differ under certain Activity or Product Requirements.

4.1.42 | The project start date and the stakeholder consultation date determines the project as

- (a) Regular Projects, for which the Stakeholder Consultation (1<sup>st</sup> round) has been conducted before the Project Start Date.

- (b) Retroactive Projects, for which the Stakeholder Consultation (1<sup>st</sup> round) is conducted after the Project Start Date.

**(b) DEVELOPMENT OF MONITORING AND REPORTING PLAN**

4.1.43 | Projects shall produce a Monitoring & Reporting Plan as part of the [Project Design Document](#) that includes a detailed approach on the following:

- (a) Monitoring and reporting of parameters identified for positive SDG Impacts and associated targets.
- (b) Monitoring and reporting of parameters associated with any Requirements and re-assessments highlighted by the Safeguarding Principles Assessment.
- (c) Monitoring and reporting of Stakeholder Engagement, feedback, grievances and any action taken, including as recommended by any Expert Stakeholder.
- (d) Any monitoring requirements and parameters in any Gold Standard Approved Methodology, Tool and/or Product Requirements selected.

4.1.44 | For each monitored parameter from (a) to (d) above the following information shall be provided in the Monitoring Plan:

- (a) Metric or variable that shall be monitored and reported.
- (b) Frequency of monitoring and reporting against each parameter.
- (c) Method of collection of information and identification and details of the organisation or individuals involved in the collection.
- (d) Any quality control approaches for the proposed data collection and reporting.
- (e) Any ethical restrictions on the collection and/or reporting of collected information.

4.1.45 | The Project Monitoring & Reporting Plan shall be presented as part of the Project Documentation for Validation and shall form the basis of ongoing Monitoring Reports that shall be presented for Verification.

**Principle 5 : Financial Additionality & Ongoing Financial Need**

All Projects must demonstrate impacts that are additional as compared to their baseline scenario (i.e. the benefits of the Project are beyond a business-as-usual



scenario) as covered in Principle 1, above. In addition, Projects following certain certification pathways (i.e. those seeking to use certification to attract finance or issue market products through the issuance of Gold Standard Certified Products or Impact Statements) shall demonstrate Financial Additionality and Ongoing Financial Need.

4.1.46 | By successfully following the Procedures and Requirements in this Section the Project demonstrates Financial Additionality and is therefore able to issue relevant Certified Impact Statements and/or Products.

**(a) FINANCIAL ADDITIONALTY**

4.1.47 | All Gold Standard Projects seeking the issuance of Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products shall be demonstrated to be additional, meaning that their impact in terms of climate security (mitigation or adaptation) and sustainable development are beyond those that would have occurred in the absence of the certified Gold Standard project. In specific Project types, the application of the Requirements in this section is determined under the relevant Activity Requirements and Product Requirements.

4.1.48 | Additionality tools:

- (a) Gold Standard Projects shall use either a UNFCCC-approved or a Gold Standard-approved additionality tool to demonstrate project additionality, with the exception of specific Activity or Product Requirements as stated in the relevant documentation. Where appropriate under specific Activity Requirements, small-scale Gold Standard Projects can use the latest version of the CDM “Methodological Tool - [Demonstration of additionality of small-scale project activities](#)” to demonstrate additionality
- (b) **Version of tool:** The latest version of the additionality tool available at the time of first submission to Gold Standard shall be applied. This tool may be used by the Project until the Project completes Design Certification.
- (c) **New additionality tools:** Proposals may be made for new Gold Standard additionality tools. Gold Standard reserves the right to require changes to proposed additionality tools, seek clarification, or reject proposed additionality tools if insufficient progress is made on requested changes. New approaches for additionality demonstration may also be submitted to Gold Standard for approval as part of a new SDG Impact Quantification Methodology.

4.1.49 | **Prior Consideration:** The following requirements are applicable for the demonstration of prior consideration of revenues from Gold Standard certification for standalone projects:



- (a) Regular projects are exempt from any kind of prior consideration of revenues from Gold Standard certification checks.
- (b) Retroactive projects shall submit the required documents for preliminary review (time of first submission) within one year of the project start date. Retroactive Project submitted at a date later than one year from the project start date will not be eligible for Gold Standard certification.
- (c) The prior consideration rule is also applicable to a Project that undergoes a design change. A project with a Certified Design requesting to include a new technology/measures shall submit the request for approval of design change to Gold Standard within one year of the start date of the proposed technology/measures (design change component). If the developer fails to submit the request for approval within one year, the design change component shall not be eligible for Gold Standard Certification.

#### 4.1.50 | **For PoA/VPAs**

- (a) Regular VPAs are exempt from any kind of prior consideration of carbon revenue checks.
- (b) Retroactive VPAs with a project start date before or after the time of first submission of the PoA must submit the required documents for preliminary review within one year of its start date. Retroactive VPAs that are submitted at a date later than one year from the VPA start date will not be eligible for Gold Standard Certification.

### **(b) ONGOING FINANCIAL NEED**

4.1.51 | All Gold Standard Projects (including those that transition from earlier versions) required to demonstrate Financial Additionality, as noted above, shall demonstrate Ongoing Financial Need for such mechanisms.

4.1.52 | Ongoing Financial Need shall be demonstrated at Design Certification Renewal. The project shall provide a qualitative narrative, supported by an overview of project finances, that demonstrates how the finance derived Gold Standard Certification is material to the ongoing sustainability of the Project. The narrative may include, but not limited to the following;

- (a) Information highlighting the key categories and amounts or relative proportions (%) of project income and outgoings, including the relative proportion of certification related cost and revenue.
- (b) Description on how finance derived Gold Standard Certification contributes to or is being used to sustain or enhance the project.
- (c) Where no revenue is realised from Gold Standard certification during a given period, this would be considered a FAR for the next Issuance.

4.1.53 | The submission of the information to demonstrate OFN is mandatory, however this information will not be used for formal decision making to decide whether a project shall renew or not. The information

- (a) shall be validated by the VVB to ensure its accuracy
- (b) may remain confidential (i.e. shall be submitted alongside other project documentation and not published to the Gold Standard [Impact Registry](#)), in recognition of the commercially sensitive nature of the information
- (c) shall satisfy the OFN requirements and no further information (beyond responding to clarification questions) will be requested

**(c) STACKING AND FINANCIAL ADDITIONALITY**

4.1.54 | Projects seeking to issue multiple different Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements and/or products ('stacking') shall demonstrate Financial Additionality as per above. Such Projects shall also provide qualitative, evidence-based justification of the need and value-add to the Project outcomes for each additional revenue stream.

**(d) PROGRAMMES OF ACTIVITY (PoA)**

4.1.55 | The Gold Standard certification cycle is suitable for multi-phased programmes with multiple interventions with an extended implementation period within a sector or multiple sectors, as is typically the case in, for example, urban low-carbon growth programmes

4.1.56 | Programmes of Activity shall follow [Programme of Activity Requirements](#). The Requirements in this document are applicable for a Programme where multiple individual activities are spread over space and time.

## 5 | PROJECT CYCLE

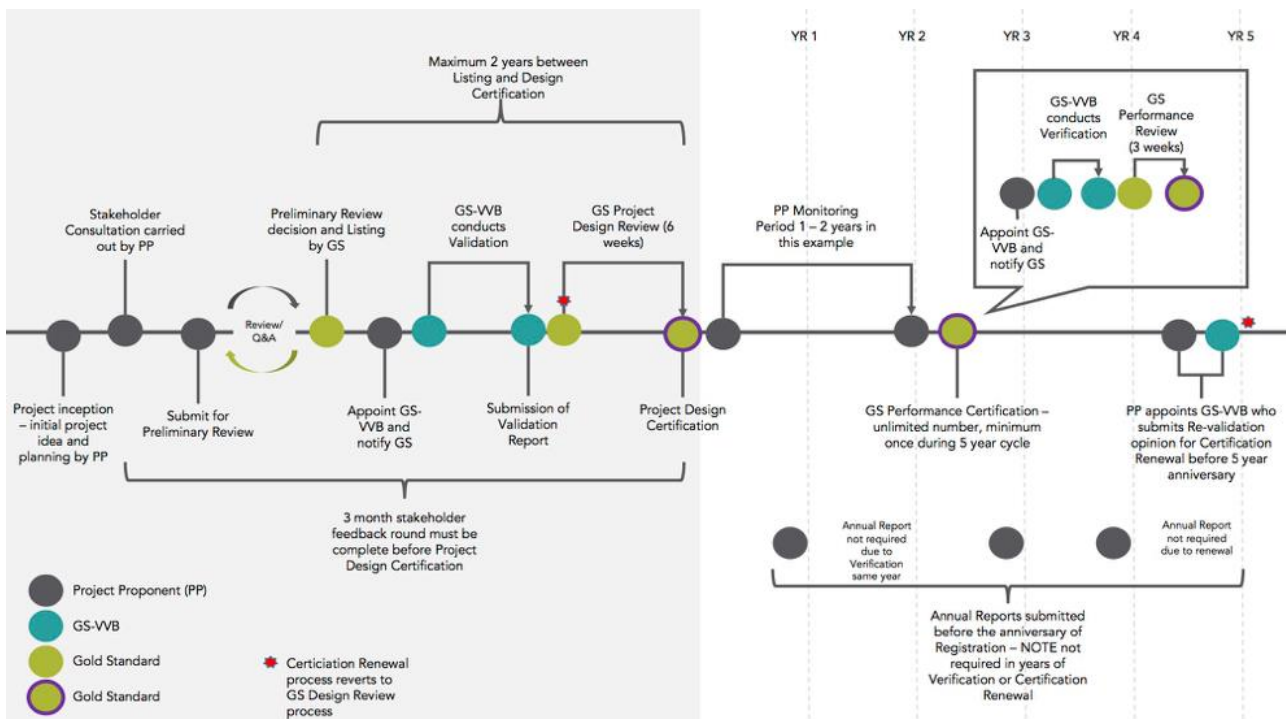
5.1.1 | Gold Standard for the Global Goals Project Certification is based on a five year renewable certification cycle, with key features as follows:

- (a) All Projects must LIST with the Gold Standard by undertaking a Preliminary Review and uploading Key Project Information, draft [Project Design Document](#) and completed [Stakeholder Consultation Report](#).
- (b) Projects may then seek Gold Standard Certified Design status by successfully completing Validation (within two years of the date of Listing) and a subsequent Design Review.
- (c) New projects attaining Gold Standard Certified Design status then enter a five-year renewable certification cycle wherein for each five-year period they must undergo Verification and Performance Review to achieve and maintain Gold Standard Certified Project status and where

sought Issuance of Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements and Products.

- (d) To retain Certified Design status at the fifth year, all projects must undergo Design Certification Renewal by updating information and the baseline, unless otherwise stated in relevant Activity or Product requirements.
- (e) The number of Performance Certifications in a five-year certification cycle is not limited although it must take place at least once, no later than two years after Project implementation or Design Certification, whichever is later. In case of Design Certification Renewal, it must take place no later than two years after Design Certification Renewal.
- (f) The Activity Requirements and/or Product Requirements governs the maximum number of Design Certification Renewals allowed for specific project types. In the absence of any such stated Requirement, a Project is limited to one Renewal (i.e. maximum 10 years certification).
- (g) Specific requirements apply in areas such as conflict and emergency zones as per Annex B of this document.

5.1.2 | The following process flow shows the Project Cycle for a typical Project Certification:



(a) PRELIMINARY REVIEW

5.1.3 | The Preliminary Review (time of first submission) is conducted once at the outset (i.e., at an early stage of project design and before Listing on the Gold Standard [Impact Registry](#), see below) of a Project. During the Preliminary Review, Gold Standard conducts a desk review of the Key Project Information

and Draft [Project Design Document, if applicable](#). This review considers whether the Project has the potential to conform to the Gold Standard Requirements and may therefore progress to Listed status. Refer to the latest version of [Rule Update- Revision to preliminary review requirements and procedure for the document requirements for preliminary review procedure](#).

- 5.1.4 | The Preliminary Review includes a desk review of the Project Eligibility Principles as well as the applicability of the methodology amongst other matters, based on the Key Project Information, draft PDD and [Stakeholder Consultation Report](#). It involves one of the pathways below, dependent on the type of activity. Gold Standard shall decide which pathway a Project is required to undertake, though guidelines are provided as follows:
- (a) Pathway 1 – Completeness Check Pathway - This pathway is for regular and retroactive cycle, eligible project types unless otherwise stated in the Activity Requirements. Note that certain project types require certain details to be checked and resolved more thoroughly during the Completeness Check. These are stated in the Activity Requirements. The Completeness Check Pathway consists of a Preliminary Review period of 4 weeks, conducted by Gold Standard.
  - (b) Pathway 2 – Detailed Preliminary Review – In this pathway, Gold Standard conducts a more thorough check of the project documentation. The application of a Detailed Preliminary Assessment is at the discretion of Gold Standard, though typically is required for early users of a new Project Type, Methodology or Product. The Detailed Preliminary Review Pathway consists of a Preliminary Review period of 4 weeks, conducted by Gold Standard.
- 5.1.5 | CARs/FARs/OBs may be raised during this review that must be addressed during Validation. However, matters pertaining to Eligibility Principles shall be addressed prior to Listing
- 5.1.6 | During the Preliminary Review step, Gold Standard may identify any further matters that require Expert Stakeholder opinion and recommendations not already pre-identified. Project developers must submit their response to Gold Standard within two weeks of receiving comments. Late submissions will result in the complete rejection of the request. If rejected, the developer must submit a new request for preliminary review. If delays exceed one year, project documents must be updated to align with the latest standard requirements, including methodology updates and new validation or verification as applicable.
- 5.1.7 | The Preliminary Assessment starts when the Project Developer has:
- (a) signed and submitted the [Terms and Conditions](#) AND
  - (b) submitted the Project Documentation AND
  - (c) paid the [fee](#) for the Preliminary Review, where required.

5.1.8 | As The minimum requirements for submission of Project Documentation include Key Project Information and

- (a) A **draft** [Stakeholder Consultation Report](#)
- (b) A substantially completed Project Design Documentation submission that captures:
  - i. Fully completed details required under Section – General Eligibility Criteria.
  - ii. A substantially completed [Safeguarding Principles Assessment](#) (meaning the majority completed, including any key matters that relate to the project type or context) including any Expert Stakeholder opinions and recommendations.
  - iii. Defined SDG Impacts including any Expert Stakeholder opinions and recommendations sought.
  - iv. Confirmation of certification pathway and any Gold Standard Approved Methodologies and Product Requirements followed including a demonstration of Financial Additionality where required.
  - v. A draft Monitoring Plan.

5.1.9 | The Preliminary Review is intended as a guide to the Project Developer and does not represent a Certification review or result in Certification. It does not guarantee that a Project shall be successful in Validation or Design Review or ongoing Verification and Performance Review. Neither does it guarantee that further issues or alternative interpretation will arise later. The CARs, OBs and FARs are indicative only; further matters may be raised or interpreted differently by the VVB and/or Gold Standard during the Project Cycle.

5.1.10 | The outcome of the Preliminary Review may be:

- (a) a successful Review without any likely or potential CARs, FARs or OBs identified, OR
- (b) a successful Review with likely or potential CARs, FAR s or OBs identified but that are not required to be resolved prior to Listing, OR
- (c) an unsuccessful Review with at least one potential Non Conformity (NC) identified.

With either outcome (a) or (b) the Project may progress to Listing, as per the Section below.

5.1.11 | With a successful Preliminary Review, the Project will obtain 'Listed' status in the Gold Standard Registry. This means that:

- (a) The Key Project Information, draft [Project Design Documentation](#) and supporting documentation are made publicly available, AND

- (b) The Project Developer may promote the Project according to the [Claims Guidelines](#) as appropriate for Listed status Projects.
- (c) The Project may proceed to Validation.

5.1.12 | Listed status does not constitute or convey Certification and does not provide any guarantee that the Project will ultimately achieve Certification.

## **(b) VALIDATION AND DESIGN REVIEW (DESIGN CERTIFICATION)**

5.1.13 | Validation may start after

- (a) A project has achieved Listed status, AND
- (b) The Project Developer has contracted an eligible, [approved VVB](#), AND
- (c) The Project Developer has submitted full Project Documentation and Supporting Documents to the VVB, AND
- (d) The Project Developer has notified Gold Standard of the commencement of Validation and the indicative date for completion and submission.

5.1.14 | Validation may include a site visit by a VVB (refer to Site Visit and Remote Audit Requirements and Procedures for specific requirements on site visit) who assesses the up-front design and monitoring plan for a Project against applicable Requirements. This includes Validation of:

- (a) The Project Documentation including the [Project Design Document](#) and Monitoring & Reporting Plan, including any updates to the Key Project Information after Listed Status has achieved.
- (b) Any supporting document and evidence to demonstrate conformity to all applicable Gold Standard Requirements.

5.1.15 | The VVB is appointed directly by the Project Developer. A VVB shall be selected from the list of approved VVBs, eligible for the Project type and pathway proposed. The VVB appointment shall include for responding to any clarifications, queries, OBs, FARs and CARs raised by Gold Standard during Design Certification Review.

5.1.16 | The Project shall complete Validation (defined as the date of submission of Validation Report by the VVB) within two years of successful listing of the project.

5.1.17 | Validation ends when VVB has submitted a final Validation Report with no open NCs and/or CARs, in the opinion of the VVB, to Gold Standard.

5.1.18 | Design Review may start after a positive final Validation Report has been submitted for Gold Standard Review (or in the case of Internal Validation, a project is successfully validated) and the completeness check conducted by Gold standard is successful. Project developers must submit their response to



Gold Standard within two weeks of receiving comments. Late submissions will result in the complete rejection of the request. If rejected, the developer must submit a new request for preliminary review. If delays exceed one year, project documents must be updated to align with the latest standard requirements, including methodology updates and new validation or verification as applicable.

- 5.1.19 | Design review is conducted by Gold Standard. It involves a review of all Project Documentation along with the Validation Report and a two week public consultation managed by Gold Standard.
- 5.1.20 | During Design Review, all project documentation is made available to the Gold Standard [Technical Advisory Committee \(TAC\)](#) and [NGO Supporters](#) for review and for public consultation via Gold Standard Assurance platform for two weeks.
- 5.1.21 | Design Review lasts for a minimum period of 4 weeks and is concluded when all CARs/CLs are successfully closed. The VVB shall be retained by the Project Developer to respond to clarification requests and CARs raised by Gold Standard. The public consultation is conducted as part of 4 week review.
- 5.1.22 | During Design Review, new CARs, FARs and OBs may be raised by any party. If any new CARs or FARs are opened, these shall be addressed by either the Project Developer and/or the VVB. VVB & Project developers must submit their response to Gold Standard within six weeks of receiving comments. Late submissions will result in the complete rejection of the request. If rejected, the developer must submit a new request for preliminary review. If delays exceed one year, project documents must be updated to align with the latest standard requirements, including methodology updates and new validation or verification as applicable.
- 5.1.23 | The date of Design Certification is the last day of the 4 week Design Review period, even if the design review is concluded after this date.
- 5.1.24 | A positive conclusion of the Design Review results in Gold Standard Certified Design status, which means that:
- (a) The Project Design Document, supporting documentation, Monitoring & Reporting Plan and final Validation Report shall be made public (unless otherwise agreed with Gold Standard, for example in the case of commercially or personal security sensitive information).
  - (b) The Project becomes eligible for Performance Certification.
  - (c) The Project Developer may promote the Project according to the [Claims Guidelines](#) as appropriate for Gold Standard Certified Design status Projects.

### **(c) VERIFICATION PERFORMANCE REVIEW (PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATION)**

- 5.1.25 | Verification may start after:

- (a) Project has achieved Gold Standard Certified Design status (it may also be combined with validation, see 'Combined Design and Performance Certification'), AND
- (b) The Project Developer has contracted an [eligible VVB](#), AND
- (c) The Project Developer has submitted the [Monitoring Report](#) to the VVB, AND
- (d) The Project Developer has notified Gold Standard of the commencement of Verification.

5.1.26 | Verification includes a site visit by a VVB who assesses the following against all Gold Standard Requirements including applicable Activity Requirements, Gold Standard Methodology and Product Requirements:

- (a) The [Monitoring Report](#) (including any updates in Annual Reports)
- (b) All supporting evidence and documents included by the Project Developer to demonstrate conformity

5.1.27 | The VVB is directly appointed by the Project Developer. A VVB shall be selected from the [list of approved VVBs](#), eligible for the project type and pathway proposed. The VVB shall be retained by the Project Developer to review and respond to queries raised during the Performance Review.

5.1.28 | Unless otherwise stated (for example in an applied Methodology or Product Requirements), the same VVB may undertake Validation and Verification of a given Project.

5.1.29 | Verification must occur at least once during the five-year Certification cycle with the first Verification completed within two years of project Implementation Date or Design Certification, whichever is later. The Project implementation date is defined as the date at which physical activity first becomes operational, for example, the commencement of energy generation or start of distribution of household technology.

5.1.30 | Verification ends when the VVB has submitted a positive Verification Report to Gold Standard. A positive Verification Report shall have no pending or open CARs in the opinion of the GS-VVB.

5.1.31 | The performance review starts after a positive final Verification Report is submitted for Gold Standard Review and the completeness check conducted by Gold standard is successful. VVB and Project developers must submit their response to Gold Standard within two weeks of receiving comments. Late submissions will result in the complete rejection of the request. If rejected, the developer must submit a new request for preliminary review. If delays exceed one year, project documents must be updated to align with the latest standard requirements, including methodology updates and new validation or verification as applicable.



- 5.1.32 | Performance review is conducted by Gold Standard following success completion of Verification. It involves a review of the [Monitoring Report](#), and all supporting Evidence and documentation including the Verification Report and a two week public consultation managed by Gold Standard.
- 5.1.33 | During the Performance Review, all Project Documentation are also made available to [Technical Advisory Committee \(TAC\)](#) and [NGO Supporters](#) for their review and for public consultation via Gold Standard Assurance platform for two weeks.
- 5.1.34 | The Performance Review period lasts for minimum period of 3 weeks<sup>1</sup> and is concluded when all CARs/CLs are successfully closed. The VVB shall be retained by the Project Developer to respond to clarification requests and CARs raised by Gold Standard. The public consultation is conducted as part of 3 week review.
- 5.1.35 | During the Performance Review new CARs, FARs and OBs may be raised by any party, including Gold Standard. If any new CARs or FARs are opened, these shall be addressed by either the Project Developer and/or the VVB. VVB and Project developers must submit their response to Gold Standard within six weeks of receiving comments. Late submissions will result in the complete rejection of the request. If rejected, the developer must submit a new request for preliminary review. If delays exceed one year, project documents must be updated to align with the latest standard requirements, including methodology updates and new validation or verification as applicable.
- 5.1.36 | The positive conclusion of the Performance Review period shall result in Gold Standard Certified Project status, which means that:
- (a) The Project Documentation, supporting documentation and Verification Report are made public via the [Impact Registry](#).
  - (b) The Project can issue any Gold Standard Certified Products or Impact Statements upon payment of required fee.
- 5.1.37 | The project may take into account retroactive period for performance Certification of Certified Impact Statement and /or Products. The maximum period for Retroactive Certification is two years prior to the date of Project Design Certification unless otherwise stated in a specific Methodology or Product Requirements.
- 5.1.38 | The project making changes to the registered project design (Annex A) may request Retroactive Certification for design change component for maximum two years prior to the date of Design Change Approval.

---

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated in a specific Activity Requirement, Methodology or Product Requirement.

**(d) ANNUAL PORTING**

- 5.1.39 | Transparent, annual update reports need to be provided for Projects that have achieved the Project Design Certification stage or have successfully transitioned to Gold Standard for the Global Goals. An annual report shall be submitted for each monitoring year by end of next calendar year for which verification is not completed<sup>2</sup>. If a verification is in progress but not completed, then an Annual Report is still required by the end of calendar year.
- 5.1.40 | Failure to provide Annual Reports as required shall result in the de-certification of the Project.
- 5.1.41 | The Annual Report shall be submitted to Gold Standard which will be made publicly available.
- 5.1.42 | The Annual Report shall focus on information since the last Annual Report or Verification Report as appropriate and provide following information
- (a) A summary of the recent activities, events and actions related to the Project,
  - (b) A clear statement on how stakeholders may provide inputs/grievances,
  - (c) A list of all inputs/grievances that have been received since the last Annual Report together with their respective answers/actions,
  - (d) Any incidents or events that may impact the Outcomes/Impacts delivered to date (in terms of loss) or the ongoing Performance of the Project,
  - (e) Any legal contest or dispute that has arisen,
  - (f) Any updates to the Key Project Information, [Project Design Document](#), Monitoring & Reporting Plan and any other supporting documentation,
  - (g) A brief descriptive summary of all monitoring information collected during the year,
  - (h) Any update of the 'Project Participants & Secured Titles' (in case of changes)
- 5.1.43 | The Project Developer shall attest to the accuracy of the information provided by its signature on the Annual Report. The signatory shall be an individual with legal signing authority within the Project Developer's organisation.
- 5.1.44 | Annual Reporting does not represent Certification nor any decision-making or agreement to any design change by Gold Standard. Annual Reporting is intended as an opportunity to share progress and track key updates and confirms to Gold Standard that the Project remains active. With formal review

---

<sup>2</sup> For example, if a project does not complete the verification for monitoring year 2019 by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020, the project shall submit an Annual report for monitoring year 2019 latest by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

of conformity to Requirements; any changes in approach shall be undertaken at Performance Certification only.

**(e) DESIGN CERTIFICATION RENEWAL**

5.1.45 | To maintain Gold Standard Certified Project status beyond five years, a Project must undergo Design Certification Renewal. This process shall begin (defined by the submission of a Renewal opinion by a VVB for Design Review to Gold Standard) no later than the last date of current certification cycle. Note that review of the Design Certification Renewal may complete after the last date of current crediting period. In this case, the renewal date shall be the first day after the end date of the current certification cycle.

5.1.46 | Delay in the completion of re-validation beyond the last date of current certification cycle shall result in a reduction of any issuance of Certified Products and/or Impact Statements available during following certification cycle (for example, a delay of 1 year beyond the first cycle shall mean that no Certified Impact Statements shall be issued for the period of delay).

5.1.47 | Design Certification Renewal follows the same process as Validation and Design Review (Design Certification) including two week public consultation though the scope of assessment is limited to:

- (a) Changes in the Project as related to the General Eligibility Criteria
- (b) Incorporation of any relevant updates to the Gold Standard Requirements
- (c) Re-definition of Baseline Scenario and any impact of change on the Eligibility Principles, Criteria and Requirements
- (d) Any Gold Standard activity, product and methodology-specific Requirements
- (e) Demonstration of Ongoing Financial Need, where relevant – see Ongoing Financial Need

5.1.48 | A five - year Design Certification Renewal cycle apply to all projects though some project types are allowed for automatic renewal for a given number of cycles and/or to remove the need for any or all of (a)-(e) above. Such exceptions are defined in applicable Activity and/or Product Requirements and/or Methodology.

**(f) TRANSITION PROJECTS**

5.1.49 | Transition projects shall maintain their existing crediting cycle and maximum crediting periods upon transition to Gold Standard for Global Goals following [GHG Emissions Reductions & Sequestration Product Requirements](#).

5.1.50 | Transitioning projects, maintaining their existing crediting cycle shall undergo Performance Certification no later than the first two years after project implementation or design certification, whichever is later, and once every three years after that, unless the Verifier provides a convincing case for less frequent visits as part of the Verification Report.

**(g) RETROACTIVE DESIGN CERTIFICATION**

5.1.51 | Retroactive Projects shall submit for Preliminary Review within one year of the Project Start Date.

5.1.52 | For certain Methodologies and Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements, the Design Certification Requirements for a Retroactive Project may differ. Likewise, some Product Requirements require Prior Consideration of revenues in order to be eligible to receive an Issued Product and may limit or extend the maximum period of Certification prior to Design Certification.

**(h) COMBINING DESIGN CERTIFICATION AND FIRST PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATION**

5.1.53 | Project Developers may choose to combine Design Certification with their first Verification and Performance Review. The VVB may combine site visits/consider their reports concurrently.

5.1.54 | Concurrent Design Review and Performance Review commences when the VVB submits positive Validation and Verification Reports at the same time to Gold Standard.

5.1.55 | Following receipt of the VVB Reports, Gold Standard shall conduct a review that covers both the Design Review and the Performance Review following the process outlines above, including two week public consultation. In such cases, the Design Review lasts a minimum of six weeks.

5.1.56 | Successful conclusion means both Design Certification and Performance Certification are approved concurrently including any issuance of Gold Standard Certified Impact and/or Products.

## **6 | PROJECT DOCUMENTATION AND TECHNICAL REQUIREMENT**

6.1.1 | ASD Projects shall provide evidence of conformity to the Requirements using approved Gold Standard Project [templates](#) except for supporting evidence and documents. The following project documentation and associated evidence and information are required at different stages of the project cycle.

(a) Preliminary Review

- i. Key Project Information (see [PDD Template](#))
- ii. Draft [PDD](#) including [Safeguarding Principles Assessment](#), SDG Impacts identified and draft Monitoring & Reporting Plan
- iii. [Stakeholder Consultation Report](#)
- iv. Supporting evidence and documents such as maps, survey results or calculations
- v. Signed [Cover Letter](#) and [Terms and Conditions](#)
- (b) Validation and Design Review
  - i. Completed [PDD](#) including Monitoring & Reporting Plan
  - ii. Fully completed [Stakeholder Consultation Report](#)
  - iii. Validation Report
  - iv. Any Activity, Context, Methodology or Product Requirement specific documentation
  - v. Supporting evidence and documents
- (c) Annual Reporting
  - i. Completed Annual Report
  - ii. Supporting evidence and documents
- (d) Verification and Performance Review
  - i. Any updates to the Key Project Information, [PDD](#) and Monitoring & Reporting Plan
  - ii. Any Context, Activity, Methodology and Product Requirement specific documentation
  - iii. Verification Report
  - iv. Supporting evidence and documents such as maps, survey results and/or calculations

6.1.2 | The Project Developer shall open an account on the Impact Registry:

- (a) Project Documentation, [PDD](#), Monitoring & Reporting Plan, Reports, supporting documentation and the VVB's Validation and Verification Reports shall be submitted to the Gold Standard Registry. Note that the VVB is responsible for uploading the final Validation or Verification Report.
- (b) All Project Documentation, except confidential information, shall be made publicly available through the [Impact Registry](#).
- (c) All information shall be submitted in English, OR a language that has been agreed upon by the Project Developer, the Gold Standard and the VVB.
- (d) Figures above one thousand shall be formatted with a comma (for example 1,000,000), and decimals will be separated by a point (for example 1.35).
- (e) Pictures, graphs, tables and supporting documents within Project Documentation shall be clearly marked with a unique ID.
- (f) Dates shall be included in the following format: DD/MM/YYYY
- (g) Maps, where required shall include:
  - i. Name of the project
  - ii. ID of the project

- iii. Legend
- iv. Printing date
- v. Scale
- vi. Direction of North
- vii. GPS coordinate system (e.g. WGS 84)
- viii. GPS grid
- ix. Infrastructure (roads, houses, etc.) and rivers
- x. Information on the satellite or aerial picture (date, resolutions, data source)

## 7 | NON-CONFORMITY

- 7.1.1 | The Project Developer shall report any potential or actual Non-Conformity against the Requirements and any associated Guidelines, Tools or Methodologies immediately upon discovery (and no later than 30 days after the Non-Conformity event discovery). Potential or actual non-conformities may also be submitted to Gold Standard by any party at any time for review.
- 7.1.2 | Gold Standard shall undertake a review of the Non-Conformity, including potentially commissioning an independent investigation and an expert peer review of any recommended action taken. During the investigation Gold Standard reserves the right to suspend activities related to Certification and/or Registry, including the assignment, transfer or retirement of Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products.
- 7.1.3 | Gold Standard shall decide upon the action taken in response to a confirmed Non-Conformity. This may include; a requirement for immediate rectification or change, a suspension of a Project until rectification has been Verified or a removal of Gold Standard Certified Design status from the Project. Factors that influence Gold Standard's consideration of the severity of the issue shall include, but are not limited to:
- (a) If the issue is repeated/systematic or fundamental to the project.
  - (b) If the issue has resulted in an inappropriate certification decision or over-issuance of Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products.
  - (c) If the issue has continued over a longer period of time or affects a significant area or population.
  - (d) If the issue has caused the endangerment of life, livelihoods, ecology or the environment.
  - (e) If the Project Developer failed to notify Gold Standard, take appropriate steps to limit any damage or disruption caused or has attempted to cover up the issue.

## **ANNEX A - DESIGN CHANGE APPROVAL PROCEDURE**

Refer to [Design change requirements](#) for the latest procedure and requirements.

## ANNEX B – CONFLICT AND EMERGENCY ZONES

### 1 | SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

- 1.1.1 | Some Project Developers have faced considerable challenges in contracting VVBs for the Validation and Verification of projects located in conflict zones, refugee camps or areas that pose high risk to life and/or health<sup>3</sup>. Gold Standard rules allow all Projects under these circumstances to combine Validation or Verification (based on a desk-review) with on-site Validation or Verification conducted by an Objective Observer (OO) that is retained by the Project Developer.
- 1.1.2 | These requirements can be applied to both regular and retroactive projects.

### 2 | APPROVAL PROCEDURES

#### (a) SUBMISSION FOR REQUEST FOR DEVIATION

- 2.1.1 | Gold Standard will assess applications on a case-by-case basis. To be eligible for the rule deviation described herein, there must be evidence that demonstrates that VVBs are not willing to go on-site<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, the applicant must demonstrate prior experience working in conflict zones/areas that pose a high risk to life and/or health. And show involvement in other activities within the considered area, apart from implementing the project under review. Alternatively, the establishment of a formal collaboration with partners who have such experience and involvement in the considered area may qualify under these rules as long as the collaboration is sustained over the entire certification period of the Project.

#### (b) SELECTION OF OBJECTIVE OBSERVER

- 2.1.2 | The Project Developer is required to identify and provide Gold Standard with the name and contact details of three Objective Observers (independent experts from local universities, NGOs, consultancies, etc.) who can credibly carry out an appraisal of the project. It is preferable for the list of suggested Objective Observers to be comprised of representatives from development organisations that have experience within conflict zones and the host country, so that environmental and socio-economic impacts can be safely and credibly

---

<sup>3</sup> This can include situations like severe disease outbreak in a country or a part of country and where advisories are issued by national governments / health departments notifying people against travel to a particular region/ country. For example, the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issues travel health notices to inform travellers about current health issues in specific destinations and warns them about the risks associated or avoiding non-essential travel. Refer to the website for more information – <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices#>

<sup>4</sup> This evidence includes, but is not limited to, written correspondence from two or more auditors refusing to go on-site in the conflict zone/ areas that pose high risk to life and / or health.



assessed. Where applicable, the Objective Observer suggested by the Project Developer should already have authorisation to work in the specified area.

- 2.1.3 | Gold Standard will select an Objective Observer amongst the three suggested candidates based on an assessment of their expertise or, if they do not match the required criteria, Gold Standard will ask for other candidates to be proposed or may suggest another expert to act as the Objective Observer.
- 2.1.4 | The VVB shall provide a checklist to the selected Objective Observer before the site visit to assist the Objective Observer in assessing the relevant aspects related to the Project's Validation or Verification. The checklist must be limited to issues that the VVB thinks would be necessary to check on-site to form the Validation or the Verification opinion. The Project Developer will be responsible for contracting with and covering the costs of the Objective Observer(s). The relationship between and among the Project Developer, the Objective Observer and Gold Standard shall be established in a Memorandum of Understanding that must be signed by all parties.

### **(c) SITE VISIT AND REPORT SUBMISSION**

- 2.1.5 | During Validation, the appointed Objective Observer is required to visit the Project site to meet the local stakeholders in order to provide an independent assessment of the risks associated with the Project, as well as to identify potential negative impacts associated with the Project on the social, environmental and economic elements of the local community.
- 2.1.6 | During Verification, the appointed Objective Observer is required to visit the Project site and confirm the status of Project operation. The Objective Observer will also assess whether the mitigation plan has been effectively implemented, and whether negative impacts and risks have been mitigated. Further, the Objective Observer is required to check that other negative impacts have not resulted due to implementation and operation of the Project.
- 2.1.7 | The Objective Observer may make use of the [Validation](#) or [Verification](#) Appraisal Report template provided by Gold Standard in addition to the checklist provided by the VVB.
- 2.1.8 | The Objective Observer's Appraisal report shall be made available to Gold Standard. This report forms part of the final Validation or Verification Report submitted by the VVB for requesting Design or Performance Certification. The VVB may seek clarification from the Objective Observer at anytime and will use the findings from the Appraisal Report to form the final Validation or Verification opinion.
- 2.1.9 | Gold Standard will review the Objective Observer's report during 4-week Design Review or 3-week Performance Review.