

GOLD STANDARD FOR THE GLOBAL GOALS

SOC Activity Modules approval procedure

Version 1.0

Published 2nd April 2020

SDG: 13 Climate Action

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1. Introduction

The [Soil Organic Carbon \(SOC\) Framework Methodology](#), hereafter *SOC Framework Methodology* was developed to ensure that quality and quantification of SOC benefits are real, consistent and correspond to the high level expected under the Gold Standard for the Global Goals.

The [SOC Framework Methodology](#) provides definitions, requirements and core calculation procedures applicable to all SOC activities, facilitating the development of separate Activity Modules containing requirements and calculation approaches for specific SOC activities.

This document provides guidance for the development and procedure for approval of Activity Modules. Section **Error! Reference source not found.** outlines the module contents; Section 2 indicates simplified procedure for SOC Activity Modules review and approval.

2. Activity Review and Approval Procedure

2.1 Eligibility Check

The Activity Module developer shall submit the module concept note to Gold Standard to assess the eligibility of new SOC Activity Module.

Eligibility requirements are the following (including but not limited to):

- (a) The proposed Activity Module shall be in line with the general eligibility principles and criteria as given in Section 2.0 of the Gold Standard for the Global Goals Principles and Requirements and shall be applicable to one of pre-approved ELIGIBLE SOC ACTIVITIES. Developers should contact Gold Standard to discuss the eligibility of activities that are not listed in eligible SOC Activities.
- (b) Concept note shall include detailed description of the proposed SOC activity including proof of activity impact, and selection of quantification approaches (see [SOC Framework Methodology](#)) for baseline and project scenario, as well as potential benefit overlap with existing Activity Modules.
- (c) The proposed SOC activity shall not yet be covered by another approved Activity Module or Activity Module under development. If the proposed SOC activity(es) has already been covered partially or completely by another activity module, modifications to the existing module should ideally be proposed. However, if a new activity module covering the scope of approved

activity module(s) (partially or completely) introduces innovative approaches, if justified, it may be considered for review.

The Gold Standard Secretariat in consultation with Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) review the activity concept note and decides if SOC activity is eligible and if external review of activity methodology is required. The Activity Module not selected for external review will be directly submitted for TAC review. (Refer to Section 2.3)

If eligibility is confirmed by Gold Standard, the developer shall prepare and submit the draft Activity Module methodology to Gold Standard for review and approval.

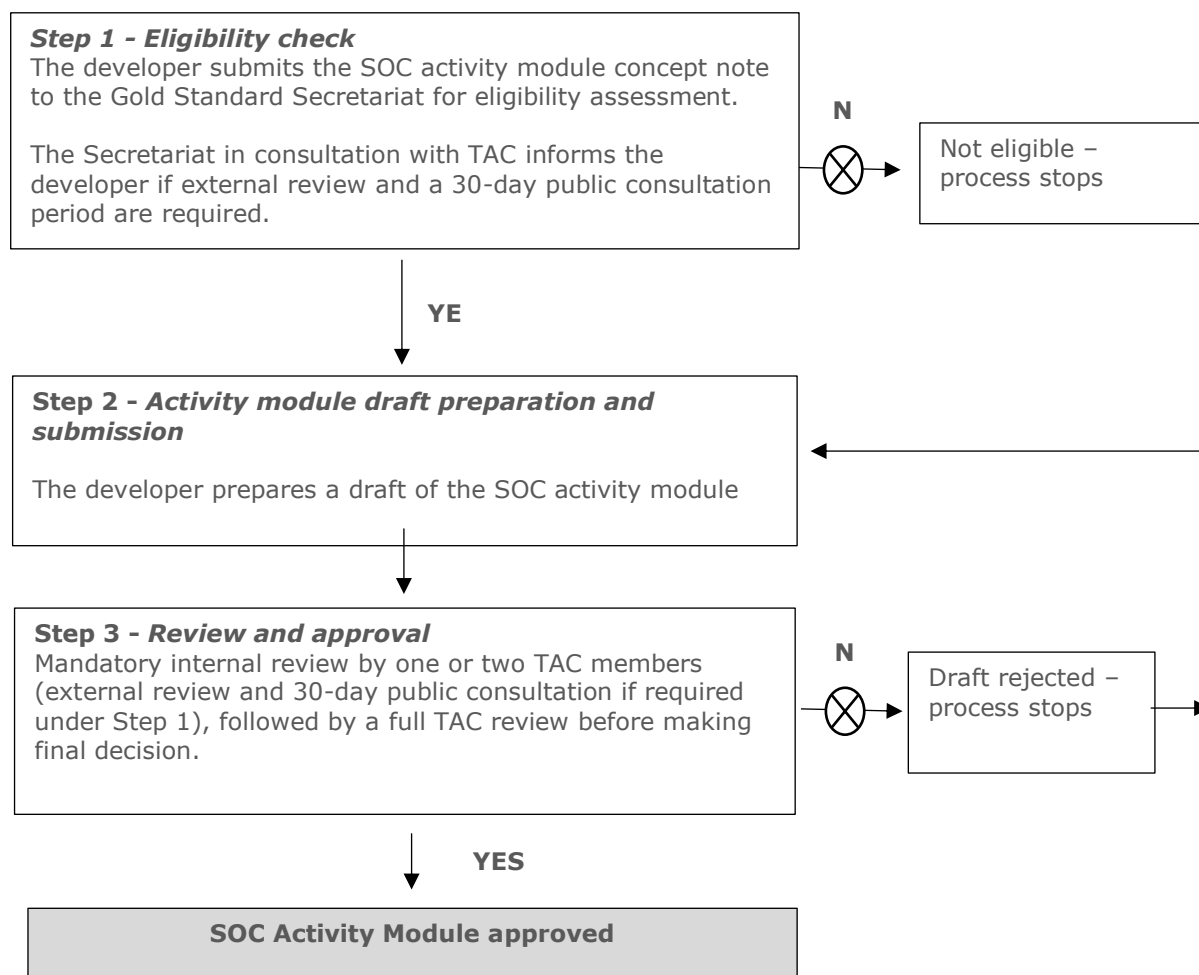


Figure 1: SOC Activity Module approval process

2.2 Activity module draft preparation and submission

2.2.1 Requirements

- (a) Generally, SOC Activity Modules shall follow all requirements set in the [SOC Framework Methodology](#). Content listed in the Activity Modules should focus on activity-specific requirements and refinements only.
- (b) Any deviation, sub-selection or addition to contents defined in Framework Methodology must be justified with public references, e.g. (sub-) national regulations or peer-reviewed publications and is subject to approval by the Gold Standard Secretariat.
- (c) Models and datasets must be validated for the scope and applicability conditions set in the respective Activity Module.
- (d) Datasets and/or models derived locally and not verified on a wider scale may only be applied if validated by direct measurements in the project area (limited to quantification Approach 1 of the [SOC Framework Methodology](#)).

2.2.2 Activity Module contents

Table 1 below lists the mandatory content for any SOC Activity Module in reference to the methodology contents according to the [Gold Standard Impact Quantification methodology approval procedure](#). For an overview of contents already covered in the [SOC Framework Methodology](#), see **Error! Reference source not found.** of the [SOC Framework Methodology](#).

Table 1 : Methodology contents to be included in the Activity Modules (based on Gold Standard for the Global Goals Methodology Approval Process Guideline)

Required content as listed in the Impact Quantification Methodology Approval Procedure	Contents for Activity Module
1. Title of the methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to SOC Framework Methodology • Module title, indicating targeted activity
2. Summary of the methodology (max. 100 words)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to SOC Framework Methodology • Description of specific SOC Module activities
3. Definitions and terms specific to the methodology or that deviate from definitions used in the applicable sectoral Activity Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to definitions and terms in SOC Framework Methodology • Definitions and terms specific to SOC Activity Module
4. Possible additional requirements for the chapters 'Sustainable Development'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Default SDGs impacted by activity
5. Crediting period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specification of crediting period
6. Frequency of 'Performance Certification'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • n/a
7. Applicability conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicability conditions, if any, specific to the activity, practices and/or quantification approaches used (e.g. geographic limitations, additional requirements)
8. Selected emission pools and sources (for LUF projects)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of GHGs monitored for activity and justification for inclusion/exclusion of each
9. Baseline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specification of eligible baseline scenarios (activity, scope)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stratification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity-specific criteria for stratification (relevant subset and/or justified additions to framework criteria)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline scenario 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligible baseline scenario calculation approach(es) based on SOC Framework Methodology (Approach 1, 2 or 3) • Activity-specific measurement guidelines, models, parameters and/or datasets to be applied
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity-specific monitoring parameters relevant for baseline calculation

10. Project activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specification of project scenarios (activity, scope)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stratification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Same as baseline)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project activities scenarios 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligible project activity scenario calculation approach(es) based on SOC Framework Methodology • Activity-specific measurement guidelines, models, parameters and/or datasets to be applied
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project activities monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity-specific monitoring parameters relevant for project activity calculation (in addition to monitoring requirements listed in SOC Framework Methodology)
11. Leakage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity-specific leakage rules (based on leakage requirements listed in the SOC Framework Methodology) and justification of inclusion or exclusion
12. Other emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity-specific emissions (in addition to "other emissions" listed in SOC Framework Methodology) • Activity-specific calculation approaches and parameters for "other emissions" as needed
13. List of references	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • References for selected measurement and/or calculation approaches (unless already referenced in SOC Framework Methodology)
14. History of versions / reasons for update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Version of SOC Activity Module and relevant SOC Framework Methodology

2.3 Review and approval

The Activity Module not selected for external review will be directly submitted for mandatory internal review by one or two TAC members prior to its submission for full TAC review and approval. If mandated by TAC, external review by one or two reviewers will be required prior to submission of the methodology for TAC review/approval.

Public consultation for a 30-day period following the Gold Standard "Standard Setting Procedures" may be required at discretion of TAC or another appointed committee.

2.3.1 External and internal review

- An introductory call between the Activity Module developer, the reviewer and the Gold Standard Secretariat is organised to initiate the review process. This will be coordinated by the Gold Standard Secretariat.
- Over a period of two weeks the external reviewer will conduct their assessment and open Corrective Action Requests (CARs) and Observations (OBSs) in a dedicated CAR/OBS list provided to the Gold Standard Secretariat. The overall review time may be longer than two weeks and the methodology developer will be duly informed of timelines.
- Gold Standard Secretariat consolidates the CARs and OBSs raised by the reviewers and shares with the developer. The module developer shall revise the draft module document to address open CARs/OBSs and submit the revised draft module document to the Gold Standard Secretariat.
- The Gold Standard Secretariat reviews the revised draft document and liaises with the module developer to close all CARs. The process may involve several rounds of discussion to address the open CARs/OBSs in a satisfactory manner. The review process concludes when all CARs/OBSs have been successfully closed.

2.3.2 TAC Review

- Once all CARs from the external reviewer have been successfully closed, the draft Activity Module is submitted to the TAC. The TAC will conduct their review and can open CARs and OBSs in a dedicated 'CAR/OBSs list' provided by the Gold Standard Secretariat.
- The methodology developer then shall revise the draft SOC Activity Module document to address CARs raised by the TAC.
- After all CARs from the TAC members have been successfully closed, the draft methodology document is ready for its approval vote by the TAC. With the successful approval vote, the draft Activity Module is accepted and published as an Gold Standard approved Activity Module.

3. FEE

- Please contact Gold Standard Secretariat for applicable activity module methodology approval fee.

Annex 1: NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST OF ELIGIBLE SOC ACTIVITIES AS POTENTIAL FUTURE SOC METHODOLOGY MODULES

Most listed activities do not simply increase soil carbon stocks or prevent soil carbon emissions but also improve the soil quality, soil aggregation, soil water retention potential and/or reduce the need for N- fertilizer. The activities listed below also contribute to other carbon pools as well as SDGs beyond SDG 13, e.g. SDG 2 Zero Hunger (food security: increase/stabilization of yield), SDG15 Life on Land (biodiversity), SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation (ensure availability and sustainable management of water, e.g. as less irrigation is needed for crops).

The Activity Module could be proposed for potential SOC activities, as listed below. Developers are encouraged to contact the Gold Standard Secretariat to discuss the eligibility of activities not listed below unless stated deemed non-eligible in the [SOC Framework Methodology](#).

Agriculture:

- **Zero tillage module:** (also called no-till) Change farming practices to prevent soil carbon emissions which apply direct measurement for the estimation of SOC accrual.
- **Sustainable grassland module:** Promote grassland management practices (such as increased use of non-N-fertilizer on degraded areas, improved pasture rotation, introduction of beneficial species (e.g. legumes) and plant inoculation, high biomass crop). This Activity Module may include fire management to prevent degradation and biomass/soil carbon loss by adopting appropriate management strategies such as regular sheep grazing, etc.
- **Endophytic module:** Add suitable microorganisms such as septate endophytic fungi to degraded, dry soils to increase soil carbon stock, improve soil quality, reduce need of N-fertilizer, and improve the water retention capacity.
- **Residue module:** Maintain and conserve ground coverage and increase input of organic crop residue, mulch, sod or other organic C sources to the project area fields, thus increasing the soil carbon stock while at the same time preventing erosion. This module would lead to benefits overlap if applied together with the reduced tillage module on the same project area. Respective safeguards/ calculation approaches would need to be implemented accordingly.
- **Sustainable livestock management module:** Prevent degradation through overgrazing by adopting appropriate management strategies (e.g. adjusting

grazing pressure by balancing spatial and temporal presence of livestock, improved mobility of animals in pastoral and agropastoral systems, integration of trees and pastures (silvopastoral management). In addition to SOC enhancement, the grasslands become more resilient to drought and to wet conditions.

- **Intercropping and crop rotation module:** Improve the soil quality, nutrients and soil carbon sequestration through simultaneous cultivation of multiple crop species in a single field which might directly or not increase yield due to species complementarity (forage crops — such as grasses, clovers and alfalfa — penetrate the soil with extensive root systems that lead to the formation of soil organic matter). Food security must be maintained (yields must not be lower than baseline scenario).
- **Agroforestry activities:** Could be considered if these are specifically implemented to increase SOC (otherwise agroforestry activities fall within the A/R methodology). Please contact the Gold Standard Secretariat to determine eligibility of the proposed activity.