



RULE UPDATE

REVISIONS TO PRELIMINARY REVIEW REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURE

Publication Date: 12/11/2024

Version: 2.0

Related Documents

- [GS4GG Principles and Requirements](#)
- Rule Update – [The SDG Impact Tool](#)
- Form - [Preliminary Review Submission](#)

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BACKGROUND

Gold Standard continuously strives to make the certification process simpler for project developers while maintaining robustness and procedural efficiency. To support these efforts Gold Standard introduced a standardised checklist to fast-track preliminary review for all project types, except projects applying a new methodology. With this rule update, the scope of the fast-track preliminary review is extended to include all project types, the document requirements have been reduced and the timelines for review expedited.

PROJECT CATEGORY: **All project categories**

1| SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

1.1.1 | Pathway 1 refers to the completeness check pathway that has been established to fast-track eligible projects through the preliminary review process. The revised requirements for pathway 1 shall apply to all the

project¹/VPAs² both regular and retroactive) submitted for preliminary review after 04/12/2024 (inclusive).

1.1.2 | Pathway 2 is a detailed preliminary review. Early users of a new Methodology or Product are required to follow Pathway 2. Such projects shall undergo detailed preliminary review as required by [GS4GG Principles and Requirements](#). The revised requirements summarised in tables 1 and 2 below apply to such projects, however, the duration of preliminary review remains at 4-weeks.

2| REVISED REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURE

2.1 | Preliminary review requirements

2.1.1 | The following tables highlight where revisions have been introduced in the requirements.

Table 1 – Revisions to [Principles and Requirements](#)

Current requirements	Revised requirements
<p>Para 5.1.1. (a)</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Para 5.1.1. (a)</p> <p>All Projects must LIST with the Gold Standard by undertaking a Preliminary Review and uploading Key Project Information draft Project Design Document and draft Stakeholder Consultation Report. For the preliminary review, project developers shall submit a draft stakeholder consultation report detailing the first round of consultation. This report shall include, at minimum, the consultation date, a list of invited stakeholders, the invitation method, information shared with stakeholders, and feedback received.</p> <p>Refer to para 5.1.4 below</p>
<p>Para 5.1.3</p> <p>The Preliminary Review (time of first submission) is conducted once at the outset</p>	<p>Para 5.1.3</p> <p>The Preliminary Review (time of first submission) is conducted once at the outset</p>

¹ In case of regular VPAs, exemptions may apply, refer to the [Programme of Activity Requirements](#) for further details.

² Preliminary review submission is considered 'submitted' 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 (para 5.1.7, [Principles and Requirements](#))

(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. This review considers whether the Project has the potential to conform to the Gold Standard Requirements and may therefore progress to Listed status.

(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~~. This review considers whether the Project has the potential to conform to the Gold Standard Requirements and may therefore progress to Listed status.

Para 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.

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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 draft [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.~~ (Refer to the revised procedure and timeline below under section 2.2 of this rule update).

(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 and a [project applying the Land Use and Forests Activity Requirements](#). The Detailed Preliminary Review Pathway consists of a Preliminary Review period of 4 weeks, conducted by Gold Standard.

	<p>- New methodology refers to the first version of a methodology. If a revised/new version of an approved methodology is published it is not considered a new methodology.</p>
<p>Para 5.1.6</p> <p>During the Preliminary Review step, Gold Standard may identify any further matters that require Expert Stakeholder opinion and recommendations not already pre-identified.</p>	<p>Para 5.16</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>Para 5.1.8</p> <p>The minimum requirements for submission of Project Documentation include Key Project Information and</p> <p>(a) A completed Stakeholder Consultation Report</p> <p>(b) A substantially completed Project Design Documentation submission that captures:</p> <p>i. Fully completed details required under Section – General Eligibility Criteria.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>iii. Defined SDG Impacts including any Expert Stakeholder opinions and recommendations sought.</p> <p>iv. Confirmation of certification pathway and any Gold Standard Approved Methodologies and Product Requirements followed including</p>	<p>Para 5.1.8</p> <p>The minimum requirements for submission of Project Documentation include</p> <p>(a) Key Project Information</p> <p>(b) A draft Stakeholder Consultation Report</p> <p>(c) Only applicable to projects A-substantially completed draft Project Design Documentation submission only for projects with a new Project Type, Methodology or Product, a draft Project Design Document is required that captures:</p> <p>i. Fully Completed details required under Section – General Eligibility Criteria section for project description and methodology application. The additionality demonstration and monitoring plan can be summarised briefly.</p> <p>ii. A summary of substantially completed Safeguarding Principles Assessment (meaning the majority completed, including any key identified risks matters that relate to the</p>

<p>a demonstration of Financial Additionality where required.</p>	<p>project type or context) including any Expert Stakeholder opinions and recommendations.</p>
<p>v. A draft Monitoring Plan.</p>	<p>iii. Defined Identified SDGs Impacts including any Expert Stakeholder opinions and recommendations sought.</p>
	<p>iv. Confirmation of certification pathway and any Gold Standard Approved Methodologies and Product Requirements followed including a demonstration of Financial Additionality where required.</p>
	<p>v. A draft Monitoring Plan.</p>

<p>Para 5.1.11</p>	<p>Para 5.1.11</p>
<p>With a successful Preliminary Review, the Project will obtain 'Listed' status in the Gold Standard Registry. This means that:</p>	<p>With a successful Preliminary Review, the Project will obtain 'Listed' status in the Gold Standard Registry. This means that:</p>
<p>(a) The Key Project Information, draft Project Design Documentation and supporting documentation are made publicly available, AND</p>	<p>(a) The Key Project Information, draft Project Design Documentation, where applicable and supporting documentation are made publicly available, AND</p>
<p>(b) The Project Developer may promote the Project according to the Claims Guidelines as appropriate for Listed status Projects.</p>	<p>(b) The Project Developer may promote the Project according to the Claims Guidelines as appropriate for Listed status Projects.</p>
<p>(c) The Project may proceed to Validation.</p>	<p>(c) The Project may proceed to Validation.</p>

Table 2 – Revisions to Rule update [THE SDG IMPACT TOOL](#)

Current requirements	Revised requirements
<p>Para 2.1.3 The SDG Impact Tool application is mandatory for all new projects submitted for Preliminary Review after 14.03.2022 and projects (including new PoAs and their VPAs) submitted for design certification review and renewal after 14.03.2022</p>	<p>Not applicable. You may use the SDG Impact Tool to identify the relevant monitoring indicator, SDGs and corresponding SDG targets and design a monitoring plan for identified indicators. It is not required to submit the SDG tool for the project for preliminary review, however, it must be completed and submitted to VVB for validation.</p>
<p>Para 2.1.5 The completed SDG Tool shall be submitted along with other project documentation (such as Project Design Document (PDD), Monitoring Report (MR), Emission Reductions (ER) spreadsheets, as applicable) during requests for: a. Preliminary Review</p>	<p>Para 2.1.5 The completed SDG Tool shall be submitted along with other project documentation (such as Project Design Document (PDD), Monitoring Report (MR), Emission Reductions (ER) spreadsheets, as applicable) during requests for: a. Preliminary Review</p>

b. Validation and Verification to GS-VVB	a. Validation and Verification to GS-VVB
c. Design and Performance review/certification to Gold Standard	b. Design and Performance review/certification to Gold Standard

2.1.2 | Regular or Retroactive - both project types shall submit the required documents for preliminary review (time of first submission) within one year of the project start date. Project submitted at a date later than one year from the project start date will not be eligible for Gold Standard certification. LUF project shall refer to [LUF activity requirements](#) for applicable timeline.

Note that for the preliminary review, project developers may submit a draft stakeholder consultation report detailing the first round of consultation – if submitted earlier than one year. This report shall include, at minimum, the consultation date, a list of invited stakeholders, the invitation method, information shared with stakeholders, and feedback received. Regardless of validation status, project developers shall submit the full stakeholder consultation report—covering both first and second round consultations—within one year of the project's start date. Note that extended submission timelines may apply for certain activities, such as those outlined in LUF activity requirements or the Shipping sector.

2.1.3 | In Case of regular VPAs, corresponding to a design certified real case VPAs – refer to para 8.2.2 of [Programme of Activity requirements](#).

2.2 | Preliminary review procedure

2.2.1 | As per the certification timeline, the project/PoA/VPAs enter the preliminary review after submitting the project documents³ and paying the applicable fee.

2.2.2 | **Pathway 1:** The Completeness Check Pathway timeline is summarised below;

- a. Step 1 - The Gold Standard shall, within 14 days of submission of the documents **and** the payment of the fee, conduct a completeness check.
 - i. If the project/PoA/VPAs successfully passes the completeness check, the project skips directly to Step 4 and Steps 2 & 3 are not applicable.
 - ii. During the completeness check, if Gold Standard identifies that information is missing and/or further information is needed to make a decision, the Gold Standard shall request further information from the Project Developer.
- b. Step 2 - The Project Developer shall submit the requested information within 14 days of receipt of the request. **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,**

³ For the list of required documentation for both the pathways, please refer to the para 1.1.2 of [Preliminary Review Request Form](#).

project documents must be updated to align with the latest standard requirements, including methodology updates and new validation or verification as applicable.

- c. Step 3 - The Gold Standard shall notify the Project Developer (within 7 days of submission -
 - i. If the submission is considered complete, the project is listed (Step 4).
 - ii. If the submission is found incomplete or further information is required, the project developer is notified accordingly. The project developer may submit further information anytime and Gold Standard will review according to available capacity.
- d. Step 4 – After the completeness check, the project is either:
 - i. listed on the [Gold Standard Impact Registry](#) or
 - ii. not listed on the [Gold Standard Impact Registry](#). Where it is decided to not list the project, the project developer is provided with the rationale for rejection of the request.

2.2.3 | **Pathway 2:** For the detailed preliminary review a 4-week desk review is conducted by Gold Standard. The 4-week review timeline shall apply to early users of a new Project Type, Methodology or Product. Such projects shall undergo a detailed preliminary review as required by the [GS4GG Principle and Requirements \(pathway 2 – detailed preliminary review\)](#).

2.2.4 | For any project type, Gold Standard at its discretion, may select the project for the Detailed Preliminary Review Pathway (Pathway 2), at any stage of preliminary review. In such cases, the 4-week timeline applies.

DOCUMENT HISTORY

Release date	Summary of changes
12/11/2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applicability of Fast track preliminary review to LUF activities - Document requirements – draft stakeholder consultation report - Review timeline and implication of late submissions
11/10/2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clarified timeline for submission of project documents for preliminary review (para 2.1.2 & 2.1.3)
16/08/2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rule update issued to introduce changes to preliminary review process