

GOLD STANDARD FOR THE GLOBAL GOALS PROGRAMMES OF ACTIVITIES REQUIREMENTS

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Table of Contents

GOLD STANDARD FOUNDATION VISION & MISSION

1.0 PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITY (PoA) ELIGIBILITY

2.0 PoA BOUNDARY

3.0 PoA TIMEFRAME

4.0 ADDITIONALITY

5.0 USE OF THE GOLD STANDARD REGISTRY

6.0 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

7.0 SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

8.0 SELECTION OF A BASELINE AND MONITORING METHODOLOGY

9.0 DE-BUNDLING PROVISIONS

10.0 GOLD STANDARD KEY PROJECT INFORMATION AND PROJECT DOCUMENTS

11.0 PoA VALIDATION AND CPA/VPA INCLUSION

12.0 PoA DESIGN CERTIFICATION

13.0 PoA PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATION

14.0 PoAs AND LIABILITY

15.0 DESIGN CERTIFICATION, CERTIFICATION FEES AND SHARE OF PROCEEDS

16.0 METHODOLOGY VERSIONS AND RENEWAL OF CERTIFICATION PERIOD FOR PoA AND CPA/VPA

17.0 DESIGN CHANGES

18.0 PRE-CDM VERs

19.0 PROCEDURE FOR THE REGISTRATION OF MULTI-COUNTRY PoA

ANNEX A – MICROSCALE PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES REQUIREMENTS

GOLD STANDARD FOUNDATION VISION & MISSION

OUR VISION: Climate security and sustainable development for all.

OUR MISSION: To catalyse more ambitious climate action to achieve the Global Goals through robust standards and verified impacts.

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1.0 PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITY (PoA) ELIGIBILITY

1.1 Where a group of project activities is submitted for Gold Standard Design Certification within a PoA, each of these activities must be in compliance with relevant Gold Standard eligibility criteria (for example in the Gold Standard for the Global Goals [Principles & Requirements](#) or particular Activity Requirements).

1.2 These Requirements are not applicable to Projects following the Gold Standard [Land-use & Forests Activity Requirements](#) or those applying any Gold Standard [Contextual Requirements](#).

2.0 PoA BOUNDARY

2.1 The boundary of a PoA is defined as the geographical area (e.g. municipality, region within a country, country or several countries) within which all CPAs/VPAs included in the PoA will be implemented. All applicable regional and national policies and regulations are taken into consideration for each Host Country within that chosen boundary.

2.2 The PoA boundary must be defined in its entirety at the time of Design Certification. The Gold Standard may permit an expansion of the PoA boundary post-Design Certification upon review of the documentation submitted in the context of a formal request for a design change (see section [17.0](#)).

3.0 PoA TIMEFRAME

3.1 Definition of the PoA and VPA/CPA Certification Period

3.1.1 The duration of the PoA shall not exceed the longer of the Certification Period of the first VPA/CPA plus 5 years or 20 years, whichever is greater. The duration of a CPA/VPA shall be as per relevant [Activity Requirements](#) or in absence of these the Gold Standard for the Global Goals [Principles & Requirements](#). It shall be defined by the entity in the CPA/[VPA DD](#) at the time of inclusion of the CPA/VPA.

3.1.2 Any CPA/VPA can be submitted for inclusion to the PoA at any time during the duration of the PoA by the coordinating/managing entity (CME). The duration of the Crediting Period of any CPA/VPA shall be limited to the end date of the PoA regardless of when the CPA/VPA was included.

3.1.3 Definition of a Regular/Retroactive CPA/VPA PoA submission:

(a) Regular CPA/VPA – CPA/VPA for which a Stakeholder Consultation has been conducted as per Gold Standard requirements before the Start Date (construction/implementation/real action) of the activity. The report of the Stakeholder consultation meeting shall be submitted to Gold Standard within three months of the event.

(b) Retroactive CPA/VPA – CPA/VPA whose start date (construction/implementation/real action) has passed although no Stakeholder Consultation has taken place as per [Gold Standard Stakeholder Consultation & Engagement Procedure, Requirements & Guidelines](#).

(c) The first submission date for a Gold Standard PoA is defined as the date when the [PoA Design Consultation Report](#) is submitted for Gold Standard review. However, in order for the PoA to be listed under Gold Standard, a Stakeholder Consultation Report must be submitted and approved for each one of the VPAs/CPAs submitted at the time of PoA Design Certification. In the event that the Local Stakeholder Consultation is conducted at the Programme level only, the listing will be based on the submission of the Programme level Stakeholder Consultation Report.

3.2 Design Certification and Retroactive Performance Certification for CDM PoAs and their CPAs

3.2.1 **Retroactive Performance Certification:** Some CPAs may be operational before Design Certification of a CDM PoA under The Gold Standard, for example when the PoA has been registered for some time with the UNFCCC before being submitted to The Gold Standard. In such a case, CERs generated since the date of Design Certification with the UNFCCC or generated for a period of up to two years prior to Gold Standard Design Certification, whichever occurs later, can receive Gold Standard labels retroactively.

3.2.2 A CPA submitted for Gold Standard inclusion/Design Certification under the retroactive project cycle is potentially eligible to receive Gold Standard labels for CERs generated since the date of inclusion/Registration with the UNFCCC or generated for a maximum of two years prior to Gold Standard Design Certification, whichever occurs later.

3.3 Design Certification and Retroactive Certification for Voluntary PoAs and their respective VPAs

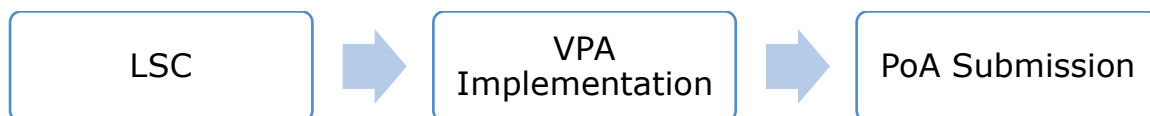
3.3.1 Design Certification

Case 1 – VPAs with start date prior to time of first submission of PoA to Gold Standard

Retroactive VPA(s) with a start date before the time of first submission of the PoA to Gold Standard must undergo a detailed Preliminary Review, a full validation and a Project Design review by Gold Standard in order to be included in the PoA.



Regular VPA(s) that started implementation before the time of first submission of the PoA to Gold Standard must undergo a full Validation and Design Certification review by The Gold Standard in order to be included in the PoA. Specific attention will be given to the additionality with respect to the early consideration of revenues from GSVERs or other Certified Impact Statements/Products.



Case 2 – VPAs with start date after time of first submission of PoA to Gold Standard

All subsequent VPAs can use the Completeness Check pathway (Pathway 1) at Preliminary Review but need to ensure that they comply with all inclusion criteria both defined originally in the PoA and in the list of complementary criteria established by the Preliminary Review of the first retroactive VPA. Refer to section 3.4.4 of Gold Standard for the Global Goals [Principles & Requirements](#) for further details. The consolidated list of inclusion criteria shall be presented in a revised version of the PoA DD Documentation.



There are no specific requirements for regular VPA(s) with a start date after the time of first submission of the PoA. Such VPA(s) are included in the registered PoA upon conformity check by a VVB and may be spot checked by Gold Standard

3.3.2 Retroactive Performance Certification

A VPA submitted for Gold Standard inclusion/Design Certification under the regular/retroactive project cycle is potentially eligible to receive credits for

emission reductions generated prior to Gold Standard inclusion/Design Certification for a maximum period of two years.

4.0 ADDITIONALITY

4.1 For PoAs seeking GS Certified Impact Statements or Products, Additionality must be demonstrated at both the PoA and CPA/VPA level in line with the Gold Standard for the Global Goals [Principles & Requirements](#) or relevant Activity Requirements, unless the coordinating/managing entity provides convincing justification, validated by a GS-VVB (hereafter VVB) and approved by Gold Standard, as to why this can be conducted at the Programme level only.

4.2 Programme level Additionality demonstration is required to ensure that the each VPA/CPA being implemented is credible, and to ensure more confidence in the expected SDG Impacts generated from the Programme.

4.3 A PoA is Additional if it can be demonstrated that in the absence of GS Certification related finance (i) the proposed voluntary measure would not be implemented, or (ii) the mandatory policy/regulation would systematically not be enforced and that non-compliance with those requirements is widespread in the country/region, or (iii) that the PoA will lead to a greater level of enforcement of the existing mandatory policy/regulation or to a greater level of adoption of an existing voluntary scheme. This shall constitute the demonstration of additionality of the PoA as a whole.

5.0 USE OF THE GOLD STANDARD REGISTRY

5.1 To develop a PoA under Gold Standard, an account must be opened in The Gold Standard Registry. The PoA and its corresponding CPAs/VPAs will be managed via this account as follows:

- (a) The CME of the PoA opens an account in their name in The Gold Standard Registry;
- (b) A PoA entry is created under this account with a unique GS ID. All relevant PoA level documents required at the Design Certification step will be uploaded (PoA-DD and associated documentation) to this GS ID;
- (c) An entry per CPA/VPA is created each with its own unique GS ID, in the CME account or in the Project Developers' accounts as per the signed Cover Letter. All documents relevant to a CPA/VPA (CPA/[VPA DD](#), CPA/VPA SC Report) will be uploaded to its registry entry; and
- (d) The name of each CPA/VPA must have a prefix that links it to the relevant PoA.

Example: A cookstove PoA in Mongolia comprised of two project activities will have the following three entries on The Gold Standard Registry:

GS ID	Project Name
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GSXXX	GSXXX ABC Cookstove PoA in Mongolia
GSYYY	GSXXX ABC Cookstove PoA – Choybalsan cookstoves in Mongolia
GSZZZ	GSXXX ABC Cookstove PoA – Dzuunmod cookstoves in Mongolia

6.0 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

6.1 Stakeholder consultations must happen at both the PoA level and the CPA/VPA level (specific consultations) unless convincing justification is provided in the project documentation as to why consultation at the activity level is not necessary, and approval is granted by Gold Standard at the Design Certification stage, following a favourable opinion by the VVB.

6.2 The PoA design consultation is mandatory and is conducted to obtain feedback from governments, relevant national authorities, NGO communities, and other stakeholders on the design framework of the PoA. This consultation does not necessarily require a live meeting. The CME shall make use of the design consultation template to document this process.

6.3 In the case of multi-country PoA, the CME needs to demonstrate that all relevant stakeholders across the different countries have been invited to provide feedback on the design of the PoA.

6.4 Stakeholder consultations at the activity level must take place in a two-step process, i.e. the Stakeholder Consultation (SC) meeting and the Stakeholder Feedback Round (SFR). For regular activities, at least one live meeting shall be conducted between the CME/PD and the stakeholders during the SC, and, for retroactive activities, a live meeting may need to be held for the SFR depending on the outcome of the detailed preliminary review or a VVB's request in case of Completeness Check pathway (Pathway 1).

6.5 The SFR shall cover all issues raised in the SC meeting and report on how due account was taken of the stakeholders' comments in the finalisation of the project design and documentation. This information is reviewed at the time of Design Certification or inclusion, as applicable.

6.6 A single SC live meeting can be organised for several CPA(s)/VPA(s) as long as convincing justification is provided in the project documentation and approved by The Gold Standard, e.g. the activities are close enough to each other in location and time (start of construction/implementation within the same 2 years), similar socio-economic situations, identical activity or technology, etc. This approach would be approved at the time of listing of the activity i.e. submission of activity level SC Report.

6.7 In cases where no activity level consultations are carried out (Programme level consultations only), a SC meeting is required at the Programme level parallel to the design consultation. The CME shall use the PoA Design Consultation Report template for this process and shall give at least one month notice to stakeholders invited to attend the meeting. A SFR must then also be conducted at Programme level.

7.0 SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

7.1 Safeguarding Principles & Requirements

The CME submitting a PoA for Gold Standard Design Certification shall conduct the Safeguarding Principles Assessment as per the [Gold Standard Safeguarding Principles & Requirements](#) at the CPA/VPA equivalent level, unless a convincing case, validated by a VVB and approved by Gold Standard at the time of Design Certification, is provided as to why this can be conducted at PoA level only. In such a case, risks with respect to the relevant safeguarding principles shall be identified at the Programme level and future activities can only be included in the Programme if they are in line with Safeguarding Principles & Requirements conformity criteria defined in the [PoA DD](#). In this case, the [PoA DD](#) would contain Safeguarding Principles & Requirements criteria per type of activity, defined at Programme level.

7.2 SDG Impacts

CMEs submitting a PoA for Gold Standard Design Certification shall conduct the SDG assessment at the CPA/VPA equivalent level, unless convincing justification validated by a VVB and approved by Gold Standard at the time of Design Certification is provided as to why this could be conducted at PoA level only. In such a case, future activities are included in the Programme only if they are in line with sustainable development compliance criteria defined in the [PoA DD](#).

8.0 SELECTION OF A BASELINE AND MONITORING METHODOLOGY

8.1 The Gold Standard allows Voluntary PoAs to use more than one [GS-Approved Methodology](#). All methodologies/combination of methodologies must be introduced in the [PoA DD](#) together with a justification for their use. A real case CPA/[VPA DD](#) must be submitted for each/combination of methodologies at the time of validation of the Programme.

8.2 In the case of methodologies using several technologies/measures (e.g. Gold Standard methodology on [Decentralized Thermal Energy Consumption](#)), each/combination of the technologies/measures included in the Programme should be discussed in the [PoA DD](#) along with the justification of their eligibility and use. A real case CPA/[VPA DD](#) must also be submitted for each/combination of these technologies/s at the time of validation of the Programme.

8.3 In the event that an activity makes use of a technology/measure that was not discussed in the [PoA DD](#) prior to Design Certification, design change rules at Programme level shall apply. Subsequently, a complete validation (including VVB site-visit) and GS Design Certification review of the activity shall be required at the time of inclusion in the Programme. A site visit is not automatically necessary, provided justification is provided to and approved by GS.

8.4 A new methodology not already mentioned in the registered [PoA DD](#) may be introduced post-Design Certification in the Programme, but in such a case, design change rules at Programme level apply and the activity applying the new methodology will undergo a full Validation and Design Review.

8.5 When the design change is carried out at the Programme level as a result of the introduction of new methodology(ies)/technology(ies)/measure(s) not already discussed in the [PoA DD](#), the PoA-DD shall be modified accordingly.

9.0 DE-BUNDLING PROVISIONS

9.1 De-bundling provisions included in CDM methodology Tool [Assessment of debundling for small-scale project activities](#) do not apply to Voluntary PoAs.

10.0 GOLD STANDARD KEY PROJECT INFORMATION AND PROJECT DOCUMENTS

10.1 For a CDM PoA, a CPA-DD and a CPA- Key Project Information document (KPI) are required for each CPA, in addition to the CDM-POA-DD and POA-KPI.

10.2 Similarly, for a Voluntary PoA, in addition to the [PoA DD](#), a [VPA DD](#) are required for each VPA.

11.0 PoA VALIDATION AND CPA/VPA INCLUSION

11.1 CMEs shall submit to a VVB the following documentation for validation:

(a) A completed [PoA DD](#). Generic information on baseline and monitoring must be provided for each one of the different methodologies (or combination of methodologies) or technologies/measures (or combination of technologies/measures) in the case of a methodology allowing for multiple technologies to be considered.

(b) A completed CPA/[VPA DD](#) based on the application of the PoA to a real case activity, for each one of the different methodologies (or combination of methodologies) or each technology/measure (or combination of technologies/measures) considered. This must be completed prior to Design Review.

(c) A Gold Standard KPI for the Programme and for each one of the CPAs or VPAs.

11.2 CPA/VPA inclusion

CPA/VPA inclusion shall be based on a compliance check completed by the VVB and with respect to the inclusion criteria defined in the PoA-DD, and as defined in the PoA-KPI in cases where SDG and Safeguarding Principles assessments are conducted at the PoA level only. The VVB/CME/PD shall request formal inclusion by contacting The Gold Standard by email. The VVB shall take into account the following while preparing the Inclusion Report:

Geographic boundary of the activity and whether it is within the boundary of the PoA set at the time of Design Certification;

- (a) Additionality criteria is being met as defined in the registered [PoA DD](#);
- (b) The activity is in line with the baseline scenario(s) identified in the [PoA DD](#);
- (c) Emission reduction calculations are in accordance with the procedures defined in the registered [PoA DD](#);
- (d) The Monitoring Plan of the activity is designed as per the applied methodology and in accordance with the [PoA DD](#); and
- (e) In the case of Safeguarding Principles and SDG assessments being done at the PoA level, then check the SDG monitoring plan is as per the PoA-DD.

11.3 Site visit requirements during CPA/VPA inclusion

The CME shall provide details of the approach chosen for site-visits in view of the inclusion of future activities in the PoA-DD. The CME shall take into consideration the fact that a site visit by the VVB may be required when a new technology/methodology is introduced into the PoA (if not completed at the time of registering the PoA).

11.4 The Gold Standard can mandate site-visits upon the reviews conducted on the activities in view of their listing or in the context of a Preliminary Review if a specific risk is identified.

11.5 Gold Standard spot checks/Design Certification/inclusion review

Activities proposed by a VVB for inclusion, after the compliance check, must undergo a two-week compliance check period and receive approval by The Gold Standard before being formally included in the Programme. The two-week period starts the day the relevant documents (CPA/[VPA DD](#), CPA/VPA-KPI, VVB Inclusion Report etc.) are uploaded onto The Gold Standard Registry. The formal date retained for the inclusion is when the two-week compliance check period ends.

11.6 The Gold Standard may conduct spot-checks for any of the activities proposed for inclusion by the VVB, based on a target-random approach. This activity would undergo an additional one-week review period.

11.7 The process is different for an activity undergoing a complete validation in view of an inclusion. In such a case, the activity must go through a four-week review period and potential requests for clarification or corrective action must be closed for the inclusion to be approved. The formal date retained for the inclusion is when the four-week review period ends, even if actual inclusion takes longer due to potential requests for clarification or corrective action.

During any of the periods mentioned above, The Gold Standard TAC and NGO Supporters can raise any requests that must be addressed in a satisfactory manner for the inclusion to be approved.

12.0 POA DESIGN CERTIFICATION

12.1 Voluntary PoAs

The Gold Standard Design Certification process takes place at the PoA level therefore both the Voluntary PoA and all its VPAs have to be registered with The Gold Standard.

12.2 CDM PoAs

12.1.1 The Gold Standard Design Certification process takes place at the PoA level. In case of a full PoA upgrade i.e. all activities of a CDM registered Programme wanting to certify under Gold Standard, the CDM registered Programme and activity level documents along with the PoA/CPA KPIs shall be provided to The Gold Standard.

12.1.2 Documentation submitted to CDM validation will undergo GS validation and Design Certification review. Future activities that were included in the CDM PoA prior to GS Design Certification are reviewed as per Section 3.3.

12.1.3 Under special circumstances for CDM PoA (such as when the PoA CME is not willing to act as The Gold Standard Coordinator), Design Certification at the CPA level can be allowed, following an evaluation that will be performed on a case-by-case basis.

12.1.4 In the case of a single CPA submitting for Design Certification under Gold Standard, the process followed is the same as that for a standalone project for either a regular or a retroactive project cycle, as applicable.

12.1.5 In the case of multiple CPAs, a Gold Standard sub-PoA is created and the following steps are followed:

(a) PoA/activity level stakeholder consultation

(b) PoA validation and Design Certification. Documentation to be submitted to GS are the CDM-PoA-DD as submitted to the CDM EB and the PoA KPI, which would contain additional information relevant for The Gold Standard sub-PoA that was not included in the CDM-PoA-DD, (e.g. sampling verification for GS which would be different from that for CDM), along with the specific CPA-DD and CPA KPI.

(c) Activity inclusion based on the CDM-CPA-DD, the CPA KPI and the inclusion report

(d) Activity verification, based on submitted monitoring reports and verification reports for activities chosen for actual Verification by the VVB (in the case of

sampling verification) and all verification reports (in the case of systematic verification)

12.1.6 Labelling: The following conditions must also be satisfied:

- (a) The serial numbers associated with the CERs issued to the relevant CDM PoA by the UNFCCC must allow for a clear differentiation among the various CPAs;
- (b) The CDM PoA-DD and the different CPA-DDs will have to be provided to GS for review;
- (c) A CDM PoA-DD and a GS PoA KPI must be submitted to GS for approval. These documents will contain all the information necessary to allow the VVB to perform a GS compliance check for the subsequent CPAs. It will be submitted together with a first CPA-DD; and
- (d) GS CPA project documentation, i.e., the CPA-DD and the CPA-KPI must be delivered for each one of the GS applicant CPAs.

13.0 POA PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATION

13.1 The CME shall submit monitoring reports for all the activities for which request of Performance Certification is intended.

13.2 In the case of sampling verification, the VVB shall select activities for verification as per the statistically sound sampling plan defined in the [PoA DD](#), conduct site visits for all selected activities and deliver a verification report to Gold Standard.

13.3 The approach chosen for the sampling verification shall be discussed in detail in the [PoA DD](#). The Managing Entity shall take into account the following factors, amongst others, while defining the approach for verification in the [PoA DD](#):

- (a) Risks related to the type(s) of project activity
- (b) Risks related to non-identification of emission and leakage sources
- (c) Risks related to double counting
- (d) Uncertainty with respect to the data monitored etc.
- (e) Different monitoring periods for activities requesting issuance that may lead to sampling verification not being compatible (any period for which SDG Impacts are claimed must be covered by verification). For instance, for a set of activities requesting issuance but having different monitoring periods, it may not be possible to choose a sample and all activities may need to be systematically Verified.

13.4 For further guidance, refer to Section A.2.4 Validation or Verification approach of the ISO 14064-3 standard.

13.5 The VVB shall validate the appropriateness of the sampling approach (including approach proposed for site-visits) as part of the Validation Report, and Gold Standard shall assess and approve the approach at the time of PoA Design Certification review.

13.6 The Gold Standard initiates a three-week review period for all activities. The Gold Standard systematically reviews activities that have been selected for verification. The Gold Standard TAC and NGO Supporters may also raise requests for clarification and corrective action as well. All requests must be addressed in a satisfactory way for the verification to be approved and for issuance to proceed.

13.7 For activities that are not verified by a VVB, spot-checks based on a target-random approach are conducted by Gold Standard. GS would conduct a 3-week review for selected activities.

13.8 Multiple VVBs may be contracted within a same Programme to verify different activities. In case of the choice of a sampling verification, each one of the VVB involved in the verification shall comply with the sampling approach defined in the [PoA DD](#).

14.0 POAS AND LIABILITY

14.1 For Gold Standard voluntary PoAs, the liability lies with the CME.

14.2 An activity is said to be erroneously included when it violates the inclusion criteria set in the [PoA DD](#)/PoA-KPI.

14.3 Whenever an erroneous inclusion is identified by the VVB or Gold Standard at the time of Verification, and in case of sampling Verification, activities that have actually been Verified, site-visit included, can proceed to issuance while issuance remains on hold for the erroneous activity(ies). All activities that have not actually been verified due to the choice of a sampling Verification must also be put on hold until the issue is resolved.

14.4 For Voluntary PoAs, whenever a VPA is found to be erroneously included in the Voluntary PoA and has already been issued Gold Standard Certified SDG Impact Statements or Products, the CME shall within sixty (60) calendar days after receiving notification of non-conformity:

(a) Compensate issued Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products with Gold Standard certified impacts from other projects of its portfolio; or

(b) Compensate issued Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products with Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products bought from other Gold Standard projects.

14.5 For Voluntary PoAs, whenever a verified VPA is found not to be delivering in accordance with the registered Voluntary PoA (e.g. the VPA is no longer operating), but Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products have already been issued to that PoA, the CME shall within sixty (60) calendar days after receiving notification of non-conformity:

(a) Compensate issued Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products with Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products from other projects of its portfolio; or

(b) Compensate issued Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products with Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products bought from other Gold Standard projects.

14.6 For CDM PoAs, whenever the CDM EB finds a project to be erroneously included and the carbon credits have been delivered, the equivalent number of labels already issued under Gold Standard for the project must be compensated by the CME as per the above.

15.0 DESIGN CERTIFICATION, CERTIFICATION FEES AND SHARE OF PROCEEDS

15.1 For PoAs applying for Design Certification under either a regular cycle or retroactive cycle, the [Design Certification fee](#) will be based on the first CPA/VPA and fees will be applicable to all CPAs/VPAs.

16.0 METHODOLOGY VERSIONS AND RENEWAL OF CERTIFICATION PERIOD FOR PoA AND CPA/VPA

16.1 CDM/Voluntary PoA

The latest methodology version applicable at the time of first submission to Gold Standard shall be used. At the time of renewal of the PoA, the latest version of the methodology available at that time shall be adopted.

16.2 CPA/VPA

16.2.1 All CPAs/VPAs to be included in the PoA shall use the same version of the methodology that is defined in the most recent version of the PoA documentation. The use of an updated methodology version is also allowed for, after a validation by a VVB, and followed by a Design Certification review by Gold Standard with respect to the methodology changes.

16.2.2 At the time of renewal of a CPA/VPA, the methodology version defined in the most recent version of the PoA documentation shall be adopted. The use of an updated version is also allowed for, after a validation by a VVB, and followed by a Design Certification review by Gold Standard with respect to the methodology changes.

Examples:

- A CPA/VPA included during the second year of the PoA shall use the methodology version defined in the PoA documentation at the time of Design Certification; this methodology version is valid for the course of the CPA/VPA's first crediting period or longer if allowed in the relevant activity requirement.
- A CPA/VPA included during the 2nd crediting period of the PoA shall use the methodology version defined in the PoA documentation that was revised during its Design Certification Renewal after the first crediting cycle; this methodology version is valid for the course of the CPA/VPA's first crediting period or longer if allowed in the relevant activity requirement.

16.2.3 Documents to be Submitted for PoA and CPA/VPA for Design Certification Renewal.

16.2.4 The documents to be submitted during Design Certification Renewal shall be in line with the list of documentation mentioned in the Gold Standard for the Global Goals [Principles & Requirements](#) but with relevant documents to be submitted at both PoA and CPA/VPA levels.

17.0 DESIGN CHANGES

17.1 In the case of a design change, the CME shall assess the changes based on The Gold Standard rules on design change for standalone project activities, but do so for both the activity and Programme level. E.g. If a new country (not already mentioned in the geographical boundary of the Programme in the PoA-DD) is added to the Programme, it should be ensured that the stakeholders from this new country accept the design of the Programme and also that this does not impact the additionality demonstrated at the Programme level etc.

18.0 PRE-CDM VERS

18.1 The CPAs in a registered Programme are eligible to claim up to two years of pre-CDM VERs provided the CME/Project Developer enters into an agreement with Gold Standard whereby they commit to surrender to Gold Standard, for immediate retirement, CERs that will be issued in respect of GHG reductions generated by the activity (or other activities from that PoA) during the CDM crediting period in an amount equal to the Pre-CDM VERs. The agreement shall make use of The 'Gold Standard CDM Emission Reduction Acquisition Agreement' template, and no delivery is required for a grace period of the first two years of issuance following CDM Design Certification.

19.0 PROCEDURE FOR THE REGISTRATION OF MULTI-COUNTRY PoA

19.1 In principle, multi-country GS voluntary PoAs shall provide a VPA-DD for each country considered at the time of PoA registration. Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis and after review by the GS-TAC, provided the CME makes a formal request to Gold Standard in writing and can deliver convincing justification to support their case.

19.2 GS Voluntary PoAs that are granted with this exception would be allowed to submit a [VPA DD](#) for only one of the countries in the PoA boundary. In this case, the CME shall conduct a Sustainable Development Goals Assessment and Safeguarding Principles Assessment at the VPA equivalent level.

19.3 Any request for exception shall be supported by documentation addressing the following elements in the [PoA DD](#) and [VPA DD](#):

(a) Additionality – Where applicable PoA level additionality shall be demonstrated taking into account all countries in the PoA boundary. Additionality at PoA level can be demonstrated using approved CDM [\[2\]](#) or GS additionality tools.

(b) Baseline scenario – the baseline situation (as defined by the applied baseline methodology/methodologies) for all countries in the PoA boundary shall be similar and this shall be justified.

(c) Emission reductions or other SDG Impact calculation (where applicable) – a typical emission reduction calculation approach as per the applied methodology should be demonstrated in the PoA/[VPA DD](#) and the same approach shall be applied for VPAs from all countries in the PoA boundary.

(d) Legislation – the legislation applicable to the applied technology shall be provided for all countries in the PoA boundary.

19.4 If the information given in the [PoA DD](#) and [VPA DD](#) provides sufficient evidence to show with confidence that all targeted communities considered within the PoA boundary are homogeneous with respect to the above four points, Project Developers can submit one [VPA DD](#) (from one of the countries included in the PoA boundary) at the time of PoA registration and subsequent VPA(s) for the other countries can be included in the PoA at a later stage.

19.5 PoAs not granted with an exception can add new countries to the PoA boundary after PoA registration via a formal design change request and in line with [Gold Standard for the Global Goals Principles & Requirements](#) (Annex A), . This process requires submission of a [VPA DD](#) for activities developed in each of the countries.

19.6 Post-Design Certification design change requests to expand the PoA boundary to other countries are also possible without requiring a [VPA DD](#). However, these design changes are governed by the point's outlines in paragraph IV. In this case, a fee per country, plus any additional assessment charge required would be charged to review its approval in the registered PoA. The remaining fee shall be charged based on the annual average emission reduction or other applicable SDG Impact estimated in the [VPA DD](#) and will be payable on submission of the [VPA DD](#).

Endnotes

[\[1\]](#) This template is the same as the CDM-CPA-DD.

[2] Demonstration of additionality, development of eligibility criteria and application of multiple methodologies for Programme of Activities

ANNEX A – MICROSCALE PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES REQUIREMENTS

Unless stated otherwise in this Annex, rules mentioned above for PoAs shall apply to Microscale Programme of Activities (mPoA) scheme. In case of any discrepancy, the rules in this Annex shall prevail.

A.1 ELIGIBILITY

(a) Scale of the project: VPAs within mPoA are eligible under the scheme if the annual emission reductions achieved per project are limited to a maximum as defined within respective Activity Requirements. Whenever actual impacts, such as emission reductions as per the verification report exceed the upper threshold for a given registered project, the project can still request for issuance, but the claimable emission reductions are capped at the maximum per year.

(b) Type of project: Eligible project types are as defined by Gold Standard for the Global Goals [Principles & Requirements](#) and any eligibility requirements listed in the Activity Requirements. A/R and AGR activities are not eligible for this scheme.

(c) Host country: mPoAs can be located in any Host Country.

(d) Project cycle: Both regular and retroactive cycle projects are eligible to apply under this scheme.

(e) Date of first submission: The first submission date for a Gold Standard mPoA is defined as the date when the mPoA Design Consultation Report is submitted for Gold Standard review.

A.2 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

Stakeholder consultations must happen at both the mPoA level and the its VPA level (specific consultations) unless convincing justification is provided in the documentation as to why consultation at the project level is not necessary, and approval is granted by Gold Standard at the Design Certification stage. Stakeholder consultations at the project level must take place in a two-step process, i.e. the Stakeholder Consultation (SC) meeting and the Stakeholder Feedback Round (SFR) as per the Gold Standard for the Global Goals Stakeholder Consultation & Engagement Requirements and Guidelines. Reporting of the stakeholder consultation shall be done using the [Stakeholder Consultation Report](#)

The requirements of stakeholder consultations as given in section 6, above also apply to mPoAs.

A.3 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The sustainable development assessment shall take place at the VPA level unless a convincing case is presented by CME and approved by Gold Standard at the time of Design Certification, as to why this can be conducted at mPoA level only. In such a case, future projects are included in the mPoA only if they are in line with sustainable development compliance criteria defined in the PoA-KPI.

An Objective Observer(s) shall be appointed in time for validation of the mPoA for an appraisal of the risks associated with the mPoA, check completeness of stakeholder consultations as well as to assess contribution to three SDGs including SDG 13.

In view of the inclusion of a project to a micro-programme or of a verification of a project a target-random approach is applied to the project appraisal making use of an Objective Observer, at the inclusion and/or verification stage.

Upon Gold Standard request and in time for validation, inclusion or verification, PDs shall identify and provide the names and contact details of at least three independent experts (e.g. academics from local universities, staff from local NGOs or local consultancies, etc.) who shall appraise VPAs with respect to sustainable development aspects, including SDG 13. The Gold Standard appoints one or more Objective Observers amongst the people suggested and/or other experts preferably chosen from The Gold Standard NGO Supporters, The Gold Standard Roster of Experts, or representatives of development organisations with host country experience such that environmental and socio-economic impacts can be credibly assessed. Experts are selected based on an assessment of the relevance of their expertise and knowledge of the local conditions. Objective Observers visit the site at validation/inclusion or verification stage to provide an independent assessment of the following:

1. risks associated with the project with respect to The Gold Standard safeguarding principles (human rights abuse, environmental degradation, non-adherence to labour laws, corruption, etc.). Refer the relevant Activity Requirements for guidelines for this assessment,
2. contribution to three SDGs with mandatory contribution to SDG-13
3. completeness of stakeholder consultations

mPOA Validation

The CMEs shall carry out a self-assessment of the risks associated with the projects within mPoA with respect to The Gold Standard for the Global Goals [Safeguarding Principles & Requirements](#) (human rights abuse, environmental degradation, non-adherence to labour laws, corruption, etc.) and shall identify positive contribution to at least three SDGs, with mandatory contribution to SDG-13 Climate Action. The self-assessment shall be submitted for review by the Gold Standard, which may also require the opinion of an Objective Observer. The Objective Observer shall carry out a site-visit as part of appraisal process.

During mPOA validation, when risks with regards to the safeguarding principles are identified the CME is required to prepare and submit an appropriate

mitigation plan. This will be evaluated by the Gold Standard or the Objective Observer who will evaluate the appropriateness of the mitigation measures and they will be reported in the Validation Appraisal Report. Inputs from stakeholders during the LSC and SFR shall be taken into account for this assessment. SDG contribution indicators shall also be included in the monitoring plan and discussed with Stakeholders.

The Validation Appraisal Report completed by Objective Observers will be made available to The Gold Standard TAC and Secretariat and to the GS NGO Supporters at the time of review and will form part of the mPoA design certification process. The appraisal will be made publicly available following project design certification.

VPA Validation / inclusion stage

In view of the inclusion of a project to a mPoA, a target-random approach is applied to the sustainability appraisal by an Objective Observer(s) who shall conduct a site-visit and report the findings. The inclusion of a project of a different type than any of those submitted with, or already part of the mPoA Certified Design (different technology, measure or methodology) requires an appraisal by an Objective Observer(s) in all cases.

For any project not selected for an appraisal by an Objective Observer at stage of inclusion, the CME/PP shall conduct a self-assessment of the risks associated with respect to the safeguarding principles (human rights abuse, environmental degradation, non-adherence to labour laws, corruption, etc.), check completeness of stakeholder consultations as well as assess contribution to three SDGs and shall make use of the Validation Appraisal Report provided to deliver the assessment.

VPA Verification stage

During verification, if an Objective Observer is selected for an appraisal then he/she shall visit the site to:

1. Confirm the status of project operation,
2. Assess the SDG contribution by the project
3. Assess if the mitigation plan is effectively implemented and negative impacts and risks are being effectively mitigated,
4. Check that other negative impacts have not resulted due to implementation and operation of the project.

The Objective Observer may also report a new issue observed during the verification.

The Verification Appraisal Report will be made available to The Gold Standard TAC and Secretariat and to the GS NGO Supporters at the time of review and will form part of the issuance approval. The Verification Appraisal Report will be made publicly available after the issuance approval.

Whenever a VPA is not selected for an appraisal by an Objective Observer(s) at verification stage, and in view of any request for issuance, the CME shall confirm the status of the project operation, assess if the mitigation plan is effectively implemented and negative impacts and risks have been mitigated, and check that other negative impacts have not resulted due to implementation and operation of the VPA.

The CME shall make use of the Verification Appraisal Report for self appraisal.

A.4 BASELINE, PROJECT SCENARIO & MONITORING

Baselines, project scenario and monitoring shall be defined as per an approved CDM or GS methodology. The latest methodology version applicable at the time of first submission to The Gold Standard shall be used. Alternatively, a new methodology may be described and submitted as part of the project documentation for approval by The Gold Standard during the validation process.

New simplified, conservative approaches (e.g. based on default factors) as well as the consideration of suppressed demand elements are encouraged in order to further streamline the evaluation of SDG outcomes, as long as convincing arguments are provided as to why the approach proposed is conservative enough. The simplified methodology is submitted as part of the Project Design Document (PDD).

Once approved as part of a given mPoA, new methodologies can be used by all CMEs for future micro-scale projects or mPoAs. When The Gold Standard is not in a position to evaluate with sufficient confidence if the new submitted methodology is appropriate and conservative enough, the proposed methodology will be sent out for external review, as per usual procedures for approval of new methodologies under The Gold Standard. In such a case, and unless applicant decide to withdraw the methodology, the cost of this external review must be covered by the applicants.

A.5 DEBUNDLING RULES

No debundling rules apply to this scheme. However, the scheme can be discontinued anytime upon decision of The Gold Standard Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) in case it is shown as being abused. In such a case, projects under mPoA already submitted remain eligible for their entire crediting period.

A.6 ADDITIONALITY

The additionality criteria as defined in Activity Requirements for project level assessment shall apply.

A.7 VALIDATION OF THE MPOA

The validation shall be conducted in one of the following ways:

1. The contracting of a VVB by CME, as for any other PoA. The VVB has to meet all the requirements stated for non-micro scale project validation in core requirements. The project must make use of an existing

methodology or submit the new methodology to The Gold Standard for approval prior to validation by the VVB.

2. The submission to The Gold Standard Internal Validation process. This option implies the payment of a flat fee to The Gold Standard Validation Fund, to initiate the validation of the project. Please refer the fee schedule for details.

If the project proposes a new methodology for the accounting and monitoring of SDG outcomes, the internal validation process includes the approval or rejection of the proposed new approach by Gold Standard, unless, as discussed above, the new methodology is sent for external review.

For The Gold Standard Validation Fund option, the following procedures apply:

1. The Gold Standard Secretariat shall be notified of the use of the Validation Fund option.
2. The completed PDD with information on baseline and monitoring and Validation Appraisal Report must be uploaded into the GS Registry.
3. The CME is notified on whether the project is selected for an appraisal of sustainable development aspects including SDG 13 Climate Action by an Objective Observer. The Validation Fund will cover the costs of Objective Observer. At all times, any assistance from The Gold Standard Validation Fund is subject to the availability of funds. This decision is made through a 'target-random' selection among mPoA opting to make use of the Validation Fund.
4. The CME is notified on whether the project will be selected for an external validation by a VVB. In this case too, the Validation Fund covers the costs. At all times, any assistance from The Gold Standard Validation Fund is subject to the availability of funds. This decision is made through a 'target-random' selection among mPoAs opting to make use of the Validation Fund. In case mPoA is selected for external validation by VVB, The Gold Standard will contract and pay the VVB from validation fund. Project will follow the steps of a regular validation.

A.8 VPA INCLUSION

CMEs can request for the inclusion of VPAs any time during the entirety of the crediting period of the approved programme.

For any project to be included, the completed VPA-DD (along with the SFR Reporting) and the Validation Appraisal Report must be submitted to initiate the process:

1. If no Objective Observer is appointed, The Gold Standard conducts a compliance check based on a desk review for the carbon and sustainability aspects. Activities proposed for inclusion after the compliance check must undergo a two-week review period during which GS TAC and NGO Supporters can request for clarification or corrective actions. The Gold Standard will then formally include it in the Programme.

2. If an Objective Observer is appointed for appraisal of the project upon listing then the selected project undergoes a compliance check by the Objective Observer for sustainability aspects including SDG 13, followed by a two-week review period during which requests for clarification or corrective actions may be raised by The Gold Standard TAC and NGO Supporters.

The two-week period starts the day relevant documents (VPA-DD, Validation Appraisal Report and VPA Inclusion Report) are uploaded on The Gold Standard Registry. The formal date retained for the inclusion is when the two-week review period ends, even if actual inclusion takes longer due to potential requests for clarification or corrective action.

The process is different for a project undergoing a complete validation in view of an inclusion. In such a case, the project must go through an four-week review period and potential requests for clarification or corrective action must be closed for the inclusion to be approved. The formal date retained for the inclusion is when the four -week review period ends, even if actual inclusion takes longer due to potential requests for clarification or corrective action.

A.9 VERIFICATION

Verification of shall be conducted in either of the two following ways:

1. The contracting of a VVB by CME, as for any other project.
2. Submission to The Gold Standard Internal Verification process. Internal verification is initiated when fees is paid to The Gold Standard Verification Fund, the first fee being paid within nine months after Design Certification.

The following procedure applies for The Gold Standard Verification Fund option:

1. The Gold Standard Secretariat shall be notified of the choice of the Verification Fund option.
2. The Monitoring Report and Verification Appraisal Report must be uploaded into the registry with necessary supporting documentation, if any.
3. CME is notified on whether a VPA or VPAs are selected for an appraisal of sustainable development aspects including SDG 13 by an Objective Observer, or if these will be verified internally by The Gold Standard alone. The Verification Fund will cover these costs. At all times, any assistance from The Gold Standard Verification Fund is subject to the availability of funds. This decision is made through a 'target-random' selection among VPAs opting to make use of the Verification Fund (see section 10). VPAs shall be subjected to OO's appraisal and site visit atleast once within 3 years of the date of Design Certification with Gold Standard.

4. CME is notified on whether a VPA or VPAs are selected for an external verification by a VVB or will be verified internally by The Gold Standard. In both cases, the Verification Fund covers the costs. At all times, any assistance from The Gold Standard Verification Fund is subject to the availability of funds. This decision is made through a 'target-random' selection among VPAs opting to make use of the Verification Fund. In case a VPA or VPAs are selected for external verification by VVB, The Gold Standard will contract and pay the VVB from the verification fund and follow the steps of a regular verification.

It is possible for fraud to occur when CME has deliberately provided information that is incorrect, and used to obtain Gold Standard status, or to inflate the SDG outcomes from the mPoA. If fraud were suspected, it would be determined through the several rounds of requests for clarification and/or corrective action.

If the verification shows that the mPoA documentation is fraudulent, and if The Gold Standard has credible evidence that shows the negative intent of the CME, the party submitting the VPA/project within the mPoA is permanently disqualified and this is publicly announced (see Gold Standard Terms & Conditions for more details).