

# GOLD STANDARD FOR THE GLOBAL GOALS PRINCIPLES & REQUIREMENTS

Version 1.1 – Published March 2018

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## 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.

Status of Document:	Version 1.1 – Effective 1 <sup>st</sup> March 2018
Language:	English
Contact Details:	<a href="mailto:help@goldstandard.org">help@goldstandard.org</a> <a href="http://www.goldstandard.org">www.goldstandard.org</a>
Next planned update:	02 <sup>nd</sup> September 2019

## 1.0 EFFECTIVE DATE, SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

### 1.1 EFFECTIVE DATE

1.1.1 Gold Standard for the Global Goals shall be effective for all Projects seeking Gold Standard Certification as of 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018. For Projects applying previous versions of Gold Standard please refer to the Gold Standard for the Global Goals [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 (GS-VVBs, hereafter VVBs) shall Validate or Verify the Project, in conjunction with the Gold Standard [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 or Programmes 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 and changes, clarifications or corrections to the Requirements. These shall be published to the Gold Standard website and shall be applicable as per the date specifically stated for each update. Gold Standard shall provide notice of all such changes and the 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 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 submission to [help@goldstandard.org](mailto:help@goldstandard.org). Such requests shall be considered as per the Gold Standard Standards Setting Requirements. 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 of 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, for practicality, shared evidence may be provided.

### 1.3 PROJECT PATHWAY APPLICABILITY

1.3.1 All Projects shall apply the Gold Standard for the Gold Standard for the Global Goals [Principles & Requirements](#) and any associated documents.

1.3.2 All Projects shall also apply the relevant Activity Requirements related to their project type. If no such Activity Requirements exist then the Requirements shall be as per this document.

Items 1.3.1 and 1.3.2 above are mandatory for all Projects seeking Gold Standard Certification of any kind.

1.3.3 In addition to 1.3.1 and 1.3.2, Projects may issue Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products. These are achieved by following applicable Gold Standard Approved Impact Quantification Methodologies and related Gold Standard Product Requirements.

## 2.0 ELIGIBILITY PRINCIPLES & CRITERIA

This section presents the Eligibility Principles & Criteria that are applicable to all Projects seeking Gold Standard Certification. 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 Criteria.

### 2.1 ELIGIBILITY PRINCIPLES

The following Eligibility Principles shall apply to all Projects seeking Gold Standard Certification:

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

(a) Projects shall be of a type pre-identified as eligible or shall submit to Gold Standard for approval of eligibility. This procedure is described in Section 3.1.1.

(b) Projects shall define their Baseline Scenario and Project Scenario. This procedure is described in Section 3.1.2.

(c) Projects shall contribute positively to Climate Security & Sustainable Development. These positive impacts are considered against the Sustainable Development Goals. This procedure is described in Section 3.1.3.

***Principle 2: Safeguarding Principles:***

Projects shall conduct a Safeguarding Principles Assessment and conform to Gold Standard [Safeguarding Principles and Requirements](#). This procedure is described in Section 3.2.

***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. This procedure is described in Section 3.3 and in the Gold

Standard Stakeholder Consultation & Engagement Procedure, Requirements & Guidelines.

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

Projects shall:

(a) Design and develop an upfront Project Design Document (PDD), incorporating a Monitoring & Reporting Plan. The procedure for this is described in Section 3.4.

(b) Undergo Design Certification (comprising Validation and Design Review). This procedure is described in Section 3.4.

(c) Undertake Monitoring in accordance with the Monitoring & Reporting Plan and produce Annual Reports and Monitoring Reports. Projects shall 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.

(d) Undergo Gold Standard Design Certification Renewal in order to remain Certified Project status and to continue to seek Gold Standard Certified Products and Impact Statements where sought.

This procedure is described in Section 3.4.

***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. This procedure is described in Section 3.5.

## **2.2 GENERAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

The following General Eligibility Criteria shall apply 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 Section 3.1.1.

**(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 though certain rules, requirements and limitations may apply under specific Activity Requirements, Impact Quantification Methodologies and Products.

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). Likewise Projects shall be ineligible if their Project Area overlaps with that of another Gold Standard or other voluntary or compliance standard programme of a similar nature or where the potential for double counting of impact exists (for example use of similar technology or practices through which the potential arises for double counting or mis-estimation of impacts amongst projects).

**(d) Host Country Requirements:** Projects shall be in compliance with Host Country's legal, environmental, ecological and social regulations.

**(e) Contact Details:** As part of the Project Documentation (see Section 3) the Project Developer shall provide the following information for all Project Participants:

(i) name AND

(ii) contact details 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 title/tenure to be demonstrated. These are contained within specific Activity 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.

### **3.0 PROCEDURES & REQUIREMENTS**

This Section describes the Requirements that shall be met for each of the Eligibility Principles described in Section 2.1. Each section describes the Purpose, Scope, Applicability, Procedure and Requirements.

#### **3.1 PRINCIPLE 1: CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE SECURITY & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:**

This section describes the Procedures and Requirements concerning Principle 1 – Contribution to Climate Security & Sustainable Development. By successfully following the Procedures and Requirements in this Section, the outcomes are:

- (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 (SDGs), meaning at least an impact on SDG 13 plus two other Goals.
- (c) The Project includes the above in its Project Documentation, including the Monitoring & Reporting Plan.

##### ***3.1.1 Eligible Project Types***

3.1.1.1 A Project type is automatically eligible for Gold Standard Certification if there are approved Gold Standard Activity Requirements and/or Gold Standard Impact Quantification Methodologies associated with it or as referenced in Gold Standard Product Requirements. These are published to the Gold Standard website and shall be followed where provided for a given Project type.

3.1.1.2 For Project types that are not automatically eligible, a Project Developer may submit to Gold Standard for approval. This shall be done at 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.

3.1.1.3 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.

3.1.1.4 In reviewing a new Project type for approval, Gold Standard may establish new Requirements to be met by the Project in order to achieve Gold

Standard Design Certification and ongoing Gold Standard Certified Project status. Where required, Gold Standard shall engage expert peer reviewers to establish these Requirements, at the Project Developer's expense.

3.1.1.5 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. This is captured in the relevant Activity Requirements, Gold Standard Approved Methodologies and/or Product Requirements.

### **3.1.2 Definition of Baseline and Project Scenarios**

3.1.2.1 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.

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

3.1.2.2 The defined Baseline and Project Scenarios shall be included in the Project Design Document and used to inform the other Principles outlined in this Section. The Baseline Scenario is also reviewed as part of Design Certification Renewal.

3.1.2.3 In certain cases Gold Standard methodologies allow for a Suppressed Demand baseline scenario to be assumed. In such cases, the application of Suppressed Demand baseline is limited to Small Scale Projects (as defined in the relevant Activity 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.

### **3.1.3 Contribution to Climate Security and the Sustainable Development Goals**

3.1.3.1 All Projects shall demonstrate a clear, direct contribution to sustainable development, defined as making demonstrable, positive impacts on at least three 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.

3.1.3.2 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 or start-up or decommissioning of the Project.

3.1.3.3 The Project shall define its SDG Impacts and set monitoring indicators to be included in the Monitoring & Reporting Plan. The following procedure shall be followed:

(a) Step 1: Identify the broad list of 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). All SDG Impacts shall be demonstrated as making a positive effect beyond what would reasonably be expected to occur in the Baseline Scenario.

(b) Step 2: Based on the potential SDG Impacts identified in Step 1, select the minimum 3 (including climate security) that meet the Requirements stated 3.1.3.2, above.

(c) Step 3: The Project Developer may choose from the following options to demonstrate SDG Impacts:

Option 1 – For any SDG Impact the Project Developer shall review the UN 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. Select the three most relevant to the chosen SDG Impacts. Propose an Output Indicator and Justification Information that, combined, demonstrate how the Project positively impacts the chosen Sustainable Development Goal Indicator.

Option 2 – Follow a Gold Standard Approved SDG Tool for the demonstration of SDG Impact(s).

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.

(d) Step 4 (where required): For certain SDG Impacts, an Expert Stakeholder Opinion and Recommendation may be required – See 3.3.

(e) Step 5: Include the Output Indicator, Justification and Monitoring Approach or the monitoring parameters for Gold Standard Approved SDG Tools or Methodologies in the Project Design Document Monitoring Plan to inform future Monitoring Reports.

3.1.3.4 As per Step 3, Option 3 above 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. By following and achieving Certification



under this approach, the Project Developer may be issued with Gold Standard Impact Statements or Products. These may either be selected from the existing Gold Standard Approved Methodologies available or the Project Developer may submit a methodology for review and approval by Gold Standard where appropriate.

Before proposing a new methodology, the Project Developer shall discuss and agree this with Gold Standard prior to commencement of development. It is possible to develop a Project and a Methodology concurrently.

3.1.3.5 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, 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. The Project Developer shall demonstrate that the Expert Stakeholder has confirmed that the impact is real and meets the Requirements of this section and that any recommendations have been considered and incorporated into the Project design.

#### **3.1.4 Process:**

3.1.4.1 For Stakeholder Consultation – See the Gold Standard Stakeholder Consultation & Engagement Procedure, Requirements & Guidelines.

3.1.4.2 Preliminary Review – The proposed SDG Impacts shall be provided in the Key Project Information and drafted so far as possible in the Project Design Document and Monitoring & Reporting Plan.

3.1.4.3 Validation and Design Review (Design Certification) – The proposed SDG Impacts shall be fully incorporated into the Project Design Document with evidence provided as per Section 3.1.3, above. The proposed parameters as per 3.1.3.3 (e), above shall be included in the Monitoring & Reporting Plan.

3.1.4.4 Verification and Performance Review (Performance Certification) – The Monitoring Report shall include reporting on the positive SDG Impacts and associated monitoring parameters.

3.1.4.5 Design Changes – during the project cycle, changes may occur to the design that was envisaged at Design Certification. Where these are considered material and permanent, they must be reflected in the project documentation. The procedure for design changes is included in Annex A of this document.

## **3.2 PRINCIPLE 2: SAFEGUARDING PRINCIPLES**

This section describes the Requirements concerning Principle 2 – Safeguarding Principles.

By successfully following the Procedures in this Section the outcomes are:

(a) The Project completes a Safeguarding Principles Assessment as per the Gold Standard [Safeguarding Principles & 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 will be met.

(c) The above is included in the Project Design Document, including the Monitoring & Reporting Plan.

### **3.2.1 Safeguarding Principles Procedure**

3.2.1.1 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, though certain Assessment Questions and Requirements involve a comparison to the Baseline Scenario(s) and/or the implementation or decommissioning phases of a Project.

3.2.1.2 All Safeguarding Principles and Requirements shall apply to all Projects (including those noted as Not Relevant below); however, in order to make the Assessment more practical, the Assessment in combination with specific Activity Requirements shall define the Requirements per Assessment Question that are answered:

(a) 'Yes' – Meaning that the risk or expected issue identified in the Assessment Question is relevant to the Project and context. The Requirements shall apply and adherence shall be demonstrated. They must be included in the Monitoring & Reporting Plan and future Monitoring Reports.

(b) 'Potentially' – Meaning that the risk or expected issue may be relevant at some point in the Project's cycle but is not necessarily relevant now and/or may never arise. The Requirements apply but the Project Developer may justify why these Requirements do not need to be demonstrated as being met.

(c) 'No' – Meaning that the risk or expected issue is not relevant to the Project. Justification shall be provided to support this conclusion, with evidence provided where required.

3.2.1.3 A number of Safeguarding Principles require the opinion and recommendations of an Expert Stakeholder. These are pre-identified in the Safeguarding Principles Procedure and in specific Activity Requirements.

### **3.2.2 Process**

3.2.2.1 For Stakeholder Consultation – See the Gold Standard [Stakeholder Consultation & Engagement Procedure, Requirements & Guidelines](#).

3.2.2.2 Preliminary Review – A draft Safeguarding Principles Assessment shall be provided, so far as possible, in the Project Design Document.

3.2.2.3 Validation and Design Review (Design Certification) – 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 Safeguarding Principle Requirements parameters that are required to be monitored and reported upon and/or reassessed in future, in line with the Gold Standard Safeguarding Principles procedure. This shall be used to inform the ongoing Monitoring Reports and Verification and Performance Review processes.

3.2.2.4 Verification: The Monitoring Report shall include reporting on Safeguarding Principles and Requirements and the associated monitoring parameters.

### **3.3 PRINCIPLE 3: STAKEHOLDER INCLUSIVITY**

This section describes the Procedures and Requirements concerning Principle 3 - Stakeholder Inclusivity. Further information is provided in the Gold Standard Stakeholder Consultation Procedure, Requirements and Guidance document.

By successfully following the Procedures and Requirements in this Section, the outcomes are:

- (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 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 above is captured in the Project Design Document, including the Monitoring & Reporting Plan.

#### **3.3.1 Stakeholder Engagement & Consultation**

3.3.1.1 All Projects shall conduct Stakeholder Consultation and ongoing engagement process in line with the Gold Standard Stakeholder Consultation & Engagement Procedure, Requirements & Guidelines.

3.3.1.2 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.

3.3.1.3 The Stakeholder Consultation shall be conducted prior to the start date of the Project (see Section 3). 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 Gold Standard Stakeholder Consultation & Engagement Procedure, Requirements & Guidelines.

3.3.1.4 The Stakeholder Consultation shall include at least one public in-person meeting and one Stakeholder Feedback Round of lasting a minimum of 2 months. These shall be open to anyone wishing to attend and shall be conducted in accordance with the Gold Standard Stakeholder Consultation & Engagement Procedure, Requirements & Guidelines.

3.3.1.5 The Project Developer shall share the information on Project, its objective, scale and duration, contribution to sustainable development and safeguards reports to ensure that stakeholders are actively involved in the Project from the beginning thus enabling stakeholders to influence the Project design and implementation.

3.3.1.6 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 Procedure). These may be sought any time during the Project design and consultation but it is recommended that they are sought during the 1st phase of consultation. It is a requirement that the Project demonstrate how the opinions and recommendations of Expert Stakeholders are incorporated into the Project design.

3.3.1.7 Where a given Safeguarding Requirement, SDG Impact or other topic requires the input of an Expert Stakeholder, they shall be appointed directly by the Project Developer. Expert Stakeholders shall be demonstrated to be fully independent of the Project and the Project Developer and to confirm in writing to Gold Standard that they have no Conflict of Interest or other financial interest in the Project, Project Developer or associated organisations. Expert Stakeholder advice shall be provided with the Project Documentation and shall be unedited.

3.3.1.8 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. This shall be provided in the form of written feedback that must be provided for Validation along with evidence as to how the feedback has been addressed and incorporated into the Project design.

3.3.1.9 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.

3.3.1.10 The Project shall have a formal input, feedback and grievance mechanism in place in accordance with Stakeholder Procedure and Guidelines. This mechanism shall be described during the Stakeholder Consultation and in

line with the Gold Standard Stakeholder Consultation & Engagement Procedure, Requirements & Guidelines.

### **3.3.2 Process:**

3.3.2.1 Preliminary Review: A report of the Consultation process, including consultation feedback and how this was incorporated into the design of the Project, shall be included in the Project Design Documentation and the Monitoring & Reporting Plan. These shall be included for submission for Preliminary Review.

3.3.2.2 Validation and Design Review (Design Certification): As per Preliminary Review, report shall be fully complete.

3.3.2.3 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.

## **3.4 PRINCIPLE 4: DEMONSTRATION OF REAL OUTCOMES**

This section describes the Procedures and Requirements concerning Principle 4 – Demonstration of Real Outcomes. This Principle represents the Gold Standard Project cycle and the timescales and frequency for Certification.

By successfully following the Procedures and Requirements in this Section the outcomes are:

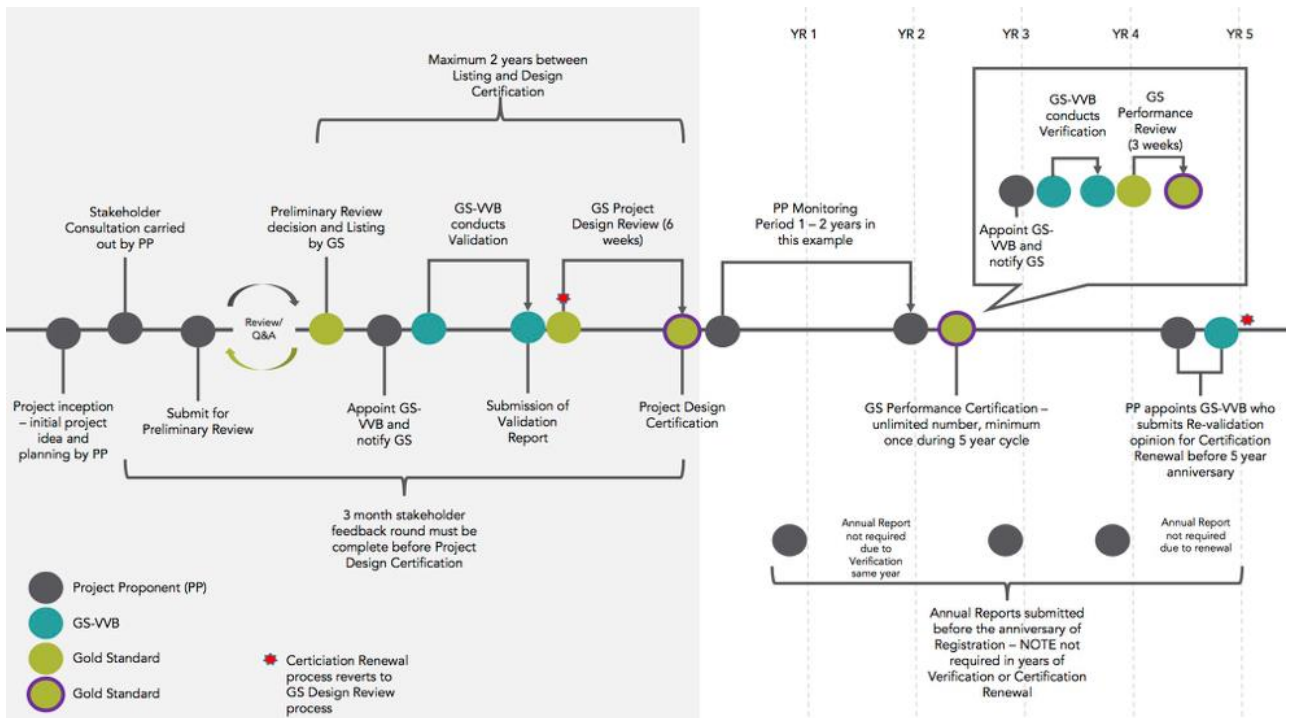
- (a) The Project develops Project Documentation, including Key Project Information, Project Design Document and Monitoring and Reporting Plan.
- (b) The Project undertakes Design Certification by engaging a VVB and undergoing Validation and a Design Review.
- (c) The Project provides ongoing Annual Reporting.
- (d) The Project undertakes Performance Certification by engaging a VVB and undergoing Verification and a Performance Review.
- (e) The Project undertakes Design Certification Renewal every five years, except for Transition projects i.e., projects transitioning from earlier versions of Gold Standard shall maintain their existing crediting renewal cycle.
- (f) VVBs shall conduct a site-visit as part of the validation and verification of Gold Standard projects.

### **3.4.1 Gold Standard Project Cycle**

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

- 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](#).
- 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.
- New projects attaining Gold Standard Certified Design status then enter a 5 year renewable certification cycle wherein for each five year period they must undergo Verification and Performance Review to achieve Gold Standard Certified Project status and where sought Issuance of Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements And Products.
- To retain Certified Design status at the 5<sup>th</sup> year, all Projects must undergo Design Certification Renewal by updating information and baseline. Transition projects shall follow their existing crediting renewal cycle for Design Certification Renewal.
- The number of Performance Certifications in a 5 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.
- Transitioning project, maintaining their existing crediting cycle shall undergo for 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
- The maximum number of Design Certification Renewals and whether a certain number or automatic or reduced in scope is governed by individual Activity Requirements and/or Product Requirements. In the absence of any such stated Requirement, a Project is limited to one Renewal (i.e. maximum 10 years Certification). 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](#).
- Specific requirements apply in areas such as conflict and emergency zones as per Annex B of this document.

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



### 3.4.2 Development of Monitoring and Reporting Plan

3.4.2.1 Projects shall produce a Monitoring & Reporting Plan as part of the Project Design Document that includes a detailed approach to the following:

- (a) Monitoring and reporting of parameters identified for positive SDG Impacts.
- (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.

3.4.2.2 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 Listing 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.

3.4.2.3 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.

### **3.4.3 Project Start Date**

3.4.3.1 Project Start Date: The Project start date shall be 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.

3.4.3.2 Examples of start date may be 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.

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

### **3.4.4 Preliminary Review**

3.4.4.1 The Preliminary Review is conducted once at the outset (i.e., at an early stage of project design and before Listing on the Gold Standard 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.

3.4.4.2 The Preliminary Review includes a desk review of Project Eligibility Principles as well as Methodology applicability 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 – 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 pathway. These are stated in the Activity Requirements.

(b) Pathway 2 – Detailed Preliminary Review – In this pathway, Gold Standard conducts a more thorough check of the 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 period is 4 weeks, conducted by Gold Standard.



3.4.4.3 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. The Completeness Check pathway consists of a Preliminary Review period of 2 weeks, conducted by Gold Standard.

3.4.4.4 The Preliminary Assessment starts when the Project Developer has:

- (a) signed and submitted the '[Terms and Conditions](#),' AND
- (b) submitted the Project Documentation (see 6, below), AND
- (c) paid the [fee](#) for the Preliminary Review where required.

3.4.4.5 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, FARs or OBs identified but that are not required to be resolved prior to Listing, OR
- (c) an unsuccessful Review with at least one potential NC identified. With either outcome 5.a or 5.b the Project may progress to Listing, as per Section 3.4.5, below.

3.4.4.6 The minimum requirements for submission of Project Documentation includes Key Project Information and a substantially completed Project Design Documentation submission that captures:

- (a) Fully completed details required under Section 2 – Eligibility Criteria.
- (b) A [Stakeholder Consultation Report](#) as defined under the Gold Standard [Stakeholder Consultation & Engagement Procedure, Requirements & Guidelines](#).
- (c) 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.
- (d) Defined SDG Impacts including any Expert Stakeholder opinions and recommendations sought.
- (e) Confirmation of certification pathway and any Gold Standard Approved Methodologies and Product Requirements followed including a demonstration of Financial Additionality where required.
- (f) A draft Monitoring Plan.

3.4.4.7 During the Preliminary Review step, Gold Standard may identify any further matters that require Expert Stakeholder opinion and recommendations not already pre-identified.

3.4.4.8 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.

### **3.4.5 Listing**

3.4.5.1 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 Gold Standard Claims Guideline as appropriate for Listed status Projects.
- (c) The Project may proceed to Validation.

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

### **3.4.6 Validation and Design Review (Design Certification):**

3.4.6.1 Validation is conducted by a VVB who assesses the up-front design and monitoring plan for a Project against the Eligibility Principles, Criteria and 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 since Listing.
- (b) Any supporting information required by any aspect of Gold Standard or included by the Project Developer as containing evidence of conformity to all applicable Gold Standard Requirements.

3.4.6.2 Following Listing, a Project may proceed to Validation, followed by Design Review to achieve Gold Standard Certified Design status.

3.4.6.3 The Project shall complete Validation (defined as the date of submission of Validation Report by the VVB) within two years of successfully completing Preliminary Review.

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

Validation begins when:

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

3.4.6.5 Validation ends when the VVB has conducted a site visit and submitted a complete Validation Report, with no open NCs and/or CARs in the opinion of the VVB, to Gold Standard.

3.4.6.6 Design Review: Following submission of the Validation Report by the VVB and payment of any relevant [fee](#) by the Project Developer, Gold Standard conducts a Design Review of the Project Documentation and Validation Report. During the Design Review the Project Documentation is also open to Technical Advisory Committee and NGO Supporter comment.

3.4.6.7 The Design Review period concludes at the later of either 4 weeks post commencement of review or when all CARs are closed. The services of the VVB shall be retained by the Project Developer to respond to clarification requests and CARs raised by Gold Standard and until the Design Certification decision.

3.4.6.8 The date of Design Certification is the last day of the Design Review period, even if the review itself extends beyond this date (i.e., the date of Design Certification is retrospectively confirmed).

3.4.6.9 The positive conclusion of the Design Review period shall result in Gold Standard Certified Design status.

This 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 Gold Standard Claims Guidelines as appropriate for Gold Standard Certified Design status Projects.

### **3.4.7 Regular vs Retroactive:**

3.4.7.1 Design Certification may take place under a Regular or Retroactive procedure.

3.4.7.2 Regular Projects are those where the Stakeholder Consultation (according to Gold Standard Stakeholder Guidelines) meeting has taken place

prior to the Project Start Date. The report of the Stakeholder Meeting shall be submitted to Gold Standard within three months of the event (though this date may be after the Project Start Date).

3.4.7.3 Retroactive Design Certification may be sought for Projects where the Project Start Date has already occurred prior to the first submission of Preliminary Review information to Gold Standard).

3.4.7.4 Retroactive Projects shall submit for Preliminary Review within 1 year of the Project Start Date.

3.4.7.5 For certain Methodologies and Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements, the Requirements for Retroactive Project Design Certification 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.

### ***3.4.8 Combining Design Certification and first Performance Certification:***

3.4.8.1 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. This may occur where the Project Start Date is prior to the envisaged Design Certification Date.

3.4.8.2 Design Review and concurrent Performance Review commences when the VVB submission of positive Validation and Verification Reports (i.e., with no open NCs or CARs) concurrently to Gold Standard.

3.4.8.3 Following receipt of the VVB Reports, Gold Standard shall carry out a 6 week review period that covers both the Design Review and the Performance Review, in line with the Design Review procedure noted in 3.4.6.

3.4.8.4 Successful conclusion means both Design Certification and Performance Certification (and any issuance) are approved concurrently.

### ***3.4.9 Annual Reporting***

3.4.9.1 Projects shall provide transparent, annual update reports. Reports shall be published and notified to Gold Standard within 12 months of the date of Project Design Certification or in the case of Transition projects approval of transition to Gold Standard for Global Goals and every subsequent 12 month period thereafter. It is not required for years when a Verification is completed. If a verification is in progress but not completed, then an annual report is still required following the 12 month cycle. Failure to provide Annual Reports as required shall result in the de-Certification of the Project.

3.4.9.2 The Project Developer shall produce an Annual Report (and submit to Gold Standard) that shall be made publicly available to access to stakeholders identified in Stakeholder Consultation. The Annual Report is not published to the Gold Standard Registry.

3.4.9.3 The Annual Report shall focus on information since the last Annual Report or Verification Report as appropriate. It shall include:

- (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) A list of stakeholders (with contact details) who will receive the 'Annual Report'
- (i) Any update of the 'Project Participants & Secured Titles' (in case of changes)

3.4.9.4 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.

3.4.9.5 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 make key updates with formal review of conformity to Requirements; any changes in approach shall be undertaken at Performance Certification only. Annual Reporting also confirms to Gold Standard that the Project remains active.

### **3.4.10 Verification & Performance Review (Performance Certification)**

3.4.10.1 Verification: Verification may take place either alongside or after Design Certification (see Section 3.4.8) and must occur at least once during the 5 year Certification cycle. The first Verification shall be completed either within two years of project Implementation Date or Design Certification, whichever is later. Where project implementation is completed after Design Certification, the certification period shall start at completion of implementation. Project implementation is defined as the date at which physical activity first becomes operational, for example, the commencement of energy generation or distribution of household technology.

3.4.10.2 Verification shall be commenced only once a Project achieves Gold Standard Certified Design status (or concurrently as noted above).

3.4.10.3 Verification shall include all Gold Standard Principles & Requirements as well as those contained in any Activity Requirements, Gold Standard Methodologies and Product Requirements that are included in the application by the Project Developer.

3.4.10.4 Verification shall be undertaken by a VVB who is eligible for the scope of Project and any Gold Standard Methodology being applied. The VVB is directly appointed by the Project Developer and shall be retained by the Project Developer to review and respond to queries raised during the Performance Review.

3.4.10.5 In some circumstances a different VVB is required to undertake Verification than was used for Validation. This is as stipulated in the relevant Methodology or Product Requirements. Unless otherwise stated, the same VVB may undertake both steps for a given Project though an additional fee to Gold Standard shall apply.

3.4.10.6 Verification starts when the Project Developer has:

(a) Contracted an eligible VVB, AND

(b) Submitted the Monitoring Report to the VVB, AND

(c) Notified Gold Standard of the commencement of Verification. Failure to do so may result in a delay to the commencement of Performance Review.

3.4.10.7 Verification ends when the VVB has conducted a site visit and submitted a complete Verification Report to Gold Standard. A positive Verification Report shall have no pending or open CARs in the opinion of the GS-VVB.

3.4.10.8 Performance Review:

Following submission of the Verification Report by the GS-VVB and payment of the relevant [fee](#) by the Project Developer, Gold Standard conducts a Performance Review of the Monitoring Report and Verification Report. During the Performance Review, the Project Documentation and Monitoring Report is also open to Technical Advisory Committee and NGO Supporter comment. Unless otherwise stated in a specific Activity Requirement, Methodology or Product Requirement, the Performance Review period concludes at the later of 3 weeks post commencement of review or when all CARs are closed. The GS-VVB shall be retained by the Project Developer to respond to clarification requests and CARs raised by Gold Standard.

3.4.10.9 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 GS-VVB.

3.4.10.10 The Performance Review period concludes at the later of the conclusion of 3 weeks or when all CARs are closed.

3.4.10.11 The positive conclusion of the Performance Review period shall result in:

(a) Gold Standard Certified Project status wherein the Project Documentation, supporting documentation and Verification Report are made public via the Gold Standard Registry.

(b) The Project becomes eligible for issuance of any Gold Standard Certified Products or Impact Statements.

3.4.10.12 Gold Standard Certified Products and/or Impact Statements shall be issued once the Project is both eligible (as above) and the required [fees](#) have been paid to Gold Standard.

3.4.10.13 This process may take into account Retroactive Certified Products and/or Impact Statements. The maximum time for Retroactive Certification is the later of the Project Start Date or two years prior to the date of Project Design Certification unless otherwise stated in a specific Methodology or Product Requirements.

### **3.4.11 Design Certification Renewal**

3.4.11.1 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.

3.4.11.2 Delay to 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).

3.4.11.3 Design Certification Renewal follows the same process as Design Certification (see Section 3.1.4) 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 activity or methodology-specific Requirements
- (e) Demonstration of Ongoing Financial Need, where relevant – see Section 3.5

3.4.11.4 The application of Design Certification Renewal may differ from Project type to Project type. The five year renewal cycle remains in place for all though different Project types allow for automatic renewal for a given number of cycles and/or to remove the need for any or all of 3.4.11.3 (a)-(e) above. These are as defined in the Activity Requirements related to the Project where provided. Transition projects shall follow their existing crediting renewal cycle for Design Certification Renewal.

## **3.5 PRINCIPLE 5: FINANCIAL ADDITIONALITY AND ONGOING FINANCIAL NEED**

This section describes the Procedures and Requirements concerning Principle 5 – Additionality and Financial Need. By successfully following the Procedures and Requirements in this Section the Project demonstrates Financial Additionality and is therefore able to Issue Certified Impact Statements and Products.

### ***3.5.1 Financial Additionality***

3.5.1.1 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 are determined under the relevant Activity Requirements and Product Requirements.

3.5.1.2 Additionality tools. 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 CDM “[Methodological Tool - Demonstration of additionality of small-scale project activities](#)” to demonstrate additionality

3.5.1.3 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.

3.5.1.4 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.

3.5.1.5 Prior Consideration: The following requirements are applicable for the demonstration of prior consideration of carbon revenues for standalone Projects:



(a) Regular cycle projects are exempt from any kind of prior consideration of carbon revenue checks.

(b) Retroactive project must submit the required documents to Gold Standard (time of first submission) within one year of its start date. Project documents submitted at a date later than one year from the project start date will not be eligible for Gold Standard certification.

#### 3.5.1.6 For PoA/VPAs

(a) Regular cycle VPAs are exempt from any kind of prior consideration of carbon revenue checks.

(b) Retroactive VPAs (with a start date before or after the time of first submission of PoA) must submit the required documents to Gold Standard (time of first submission) within one year of its start date. Retroactive VPA documents that are submitted at a date later than one year from the project start date will not be eligible for Gold Standard Certification.

3.5.1.7 Prior Consideration in the context of Design Change: The prior consideration rule is also applicable to a Certified Design 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. 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. The design change request shall be assessed in line with the Design Change rules.

### **3.5.2 Ongoing Financial Need:**

3.5.2.1 All Gold Standard Project (including those that transition from earlier versions) required to demonstrate Financial Additionality, as noted in 3.5.1 above, shall demonstrate Ongoing Financial Need for such mechanisms.

3.5.2.2 Ongoing Financial Need shall be demonstrated at Design

Certification Renewal.3.5.2.3 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 followings;

- 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.
- Description how the GS finance contributes to or is being used to sustain or enhance the project.
- Where no revenue is realized from certification during a given period this would be considered a FAR for the next Issuance.

3.5.2.4 The submission of the information to demonstrate OFN is mandatory, but information

- may remain confidential (i.e. shall be submitted alongside other project documentation and not published to the GS Registry), in recognition of the commercially sensitive nature of the information.
- shall satisfy the OFN portion of project renewal and no further information (beyond responding to clarification questions) will be requested.
- will not be used for formal decision making to decide whether a project shall renew or not.

### **3.5.3 Stacking and Financial Additionality:**

Projects seeking to issue multiple different Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements and/or products ('stacking') shall demonstrate Financial Additionality as per 3.5.1, 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.

## **3.6 PROGRAMMES OF ACTIVITY**

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

3.6.2 Programmes of Activity shall follow the Gold Standard for the Global Goals [Programme of Activity Requirements](#). The Requirements in this document are applicable for a Programme where multiple individual activities are spread over space and time.

## **4.0 CERTIFICATION OUTCOMES**

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

### **4.1 Types of Certification:**

#### **4.1.1 Gold Standard Certified Design:**

Successful attainment of Gold Standard Certified Design status allows the Project to undertake Performance Certification on the way to becoming a Gold Standard Certified Project and to promote the Project in accordance with the Gold Standard Claims Guidelines.

#### **4.1.2 Gold Standard Certified Project:**

A Gold Standard Project that successfully completes Verification and Performance Review (Performance Certification) is called a Gold Standard Certified Project.

A Gold Standard Certified Project is issued a statement confirming its status and its SDG Impacts. The Project is also able to promote itself in accordance with the Gold Standard Claims Guidelines.

#### **4.1.3 Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements and Products:**

Further to Gold Standard Certified Project status, a Project may also be issued Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements and Products (such as Gold Standard Verified Emission Reductions, or VERs). This is subject to successful Performance Certification of the Project's conformity to applicable Gold Standard Methodologies and Product Requirements.

4.1.4 All projects from Listed status and beyond, including their Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products are captured on the Gold Standard Registry and are publicly and transparently available to all to review. The Project is also able to promote its claims in accordance with the Gold Standard Claims Guidelines.

#### **4.1.5 Stacking:**

The 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 relevant Gold Standard Methodologies 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 specific guidelines, 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.

4.1.6 Project Developers and funders/buyers of Impact Statements and Products shall adhere to the Gold Standard 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.

4.1.7 After Design Certification it is possible to include more Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products as part of the Project but it is not allowed to retroactively issue Impact Statements or Products for previous Monitoring Report periods.

## **5.0 PROJECT DOCUMENTATION AND TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS**

5.1 Projects shall provide evidence of conformity to the Requirements in the form of:

**Preliminary Review Project Documentation:**

- (a) Key Project Information (see [PDD Template](#))  
Draft PDD including Safeguarding Principles Assessment, SDG Impacts identified and draft Monitoring and Reporting Plan
- (b) [Stakeholder Consultation Report](#)
- (c) Supporting evidence and documents such as maps, survey results or calculations
- (d) Signed [Cover Letter](#) and [Terms and Conditions](#)

**Validation and Design Review Documentation:**

- (a) Completed PDD including Monitoring & Reporting Plan
- (b) Fully completed [Stakeholder Consultation Report](#)
- (c) Any Activity, Context, Methodology or Product Requirement specific documentation
- (d) Supporting evidence and documents

**Annual Reporting Documentation:**

- (a) Completed [Annual Report](#)
- (b) Supporting evidence and documents

**Verification and Performance Review Documentation:**

- (a) Any updates to the Key Project Information and PDD
- (b) Monitoring & Reporting Plan
- (c) Any Context, Activity, Methodology and Product Requirement specific documentation
- (d) Supporting evidence and documents such as maps, survey results and/or calculations

5.2 All of the above Documentation shall be submitted using Gold Standard Project templates except for supporting evidence and documents

5.3 The Project Developer shall open an account on the Gold Standard 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 Gold Standard Registry.

(c) All information shall be submitted in English, OR a language that has been agreed upon by the Project Developer, the Gold Standard Secretariat 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 shall include:

- Name of the project
- ID of the project
- Legend
- Printing date
- Scale
- Direction of North
- GPS coordinate system (e.g. WGS 84)
- GPS grid
- Infrastructure (roads, houses, etc.) and rivers
- Information on the satellite or aerial picture (date, resolutions, data source)

## 6.0 NON-CONFORMITY

6.1 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 in no circumstances later than 30 days after the Non-Conformity event). Potential or actual Non-conformities may also be submitted to Gold Standard by any party at any time for review.

6.2 Gold Standard shall undertake a review of the Non-Conformity, including as required 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.

6.3 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**

### **1. Applicability of procedures on design changes**

1.1 These procedures relate to material and permanent design changes. Design changes are considered material and permanent if at least one of the following aspects of a project is affected: additionality, scale of the project<sup>[1]</sup>, validity/applicability of the applied methodology, stakeholder consultation, and sustainable development criteria. Changes must be reflected in the project documentation.

1.2 These procedures do not apply to requests for deviation from or changes to the monitoring plan of a Certified Project Design Document (PDD). However, these procedures do apply to changes in the monitoring plan caused by material and permanent design changes for which approval is requested.

### **2. Design changes occurring before Design Certification**

2.1 Any request for approval of a design change that occurs prior to or during Design Review must be reviewed and validated by the Validating VVB. The project documentation and the Validation Report shall be revised accordingly before submission (or re-submission) for Design Review.

2.2 For Projects seeking Certified Impact Statements and/or Products, for example GS-VERs, 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 (safeguarding principles and indicators). All potential scenarios must be Validated by the VVB and the actual scenario must be chosen before the first Verification.

2.3 Project Developers shall discuss if there is a need to conduct a stakeholder consultation with respect to changes that are to occur or occurred in the project

design/location/specifications. Whenever design changes include the extension of the project boundaries to new sites or the selection of different sites from those that had been envisioned at the time of Design Certification, relevant stakeholders from these locations shall be invited for comments as per Gold Standard guidelines. For example, design changes in a wind power project that has increased its capacity to new locations or modified the microsite plan of wind turbines to include different locations compared to the one envisioned at the time of Stakeholder Consultation or Preliminary Review, may call for another physical meeting to collect feedback from stakeholders not included in the earlier stakeholder meetings.

### **3. Design changes occurring after Design Certification**

3.1 The guidelines apply in the case when a Project Developer alerts Gold Standard about a design change with respect to a project that has reached Design Certification status, or in case the VVB contracted to perform the Verification identifies that the project has not been implemented according to the Certified PDD at the time of verification<sup>[2]</sup>. The VVB shall identify and inform the Project Developer of any concerns related to the conformity of the project and its operation with the Certified PDD.

3.2 The procedures are also applicable if the permanent changes have occurred after the implementation of the project as per the Certified PDD and issuance of Impact Statements or Products have also taken place.

### **4. Request for approval of design changes for a project**

4.1 Project Developers are required to submit a request for approval for material and permanent changes to a project. The Project Developer must submit the request to the Gold Standard Secretariat prior to making the changes, or, at the very latest, prior to request for issuance. In the latter case, however, Project Developers must be aware that negative feedback from stakeholders or reviewers may lead to the rejection of any future issuance request unless the design is revised appropriately, which may be problematic when implementation has already occurred.

4.2 The following information/documents should be submitted as a part of the request for approval:

(a) Revised PDD highlighting the changes in track-change mode, and a memo highlighting the design changes and discussing impact(s) of the changes on the relevant aspects of the project.

(b) Any other additional supporting documentation (for example, Environmental Impact Assessment conducted in relation to the changes in the project, etc.)

### **5. Preparation of revised documentation**

5.1 The revised documentation should include an assessment of the impact of the design changes with respect to all the aspects below (a to g). The design

change memo submitted at the time of request for approval shall discuss these in a concise way:

(a) **Additionality:** Changes may impact the validity of investment analysis or barrier analysis established at the time of project Design Certification, thus affecting the additionality of the project. This would typically be the case when:

(i) Changes affect the output capacity due to an increased installed capacity or an increased number of units, or installation of units with lower capacity or units with a technology which is less advanced than that described in the project documentation.

(ii) Components are added or the ones considered are extended.

(iii) Sites are removed or added in the context of a project registered with multiple sites.

(iv) Actual operational parameters within the control of the Project Developer are associated with different values than previously expected, affecting the determination of the emission reductions and the IRR calculation.

5.2 The Project Developer must therefore discuss the effect of design changes on the validity of the demonstration of additionality and provide all required justifications.

5.3 Within an investment analysis, all but the parameters affected by the design changes shall be given the same values as in the demonstration provided at the time of Design Certification.. If the demonstration relies on a barrier analysis, the Project Developer shall discuss why the barriers still remain valid despite the design changes.

**(a) Scale of Project:** Project Developer shall discuss to what extent the design changes affect the scale of the project as per Gold Standard Requirements.. If the defined upper threshold for the project scale is exceeded, related rules are no longer applicable to the Project and Project Developer shall revise the project documentation accordingly.

**(c) Applicability of methodology:** Project Developer shall discuss whether the original methodology is still applicable, or whether another methodology shall be used. The same analysis shall also be conducted with respect to the selected baseline scenario. When a Project has not been implemented as described in the registered project documentation, the applicability and application of the baseline methodology with which the Project has been registered shall be re-assessed.

**(d) Stakeholder feedback on design change:** The Project Developer shall discuss if there is a need to conduct a stakeholder consultation with respect to changes that are to occur or have occurred in the Project design/location/specifications. Whenever design changes include the extension of the Project boundaries to new sites or the selection of different sites from those that had been envisioned at the time of Design Certification, relevant stakeholders from these locations shall be invited for comments as per Gold



Standard guidelines. For example, design changes in wind power projects increasing their capacities to new locations or modifying the microsite plan of wind turbines involving different locations compared to the one envisioned at the time of Design Certification may call for a physical meeting to include the feedback of stakeholders who were not included in the earlier stakeholder meetings.

The Project Developer can choose to invite comments electronically or through a physical meeting, but will be required to justify the same. To the extent possible, the Project Developer shall conduct the complementary consultation prior to the start of construction/implementation of the affected components.

**(e) Sustainable Development Assessment:** The Project Developer shall discuss any necessary revision in the scores of the SDG Impact indicators following the design changes. The same should be done with respect to the level of risk for the Safeguarding Principles.

Changes in the project location or the extension of the project boundaries call for a re-assessment of the SDG Impacts and Safeguarding Principles, as does a significant change of scale of the project, even if located on the same site. If a new Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required as per the local legislation, the SDG Impact and Safeguarding Principles assessment shall take into account the new elements provided, including potential new mitigation and/or compensation measures to put in place.

**(f) Monitoring & Reporting Plan:** The Project Developer shall discuss whether there is a need to prepare a revised sustainable development monitoring plan to accommodate any changes and/or comments from the local stakeholders. This can potentially include new mitigation measures as per a revised EIA or new comments by stakeholders. Changes in the scores of the SDG Impact indicators due to the new project design can also lead to a revision of the sustainable development monitoring plan. The changes in the scores of the SDG Impact indicators shall be assessed as per the sustainable development assessment guidance discussed above.

**(g) Legislation:** The Project Developer should also discuss the need for any new approvals/licenses from the environmental and/or regulatory agencies.

## 6. Evaluation of the request for approval

6.1 Upon receipt of the request for approval, the Gold Standard Secretariat conducts a 'completeness' check to confirm whether all the necessary information and documentation has been submitted.

6.2 Upon payment of the design change fee, the Secretariat then proceeds with a preliminary evaluation of the request for approval in order to assess whether:

(a) An opinion on the impacts of the design changes with respect to points a to g above shall be performed by either the Validation VVB or Verification VVB (post-Design Certification), or

(b) Gold Standard conducts the assessment of the design changes on its own.

Under case 'a', the Project Developer shall contract the Validation VVB or Verification VVB to perform a review of the design change memo and the revised project documentation submitted to Gold Standard. The VVB must provide an opinion on each one of the points a to g discussed. The VVB shall assess how the affected data/information in the Certified Project Documentation have been derived, and validate if the assumptions underlying this original data/information are correct. The revised Project Documentation, the design change memo, and the VVB opinion shall be submitted to Gold Standard for review. Once approved, both documents will be uploaded in the Gold Standard Registry as amendments to the Project Documentation and the Validation Report.

Under case 'b', Gold Standard proceeds to the review of the submitted design change document without further involvement of a VVB. The revised documentation and the design change memo once approved will be uploaded in the Gold Standard registry as an amendment of the Project Documentation. In all cases above, approval or rejection may occur directly after submission of the necessary documentation or after rounds of review necessary to close all requests for clarification or corrective action, if any.

6.3 Approval of the request for design changes as proposed by the Project Developer allow for subsequent requests for issuance.

6.4 Rejection of the request for design changes prevents any request for issuance unless the previous design is recovered or an alternative, acceptable design change is submitted.

6.5 Once a decision has been made, the Gold Standard Secretariat will communicate it to both the Project Developer and the VVB that was involved in the assessment of the design changes. The revised version of the complete Project Documentation shall then be applicable for all future requests for issuance.

## **ANNEX B – CONFLICT AND EMERGENCY ZONES**

### **1. Background**

1.1 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. These requirements can be applied to both regular and retroactive projects.

2. Steps and procedures for projects that want to apply the proposed approach

2.1.1. Submission for approval: 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.

2.1.2. Selection of Objective Observer: 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 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.

2.1.5. Site visit by Objective Observer and submission of the report: 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 shall make use of the Validation or Verification Appraisal Report template provided by Gold Standard as well as the checklist provided by the VVB.

2.1.8 The Validation or Verification Appraisal Report prepared by the Objective Observer will be made available to Gold Standard and the VVB. This report forms part of the final Validation or Verification Report submitted by the GS-VVB for requesting Design Certification or issuance. The VVB may seek clarification from the Objective Observer at anytime and will use the findings from the Validation or Verification Appraisal Report to form the VVB final Validation or Verification opinion.

2.1.9 Gold Standard will review the report delivered by the Objective Observer during the 4-week Design Certification or three-week Performance Review process.

## Endnotes

[1] The scale of the project is not only defined by the maximum power generation capacity for power projects and maximum threshold of energy savings for energy efficiency project, but also refers to the volume of emission reductions from a project.

[2] Gold Standard will not conclude the Verification until the request for approval of changes has been approved.

[3] 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#>

[4] 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.