GOLD STANDARD FOR THE GLOBAL GOALS

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITY REQUIREMENTS

Version 1.2

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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.

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1. SCOPE AND APPLICABLITY

1.1.1 The Programme of Activity (PoA) requirements provide the minimum requirements for designing and implementing a PoA and seeking issuance of Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products.

1.1.2 All Voluntary Project Activities (VPAs) or Component Project Activities (CPAs) submitted for Design Certification within a PoA, must be in compliance with relevant Gold Standard eligibility criteria (for example Principles & Requirements and applicable Activity Requirements).

1.1.3 These Requirements are not applicable to projects applying Land Use & Forests Activity Requirements or Contextual Requirements.

1.1.4 Unless otherwise specified in this document, Gold Standard PoAs follow the requirements listed in the CDM Project Standard for Programmes of Activities.

2. PoA BOUNDARY

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

2.1.2 The PoA boundary must be defined in its entirety at the time of Design Certification. An expansion of the PoA boundary can be requested following the design change approval procedure (refer to Section - Design Change Rules for details).

3. START DATE, DURATION AND CREDITING PERIOD

3.1.1 The PoA start date for a Gold Standard voluntary PoA is the date when the PoA Design Consultation Report is submitted for Gold Standard Review. This event is the time of first submission of the PoA. The start date for a CDM Gold Standard PoA follows the definition of start date of a CDM PoA.

3.1.2 The PoA crediting period start date is the crediting period start date of the earliest VPA/CPA included in the PoA.

3.1.3 The PoA duration shall not exceed 20 years or the crediting period of first VPA/CPA plus 5 years, whichever is greater. The PoA that are design certified under an earlier version of Gold Standard shall maintain their maximum crediting periods as envisaged at time of registration. Refer to Transition Requirements for further details.

3.1.4 Unless otherwise stated in a specific Methodology or Product Requirements, the VPA/CPA crediting period start date is either the VPA/CPA Start Date or two years prior to the date of Design Certification

– whichever is later. For the VPA/CPA Start date definition, refer to the Project Start Date as defined in the Principles & Requirements. Under no circumstances, the VPA/CPA crediting period start date can be earlier than the PoA crediting period start date.

3.1.5 The crediting period of a VPA/CPA shall not exceed the end of the duration of the PoA, regardless of the VPA/CPA inclusion date or start date.

3.1.6 The crediting period of a VPA/CPA shall be selected as per relevant Activity Requirements or in the absence of these Principles & Requirements. The coordinating/managing entity (hereafter "CME") shall select and specify the crediting period in the VPA/CPA Design document (VPA/CPA DD) at the time of inclusion to the PoA.

3.1.7 A CPA/VPA may be submitted for inclusion to the PoA at any time during the duration of the PoA by the CME.

3.1.8 In order for the PoA to be listed under Gold Standard, the PoA document including a Stakeholder Consultation Report shall be submitted for preliminary review. The PoA can only be listed once a preliminary review of PoA and each one of its VPAs/CPAs submitted with PoA for preliminary review has been completed. When the Stakeholder Consultation is conducted at the Programme level only, the listing will be based on the submission of the Programme level Stakeholder Consultation Report.

3.1.9 Regular and Retroactive VPA/CPA are defined as

(a) Regular VPA/CPA is the activity for which the Stakeholder Consultation (1st round) has been conducted before the Start Date of the VPA/CPA.

(a) Retroactive VPA/CPA is the activity for which a Stakeholder Consultation (1st round) is conducted after the Start Date of the VPA/CPA.

4. ADDITIONALITY

4.1.1 The additionality shall be demonstrated at both the PoA and VPA/CPA level, where required, in line with the Principles & Requirements or relevant Activity Requirements. The CME may seek exception by providing convincing justifications validated by Validation/Verification Body (VVB) and approved by Gold Standard as to why demonstration of programme level additionality is appropriate for proposed PoA.

4.1.2 The CME shall demonstrate additionality of proposed PoA by establishing that in the absence of Gold Standard Certification related finance (i) the proposed CPA/VPA 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.

4.1.3 VPA/CPA level additionality can be proven using one of the following options in line with the Principles & Requirements

(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.

(b) 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.

4.1.4 The latest version of the additionality tool available at the time of first submission of PoA shall be applied. This tool may be used by PoA until PoA completes Design Certification. The PoA shall include conditions that would systematically demonstrate additionality of VPAs/CPAs under the proposed PoA in the inclusion criteria of VPAs/CPAs in the PoA.

5. USE OF THE GOLD STANDARD IMPACT REGISTRY

5.1.1 To develop a PoA under Gold Standard, the CME shall have an account in the Gold Standard Impact Registry. The PoA and its corresponding VPAs/ CPAs/ will be managed via this CME account as follows:

(a) The CME of the PoA opens an account in their name in the Impact Registry;

(b) PoA entry is created under this account with a unique GS ID. All relevant PoA level documents required at the Design Certification shall be uploaded (PoA-DD and associated documentation) to this GS ID;

(c) An entry per VPA/CPA 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 VPA/CPA (VPA/CPA DD, VPA/CPA Stakeholder Consultation Report) will be uploaded to its registry entry; and

(d) Each CPA/VPA must be prefixed with the GS ID and title of the POA that it is linked to

Example: A cookstove PoA in Mongolia comprised of two VPAs will have the following three entries on the Impact Registry:

GS ID	Project Name

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. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

6.1.1 The CME shall conduct the local Stakeholder Consultation at both the PoA and the VPA/CPA level. The CME may seek exception by providing convincing justifications validated by Validation/Verification Body (VVB) and approved by Gold Standard at the PoA Design Certification stage as to why demonstration of programme level stakeholder consultation is sufficient for proposed PoA.

6.1.2 The PoA level consultation i.e., PoA Design Consultation is mandatory and is conducted to obtain feedback from governments, relevant national authorities, NGO communities, and other stakeholders on the design of the PoA. The PoA design consultation does not necessarily require a live meeting. The CME shall make use of the design consultation template to document the PoA Design Consultation.

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

6.1.4 Stakeholder consultations at the VPA/CPA level shall comprise of a minimum two rounds of consultation including one mandatory physical meeting and one stakeholder feedback round lasting at least two months. Refer to the Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement requirement for details.

6.1.5 For regular VPA/CPA, the physical meeting with stakeholders shall be conducted during the first round of consultation. For retroactive VPA/CPA, a physical meeting shall be held at the stakeholder feedback round if no physical meeting has taken place earlier or depending on the outcome of the detailed preliminary review or a VVB's request in case of Completeness Check pathway (Pathway 1).

6.1.6 A single stakeholder physical meeting can be organised for several VPA(s)/CPA(s) as long as convincing justification is provided and approved by 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 shall be approved at the time of listing

the VPA/CPA i.e. submission of activity level stakeholder consultation report.

6.1.7 In cases where only PoA level consultations are being conducted, a physical meeting for stakeholders is required at the PoA level in parallel to the design consultation. The physical meeting shall be followed by a Stakeholder Feedback Round at PoA level. 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.

6.1.8 The stakeholder consultation report shall be submitted to Gold Standard within three months of the event (though this date may be after the VPA/VPA Start Date).

7. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT

(a) Contributions to SDGs

7.1.1 The CME shall conduct the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) impact assessment at the VPA/CPA equivalent level as per Principles & Requirements.

7.1.2 An exception can be granted, if convincing justifications validated by a VVB and approved by Gold Standard are provided as to why the SDG impact assessment shall be conducted at PoA level only. In such a case, the CME shall include SDG inclusion criteria in the PoA DD for inclusion of VPAs/CPAs in the PoA. The future VPAs/CPAs shall only be included in the PoA if they are in line with SDG compliance criteria.

(b) Safeguarding Principles & Requirements

7.1.3 The CME shall conduct the Safeguarding Principles Assessment as per the Safeguarding Principles & Requirements at the VPA/CPA equivalent level.

7.1.4 An exception can be granted, if convincing justifications, validated by a VVB and approved by Gold Standard are provided as to why the Safeguarding Assessment shall be conducted at PoA level only. In such a case, the CME shall include Safeguarding Principles & Requirements conformity criteria in the PoA DD based on identified risks with respect to the relevant safeguarding principles. The PoA DD shall contain Safeguarding Principles & Requirements criteria per type of activity, defined at Programme level. The future VPAs/CPAs shall only be included in the PoA if they are in line with the conformity criteria.

8. SELECTION OF A BASELINE AND MONITORING METHODOLOGY

8.1.1 The Gold Standard allows Voluntary PoAs to use more than one GS-Approved Methodology. In the case of CDM methodologies, combinations of multiple technologies/measures and/or small-scale methodologies is

allowed in line with the latest version of the CDM project standard for programmes of activities.

8.1.2 All methodologies/combination of methodologies shall be introduced in the PoA DD together with a justification for their application. A real case VPA/CPA DD be submitted for each/combination of methodologies at the time of validation of the PoA.

8.1.3 In the case of methodologies applicable for several technologies/ measures (e.g. Gold Standard TPDDTEC methodology), each/combination of the technologies/measures included in the PoA shall be included in the PoA DD along with the justification of their eligibility and application. A real case VPA/CPA must also be submitted for each/combination of these technologies/s at the time of validation of the PoA.

8.1.4 In the event that an activity makes use of a technology/measure that was not included in the PoA DD prior to Design Certification, design change rules at the PoA level shall be followed to include new technology/measures. Subsequently, a complete validation (including VVB site-visit) and Design Certification review of the VPA/CPA shall be required at the time of inclusion in the PoA. A site visit is not automatically necessary, if justification is provided and approved by Gold Standard.

8.1.5 A new methodology not already applied in the registered PoA DD may be introduced post-Design Certification, but in such a case, design change rules at the Programme level shall apply and the VPA/CPA applying the new methodology shall undergo a full Validation and Design Review.

8.1.6 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 included in the design certified PoA DD, the PoA DD shall be modified accordingly.

9. APPLICABLE METHODOLOGY VERSIONS

(a) PoA

9.1.1 The latest version of the methodology available 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.

(b) VPA/CPA

9.1.2 All VPAs/CPAs 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 following Validation and Design Review of the methodology changes.

9.1.3 At the time of renewal of a VPA/CPA, the methodology version defined in the most recent version of the PoA documentation shall be adopted. The use of an updated methodology version is also allowed following Validation and Design Review of the methodology changes.

Examples:

- A VPA/CPA included during the second year of the first certification period 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 VPA/CPA included during the second 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 certification cycle; this methodology version is valid for the course of the VPA/CPA's first crediting period or longer if allowed in the relevant activity requirement.

10. DE-BUNDLING RULES

10.1.1 De-bundling provisions included in CDM methodology Tool Assessment of De-bundling for small-scale project activities do not apply to Voluntary PoAs.

11. PROJECT DOCUMENTS

11.1.1 For a CDM PoA, the CME shall provide following documents CDM-POA-DD, PoA-Key Programme information, CPA-DD and CPA- Key Project Information document (KPI).

11.1.2 Similarly, for a Voluntary PoA, in addition to the PoA DD, a VPA DD is required for each VPA.

12. PoA CERTIFICATION CYCLE

(a) Preliminary review

12.1.1 All VPAs with a start date after the first submission date of the PoA shall follow the Completeness Check pathway (Pathway 1) at Preliminary Review. The VPA(s) shall comply with inclusion criteria defined originally in the PoA and complementary criteria established by the Preliminary Review of the first regular or retroactive VPA, as applicable. Refer to Principles & Requirements for further details. The consolidated list of inclusion criteria shall be included in the revised version of the PoA DD Documentation.

12.1.2 Regular and retroactive VPA(s) with the start date before the first submission date of the PoA shall undergo a Detailed Preliminary Review (Pathway 2), full Validation and Design Certification review in order to be included in the PoA.

(b) PoA Validation

12.1.3 A PoA and all its VPAs shall achieve Design Certification and therefore each undergoes a Design Review.

12.1.4 To include a VPA/CPA in a design certified PoA, the CME shall ensure that the proposed VPA/CPA complies with the latest version of the registered PoA-DD, including the inclusion criteria of VPAs/CPAs in the PoA, and relevant Gold Standard rules and requirements.

12.1.5 The CMEs shall submit the following documentation with the supporting documents to the selected VVB 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 VPA/CPA DD based on the application of the PoA to a real case VPA/CPA, 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) Key Programme information and for each one of the CPAs or VPAs.

12.1.6 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. The VVB shall take into account the following factors, amongst others, while approving proposed sampling approach for validation in the PoA DD:

(a) Risks related to the type(s) of project activity/ technology/ geographic location

(b) Risks related to non-identification of emission and leakage sources

(c) Risks related to double counting, especially in the case of distributed technologies.

(d) Uncertainty with respect to the data monitored etc.

(e) Risks related to environmental, economic or social safeguards

(f) Risks on account of previous VPA/CPA having been erroneously included or other VPA/CPA facing significant grievances from local stakeholders or ongoing legal cases for existing CPA/VPA etc.

12.1.7 Once a real case VPA/CPA has been fully validated, other CPA/VPAs applying the same technology/measure(s) may be included in the PoA following a simplified inclusion process.

(c) VPA/CPA Inclusion

12.1.8 Once a PoA has achieved Design Certification, VPA/CPA may be included to the PoA as per the process below.

12.1.9 The VVB shall conduct a compliance check prior to inclusion of any new CPA/VPA. The inclusion check with respect to the inclusion criteria defined in the PoA-DD and PoA-KPI, where SDG and Safeguarding Principles assessments are conducted at the PoA level only. The VVB/CME/PD shall request formal inclusion by informing Gold Standard.

12.1.10 The VVB shall take into account the following for preparing the VPA/CPA Inclusion Report:

(a) Geographical boundary of the VPAs/CPAs is consistent with the geographical boundary of the PoA;

(b) Additionality criteria is being met as defined in the registered PoA DD;

(c) The activity is in line with the baseline scenario(s) identified in the PoA DD;

(d) Emission reduction calculations are in accordance with the procedures defined in the registered PoA DD;

(e) The Monitoring Plan for the activity is designed as per the applied methodology and in accordance with the PoA DD; and

(f) In the case of Safeguarding Principles and SDG Assessments being done at the PoA level, the SDG monitoring plan is checked against the PoA-DD.

(d) Site visit requirements during CPA/VPA inclusion

12.1.11 The CME shall provide details of the approach chosen for site-visits in view of the inclusion of future VPAs/CPAs 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).

12.1.12 The Gold Standard can mandate site-visits if a risk is identified.

(e) Design review

12.1.13 The Gold Standard Design Certification requires both the PoA and all its VPAs to be registered with Gold Standard.

12.1.14 The VPAs/CPAs proposed by a VVB for inclusion must undergo a two-week compliance check and shall receive Gold Standard approval before being formally included in the Programme. The two-week period starts the day the relevant documents (VPA/CPA DD, VPA/CPA-KPI, VVB Inclusion Report etc.) are submitted to Gold Standard. The VPAs/CPAs inclusion date is the date when the two-week compliance check period ends.

12.1.15 The Gold Standard may conduct spot-checks for any of the proposed VPA/CPAs for inclusion by the VVB, based on a target-random approach. The spot-check will entail Gold Standard carrying out a full review as opposed to a compliance check done normally. This activity would undergo an additional one-week review period.

12.1.16 The VPA/CPA undergoing a complete validation shall go through a four-week Design Review period. Any clarification or corrective action requests for the CPA/VPA need to be closed to be approved for inclusion. In such a case, VPA/CPA inclusion date is the date when four-week review period ends, even if actual inclusion takes longer due to requests for clarification or corrective action.

12.1.17 During any of the periods mentioned above, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and NGO Supporters can raise any requests that shall be addressed in a satisfactory manner for Design Certification to be approved.

(f) CDM PoAs

12.1.18 All documentation submitted for CDM validation shall undergo Gold Standard Validation and Design Certification review, as applicable, following the options below:

(a) In case of a full PoA certification i.e. all CPAs of a CDM registered PoA wanting to certify under Gold Standard, the CDM registered PoA and CPA level documents along with the PoA and CPA DD shall be provided to Gold Standard.

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

(c) Under special circumstances for CDM PoA (such as when the CDM PoA CME is not willing to act as CME for Gold Standard), Design Certification at the CPA level can be allowed. This is evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

(d) In the case of multiple CPAs submitting for Design Certification, a Gold Standard PoA-DD is created for those CPAs seeking Design Certification and the following steps are followed:

i. PoA/CPA level stakeholder consultation is conducted

ii. PoA validation and Design Certification. Documentation to be submitted to Gold Standard include the registered CDM-PoA-DD and the additional information required for the Gold Standard PoA-DD not included in the CDM-PoA-DD, (e.g. sampling verification for Gold Standard is different from CDM), along with the specific CPA-DD and CPA KPI.

iii. CPA inclusion based on the CDM-CPA-DD, the CPA KPI and the VVB Validation/inclusion report

iv. CPA verification based 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)

12.1.19 The following conditions shall also be satisfied for the labelling of CERs:

(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) A CDM PoA-DD and a GS PoA KPI must be submitted to Gold Standard for approval. These documents will contain all the information necessary to allow the VVB to perform a compliance check for the subsequent CPAs. It will be submitted together with a first CPA-DD; and

(c) Gold Standard CPA documentation, i.e., the CPA-DD and the CPA-KPI must be delivered for each one of the Gold Standard applicant CPAs.

(g) PoA PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATION

12.1.20 The CME shall submit monitoring reports for all the VPA/CPA for which request of Performance Certification is intended. The CME can submit a single monitoring report for VPAs/CPAs part of the same PoA as long as all VPA/CPA have the same monitoring period.

12.1.21 The Performance Review starts the day the monitoring and verification report and supporting documents are provided to the Gold Standard.

12.1.22 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.

12.1.23 The approach chosen for the sampling verification shall be discussed in detail in the PoA DD. The CME 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.

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

12.1.25 The Gold Standard initiates a three-week review period for all VPA/CPAs submitted for performance certification. The Gold Standard systematically reviews activities that have been selected for verification.

12.1.26 The Gold Standard Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and NGO Supporters may also raise requests for clarification and corrective action. All requests must be addressed in a satisfactory way for the verification to be approved and for issuance to proceed.

12.1.27 For activities that are not verified by a VVB, spot-checks based on a target-random approach are conducted by Gold Standard. For randomly selected VPAs/CPAs, the spot check review is conducted in three 3-week review period.

12.1.28 Multiple VVBs may be contracted within a same PoA to verify different CPAs/VPAs. 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.

(h) Retroactive Performance Certificaiton

12.1.29 A CDM PoA and its CPAs registered with the UNFCCC may be operational before submission for Design Certification under Gold Standard. In such a case, CERs generated for a maximum period of two years prior to Gold Standard Design Certification of the CPAs can receive Gold Standard labels retroactively.

12.1.30 A Retroactive VPA with a project start date before or after the time of first submission of the PoA must submit the required documents for preliminary review within one year of its start date. Retroactive VPA submitted at a date later than one year from the VPA start date will not be eligible for Gold Standard Certification.

12.1.31 A regular or retroactive VPA can claim Certified Impact Statements or Products, for example Gold Standard VERs, for the emission reductions generated for a period of up to two years prior to Gold Standard Design Certification of the VPA.

13. RENEWAL OF PoA & VPAs/CPAs

13.1.1 All Gold Standard PoAs shall be renewed every 5 years. Exception is granted to PoAs that were registered under earlier versions of Gold Standard which shall be renewed after the first 7 years and thereafter follow the Gold Standard for the Global Goals certification cycle (i.e., 5 year renewals).

13.1.2 All VPAs/ CPAs shall be renewed every 5 years. Exception is granted to Gold Standard VPAs that are or will be part of PoA that was registered under earlier versions of Gold Standard. Any VPA submitted within the first crediting cycle of PoA (i.e., 7 years) shall be allowed to use the same 7 year, twice renewal model. All VPAs/CPAs submitted for inclusion after the first crediting cycle of such PoA and completion of transition to GS4GG shall follow the GS4GG Certification Cycle (i.e. 5 year renewals).

13.1.3 The documents to be submitted during Design Certification Renewal shall be in line with the list of documentation mentioned in the Principles & Requirements but with relevant documents to be submitted at both PoA and CPA/VPA levels.

14. POAS AND LIABILITY

14.1.1 For Gold Standard voluntary PoAs, the liability for erroneous inclusions lies with the CME.

14.1.2 An Erroneous Inclusion occurs where a non-conformity is identified against an activity that is part of a wider group-certification a Programme of Activities (PoA). The implication of the non-conformity is that the activity should not have been successfully included within the certification due to the non-conformity and that there may be systemic issues with other activities included. An Erroneous Inclusion may be identified by Gold Standard or the VVB, typically during Verification or Performance Review where a sample-based approach is employed.

14.1.3 When an Erroneous Inclusion is identified:

(a) Activities that have been verified, including a site visit, can proceed to Performance Certification and issuance as appropriate.

(b) Activities of the same type that have not been verified, including a site visit (for example, due to the application of a sample-based approach) shall remain on hold subject to the closure of the non-conformity by Gold Standard, as per the Non-conformity Requirements of the Principles & Requirements.

14.1.4 Where the Erroneous Inclusion does not represent a systemic non-conformity[1] across the whole group of activities, then all other activities that have not actually been verified due to the choice of a sample-based approach verification shall also proceed to Performance Certification and issuance as appropriate.

14.1.5 Where the Erroneous Inclusion represents a systemic non-conformity, indicating risks with other activities that have not actually been verified due to the choice of a sampling verification, then all such activities shall also be put on hold until the issue is resolved to the satisfaction of Gold Standard. The assessment by Gold Standard shall be as per the Non-conformity Requirements of Principles & Requirements.

14.1.6 For Voluntary PoAs, whenever a VPA is found to be erroneously included 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 Certified Impact Statements or Products by retiring equivalent number of Certified Impact statements or products from other projects of its portfolio; or

(b) Compensate issued Certified Impact Statements or Products by retiring equivalent number of Certified Impact Statements or Products bought from other Gold Standard projects.

14.1.7 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 by retiring equivalent number of Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products from other projects of its portfolio; or

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[1] Systemic non-conformity: A non-conformity that has been identified as part of the Verification of activities under a PoA that may be reasonably assumed to arise in other included activities that have not be verified (for example due to a Sample-based approach).

Non-systemic Non-conformity: A non-systemic non-conformity is one that can be demonstrated to have occurred due to the particular circumstances of the activity that does not apply to other activities in the Sample.

(b) Compensate issued Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products by retiring equivalent number of Gold Standard Certified Impact Statements or Products bought from other Gold Standard projects.

14.1.8 For CDM PoAs, whenever the CDM EB finds a project to be erroneously included and the carbon credits have been incorrectly issued. The CME shall proactively inform Gold Standard and the equivalent number of labels already issued under Gold Standard for the project must be compensated by the CME within sixty (60) calendar days after receiving notification of a non-conformity as per the above.

15. CERTIFICATION FEES

15.1.1 For PoAs applying for Design Certification, the Design Review fee is calculated based on the first VPA/CPA.

15.1.2 Design review fees apply to each additional CPA/VPA and are calculated on an individual basis.

16. DESIGN CHANGES RULES

16.1.1 In the case of a design change, the CME shall assess the changes based on the Design change rules for standalone project activities, but do so for both the Programme and the affected VPAs/CPAs. 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.

16.1.2 The documents to be submitted during PoA or CPA/VPA design change shall be in line with the list of documentation mentioned in Annex A of the Principles & Requirements but with relevant documents to be submitted at both PoA and CPA/VPA levels.

17. REGISTERATION OF MULTI-COUNTRY PoAs

17.1.1 Multi-country Voluntary PoA 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. The CME shall submit a formal request to Gold Standard with convincing justification to support their case.

17.1.2 Any request for exception shall be supported by documentation addressing the following elements in the PoA DD and VPA DD, (where submitted):

(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 Gold Standard 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.

17.1.3 The information given in the PoA DD and VPA DD should demonstrate with confidence that all targeted communities within the PoA boundary are homogeneous with respect to the above four points.

17.1.4 Gold Standard Voluntary PoAs that are granted with this exception can submit one VPA DD (from one of the countries included in the PoA boundary) at the time of PoA Design Certification and subsequent VPA(s) for the other countries can be included in the PoA at a later stage. In this case, the CME shall conduct a Sustainable Development Goals Assessment and Safeguarding Principles Assessment at the VPA equivalent level.

17.1.5 Gold Standard Voluntary PoAs that not are granted with this exception can add new countries to the PoA boundary after PoA registration via a formal design change request and in line with Principles & Requirements (Annex A) and payment of the design change fee. This process requires submission of a VPA DD for activities developed in each of the countries.

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

ANNEX A – MICROSCALE PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES REQUIREMENTS

1. SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

1.1.1 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.

2. GENERAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

2.1.1 VPAs within mPoA are eligible under this scheme;

(a) If the annual emission reductions achieved are limited to a maximum of 10,000 tonnes of CO2eq in each and every year of the crediting period. Whenever actual emission reductions, as per the verification report, exceed the upper threshold for a given registered VPA, the VPA can still request for issuance, but the claimable emission reductions are capped at 10,000 tonnes of CO2eq per annum. OR

(b) VPA seeking Certified Impact other than emission reductions meets the criteria defined within respective Activity Requirements for the project scale

3. ADDITIONALITY

3.1.1 The additionality criteria as defined in Activity Requirements for project level assessment shall apply. In the absence of specific Activity Requirements, the requirements outlined in Principles & Requirements shall apply.

4. BASELINE, PROJECT SCENARIO & MONITORING

4.1.1 Baseline, project scenario and monitoring shall be defined as per the Gold Standard Approved Impact Quantification Methodology (including eligible CDM Methodologies). Refer to PoA requirements for further details.

4.1.2 The CME can describe and submit a new methodology as part of the mPOA DD documentation for approval by Gold Standard. Refer to Microscale Project Requirements for further details.

5. DE-BUNDLING RULES

5.1.1 No de-bundling rules apply to this scheme. The Gold Standard Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) can decide to discontinue the scheme at any time in the case it's shown as being abused. In such cases, activities under mPoA already submitted or registered remain eligible for their entire crediting period.

6. VALIDATION OF THE PROGRAMME

6.1.1 Validation shall be conducted in one of the following ways:

(a) Contracting an accredited Gold Standard Validation/Verification Body (GS-VVB). The PoA and its VPAs shall make use of an existing methodology or submit a new methodology to Gold Standard for approval , with opinion of VVB, at the time of requesting design certification.

(b) Applying for *the* Gold Standard Internal Validation by paying required fee to the Gold Standard Validation Fund. If the PoA proposes a new methodology as part of the PoA documents, the proposed methodology shall be reviewed following the process outlined in the Microscale Project Requirements.

6.1.2 The following procedure apply to the Gold Standard Validation Fund option:

(a) The Gold Standard shall be notified of the selection of the Internal Validation process option.

(b) The completed PoA DD, VPA DD along with supporting evidence and documents shall be provided to Gold Standard to initiate the validation process.

(c) Gold Standard will decide and notify the CME on whether the mPoA is selected for an external validation by a VVB, or will be validated internally by Gold Standard. In both cases, the Validation Fund covers the validation costs.

(d) In the case when a mPoA is selected for external validation by a VVB, the CME shall provide competitive quotes from three VVBs. Based on the quotes, Gold Standard will contract and pay the VVB from the validation fund and the mVPA will follow the steps of a regular validation.

(e) For an internal validation, the CME will be notified on whether the project is selected for an appraisal of sustainable development aspects, including SDG 13, by an Objective Observer. The Validation Fund will cover these costs.

(f) At all times, any assistance from the Gold Standard Validation Fund is subject to the availability of funds. The decision is made through a 'target-random' selection among microscale projects opting to make use of the Validation Fund.

7. VPA VALIDATION AND INCLUSION

7.1.1 CMEs can request for the inclusion of VPAs at any time during the duration of the PoA.

7.1.2 For any VPA to be included, the completed VPA-DD (along with the Stakeholder Feedback Round Reporting) and the Validation Appraisal Report must be submitted to initiate the validation process:

(a) If an Objective Observer is appointed for appraisal of the project upon listing then the selected VPA undergoes a compliance check by the Objective Observer for sustainability aspects including SDG 13. The compliance check ends with positive conclusion of Objective observer assessment.

(b) If no Objective Observer is appointed, the Gold Standard conducts a compliance check based on a desk review of sustainable development aspects, including SDG 13. The compliance check ends with positive conclusion of Gold Standard assessment.

7.1.3 After successful completion of compliance check by Objective Observer and Gold Standard, activities must undergo a two-week review period during which the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and NGO Supporters can request for clarification or corrective actions.

7.1.4 Upon successful completion the review period, the proposed VPA is formally included in the Programme.

7.1.5 The two-week period starts the day relevant documents (VPA-DD, Validation Appraisal Report and VPA Inclusion Report) are submitted to Gold Standard. 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.

7.1.6 The process is different for a VPA undergoing a complete validation in view of an inclusion. In such a case, the VPA 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.

8. VERIFICATION

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

(a) Contracting of an accredited GS-VVB

(b) Applying for the Gold Standard Internal Verification by paying an required fee to the Gold Standard Verification Fund.

8.1.2 The following procedure applies to the Gold Standard Internal Verification Fund option:

(a) The Gold Standard shall be notified of the selection of the Internal Verification option.

(b) The Monitoring Report together with supporting evidence and documents shall be provided to Gold Standard to initiate the verification process.

(c) Gold Standard will decide and notify the CME on whether the VPA(s) is selected for an external verification by VVB or will be verified internally by Gold Standard. In both cases, the Verification Fund covers the costs.

(d) In the case when VPA(s) is selected for external verification by a VVB, the CME shall provide competitive quotes from three VVBs. Based on the quotes, Gold Standard will contract and pay the VVB from verification fund and the VPA(s) will follow the steps of a regular verification.

(e) For an internal verification, the CME is notified on whether the VPA(s) is selected for an appraisal of sustainable development aspects, including SDG 13, by an Objective Observer, or if these will be verified internally by Gold Standard alone. The Verification Fund will cover these costs.

(f) 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 microscale projects opting to make use of the Verification Fund.

8.1.3 If CME deliberately provide information that is incorrect to obtain Gold Standard status, or to inflate the SDG outcomes and impacts, the PoA will be subject to an investigation by Gold Standard. If such wrongdoing is suspected and the resulting investigation shows that the PoA or its VPAs documentation is fraudulent and credible evidence shows the negative intent of the CME and or Project Developer, the party submitting the project is permanently disqualified and this is publicly announced (see Gold Standard Terms & Conditions for more details).

9. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

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

9.1.2 A microscale VPA must be subjected to an Objective Observer appraisal and site visit at least once within three years of date of VPA inclusion or start of crediting period, whichever is later.

9.1.3 The inclusion of a VPA with different technology, measure or methodology than any of those submitted with, or already part of

the mPoA Certified Design requires an appraisal by an Objective Observer(s) in all cases.

9.1.4 Upon request from Gold Standard and in time for validation, inclusion or verification, CME 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 chosen from the Gold Standard NGO Supporters, 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.

(a) VPA Validation/ Inclusion stage

9.1.5 Objective Observers visit the site at validation/inclusion or verification stage to provide an independent assessment of the following:

(a) to Safeguarding Principles & Requirements (human rights abuse, environmental degradation, non-adherence to labour laws, corruption, etc.).

(b) contributions to three SDGs with mandatory contribution to SDG-13

(c) completeness of stakeholder consultations

9.1.6 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 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 design consultation, Stakeholder Consultation (1st round) and Stakeholder Feedback Round (SFR) shall be taken into account for this assessment. SDGs Impact indicators shall also be included in the monitoring plan and discussed with Stakeholders.

9.1.7 The Validation Appraisal Report completed by Objective Observers will be made available to the Gold Standard Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and 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.

9.18 For any VPA 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. The CME shall use of the Validation Appraisal Report provided to deliver the assessment.

(b) **VPA Verification stage**

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

(a) Confirm the status of VPA(s) operation,

(b) Assess the SDG contribution by the VPA(s)

(c) Assess if the mitigation plan is effectively implemented and negative impacts and risks are being effectively mitigated,

(d) Check that other negative impacts have not resulted due to implementation and operation of the VPAs.

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

9.3 The Verification Appraisal Report will be made available to the Gold Standard Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and NGO Supporters at the time of review and will form part of the issuance review. The Verification Appraisal Report will be made publicly available after the issuance approval.

9.4 For VPA(s) not selected for an appraisal by an Objective Observer(s) at verification stage, and in view of any request for issuance, the CME shall relevant information in the monitoring report including, status of the VPA 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.