

### ISEAL COMMUNITY SYSTEM OVERVIEW

#### ISEAL Community Member System Overview

Organisation Name	Gold Standard
Year	2022
Version	1

### 1. The **STRATEGIES** our system employs to meet its sustainability objectives

The mission of Gold Standard is to catalyse more ambitious climate action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through robust standards and verified impacts. We do so by reducing barriers to market entry, increasing capacity, and incentivising more action across three strategic pillars: environmental markets, corporate sustainability, and climate + development finance. The description of the long-term social and environmental impacts that Gold Standard intends to achieve are described in the [Impacts Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Manual](#). The strategies employed by Gold Standard are:

- **Standards and certification pathway development** to allow the certification of climate and sustainable development action and impact
- **Development and recognition of protocols, schemes, and methodological approaches** for accessing finance through alignment with and assurance under relevant requirements
- **Issuance and labelling of credits** in the voluntary carbon market and domestic and international compliance carbon crediting schemes
- **Thought leadership, capacity building and guidance development** to reduce barriers to entry and increase incentives and capacity to deliver climate action

We work with a variety of sectors from renewable energy, energy efficiency, waste management, transport, agriculture, forestry, etc.

### 2. A description of the **STANDARD** that our system has developed

Gold Standard is the Scheme Owner of the [Gold Standard for the Global Goals](#), (GS4GG) Standards System. GS4GG is a comprehensive standard to accelerate progress towards climate security and sustainable development for all by allowing for projects, programmes, and funds (henceforth referred to as 'projects') to manage, measure and maximise their impact to the SDGs. GS4GG was launched in July 2017, following several other versions of the Gold Standard. Unlike many other ISEAL standards, GS4GG is a Standard for Project certification. The Project Developer, as per the [GS4GG Glossary](#), is the certificate holder and the Project, and its specific

Impacts, are what is certified. Projects can only be certified under GS4GG if they adhere to 5 [principles](#) and demonstrate compliance to the corresponding requirements:

1. **Contribution to climate security & sustainable development**, that is, to minimum 3 SDGs, one of which must be SDG 13 – Climate Action
2. **Safeguarding principles** around human rights, environment, etc, including monitoring of mitigation measures if appropriate
3. **Stakeholder inclusivity** – at design stage and continuously throughout the project
4. **Demonstration of real outcomes** – by using Gold Standard-approved standardised baseline and monitoring methodologies
5. **Additionality** – that they would not be implemented without revenue generated through GS4GG certification

The strategies of Gold Standard are therefore monitored mainly through the quantification of certified impact of its projects towards the SDGs, as well as through the breadth of avenues/methodologies that GS4GG offers for certification.

### 3. How we maintain **RESPONSIBILITY** for decisions taken about and by our system

1. The **standard development system** is described in the [Standards Setting Procedure](#) and is governed in the following way:
  - The **Technical Governance Committee** (TGC) is responsible for mandating the development and approval process of all Standards and Modules. It does so by reference to the [Technical Governance Guiding Principles](#). TGC provides the necessary mandate to other Advisory Committees, Working Groups, or the Secretariat as appropriate for development of standards.
  - The creation or revision of the standard and its modules may be undertaken by Gold Standard either as:
    - Self-initiated in line with pre-planned reviews or the strategic objectives and priorities of the organisation
    - By initiation via request by any stakeholder and acceptance by Gold Standard
2. The **assurance system** can be summarised as follows: certification decisions are taken independently of the Scheme Owner, based on:
  - Project design documents and monitoring reports by the **Project Developer**,
  - Validation/verification audits and certification opinion by third-party [Validation/Verification Bodies](#) (VVBs),
  - Certification review and confirmation of the certification decision by an appointed **Certification Body**
3. The **oversight model** can be summarised as follows:
  - **Approval and accreditation:**

- A **Validation Verification Body** can be [approved by Gold Standard](#) based on:
  - Proxy-accreditation by UNFCCC/CDM or an established accreditation body
  - Compliance with additional Gold Standard requirements
  - Annual training and examination for auditors
- A **Certification Body** is assigned by Gold Standard. Currently there is one approved Certification Body, SustainCERT. The work of the Certification Body is defined through a series of Standard Operating Procedures (between Gold Standard and SustainCERT) and GS4GG standard documents.
- **Oversight of assurance activities and providers**
  - The accreditation bodies perform oversight activities on VVBs as per ISO14065, the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) accreditation standard, or the FSC accreditation scope, as applicable.
  - The Certification Body performs checks on every validation or verification report submitted by a VVB.
  - The Technical Advisory Committees and Gold Standard [NGO supporters group](#) are invited to review project documentation.
  - Gold Standard conducts sample-based quality assurance/quality control checks of the work of the certification body, providing advice on improving the certification process, and clarifications on standard interpretation, but does not take certification decisions.
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#### 4. How our systems design demonstrates a **COMMITMENT TO IMPROVEMENT**

The GS4GG certification process is set up in such a way that the project goes through several phases of approval:

- Listing (after preliminary review), which assesses the project's eligibility with Gold Standard
- Design certification (after validation), which serves to confirm that safeguards have been assessed and local stakeholder consultations have been held, estimate impact, and set up the project's outcome/impact monitoring system
- Performance certification (after verification), which serves to certify the actual project impact for both climate and broader SDG contributions

The certification status, the estimated impact, and actual impact are all traced on the public [Gold Standard Impact Registry](#). The data on the Gold Standard Registry allows Gold Standard to assess the potential of the project portfolio and compare the portfolio impact estimated at design certification stage with the actual impact of the portfolio demonstrated through verifications. This is a useful way of assessing the effectiveness of the system, and can be applied to all SDGs, which we manage through our new [SDG Impact Tool](#).)

The conclusions of these assessments help the Gold Standard technical team concentrate efforts on improving the system. Recently, we have significantly streamlined requirements for several key activities for stakeholders: preliminary review, transition from other carbon standards, and requirements for programmes of activities (grouped certification), and we have also introduced remote audit requirements based on ISEAL best practice to improve accessibility and usability of the standard.

## 5. How our standard or tool is monitored and reviewed to ensure its **RELEVANCE**

We try to minimise barriers to access through:

- The introduction of standardised and verifiable methodologies for estimating impact. We currently work with almost 200 impact quantification methodologies in a variety of sectors, (from households to large industrial applications) and are developing over 20 new ones
- Grouped certification and other simplified certification approaches
- Development of requirements for different types of stakeholders (e.g. [Fund Requirements](#))

These and any other standard updates go through [Stakeholder Consultation](#) process to make our rule-making transparent, informed, and conservative. Comments and feedback from our stakeholders allow us to make decisions that are based on evidence, experience, and the views of those local communities who will be most affected by the rules or decisions. Our stakeholder engagement team is tasked with amplifying the voices of standard users. We regularly engage with the ISEAL community, the wider voluntary carbon market, with corporates, governments, financial institutions to gain market intelligence that allows Gold Standard to:

- Ensure environmental integrity of wider climate action through our advocacy and thought leadership activities
- Identify new ways to expand the scale of our impact and channel more finance towards sustainable development by radically reducing transaction costs.

For example, we lead major efforts on alignment of the voluntary carbon market with the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals; we hold regular public webinars and feedback sessions; we participate in advisory groups like Science Based Targets Initiative, GHG Protocol, OECD Blue Dot Network, Sustainable Development Solutions Network, among others.

Furthermore, it is this standard that serves as the platform for implementing [Article 6 of the Paris Agreement](#), for ensuring consistency in the sustainability investment sector through developing our new [Fund Requirements](#), or innovating on the [Digital and Alternative MRV](#) front.

## 6. How the standard or tool is **IMPLEMENTED**

With the GS4GG at the core of the Gold Standard, we rely on standardized, measurable, and verified impact for both the implementation of projects and the monitoring of impact.

To ensure consistent interpretation of the GS4GG and accurate results while allowing for breadth and scale of its application, we rely on:

- Standardised methodologies, modular set-up of the standard, templates, and tools for project developers
- [Standardizing the impact indicators](#) for projects and for Gold Standard's M&E system
- Variety of VVBs with local and sectoral expertise, Certification Body to confirm certification decisions, and Quality Assurance/Quality Control checks by Gold Standard and the Technical Advisory Committees

We allow a variety of different claims, depending on the actor and their role in achieving impact towards the SDGs. Our [Claims Guidelines](#) provide safeguards to ensure no double counting or double claiming of impact occurs. We have recently updated these to align to and help shape a new era of climate action in the context of the Paris Agreement, carbon market growth, innovation and diversification, and welcome increases in climate commitments by companies and investors.

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