



GUIDELINE

CLAIMS GUIDELINES

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1| INTRODUCTION

The Gold Standard for the Global Goals Claims Guidelines are intended to assist project developers, partners, supporters and investors in communicating accurately and appropriately about the climate and development impacts derived from Gold Standard-certified projects, programmes and funds (hereafter “projects”). In addition, the Guidelines are designed to safeguard the reputation of Gold Standard and its stakeholders, the integrity of the Gold Standard trademark and Gold Standard activities, and to promote good practice and confidence in the markets and mechanisms in which we operate.

A **claim** is defined as any communication derived from a project’s certification status or its performance, associated with the design, implementation and/or financial support of a Gold Standard-certified project, programme or fund and/or the Gold Standard-certified impacts they generate.

The key integrity attributes that underpin the Gold Standard for the Global Goals Claims Guidelines are:

- **Transparent** – Claims should openly reflect the nature of the claimant’s involvement in a given Project or associated impact.
- **Rigorous** – Claims should reflect the level of rigour and confidence associated with Gold Standard.
- **Accurate** – Claims should be a true reflection of involvement and achievement of the Project and/or Impact.
- **Verifiable** – Claims should be traceable back to Gold Standard certified project documentation.
- **Straightforward** – Claims should be communicated simply and in ‘plain English’ and in line with the intended audience’s expectation and level of understanding.
- **Appropriate** – Claims should be responsible and appropriate to the role of the claimant and the intended application of the certification.

2| APPLICABILITY AND USE OF GUIDELINES

These Guidelines are intended for use by Gold Standard project developers, partners, intermediaries, buyers, funders and other claimants (hereafter collectively referred to as ‘users’) associated with Gold Standard projects or the certified impacts these projects deliver. For Gold Standard project developers and Impact Registry account holders, this document is referred to as part of the applicable Requirements of Gold Standard for the Global Goals (GS4GG) and of the Gold Standard for the Global Goals [Terms and Conditions](#). Material breach of the principles or content of these guidelines shall be treated as a non-conformity and/or as contravening the Gold Standard for the Global Goals [Terms and Conditions](#) and [Impact Registry Terms of Use](#).

Claims that abide by all of the relevant principles and guidelines in this document will be deemed to be ‘authorised’.

Any claim that uses the name Gold Standard and does not comply with these guidelines will be treated as 'unauthorised'. Those who make unauthorised claims (i.e., in contravention of these Guidelines) with respect to Gold Standard certified outcomes or use outputs of certification inappropriately do so at their own risk. It is the intention of Gold Standard to support users to make accurate and appropriate claims through this guidance and other actions, and it is recommended that all users fulfil the requirements set out in these Guidelines to ensure that any claims made are in keeping with the values and principles of Gold Standard.

Where a user is identified to be engaging in unauthorised claims, Gold Standard may take reasonable steps to help the user make the corrections required to comply with these guidelines. If such steps are not successful, Gold Standard reserves the right, at all times and in its sole discretion, to take any action against any entity that engages in unauthorised claims.

All digital communications promoting a project in the Gold Standard certification process and/or making claims about its impact is encouraged to include hyperlinks to www.goldstandard.org and when possible link to any relevant activities via the Impact Registry, referring to the Gold Standard for the Global Goals [Terms and Conditions](#) section titled 'Claims' when applying .

3| SCOPE

This document provides principles and guidelines from the initial listing of a project through to the use of any products issued by Gold Standard. Guidelines are provided for:

- i. **Process claims:** Claims related to the status of a project's certification by Gold Standard, and
- ii. **Impact claims:** Claims related to the performance and impact of Gold Standard-certified projects, programmes or funds.

The Guidelines are applicable in particular for project developers and funders or sponsors of projects.

Funders or sponsors can include impact investors, traditional investors, corporates, foundations, development agencies, multinationals, governments, or even individuals. Funders or sponsors may claim they have supported a project, in line with these Guidelines, if they:

- Finance a Gold Standard project, once it reaches 'Design Certified' status
- Fund or sponsor a Gold Standard 'Certified Project' and its Certified Impacts once it completes 'performance certification'. This can include the purchase of Gold Standard products, including carbon credits.

Funders or sponsors must sign [Gold Standard Terms & Conditions](#) in order to use the Gold Standard logo and make impact claims.

4| PROCESS CLAIMS

Process claims relate to the status of a project's certification, reflecting their conformity to Gold Standard Principles and Requirements. This section provides guidelines for entities wishing to make process-related claims.

Listed: A Listed project has entered the process and is publicly listed on the Gold Standard [Impact Registry](#), but is not yet certified. Therefore, no claims can be made with respect to Gold Standard certification status and no use of the Gold Standard brand is authorised unless expressly provided in writing by Gold Standard.

Design Certification: A Design Certified project is registered on the Gold Standard [Impact Registry](#). Successful completion and registration of Gold Standard Project Design Certification (Validation and Design review) means that a project can claim to have a 'Gold Standard Certified Design'.

A Gold Standard Certified Design **means:**

- The project design and planning has met the Gold Standard for the Global Goals Requirements, including Safeguarding Principles, Stakeholder Engagement, and Sustainable Development Goal requirements and has created a compliant Monitoring Plan.
- The project design and ex-ante impact assessment has been validated by an accredited and Gold Standard approved third party Validation and Verification Body (VVB) and in some cases such as Microscale projects by Gold Standard appointed Certification Body, for example SustainCERT.
- The project has successfully completed Design Review by an approved Gold Standard Certification Body, for example SustainCERT, and was subject to overarching independent review by the Gold Standard Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and NGO Supporters.

Design Certified status **does not mean** or imply:

- That any impacts have been realised or will be realised or that these have been verified by a VVB or certified to Gold Standard (see below).
- That the project is yet authorised for use in any third-party schemes.

Project Certification: Successful completion of Gold Standard Performance Certification (Verification and performance review) means that a project can claim to be a Gold Standard Certified Project.

This status is retained by successfully completing ongoing monitoring, Verification and Performance Reviews. It is conversely suspended in the event of non-conformity to the Requirements (see [Principles & Requirements](#)) or terminated in the event of failure to complete Verification and Performance Review in the timelines required.

A Gold Standard Certified Project **means:**

- The project has met Gold Standard for the Global Goals Requirements, including Safeguarding Principles, Stakeholder Engagement, and Sustainable Development Goal requirements and has created and followed a compliant Monitoring Plan, producing and submitting Monitoring Reports for Verification.

- Any impacts stated or claimed to have been achieved are real.
- The project and its Certified Impacts have been validated and verified as required by an accredited, approved third party VVB.
- That project has successfully completed Performance Review by an approved Gold Standard Certification Body, for example SustainCERT, and was subject to overarching independent review by the TAC and NGO Supporters.

Gold Standard Certified Projects can claim that the following have been certified:

- **Stakeholder inclusion.** The project has been developed in line with best practice following a process that is inclusive of affected and interested stakeholders and ensures their objectives and concerns are represented.
- **Safeguard management.** The project has been developed in line with best practice following rigorous safeguards to prevent unintended consequences and manage trade-offs where needed.
- **Contributions to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).** The project has made contributions to a minimum of three Sustainable Development Goals, tracked according to robust monitoring plans, verified by an approved independent third party VVB, and certified to Gold Standard. All GS4GG projects may also claim to be “gender sensitive.” Relevant projects may also claim to be “water sensitive.” See below for more details about impact claims.
- **Civil society support.** The process followed is endorsed by Gold Standard’s network of [NGO supporters](#) who can access and provide input to project reviews. However, no specific claims of endorsement of the project by any third-party actor shall be claimed, and the individual names and logos of NGO supporters shall not be used without their explicit written permission.

Where specific products issued by Gold Standard are assigned or transferred and retired, any claims made by the project proponent should be transparent that ownership has been assigned or transferred to another party.

5| IMPACT CLAIMS

Impact claims related to the performance and impact of Gold Standard-certified projects, programmes or funds. This section provides guidelines for entities wishing to make impact-related claims.

Gold Standard Certified SDG Impacts™

Gold Standard for the Global Goals specifies that all projects shall demonstrate a clear, direct contribution to sustainable development, defined as making demonstrable, positive contributions to at least three SDGs, one of which must be SDG 13, Climate Action. This can reflect either climate mitigation and/or adaptation impacts. These must be a significant and primary effect of the projects and must be permanent or lasting (with any time-limit to the project’s effect transparently declared). Certified SDG Impacts are third-party verified and reviewed by an approved Certification Body (for example, SustainCERT) and certified to Gold Standard.

Claims made in relation to SDG Impacts in project or funder communications should include an easily accessible footnote or hyperlink to information about the tool or methodology used for monitoring and measuring the benefits.

Projects and their funders are encouraged to use the “Gold Standard Certified SDG Impacts” logo in their communications.



Those that follow Gold Standard-approved methodologies and demonstrate Financial Need may also use relevant SDG icons paired with the Gold Standard logo, as described in the following section.

GOLD STANDARD CERTIFIED PRODUCTS

When a project follows a Gold Standard-approved impact methodology and demonstrates Financial Need for a given Certified Impact - for example, Gold Standard Verified Emission Reductions (GSVERs) or Gold Standard ADALYs - these Impacts are represented by the issuance of individually assignable and/or tradeable products that can be transferred to other users. These products are listed in the Impact Registry and can be assigned to a funder or sponsor.

This section outlines requirements and principles for claims made with respect to the use of Gold Standard Certified Products. When using Gold Standard Certified Products, organisations should not communicate in a way that suggests these make up a larger proportion of the products used towards the organisation’s claim than they do. Organisations are encouraged to specify the percentage that Gold Standard Certified Products represent towards any claim.

Products related to Certified Emission Reductions and Removals

This section relates to claims made with respect to Gold Standard Verified Emission Reductions (GSVERs), or Gold Standard-labeled Certified Emission Reductions (GSCERs) issued under the Clean Development Mechanism. These are hereafter referred to collectively as ‘carbon credits’.

Impact-related claims

The certification of emission reductions or removals and subsequent issuance of carbon credits represents a Certified Impact to SDG 13 through its contribution to climate change mitigation.

All carbon credits issued or labelled by Gold Standard for certified emission reductions or removals may be used, following their retirement, towards claims that describe the climate change mitigation impact represented by the credit. Examples of impact-related claims that users of carbon credits may make are provided below:

Organisation X has made a contribution to SDG Target 13 by retiring X,000 [Gold Standard Carbon Credits/Labelled Credits] on [DATE]. This represents a

direct and quantifiable impact on climate change mitigation, monitored, verified and certified to Gold Standard.

Organisation Y has taken responsibility for the greenhouse gas emissions it has produced by retiring X,000 credits, including Y,000 [Gold Standard Carbon Credits/Labelled Credits] on [DATE]. This represents a direct and quantifiable impact on climate change mitigation, and a contribution to global efforts to achieve the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement.

Organisation Z wishes to support global efforts to limit global warming and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Towards this end, it has retired X,000 [Gold Standard Carbon Credits/Labelled Credits] on [DATE], which represent a direct and quantifiable impact on climate change mitigation. The project(s) supported have also made a quantifiable contribution to [other certified SDG benefits related to the project].

All carbon credits issued or labelled by Gold Standard for certified emission reductions or removals may also be used in conjunction with other climate-related action by the user towards an organisation-, product- or event-level claim that includes the use of carbon credits, where these do not state or imply the compensation of emissions. See the following section for compensatory claims.

In addition, the project developer may also make the following claim:

Project [NAME/NUMBER] made a contribution to SDG Target 13: issuing X,000 [Gold Standard VERs/ Gold Standard CERs] on [DATE]. This represents a direct and quantifiable impact on climate change mitigation, monitored, verified and certified to Gold Standard.

The Gold Standard Certified SDG Impact logo, below, may be used in conjunction with issuance and funding of all carbon credits issued or labelled by Gold Standard.



Compensatory claims

In addition, certain carbon credits issued or labelled by Gold Standard for certified emission reductions or removals are also, following their retirement, recognised by Gold Standard for use in pursuit of claims intended to state or imply the compensation of emissions, including the ‘offsetting’ of emissions, ‘carbon neutral’ or ‘climate

neutral', or any other claim that directly implies that an organization's carbon footprint has been compensated¹. These are:

- Credits with a vintage year prior to 2021
- Credits with a vintage year of 2021 or later that are applying Gold Standard's Requirements for Credits Authorised for Use Under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement and are identified accordingly in the Gold Standard Impact Registry.

During the initial transitional period at the beginning of the Paris Agreement's implementation, Gold Standard does not intend to take action in cases where entities make compensatory claims with respect to credits with vintages of 2021 or later that are not applying Gold Standard's Requirements for Credits Authorised for Use Under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. However Gold Standard encourages users to transition to impact-related claims for such credits as soon as practicable and will review its approach prior to the beginning of 2025.

Compliance claims

Carbon credits issued or labelled by Gold Standard for certified emission reductions or removals may be used within certain compliance regimes, where the relevant administrator has deemed these to be eligible emission units. Entities using carbon credits for compliance purposes should ensure they purchase and use credits that are eligible and abide by the requirements of the relevant compliance regime.

Any claims made with respect to these credits should abide by any guidance provided by the relevant administrator, as well as the key integrity principles outlined in the Introduction to these Guidelines and any other relevant sections.

Additional Certified claims:

The funder/sponsor must not make claims for other Gold Standard Certified SDG Impacts that they have not directly funded (e.g., Black Carbon and/or ADALYs). They can include a description of SDG Impacts as part of a project narrative but must indicate clearly and precisely what their funds supported.

Planned Emission Reductions (through sequestration):

A Planned Emission Reduction represents the expected (i.e., future) sequestration of 1 tonne of CO₂e but does not represent an actual sequestration and accordingly shall not be used for claims described in the above section, 'Products related to Certified

¹ It is noted that, in line with the principles of the mitigation hierarchy, organizations should prioritise the avoidance and reduction of emissions – for example as determined by adherence to a science-based mitigation target - with the compensatory use of carbon credits reserved for emissions that are unavoidable.

Emission Reduction and Removal', until its conversion to a Verified Emission Reduction takes place.

Claims made with respect to Planned Emission Reductions should be transparent that the product is 'designed' to contribute to climate change mitigation (SDG13) and that any impact is expected rather than achieved. Examples of claims that may be made are provided below:

Project developer: *Project [NAME/NUMBER] is designed to contribute to SDG 13, issuing X,000 Gold Standard Planned Emission Reductions on [DATE]. This represents an expected sequestration of emissions that, once converted to a Verified Emission Reduction, will have a positive impact on climate change mitigation monitored, verified and certified to Gold Standard.*

Funder/sponsor: *Organisation [XXXX] made an investment toward a contribution to SDG 13 by funding X,000 Gold Standard Planned Emission Reductions on [DATE]. This represents an expected sequestration of emissions that, once converted to a Verified Emission Reduction, will have a positive impact on climate change mitigation monitored, verified and certified to Gold Standard.*

For those funders seeking to ensure their investments also contribute to actual emission reductions, Gold Standard allows project developers to bundle Planned Emission Reductions with supplemental Gold Standard Emission Reductions. In such cases the claims may be amended as reflected in the following example:

Organisation [XXXX] made an investment toward a contribution to SDG 13 by funding X,000 Gold Standard Planned Emission Reductions and also an equivalent number of supplemental Gold Standard Emission Reductions on [DATE]. This represents both an actual reduction or sequestration and an investment into future sequestration of CO₂ – making a direct and quantifiable impact on climate change mitigation monitored, verified and certified to Gold Standard.

By purchasing applicable Gold Standard Emission Reductions bundled with Gold Standard Planned Emission Reductions, buyers or funders can use each bundle as a single unit eligible for compensatory claims.

Black Carbon/Short-lived Climate Pollutants (SLCPs) Reduction Statements

Short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs) include compounds such as black carbon (BC), methane (CH₄), tropospheric ozone (O₃), and many hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). These compounds have short lifetimes in the atmosphere compared to greenhouse gases (GHGs). Although lifetimes in the atmosphere are shorter lived, their effects on climate are significant and happen at a more localized level. Black carbon, also known as 'soot,' is a solid form of mostly pure carbon that is one of the most effective solar-absorbing aerosols. Beyond its climate impact, black carbon also has other negative effects to the environment and health.

Under Gold Standard for the Global Goals, the quantification and certification of reductions of black carbon and other SLCPs through the introduction of efficient cookstoves represents a Certified SDG Impact to SDG 13 through its contribution

climate change mitigation. This product comes in the form of a certified impact statement that captures the quantification of black carbon and other SLCP emission reductions.

Claims made with respect to black carbon/SLCP reductions may acknowledge the direct contribution to SDG 13 and the quantity of emission reductions achieved, and the fact that the project's impact has been monitored, verified and certified to Gold Standard. Examples of claims that may be made are provided below:

Project developer: *Project [NAME/NUMBER] made a contribution to SDG 13, certifying X,000 black carbon/SLCP emission reductions on [DATE]. This represents a direct and quantifiable impact on climate change mitigation, monitored, verified and certified to Gold Standard.*

Funder/sponsor: *Organisation [XXXX] made a contribution to SDG 13 by funding the reduction of black carbon/SLCP emission on [DATE]. This represents a direct and quantifiable impact on climate change mitigation, monitored, verified and certified to Gold Standard.*

The Gold Standard Certified SDG Impact logo may be used in conjunction with issuance and funding of certified impact statements for black carbon/SLCP reductions.



Renewable Energy Labels

A Gold Standard Renewable Energy Label is a quality attribute for renewable electricity market instruments, which are also referred to as renewable energy certificates, renewable energy credits, or other names depending on the market. These market instruments are tradable, non-tangible energy commodities that represent proof that 1 megawatt-hour (MWh) of electricity was generated from an eligible renewable energy resource (renewable electricity) and was fed into the shared system of power lines which transport energy.

The Gold Standard Renewable Energy Label ensures that a buyer's purchase of a renewable electricity market instrument results in real-world emissions reductions, new renewable energy capacity and sustainable development benefits. Under Gold Standard for the Global Goals, the issuance of Gold Standard Renewable Energy Labels represents a Certified Impact to SDG 7 by increasing the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.

Claims made with respect to the Gold Standard Renewable Energy Label may acknowledge the direct contribution to SDG 7.2, and the quantity of renewable energy associated with the certificates used, as well as the fact that the project's impact has

been monitored, verified and certified to Gold Standard. Examples of claims that may be made are provided below:

Project developer: *Project [NAME/NUMBER] made a contribution to SDG Target 7.2: issuing X,000 Gold Standard Labelled Renewable Energy Certificates [STATE TYPE, e.g., I-RECs] on [DATE]. This represents a direct and quantifiable impact on increasing the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix, monitored, verified and certified to Gold Standard.*

Funder/sponsor: *Organisation X has made a contribution to SDG Target 7.2 by purchasing X,000 Gold Standard Labelled Renewable Energy Certificates [STATE TYPE e.g. I-RECs] from Project [NAME/NUMBER] issued on [DATE]. This represents a direct and quantifiable impact on increasing the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix, monitored, verified and certified to Gold Standard.*

The Gold Standard Certified SDG Impact logo may be used in conjunction with issuance and funding of these assets.



ADALYS

Averted Disability Adjusted Life Years (ADALYs) are a measure of avoided mortality and morbidity, commonly used in public health reporting. They represent the number of years of healthy life made possible / arising from by interventions that lead to, for example, reduction in personal exposure to air pollution in the form of particulate matter (PM2.5) or through provision of safe drinking water.

Claims made with respect to ADALYs may acknowledge the direct contribution to SDG 3.9, the quantity of ADALYs represented by the units used, and the fact that the project's impact has been monitored, verified and certified to Gold Standard.

Examples of claims that may be made are provided below:

Project developer: *Project [NAME/NUMBER] made a contribution to SDG Target 3.9: issuing X,000 Averted Disability Adjusted Life Years (ADALYs) on [DATE]. This represents a direct and quantifiable impact on human health, monitored, verified and certified to Gold Standard.*

Funder/sponsor: *Organisation X has made a contribution to SDG Target 3.9 by funding X,000 Averted Disability Adjusted Life Years (ADALYs) from Project [NAME/NUMBER] issued on [DATE], This represents a direct and quantifiable impact on human health, monitored, verified and certified to Gold Standard.*

The Gold Standard Certified SDG Impact logo may be used in conjunction with issuance and funding of these assets.



A sponsor or funder of certified ADALYs must not make claims for other Gold Standard Certified SDG Impacts that they have not directly funded, for example, Black Carbon and/or VERs. They can, however, include a description of SDG Impacts as part of a project narrative, but must indicate clearly and precisely what their funds supported

Gender impacts

All GS4GG projects conform to the Gold Standard for the Global Goals [Safeguarding Principles & Requirements](#) which include 'Gender Equality and Women's Rights' as one of the principles. Gender equality [requirements and guidelines](#) define gender certification at mandatory gender-sensitive requirements level and at optional gender-responsive guidelines level.

Any project certified under Gold Standard for the Global Goals may claim to have supported a 'Gender Sensitive' project, reflecting its compliance with the latest best practices in gender equality.

Claims made with respect to 'certified SDG 5 impacts' under the "Gender Responsive" Framework may acknowledge the direct contribution to SDG Target 5.1, 5.4 and 5.5, including the impacts it has delivered as well as the fact that the project's impact has been monitored, verified and certified to Gold Standard. Examples of claims that may be made are provided below:

Project developer: Project [NAME/NUMBER] made a contribution to SDG Target 5.4 by certifying the reduction of XXXX hours of unpaid domestic work on [DATE] and to SDG Target 5.5 by providing new permanent employment to XX women within the project boundary on [DATE]. This represents a direct and quantifiable impact on gender equality, monitored, verified and certified to Gold Standard.

Funder/sponsor: Organisation X has made a contribution to SDG Target 5.4 by funding the reduction of XXXX hours of unpaid domestic work through PROJECT NAME and to SDG Target 5.5 by providing new permanent employment to XX women within the project boundary. This represents a direct and quantifiable impact on gender equality, monitored, verified and certified to Gold Standard.

6| IMPACT CLAIMS FOR PROJECTS TRANSITIONING TO GOLD STANDARD FOR THE GLOBAL GOALS

In general, projects that transition to Gold Standard for the Global Goals from earlier versions of our standards (Energy, Land Use & Forests or Water) are eligible to make

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the same impact claims as projects that initiate under Gold Standard for the Global Goals. Potential restrictions are limited to impact claims around enhanced safeguards that are required at the beginning of project design, like “gender sensitive” or “water sensitive.” However, projects that can demonstrate during the transition process how the key principles or requirements of these safeguards were followed will be given clearance to make such impact claims.

7| LOGO USAGE

Please refer to [Gold Standard Terms and Conditions](#) and [Gold Standard Brand Guidelines](#) for all specifications related to the Gold Standard corporate logo and the Gold Standard for the Global Goals standard logo.

DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version	Date	Description
2.0		
1.0	Mm/dd/yyyy	Initial adoption