Micro-scale programme Rules

Unless stated otherwise in this document, the rules provided in the Gold Standard Requirements and Toolkit, and in particular the most recent version of Annex F of the Gold Standard Toolkit on PoAs apply to this scheme. In case of any discrepancy, the rules in this document shall prevail.

1. Eligibility:

- **Scale of the activity:** Emission reductions achieved by each one of the activities considered under the micro-scale programme are limited to a maximum of 10,000 tonnes of CO₂e, in any year of their crediting period.

- **Type of activity:** Renewable energy supply and end-use energy efficiency improvement activities that comply with the GS specific eligibility requirements listed in Annex C of the Toolkit, are eligible types of activity within the programme.

- **Host Country:** Activities can be located in any host country. Activities located in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS (see Annex A, B and C respectively) benefit from simplified rules with respect to the demonstration of additionality, so long as they are not retroactive activities.

- **Activity cycle:** Both regular and retroactive cycle activities are eligible under the micro-scale programme scheme. For details on the different scenarios applicable to an activity, refer to the most recent version of Annex F of the GS Toolkit.
  - **Retroactive crediting:** Any activity can claim for emission reductions generated between the start date of operation of the project activity and up to a maximum of 2 years prior to the date of its registration or its inclusion in a registered programme.
  - **Retroactive registration:** Retroactive activities shall undergo a pre-feasibility assessment as per Gold Standard Requirements. The pre-feasibility assessment can be fast-tracked if the activity complies with the rules defined in the most recent version of Annex F of the Gold Standard Toolkit.

- **Date of submission:** The date of submission of a micro-scale programme is defined as the upload to the Gold Standard Registry of the PoA Design Consultation Report. In order for the PoA to be listed under Gold Standard however, the VPA-DD with the local stakeholder consultation reporting must be submitted and approved for each one of the methodologies or technologies/practices to be submitted at the time of PoA validation and registration.

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1 For the definition of what is meant by renewable energy supply and end-use energy efficiency improvement refer the latest version of Gold Standard Requirements.
2. Programme time frame. The duration of a micro-scale programme shall not exceed 28 years. The duration of a programme shall be defined by the Managing Entity at the time of request for registration of the considered programme. A micro scale project activity can be added to by the Managing Entity the programme at any time during the programme time frame.

An activity submitted under the programme will either follow a standard renewable crediting period, 7-year renewable twice, or a standard 10-year fixed crediting period. The duration of the crediting period of any micro sale project activity shall be limited to the end date of the PoA, regardless of when the activity was added.


3.1 Consultation process. Stakeholder consultation must happen at both micro programme level (generic consultation) and project activity level (specific consultations), unless convincing justification is provided in the project documentation as to why consultation at the activity level is not necessary, and approval is granted by the Gold Standard Foundation at the registration stage.

The programme level design consultation is conducted to obtain feedback from relevant national and local authorities, NGO communities, and other stakeholders on the design of the programme. This consultation does not necessarily require a live meeting. The Coordinating Managing Entity (CME) shall use the Design Consultation template to report on the programme level consultation.

Stakeholder consultations at the activity level must take place in a two-step process, at both the Local Stakeholder Consultation (LSC) meeting and during the Stakeholder Feedback Round (SFR). At least one live meeting shall be conducted between the CME/PP and the stakeholders during the LSC for regular activities and possibly during the SFR for retroactive activities (as per pre-feasibility assessment). See the Gold Standard Toolkit for guidance on how to conduct such consultations.

A single LSC live meeting can be organized for several micro scale project activities as long as convincing justification is provided in the project documentation and approved by the Gold Standard Foundation, e.g. 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. The CME shall make use of the simplified VPA-DD to report on the Local Stakeholder Consultation for each one of the micro-scale activities separately, including the rationale for using the same LSC meeting as for other activities.

A simplified VPA-DD with the stakeholder consultation details must be submitted to the Gold Standard Foundation for each activity prior to its submission for inclusion to a registered micro-programme. The activity is ‘listed’ upon approval by the Gold Standard Foundation. At this stage, the Gold Standard Foundation can inform the CME if an Objective Observer is to be appointed as part of the Sustainable Development Assessment as per the process defined in section 3.2.

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2 For guidance on how to conduct the LSC, refer GS V2.1 Toolkit, section 2.6. Under section 2.6.1, the guidance on the blind sustainable development exercise is not applicable to micro-programmes. For guidance on how to conduct SFR, refer section 2.11 of the GS V2.1 Toolkit.
The Stakeholder Feedback Round shall cover all issues raised in the local stakeholder consultation meeting and report on how due account was taken of the stakeholders' comments in the final project design and project documentation. The CME shall also make use of the simplified VPA-DD to report on the SFR. This information will be reviewed at the time of registration or inclusion, as applicable.

In cases where no activity level consultations are carried out (where only programme level consultations take place), a Local Stakeholder Consultation meeting is also required, in parallel to the programme design consultation. The CME shall make use of the simplified PoA-DD to report on the Local Stakeholder Consultation at the programme level. A Stakeholder Feedback Round must also be conducted at the programme level. See the Gold Standard Toolkit for guidance on how to conduct such consultations.

3.2 Sustainable Development Assessment (SDA): The SDA shall take place at the activity level. An Objective Observer shall be appointed for an appraisal of the risks associated with the micro-programme (human rights abuse, environmental degradation, non-adherence to labour laws, corruption, etc.), as well as to identify potential negative social, environmental or economic impacts. The CME shall identify and provide names and contact details for three independent experts from local universities, NGOs, UN bodies, consultancies, etc. The Gold Standard appoints Objective Observer(s) amongst the three people suggested and/or other experts so that environmental and socio-economic impacts can be credibly assessed. The Objective Observer(s) are preferably chosen from the GS NGO supporters, the GS Roster of Experts, or representatives of development organizations with host country experience. They are selected based on an assessment of the relevance of their respective expertise and knowledge of the local conditions.

The Objective Observer(s) shall conduct site visit(s) to provide an independent assessment of the activity(ies) submitted for registration along with the programme. They shall make use of the Gold Standard Sustainable Development Appraisal Template - Validation stage.

Prior to the registration of the programme, when risks with regards to the Gold Standard safeguarding principles are identified and/or when negative impacts on sustainable development are identified as part of the Objective Observer’s appraisal process, the CME shall prepare and submit an appropriate mitigation plan to the Objective Observer who will evaluate the mitigation measures and report about them in the final Sustainable Development Appraisal Report - Validation stage. The mitigation plan shall be reflected in the finalized project documentation with a discussion of the mitigation measures implemented and the establishment of an appropriate Monitoring Plan. The Appraisal Report by Objective Observer(s) will be made available to the Gold Standard at the time of registration review. The appraisal will be made publicly available together with the rest of the project documentation after registration.

In view of the inclusion of an activity to a micro-programme or of Verification of the activity, a

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3 For guidance on how to conduct the LSC, refer GS V2.1 Toolkit, section 2.6. Under section 2.6.1, the guidance on the blind sustainable development exercise is not applicable to micro-programmes. For guidance on how to conduct SFR, refer section 2.11 of the GS V2.1 Toolkit.
target-random approach is applied to the sustainability appraisal by (an) Objective Observer(s) who shall conduct a site-visit and report about the findings in the Sustainable Development Appraisal Report - Validation stage, or the Sustainable Development Appraisal Report - Verification stage respectively. The inclusion of an activity of a different type than any of those submitted together with the programme at the registration stage (different technology or practice) requires an appraisal by an Objective Observer(s) in all cases.

For any activity not selected for appraisal by an Objective Observer and in view of the inclusion of an activity, the CME/PP shall conduct a self-assessment of the risks associated with respect to the safeguarding principles\(^4\) (human rights abuse, environmental degradation, non-adherence to labour laws, corruption, etc.) and shall identify potential negative social, environmental and economic impacts. They shall make use of the Gold Standard Sustainable Development Appraisal Template - Validation stage.

For verifications, whenever micro-programme activities are not selected for an appraisal by an Objective Observer(s), and in view of any request for issuance, CME/PPs shall confirm the status of project operation, assess if the mitigation plan is effectively implemented and negative impacts and risks have been mitigated, and check that other negative impacts have not resulted due to implementation and operation of the project. This information shall be provided in the Monitoring Report delivered to the Gold Standard.

4. **Baseline and project emissions.** Baselines and project emissions shall be defined as per an approved CDM or GS VER methodology. Alternatively, a new methodology may be described and submitted as part of the project documentation for approval by the Gold Standard Foundation during the Validation process.

New simplified, conservative approaches (e.g. based on default factors) are encouraged in order to further streamline the evaluation of emission reductions, so long as convincing justification is provided regarding the conservativeness of the approach. The simplified methodology is submitted as part of the micro scale PoA-DD. Once approved as part of a given programme, new methodologies can be used by all project developers for future programmes and individual micro-scale project activities.

When the Gold Standard Foundation is not in a position to evaluate with sufficient confidence if the new submitted methodology is appropriate and conservative enough, the proposed methodology will be sent out for external review. The project proponent(s) must cover the cost for external review, as per current procedures for approval of new methodologies under Gold Standard.

More than one methodology can be applied under a micro programme. Each of methodology that will be applied in the programme must be discussed in the micro scale PoA-DD with a justification for its use, in time for the registration review. The CME shall make use of the PoA-DD template.

A VPA-DD should be submitted in time for the registration review for each of the activities or combination of methodologies considered. CME shall make use of the VPA-DD template for inclusion or registration.

\(^4\) For guidance on the safeguarding principles and sustainability assessment refer Annex H and Annex I of the GS V2.1 Toolkit respectively.
Any activity of a given type not submitted prior to the registration review but at later stage for inclusion within the registered programme shall undergo an actual Validation and an 8-week registration review.

The latest methodology version applicable at the time of first submission of the PoA Design Consultation Report to Gold Standard shall be used. At the time of renewal of the PoA (after every 7th year), the latest version of the methodology available at that time shall be adopted.

5. Bundling & Debundling. Project activities can be submitted within a bundle. The upper threshold applies to the bundle as a whole. No debundling rules apply. The scheme will be subjected to continuous assessment by the Gold Standard Foundation and can be discontinued anytime upon decision of the Gold Standard Technical Advisory Committee in case it is shown as being abused. In such cases, activities already submitted remain eligible for their entire crediting period.

6. Additionality. Additionality should be demonstrated at both the micro programme level and at the activity level using an approved UNFCCC or Gold Standard additionality tool, unless the CME provides convincing justification for why this can be conducted at the programme level only, and the approach is Validated and approved by the Gold Standard Foundation.

**Programme level additionality.**

Programme level additionality is required to ensure that the programme is credible, and to provide confidence in the expected emission reductions to be generated by the programme.

A PoA is additional if it can be demonstrated that in the absence of carbon finance (i) the proposed voluntary measure would not be implemented, or (ii) the mandatory policy / regulation would be systematically not enforced, and that noncompliance 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 a greater level of adoption of an existing voluntary scheme. This shall constitute the demonstration of additionality of the programme as a whole.

Whenever the demonstration of additionality at the programme level only is permitted by the Gold Standard Foundation, additionality at the VPA level has to be defined as part of the eligibility criteria for inclusion of all future VPAs.

**Activity level additionality.**

Regular cycle activities that meet any one of the criteria defined below shall be deemed additional:

i. The project activity is located in a Least Developed Country (LDC), Small Island Developing States (SIDS) or Land Locked Developing Country (LLDC)\(^5\).

\(^5\) List as per UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and
ii. The project activity is located in a special underdeveloped zone of the host country identified by the Government before 28 May 2010. CME shall refer to the list published by the host country DNA.

iii. The project activity is located in any host country (outside of the countries defined above) and the project proponent(s) can demonstrate that project implementation will benefit poor communities. No specific definition of ‘poor communities’ is pre-established. The Millennium Development Goals-based long term National Development Strategy (NDS) can serve as the basis to assess the eligibility of the targeted communities. Project proponents shall seek approval from the Gold Standard Foundation on the basis of a formal request providing detailed explanation for how the activity benefits poor communities.

iv. The project activity generates electricity:

a. as on-site generation, i.e. electricity generated at the point of use and with no grid connection, OR

b. which feeds into an existing or new local, low voltage isolated grid\(^6\). It may also feed into the regional or national high voltage grid if convincing evidence can be provided to demonstrate that the implementation of the project activity will significantly improve electricity access for poor local communities, households or SMEs.

v. The project activity employs specific renewable energy technologies or measures recommended by the host country DNA and approved by the CDM EB (project proponents shall refer to the list published by the host country), OR approved by the Gold Standard Foundation.

vi. The project activity is an emission reduction project in which each of the independent sub-systems or measures achieve annual emission reductions equal to or less than 600 t\(\text{CO}_2\) or annual energy savings equal to or less than 600 MWh or installed capacity is less than 1500 kW for households/ SMEs or communities.

For regular cycle activities that do not comply with any of the criteria above, as well as all retroactive activities, project proponents are required to use either a UNFCCC-approved or a Gold Standard-approved additionality tool to demonstrate project additionality.

The additionality of any project with a renewable crediting period that benefits from deemed additionality will be reassessed at the end of each crediting period, i.e. every seven years as per latest approved criteria.

7. Monitoring of emission reductions. The monitoring of emission reductions shall be defined as per an approved CDM or GS methodology. Alternatively, a new methodology may

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Small Island Developing States
\(^6\) Down to the consumption level and up to a distribution level in the order of 10 kV. Or as an off grid activity supplying energy to households / communities with less than 12 hours grid availability per 24 hour day,
be described and submitted as part of the project documentation for approval by the Gold Standard during the Validation process.

New, simplified approaches are encouraged in order to further streamline the monitoring of emission reductions, so long as convincing justification is provided as to the conservativeness of the proposed approach. The simplified methodology is submitted as part of the micro scale PoA-DD. Once approved as part of a given programme, new methodologies can be used by all project developers for future programmes and individual micro scale project activities.

When the Gold Standard Foundation is not in a position to evaluate with sufficient confidence if the new submitted methodology is appropriate and conservative, the proposed methodology is sent out for external review and the project proponents must cover the cost for external review, as per current procedures for approval of new methodologies under Gold Standard.

A VPA-DD must be submitted in time for the registration review for each of the activities or combination of methodologies considered. CME shall make use of the VPA-DD template for inclusion or registration.

Any activity of a type not submitted prior to the registration review and submitted at later stage for inclusion within the registered programme shall undergo an actual Validation and an 8-week registration period.

The latest methodology version applicable at the time of first submission to Gold Standard shall be used. At the time of renewal of the PoA (after every 7th year), the latest version of the methodology available at that time shall be adopted.

8. Validation of the programme. The Validation process shall be conducted in one of the following ways:

   o Contracting of a DOE, as for conventional PoAs. In this case, the activity must make use of an existing methodology or submit the new methodology to the Gold Standard Foundation for approval prior to Validation by the DOE.
   o Submission to the Gold Standard Internal Validation process. This option implies the payment of a USD 20,000 fee to the Gold Standard Validation Fund, to initiate the validation of the programme. In addition, a fee of USD 2,500 must be paid for each micro scale project activity submitted along with the programme prior to registration.

If the micro-scale programme proposes a new methodology for the accounting and monitoring of emission reductions, the internal validation process includes the approval or rejection of the proposed new approach for the evaluation of the emission reductions and the monitoring procedures.

The following procedure applies for the Gold Standard Validation Fund option:

1. The Gold Standard Secretariat shall be notified of the choice of the Validation Fund option;
2. The completed PoA-DD with generic information on baseline and monitoring must be uploaded in the registry for each one of the methodologies (or combination of
methodologies) and different technologies or practices considered under the methodologies.

3. A VPA-DD based on the application of the programme to one real case, must be uploaded in the registry with necessary supporting documentation, if any, for each one of the different methodologies (or combination of methodologies) and different technologies or practices considered under the methodologies.

4. The CME is notified if the programme will be selected for an external Validation of the emission reductions by a DOE, or if it will be validated internally by the Gold Standard Foundation. In both cases, costs are covered by the fund. This decision is made through ‘target random’ selection among all of the micro-scale programmes opting to make use of the Validation Fund.

In any case, an Objective Observer(s) shall carry out the Sustainable Development Assessment as per the process defined in section 3.2.

9. Inclusion of micro scale project activities to a registered micro programme. CME can request for inclusion of micro scale project activities any time during the 28 years of crediting period of the registered programme.

For any project activity to be included, the completed VPA-DD (along with the SFR reporting) and Sustainable Development Appraisal Report - Validation stage must be submitted to the Gold Standard, and a fee of USD 2,500 must be paid to initiate the process:

a) If no Objective Observer is appointed, the Gold Standard Foundation conducts a compliance check based on a desk review. Activities proposed for inclusion after the compliance check must undergo a 3-week review period and will receive approval by the Gold Standard before being formally included in the programme.

b) If an Objective Observer is appointed to check the sustainability aspects of the activity upon the listing of the activity (see section 3.2), the selected activity undergoes a 3-week review period during which requests for clarification or corrective actions may be raised by the Gold Standard and its NGO Supporters.

The 3-week period starts the day relevant documents (VPA-DD, Sustainable Development Appraisal Report - Validation stage and VPA Inclusion report) are uploaded on the Gold Standard registry. The formal date retained for inclusion is when the 3-week review period ends, even if actual inclusion takes longer due to requests for clarification or corrective action.

10. Verification. The verification process shall be conducted in one of the following ways:

1. Contracting of a DOE, as for conventional PoAs;
2. Submission to the Gold Standard Internal Verification process. Internal verification is initiated upon request for issuance, and if the fee of USD 1,500 per annum for each micro scale project activity being verified in the registered micro scale programme has been paid.

The following procedure applies for the Gold Standard Verification Fund option:
1. The Gold Standard Secretariat shall be notified of the choice of the Verification Fund option;
2. The CME shall submit Monitoring Reports and Verification Appraisal Reports for all micro scale project activities included in the registered programme and for which issuance of VERs is requested. The CME cannot request for internal Verification of micro scale project activities more than once in three months.
3. The approach for sampling verification shall be defined in the PoA-DD and shall be applied during verification of activities. In the case of sampling verification, the Gold Standard Secretariat shall choose activities for actual verification as per the statistically sound sampling plan in the PoA-DD, and may appoint DOE/Objective Observer to conduct site visit(s).
4. The CME is notified as to which micro scale project activities have been selected for an external verification of the emission reductions by a DOE, and which will be verified internally by the Gold Standard Foundation. In both cases costs are covered by the fund. This selection of activities sent for external verification is made through ‘target random’ selection among all of the micro scale project activities selected for internal verification.
5. If the micro scale project activity is selected for external verification, a site visit will be carried out by a DOE.
6. The Gold Standard will carry out a desk review of the monitoring reports of the activities selected for actual internal verification.

In the case of issuance of credits from an activity, GS shall not issue credits beyond the threshold even in cases where the activity has realized surplus emission reductions.

A 3-week verification review period is initiated for all activities requesting issuance during which requests for clarification or corrective action may be raised by the Gold Standard Foundation and its TAC and NGO Supporters.

11. Design Change Rules: Project proponents shall refer to the most recent version of Gold Standard rules for design change requests.

12. Micro scale programme and liability: For Gold Standard voluntary PoAs, the liability lies with the Coordinating and Managing Entity.

An activity is said to be erroneously included when it violates the inclusion criteria set in the PoA documentation.

Whenever an erroneous inclusion is identified by the DOE or the Gold Standard Foundation, at the time of verification or sampling verification, activities where verification has been completed (site-visit included) can proceed to issuance while issuance is on hold for those that have been found to be erroneous. All activities that have not actually been verified due to the choice of a sampling verification are also put on hold until the issue is resolved.

Whenever a validated micro-scale activity is found to be erroneously included in the Voluntary PoA and has already been issued credits, the CME shall within sixty (60) calendar days after receiving notification of non-compliance:
- Compensate issued Gold Standard credits with Gold Standard credits from other projects of its portfolio; or
- Compensate issued Gold Standard credits with Gold Standard credits bought from other Gold Standard projects.

Whenever a verified micro-scale activity is found not to have delivered according to the registered Voluntary PoA (e.g. VPA no longer operating), but credits have already been issued to that PoA, the CME shall within sixty (60) calendar days after receiving notification of non-compliance:
- Compensate issued Gold Standard credits with Gold Standard credits from other projects of its portfolio; or
- Compensate issued Gold Standard credits with Gold Standard credits bought from other Gold Standard projects.

Fraud occurs when a CME has deliberately provided information that is clearly incorrect, and used this information to obtain Gold Standard status, or inflated the amount of emission reductions from the project. The determination of fraud would be pre-empted by several rounds of requests for clarification and/or corrective action. If the verification shows that the project documentation is fraudulent, and if the Gold Standard has credible evidence that shows the negative intent of the PP, the party submitting the project is permanently disqualified and this is publicly announced (see Gold Standard Toolkit Annex M, Terms & Conditions for more details).


16. Templates:

For Programme:
- PoA-DD
- PoA Design Consultation Template

For Activity:
- VPA-DD
- Validation Appraisal Form
- Verification Appraisal Form
Annex A: List of LDCs (www.unohrrls.org/en/ldc/related/62/)

Africa (33)

1. Angola
2. Benin
3. Burkina Faso *
4. Burundi *
5. Central African Republic *
6. Chad *
7. Comoros *
8. Democratic Republic of the Congo
9. Djibouti
10. Equatorial Guinea
11. Eritrea
12. Ethiopia *
13. Gambia
14. Guinea
15. Guinea-Bissau *
16. Lesotho *
17. Liberia
18. Madagascar
19. Malawi *
20. Mali *
21. Mauritania
22. Mozambique
23. Niger *
24. Rwanda *
25. São Tomé and Príncipe *
26. Senegal
27. Sierra Leone
28. Somalia
29. Sudan
30. Togo
31. Uganda *
32. United Republic of Tanzania
33. Zambia *

Asia (15)

1. Afghanistan *
2. Bangladesh
3. Bhutan *
4. Cambodia
5. Kiribati *
6. Lao People’s Democratic Republic *
7. Maldives *
8. Myanmar
9. Nepal *
10. Samoa *
11. Solomon Islands *
12. Timor-Leste *
13. Tuvalu *
14. Vanuatu *
15. Yemen

Latin America and the Caribbean (1)

1. Haiti *

* Also SIDS
#Also LLDCs
Annex B: List of LLDCs (www.un.org/special-rep/ohrlls/lldc/list.htm)

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<th>1. Afghanistan *</th>
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<td>2. Armenia</td>
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<td>3. Azerbaijan</td>
<td>18. Moldova, Republic of</td>
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<td>4. Bhutan *</td>
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<td>31. Zimbabwe</td>
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* Also LDCs

UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

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<th>List of Small Island Developing States</th>
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UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States