



Item 07 – GRI Standard Project for Alignment Sector Standards with New and Revised Topic Standards – Project proposal

For GSSB discussion and approval

Date	27 November 2023
Meeting	14 December 2023
Project	GRI Standard Project for Alignment of Sector Standards with New and Revised Topic Standards
Description	<p>This document sets out the draft project proposal to align the published GRI Sector Standards with the revised Topic Standards for biodiversity, climate change, labor, and economic impacts.</p> <p>The Standards Division has incorporated all GRI Board and Stakeholder Council feedback. The Standards Division presents this proposal to the GSSB for discussion and final approval in accordance with the Due Process Protocol.</p>

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Contents

Contents	2
Project background	3
Project objectives	3
Project approach	3
Division of responsibilities	5
Timeline.....	5

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1 Project background

2 The GRI Sector Standards list the disclosures that have been identified as relevant for reporting by an
3 organization in a sector. Most of these disclosures are drawn from the GRI Topic Standards, and
4 when a Topic Standard is revised, all Sector Standards that refer to it need to be aligned with the
5 revised version.

6
7 Failure to align Sector Standards before the effective date of a revised Topic Standard will result in a
8 situation in which organizations will be directed to different, and potentially contradictory, disclosures
9 by the Sector and Topic Standards that they are requested to follow.

10
11 The GSSB Work Program 2023-2025 has recognized the need to align Sector Standards with new or
12 revised Topic Standards, and marked it as a priority for 2023 to design and test a process 'to preserve
13 the linkage between Topic and Sector Standards'.

14
15 Future projects for new or revised Topic Standards will include the correspondent alignment of all
16 Sector Standards published previously. The current projects for the revision of the Standards for
17 biodiversity, climate change, labor-related topics, and economic impacts do not yet have such a
18 provision, and a separate project is required to perform this alignment.

19 Project objectives

20 The objective of this project is to align the existing portfolio of GRI Sector Standards with the new and
21 revised GRI Topic Standards that are being developed under the projects for biodiversity, climate
22 change, labor, and economic impacts. The number of Topic Standards that will trigger alignments
23 under this project is still not determined, particularly since the projects on labor and economic impacts
24 have a programmatic approach, with a number of Standards being revised under each project.

25
26 The proposed project will result in aligned versions of all Sector Standards that had already been
27 approved at the time of the approval of one of the Topic Standards mentioned above. As of November
28 2023, there are only three Sector Standards approved: *GRI 11: Oil and Gas Sector 2021*, *GRI 12:
29 Coal Sector 2022*, and *GRI 13: Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fishing Sectors 2022*, but other Sector
30 Standards are likely to be approved during the lifetime of this project, and these will also be aligned
31 following the same procedure. The proposed project will last until the last Topic Standard developed
32 under the projects mentioned above is approved.

33
34 Each existing Sector Standard will be subject to several rounds of revisions under this project as new
35 and revised Topic Standards will continue to be released. For example, *GRI 11 Oil and Gas Sectors
36 2021* will be aligned with the revised Biodiversity Standard in 2024, the revised Climate Change
37 Standard expected in 2025, and other Topic Standards in subsequent years.

38
39 Coordination of Topic and Sector Standards when these are being developed in parallel will not be
40 covered by this project.

41 Project approach

42 The project will be conducted in accordance with the GSSB Due Process Protocol.

43 **Scope**

44 The changes to the Sector Standards developed under this project will be limited to the alignment with
45 the new and revised Topic Standards, ensuring consistency within the set of GRI Standards. Broader
46 revisions of the Sector Standards, for example, to adapt them to new external instruments or evolving
47 stakeholder expectations, will not be part of the scope.

48 Alignment of the Sector Standards under this project will include changes to the descriptions of likely
49 material topics and reporting sections. It may include changes to other sections that relate directly to
50 the Topic Standard that has been revised or to glossary entries that have been modified in the new
51 Topic Standard.

52 **Timing**

53 The alignment of the Sector Standards will take place during the first half of the year and by grouping
54 together all new or revised Topic Standards that will be adopted on 1 January of the following year.
55 This will allow sufficient time for the finalized Standards and the translations to become available to
56 reporters well before the effective date of the new or revised Topic Standard.

57 Alignment of Sector Standards will begin as soon as possible after the GSSB approval of each new
58 Topic Standard. This will allow the Standards Division to build on the knowledge and the contacts
59 developed during the development of the new Topic Standard(s). It will also facilitate the
60 communication campaign for the required public comment, which can be integrated in the launch of
61 the new Topic Standard.

62 **Methodology**

63 The Standards Division will map the changes in the revised Topic Standard to its previous version,
64 and to the relevant sections in existing Sector Standards. Based on these mappings, the Standards
65 Division will propose changes to the relevant Sector Standards that ensure alignment with the new
66 and revised Topic Standard.

67 If the proposed changes are not considered significant, the Standards Division will recommend that
68 the GSSB approve the draft revision and submit it directly for public comment. If the changes are
69 considered significant, the GSSB may consider the appointment of a technical committee comprised
70 of relevant sector experts to evaluate the proposed changes before submitting the exposure draft for
71 GSSB approval and public comment. A technical committee may cover the update of more than one
72 Sector Standard if the sectors have similar impacts in the topic under discussion.

73 The Standards Division recommends having an exposure period of 30 days because the exposure
74 draft will be short (it will only concern the part of the Sector Standard directly affected by the new
75 Topic Standard).

76 **Process**

77 The first activity of this project will be to align the existing Sector Standards *GRI 11 Oil and Gas*
78 *Sectors 2021*, *GRI 12 Coal Sector 2022*, and *GRI 13 Aquaculture, Agriculture and Fishing Sectors*
79 *2022*, with the revised Biodiversity Standard. This first activity will be a pilot project to define the
80 precise methodology and assess the resources that will be needed.

81 Alignment of Sector Standards with other Topic Standards developed under the projects for climate
82 change, labor, and economic impacts will follow. Depending on the timing of approval of these Topic
83 Standards, the Sector Standards can be aligned with more than one Topic Standard at the same time.

84 **Division of responsibilities**

85 The Standards Division will review the extent to which the revised Topic Standard differs from the
86 previous one, or the implications for the existing Sector Standards of new or revised Topic Standards.
87 The Standards Division will then bring an updated version of the Sector Standard that is aligned with
88 the new or revised Topic Standard forward to the GSSB.

89
90 Depending on the changes required, the GSSB can decide to appoint a technical committee
91 composed of experts in the relevant sectors and topics under review to review the draft.

92
93 After the technical committee reviews the draft, the GSSB will be asked to approve it for public
94 consultation.

95
96 The Standards Division, or the technical committee, if appointed, will review the comments received
97 and propose amendments to the draft accordingly. The updated draft of the Sector Standard will be
98 submitted to the GSSB for final approval.

99 **Timeline**

100 This project is envisioned to start in December 2023. To expedite the process, the Standards Division
101 can start preparing the proposed changes to the Sector Standards before the final publication of the
102 Biodiversity Standard.

103
104 The timeline projected in Table 1 covers only the alignment of the published Sector Standards with
105 the updated Biodiversity Standard. The updates to align with the other Topic Standards are expected
106 to have a similar timeline, allowing for variations based on the complexity of the changes that need to
107 be implemented, unless the implementation of the alignment with biodiversity suggests a different
108 strategy.

109
110 The proposed project will cover alignment with several new or revised Topic Standards, whose
111 development will be spread over several years. The final duration of this project will depend on the
112 timing of the four Topic Standard projects covered by this project.



Table 1: Estimated duration of Sector Standards alignment with the Biodiversity Standard

Phase	~Duration	2023		2024												2025	
		Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7	Month 8	Month 9	Month 10	Month 11	Month 12	Month 13	Month 14	Month 15	
GSSB approval of proposed project	1		◆														
Content Development	3		■	■	■												
GSSB approval public exposure drafts	1						◆										
Public comment period	1							■									
Consideration of comments and final draft preparation	1								■								
Editorial review/Proofreading adjustments by SE&P	1									■							
GSSB approval final draft	1										◆						
Translations	3								■	■	■	■					
DPOC approval	1												◆				
Publication aligned Sector Standards	1												◆				
Publication translations of aligned Sector Standards	2												■	■			
Aligned Sector Standards effective date	1																◆

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