GRI Sector Program

Information sheet

The Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB), the independent standard setting body of GRI, has published an exposure draft of the Sector Standard: Oil and Gas for public comment between 8 July and 6 October 2020. This is the first pilot Standard of the GRI Sector Program, and as such, it will help define the structure, format and language of future GRI Sector Standards (Sector Standards) and the approach to their implementation.

The Sector Standards are also referenced in the exposure draft of the Universal Standards, which are being reviewed and are open for public comment until 9 September 2020.

This document serves to summarize the concept and the proposed structure of the Sector Standards and also assists in understanding how the Sector Standards will work in conjunction with the revised Universal Standards.

Background

Sustainability reporting using the GRI Standards enables an organization to publicly disclose its most significant impacts and how it manages these impacts. However, reporting by individual organizations has been inconsistent in addressing a sector's key challenges and impacts. Possible reasons for this include lack of clarity on a sector's most significant impacts and inconsistent application of the principles for defining report content in the existing *GRI 101: Foundation 2016*.

The GSSB initiated the Sector Program to develop standards that are specific to certain sectors. The Sector Standards will identify and describe one or more sectors' most significant impacts from a sustainable development perspective. They are intended to focus sustainability reporting on the impacts that matter most, as well as reflect stakeholder expectations for a sector's sustainability reporting.

The Sector Standards will:
- Describe the sustainability context for a sector;
- Outline topics that are likely material for a reporting organization in the sector based on the sector's most significant impacts; and
- List appropriate disclosures to report on those topics.

In this way, the Sector Standards will clarify the reporting that is expected of organizations in a given sector and assist them in identifying material topics and what to report for each material topic.
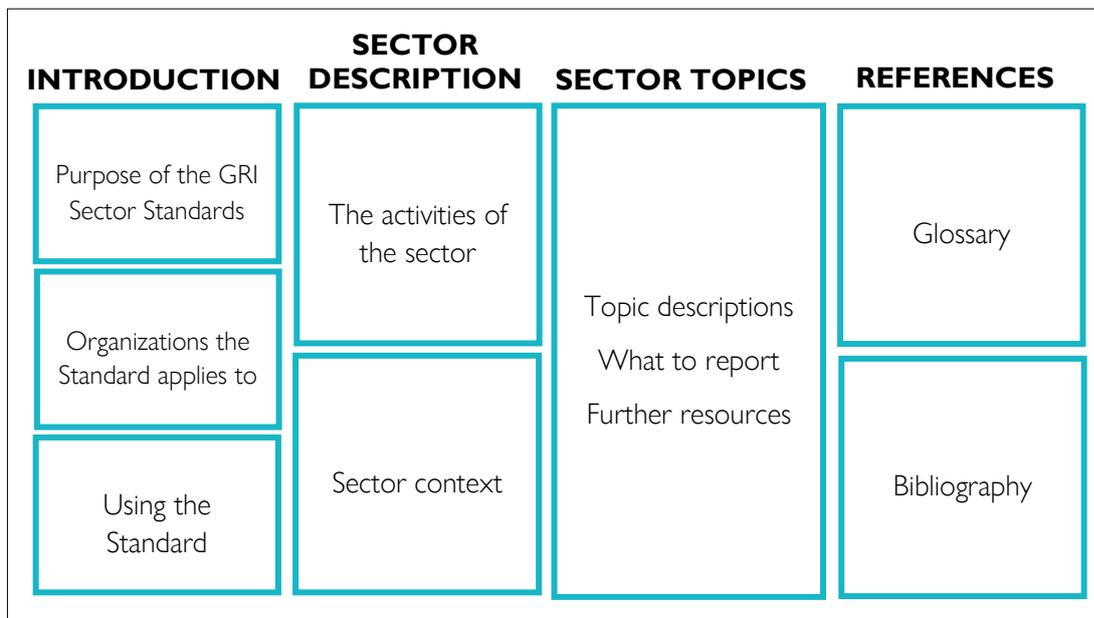
Sector Standards are developed by a multi-stakeholder expert working group following the GSSB Due Process Protocol.

The Sector Program is currently in the pilot phase and has commenced projects for the oil, gas, coal, agriculture and fishing sectors.

Structure of Sector Standards

It is proposed that Sector Standards contain the sections depicted in Figure 1 and described below it.

Figure 1. Sections of a Sector Standard

INTRODUCTION	SECTOR DESCRIPTION	SECTOR TOPICS	REFERENCES
Purpose of the GRI Sector Standards	The activities of the sector	Topic descriptions	Glossary
Organizations the Standard applies to		What to report	
Using the Standard	Sector context	Further resources	Bibliography

Introduction: These sections provide organizations background on the purpose of the Sector Standards and instruct them on how they are used in conjunction with other GRI Standards, including the Universal Standards.

Sector description: These sections outline the types of organizations that should use the Sector Standard. Included are an overview of sector activities, business relationships and context. This description is intended to help an organization identify and report on its material topics and related impacts. It can also help information users assess if an organization's reporting meets stakeholder expectations.

Sector topics: These sections describe topics that are likely material for an organization in a given sector and that therefore might merit inclusion in their sustainability reporting.

Each topic description lists disclosures identified as appropriate for reporting on that topic by an organization in a given sector. The description will assist an organization in determining what to report for each material topic. This section specifies appropriate disclosures largely from GRI Topic Standards (Topic Standards), but might also include additional disclosures and guidance.

Each topic description also lists resources that can assist an organization with its reporting.

References: These sections provide a list of defined terms that are used in the Sector Standard and references that were used to develop the content of the Sector Standard.

Using the Sector Standards

To identify material topics

The exposure draft of GRI 101: Using the GRI Standards requires that a reporting organization use Sector Standard(s) that apply to its sector(s) when identifying material topics, where these are available.

A Sector Standard describes topics that have been identified as likely material for organizations in a given sector. It explains why the topic might be material, outlining significant impacts and how these impacts occur in the sector as well as drawing on authoritative instruments and other supporting references.

When an applicable Sector Standard is available, an organization needs to determine whether the topics listed are material for the organization.

Using Sector Standards is not a substitute for an organization's own process for identifying material topics. Not all topics listed in a Sector Standard may be material for all organizations in a given sector. Also, topics that are material for an organization due to other factors (e.g., the organization's geographic location) might not be represented in a Sector Standard. An organization is therefore still required to identify its own material topics according to its own circumstances.

To identify appropriate disclosures

If an organization identifies a topic in an applicable Sector Standard as material, the Sector Standard will also assist an organization in determining what to report for that topic.

The exposure draft of GRI 101: Using the GRI Standards requires that the organization report appropriate disclosures from the corresponding Topic Standard for each material topic. If a material topic is not covered by Topic Standards, or the Topic Standards do not provide appropriate disclosures for the organization's impacts for a material topic, the organization should report appropriate disclosures from other sources.

A Sector Standard includes a list of disclosures identified as appropriate for reporting on a topic by an organization in the sector. This list includes appropriate disclosures from Topic Standards, and where the Topic Standards do not provide disclosures that sufficiently capture the impacts associated with a sector, additional disclosures and guidance might also be listed.

If an organization determines that some disclosures listed in a Sector Standard for a material topic do not adequately capture the impacts it has identified, the organization does not need to report these disclosures. Rather, it only needs to report those disclosures that adequately capture the impacts for its material topics.

It should be noted that an organization is required to report how it manages each material topic and related impacts using GRI 103 (see the exposure draft of GRI 103: Material Topics).

An organization might need to use more than one Sector Standard to report its material topics, depending on its activities.

Have your say

Public comment – Universal Standards

The exposure draft of the Universal Standards has been released for a 90-day public comment between 11 June and 9 September 2020.

Download the exposure draft of GRI's Universal Standards and provide your feedback by filling out the online survey.

Public comment – Sector Standard: Oil and Gas

The exposure draft of the Sector Standard: Oil and Gas has been released for a 90-day public comment between 8 July and 6 October 2020.

Download the exposure draft of the Sector Standard: Oil and Gas and provide your feedback by filling out the online survey.

More information

To learn more about the Sector Program, the Sector Standard for oil and gas, or the review of the GRI Universal Standards, please visit the GRI website or email standards@globalreporting.org.

Disclaimer

Information and descriptions provided in this information sheet are based on the work of pilot projects for the GRI Sector Program and the exposure draft of the Universal Standards. Its contents might change and is subject to the approval of the GSSB and a public comment process.