

Item 03 – GSSB Work Program 2020-2022

For GSSB information

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Description This paper presents the GSSB Work Program 2020-2022 and the accompanying Project Schedules 2020 and 2021.

This version of the GSSB Work Program 2020-2022 and the accompanying project schedules are presented for approval by the GSSB.

This document has been prepared by the GRI Standards Division. It is provided as a convenience to observers at meetings of the Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB), to assist them in following the Board's discussion. It does not represent an official position of the GSSB. Board positions are set out in the GRI Sustainability Reporting Standards. The GSSB is the independent standard setting body of GRI. For more information visit www.globalreporting.org.

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2 Preamble

3 The Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB) recognizes that its Work Program 2020-2022 is
4 published during a time of unprecedented interest in the practice of sustainability reporting.
5 Interest in sustainability reporting in general, and the GRI Standards in particular, is at an all-time
6 high. Record levels of practitioners download the GRI Standards, and there is continuous growth in
7 the number of reporters who choose to base their public sustainability reporting on the GRI
8 Standards.
9 Over the course of recent months, key stakeholders and institutions from all constituencies have
10 come forward to lay out their respective perspectives on what a future sustainability reporting
11 regime should look like. Concerns about reporting burden and quality and usability of reported data,
12 as well as a strong interest in making sustainability reporting a mandatory practice, are among the
13 key drivers for this important debate.
14 As the entity responsible for maintaining the world's most widely used and comprehensive
15 sustainability reporting standards, the GSSB acknowledges its central role and responsibility to
16 contribute to the ongoing debate. The GSSB is committed to an effective future sustainability
17 reporting regime and one that supports the public interest in addressing the mounting global
18 sustainable development challenges.
19 To this end, the GSSB strongly believes in a vision of a single, coherent global set of sustainability
20 reporting standards alongside, and complementary to, the established international financial
21 reporting regime.
22 The GSSB is committed to playing a leadership role in the consolidation efforts that are underway.
23 Through its standard-setting activities, the GSSB aims to reduce the burden on reporting
24 organizations and facilitate an informed dialogue and decision-making based on consistent and
25 comparable information.
26 To accomplish this, the GSSB will ensure that all its standard-setting activities are designed and
27 organized with the aim to achieve a tangible, practical convergence of all leading standards,
28 frameworks and similar initiatives. All standards projects will be designed to deliver on this vision,
29 with the explicit commitment to collaborate with all relevant standard setters and frameworks.
30 The GSSB recognizes that the leading role of the GRI Standards in the global field of sustainability
31 reporting carries an expectation to also lead the field in delivering on its promise of a globally
32 harmonized set of standards. With this Work Program, the GSSB explains its approach to making
33 this promise a reality.

34 Introduction

35 The Global Sustainability Standards Board has sole responsibility for setting the first globally
36 accepted standards for sustainability reporting – the GRI Sustainability Reporting Standards.
37 Established as an independent operating entity under the auspices of GRI, the GSSB is formed of 15
38 members representing a range of expertise and multi-stakeholder perspectives on sustainability
39 reporting. The GSSB operates under the [GSSB Terms of Reference](#) to oversee the development of
40 the GRI Standards according to a formally defined [due process](#).
41 The GSSB works exclusively in the public interest and according to the vision and mission of GRI.

42 This document outlines the work program of the GSSB for the years 2020-2022. The
43 implementation of the work program is dependent on the budget allocation by the GRI.
44 Based on the available budget the GSSB will publish a project schedule on an annual basis between
45 2020 and 2022 on the [GSSB website](#). The project schedule will provide an indication of how the
46 work program outlined in this document can be implemented.

47 Review of existing GRI Standards

48 The GSSB is committed to reviewing all existing GRI Standards every 4 years to guarantee that they
49 reflect the global multi-stakeholder consensus and continue to promote the public interest.
50 Priorities for review will be identified by the GSSB based on stakeholder feedback received, including
51 through the GSSB's public consultations on the work program, as well as on research carried out by
52 the Standards Division and third parties. In all cases, the GSSB will identify the most pressing needs
53 and the most promising opportunities to effect convergence and harmonization among sustainability
54 reporting standards, frameworks, and similar initiatives.
55 The GSSB will issue a comprehensive list of priority projects for the review of existing topic-specific
56 GRI Standards for the coming years in 2021.
57 The GSSB will publish a project schedule which covers the review of Standards annually between
58 2020 and 2022 on the [GSSB website](#).
59 Based on the priorities identified by the GSSB, the Standards Division will undertake this work in line
60 with the [Due Process Protocol](#).

61 Development of new topic-specific 62 Standards

63 In addition to the ongoing review of existing GRI Standards, the GSSB is committed to have five new
64 topic-specific Standards under development concurrently. This is to ensure that the GRI Standards
65 reflect the ongoing evolution of the sustainable development agenda, are responsive to stakeholder
66 expectations, and continue to promote the public interest.
67 Priorities for the development of new topic-specific Standards will be identified by the GSSB based
68 on stakeholder feedback received, including through the GSSB's public consultations on the work
69 program, as well as on research carried out by the Standards Division and third parties.
70 New Standards might be required in order to address sustainability topics not covered by the GRI
71 Standards, including those identified through the Sector Program, or to reflect changes in the
72 structure of the GRI Standards. New Standards may also be necessary to achieve the anticipated,
73 necessary harmonization of standards and frameworks.
74 The GSSB will issue a comprehensive list of priority projects for the development of new topic-
75 specific GRI Standards for the coming years in 2021.

- 76 The GSSB will publish a project schedule which covers the development of new topic-specific
77 Standards annually between 2020 and 2022 on the [GSSB website](#).
78 Based on the priorities identified by the GSSB, the Standards Division will undertake this work in line
79 with the [Due Process Protocol](#).

80 Sector Program

- 81 Sustainability reporting by organizations operating within specific sectors has not always consistently
82 addressed those sectors' most significant impacts. The GSSB has approved the [GRI Sector Program](#)
83 to develop GRI Sector Standards to address this issue. The Sectors Standards will form an integral
84 part of the GRI Standards.
85 Authoritative information on sector-specific impacts offered by the GRI Sector Standards will
86 provide clarity and focus for sustainability reporting on the topics that matter most from a
87 sustainable development perspective. This information can both reflect and set stakeholder
88 expectations for the sector's sustainability reporting.
89 The aim for the GRI Sector Program is ultimately to cover around 40 high-impact sectors. Priority
90 Group I provides an indication of the prioritization of the high-impact sectors for the time covered
91 by this Work Program. For a full initial list, and related priority groups, consult [Item 02 – GRI Sector](#)
92 [Standards Program – Revised list of prioritized](#) sectors published on 2 October 2020.
93 The GSSB will continue to review and refine the initial list of high-impact sectors, and related
94 priority groups, based on the learnings from the pilot projects on the oil, gas, coal and agriculture
95 sectors, as well as learnings from the overall program implementation, opportunities for further
96 convergence and harmonization among standards and frameworks, and from stakeholder feedback.
97 Future revisions of the list will be discussed in the public GSSB meetings and published on the GSSB
98 website.
99 The scope and names of individual sectors may be adjusted as a result of research and stakeholder
100 input at the commencement and throughout the development of each sector project.
101 The first sectors to prioritize (Priority Group I) are upstream sectors providing for fundamental
102 needs (e.g. food, textiles, energy), or for basic materials on which other sectors depend (e.g. metals,
103 minerals, chemicals, cement, wood). In addition, banking is included as an essential service.

104 **Table I: Priority Group I sectors: Basic materials and needs**

Mining
Food and beverages
Textiles and apparel
Banking
Insurance
Asset management
Utilities
Renewable energy
Forestry, paper and rubber
Iron, steel and aluminum



- 105 Based on an evaluation of the pilot projects, the GSSB will select a to be determined number of
106 additional Sector Standard projects from the above priority list in the second quarter of 2021.
- 107 The GSSB will publish a project schedule which covers Sector Standard projects annually between
108 2020 and 2022 on the [GSSB website](#).
- 109 Based on the priorities identified by the GSSB, the Standards Division will undertake this work in line
110 with the [Due Process Protocol](#).

111 **Issuance of FAQs, Guidance and 112 authoritative interpretations**

- 113 Interested stakeholders can submit questions and feedback to the GSSB about the application of the
114 GRI Standards through standards@globalreporing.org
- 115 After reviewing the feedback received, if necessary, the GSSB will issue FAQs or interpretations, or
116 it will provide additional guidance to address implementation issues identified by the users of the
117 GRI Standards.



118 Project Schedule 2020

119 Review of existing GRI Standards

120 The GSSB aims to complete the following three projects in 2020:

- 121 1. [Phase I of the Review of Human Rights-related Standards](#)
- 122 2. [Review of GRI's Universal Standards](#) (*GRI 101: Foundation, GRI 102: General Disclosures, GRI 103: Management Approach*)
- 124 3. [Review of GRI Waste Disclosures](#)

125 Based on the budget allocation for 2020, the GSSB is, at the point of issuance of the Work Program
126 2020-2022, not in a position to commit to the commencement of further projects to review existing
127 GRI Standards.

128 The GSSB has identified the review of *GRI 304: Biodiversity 2016* as a priority project if further budget
129 becomes available, and is actively pursuing commitment from potential collaborating organizations to
130 begin work on a new, harmonized and globally relevant biodiversity standard as soon as
131 circumstances allow.

132 Additional priority projects for the review of existing GRI Standards in 2020 will be identified by the
133 GSSB based on the stakeholder feedback received, including through the GSSB's public consultations
134 on the Work Program 2020-2022. Pending projects that have previously been approved by the GSSB
135 will be considered, as well.

136

137 Development of new topic-specific Standards

138 Based on the budget allocation for 2020, the GSSB is, at the point of issuance of the Work Program,
139 not in a position to commit to the commencement of projects for the development of new topic-
140 specific Standards.

141 Priority projects for the development of new topic-specific GRI Standards in 2020 will be identified
142 by the GSSB based on the stakeholder feedback received, including through the GSSB's public
143 consultations on the Work Program 2020-2022. Pending projects that have previously been
144 approved by the GSSB will be considered, as well.

145

146 Sector Program

147 The GSSB will continue the first pilot project, the Sector Standard Project for Oil, Gas, and Coal,
148 and commence the second pilot project, the Sector Standard Project for Agriculture and Fishing.

149 Based on the budget allocation for 2020, the GSSB is, at the point of issuance of the Work program
150 2020-2022, not in a position to commit to the commencement of further Sector Standard projects.



151 Project Schedule 2021

152 Review of existing GRI Standards

153 The GSSB aims to complete the following two projects in 2021:

154 1. [Phase I of the Review of Human Rights-related Standards](#)

155 2. [Review of GRI's Universal Standards](#) (*GRI 101: Foundation, GRI 102: General Disclosures, GRI 103: Management Approach*)

157 The GSSB has identified the following priority projects for commencement in 2021:

158 1. Review of *GRI 304: Biodiversity 2016*

159 2. [Phase II of the Review of Human rights-related Standards](#)

160 3. Review of Climate Change-related Standards

161 Development of new topic-specific Standards

162 The GSSB has identified the following priority project for commencement in 2021:

163 1. [Spills and Leaks](#)

164 Sector Program

165 The GSSB aims to complete the following two pilot projects in 2021:

166 1. [Sector Standards Project for Oil, Gas and Coal](#)

167 2. [Sector Standards Project for Agriculture and Fishing](#)

168 Based on an evaluation of the pilot projects, the GSSB will select a to be determined number of
169 additional Sector Standard projects from the priority list in the second quarter of 2021.

