



Item 07 – GRI Topic Standards Project for Biodiversity – Technical Committee terms of reference

For GSSB information

Date	19 October 2021
Meeting	21 October 2021
Project	GRI Topic Standard Project for Biodiversity
Description	<p>The Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB) has identified the review of GRI 304: Biodiversity 2016 as a priority project for commencement in 2021.</p> <p>This paper presents the Terms of Reference outlining the mandate of the Technical Committee for the GRI Topic Standards Project for Biodiversity (Biodiversity Technical Committee) for information of the GSSB.</p>

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3 Terms of Reference

4 These Terms of Reference outline the mandate of the Technical Committee for the GRI Topic
5 Standards Project for Biodiversity (Biodiversity Technical Committee), including its selection and
6 appointment, primary objectives and time commitments.

7 Background

8 The Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB), GRI's independent standard-setting body, has
9 identified the review of *GRI 304: Biodiversity 2016* as a priority project for commencement in 2021.

10 The objective of sustainability reporting using the GRI Standards is to provide transparency on how
11 an organization contributes or aims to contribute to sustainable development. The GRI Standards
12 enable an organization to publicly disclose its most significant impacts on the economy, environment,
13 and people, including impacts on human rights, and how the organization manages these impacts.

14 The primary objective of this GRI Topic Standards Project for Biodiversity is to develop a Topic
15 Standard that enables an organization to publicly disclose its most significant impacts on biodiversity
16 and how the organization manages these impacts and improve the global comparability and quality of
17 reported information on these impacts. The review of *GRI 304: Biodiversity 2016* will bring the content
18 of this Standard in line with internationally agreed best practice and relevant authoritative
19 intergovernmental instruments, and with recent development in the field of biodiversity. It will be
20 carried out following the [GSSB Due Process Protocol](#).

21 See the [project proposal](#) for more information.

22 Mandate of the Biodiversity Technical Committee

23 Topic Standards are developed using multi-stakeholder expertise, authoritative intergovernmental
24 instruments, and other relevant evidence. The Biodiversity Technical Committee is to contribute their
25 expertise to the revision of the Topic Standard for Biodiversity. The overall work of the Biodiversity
26 Technical Committee should support sustainability reporting as promoted by the GRI Sustainability
27 Reporting Standards (GRI Standards), which is to provide transparency on how an organization
28 contributes or aims to contribute to sustainable development.

29 Scope of work

30 The Biodiversity Technical Committee (TC) will be responsible for reviewing *GRI 304: Biodiversity*
31 *2016* for the consideration of the GSSB.

32 The TC will be tasked with providing recommendations on:

- 33 • revising the existing 'Background context' information within *GRI 304*;
- 34 • developing the topic management disclosures, considering contents in
35 the existing management disclosures section within *GRI 304*, including:
 - 36 ○ developing new requirements, recommendations, and guidance;
- 37 • ensuring the revised management disclosures are compatible for organizations to use
38 together with [GRI 3: Material Topics 2021](#).
- 39 • developing topic disclosures for biodiversity, building on the existing topic disclosures (along
40 with their related reporting requirements, recommendations and guidance) including:
 - 41 ○ revising the existing content;
 - 42 ○ developing new disclosures, requirements, recommendations, and guidance to
43 address areas not currently covered by the Standard.

- 44
- revising and updating the existing Bibliography related to biodiversity.
- 45
- revising existing definitions in the [GRI Standards Glossary](#) and, where applicable, developing
- 46
- new ones.
 - which GRI Sector Standards content related to biodiversity should be revised to ensure alignment and consistency with the revised Topic Standard for Biodiversity.

47 The TC will also be responsible for proposals to delete existing content, where applicable. This may
48 be the case when content is outdated or not useful for reporting an organization's impacts on
49 biodiversity. The TC may also provide recommendations on considerations that may be relevant to
50 other GRI Topic Standards. Changes to the overarching GRI system of standards, like the 'in
51 accordance criteria', are not within the remit of the TC.

52 **Responsibilities of other parties**

53 The Standards Division is responsible for:

- overall project management and ensuring compliance with the [GSSB Due Process Protocol](#);
- facilitating, providing logistical support and preparing materials for TC meetings;
- maintaining an online collaboration platform for the TC;
- engaging with the GSSB and other GRI Governance bodies;
- engaging other experts and interested parties in a peer review and on an as needed basis;
- coordinating public exposure of the draft Topic Standard, including collecting and summarizing feedback for consideration by the TC;
- undertaking research to support the development of the Topic Standard; and
- drafting the content of the Topic Standard.

54 The Standards Division will draft the Topic Standard and other relevant deliverables in accordance
55 with the recommendations of the TC and in accordance with template and house rules for
56 terminology, style and presentation. The Standards Division will also be responsible for editing the
57 stylistic and grammatical presentation of the deliverables to ensure consistency with existing GRI
58 documents.

59 The GSSB votes on the approval of the final draft Topic Standard for public exposure and the final
60 content of the Topic Standard. The GSSB will review the drafted contents and may ask the TC to
61 conduct further research and/or develop the draft recommendations further. TC members should be
62 committed to support the revision of draft contents in addition to the development of these contents.
63 Further information on the role and authority of the GSSB can be found in the [GSSB Due Process](#)
64 [Protocol](#).

65 **Additional considerations**

66 The revision of *GRI 304* is to be carried out within the existing structure and template of the GRI Topic
67 Standards, including preserving the hierarchy, coherence and implementation approach of the
68 GRI Standards as outlined in [GRI 1: Foundation 2021](#).

69 The Standards Division will provide the TC with a template structure to refer to in revising the content.

70 The TC should ensure that the revised Topic Standard is applicable to organizations of any size, type,
71 sector or geographic location; and that it reflects and supports best practice of biodiversity
72 management reporting, while remaining accessible and practicable for a global user base.

73 The TC should aim to develop disclosures (and related methodologies) that are clear, consistent, and
74 focused on the measurement and reporting of impacts on biodiversity.

75 The TC should seek to revise content in line with international authoritative instruments, and other
76 relevant standards and developments.

77 The TC should aim to develop topic descriptions that are clear, consistent, and focused on impacts
78 from a sustainable development perspective. Content should also seek to be in line with key
79 authoritative inter-governmental instruments (such as instruments of the United Nations, the
80 International Labour Organization, and the OECD) and consider the content of other business and
81 human rights reporting frameworks.

82 The discussions of the TC are confidential but any recommendations made by the TC to the GSSB
83 will be publicly available in accordance with the [GSSB Due Process Protocol](#).

84 GRI will hold the copyright of any deliverables associated with the project.

85 **Composition of the Technical Committee**

86 It is anticipated that the Technical Committee (TC) will have up to 15 members. The TC will aim to
87 have at least one person drawn from each of the stakeholder constituencies on which the
88 membership of the GSSB is based: business enterprises, investment institutions, labor, civil society,
89 and mediating institutions.

90 In addition, geographical, gender and cultural diversity will be considered. There can only be one
91 representative per organization in the TC.

92 **Table 1: Descriptions of stakeholder constituencies represented on the TC**

Business enterprise	a) An enterprise (other than a mediating or investment institution) that has been established in order to generate a profit for the benefit of its investors or owners; or b) An organization representing the collective interests of those falling into category 'a'.
Investment institution	An enterprise that is primarily concerned with the direct or indirect, long-term investment of funds in business – including, but not limited to, asset owners, asset managers, development banks, exchanges, ratings agencies and market information brokers.
Labor	An organization established independently of employers and governments to represent the interests of workers.
Civil society	An organization established in order to promote or secure a public good relating to sustainability (environmental, social and governance) and that does not fall into any of the categories defined above.
Mediating institution	An individual or organization that provides goods and/or services associated with the reporting process and derives benefit from doing so.

93 A GSSB sponsor(s) may join TC meetings.

94 **Selection criteria**

95 In accordance with the [GSSB Due Process Protocol](#), members of the TC are appointed by the GSSB.
96 The principal criterion for selecting the TC is relevant knowledge and experience relating to business
97 and biodiversity, including ecosystems. This includes familiarity with the goals and targets of the
98 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and experience in identifying and measuring impacts of
99 businesses on biodiversity.

100 Members shall be available and able to participate in TC meetings held in English, review the drafts
101 and provide written English feedback when requested.

102 In addition, the following criteria will be considered:

- 103 • relevant knowledge of sustainability reporting on biodiversity;

- 104 • familiarity with the needs of users of sustainability reports;
105 • related experience with multi-stakeholder initiatives;
106 • understanding of and willingness to work in a consensus-based, multi-stakeholder working
107 group.

108 **TC commitments**

109 TC members are expected to:

- 110 • act in an individual capacity, exclusively in the public interest, and according to due process
111 as defined in the [GSSB Due Process Protocol](#);
- 112 • review the materials provided by the Standards Division in advance of TC meetings, in order
113 to be able to actively participate;
- 114 • provide timely feedback on documents or other materials distributed by the Standards
115 Division;
- 116 • work in the manner that aims at achieving consensus.

117 The revision of the Biodiversity Standard is expected to take up to 12 months following the
118 appointment of the TC. See the timeline included in Appendix 1.

119 A total time commitment of 75 hours across the entire project is estimated for each TC member.
120 Members commit to attending up to 25 hours of meetings and reviewing the draft Standard for a
121 minimum of three times during that period. TC members also commit to plan sufficient time to prepare
122 for meetings, review other materials and engage in supplementary content creation methods. It is
123 estimated that this may result in up to 50 hours of time commitment across the project (excluding any
124 necessary travel time).

125 Meetings and other engagement methods will vary depending on the needs of the TC and the project.
126 Commonly used methods include virtual TC meetings, sub-group meetings and or workshops, and
127 use of digital content creation platforms. The use of these methods will also take into account any
128 travel restrictions or risk factors related to Covid-19.

129 Virtual meetings are normally held between 1.00-2:30 pm Central European Time (CET), so that
130 members in most time zones can join. This will be adjusted based on the final geographical
131 representation of the TC.

132 In the event of an in-person meeting (which we do not foresee at this moment), TC members will be
133 asked to attend a two-day meeting in Amsterdam (excluding travel time).

134 See Appendix 2 for the proposed minimum meeting schedule and an itemized time commitment.

135 TC members volunteer their time. There is no fee or compensation associated with participation in the
136 TC. Upon request, TC members will be eligible for travel and accommodation reimbursement for in-
137 person meetings, in accordance with GRI policies.

138 **Public communications protocol**

139 Public communication on issues related to the activities of the TC and the development of the GRI
140 Standards is the responsibility of the GSSB. TC members may publicly express their personal
141 opinions and views but may not speak on behalf of the TC, GSSB or GRI.

142 The names and bios of members will be published on the GRI website. Members are welcome to
143 publicize their participation in, and the activities of the TC, in channels such as press releases or on
144 social media. Members are asked to work with the Standards Division or GRI's communication team
145 to coordinate any such activity ahead of time.

146 TC members are advised to use the following when referring to their participation in this process:

147 “[name of member] has been appointed by the Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB), GRI’s
148 independent standard setting body, to serve on the Biodiversity Technical Committee to help the
149 review of *GRI 304: Biodiversity 2016*.”

150 These links are also available at the project website.



Appendix 1. Project timeline and milestones

GRI Biodiversity revision – proposed time frame															
2021					2022										
Project phase	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
GSSB approval	◆	◆													
Content development TC				◆	◆	◆	◆			◆	◆	◆	◆		
GSSB approval draft								◆							
Public comment period								Public comment							
GSSB approval Publication														◆	

◆ TC meetings - milestones

- Dec: Suggestion, input and review first draft
- Jan/Feb: Discuss amendments and new draft
- March: Final draft discussion
- Jun: Consider public comments and revise draft
- July: Final changes to draft based on input
- Sept: Overview of GSSB feedback, final content changes

◆ GSSB meetings - milestones

- Sept: Approval proposal
- Oct: Approval TC members
- Jan/Feb: Progress update – GSSB Feedback
- March: Approval draft for public exposure
- Aug: Progress update – GSSB feedback
- Oct: Approval final draft Standard for publication

151 Phases and milestones

- **Phase 1 – Project initiation and commencement**

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153 Research phase, project proposal prepared: approved by GSSB: September 2021

154

Formation Technical Committee, approval TC members by GSSB: October 2021

155

- **Phase 2 – Content development**

156

Initial scoping - Interviews with individual TC members, and drafting a preliminary discussion paper by the GRI Standards Division: November 2021

157

158

TC review and input to the development of the exposure draft: December 2021 – March 2022

159

Technical and editorial review, final TC agreement on the exposure draft: March 2022

160

Exposure draft is submitted to the GSSB for approval for public exposure: March 2022

161

- **Phase 3 – Public exposure**

162

Draft Topic Standard is launched for public consultation: April 2022

163

Public comments are collected and analyzed: May 2022

This document has been prepared by the GRI Standards Division and is made available to observers at meetings of the Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB). 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.

- 164 • **Phase 4 – Standard revision**
- 165 Based on the analysis of public comments, the Standards Division will develop proposed
- 166 revisions to the draft Standard: May-June 2022
- 167 Comment analysis and proposed revisions to the draft Standard are presented to the TC for
- 168 review and consideration. Recommendations for revision of relevant content in the Sector
- 169 Standards is discussed in TC meetings: June – July 2022
- 170 Final content of the draft Standard and recommendations to revise the Sector Standards are
- 171 discussed in meeting with the TC: August 2022
- 172 Final Standard and recommendations are submitted to GSSB for approval: September 2022
- 173
- 174 • **Phase 5 - Standard approval and publication**



175 Appendix 2. Meeting schedule

176 The following table outlines the minimum number of meetings expected to occur throughout the
177 course of the project. Engagement as a technical committee is currently predicted to be completely
178 virtual as it is anticipated that international travel and in-person meetings may still be challenging. If
179 this changes, an in-person meeting may be planned and replace some virtual engagements. In this
180 case, the TC will be provided with sufficient notice and scheduling will be subject to member
181 availability.

182

Meeting	Time commitment	Approximate date
Meeting 1	2-hour virtual meeting + 2 hours review of preparatory materials	December 2021
Meeting 2	2-hour virtual meeting + 2 hours review of preparatory materials	January 2022
Meeting 3	2-hour virtual meeting + 2 hours review of preparatory materials	February 2022
Meeting 4	4-hour virtual meeting + 2 hours review of preparatory materials	March 2022
Public exposure period		
Meeting 5	2-hour virtual meeting + 2 hours review of preparatory materials	June 2022
Meeting 6	2-hour virtual meeting + 2 hours review of preparatory materials	July 2022
Meeting 7	2-hour virtual meeting + 2 hours review of preparatory materials	September 2022

183 In addition to the meetings listed above, it is expected that the TC member will provide input before
184 meeting 1 via one or more interviews, review the draft Standard in-full several times, three times prior
185 to the public exposure and twice following, and participate in stakeholder engagement activities during
186 the public exposure period and to support the launch of the Standard as relevant.

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