



# **CERTIFIED SOFTWARE AND TOOLS**

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

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# 1. ABOUT THE PROGRAM

## 1.1. WHAT IS GRI COPYRIGHT PROTECTED CONTENT?

'GRI content' refers to any part of the GRI Standards and/ or other GRI publications, as well as GRI branding (e.g., name, logo and organizational marks).

## 1.2. WHO OWNS THE COPYRIGHT FOR THE GRI COPYRIGHT PROTECTED CONTENT?

Stichting (foundation) Global Reporting Initiative owns the copyright of all GRI content.

## 1.3. WHAT TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS NEED GRI CERTIFICATION?

All organizations that are developing; plan to develop or have already developed a tool or software that includes GRI content. This applies to profit and not-for-profit organizations.

## 1.4. WHAT IF AN ORGANIZATION HAS RELEASED UNCERTIFIED SOFTWARE OR DIGITAL TOOLS?

If GRI content has already been included in a tool or software without written permission from GRI, this is an infringement of copyright on GRI content. The organization is obliged to apply for the GRI Certified Software and Tools Program as soon as possible, or else remove GRI content from their tool or software immediately.

The program also applies to those organizations that have previously received approval from GRI to use GRI copyright protected material in their software or tools without having the usage of the relevant material certified by GRI. These organizations are requested to submit their applications for certification to GRI as soon as possible.

## 1.5. IS CERTIFICATION REQUIRED FOR AN ORGANIZATION'S OWN DIGITAL GRI REPORT?

No certification is required when an organization is planning to prepare its own digital GRI report, unless the organization is developing a specific tool for reporting and uses that for commercial purposes as well.

## 1.6. DOES GRI PROVIDE ANY CONSULTANCY REGARDING THE SOFTWARE OR DIGITAL TOOLS?

No. As an independent standard-setter GRI remains neutral. GRI verifies if the content is included correctly and consistently but does not take a view on how it is presented or linked to other functions of the software or digital tool. GRI certification does not represent assurance or endorsement of the software or digital tools being submitted to the service.

# 2. QUESTIONS ABOUT SOFTWARE OR DIGITAL TOOLS

## 2.1 WHAT TYPE OF SOFTWARE AND DIGITAL TOOLS IS GRI REFERRING TO?

All software or digital tools (data gathering systems, reporting process reports, learning software, etc.) that include GRI content as defined above require GRI certification and written permission to use GRI copyright protected content. A software or digital tool may be a stand-alone product or included in a broader suite of products.

## 2.2 WHICH PROVIDERS, SOFTWARE OR TOOLS ARE ENDORSED BY GRI?

GRI does not endorse any providers or software or digital tools. GRI only certifies that content from the GRI Standards is accurately presented in the software or tool in question.

GRI is not responsible for the quality or use of the overall tool or software that contains GRI content. GRI certification does not extend beyond the limits of the GRI copyright protected content in the product.

Customers of the CST service should therefore be careful to avoid claiming, or otherwise implying, that GRI has endorsed their product in marketing materials, user-guides or other supporting materials for their software or digital tool.

## 2.3 HOW IS THE SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS COPYRIGHT PROTECTED?

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) contains a Confidentiality Agreement (Annex V).

# 3. CERTIFICATION PROCESS

## 3.1 HOW CAN I APPLY FOR STANDARDS CERTIFICATION?

To start the process, please send the [application form](#) to [certifiedsoftware@globalreporting.org](mailto:certifiedsoftware@globalreporting.org)

## 3.2 WHAT ARE THE MAIN STEPS IN THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS?

In general, the certification follows a five-step process:

- 1. Application submission**  
Organizations submit an [application form](#), which is then reviewed to determine whether the software or tool meets the requirements of the CST Program.
- 2. Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**  
A MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) containing all the terms and conditions of the program is signed by both parties.
- 3. Content certification process**  
GRI verifies whether the content has been correctly applied in the software or digital tool and provides relevant feedback.
- 4. Permission to use**  
Once the feedback has been addressed and the certification process completed, GRI will issue an Organizational Mark and a Permission Letter stating that the content usage has been verified and is authorized for a period of 12 months.
- 5. Yearly renewal**  
If no modifications of the certified GRI content have occurred in the software or tool, the Client can choose to prolong the permission to use GRI certified content for an additional period of twelve (12) months each year.

## 3.3 WHAT VERSION OF THE TOOL WILL GRI CERTIFY?

To certify the product, GRI will require access to the pre-release or Alpha testing version of the product, in order to review the content from a users' perspective.

## 3.4 WHAT CONTENT WILL GRI CERTIFY?

GRI will certify all content related to the GRI Standards, such as Standards and disclosure titles, publication years, requirements, recommendations, and guidance. These details will be provided in an Excel spreadsheet which is referred to as the "GRI Standards Masterfile".

If the software or digital tool generates a sustainability report, GRI will check that the GRI content index is clearly presented and the references for all disclosures included are accurate.

GRI will also ensure that the technical language is aligned with the GRI Standards.

### **3.5 HOW LONG WILL THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS TAKE IN TOTAL?**

The MoU will determine the timeframe of the process, which can vary case to case from one month to several months. On average, however, it takes between 2 to 3 months for a company to be fully certified. The process consists of 2-3 rounds of feedback and each round will normally take between 15 to 20 working days.

### **3.6 WHAT IS THE STANDARD PERIOD OVER WHICH THE GRI COPYRIGHT PROTECTED CONTENT CAN BE USED?**

The standard period of GRI permission to use GRI copyright protected content is one year from the day permission is issued. Permissions need to be renewed annually. If they are not renewed, GRI content must be removed from the software or digital tool by the time the permissions expire to avoid copyright infringement.

### **3.7 CAN I USE THE GRI LOGO ON MY SOFTWARE OR TOOL?**

The use of GRI's logo by third parties without prior written permission from GRI is prohibited.

In the Certified Software and Tools Program, the GRI logo can only be used when listing different frameworks included in the software or digital tool. This is further better explained in GRI's [Trademarks and Copyright Policy](#).

### **3.8 WHAT KIND OF MARKETING COLLABORATION CAN BE EXPECTED AT THE END OF THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS?**

Once the certification process has been completed, GRI will issue two Organizational Marks (see below) and a Permission Letter stating that the content usage has been certified and is authorized for a period of 12 months.

#### **“GRI Content used with permission” mark**

Upon completion of the certification, the Client receives from GRI a non-exclusive, revocable, non-transferable, limited license to use the “GRI Content used with permission” organizational mark. It confirms that the certified software or tool has undergone and successfully completed the certification process within the GRI Certified Software and Tools Program.

This organizational mark is trademark specific to the software or digital tool for which it is issued and should only be displayed in the software or digital tool at the end of the certification process.

It should not be used for any other purpose or under any other circumstances. It is not to be used for marketing purposes or dissemination actions.

#### **“GRI Software and Tools Partner” mark**

Upon completion of certification, the software provider receives from GRI a non-exclusive, revocable, non-transferable, limited license to use the “GRI Software and Tools Partner” organizational mark. It confirms that the software provider has a license to use GRI copyright protected content in the certified software or tool for the period of validity of this MoU.

Software providers are encouraged to use this organizational mark to promote the software as appropriate. It can be used both electronically and in print. The organizational mark can only be used while the software provider has a license to use GRI copyright protected content in the certified software or tool.

The Partner will also be included in the [directory of GRI certified software](#) on the GRI website. Partners are welcome to refer to this directory in their marketing and communications.

## 4. PRICING POLICY

### 4.1 WHAT ARE THE FEES INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAM?

Please contact us for any pricing related inquiries at [certifiedsoftware@globalreporting.org](mailto:certifiedsoftware@globalreporting.org).

## 5. TRANSITION TO THE REVISED GRI UNIVERSAL STANDARDS 2021

### 5.1 WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHANGES IN THE REVISED UNIVERSAL STANDARDS?

Resources regarding the latest revision of the Standards can be found on the [GRI webpage](#).

### 5.2 WHEN IS GRI GOING TO STOP REVIEWING THE 2016 VERSION OF THE STANDARDS?

GRI will stop certifying the 2016 version of the Standards in Q1 of 2022. The revised Universal Standards are in effect for reporting from 1 January 2023, with early adoption encouraged.

### 5.3 DUE TO THE LAUNCH OF THE REVISED GRI UNIVERSAL STANDARDS 2021, WILL SOFTWARE OR DIGITAL TOOLS PREVIOUSLY CERTIFIED BE REMOVED FROM THE WEBSITE?

Software and tools already certified in accordance with GRI Standards 2016 will not be removed from the Directory, because at the time of the transition period, they are still considered valid, valuable, and useful for reporters.

### 5.4 WHAT IS THE PROCESS TO CERTIFY THE *GRI UNIVERSAL STANDARDS 2021* IF OUR SOFTWARE HAS ALREADY BEEN CERTIFIED?

It is possible to certify the revised Universal Standards 2021 by notifying GRI and by starting a new certification process at a "*Reduced Certification Process Fee*".

### 5.5 IS THERE AN ADDITIONAL PRICE FOR SECTOR STANDARDS?

Certifying Sector Standards will come at an additional cost.

### 5.6 ARE THERE "GRI STANDARDS MASTERFILE" AVAILABLE FOR SECTOR STANDARDS?

These are developed as Sector Standards are published.

### 5.7 IS THE "GRI STANDARDS MASTERFILE" PROVIDED ONLY IN ENGLISH OR IS IT TRANSLATED IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES?

We are working on having translated versions of the "GRI Standards Masterfile" as official translations to the revised GRI Universal Standards 2021 become available.

## Stay in touch

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