

# Standards Manual



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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Green Seal develops voluntary standards to transform the economy for a healthier and greener world. Green Seal standards set clear and meaningful health and environmental goals and define improvement opportunities for products and services across supply chains. Green Seal standards are the basis for certification of products, services, and spaces. Green Seal develops three types of leadership standards.

### Types of Green Seal Standards

- **Product category standards.** Achieving certification to a Green Seal product category standard confirms that a manufacturer's product is significantly healthier and safer for the environment than conventional products that provide the same function. Conformance to requirements reflects sustainability leadership across the supply chain, including specific and measurable attributes of the final product formula that result in safer use and safer product disposal. Product category standards set requirements for functional performance, prohibitions on individual or categories of hazardous chemicals, restrictions for chemicals that are hazardous at higher concentrations, low-impact packaging, and other requirements as appropriate. Green Seal's Standard for Paints, Coatings, Stains, and Sealers (GS-11) is one example of this type.
- **Service standards.** For services that demonstrate significant health and environmental impact reductions through the consistent, reliable use of greener policies, products, and practices, Green Seal's service standards provide important third-party verification. By contracting with service providers that have attained Green Seal certification, property managers can achieve impact reductions beyond a baseline, identify low-investment pathways for further impact reduction, and set and achieve improvement goals. Green Seal's Standard for Commercial and Institutional Cleaning Services (GS-42) is an example of this category.
- **Innovation standard.** This standard rewards unique solutions to critical issues. By evaluating and verifying products that make innovation claims (to be the first, or one of the first, on the market), Green Seal recognizes critical human health and environmental impacts for a chosen product type. Products certified under the innovation standard earn recognition for achieving significant improvements on a single health or environmental attribute relevant to the product category, while also eliminating use of hazardous ingredients, all without compromising product performance.

### International Best Practices for Standard Development

Green Seal bases its standard development procedures on internationally recognized best practices, as described in ISEAL's Standard Setting Code (2014). This ISEAL code is Green Seal's primary guide for conducting a transparent process and developing outcomes-focused standards. Green Seal has aligned its policies and procedures with ISEAL's Standard Setting Code since 2019.

Green Seal also references the following two guidance documents when implementing standard development policies and procedures:

- **ANSI Essential Requirements (2020).** Green Seal adheres to ANSI guidelines for the following:
  - openness;
  - lack of dominance;
  - balance;
  - consideration of views and objections; and
  - written procedures.
- **ISO 14024 Standard for Type I Ecolabels (2018).** Green Seal's policies align with the life-cycle review framework established in this ISO standard, which covers technical excellence in

standard development. Green Seal's approach to technical excellence is described in Section 2.

Italicized terms in the text of this manual have meanings specific to Green Seal; refer to the definitions in Appendix I.

### **About This Manual**

This document defines Green Seal procedures for the following activities:

- standard development;
- standard maintenance; and
- complaint resolution.

Green Seal is committed to carrying out the above activities according to the defined procedures. Adherence to these procedures is essential to protect and enhance the integrity, authority, and value of Green Seal standards.



## 2. STANDARD DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

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Green Seal is committed to implementing a rigorous and inclusive standard development process based on international best practices, conducted within an accountability framework that adheres to the following five principles.

### Principle 1. Market Acceptance

Green Seal's mission is to transform the economy for a healthier, greener world. To this end, the objective of Green Seal's standards is to accelerate the adoption of innovative technologies and practices that are meaningful yet also feasible. Green Seal aims to set criteria that reflect the top 20% of the marketplace in terms of health and environmental performance. Before embarking on development of a new standard, Green Seal conducts market research to assess the opportunity, *feasibility*, and likelihood of market acceptance of the criteria to ensure that the standard will succeed in influencing the choices of both producers and consumers.

### Principle 2. Technical Excellence

Green Seal implements standards that result in significant impact reductions. Green Seal strives for consistency, predictability, measurable results, and a systems approach to health and environmental impact reduction opportunities. The following goals guide the standard development process.

- **Impartiality, with no conflicts of interest.** Green Seal has no financial or organizational incentives for the selection of a standard's criteria and test methods. There are no intentional commercial advantages for a particular company, group, or technology.
- **Evidence-based determinations.** Decisions about the standard's criteria are based on a deliberate application of empirical knowledge and research-supported principles. Decisions are not influenced by individual preferences, interpretations, or prejudice.
- **Application of the precautionary principle.** The precautionary principle is summarized as follows: "When there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall be not used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation" (Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration, 1992). In determining criteria, Green Seal is guided by the precautionary principle.

### Principle 3. Transparency

Green Seal standards are designed to transform markets by influencing the choices of manufacturers, purchasers, and consumers. To carry out a transparent program, Green Seal provides free access to standards, standard development procedures, and documentation of major decisions that shape the development and maintenance of standards. Through transparency, Green Seal can be held accountable to *stakeholders* who can confirm that Green Seal executes an open process and implements credible, evidence-based decision making.

### Principle 4. Openness

Green Seal facilitates the development of standards in an open process. Members of any *interest category* are encouraged to participate by submitting questions, formal comments, and market or technical information. Green Seal works to achieve an open process by effectively promoting opportunities to participate, clearly defining the process for participating, and setting internal goals to make participation mutually beneficial.

### Principle 5. Substantial Agreement

Green Seal aims to take into account the views of all *interest categories* and to achieve *substantial agreement* by reconciling conflicting arguments through its standard development process. Green Seal seeks to encourage and achieve high levels of *stakeholder* participation. Green Seal uses good-faith efforts to attain explicit support from a significant majority of participants, or at minimum, to attain the absence of sustained opposition to substantive issues.

### 3. STANDARD DEVELOPMENT PROCEDURES

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To ensure that Green Seal's standard development principles (Section 2) are met in each Green Seal standard, the following procedures are implemented each time a standard is developed or undergoes a *major revision*.

#### 3.1 Public Notification

Green Seal will post notice that a standards activity has been initiated. The notification will be announced in suitable media to effectively offer the opportunity for participation by directly and materially affected persons.

#### 3.2 Balanced Participation of Stakeholders

Outreach is conducted in accordance with Green Seal's principles of openness and technical excellence to encourage *stakeholder* participation in the standard development process.

Green Seal seeks to achieve balanced participation from *stakeholders* representing the three main *interest categories*. *Balance* is considered achieved if no single interest category accounts for more than half of the participating *stakeholders* and at least one representative from each *interest category* has participated.

If *balance* cannot be achieved within a practical timeframe, or because of exigent circumstances, Green Seal documents efforts taken and devises future opportunities to achieve balance for the standard or issue.

#### 3.3 Criteria Development

Green Seal develops criteria through an iterative approach and in collaboration with participating *stakeholders* and, when available, *technical advisers*. Green Seal staff finalize criteria using *stakeholder* input in accordance with the procedures outlined in Sections 3.4 through 3.7. Green Seal's criteria development approach has the following seven phases:

- market review;
- lifecycle review;
- data quality review;
- impacts determination;
- drafting criteria;
- *feasibility* assessment; and
- intended outcomes determination.

#### 3.4 Public Comment and Stakeholder Consultation

For new standard development, Green Seal will post for public comment a *public comment version of a standard* for no fewer than 60 calendar days. For standard revisions, Green Seal will post for public comment a *public comment version of a standard* for no fewer than 30 calendar days. Green Seal will prioritize comments that adhere to the following guidelines:

- The comments are specific.
- The comments include technical and/or market-focused justifications.
- The comments make reference to reputable sources.
- If negative, the comments suggest improvements.

Comments should be submitted via email. Comments submitted in other ways are not assured of being included for consideration. Comments that address issues outside the defined scope may not be included in a public record of the standards activity.

Requests for extensions to the comment period will be considered and granted at Green Seal's discretion. Extensions will be scheduled for no fewer than 15 calendar days.

### 3.5 Addressing Substantive Opposition

Green Seal aims to resolve substantive opposition by evaluating whether *stakeholder* participation goals were met and confirming that Green Seal took into account conflicting arguments through an impartial lens. *Substantial agreement* is achieved when approximately two-thirds of participating *stakeholders* state support for the proposed standard or criterion. Minimally, *substantial agreement* may be determined by an “absence of sustained opposition to substantive issues” (ISEAL Standard-Setting Code, 2014). *Substantial agreement* need not imply unanimity (ISO/IEC Guide 2:2004).

### 3.6 Response to Comments

Green Seal will publish a *response to comments* submitted in accordance with the above requirements (Section 3.4). Green Seal staff evaluate comments for relevance and take one of the following actions:

- **Accept the comment.** The comment will affect the standard.
- **Accept the comment in part.** A portion of the comment will affect the standard.
- **Acknowledge the comment.** The information provided was noted by Green Seal but did not affect the standard.
- **Defer the comment for future consideration.** The comment is not actionable for the scope of standard development but may be revisited in the future.

### 3.7 Standard Issuance

A standard is issued once *substantial agreement* is achieved. Green Seal will publish relevant standard development documentation concurrent with the standard, including a summary regarding achievement of *substantial agreement*. Upon *issuance* of a standard, Green Seal announces that the certification of products or services can commence.

## 4. STANDARD MAINTENANCE PROCEDURES

### 4.1 Continuous Maintenance

Green Seal monitors the uptake, application, and visibility of Green Seal standards. *Major revisions* are initiated to maintain effective, accurate, and market-relevant standards. Green Seal maintains standards according to a continuous maintenance process, as defined by ANSI and described in Table 1.

**Table 1. Green Seal's Continuous Maintenance Activities**

<i>Maintenance activity</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Revision process</i>
Major revisions	Substantive	<i>Major revisions</i> may add new requirements or change the technical rigor of existing requirements.	Process as outlined in Section 3.
Minor revisions	Substantive	<i>Minor revisions</i> have limited scope, such as altering only a small portion or one criterion of a standard or affecting only a fraction of <i>stakeholders</i> .	Process as outlined in Section 3.
Corrections and clarifications	Non-substantive	Corrections fix unintentional inaccuracies, errors, and omissions. Clarifications define or expand on existing content where misunderstanding of language has occurred.	<i>Stakeholder</i> engagement and public comment <i>are</i> not required. Changes are published in quarterly reports.

### 4.2 Five-Year Review

Every five years, or more frequently if needed, Green Seal aims to conduct a full review of each standard with two primary types of evaluations:

- **Health and environmental impact review.** This review assesses whether the standard criteria continue to define health and environmental leadership in the relevant categories throughout the product or service life cycle.
- **Market uptake review.** This review identifies whether and how the standard has shifted the market. Beyond certification, a standard may be changing dialogues, assumptions, issues, and in other ways informing the market regarding the health and environmental consequences of product design, manufacture, use, and disposal.

Upon completion of the two evaluations, Green Seal publishes a summary of the results and identifies an appropriate proposed action.

### 4.3 Withdrawal of a Standard

Green Seal initiates the *withdrawal* of an *active standard* in response to one or more developments:

- There is no longer a significant, measurable difference between environmentally preferable products and conventional products on the North American market.
- Other health or environmental programs have implemented a meaningful, relevant market transformation tool and a Green Seal standard is no longer needed or effective for that market.
- The product type or product category is no longer being manufactured or is no longer widely available on the North American market.

A *withdrawal* proposal will be published for a *public comment period* of 30 calendar days. Green Seal will conduct *stakeholder* engagement and review evidence submitted by *stakeholders* and public participants. Green Seal will take good-faith efforts to resolve any conflicts and objections.



If Green Seal determines that *withdrawal* is appropriate, Green Seal will alert *stakeholders* to the forthcoming process and sunset dates, and it will publish substantive comments and Green Seal's *response to comments*.

Once a standard is withdrawn, it is no longer an *active standard* and Green Seal will no longer offer certification to that standard.

## 5. COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

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Green Seal provides a process for *complaint resolution*, a transparent mechanism by which *stakeholders* can submit for consideration a *procedural complaint* regarding published criteria or a standard.

### 5.1 Submission

The complainant must be a *stakeholder*. A *procedural complaint* must be submitted in writing via email within 30 calendar days of the action alleged to be inconsistent with procedures established in Section 3 and Section 4 of this manual.

*Procedural complaints* must include the following:

- A summary of the action or inaction that occurred and did not adhere to the procedures defined in this manual, and the specific remedial action that would satisfy concerns. The complainant has the burden of proof of showing that the Green Seal activity did not adhere to the procedures defined in Section 3 or Section 4 of this manual.
- A summary of previous efforts to resolve the issues or address the concerns and the statement of outcome or decision of each, including a sequence of events of these efforts.
- Documentation supporting all statements in the *procedural complaint*.

### 5.2 Extensions

Upon written request, a two-week extension may be granted for submitting a *procedural complaint* regarding an action alleged to be inconsistent with Section 3 or Section 4 of this manual.

### 5.3 Response

Green Seal will confirm receipt of any *procedural complaint* submitted in accordance with the above requirements (Section 5.1) within 20 calendar days of its submission.

### 5.4 Resolution

Confirmation of receipt initiates a 60-day resolution process with discussion among the appellant, the Green Seal CEO, and the Director of Green Seal Science and Standards. This will include a review of evidence that the procedural actions or inactions at issue did not conform to the requirements in this manual, and an appropriate resolution. Within 60 days, the Green Seal CEO will inform the complainant in writing of the decision, any subsequent actions to be taken, and the timeline for completion.

## Appendix I. Definitions

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**active standard** criteria for a level of attainment whose achievement earns certification for a product or service

**balance** an even distribution of stakeholders, such that representatives of no single *interest category* constitute more than half of the participants and at least one representative of each participating *interest category* participates

**certification process** the steps Green Seal takes to formally evaluate a product or service against the criteria in an *active standard* to verify conformity

**complaint resolution** the opportunity for any *stakeholder* adversely affected by actions or inactions inconsistent with the standard development processes outlined in this document to have an objection heard and considered. Complaint resolution is a mechanism for ensuring due process and, therefore, transparency and accountability.

**continuous maintenance** the ongoing review of criteria to ensure that standards remain effective and relevant

**feasibility** the likelihood that a criterion in the standard will be achievable by the target market

**interest category** a group of stakeholders with particular concerns in a standard. Green Seal has three interest categories: producers, users, and general interest. Subcategories and examples of the three interest categories are listed in Appendix III.

**issuance** the public release of a new or revised standard that supersedes all previous editions

**major revision** substantive changes to a standard's thresholds or requirements that significantly alter its stringency.

**minor revision** substantive but scope-limited changes to a standard, such as those that alter only a small portion or one criteria of the standard or that affect only a fraction of stakeholders.

**procedural complaint** an objection "about the standard-setting procedure (how the standard was set), as opposed to [a] substantive [complaint], which relate[s] to the content of the standard and which should be taken into account through the regular standards' review and revision process." (ISEAL Standard Setting Code 2014)

**public comment period** an opportunity for stakeholders to submit feedback on the proposed revisions to a standard.

**public comment version** a draft version of a Green Seal standard that is ready to be released to the public for review and input. The *public comment version* of a Green Seal Standard is posted for at least one *public comment period*.

**response to comments** a public report published by Green Seal that summarizes comments, quotes comments, and defines actions taken in response to comments submitted during the *public comment period*

**stakeholder** an individual or group that has a direct or indirect interest in Green Seal's standards and/or activities (ISEAL Standard Setting Code 2014)

**substantial agreement** support from approximately two-thirds of participating *stakeholders* or, at minimum, the absence of sustained opposition to substantive issues (ISEAL Standard-Setting Code, 2014)

**technical adviser** a leader in a relevant field, such as product design, service implementation, life-cycle analysis, health and environmental impact assessment, toxicology, pollution prevention, or another specialized topic. A technical adviser is typically a volunteer subject matter expert and not a member of Green Seal's staff.

**withdrawal** discontinuation of a Green Seal standard. A standard may be withdrawn because it is no longer needed or relevant in the current market.

## **Appendix II. Numbering Protocol for Standards and Revisions**

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### **New Standards**

A new standard is published as Edition 1.0.

### **Major Revisions**

At the close of a *major revision*, a standard is issued as the next integer. For example, Edition 3.3 is superseded by Edition 4.0.

### **Minor Revisions**

A completed minor revision alters a standard's number by one decimal point. For example, Edition 3.1 is superseded by Edition 3.2.

### **Corrections and Clarifications**

Corrections of mistakes and clarifications of ambiguous wording do not change a standard's number. These changes are published in quarterly reports.



## Appendix III. Green Seal Interest Categories

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Green Seal recognizes three *interest categories* that bring important perspectives to standard development.

**Producer.** Producers provide materials, products, systems, or services, or operate or manage the spaces covered by a standard. Applicants for certification to a standard are typically producers. Examples include the following:

- product manufacturers
- in-house service providers
- contracted service providers
- building operators (for services or space standards)
- property managers (for services or space standards)
- supply chain participants, such as
  - raw material suppliers
  - packaging suppliers
  - distributors
  - retailers
  - waste management operators

**User.** Users are directly involved in the purchase, procurement, or use of a product or service that is the subject of a standard. Examples include the following:

- buildings operations managers (for product standards)
- facility and corporate procurement teams (for product standards)
- government policymakers (local, state, federal)
- institutional policymakers
- custodial teams and frontline workers (for product standards)
- building occupants and visitors
- private consumers

**General interest.** General interests, including consultants who are not covered by another *interest category*, and have expert knowledge in the field. Examples include the following:

- nongovernmental organizations
- educators
- health and environmental advocates
- public health researchers and toxicologists
- environmental impact specialists, other experts on waste, water, health, and climate
- utilities
- vulnerable populations (children, the elderly, and individuals with compromised immune systems)
- environmental and health-focused nonprofit organizations
- other standard developer organizations
- non-standards-based health and environmental market transformation programs
- industry associations
- performance testing laboratories, auditors that implement assurance programs
- workers associations, unions

## **Appendix IV. Revisions to This Document**

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The Green Seal Standard Development Manual was revised on July 13, 2022, to clarify that Green Seal staff use stakeholder input to finalize standard criteria.

This is the first edition (1.0) of the Green Seal Standard Development Manual. This document was published on August 9, 2021.

Green Seal's older Standard Development Procedures (2014) is available upon request.