

Green Seal v1.0 Standards Manual



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1. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with its mission to protect human health and the environment by accelerating the adoption of products that are safer and more sustainable, Green Seal develops voluntary standards to create a definition of, and recognition criteria for, safer and more sustainable products. 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 two types of leadership standards.

Types of Green Seal Standards

- **Product category standards.** Achieving certification to a Green Seal product category standard confirms that a product meets a high standard for protecting people and the planet. 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 and verified claims, prohibitions or restrictions on individual or categories of hazardous chemicals, low-impact manufacturing, responsible sourcing of product ingredients, sustainable packaging, and other requirements as appropriate.
- **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.

International Best Practices for Standard Development

We base our standard development procedures on internationally recognized best practices and use the ISEAL Code as a reference for conducting a transparent process and developing outcomes-focused standards. In addition, Green Seal adheres to:

- ***ANSI Essential Requirements (2020).***
 - openness;
 - lack of dominance;
 - balance;
 - consideration of views and objections; and
 - written procedures.
- ***ISO 14024 Standard for Type I Ecolabels (2018).***
 - 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

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 protect human health and the environment by accelerating the adoption of products that are safer and more sustainable. To this end, Green Seal develops voluntary standards to create a definition of, and recognition criteria for, safer and more sustainable products. Green Seal aims to set criteria that reflect the top 25% of the market 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.
- **Life cycle-based criteria.** Standard development involves considering the entire product life cycle to avoid burden shifting impacts across different life cycle stages.

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. Comments, questions, or concerns regarding the standard development process can be submitted either via the form on the 'Take Part in the Process' section of the Green Seal website or directly to the Standards Team email address at standards@greenseal.org. 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

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;
- life cycle 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 draft version of a standard* for no fewer than 60 calendar days for the first *public comment period*, and no fewer than 30 days for a second *public comment period*. For standard revisions, Green Seal will post for public comment a *public comment draft version of a standard* for no fewer than 60 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 the proper forms on Green Seal's website. 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 in whole or in part.** Either taken in whole or in part, the comment will be incorporated into the revised draft version of the standard.
- **Acknowledge the comment.** The information provided will be noted by Green Seal but will not be incorporated into the revised draft version of 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. Green Seal maintains standards according to a continuous maintenance process, as defined by ISEAL 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, including adding one or more criteria, 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.	Process as outlined in Section 3.
Urgent Substantive Revisions	Substantive	Revisions that correct a substantive error, unintended negative consequence from standard criteria, or when there are risks to the integrity or credibility of the standard. Revisions can be major or minor in scope.	Focused stakeholder engagement. ^a Public comment is not required, but all urgent substantive revisions are reviewed at the next <i>major revision</i> of the standard.
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 engagement and public comment are not required.</i> Changes are published in quarterly reports.

^a Development of revised requirements for urgent substantive revisions entails, at minimum: a review of available research, a focused consultation of impacted stakeholders, a notification on Green Seal’s website including the justification for urgency and compliance timelines for impacted certified participants. Impacted participants are notified 60 days prior to the publishing of an urgent substantive revision.

Major and minor revisions are made to keep standards accurate, effective, and relevant to market needs. The time given for current users to demonstrate compliance with the updates depends on whether the revision is *major* or *minor*. With a *major revision*, certified products or services have at least one year to meet new requirements. Green Seal may extend this period if the changes are especially broad or complex. Compliance with *minor revisions* is typically checked during the next renewal of the product or service. Any timeline updates will be posted on Green Seal’s website.

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 staff initiate 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 in the North American market.
- Green Seal has determined the program is no longer a viable offering for the organization to maintain.

If Green Seal staff determine that a *withdrawal* is appropriate, Green Seal will alert *stakeholders* to the forthcoming process and sunset dates. A *withdrawal* notice will be published at least one year in advance of a standard *withdrawal* effective date. Stakeholders with currently certified products will be given an additional sell-through period of one year after the effective withdrawal date. Green Seal will make exceptions to this policy on a case-by-case basis.

Once a standard is withdrawn, it is no longer an *active standard*, and Green Seal will no longer offer certification to that standard. Withdrawn standards remain available on Green Seal's website for five years after the withdrawal date.

5. COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

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 demonstrate that it is a materially affected interested party (see definition of *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 demonstrating the complainant is a materially affected party by the standard or standard development process.
- 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 90-day resolution process with discussion among the appellant, the Green Seal CEO, and the Senior Director of Green Seal Products and Standards. Green Seal's CEO will be the final arbitrator of all complaints. 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 90 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. On an annual basis, Green Seal will make public any complaints that have been received including actions and results taken.

Appendix I. Definitions

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, including adding one or more criteria

minor revision substantive but scope-limited changes to a standard, such as those that alter only a small portion or one criterion of the standard

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 Code of Good Practice 2023)

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

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.

Urgent Substantive Revisions

An urgent substantive revision can be either minor or major, and the edition number is updated accordingly on the publish date of the altered criteria.

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

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
 - 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 procurement policymakers (local, state, federal)
- institutional policymakers
- custodial teams and frontline workers (for product standards)
- building occupants and visitors
- retailers and distributors
- 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
- government health and environmental policymakers (local, state, federal)
- 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

The Green Seal Standard Manual was revised on March 2, 2026, to reflect several changes including clarifications on interest category divisions, updates to how Green Seal withdraws standards, and updated language on how urgent substantive revisions are managed within the standard scheme. Other administrative updates such as updated references to external sources were also included.

The Green Seal Standard 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 Manual. This document was published on August 9, 2021.

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