



## Guidance Document for Validation and Verification Bodies (VVBs) of the W+ Standard

This document provides guidance for Validation and Verification Bodies (VVBs) seeking approval under the W+ Standard. It outlines the application process, competency requirements, sector-specific expertise, and documentation needed to align VVBs activities with the W+ Standard.

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### 1. Application Process

- **Online Training:** VVB applicants must complete the [W+ Standard online course](#) to gain a foundational understanding of W+ principles and requirements
  - **Submission:** Complete the W+ Standard Validation/Verification Body (VVB) Application Form, ensuring all provided information is accurate and truthful. The form can be accessed [here](#) and should be submitted to [coordinator@wplus.org](mailto:coordinator@wplus.org).
  - **(Optional) Accreditation:** If existing, include proof of accreditation (e.g., an accreditation certificate or a URL to the accreditation body's official listing).
  - **Approval process:** The W+ Coordinator performs a completeness check and the Verifier Approval Committee of the W+ Advisory Council approved the application.
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### 2. Key Competencies for VVBs

- **Gender and Women's Empowerment Focus:** Key personnel within VVBs applicants must demonstrate experience or training in gender analysis, gender action planning, or related certifications. This includes:
  - Experience in projects that foster women's empowerment
  - Familiarity with gender-sensitive frameworks for project design, evaluation, and reporting.
- **Social and Environmental Auditing Experience:** Key personnel within VVBs must have staff or contracted assessors with knowledge of methodologies and principles for social auditing, particularly in projects that deliver measurable benefits to women and marginalized groups. Evidence of this experience must be detailed in the application form.
- **Sector-Specific Expertise:** Key personnel within VVBs should demonstrate proficiency in relevant sectors, with competency in Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) processes related to women's empowerment projects.



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### 3. Sector-Specific Guidance

VVBs applicants may provide evidence of expertise across various sectors. Each sector requires a detailed description of competencies, backed by supporting documentation, including previous project reports, certifications, and published work.

#### a) **Women's Empowerment/Gender Equality**

- VVBs must demonstrate experience in projects that promote gender equality and empowerment. Including those related to the W+ Standard 6 domains (Education & Knowledge, Food Security, Leadership, Income & Assets, Health and Time Saving) .
- **Education:** Participation in educational initiatives focused on improving access for women and girls or offering gender-sensitive training programs.
- **Food Security:** Experience with food security programs addressing malnutrition, access to food, and supporting sustainable agricultural practices
- **Health:** Knowledge of health initiatives that improve women's health outcomes, including reproductive health, mental health, and healthcare accessibility.
- **Livelihoods:** Implementation of livelihood programs that provide economic opportunities, skill-building, and resources for women and marginalized groups.
- **Governance:** Involvement in projects focused on community governance, especially initiatives that encourage women's participation in leadership and decision-making roles.

#### b) **Additional expertise**

VVBs applicants could provide documented experience in the following sectors:

- **Agriculture, Forestry, and Social Development:** Knowledge of sustainable land management, conservation, and agroforestry practices supporting women's livelihoods and community resilience.
- **Climate Change Adaptation:** Experience in projects that help communities adapt to climate changes, including disaster risk reduction and resilience-building in vulnerable populations.
- **Energy:** Engagement in renewable energy projects or energy access initiatives that reduce women's labor burden and provide economic opportunities.
- **Transport:** Experience in transport projects that focus on safe, accessible options, enhancing women's mobility and safety.
- **Water Access and Sanitation:** Expertise in water and sanitation projects that reduce the time women spend on water collection and enhance sanitation facilities.
- **Oceans and Marine Resources:** Familiarity with projects on sustainable management of marine resources, particularly initiatives supporting coastal communities and women's roles in marine economies.



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## 4. Values and Principles

VVBs must uphold values and principles essential to the W+ Standard, including:

- Respect for communities
- Cultural sensitivity
- Trust and transparency
- Empathy and inclusivity
- These principles guide VVB interactions with project stakeholders and ensure alignment with the ethos of women's empowerment.

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## 5. Integrity and Continuous Training

To maintain the integrity of the W+ Standard, a robust verifier approval process and continuous training pathway are in place to ensure that verifiers remain current on the latest methodologies and social impact assessment practices.

- **Verifier Approval Committee:** An expert Verifier Approval Committee of the W+ Advisory Council oversees the approval of third-party verifiers. The committee consists of specialists in both carbon auditing and gender-sensitive auditing to ensure verifiers possess the necessary expertise in these fields.
- **Continuous Training:** Approved VVBs are required to participate in ongoing training programs to stay up-to-date with evolving methodologies, social impact assessment practices, and W+ Standard updates. This ensures that VVBs maintain a high standard of quality and consistency in verification activities.

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## 6. Documentation and Evidence Requirements

- **Sectoral Competency Documentation:** VVBs can provide specific examples and documentation of their experience in each relevant sector, including:
  - Certificates of gender or sector-specific training
  - Publications, project reports, or peer-reviewed articles that showcase VVBs' expertise in the respective areas
- **Insurance Requirements:** VVBs must maintain professional indemnity insurance to cover liabilities arising from verification malpractice. The minimum required coverage is \$300K, with a recommendation for higher coverage (up to \$2M) depending on contract size and risk exposure.

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## 7. Finalizing Approval and Execution



- **Agreement and Fees:** Once approved, VVBs will receive a certificate from the W+ Standard and pay any application/review fees. Upon completion, VVBs will be listed on the W+ Standard website as an approved body.
    - Application review fee is 1,000 USD
  - **Ongoing Compliance:** Approved VVBs are expected to maintain their accreditation status. At every renewal, the VVBs need to demonstrate they still meet the eligibility criteria
    - Accreditation needs to be renewed every year, renewal fee is 1,500 USD – this fee includes the travel for the onsite review once a year
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### . W+ Oversight

- The W+ Coordinator performs a completeness check of the Verification report
- The W+ Advisory Council Committee conducts an annual review of the VVBs performance.
- One W+ Staff member will conduct an onsite review of the verification process once a year.

This guidance document ensures that VVBs interested in validating or verifying projects under the W+ Standard have a clear understanding of requirements, competencies, and sector-specific expertise needed to support women's empowerment and social benefits effectively.