

ProTerra Foundation

Guidelines for standards evaluation and benchmarking

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to clearly explain the process used for benchmarking against the ProTerra Standards so that both external and internal stakeholders can be assured of the integrity and standardised and transparent process.

Scheme owners who desire to conduct a benchmarking exercise against the ProTerra Standards¹ can do so by following these guidelines. ProTerra embraces mutual recognition and synergies wherever applicable. These synergies aim to reduce costs, audit burdens and complexity at all levels and encourage collaboration.

Business evaluation

After a standard owner shows interest in a benchmark assessment and applies for benchmarking, a simple business evaluation should be carried out by ProTerra Foundation and the standard owner. This may be done in writing or via a conference call, in which case the call must be documented in minutes and dated. The scope of this phase is to get a better understanding of the goals and the potential of the benchmarking exercise, such as the value chain of the given crops to regions and countries, volumes, potential economic interest, synergies, etc.

Assessment

A customised Excel template of the ProTerra standard selected for the benchmarking exercise should be used to conduct the benchmark. Figure 2 shows an example of a benchmarking template for the ProTerra Sustainability Standard. A first draft of a benchmark can be carried out by a trained expert. A standard can be benchmarked in isolation or in combination with one or more other standards. The benchmarking process is shown in Figure 1.

¹ Including the ProTerra Sustainability Standard, its Interpretations and the ProTerra Monitoring and Verification Standard

On completion of the benchmarking exercise, a round of discussions with the expert may be held to align the interpretation. Subsequent to this discussion, a final version of the benchmark result should be issued.

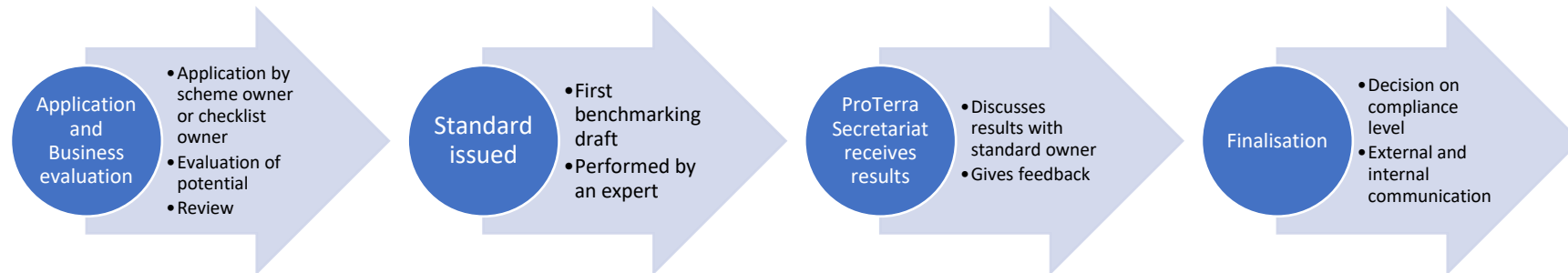


Figure No.1: Process of a benchmarking assessment

Costs

The cost of benchmarking will depend on the complexity, such as the number of criteria to be compared, the number of performance indicators within a standard, the consultation and the standards development, and whether an initial internal draft already exists.

The costs and how they will be shared should be discussed and agreed upon directly with the benchmarking consultants and standard owners before the assessment begins.

Validity period

The benchmark result is valid for a specific version of the published standard and for the version of the ProTerra Standard(s) in force at the time of the assessment. A benchmark may be repeated if, for example, the benchmarked standard, or the ProTerra Standard, is revised and/or a new version is published.

Results

The ProTerra Foundation supports a stepwise approach and continuous development and therefore believes that there is potential for mutual recognition approaches depending on the level of alignment with a particular standard. Standards are considered to be highly aligned if there is 80% or more alignment between the indicators.

Each ProTerra requirement should be assessed individually for coverage by the standard under review. Figure 2 shows a theoretical example of a benchmarking template against the ProTerra Sustainability Standard. The scores are presented as a percentage, which refers to the extent to which the standard under review meets the requirement of the ProTerra Standard being benchmarked. Recommendations are not included in the benchmark.

The benchmarking aims to provide an overview of the level of alignment with the ProTerra Standard(s) and to identify which principles or requirements require additional review and action to achieve alignment.

In addition to alignment with the requirements of the standard being benchmarked, the benchmarking exercise will also consider the criteria used to make the certification decision.

For those standards that have been positively benchmarked against a ProTerra Standard(s), the organisation, will receive a ProTerra Certificate upon formal application, provided that:

- It has been subjected to a third-party audit under the original scheme positively benchmarked against a ProTerra Standard and is currently certified under this scheme;
- The Certification Body/Third-party mentioned above shall be accredited to ISO/IEC 17065:2012 by an Accreditation Body that is a member of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) or the European Co-operation for Accreditation (EA) and a signatory to the Multilateral Agreement, including peer review by other IAF or EA member accreditation bodies. The Certification Body shall also operate at least one accredited scheme under ISO/IEC 17065:2012 which is relevant to the sustainability criteria required by the ProTerra Standard;

- It is registered as a member of the ProTerra Network; and
- ProTerra-certified materials and products are identified using the correct claims, the ProTerra logo, seal and certificates, according to the Guidelines and Requirements for the Use of the ProTerra Logos and Seals.

The ProTerra Certificate is issued by the certification body authorised and approved by ProTerra after a Document Based Review Audit (DBR).

The validity of the ProTerra Certificate is the same as the validity of the certificate associated with the original scheme.

A recognition agreement must be signed with the original scheme owner.

For all those schemes that do not meet ProTerra's equivalence criteria, a detailed action plan for future alignment can be agreed with ProTerra. Alternatively, a partial recognition agreement can be established between ProTerra and the scheme owner stating that organisations certified under the scheme may be granted a ProTerra Certificate if they undergo a complementary audit with a reduced scope. In this case, the complementary audit would cover the individual requirements for which no equivalence was found during the benchmarking exercise. This essentially means that an organisation may implement the additional requirements under ProTerra and be audited against them.

In a partial recognition situation, ProTerra certification of an organisation is only possible if:

- It has been subjected to a third-party audit under the original scheme and is currently certified under that scheme;
- The Certification Body/Third-party mentioned above shall be accredited to ISO/IEC 17065:2012 by an Accreditation Body that is a member of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) or the European Co-operation for Accreditation (EA) and a signatory to the Multilateral Agreement, including peer review by other IAF or EA member accreditation bodies. The Certification Body shall also operate at least one accredited scheme under ISO/IEC 17065:2012 which is relevant to the sustainability criteria required by the ProTerra Standard;
- A complementary audit against ProTerra Standard is conducted by a Certification Body authorised by the ProTerra Foundation, which shall issue the certificate;
- The organisations pass the complementary audit, and
- Comply with all ProTerra system rules as set out in the current version of the ProTerra Certification Protocol, where applicable.

The validity of the ProTerra Certificate is the same as the validity of the certificate associated with the original scheme.

Figure 2: Benchmarking results per topic (an example of a ProTerra Sustainability Standard benchmark)

Total Standard ABC										
Principle	Align	Not Aligned	Partially Aligned	NA	TOTAL	Adjusted for NA	% alignment of indicators	Not Aligned with Core Indicators	Total Core Indicators	Total Aligned Core Indicators
Principle 1 – Management system, compliance with laws international conventions and the ProTerra Standard	1	5	1	1	8	7	21.43%	4	5	1
Principle 2 – Human rights and responsible labour policies and practices	15	24	4	0	43	43	39.53%	17	29	12
Principle 3 – Responsible relations with workers and community	1	6	2	0	9	9	22,22%	2	2	0
Principle 4 – Biodiversity conservation, effective environmental management and environmental services	2	4	1	0	7	7	35.71%	3	5	2
Principle 5 – No use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)	0	5	0	0	5	5	0.00%	3	3	0
Principle 6 – Pollution and waste management	0	4	4	0	8	8	25.00%	7	7	0
Principle 7 – Water management	0	5	0	0	5	5	0.00%	4	4	0
Principle 8 – Greenhouse gases and energy management	0	1	1	0	2	2	25.00%	1	1	0
Principle 9 – Adoption of good agricultural practices	10	15	3	0	28	28	41.07%	12	19	7
Principle 10 – Traceability and Chain of Custody	0	13	0	1	14	13	0.00%	0	0	0
<i>Total ProTerra Indicators</i>	29	82	16	2	129					
						Total CORE		53	75	22