

Document Number 6.3	TITLE W+ Standard Setting Procedure	ORIGINAL DATE January 2017
DOCUMENT MANAGER W+ Standard Coordinator		REVISION DATE 27 July 2017
APPROVAL W+ AC/Standard Committee	FILE LOCATION(S) W+/W+ Program Policies and Procedures, www.wplus.org	

W+ Standard Setting Procedure

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1. Timeframe for Standard Review

The W+ Standard shall be reviewed not less frequently than once every five years, and optimally once in three years.

Other circumstances may trigger the standard setting procedure, when risks or opportunities present themselves or when prompt action will enhance the effectiveness of the W+ Standard’s application. These may include:

- Harmonizing procedures between the W+ and other, complementary standards,
- Incorporating best practices, or lessons learned from field experience or other practical improvements,
- Incorporating lessons learned from regular reviews of Assurance or Monitoring & Evaluation systems

The W+ Standard, and any program documents may be updated from time-to-time without a full public review process for changes that are:

- Non-substantive; in that they do not change interpretation or implementation
- Clerical, such as minor corrections, or text edits or additions for clarity or consistency with other program documents
- Format changes, such as those for document consistency or document control format.

These changes will be noted in the revisions record at the end of all W+ program documents.

2. Standard Setting Process

Standard Setting, which includes any Review and Revision of the W+ Standard will generally follow this process:

Step 1 – An announcement will be made via the WOCAN and W+ websites and to identified stakeholders that the W+ Standard will undergo review and revision and what the future schedule for that review and revision will be, and how to participate. This step may be combined with Step 2.

Step 2 – The Advisory Council and its Standard Sub-Committee, and the W+ Standard Coordinator, will compile a draft revised standard and publish that for stakeholder input. At the same time, the availability of the draft document for review and comment will be announced via the WOCAN and W+ websites and to identified stakeholders via newsletters, emails and social media.

Step 3 – The W+ Standard Coordinator will receive stakeholder input via electronic communications (email) or via comments submitted to the WOCAN or W+ websites, or via written comments sent via mail, or via verbal comments submitted during phone calls or in-person meetings. Any interested

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persons may comment on the W+ Standard or any program documents, policies or procedures. For the W+ Standard document, there will be two consecutive comment periods, first of 60 days, then of 30 days. Program documents will be posted for one, thirty-day comment period. Comments received in each comment period, as well as responses to comments, will be published on the W+ website.

Step 4 – At the close of the first comment period, the W+ Standard Coordinator and the W+ Advisory Council’s Standard sub-committee will consider all comments and will create a revised W+ Standard document (and potentially any associated program documents where concurring changes are needed) and publish the revised W+ Standard for a second, 30-day comment period.

Step 5 – WOCAN and the W+ Standard Coordinator will announce the availability of the second draft document for review and comment via the WOCAN and W+ websites and to identified stakeholders for a period of not less than 30 days.

Step 6 – At the close of the second comment period, the W+ Standard Coordinator and the W+ Advisory Council’s Standards sub-committee will consider all comments and finalize a revised W+ Standard for publication. The W+ Standard Coordinator will provide a summary of comments to the W+ Advisory Committee and will seek their input on the adequacy of comments received or the need for additional stakeholder outreach or an extension of the public comment period. Comments received in each comment period, as well as responses to comments, will be published on the W+ website.

Step 7 – WOCAN and the W+ Standard Coordinator will announce the availability of the revised standard via the WOCAN and W+ websites and through its newsletters, and other channels as appropriate.

3. Version in Force

Previous versions of the W+ Standard will be obsolete effective on the date the revised W+ Standard is published. Projects which are underway at the time the W+ Standard is revised may continue utilizing the version of the Standard current as of the time of their project approval, or they may choose to apply the latest version of the Standard. If their choice is to apply the new version, the Project Implementer shall notify the W+ Standard Coordinator (and they should also notify their verification/assurance provider) that they intend to apply the latest version of the Standard.

4. Provisions for Additional Outreach or Urgent Revisions

If there is minimal stakeholder input during public comment periods for the W+ Standard or related program document updates and revisions, the W+ Advisory Council will be consulted regarding the advisability of conducting additional outreach and consultation, or extending the comment period(s). The W+ Advisory Council may choose to conduct additional outreach or extend the comment period based on factors such as: the scope or depth of proposed revisions to the W+ Standard and associated documents, any un-resolved or conflicting comments. A limited number of comments is not a reason to

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undertake additional or extended comments so long as the comments that are received are relevant, substantive and non-controversial.

Although it is not anticipated, if urgently needed substantive changes to the Standard and associated program documents are identified, the process for expedited review and modification will follow this process:

- Evidence for the urgent need for changes to the Standard and associated program documents shall be submitted by stakeholders or members of the Advisory Council
- The Standards Committee considers and if there is approval, moves ahead with proposed revisions
- The W+ Standard Coordinator releases a public statement of an urgent change to the W+ website and stakeholder distribution list(s), citing the need, the proposed change(s), comment time-frame (probably 30 days), and how to submit comments
- Barring any unresolvable conflicting comments, the proposed urgent changes will go into effect one business week after the close of the urgent changes comment period.
- If there are conflicting, unresolved comments, the proponent of the change shall be responsible for resolving the contested issue(s) through a facilitated or mediated stakeholder process, and the existing Standard shall remain in force for the duration of any negotiations.

Evidence for the urgent need for changes to the Standard and associated program documents shall be submitted by the interested stakeholders. The burden of proof shall be on the proponents for urgent changes. The evidence will be considered by the W+ Advisory Council Standards Committee and the W+ Standard Coordinator. Only in exceptional cases, and where a change to the Standard and associated program documents would not adversely impact other stakeholders will urgent changes be considered.

5. Revisions and Updates to Associated Program Documents

Program documents such as the Program Guide and Program Template documents may be updated at any time. A public notice and comment processes will be conducted for documents related to the W+ Standard, but only the W+ Standard itself will utilize the 60- then 30-day comment periods.

6. Records and Prior Document Versions

Records of standard setting drafts and prior versions shall be kept for at least 7 years. Official documents retained and available shall be; a draft for public comment version and a final version of each Standard or associated program document, for each revision cycle. These shall be available on the W+ website. Versions prior to the current document versions shall be in a location clearly described as an archive.

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7. Official Language of the Standard

The official language of the W+ Standard and associated program documents is English. If translations are needed, WOCAN and the W+ Standard Coordinator, working with the requestor, will identify translation scope needs and resources, and within available resources will provide translated Standard and program documents (or document elements, as needed). However, if there are conflicting interpretations of the Standard or program documents due to ambiguities resulting from translation, the English version shall prevail.

Translations of the W+ Standard and associated program documents will be considered if they are necessary and if resources are available. Only translations directed by WOCAN and the W+ Standard administration will be recognized as valid versions of the W+ Standard.

8. Review of the Standard Setting Process

The W+ Advisory Council shall review this standard-setting process prior to undertaking a standard review, to ensure the process remains efficient, effective and responsive. The review of the standard-setting process shall include soliciting input from key stakeholders, who may include: organizations applying the W+ Standard, organizations partnering or collaborating with WOCAN/W+, verification/assurance providers, and women’s groups.

Questions about the Standard Setting Procedure should be referred to the W+ Standard Coordinator at coordinator@wplus.org

Revision History		
#	Date	Description
1	January 2017	Original
2	27 July 2017	Expanded and clarified language per Advisory council and stakeholder comments. Reconciliation with other W+ program documents.
3		
4		