

Green Electronics Council's Dynamic Standards Development Process

The Green Electronics Council has created an innovative new process for developing criteria for the EPEAT ecolabel. GEC's Dynamic Standards Development Process is a new way of implementing a balanced voluntary consensus process and directly responds to multi-stakeholder feedback that the existing EPEAT criteria development process needs to be faster, address "priority impacts" and integrate product innovation and market feedback through continuous maintenance. The Dynamic Standards Development Process was developed with feedback from purchasers, manufacturers and sustainability advocacy non-profits. GEC is committed to the Dynamic Standards Development Process to continue to provide purchasers access to the maximum number of credible sustainable IT products.

The GEC Dynamic Standards Development Process (DSDP) is focused on:

- **Impact/Relevance:** Through a "State of Sustainability Research Packet" that ensures the criteria development process is driven by priority impacts and purchaser voice
- **Efficiency:** From start to finish an 18-month process, significantly reducing the demand on participating organizations and thereby facilitating the participation of a broad base of diverse stakeholders
- **Innovation:** Leveraging continuous maintenance to reflect product innovation and market feedback in the criteria
- **Dynamic, Iterative Process:** Continuous maintenance is recognized as an integral part of the process and a way to maintain the 18-month timeline and sustainability impact of criteria

Overview

The DSDP includes three major process areas:

1. **State of Sustainability Research Packet** that identifies science-based life-cycle priority impacts (through Lifecycle Assessments and other relevant research)
2. **Voluntary Consensus Criteria Development Process**
 - 2.1 **Modular Approach** to criteria development that targets the involvement of all participants and minimizes the demands on their time
 - 2.2 Conducting a **Commonality Assessment** to maximize harmonization with existing criteria and approaches
 - 2.3 **Multi-Stakeholder Committee** to finalize and ballot the criteria
 - 2.4 Library of **Experimental Optional Criteria**
 - 2.5 **Balloting** of criteria in batches
3. **Continuous Maintenance** that reflects product innovation and assures criteria "make a difference"

1. Outreach and State of Sustainability Research Packet: The first, and a key foundational part of the DSDP, is gathering data that provides a science-based identification of priority sustainability impacts for the product category. This "State of Sustainability Research Packet" will be developed from materials publicly available, provided by stakeholders interested in sharing relevant technical data and by research institution(s) engaged by GEC. The research packet identifies priority environmental and social impacts, specific institutional purchaser needs/opinions, and includes consideration of relevant product security issues. Its purpose is to provide a baseline understanding for all participants involved.

2. Voluntary Consensus Criteria Development Process: The DSDP is a new way of implementing a balanced voluntary consensus process – which is a founding principle of GEC. Voluntary consensus processes provide a group of diverse, yet balanced, interested parties the opportunity to share their technical expertise, opinions, insights, and pursue their motivations. GEC believes that while voluntary consensus processes are a challenging way to develop EPEAT criteria, it is the only approach that results in a maximum number of credible IT products for purchasers.

2.1 Modular Approach: Assuring that the process is achieved within 18 months requires that it be as efficient as possible. To achieve this, the DSDP uses a modular approach, i.e. criteria will be discussed and developed in three groupings of topics. Two of the modules will be criteria that are “common” and applicable across all product categories, leveraging prior criteria development processes and facilitating harmonization across EPEAT product categories. With a focus on “priority impacts”, each module should have fewer criteria, targeting the engagement of individuals and lowering the overall level of commitment necessary to participate.

2.2 Commonality Assessment: The purpose of the Commonality Assessment is to identify existing criteria (that should be leveraged to facilitate harmonization and cut down on useless “recreating of the wheel”) as well as identify criteria topics that are new. The benefit of the commonality assessment is efficiency – another way to speed up the criteria development process and engage technical experts. The output of the process is a document identifying draft environmental and social responsibility criteria or criteria topics for use by the multi-stakeholder committee.

2.3 Multi-Stakeholder Committee: A balanced multi-stakeholder voluntary consensus committee will be formed including, but not limited to, manufacturers, suppliers, policy representatives, purchasers, and environmental and social impact experts. The committee will use the output of the Commonality Assessment to develop and finalize draft criteria that will then go to formal ballot.

2.4 Experimental Optional Criteria: A key innovative element of the DSDP is library of experimental optional criteria that are a new category and provide “extra credit” optional points. This will allow the voluntary consensus committee to experiment with criteria approaches and topics with less risk.

2.5 Balloting: To allow the criteria to keep moving through the process, balloting (i.e. formal voting) in the DSDP process will be done by topic area. Once the multi-stakeholder voluntary consensus committees have completed draft criteria for each topic area, that group of criteria will then move to ballot.

3. Continuous Maintenance: Once adopted by EPEAT, criteria will be under continuous maintenance with an initial focus to adopt any criteria “deferred” for further discussion during the criteria development process, and then to reflect product innovation and market advancements to keep the criteria as relevant as possible. The timing associated with implementing criteria resulting from continuous maintenance will take into consideration product design cycles and be no more frequent than once a year.

With GEC’s Dynamic Standards Development Process, developing criteria for the EPEAT program will be significantly more efficient, with criteria harmonized across product categories and relevant to purchasers.

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