



Procedure for Validation of Science-based Targets for Nature

Version 2.0

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VERSION HISTORY

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Version history

Version Number	Effective Date	Description of Amendment
V.1.0	February 20, 2025	First version of the Accountability Accelerator's Procedure for the Validation of Science-based Targets for Nature.
V.1.1	September 24, 2025	Reviewed version by the Integrity Council for the Validation Service. Main changes include: - Added the purpose and audience for the document. - Added further context related to the governance of the validation service, clarifying roles and responsibilities. - Added a section on why companies should use the validation service. - Clarified the scope of the validation service against SBTN's 5-step framework. - Added information about new accelerated pathways (which are new validation services) included in SBTN Steps 1 and 2 VI.2 - Added further clarity on the definition of claims and the process for companies using claims related to their validation. - Inserted a glossary to support understanding of key terms used throughout the document.
V.2.0	October 13, 2026	Reviewed version by the Integrity Council for the Validation Service. Main changes include: - Updated validation eligibility to align with V2.0 of the SBTN methods. - Refined scope of the validation service and added in new validation services to align with V2.0 of the SBTN methods. - Validation prerequisites added. - Refined validation process to 5 steps including removing the screening step and increasing the length of time of validations.

FOR INFORMATION

For questions or feedback in relation to this document, please contact validation@accountabilityaccelerator.org.

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I. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to provide an overview of the Accountability Accelerator's validation process that companies must follow before submitting their work for validation. It is the core document for the validation service and should be used as a reference to navigate to the family of validation procedures and policies found in Annex 2.

1.2. Target audience

The target audience for this procedure is companies (and their consulting partners) seeking to utilize the Accountability Accelerator's validation service for science-based targets for nature.

2. The Accountability Accelerator's validation service

2.1. Objectives of the service

The objective of the Accountability Accelerator's validation service is to provide a robust and independent assessment of corporate nature targets in line with the target-setting methods developed by the Science Based Targets Network (SBTN).

2.2. Governance

As of February 20, 2025, the Accountability Accelerator was commissioned to host the validation function of the Science Based Targets Network (SBTN).

The Accountability Accelerator maintains complete organizational independence to carry out the validation process.

To ensure an additional level of transparency and accountability, the validation service is overseen by an expert Integrity Council, which is fully independent of both the Accountability Accelerator and SBTN.

Validation Team at the Accountability Accelerator

The Validation Team consists of internal and third-party validators who are assigned to work with companies throughout their target validation journey. Validators are responsible for screening and assessing target submissions. They work closely with the company's technical contact, using the Accountability Accelerator's online validation platform.

Integrity Council for the Accountability Accelerator's Validation Service

The Integrity Council is an independent decision-making entity (with delegated authority from the SBTN Network Council and Accountability Accelerator Impact Advisory Council) to oversee the governance of the target validation function and approve its operating procedure and policies. This includes overseeing matters related to conflict of interest, compliance with data protection, and complaints and appeals.

The Integrity Council provides oversight of the validation process and ensures the integrity, accuracy and scientific robustness of the validation procedure, by assessing whether due process was followed and whether final results meet the intent and desired outcome of SBTN methods.

Science Based Targets Network (SBTN)

SBTN's role is to develop target-setting guidance, in line with the best available science, that allows companies to align with Earth's limits and societal sustainability goals.

3. Why use the validation service?

Validation is the process of assessing whether the company targets and their target preparation work follow the requirements set out by SBTN. It provides companies with confirmation that their nature targets are in line with the best available science, a critical step in assuring the credibility, comparability and robustness of the targets.

With validation, companies can make credible claims about their current impacts on nature and their targets contributing towards global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the Global Biodiversity Framework and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Discover the business value of science-based targets for nature [here](#).

4. Who can use the validation service?

4.1. Overview

The Accountability Accelerator's validation service applies to legally recognized companies (see exceptions below), such as individual companies, parent or holding companies, subsidiaries, cooperatives, franchise operators, or other forms of corporate group or business organization. Legally recognized companies, regardless of their size or operational complexity, are eligible to submit for validation.

Companies which submit for validation are referred to as **implementing companies**. They are eligible to make claims on validated targets and are responsible for tracking progress under the SBTN methods. Internal business units, departments, operational divisions, brands, and any other non-incorporated units are not eligible to sign a contract with the Accountability Accelerator for validation.

Company eligibility exceptions

Eligibility is subject to certain sectoral limitations. Specifically, companies operating in the following ISIC Rev. 4 sectors may not be eligible for validation:

- Section K: Financial and insurance activities
- Section M: Professional, scientific and technical activities
- Section N: Administrative and support service activities
- Section O: Public administration and defence; compulsory social security
- Section S: Other service activities
- Section U: Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies

Contact the Accountability Accelerator if your company is in these sectors.

Additionally, companies in the fossil fuel sector are ineligible for validation and claims on science-based targets for nature (see Section 4.3 for further details).

4.2. Financial institutions

SBTN provides financial sector actors with a structured framework for client and corporate engagement. It enables more effective questioning, rigorous evaluation of corporate action, and better integration of nature-related risks and opportunities across portfolios, lending, underwriting, and commercial strategy.

Although formal target-validation guidance for financial institutions is not yet available, these organizations are uniquely positioned to drive real-economy action. Investors are increasingly demanding science-based targets and audit-ready data, thereby endorsing the SBTN framework—developed by a coalition of civil society organizations and grounded in planetary boundaries, offers a significant opportunity to objectively evaluate and manage risk across their portfolios.

4.3. Oil and Gas companies

SBTN has adopted the [Fossil Fuel Policy](#) of the [Science Based Targets initiative](#) (SBTi), which indicates that companies with any level of direct involvement in exploration, extraction, mining and/or production of oil, natural gas, coal or other fossil fuels, irrespective of percentage revenue generated by these activities, are ineligible to set science-based targets at present. This includes but is not limited to, integrated oil and gas companies, integrated gas companies, exploration and production pure players, refining and marketing pure players, oil products distributors, gas distributors and retailers and traditional oil and gas service companies. There are instances where some fossil fuel-related companies can have their targets validated by SBTi and become eligible for SBTN. Please see Annex I for further details of SBTN's policy and the specifics of when it applies.

5. Scope of the validation service

5.1. Overview

Setting science-based targets for nature involves a [five-step target-setting process](#). The current scope of the validation service includes *Step 1: Assess (1a materiality screening and 1b value chain assessment)*, *Step 2: Interpret and Prioritize*, and *Step 3: Set targets*.

The validation of science-based targets for nature by the Accountability Accelerator is an independent process involving expert review of corporate submissions to confirm conformance with SBTN's technical guidance.

Companies may submit SBTN Step 1: Assess and Step 2: Prioritize either together or separately. This is the preparatory work companies must do before setting and validating targets.

Step 1a (materiality screening) must always cover the full organizational boundary of the implementing company. From Step 1b onwards, the Accountability

Accelerator offers two pathways for validation: the **comprehensive or accelerated pathways** (see Figure 1 below). The comprehensive pathway requires a thorough assessment of the company's activities. The **accelerated pathway** allows companies to further refine the scope of their validation from Step 1b onwards. Under this pathway, companies complete their value chain assessment, and subsequent steps of the methods, for specific business units, realms (i.e., Land, Freshwater, Ocean), and/or value chain segments (i.e., direct operations or upstream) when certain minimum scope rules are met. Selections made for Step 1b (business units/realms/value chain segment) carry through to Step 2 and Step 3; targets, claims and public disclosures must transparently reflect the chosen scope.

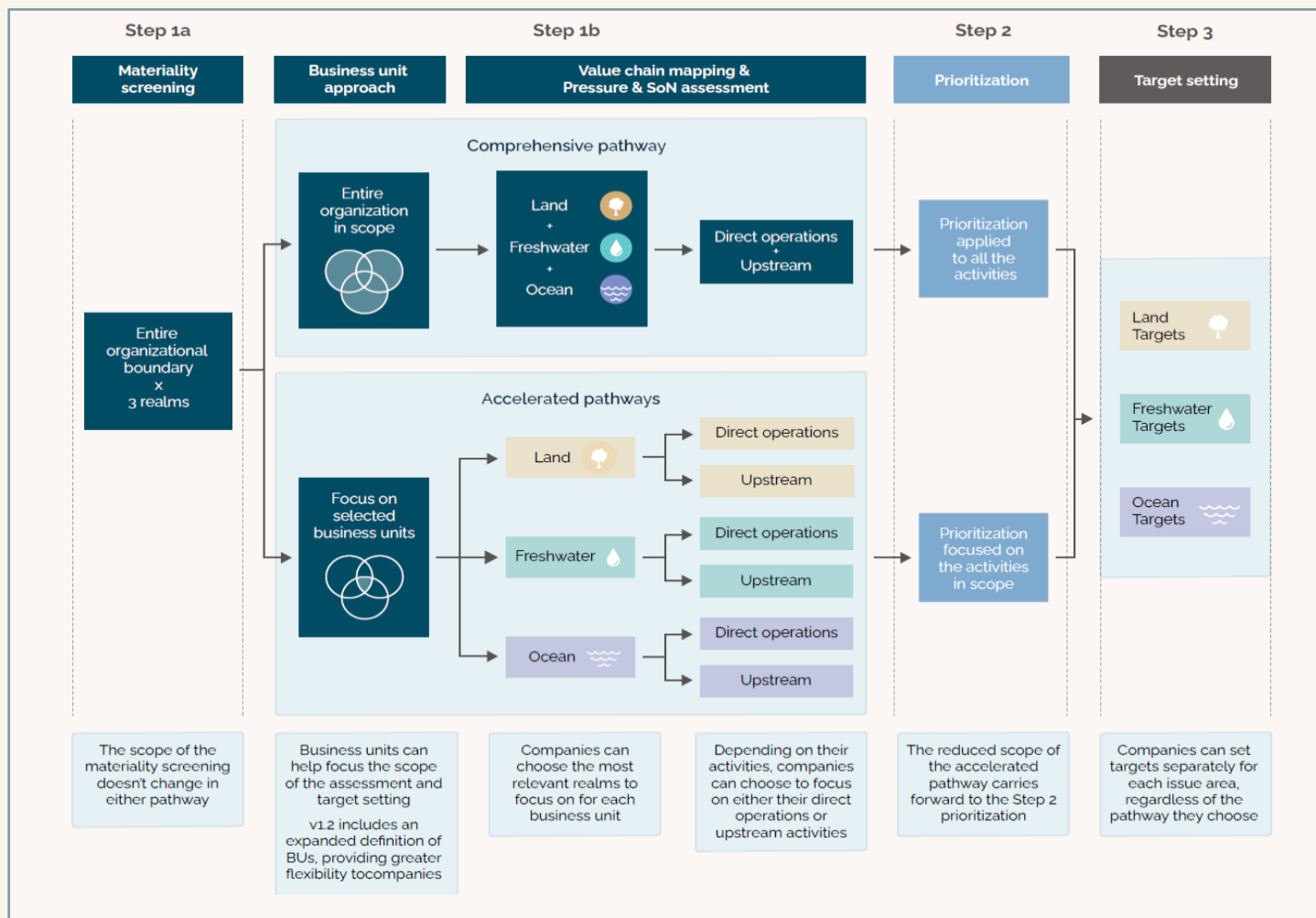


Figure 1: SBTN's comprehensive and accelerated pathways.

5.2. Validation pre-requisites

Companies shall observe the following validation pre-requisites:

- 5.2.1. Given that the steps in the SBTN framework are interconnected, companies must obtain validation for each preceding step before advancing in their target-setting journey.
 - For example, a company that has validated its materiality assessment (Step 1) cannot jump directly to setting targets (Step 3). It must first complete and validate the prioritization process (Step 2) before submitting its Step 3 targets for validation.
- 5.2.2. Companies setting science-based targets must use their results from Steps 1 and 2 to establish a prioritized list of locations for target setting. It is recommended to identify at least ten locations per pressure category to ensure alternative options are available if certain locations prove unsuitable. Note: Spatial prioritization is not required for HHP Cessation, Land footprint reduction, or No conversion of natural ecosystems targets.
 - For example, if a company wants to set a science-based target for freshwater quality impacts, it must select from the prioritized list of target-setting locations determined in Steps 1 and 2.
- 5.2.3. Setting Step 2 enabling targets is an optional service offered separately from core Step 2 validation.
- 5.2.4. Companies may submit their targets for freshwater, land, and oceans either concurrently or independently.
- 5.2.5. If a company with validated Step 1 and 2 results uses a newer version of the Step 3 Technical Guidance to set targets for newly added pressure indicators, it must submit updated Step 1 and 2 V2.0 data templates for those additional indicators along with Step 3.
 - For example, to submit Freshwater pesticide targets introduced in version 2.0 of the Technical Guidance after validating Steps 1 and 2 under version 1.0 (which excluded pesticides), a company must

submit the Step 1 and 2 V2.0 data template for pesticide-related value chain assessment and prioritization alongside its Step 3 pesticide target(s).

- 5.2.6. **Step 3 - Freshwater targets - Technical Guidance:** Freshwater quantity and quality targets may be submitted asynchronously, yet it is recommended to set both, particularly where there are co-benefits in a basin.
- 5.2.7. **Step 3 - Land targets - Technical Guidance:** Companies must determine which of the three types of land targets they are required to set and submit them all at once for validation. These targets are designed to work together to incentivize synergistic actions that contribute to nature goals in land systems.
- 5.2.8. **Step 3 - Ocean targets - Technical Guidance:** Companies must identify the relevant ocean targets from the suite of options for any stocks or farms carried forward into Step 3 and submit all required target types simultaneously for validation.

SBTN's biodiversity guidance is embedded in all SBTN steps and addresses threats to species, ecosystems, and nature's contributions to people.

All companies with material contributions to greenhouse gases are expected to set a climate target via the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) as part of their science-based targets for nature journey.

5.3. Progressing through the SBTN framework

Companies seeking to progress through the validation of SBTN steps must consider the following:

- 5.3.1. Validated Step 1 and Step 2 results remain valid for five years, as specified in SBTN technical guidance. Because these results establish the context for Step

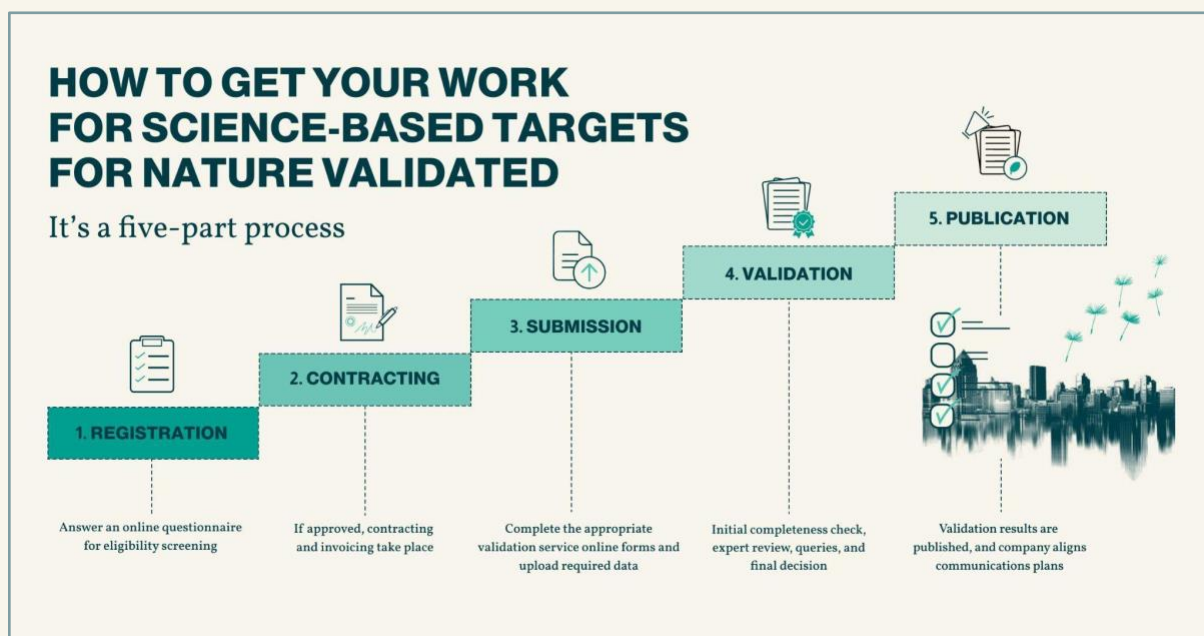
3 target setting, validators will review the outcomes of Steps 1 and 2 at the start of Step 3.

- 5.3.2. Companies are not obligated to complete target boundaries across all areas defined in Steps 1 and 2 (e.g., a company may choose to set targets in a single basin). However, claims are limited strictly to validated scope, and mandatory disclosure requirements accompany all public claims—such as indicating on the SBTN Target Tracker the relative position of the target basin within the prioritized list of material basins.
- 5.3.3. Companies may progress at their own pace and capabilities through their prioritized locations for a given realm and across realms: freshwater, land and oceans.

6. Validation process

The validation process is composed of five parts: 1) Registration, 2) Contracting 3), Submission, 4) Validation, 5) Publication (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Accountability Accelerator's validation process



Part 1: Registration

Companies are to complete the online registration that gathers information on the following:

- the company name for identification and to conduct an eligibility check,
- technical contact(s) that will manage the submission, validation process, and respond to the validation team queries,
- the service requested - including the organizational boundary and scope of the submission,
- contracting and invoicing contact details and,
- confirmation the company has read the SBTN Claims and Disclosure Guidance.

The Accountability Accelerator Validation Team will conduct an eligibility assessment based on the criteria outlined in Sections 4 and 5, notifying the registrant of the outcome via email within one to two business days.

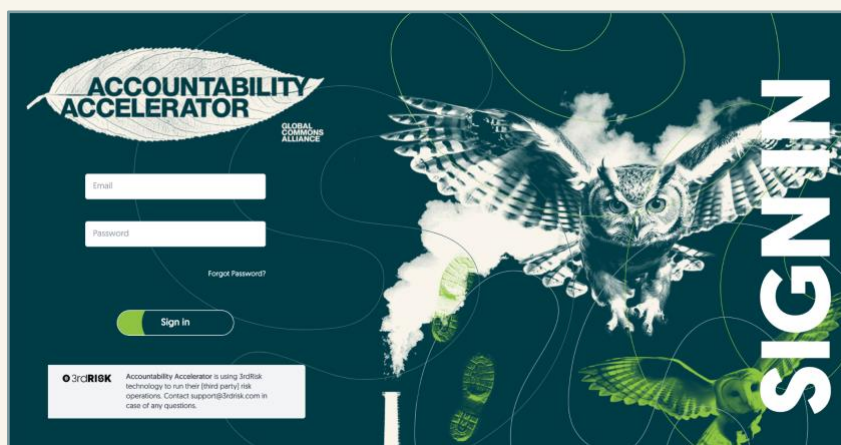
Part 2: Contracting

Upon issuing written confirmation of eligibility, the Accountability Accelerator will send the validation contract to the company's designated legal contact, with the primary contact copied. Although the company may initiate the submission process in parallel, the contract must be fully executed prior to commencing validation.

Part 3: Submission

While the contract is being finalized, the company technical contact will be invited to join the Accountability Accelerator's online validation platform. The technical contact may then invite other relevant team members from the company side or assisting consultants to join the validation platform.

Figure 3. Validation platform homepage



On the validation platform (see Figure 3), companies will be given access to the submission form that corresponds to the service requested. Companies must complete the online validation submission forms and upload the completed required data templates.

Companies have ten business days to work on the platform and submit their forms and data templates.

Validation submission forms and data templates are [available to download](#) on the Accelerator's website, so that companies can begin to prepare their submission before beginning the validation process.

The Accountability Accelerator handles confidential data from the companies validated with the highest level of integrity and responsibility. The Accountability Accelerator is committed to safeguarding the company's data by using secure platforms and maintaining strict data handling procedures. Refer to the [Website Data and Privacy Policy](#) for more information.

Part 4: Validation

The validation process is a detailed desktop technical review followed by a validation sign-off. Under optimal conditions, the validation process is estimated to take approximately 10 weeks (see the schedule below). However, in practice, the timeline typically extends to 12–16 weeks depending on the complexity of the queries raised and the responsiveness of the company.

Validation Desktop Review Timeline

Date (business days) Indicative	Steps	Responsibility/ Activity	
		Accelerator	Company
Day 1 (Services start date)	Lead validator assigned	<u>Validation and Learning Manager:</u> A Lead Validator is assigned per company and service based on workload, technical expertise, sectoral experience, and potential conflict of interest risks (per the Conflict of Interest Policy).	Not applicable
Day 2 - 10	1st review	<u>Lead Validator:</u>	Not applicable

	and queries	The Lead Validator reviews the company's submission forms, data templates, and supporting evidence on the platform, documenting their assessment and raising queries as needed.	
Day 11 - 14	1st response due	N/A	Companies have four business days to respond to queries via the validation platform. Technical contacts must monitor email notifications to prevent process delays. Queries which require more time to resolve are indicated.
Day 15 - 20	2nd review and queries	<u>Lead Validator:</u> The Lead Validator reviews responses to queries and updates the validation report. Additional queries may be required if the first round of responses was not sufficient.	
Day 21 - 24	2nd response due	Not applicable	Companies have four business days to respond to follow up queries via the validation platform.
Day 25 - 30	Finalize review	<u>Lead Validator:</u> Once all queries have been resolved, the Lead Validator will prepare a comprehensive validation report outlining where the company fulfilled the validation requirements (and passed the validation) or feedback on where it did not fulfill the requirements (and as a result, did not pass the validation).	Not applicable

Validation sign-off

Date (business days)	Steps	Responsibility/ Activity	
		Accelerator	Company
Day 31 - 35	Technical review	<u><i>Validation and Learning Manager:</i></u> Includes a four-day review by the Accelerator's Validation & Learning Manager, a three-day response period for the Lead Validator to address feedback and to finalize the report, and a three-day approval period for the Validation Manager & Learning Manager.	If queries are raised the company will need to respond.
Day 36 - 45	Validation sign-off	<u><i>Integrity Council:</i></u> An oversight review by the Integrity Council to confirm due process has been followed and the outcomes of the validation meet the intent and desired outcome of SBTN methods.	Not applicable
Day 45 - 50	Final decision	The Accountability Accelerator will share the validation report, a decision letter and draft claims (when it is a Pass or Pass with recommendations) with the company. A feedback call between the Accelerator and the company will be offered to review the findings.	Complete feedback survey and participate in feedback call

Companies must meet the requirements set out in the SBTN Technical Guidance to obtain validation and enable claims. There are three possible outcomes:

Table 1: Validation outcomes

Outcome	Description	Further action
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Pass	A company's submission fulfills all minimum validation requirements.	No further action required.
Pass with recommendations	A company's submission fulfills all validation requirements, however, there are some recommendations for future submissions or next steps that the validation team would like to share with the company.	No further action required related to this validation. Companies can consider recommendations for future submissions.
No Pass	A company's submission does not fulfill all validation requirements and resubmission is required.	Companies are invited to address non-conformities and re-submit their work for validation.

Part 5: Publication

Following validation (i.e., a pass or pass with recommendations), companies may publicly announce their achievement, provided they comply with the guidelines below. To make public claims regarding Steps 1 (Assess), 2 (Prioritize), or 3 (Set Targets), companies must first:

- Submit under a valid version of the SBTN Methods. When a new version is released, a six-month grace period applies to the preceding version unless otherwise specified.
- Meet all minimum validation requirements for that method version.
- Obtain validation from the Accountability Accelerator, via Validation Report and Decision Letter.
- Wait for your validated assessment (Step 1 / Step 2) and/or targets (Step 3) to be published on [SBTN's Target Tracker](#).
- Companies have 6 months to publicly announce their achievement from the date they receive the Decision Letter. After this period, companies need to resubmit to ensure alignment with latest versions and validation guidance.

- Companies must follow the [SBTN Claims and Disclosure Guidance](#).

7. Validation service fees

The Accountability Accelerator's Validation Service Offering and Fees can be found here: <https://accountabilityaccelerator.org/validation/>.

Annex 1: SBTN Fossil Fuel Policy

SBTN has adopted the [Fossil Fuel Policy](#) of the [Science Based Targets initiative](#) (SBTi), which means that any company in category one (see below) cannot use the Accountability Accelerator's validation service to set science-based targets at this point.

1. **Category one:** companies that cannot currently use the Accountability Accelerator's validation service for the validation of science-based targets for nature.
 - 1.1. Companies with any level of direct involvement in exploration, extraction, mining and/or production of oil, natural gas, coal or other fossil fuels, irrespective of percentage revenue generated by these activities, i.e. including, but not limited to, integrated oil and gas companies, integrated gas companies, exploration and production pure players, refining and marketing pure players, oil products distributors, gas distributors and retailers and traditional oil and gas service companies (except as noted in category 2 below).
2. **Category two:** companies that can currently use the Accountability Accelerator's validation service for the validation of science-based targets for nature.
 - 2.1. Companies that derive less than 50% of revenue from a) the sale, transmission and distribution of fossil fuels, or b) providing equipment or services to fossil fuel companies (see 1.1).
 - 2.2. Companies with less than 5% revenue from fossil fuel assets (e.g. coal mine, lignite mine, etc.) for extraction activities with commercial purposes.
 - 2.3. Electric utilities that mine coal for their own power generation.
 - 2.4. Subsidiaries of fossil fuel companies (see section 1.1) may use the validation service of the Accountability Accelerator if the subsidiary itself is not considered a fossil fuel company. In this case, these subsidiaries can be classed as 'Business Units', and they must follow SBTN's Business Unit approach completing SBTN's step-by-step process only for the Business Unit.

SBTN will continue to monitor the development of SBTi's fossil fuel policy and revisit this policy in due course.

Annex 2: Validation Resources

Category	Document Name	Description
Validation Submission Forms	Step 1 and 2 Validation Submission Form v2.0	The validation submission forms enable companies to prepare their submissions for Steps 1 to 3 for validation. The questions on this worksheet are identical to those on the Accountability Accelerator's validation platform. Use this document as a workbook to draft your responses.
	Step 3 Freshwater Validation Submission Form v1.1	
	Step 3 Land Validation Submission Form v2.0	
	Step 3 Ocean Validation Submission Form V1.0	
Validation Data Templates	Step 1 and 2 Validation Data Template v2.0	The Validation Data Template must be completed and uploaded to the validation platform, alongside the company's responses to the submission form; data templates are essential to check companies' analysis and requirement conformance.
	Step 3: Freshwater Validation Data Template v1.1	
	Step 3 Land Validation Data	

	Template v2.0	
	Step 3: Ocean Validation Data Template V1.0	
Validation Processes and Procedures	Procedure for the Validation of Science-based Targets for Nature v2.0	This document provides an overview of the Accountability Accelerator's end-to-end validation process that companies must understand before submitting their work for validation.
	Accountability Accelerator Validation Service Offering v1.2	Validation service description and pricing of the Accountability Accelerator.
	Conflict of Interest Policy for the Validation Activities of the Accountability Accelerator v1.1	This policy aims to maintain the integrity and objectivity of the Accountability Accelerator's validation activities by defining, identifying, and managing potential conflicts of interest.
	Code of Conduct Policy for the Validation Activities of the Accountability Accelerator v1.0	This policy outlines the values and behaviours expected of all individuals and entities involved in the Accountability Accelerator's validation of science-based targets for nature.
	SBTN Claims and Disclosure Guidance v1.2	This claims and disclosure guidance document is intended to be used by companies using SBTN methods and passing through the Accountability Accelerator validation process.

	Website Data and Privacy Policy v1.0	This policy describes the types of personal information we may collect from you or that you may provide when you visit the website. It also outlines our practices for collecting, using, maintaining, protecting, and disclosing that information.
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Annex 3: Glossary

Term	Definition
Accelerated pathway	Companies may follow an accelerated pathway, where they complete their value chain assessment, and subsequent steps of the methods, for specific business units, realms (i.e., Land, Freshwater, Ocean), and/or value chain segments (i.e., direct operations or upstream).
Business Unit	A business unit is a subset of a company's organizational boundary with sufficient operational autonomy to set and act on science-based targets, delineated by legal, geographic, and/or operational divisions within the company.
Comprehensive pathway	Companies are recommended to follow a comprehensive pathway when implementing the methods. This involves keeping the entire organizational boundary, all associated procurement, and all pressure categories in scope during their Step 1b value chain assessment. This keeps all activities in scope for the Step 2 prioritization and helps companies set the most relevant targets. This pathway offers greater opportunities to identify synergies and trade-offs in prioritization and to define more effective and efficient approaches for implementing targets using the resources for Step 4: Act.
Implementing company	The implementing company is the entity that implements the methods and submits them for validation. They are eligible to make claims on validated targets and are responsible for tracking progress under the SBTN methods.
Procedure	In the context of this document, a procedure refers to the process of setting and validating science-based targets for nature, as outlined by the Accountability Accelerator and the Science Based Targets Network (SBTN). It details the steps and guidelines companies must follow to have their nature targets assessed and confirmed to be in line with scientific requirements.

Term	Definition
Science-based targets for nature	Science-based targets for nature are measurable, actionable, and time-bound objectives, based on the best available science, that allow companies to align with Earth's limits and societal sustainability goals.
SBTN target setting process	The SBTN target-setting process is divided into five steps; Assess , Prioritize , Set targets , Act and Track .
Submission	In the context of this document, "submission" refers to the step of providing a company's completed forms and data templates to the Accountability Accelerator for validation.
Validation	Validation is the process of assessing whether company targets and their target preparation work follow the requirements set out by SBTN. It provides companies with confirmation that their nature targets are in line with the best available science, a critical step in assuring the credibility, comparability and robustness of the targets.
Validation process	The Accountability Accelerator's step-by-step approach for companies using the validation service. It is composed of five parts: 1) Registration, 2) Submission, 3) Contracting, 4) Validation, 5) Publication.
Validation platform	The platform is enabled by 3rdRisk Cloud Platform and has been developed over the past year with the support of Deloitte Netherlands. The platform is designed to digitize the entire process of data submission, validation, assessment and feedback, providing a robust, secure and user-friendly solution for validators and companies.
Validation service deliverables	The Accountability Accelerator validation services comprise SBTN steps 1: Assess, Step 2: Prioritize, Step 3: Set targets. For each contracted service, the company will receive a decision letter summarizing the overall outcome of the validation and the next steps, a validation report with the details of conformance against all method requirements, and a 60-min feedback call to clarify any comments in the validation report as needed.

DISCLAIMER

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The Accountability Accelerator reserves the right to revise this document according to a set revision schedule or as advisable to reflect the most recent scenarios, regulatory, legal or scientific developments, or changes to nature accounting best practices.

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Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors

90 Church Street, Fl 1, #7082

New York, NY 10008

