SECTION 8

SFI STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT AND INTERPRETATIONS PROCESS

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1. PROCEDURES FOR SFI STANDARD REVISION

1.1 Actors and Responsibilities

The *SFI* Board of Directors is responsible for standard development and revision and will convene the Forum. The *SFI* Board of Directors, the Resources Committee and the External Review Panel (independent oversight role) constitute the Forum and ensure that the revision process includes economic, environmental and social representation equally. Any individual can suggest candidates to the nominations committee. The Board Nominations Committee considers suggestions and invites individuals to be considered by the Board. The Forum follows the procedures outlined in this document for *SFI* Standard Revision.[1]

1.1.1 *SFI* Board

SFI Board members include representatives of environmental, *conservation*, social professional and academic groups, independent professional loggers, small family forest owners, public officials, labor and the forest products industry. The 18-member *SFI* Board of Directors has representatives from the main geographic regions of the U.S. and Canada and includes:

- Six directors from non-profit environmental /*conservation* organizations representing the environmental sector;
- Six directors from community or social interest groups such as universities, labor, independent professional loggers, family forest owners or government agencies representing the social sector; and
- Six directors from the forest, paper and wood products industry or other for-profit forest ownership or management entities representing the economic sector.

SFI Board members are invited by the Board Nominations Committee to participate as directors and must be approved by the full Board. The Board is a voluntary Board.

1.1.2 *SFI* Resources Committee

Each *SFI* Inc. Board member appoints one person from their organization (or other organization they may choose) to serve on the *SFI Inc.* Resources Committee (RC) or the Board member may choose to represent themselves on the Resources Committee. As such, the Resources Committee has the same equal representation of social, environmental and economic interests and geographic scope as the *SFI Inc.* Board.

1.1.3 *SFI* External Review Panel

The *SFI* External Review Panel is an independent panel of experts that provides diverse perspectives and expertise to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) program while contributing to quality assurance and continuous improvement. As part of the Forum, Panel members provide external independent oversight to ensure the standard revision process is objective and credible and that all comments are treated equally and fairly. The volunteer External Review Panel is made up of 15-18 external experts and has representatives from the main geographic regions of the U.S. and Canada where the *SFI Standards* are applied. Its membership maintains a balance of technical skills and organizational experience, with four to six members from each of the following categories – environmental/*conservation* groups, professional/academic groups, and public agencies (local, state, provincial, tribal or federal governments). Panel members come from universities, government agencies, foundations, professional associations, and landowner/*conservation* organizations. The *SFI* External Review Panel selects its own members based on their individual expertise and experience, following an election process set out in its charter. It develops its own agenda to represent the public interest as an outside observer of the *SFI program*. All stakeholders can suggest candidates to the *SFI* External Review Panel for consideration.

1.2 Procedures

The *SFI Standards* setting process shall be on a five year cycle, which is consistent with international protocols for forest certification standard revision cycles. The *SFI Standards* development process is open, transparent and consensus[2] based, and *SFI Inc.* Board decisions regarding final changes to the *SFI Standards* shall be consistent with PEFC ST 1001:2010 for consensus[3] based decision making. The revision process shall begin in the first quarter of the year prior to the year the existing standard expires. The *SFI Standards* setting process shall begin with a public notice to all stakeholders prior to the start of the process. The start of the process will be communicated on the *SFI* website, in newsletters and e-mails to all stakeholders inviting comments. *SFI* shall identify stakeholders relevant to the objectives and scope of the standard-setting work. A stakeholder mapping exercise will be used to identify which interest sectors — both public and private — are relevant (environmental, economic, social) including stakeholders who may not be able to participate by conventional means and what means of communications will best

[1] Section 8 - SFI Standards Development and Interpretations Process is publicly available and can be found on the SFI website.

[2] Consensus as defined by PEFC and ISO: General agreement, characterized by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important part of the concerned interests and by a process that involves seeking to take into account the views of all parties concerned and to reconcile any conflicting arguments. NOTE - ***Consensus*** need not imply unanimity. Item 1.7 in *ISO/IEC Guide 2:1991* and item 3.1 in *PEFC Standard Setting Requirements PEFC ST 1001:2010 dated 2010-11-26. PEFC ST 1001:2010* and *ISO Guide 59:1994, Code of Good Practice for Standardisation* are normative references.

[3] The SFI Inc. Board of Directors has a balance of stakeholders including representatives of environmental, conservation, social professional and academic groups, independent professional loggers, small family forest owners, public officials, labor and the forest products industry. The SFI Inc. Board of Directors voting structure in the SFI Inc. bylaws defines the consensus based approach used for final approval of revisions to the SFI Standard: a minimum of eighty percent of those present, which must include at least two representatives of each Sector [environmental, social, economic] is required to approve any action of the Board.

reach each stakeholder group. This mapping exercise will be done at the beginning of each standard review process and will define who the stakeholders are and what is necessary to ensure all can participate in the process if they so choose.[4] The process shall include an initial 60-day public comment period, a second 60 day public comment period (the inquiry draft) and a final draft review period of at least 45 days. (See Figure 1.) The External Review Panel (ERP) shall independently monitor the entire process including a review of all comments received on draft standards and their disposition.

Broad public and stakeholder involvement is important to the *SFI program.* The *SFI Standards* review process shall be conducted on a national level in Canada and in the United States. Stakeholders — including disadvantaged and key stakeholders and those from the environmental community, forest products industry, private forest landowners, customers, local and federal government agencies, trade associations, landowner associations, academia and all other stakeholders shall be invited to participate in the review process. The start of the standards review process and all subsequent public review periods shall be communicated publicly to all interested stakeholders with an invitation to provide comments on the standards and standard setting process.[5]

The Standards Revision process is intended to be collaborative. While consensus on proposed *SFI Standards* revisions is desirable, there may be issues for which consensus cannot be achieved. In these scenarios the Review Task Groups established by the Resources Committee may forward multiple recommended options to a Steering Committee, also established by the Resources Committee, who will review and prepare recommendations for the Resources Committee's review. Task Group Chairs shall be fair to all viewpoints; however, they are charged with moving the process forward in a timely manner. If consensus is not achieved by the Resources Committee, the issue(s) will be moved forward to the *SFI* Board of Director for final resolution either by consensus or according to voting procedures outlined in the *SFI* Board Directors bylaws (http://www.sfiprogram.org/about-us/sfi-governance/). All recommendations developed by the task groups will be reviewed by the Board and may be accepted as is, modified, or returned to the task groups with instructions for additional consideration and discussion.

The draft of proposed changes to the *SFI Standards* shall be released and published to the *SFI* website during the first quarter of the second review year, followed by an additional 60-day public comment period to allow all stakeholders an opportunity to provide additional comments regarding proposed changes.

This draft will also be presented to and discussed with *SFI Program Participants* and all other stakeholders at regional workshops conducted by the Forum and *SFI Inc.* throughout the U.S. and Canada. All stakeholders who have commented on proposed changes or who have proposed changes to the *SFI Standards* shall use this opportunity to raise any concerns regarding their comments and the manner in which the *SFI Standards* Review Task Group addressed their comments or suggested changes.

Formal complaints regarding the disposition of comments shall be submitted in writing to the External Review Panel Secretariat (http://sfierp.org/resources) for review.[6] The ERP shall acknowledge receipt of all complaints, impartially and objectively review all complaints, and provide feedback to the Forum regarding complaints where additional review and potential action by the Forum is warranted. Once resolved, the decision on the complaint and the complaint process shall be communicated to the complainant.

A final draft of the proposed changes to the *SFI Standards* shall be delivered to the *SFI Inc.* Board of Directors during the third quarter of the final review year. The *SFI Inc.* Board will meet in the third quarter of the final review year at the *SFI* annual conference to discuss the *SFI Standards* draft and begin the 45-day advance notice to review proposed changes to the standards before Board approval can occur. The proposed changes to the *SFI Standards* draft will be presented at the *SFI* annual conference in the third quarter of the final review year.

Upon completion of the *SFI* Board 45-day advance review period, the *SFI Standards* shall be finalized by the Forum and approved by the *SFI* Board and published to the *SFI program* website. Printed copies will be available during the first quarter of the following year. All *Program Participants* have one year to fully implement new and revised *SFI Standards* elements adopted by the Forum.

The Forum shall maintain records regarding all comments and their disposition for review by the independent External Review Panel. All comments will be considered carefully and records of their disposition maintained for a minimum of five years and posted to the *SFI* website. As in any review process, it is not necessary to agree to every suggestion, but it is important that all comments be given consideration.

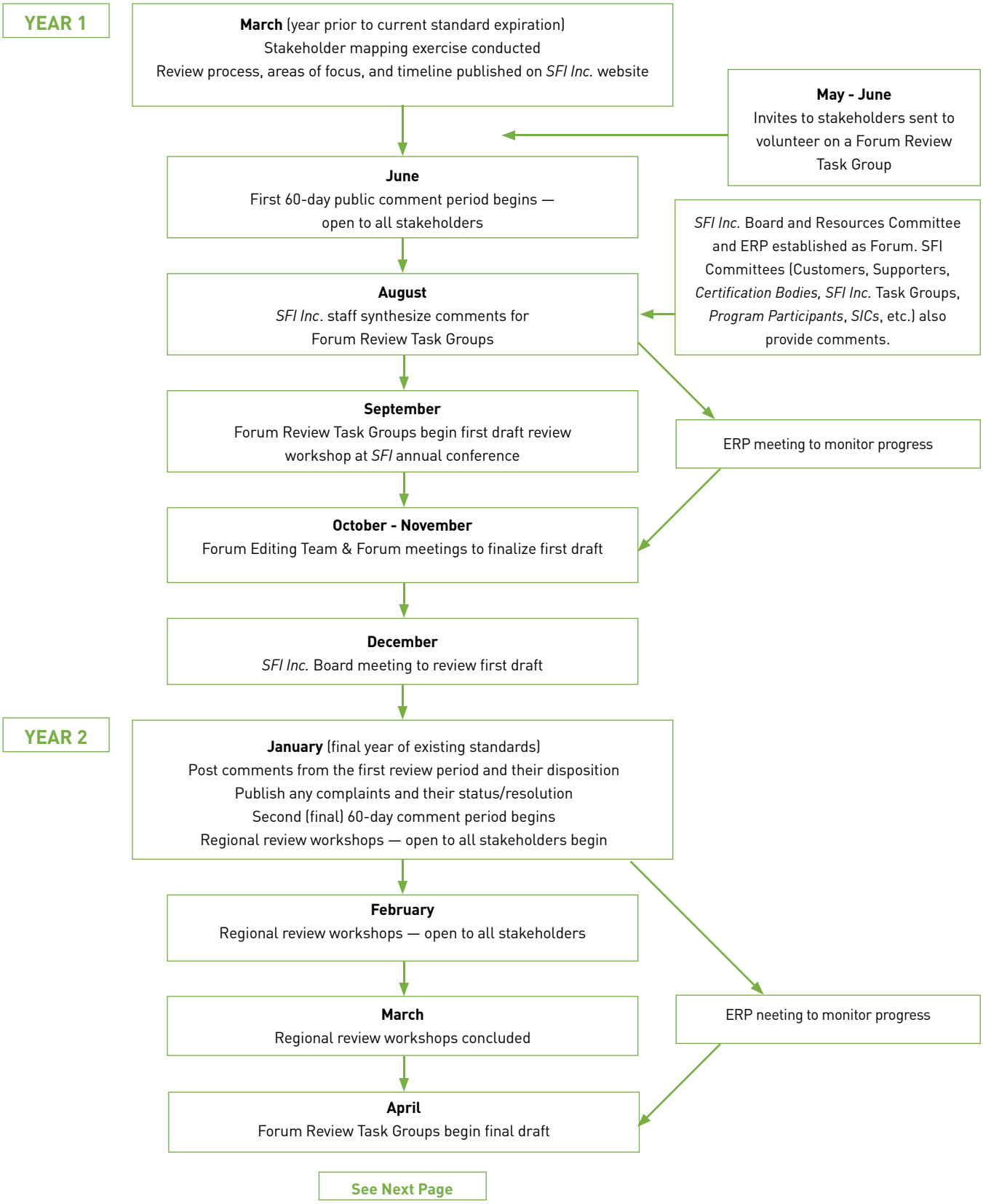
These written procedures shall be publicly available to all interested parties. Additional information on the *SFI Standards* development process, regional workshop reports and stakeholder comments submitted during both public comment periods and how they were addressed shall be publicly available and also maintained for a minimum of five years.

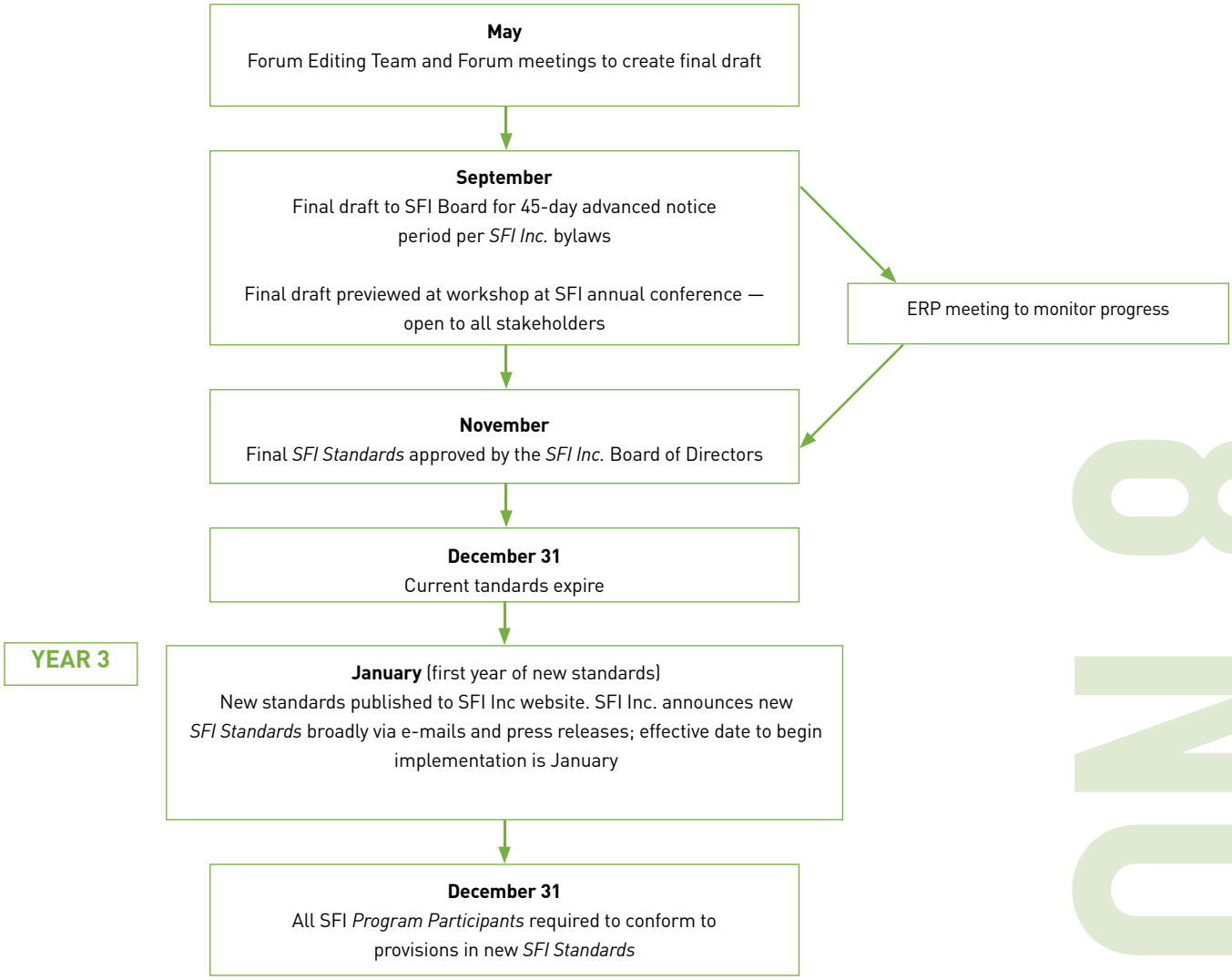
[4] Stakeholders will be identified by doing a stakeholder mapping exercise that includes defining which interest sectors are relevant and why, and for each sector what are likely to be the key issues, who are the key stakeholders including those who may not be able to participate by conventional means, and what means of communication will best reach them.

[5] The public announcement will include where to find the publicly available standards-setting procedures, the objectives, scope and steps of the standards setting process including key dates, information on how stakeholders can participate in the process, information on how to submit comments on the standards and how to be involved in standards revision workshops and working groups.

[6] The ERP process for reviewing complaints will be posted on the ERP website.

Figure 1: Procedure Used For SFI Standards Revision




May
Forum Editing Team and Forum meetings to create final draft
September
Final draft to SFI Board for 45-day advanced notice period per SFI Inc. bylaws
Final draft previewed at workshop at SFI annual conference — open to all stakeholders
ERP meeting to monitor progress
November
Final SFI Standards approved by the SFI Inc. Board of Directors
December 31
Current tandards expire
YEAR 3
January (first year of new standards)
New standards published to SFI Inc website. SFI Inc. announces new SFI Standards broadly via e-mails and press releases; effective date to begin implementation is January
December 31
All SFI Program Participants required to conform to provisions in new SFI Standards

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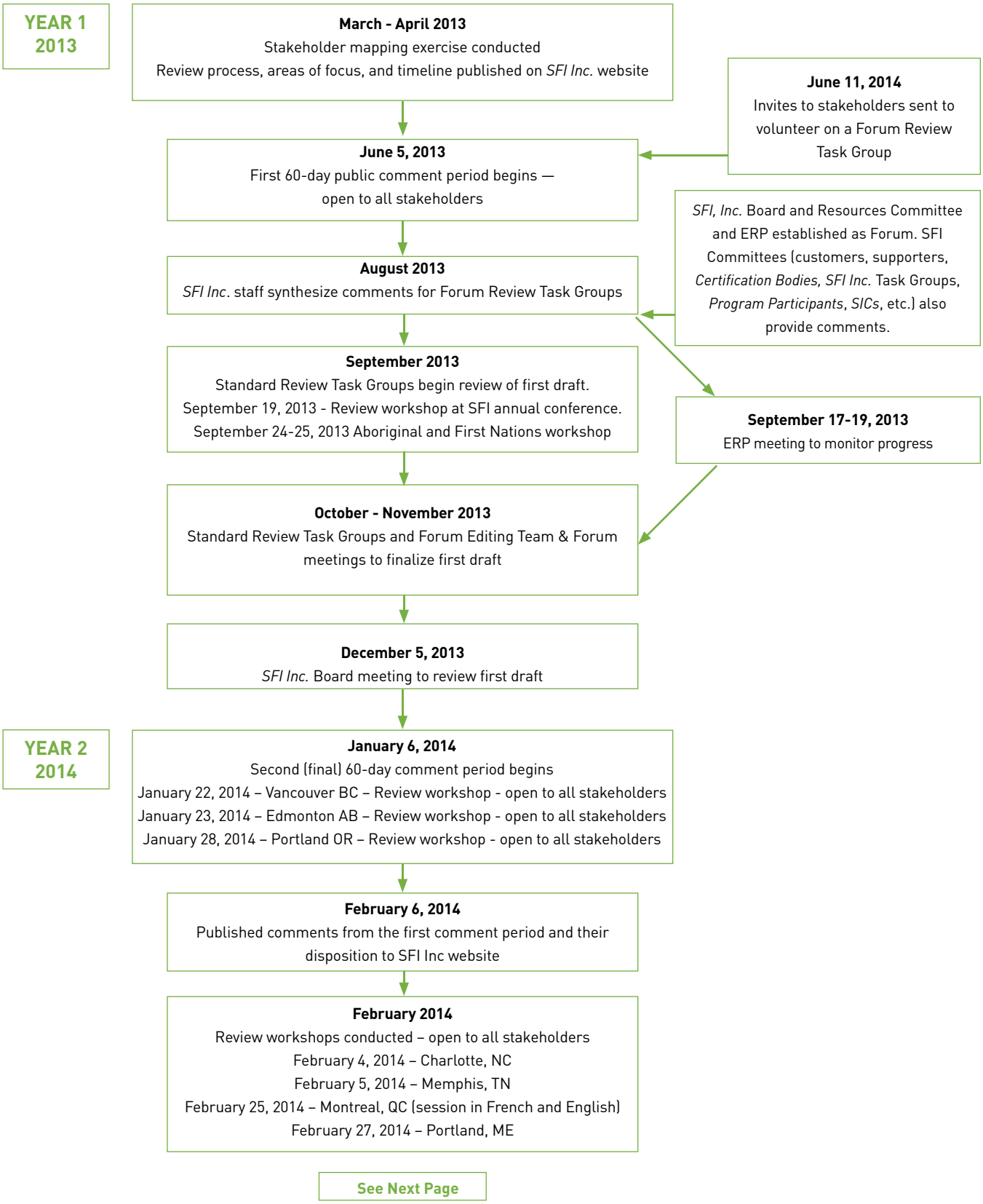
2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SFI 2015-2019 STANDARDS AND RULES

Figure 2: Procedure Used for the 2015-2019 SFI Standards and Rules Development



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March 2014
March 4, 2014 – Minneapolis, MN — review workshop — open to all stakeholders
March 6, 2014 – Webinar — review workshop – open to all stakeholders

March - April 2014
Standard Review Task Groups begin final draft based on comments received from website and workshops

April 23-24, 2014
ERP meeting to monitor progress

April - July 2014
Standard Review Task Group meetings, Steering Committee Meetings and Resources Committee meetings to complete final draft. Includes SFI Board meetings to review progress on April 30, 2014 and June 26, 2014.

September 2, 2014
Final draft of 2015-2019 Standards and Rules to SFI Board two weeks in advance of SFI Board meeting.

September 16, 2014
SFI Board reviews final draft. 45-day advance notice (as per SFI Inc. bylaws) begins on September 22, 2014.

September 18, 2014
Preview of final draft during SFI Annual Conference Workshop. SFI Inc. will make available to *Program Participants* copies to preview.

September 16-18, 2014
ERP meeting at annual conference to monitor progress

November 5, 2014
Final SFI 2015-2019 Standards and Rules approved by the SFI Inc. Board of Directors

December 31, 2014
SFI 2010–2014 *Program* requirements expire

YEAR 3 2015

January 2015
New standards published to SFI Inc website.
SFI Inc. announces new *SFI Standards* broadly via e-mails and press releases; effective date to begin implementation is January 1, 2015.

Published comments from the final comment period and their disposition to SFI Inc website

December 31, 2015
All SFI *Program Participants* required to conform to provisions in new *SFI Standards*

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3. INTERPRETATIONS

From time to time, a formal process may be needed to interpret the *SFI 2015-2019 Standards* and supporting documents. As part of *SFI Inc.'s* commitment to continual improvement of both the *SFI certification* process and the *SFI 2015-2019 Standards*, such concerns shall be submitted promptly to the *SFI Inc.* Interpretations Committee by contacting staff at *SFI Inc.* The *SFI Inc.* Interpretations Committee shall respond within 45 days of receipt.

It is neither the intent nor the responsibility of the *SFI Inc.* Interpretations Committee to resolve disputes arising through certification; nevertheless, the committee will provide opinions and direction to assist parties in answering interpretive questions. Through this process, the *SFI program* shall maintain a record of opinions and concerns available to both *Program Participants* and *certification bodies* to assist with certification planning. *SFI Inc.* shall periodically review this record and, where appropriate, recommend changes for inclusion in the *SFI 2015-2019 Standards* or *SFI* audit procedures.