Approvals Module

User Manual - Console Interface

SONARWORKS WORKFLOW SYSTEM

Version 1.1

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1. Introduction

The Approvals Module is where designated approvers review and process workflow submissions. As an approver, you play a critical role in the business process by evaluating requests and making approval decisions.

Key Functions:

- View workflows pending your approval
- Review submission details and attachments
- Approve valid requests
- Reject requests with reasons
- Escalate complex cases to higher authority
- Put submissions on hold when needed
- Add comments and feedback
- Approve directly from email notifications

NOTE: This module is only visible to users with approver roles or privileges.

[Screenshot: Approvals Module Overview]

Figure: Approvals Module Overview

2. Accessing Approvals

2.1 From the Dashboard

Steps:

Step 1: Log in to the system

Step 2: On the Dashboard, locate the 'Pending Approvals' card

Step 3: Click on the card or the count number

Step 4: You are taken directly to your approval queue

2.2 From Navigation Menu

Steps:

Step 1: Click 'Approvals' in the navigation sidebar

Step 2: The Approvals list page displays your pending items

Step 3: Use filters to narrow down the list if needed

[Screenshot: Navigation to Approvals]

Figure: Navigation to Approvals

2.3 Notification Access

When a workflow requires your approval, you may receive:

- Email notification with workflow details and summary
- System notification (bell icon in header)
- Direct email approval links with Approve/Reject buttons
- Submission title in email subject for easy identification

3. Understanding the Approvals Queue

3.1 Queue Overview

The Approvals Queue lists all workflows waiting for your review. Items are displayed in a table with key information at a glance.

3.2 Queue Columns

Column	Description
Reference No.	Unique identifier for the submission
Title	Submission title (from designated title field)
Workflow	Name of the workflow type
Category	Financial or Non-Financial
Initiator	Person who submitted the workflow
SBU	Strategic Business Unit of the submission
Amount	Monetary amount (for financial workflows)
Submitted Date	When the workflow was submitted
Status	Current status (Pending, Escalated, On Hold)
Actions	Quick action buttons

[Screenshot: Approvals Queue Table]

Figure: Approvals Queue Table

3.3 Filtering the Queue

Use filters to find specific items:

Filter	Options
Workflow Type	Filter by specific workflow name
Category	Financial, Non-Financial
SBU	Filter by business unit
Date Range	Filter by submission date

Amount Range	Filter by amount (financial workflows)
Status	Pending, Escalated, On Hold

3.4 Sorting

Click on column headers to sort:

- Click once for ascending order
- Click again for descending order
- Default sort is by submission date (oldest first)

TIP: Processing older items first ensures timely approvals and avoids automatic escalations.

4. Viewing Approval Details

4.1 Opening a Submission

Steps:

Step 1: In the Approvals queue, click on a row

Step 2: Or click the 'View' button in the Actions column

Step 3: The Approval Detail page opens

4.2 Detail Page Sections

Section	Contents
Header	Reference number, workflow name, title, status badge
Summary	Key information: initiator, date, amount, SBU, category
Form Data	All submitted field values organized by groups/screens
Attachments	Uploaded files (downloadable)
Approval History	Timeline of all approval actions
Action Panel	Approve, Reject, Escalate, Hold buttons

[Screenshot: Approval Detail Page Layout]

Figure: Approval Detail Page Layout

4.3 Multi-Step Form Data

For workflows with multiple screens (wizard-style forms):

- Data is organized by screen/step
- Each screen's fields are grouped together

- Screen titles help navigate complex submissions
- All screens are visible in the detail view

4.4 Reviewing Attachments

Steps:

Step 1: Scroll to the Attachments section

Step 2: Click on a filename to preview (if supported)

Step 3: Click the download icon to save locally

Step 4: Review all attachments before making a decision

> **TIP:** Always review attachments for supporting documentation. Missing or invalid documents may warrant rejection.

5. Approving a Workflow

Approving a workflow indicates that you have reviewed the submission and authorize it to proceed.

5.1 Approval Process

Steps:

Step 1: Open the workflow detail page

Step 2: Review all submitted information thoroughly

Step 3: Review attachments and supporting documents

Step 4: Verify amounts are within your approval authority

Step 5: Click the 'Approve' button

Step 6: Add comments (optional or required based on configuration)

Step 7: Click 'Confirm' to complete the approval

Step 8: Success message confirms the approval

[Screenshot: Approve Button and Dialog]

Figure: Approve Button and Dialog

5.2 Approval Authority Check

For financial workflows, the system checks your approval authority:

Scenario	Result
Amount within your limit	Approval proceeds normally
Amount exceeds your limit	Warning displayed; may auto-escalate
Unlimited approval authority	Can approve any amount
No amount field (non-financial)	No authority check needed

5.3 What Happens After Approval

Scenario	Result
More approval levels required	Workflow moves to next approver
Final approval level	Workflow status changes to 'Approved'
Amount exceeds next approver's limit	Workflow escalates to higher authority
Initiator notification	Email sent to initiator about approval

6. Rejecting a Workflow

Rejection indicates that the workflow does not meet requirements or cannot be approved. Always provide clear reasons for rejection.

6.1 Rejection Process

Steps:

Step 1: Open the workflow detail page

Step 2: Review the submission and identify issues

Step 3: Click the 'Reject' button

Step 4: Enter a rejection reason (usually required)

Step 5: Be specific about what needs to be corrected

Step 6: Click 'Confirm' to complete the rejection

Step 7: Workflow status changes to 'Rejected'

[Screenshot: Reject Button and Comment Dialog]

Figure: Reject Button and Comment Dialog

6.2 Writing Effective Rejection Reasons

Good rejection comments should:

- Clearly state why the workflow is being rejected

- Identify specific fields or information that are problematic
- Explain what changes or corrections are needed
- Be professional and constructive

Example: Good vs Bad Rejection Comments

BAD: "Rejected - incomplete"

GOOD: "Rejected due to missing supporting documentation. Please attach the vendor quotation and purchase justification memo before resubmitting."

6.3 What Happens After Rejection

- Workflow status changes to 'Rejected'
- Initiator is notified via email with rejection reason
- Rejection reason is visible to initiator
- Initiator may submit a new corrected workflow

NOTE: Rejection is final for that submission. The initiator must submit a new workflow with corrections.

7. Escalating a Workflow

Escalation moves a workflow to a higher authority when you cannot make a decision or when special authorization is needed.

7.1 When to Escalate

- Request exceeds your approval authority
- You need guidance from a supervisor
- Special circumstances require higher review
- Policy exception is needed
- You have a conflict of interest

7.2 Manual Escalation Process

Steps:

Step 1: Open the workflow detail page

Step 2: Review the submission

Step 3: Click the 'Escalate' button

Step 4: Select the escalation target (if options provided)

Step 5: Enter escalation reason (required)

Step 6: Click 'Confirm' to complete escalation

Step 7: Workflow is reassigned to higher authority

7.3 Escalation vs Rejection

Action	When to Use	Result
Reject	Workflow has errors or cannot be approved	Workflow ends, initiator notified
Escalate	You cannot/should not decide, need higher authority	Workflow moves to next level

8. Putting on Hold

The Hold action temporarily pauses a workflow when you need more time or additional information before making a decision.

8.1 When to Use Hold

- Waiting for additional documentation
- Need clarification from the initiator
- Pending external verification
- Requires coordination with other parties
- Time-sensitive matters that cannot be decided immediately

8.2 Hold Process

Steps:

Step 1: Open the workflow detail page

Step 2: Click the 'Hold' button

Step 3: Enter a reason for holding (required)

Step 4: Click 'Confirm' to place on hold

Step 5: Workflow status changes to 'On Hold'

8.3 Resuming from Hold

When ready to process a held workflow:

Steps:

Step 1: Open the held workflow

Step 2: Review any updates or additional information

Step 3: Click 'Approve', 'Reject', or 'Escalate' as appropriate

Step 4: The workflow resumes normal processing

> **TIP:** Workflows on hold do not auto-escalate. Monitor held items to avoid excessive delays.

9. Adding Comments

Comments provide context and feedback on approval decisions. They become part of the permanent audit trail.

9.1 When Comments Are Required

Scenario	Comment Required?
Approval (workflow configured to require)	Yes
Approval (workflow allows optional)	Optional but recommended
Rejection	Usually required
Escalation	Always required
Hold	Always required

9.2 Writing Useful Comments

- Be concise but informative
- Reference specific fields or documents
- State your reasoning for the decision
- Use professional language
- Avoid abbreviations that others may not understand

> **Example: Effective Approval Comment**
> *"Approved. Verified quotation is competitive and within budget allocation. Delivery timeline acceptable for project schedule."*

10. Email Approvals

The system sends email notifications with direct approval links, allowing you to approve, reject, or escalate without logging into the system.

10.1 Email Notification Contents

- Subject includes submission title for easy identification
- Workflow reference number and name
- Initiator information
- Submission summary (key field values)
- Amount (for financial workflows)
- SBU and department information
- Direct action buttons: Approve, Reject, Escalate

[Screenshot: Email Approval Notification Example]

Figure: Email Approval Notification Example

10.2 Using Email Approval Links

Steps:

Step 1: Open the email notification

Step 2: Review the submission summary in the email

Step 3: Click 'Approve', 'Reject', or 'Escalate' button

Step 4: A browser page opens showing the Email Approval page

Step 5: Review the submission details if needed

Step 6: Add comments (required for reject/escalate, optional for approve)

Step 7: Click 'Confirm' to complete the action

Step 8: Success message confirms the action was recorded

10.3 Email Approval Page

When you click an email link, you see:

- Workflow and submission information
- Action you selected (Approve/Reject/Escalate)
- Comment field for your feedback
- Confirm button to execute the action
- Cancel button to abort

10.4 Email Approval Authentication

Depending on system configuration:

Mode	Description

No Authentication	Action executed directly from email link
Inline Login	Login dialog appears if not authenticated
Full Authentication	Must log in to system first

10.5 Email Approval Security

- Links are unique and time-limited (configurable expiry)
- Links can only be used once
- Action is logged with 'EMAIL' source indicator
- Token includes approver and workflow validation
- IP address and timestamp are recorded

TIP: If the email link has expired, log into the system directly to process the approval.

WARNING: Do not forward approval emails - links are specific to your account and will not work for others.

11. Auto-Escalation and Amount Limits

For financial workflows, the system can automatically escalate submissions based on amount limits and approver authority.

11.1 Amount Limits

Each approver can have an amount limit defining their maximum approval authority:

Limit Type	Description
Fixed Amount	Can approve up to specified amount (e.g., $10,000)
Unlimited	Can approve any amount
No Limit Set	Treated as unlimited or based on workflow config

11.2 Auto-Escalation Behavior

When 'Skip Unauthorized Approvers' is enabled for a workflow:

1. System checks if current approver has sufficient authority
2. If amount exceeds approver's limit, automatically escalates
3. Escalation continues until finding approver with sufficient authority
4. If no authorized approver found, workflow goes to final approver

Example: Auto-Escalation Example

Workflow: Purchase Request for $25,000

Level 1 Approver: John (Limit: $5,000)
-> Auto-escalated (amount exceeds limit)

Level 2 Approver: Jane (Limit: $20,000)
-> Auto-escalated (amount exceeds limit)

Level 3 Approver: Mike (Limit: Unlimited)
-> Workflow assigned here for approval

Result: John and Jane are skipped automatically.

11.3 Financial vs Non-Financial Workflows

Category	Amount Limits Apply?	Auto-Escalation?
FINANCIAL	Yes	Based on configuration
NON_FINANCIAL	No	No (no amount field)

11.4 Identifying Limited Fields

In financial workflows, certain fields are marked as 'Limited' (amount fields). These fields:

- Are used to determine approval authority
- Trigger auto-escalation when exceeding limits
- Show the submission amount in approval queue
- Are highlighted in workflow configuration

12. Multi-Level Approvals

12.1 Understanding Approval Levels

Workflows can have multiple approval levels, each with one or more approvers:

Level	Typical Role	Description
Level 1	Immediate Supervisor	First review and validation
Level 2	Department Manager	Departmental authorization
Level 3	Finance/Director	Higher authority approval
Level 4+	Executive/Board	Final approval for large requests

12.2 Approval Flow

The approval process moves through levels sequentially:

5. Submission enters at Level 1
6. Level 1 approver reviews and approves

7. If more levels exist, moves to Level 2
8. Process continues until final level approves
9. Workflow marked as fully Approved

12.3 Multiple Approvers at Same Level

Some levels may have multiple approvers. Depending on configuration:

Mode	Requirement
Any One	Any single approver can approve
All Required	All approvers must approve
Sequential	Approvers act in specified order

Example: Multi-Level Approval Example

Workflow: Purchase Request for $5,000

Level 1: Department Manager (You)
- You review and approve
- Workflow moves to Level 2

Level 2: Finance Manager
- Reviews and approves
- Workflow fully approved

Final Status: APPROVED
Initiator notified of approval

13. Approval History

Every workflow maintains a complete history of all approval actions, providing transparency and audit trail.

13.1 Viewing Approval History

Steps:

Step 1: Open the workflow detail page

Step 2: Scroll to the 'Approval History' section

Step 3: View the chronological list of all actions

13.2 History Information

Field	Description
Date/Time	When the action occurred
Action	SUBMITTED, APPROVED, REJECTED, ESCALATED, ON_HOLD, etc.
Actor	Who performed the action
Level	Approval level (1, 2, 3, etc.)
Comments	Any comments provided
Source	SYSTEM (web) or EMAIL (email link)

[Screenshot: Approval History Timeline]

Figure: Approval History Timeline

13.3 Action Types in History

Action	Description
SUBMITTED	Workflow was submitted by initiator
APPROVED	Approved by an approver
REJECTED	Rejected by an approver
ESCALATED	Escalated to higher authority (manual or auto)
ON_HOLD	Placed on hold by approver
RECALLED	Recalled by initiator
CANCELLED	Cancelled by initiator or system
REASSIGNED	Reassigned to different approver
RETURNED	Returned to previous level

14. Best Practices

14.1 Timely Processing

- Check your approval queue daily
- Process items in order of urgency and age
- Don't let items sit too long (may escalate automatically)
- Enable email notifications to stay informed
- Use email approval links for quick actions

14.2 Thorough Review

- Read all form fields carefully
- Review all attachments before deciding
- Verify amounts and calculations
- Check for policy compliance
- Ensure proper authorization chain

- For financial workflows, verify amount is within your authority

14.3 Clear Communication

- Always add meaningful comments
- Be specific about rejection reasons
- Provide guidance for resubmission
- Document any special considerations

14.4 Security Awareness

- Log out when leaving your workstation
- Don't share or forward email approval links
- Report suspicious workflows to administrators
- Verify initiator identity for unusual requests

14.5 Troubleshooting

Issue	Solution
Can't see expected approval	Check filters, verify you're assigned as approver
Approve button disabled	Check if already approved, escalated, or on hold
Email link expired	Log in to system and approve directly
Amount exceeds my limit	Escalate to higher authority or contact admin
Comment box too short	Use clear, concise language; contact admin if limit too restrictive
Workflow auto-escalated	Normal for amounts exceeding your limit