



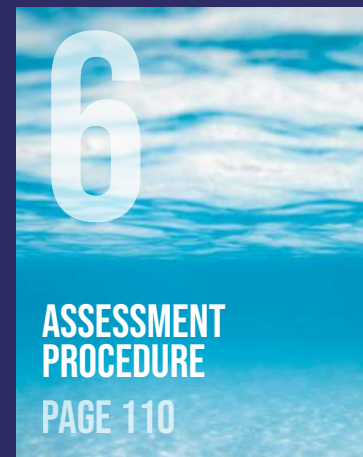
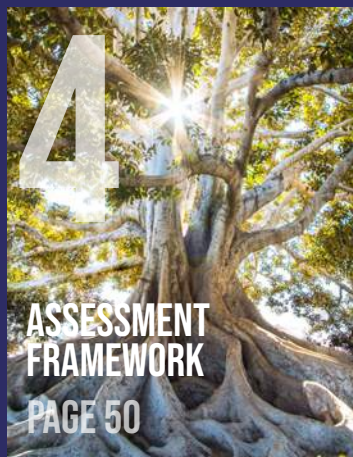
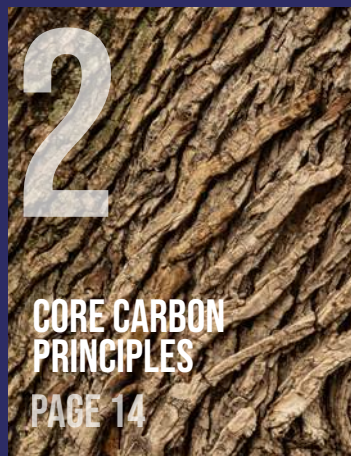
THE INTEGRITY COUNCIL  
FOR THE VOLUNTARY CARBON MARKET

# CORE CARBON PRINCIPLES, ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK AND ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

January 2024, Version 2



# SECTIONS



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Published by The Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market July 2023, Version 2 published January 2024.

## Publishing information

This document replaces the CCPs, Assessment Framework for Programs and other accompanying documents listed below that were published in March 2023, with the Version 2 published in January 2024.

The complete CCP Assessment Framework and Procedure is published in the following parts:

**Part 1: Introduction**

**Part 2: The Core Carbon Principles**

**Part 3: Summary for Decision Makers**

**Part 4: The Assessment Framework**

**Part 5: Definitions**

**Part 6: Assessment Procedure**

This document is published by the Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market and came into effect on 27 July 2023. It was prepared in line with the ICVCM [governance documents](#) through the process described in the [Feedback Statement](#) and was adopted by the Governing Board.

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# FOREWORD FROM ANNETTE NAZARETH

Chair of the Governing Board,  
Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market



As the UN Secretary-General said, “the climate time-bomb is ticking”. The magnitude of the climate crisis requires swift and decisive action. The alarming frequency of extreme weather events

and the devastating impacts on global ecosystems underscore the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at unprecedented pace to ensure a stable and secure future for our society and economy. These realities present us with an urgent call to action: to use all the tools at our disposal to combat the warming of our planet in the short window of time remaining.

The fight against the climate crisis is a common goal that we share across every market, every sector and every region. While public sector efforts are vital, it is abundantly clear that they alone are insufficient to deliver the [\\$125 trillion of investment](#) that the transition to net zero requires, according to analysis by GFANZ. Approximately 70% of the capital required could come from the private sector, with nearly half financed directly by corporates. Some portion of that could be mobilised by the voluntary carbon market (VCM), which provides a means for private companies to channel finance into emissions reductions and sustainable green growth as part of their voluntary commitments to climate action.

“

**In the face of the climate crisis, we collectively need to harness the power of every possible solution. On behalf of the ICVCM, I invite all stakeholders in the voluntary carbon market to join us on this journey. High-integrity carbon markets and credits can provide a critical avenue for leveraging private investment to drive emissions reductions and sustainable practices.**

”

## Why the voluntary carbon market matters

The goal of the Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (Integrity Council or ICVCM) is to ensure that carbon credits are consistently high integrity to enable the voluntary carbon market to meet its potential.

And that potential is vast. When optimally functioning, the VCM has the capacity to mobilize finance to reduce and remove billions of tons of emissions. High-quality carbon credits, adhering to stringent criteria, can provide a credible and effective means for companies to use as a complement – not a substitute – to rapid emissions reductions within their value chains. The VCM can catalyze emissions reductions and removals through investments in low carbon solutions in, for instance, the clean energy, transport and industrial sectors. Additionally, by linking the protection of natural ecosystems to economic value, the VCM offers a powerful tool for leveraging private sector investment in the protection and sustainable management of forests, wetlands and other critical carbon sinks.

Today, carbon credits are already channelling significant funds to projects that reduce and remove emissions, but they are far from meeting their full potential. Currently, the market is fragmented and carbon credits are not of a consistent quality.

## The road to high integrity

The Integrity Council's work seeks to bring consistency to the market, overcome this fragmentation and give buyers confidence that they are funding projects making a genuine impact. The Core Carbon Principles (CCPs), launched in March 2023, set a global benchmark for high-integrity. They are ten fundamental principles for high-quality carbon credits that create real, verifiable climate impact, based on the latest science and best practice.

The CCP label is designed to build trust and unlock investment by making it easy for buyers to identify a high-integrity credit no matter which carbon-crediting program issued it, what kind of credit it is, or where it is generated.

This publication is the Integrity Council's now complete Assessment Framework, with full criteria for assessing carbon-crediting programs and Categories of carbon credits against the CCPs. It is supported by an updated Assessment Procedure and an Assessment Platform which carbon-crediting programs can use to apply for assessment.

## Going further, together

Achieving high integrity in the VCM is an ongoing journey. The urgency of the climate crisis compels us to act now, building on existing practices to ensure progress continues towards our goals. At the same time, we are already planning the next iteration of the CCP Framework, due to be launched in 2026, and signposting to the market in advance the areas of higher ambition that will be included. In addition, we are launching a range of multi-stakeholder working groups to tackle key market issues and areas for innovation to feed into the next version of the CCPs and Assessment Framework.

Through regularly revisiting and revising our standards and processes, we will help operationalise a high-integrity carbon market that will drive real, impactful change. This commitment to progress is rooted in sound regulatory practices and a shared understanding that the challenges we face require ongoing adaptation and innovation.



## Inclusive and transparent

We are enormously grateful to the climate and sustainable development experts, Indigenous Peoples and Local Community members, NGOs and academics, along with voluntary carbon market participants who have provided invaluable inputs and insights to shape our work.

Together they have helped define a robust, principles-based process for assessment and will continue working with us on deeper assessment of some carbon credits, where complex issues demand it, through our multi-stakeholder working groups.

I would also like to thank my colleagues on the ICVCM's Board, Standards Oversight Committee, Expert Panel, and Secretariat for their tireless efforts to bring high integrity to the voluntary carbon market and to express my gratitude to the Distinguished Advisory Group for their ongoing support. The CCPs, Assessment Procedure and Assessment Framework are the comprehensive and thoughtful output of a significant amount of work, discussion and debate.

The assessments under the CCPs mark the start of a new chapter in the evolving voluntary carbon market, with the introduction of high-integrity CCP-labeled credits expected to be available in the market later this year and beyond.

Launching the ICVCMs assessment process is just one part of the wider work underway to ensure investments in the voluntary carbon market drive positive impacts. The new claims code published by our colleagues at the Voluntary Carbon Market Initiative (VCMI) provides a rulebook for companies on the credible use of high-integrity carbon credits on the pathway to net zero. Together with VCMI we endeavour to create end-to-end integrity in the supply chain of carbon credits, how they trade, and how they are used to build confidence in the voluntary carbon market.

In the face of the climate crisis, we collectively need to harness the power of every possible solution. On behalf of the ICVCM, I invite all stakeholders in the voluntary carbon market to join us on this journey. High-integrity carbon markets and credits can provide a critical avenue for leveraging private investment to drive emissions reductions and sustainable practices. By ensuring that the voluntary carbon market operates with the highest levels of integrity and transparency, we can ensure it plays a pivotal role in achieving our global climate goals while channelling significant funds from the Global North to finance urgently needed climate action and sustainable development in the Global South.

Let this mark the beginning of a more accountable and action-oriented era, where the voluntary carbon market fulfils its potential role in the fight against climate change.





THE INTEGRITY COUNCIL  
FOR THE VOLUNTARY CARBON MARKET

SECTION

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

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# INTRODUCTION

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**The Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (Integrity Council or ICVCM) is an independent governance body for the voluntary carbon market (VCM). Its purpose is to ensure that the VCM accelerates progress toward the objective of combatting climate change.**

To achieve this, the Integrity Council has established a global threshold standard for carbon credit quality, drawing on the best science and expertise available, with a view to ensuring that high-quality carbon credits efficiently mobilise finance towards urgent climate action.

The Core Carbon Principle (CCP) label will provide a credible, rigorous, and readily accessible means of identifying high-quality carbon credits. The Integrity Council's work on the high-integrity supply of carbon credits complements that of the Voluntary Carbon Markets Integrity Initiative ([VCMII](#)) which, in June 2023, published its Claims Code of Practice. The VCMII Claims Code addresses integrity on the demand side by informing companies and other non-state actors on the voluntary use of carbon credits as part of their climate commitments and on the associated claims they can make regarding the use of those credits. It provides clarity, transparency and consistency on what these commitments and claims mean and will help build confidence in VCM.

The threshold standard set by the Integrity Council's CCPs will be implemented through the Assessment Framework and the Assessment Procedure. This publication forms the complete process and operational requirements that the Integrity Council will follow to assess carbon-crediting programs and Categories of carbon credits. It replaces the components published in March 2023.



# DOCUMENT OVERVIEW



**Section Two** of this document sets out the **CCPs**. These are the ten principles that need to be considered to identify whether carbon credits create real, additional and verifiable climate impact with high environmental and social integrity, based on the latest science and evolving best practice.

**Section Three** is the **Summary for Decision Makers**. This summary provides the context and supporting rationale for the Assessment Framework, explaining how the CCPs are met through the application of criteria and requirements in the Assessment Framework.

**Section Four** is the **Assessment Framework**. The CCPs are operationalised through the Assessment Framework, which details the criteria and requirements to be met for the CCPs at the Program-level and Category-level.

**Section Five** contains **Definitions** applicable to the Core Carbon Principles, the Assessment Framework and the Assessment Procedure.

**Section Six** is the **Assessment Procedure**, the process through which carbon-crediting programs apply to become CCP-Eligible and carbon credits may become CCP-Approved.

# ASSESSMENT PROCESS

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**With the publication of this document, carbon-crediting programs can now apply to the Integrity Council for assessment against the CCPs. Applications will be assessed in accordance with the process set out in the Assessment Procedure, with the accompanying Terms and Conditions specifying how the relationship between the ICVCM and eligible carbon-crediting programs will be managed.**

All Categories of carbon credits (Categories) will be provisionally grouped for assessment, where some will undergo an internal assessment process for approval, while other Categories will undergo assessment by a multi-stakeholder working group. The multi-stakeholder working groups will be organised by sectoral expertise and Categories will be prioritised for assessment depending on their current and trending market share. The multi-stakeholder working groups will provide advice to the Integrity Council on Category assessments. Following the multistakeholder assessment, the Category may be approved, not approved, or awarded conditional approval, stipulating matters that an eligible carbon-crediting program needs to remediate for the Category to be approved.

The Integrity Council will engage in a process of continual improvement of the CCPs and their related criteria and requirements in the Assessment Framework to drive greater ambition in the VCM. It expects to publish the next iteration of the CCPs in 2025, aimed at implementation starting in 2026. This will be informed by a series of thematic multi-stakeholder work programs as set out in Section C of the Summary for Decision Makers.

The Integrity Council continues to encourage feedback from the public and all stakeholders, which can be submitted to [info@icvcm.org](mailto:info@icvcm.org) with the word “feedback” included in the subject line of the email. All feedback will be considered, and the Integrity Council may update these documents or adopt further guidance or procedures from time to time.





THE INTEGRITY COUNCIL  
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SECTION

# CORE CARBON PRINCIPLES

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# CORE CARBON PRINCIPLES (CCPs)

## Definition of Core Carbon Principles

This document defines the Core Carbon Principles (CCPs) for identifying high-quality carbon credits. The CCPs form the basis of the Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (Integrity Council or ICVCM)'s Assessment Framework, which elaborates criteria to evaluate whether carbon credits and carbon-crediting programs reach its threshold for quality and integrity.

The CCPs and Assessment Framework define a threshold standard focused on the integrity of the VCM. The CCPs and the Assessment Framework have been developed through an open dialogue with carbon-crediting programs and other stakeholders and draw from multiple sources, including: the Taskforce on Scaling Voluntary Carbon Markets (TSVCM), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's Paris Agreement and Cancun Safeguards, Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and the work of Calyx Global and the Carbon Credit Quality Initiative.

The CCPs represent a full set of interlinked principles and are to be considered in their entirety. They inform and guide the assessment of carbon-crediting programs and different categories of carbon credits. The CCPs also enable the tagging of CCP-Approved carbon credits with additional attributes that attest to other verifiable features associated with the mitigation activity.

# THE CORE CARBON PRINCIPLES

## A. GOVERNANCE

### Effective governance

The carbon-crediting program shall have effective program governance to ensure transparency, accountability, continuous improvement and the overall quality of carbon credits.

### Tracking

The carbon-crediting program shall operate or make use of a registry to uniquely identify, record and track mitigation activities and carbon credits issued to ensure credits can be identified securely and unambiguously.

### Transparency

The carbon-crediting program shall provide comprehensive and transparent information on all credited mitigation activities. The information shall be publicly available in electronic format and shall be accessible to non-specialised audiences, to enable scrutiny of mitigation activities.

### Robust independent third-party validation and verification

The carbon-crediting program shall have program-level requirements for robust independent third-party validation and verification of mitigation activities.



## B. EMISSIONS IMPACT

### **Additionality**

The greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions or removals from the mitigation activity shall be additional, i.e., they would not have occurred in the absence of the incentive created by carbon credit revenues.<sup>1</sup>

### **Permanence**

The GHG emission reductions or removals from the mitigation activity shall be permanent or, where there is a risk of reversal, there shall be measures in place to address those risks and compensate for reversals.

### **Robust quantification of emission reductions and removals**

The GHG emission reductions or removals from the mitigation activity shall be robustly quantified, based on conservative approaches, completeness and sound scientific methods.

### **No double counting**

The GHG emission reductions or removals from the mitigation activity shall not be double counted, i.e., they shall only be counted once towards achieving mitigation targets or goals. Double counting covers double issuance, double claiming, and double use.

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<sup>1</sup> There are multiple approaches for additionality that, depending on the type of mitigation activity, can provide strong assurances without the need for an investment analysis.

## C. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### **Sustainable development benefits and safeguards**

The carbon-crediting program shall have clear guidance, tools and compliance procedures to ensure mitigation activities conform with or go beyond widely established industry best practices on social and environmental safeguards while delivering positive sustainable development impacts.

### **Contribution to net zero transition**

The mitigation activity shall avoid locking-in levels of GHG emissions, technologies or carbon-intensive practices that are incompatible with the objective of achieving net zero GHG emissions by mid-century.





THE INTEGRITY COUNCIL  
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SECTION

# SUMMARY FOR DECISION MAKERS

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# SUMMARY FOR DECISION MAKERS JULY 2023

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## Introduction

This Summary for Decision Makers (SDM) presents an overview of the Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (Integrity Council or ICVCM)'s Core Carbon Principles (CCPs) and their implementation through the Assessment Framework. The SDM is intended to provide Decision Makers and stakeholders with a comprehensive understanding of the approach adopted by the ICVCM. It should be read in conjunction with the CCPs, the Assessment Framework, Definitions and the Assessment Procedure.

The ICVCM seeks to help the voluntary carbon market (VCM) accelerate climate action by enabling participants in the market to more easily identify high-quality carbon credits. The VCM currently includes carbon-crediting programs (also known as carbon standards) that set rules for mitigation activities that achieve emissions reductions or removals. Those mitigation activities are developed and operated by mitigation activity proponents and their design is validated by accredited third-party Validation and Verification Bodies (VVBs). Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission reductions or removals achieved by those mitigation activities are then verified by VVBs and issued by carbon-crediting programs in their registries as carbon credits. Each carbon credit should represent one tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions reduction or emissions removal. These carbon credits may then be acquired and used by entities, including to help manage their environmental commitments.

All carbon-crediting programs have adopted requirements, procedures, and policies to address governance, decision making, administrative, and operational considerations for developing and implementing mitigation activities known as program documents. However, the quality, coverage, and adherence to the stipulations contained within those documents varies. The aim of the Integrity Council's CCPs and Assessment Framework is to help VCM participants identify high-quality carbon credits and to establish and progressively raise a threshold for quality and integrity across the VCM that builds confidence and comparability.

This publication replaces the CCPs, Assessment Framework and other accompanying documents that were published in March 2023. It comprises the complete Assessment Framework, including Category-level requirements that have been added to the already published Program-level requirements, and this publication marks the start of the processes defined within the Assessment Procedure. The ICVCM documents (in particular the Assessment Framework and the Assessment Procedure) may be subject to updating and revision from time to time, including to avoid unintended consequences as the Integrity Council seeks to carry out its mission through a principles-based approach.

The Assessment Framework enables assessment by the Integrity Council of carbon-crediting programs against its criteria and requirements. As carbon-crediting programs update their rules in line with market best practice, these changes will help to raise the collective ambition of standards in the market. Carbon-crediting programs must apply for assessment through the Integrity Council's Assessment Platform. Carbon-crediting programs that are assessed by the Integrity Council to meet the requirements will be classified as CCP-Eligible.

The Category-level criteria and requirements address methodological and related rules of a carbon-crediting program to determine whether carbon credits issued under such rules have met the requirements of the CCPs. Where the rules meet the CCP requirements and criteria, carbon credits from CCP-Eligible programs will qualify for labelling as CCP-Approved. This two-level approach means that only CCP-Eligible programs will be able to label qualifying carbon credits as CCP-Approved. When applying for assessment by the Integrity Council, carbon-crediting programs can choose to exclude certain methodologies. Excluded methodologies will not be assessed by the Integrity Council and so carbon credits that have been issued using such methodologies will not be CCP-Approved. The Integrity Council will publish and maintain a list of any methodologies excluded by carbon-crediting programs.

The Assessment Procedure establishes a collaborative process under which the ICVCM's multi-stakeholder working groups will consider Categories of carbon credits (Categories) and their assessment against the ICVCM's criteria and requirements under the Assessment Framework.

The Categories Working Group (CWG) will undertake an initial analysis, using the Category-level criteria and requirements, relevant literature and public documentation. The CWG's initial analysis will form the basis for the ICVCM Governing Board to determine which Categories of carbon credit are eligible for the internal assessment process, require assessment through a multi-stakeholder process, or are not likely to meet ICVCM requirements.

For Categories requiring multi-stakeholder assessment, the Multi-Stakeholder Working Groups (MSWG) will evaluate and advise on Categories that meet the CCP requirements. The MSWG will provide input to the Integrity Council on Categories meeting its requirements and those that are unlikely to do so. As the MSWG meet and conclude their analysis, the ICVCM will prepare draft Evaluation Reports for the Governing Board. The Board will consider the draft Reports, Recommendations and other relevant information and then make decisions on the Categories for which the specific MSWG is tasked.

The ICVCM will consider the existing inventory of carbon credits issued by CCP-Eligible programs and assess which active Categories meet the requirements of the CCPs. Where a program elects to exclude certain methodologies from ICVCM assessment, the ICVCM will not assess those methodologies and will publish the exclusion on the ICVCM website. Decisions on approval of Categories will also apply to future issuances of carbon credits that fall into Categories approved by the ICVCM, making it apparent prior to issuance whether they are CCP-Approved.



In the Category of avoiding unplanned deforestation (AUD), the ICVCM is aware that a carbon-crediting program with a large number of registered AUD mitigation activities will shortly issue a new consolidated methodology for AUD. The carbon-crediting program should have rules requiring mandatory use of and transition to that consolidated methodology, including that registered project activities using existing methodologies for AUD under that program will be required to transition. In order to ensure an orderly and consistent ICVCM assessment process for this Category, the ICVCM will only begin assessing methodologies in the Category of AUD when that consolidated methodology is published in final form.

Continuous improvement is a fundamental principle of the Integrity Council. Working with a broad range of stakeholders and market participants, the Integrity Council will establish work programs that help to share expert and stakeholder experience, including that of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPs & LCs), and strengthen the collective understanding of emerging best practice and innovation for the key issues that need to be addressed in the coming years.

The areas covered by the work programs are set out below in section E Continuous Improvement of the Assessment Framework. The work programs will include relevant experts and stakeholder representatives and will provide opportunities for wider input. The work programs will aim to identify how the market needs to evolve, offer key considerations for that evolution, and, where possible, make recommendations for future iterations of the Assessment Framework or other developments to ensure a scalable high-integrity market.

Carbon-crediting programs, experts, project developers, policymakers, IPs & LCs, and other stakeholders will help to shape the future iterations of the ICVCM and the concept of best practice on these issues. IPs & LCs play a particularly important role in raising the integrity of VCM as they manage and protect approximately 40% of the planet's ecologically intact landscapes and act as stewards of many key carbon sinks. A high-integrity VCM would be strengthened by the traditional knowledge of IPs & LCs and would provide them with resources to further develop nature-based climate solutions. But, to deliver, it is critical that IPs & LCs have agency to continue managing vital ecosystem services at the local level and are included in relevant decisions around climate and nature-based solutions. For these reasons, the ICVCM will give particular consideration to IPs & LCs and will continue to consult with them, and in light of comments received, will seek to ensure they are consulted on activities that affect them through free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) processes, that IP & LC rights, interests and values are safeguarded, and they have appropriate support for their full and effective participation in the high-quality carbon markets that the ICVCM seeks to develop.

The following sections correspond with the CCPs and the Assessment Framework and provide context, overview and summary rationale for each.

# A. GOVERNANCE

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Governance includes four of the CCPs: Effective Governance, Tracking, Transparency, and Robust Independent Third-party Validation and Verification. Taken together, these CCPs identify strong governance provisions at the Program-level. These provisions are critical to ensuring the overall quality of carbon credits issued by the carbon-crediting programs and maintaining and strengthening an environment of trust that supports the long-term integrity and growth of the VCM.

**Effective governance** is important for integrity because it significantly improves transparency and accountability and can help to grow participation in the VCM. It may also increase the responsiveness and engagement of the public and key stakeholders by providing increased relevance, reliability, comparability of reporting and improved insight into program performance.

**Tracking** is accomplished through the use of registries. A registry is a secure central database for recording comprehensive information about carbon credits that the program issues, including the mitigation activity in which they were generated, their ownership, and their transaction history. A registry uniquely identifies each carbon credit, the associated mitigation activity, and any other associated attributes. Registries also provide comprehensive information about mitigation activity proponents and VCM participants.

**Transparency** is achieved through the public availability of information. Availability of information enables stakeholders to understand how the GHG emission reductions or removals are calculated, including how additionality is assessed, GHG emissions reductions or removals are quantified, and the environmental and social impacts of the mitigation activity.

**Robust independent third-party validation and verification** through external third-party auditing is a key tool for accuracy, consistency, transparency, and integrity in the VCM. Auditing by third-party validation and verification bodies (VVBs) provides independent confirmation that the mitigation activity achieves the claimed GHG emission reductions or removals. Requirements include rules that specify when and how validation of the design of a mitigation activity and verification of GHG emission reductions and removals by third-party auditors, plus verification of other aspects, are to occur and be implemented. The work of VVBs is essential to the environmental integrity of carbon-crediting and to ensuring confidence in the VCM.

The processes listed above are all important for ensuring effective program operation. Many of those have also been addressed in the requirements by the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA), developed and adopted by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). To minimise the burden on carbon-crediting programs operating in the VCM, the ICVCM has determined that programs already eligible under CORSIA are also eligible under this version of the Assessment Framework provided that they meet some additional requirements as set out in the Assessment Framework.

Carbon-crediting programs will be required to meet all requirements in the Assessment Framework. Carbon-crediting programs that are CORSIA-eligible must provide confirmation of their eligibility when applying for assessment. Once CORSIA eligibility is established these programs will not be required to demonstrate that they meet CORSIA requirements related to effective governance, tracking, transparency and robust validation and verification. CORSIA-eligible programs will have to provide relevant information for the additional requirements detailed in the Assessment Framework and include it in the [ICVCM Assessment Platform](#) through which applicant carbon-crediting programs and Categories are assessed.

Carbon-crediting programs that have not yet applied for CORSIA eligibility will be required to demonstrate to the Integrity Council that they meet all the requirements of CORSIA through their application to the ICVCM, as set out in the ICVCM Assessment Platform. They will also have to demonstrate that they meet the additional requirements detailed in the Assessment Framework and included in the [ICVCM Assessment Platform](#).

Changes in CORSIA requirements and/or changes in relation to the carbon-crediting programs and carbon credits listed as eligible in the CORSIA-Eligible Emission Units will be addressed, to the extent required and at the discretion of the ICVCM, through the Assessment Procedure.

## 1 Effective Governance



**The carbon-crediting program shall have effective program governance to ensure transparency, accountability, continuous improvement and the overall quality of carbon credits.**



Effective governance is a core feature of well-operated carbon-crediting programs. Effective governance requirements on public availability of documents and information enables transparent decision-making, effective and inclusive participation, and feedback to support continuous improvement.

In addition to meeting governance requirements set out in CORSIA, the carbon-crediting program must demonstrate effective governance through a transparent and robust corporate governance framework for their organisations, including reporting and disclosure, and risk management policies and controls such as anti-bribery and anti-corruption. The Integrity Council's requirements on effective governance ensure processes are in place that support an organisation's long-term resilience and provide a framework of checks and balances to guide the organisation's governing body and staff.

The criteria under this CCP requires carbon-crediting programs to have an independent board, publish annual reports, have robust processes relating to corporate social and environmental responsibility, and have effective anti-money laundering rules.

Effective governance requires that program documents relevant to decision-making are publicly available, subject to compelling confidentiality constraints, including data protection and privacy. Program documents include standards, methodologies, procedures, tools, guidelines, supplementary information, and project documentation.

Carbon-crediting programs must also have processes in place that provide for public engagement through local and global stakeholder consultation and for independently addressing grievances.

In the Assessment Framework, ICVCM makes use of CORSIA rules in relation to effective governance and has additional requirements that ensure CCP-Eligible programs have comprehensively effective governance.

*See Criteria 1.1 to 1.2 for Effective Governance in the Assessment Framework.*



## 2 Tracking



**The carbon-crediting program shall operate or make use of a registry to uniquely identify, record and track mitigation activities and carbon credits issued to ensure credits can be identified securely and unambiguously.**



A registry is an information technology system used by a carbon-crediting program to identify mitigation activities and track each carbon credit from its issuance through subsequent transactions to its retirement or cancellation. Registries, therefore, play a critical role in ensuring high integrity by providing a transparent and secure platform to track and verify carbon credits. The criterion and requirements ensure that a carbon-crediting program has processes and procedures in place to provide clarity with respect to the issuance and retirement of carbon credits. Specifically, the carbon-crediting program's registry should identify by whom and on whose behalf a carbon credit was retired, identify the purpose of retirement, have procedures to address erroneous issuance of carbon credits and procedures and requirements to ensure no more than one carbon credit is issued per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent.

In the Assessment Framework, the ICVCM combines CORSIA rules in relation to registries with additional requirements that help ensure that CCP-Eligible carbon-crediting programs operate registries of the highest standards.

*See Criterion 2.1 for Tracking in the Assessment Framework.*

### 3 Transparency



**The carbon-crediting program shall provide comprehensive and transparent information on all credited mitigation activities. The information shall be publicly available in electronic format and shall be accessible to non-specialised audiences, to enable scrutiny of mitigation activities.**



The design and implementation of a mitigation activity is an intensive process requiring significant qualitative and quantitative documentation. Making this information publicly available through a registry is key to promoting transparency.

The Assessment Framework's criterion on Transparency requires public disclosure of all relevant project documentation. To meet the requirements under this criterion, the carbon-crediting program must ensure the registry contains detailed information about each mitigation activity and is searchable by the general public. By making this information publicly available, interested stakeholders will be able to understand how the GHG emission reductions or removals are calculated, including how additionality is assessed, GHG emissions reductions or removals are quantified, and the environmental and social impacts of the mitigation activity.

Information about the activity should be publicly available electronically, subject to compelling confidentiality constraints. It is also important that information requests from stakeholders are appropriately addressed, and that stakeholders are provided with and directed to that information on the carbon-crediting program's website.

In the Assessment Framework, the ICVCM combines CORSIA rules concerning transparency with additional requirements that ensure CCP-Eligible programs operate with full transparency about mitigation activities.

*See Criterion 3.1 for Transparency in the Assessment Framework.*

## 4 Robust Independent Third-party Validation and Verification

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**The carbon-crediting program shall have program-level requirements for robust independent third-party validation and verification of mitigation activities.**

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Third-party auditing of the design of mitigation activities and monitoring of GHG emission reductions or removals is critical to ensuring that each mitigation activity meets all relevant program rules specified in the program documents.

To meet the criterion and requirements under Robust Independent Third-party Validation and Verification, the carbon-crediting program's documents must set out the rules for how VVBs become and remain accredited in relation to the carbon-crediting program, review the performance of VVBs, and set standards and develop procedures that guide VVBs in their work. These rules include provisions on VVB organisational structure and management, organisational resources, validation and verification processes, information requirements, penalties for rule breaches and rules ensuring the impartiality of the VVB and the avoidance of conflicts of interest.

In the Assessment Framework, the ICVCM combines CORSIA rules on third-party validation and verification with additional requirements that ensure CCP-Eligible programs are applying validation and verification best practices.

*See Criterion 4.1 for Robust Validation and Verification in the Assessment Framework.*

# B. EMISSIONS IMPACT

## 5 Additionality



**The greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions or removals from the mitigation activity shall be additional, i.e., they would not have occurred in the absence of the incentive created by carbon credit revenues.<sup>1</sup>**



Additionality plays a central role in ensuring that the VCM drives additional climate action and is fundamental to the quality and environmental integrity of a carbon credit. Assessing additionality helps to determine that carbon credits are issued only to mitigation activities that would not have taken place without the incentives associated with the carbon credit.

Carbon-crediting programs require the demonstration of additionality for specific mitigation activities in a variety of ways at the project level, however, the ICVCM does not undertake assessments at the individual project level. Instead, it assesses the approaches taken by the carbon-crediting program at the methodological level.

As needed, carbon-crediting programs restrict or change the scope<sup>2</sup> of their program or the eligibility of certain types of mitigation activities. The Integrity Council, including through the CWG and MSWG, will take any such decisions into consideration, alongside other information, when assessing the Category for CCP-approval. Relevant restrictions and/or changes in scope across various carbon-crediting programs over the years that relate to certain Categories include but are not limited to:

<sup>1</sup> There are multiple approaches for additionality that, depending on the type of mitigation activity, can provide strong assurances without the need for an investment analysis.

<sup>2</sup> Scope in this context means the applicability of the relevant methodology for use in types of countries, per the [World Bank classification](#)



- Activities that reduce hydrofluorocarbon-23 (HFC23) emissions;
- Grid-connected electricity generation using hydroelectric power plants/units;
- Grid-connected electricity generation using wind, geothermal, or solar power plants/units;
- Utilisation of recovered waste heat for, *inter alia*, combined cycle electricity generation and the provision of heat for residential, commercial or industrial use;
- Generation of electricity and/or thermal energy using biomass (this does not include efficiency improvements in thermal applications, e.g., cookstoves);
- Generation of electricity and/or thermal energy using fossil fuels, including activities that involve switching from higher to lower carbon content fuel;
- Replacement of electric lighting with more energy-efficient options;
- Installation and/or replacement of electricity transmission lines and/or energy efficient transformers.

In addition to meeting other requirements in the Assessment Framework, carbon-crediting programs must meet the CORSIA additionality requirements. Carbon-crediting programs must have program documents which demonstrate that mitigation activities meet existing host country legal requirements, such that the emissions reductions or removals exceed those required due to relevant and enforced legal requirements.

In addition to the above approaches for demonstrating additionality, there are a number of recognised types of analysis for additionality that are required to be present in certain combinations. These approaches may be combined in the following ways:

- Investment analysis and market penetration/common practice (optionally combined with further approaches); or
- Barrier analysis and market penetration/common practice, (optionally combined with further approaches); or
- Standardised approaches (no combination required).

Carbon-crediting programs using alternative approaches that are equivalent in terms of stringency may present these to the ICVCM for consideration in the assessment process.

In the event that a carbon-crediting program's documents do not meet the additionality requirements, but the relevant Category is considered by the ICVCM including through the CWG and/or MSWG to meet additionality requirements based on other information (including but not limited to relevant literature), the relevant Category may still be approved as CCP-Approved in accordance with section 3 of the Assessment Procedure.

The ICVCM, like CORSIA, has given special consideration to determining additionality in respect of Jurisdictional REDD+ (JREDD+) activities, given their unique characteristics relative to project-based approaches.

The ICVCM recognises the important role of prior consideration of carbon credits in ensuring the additionality of credited mitigation activities and that current market practice addresses this issue in a variety of ways. In the next iteration of the Assessment Framework the ICVCM will consider the effectiveness of approaches to determine prior consideration including criteria that limit the allowed time period based on an assessment of the reasonable amount of time to produce documentation and/or a reasonable maximum amount of elapsed time between activity start date and registration, including for JREDD+ activities. The ICVCM may also consider requiring reassessment of additionality at renewal of the crediting period for certain Categories in the next iteration of the Assessment Framework.

*See Criteria 8.1 to 8.10 for Additionality in the Assessment Framework.*

## 6 Permanence



**The GHG emission reductions or removals from the mitigation activity shall be permanent or, where there is a risk of reversal, there shall be measures in place to address those risks and compensate for reversals.**



Permanent mitigation of GHG emissions is essential for maintaining net anthropogenic emissions in line with the long-term temperature goals of the Paris Agreement. However, many activities that enhance or preserve carbon stored in geologic or land-based reservoirs experience some degree of reversal risk.

These risks can be human-induced (e.g., an afforestation project that is converted to cropland) or nature-induced (e.g., an afforestation project destroyed by a wildfire). Different activities have varying degrees of reversal risk. When the carbon stored in a reservoir by a mitigation activity is released to the atmosphere, it can no longer be considered a GHG emission reduction or removal.

Temporary carbon storage, even over long periods, cannot substitute for permanent emission reductions. However, reversible mitigation can still play an important role in efforts to limit global warming. Crediting carbon storage for finite timescales, for example, could enable higher volumes of near-term investment in mitigation activities and help avoid climate tipping points. In doing so, it can also buy time until permanent mitigation solutions become viable at scale, or other policies are developed to maintain terrestrial carbon storage indefinitely.

Under the Permanence CCP, Categories must meet CORSIA permanence requirements as well as additional permanence requirements based on associated risk of reversals. As these risks vary by Category, the ICVM has tailored its permanence criteria and requirements as expressed in the Assessment Framework, including separate permanence requirements for Jurisdictional REDD+ Programs, accordingly.

For certain Categories identified in the Assessment Framework, an approach to monitor and compensate for reversals, including through obligations on mitigation activity proponents and using pooled buffer reserves, is required. These Categories are:

- Conservation and avoided conversion (e.g., grassland/rangeland management, avoided deforestation);
- Agriculture soil carbon sequestration;
- Forestry sequestration (improved forest management, afforestation/reforestation, agroforestry);
- Wetland and marine ecosystem restoration/management (including seagrasses, saltmarshes, mangroves, peatlands).



Another set of Category types are required to assess reversal risk and manage material risks. These Categories are:

- Mitigation activities involving the displacement of non-renewable biomass;
- Biochar;
- CCS with geological storage;
- Enhanced weathering;
- CCS with mineralization;
- CO2 in concrete utilisation.

The Integrity Council sets out rules that require compensation for reversals. For Categories where there is material risk, as noted above, a 40-year minimum commitment to monitor, report, and compensate for avoidable reversals, from the start date of the mitigation activity, is required.

In relation to managing reversal risk and compensating for reversals for such Categories, the Assessment Framework provides conditions under which mitigation activity proponents must compensate for avoidable reversals, and also sets out requirements for pooled buffer reserves and how the carbon credits placed within them are to be used in the case of reversals.

In its next iteration, the ICVCM will consider longer monitoring and compensation periods (e.g., one hundred years). The ICVCM may also shift monitoring and compensation oversight to the program or jurisdiction, in alignment with existing and emerging best practices among carbon-crediting programs.

The next iteration of the Assessment Framework will also require the carbon-crediting program to have provisions in place to ensure the continued operation of the pooled buffer reserve until the latest date of expiry of the monitoring and compensation period of all registered and completed mitigation activities, for instance, when the carbon-crediting program ceases to exist or is otherwise prevented from operating the pooled buffer reserve.

The Assessment Framework applies specific provisions for addressing permanence in a Jurisdictional REDD+ Program. These provisions cover use of a pooled buffer reserve and how reversals are addressed through that reserve. Given the relative newness of Jurisdictional REDD+ the ICVCM will continue to analyse JREDD+ permanence for future iterations of the Assessment Framework.

Finally, the ICVCM will also undertake a work program in relation to permanence. Refer to section E on Continuous Improvement of the Assessment Framework for additional details.

[See Criteria 9.1 to 9.5 for Permanence in the Assessment Framework.](#)

## 7 Robust Quantification

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**The GHG emission reductions or removals from the mitigation activity shall be robustly quantified, based on conservative approaches, completeness and sound scientific methods.**

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A crucial consideration in strengthening the integrity of the VCM is ensuring that GHG emission reductions or removals are robustly quantified so that their levels are not overstated. Robust quantification relates to the measurement of emission reductions from an activity, the determination of baselines, and the accuracy of the number of credits issued.

Carbon-crediting programs must, *inter alia*, address the level of uncertainty of emission reductions or removals and ensure the conservativeness of quantification methodologies. It is critical for carbon-crediting programs to understand the level of uncertainty associated with the data and assumptions used to quantify GHG emission reductions or removals to ensure they are estimated conservatively. In this context, conservativeness relates to managing the uncertainty in emission measurements and calculations relating to the baseline and credits issued. The overriding principle is to choose the most conservative value or quantification methodology to address the inherent uncertainty.

Ensuring robust quantification requires that carbon-crediting programs have a thorough methodology-approval process that includes public stakeholder consultations and reviews by independent experts. Moreover, carbon-crediting programs must have robust requirements and principles governing the quantification of GHG emission reductions and removals. In addition, robust quantification requires that carbon-crediting programs ensure that GHG emission reductions or removals are verified *ex-post*. Some carbon-crediting programs also issue carbon credits *ex-ante*. In such instances, only carbon credits issued *ex-post* may be eligible for CCP-Approval.

Carbon-crediting programs must meet the CORSIA requirements related to robust quantification. CORSIA addresses the creation and updates of methodologies which are used to issue carbon credits from activities that reduce or remove emissions. At the Category-level, quantification approaches must also meet the CORSIA requirements. In addition, the quantification approaches in methodologies and other program documents must ensure conservativeness by limiting the likelihood that emissions reductions or removals from mitigation activities are overestimated and that a very significant overestimation is very unlikely. The overall uncertainty in quantifying emissions reductions or removals is to be taken into account by including all causes of uncertainty, including assumptions (e.g., baseline scenario), estimation equations or models, parameters (e.g., representativeness of default values), and in measurement approaches (e.g., the accuracy of measurement methods), and overall uncertainty is required to be assessed as the combined uncertainty from individual causes.

Additional criteria and requirements contain quantification approaches that should be fulfilled in quantification methodologies and, where relevant, other program documents used in quantifying emissions reductions or removals for a given Category of carbon credits. These requirements include that:

- Boundaries should enable conservativeness and account for emissions sources and sinks, and, where possible, their location;
- Baselines must be conservative, consider uncertainties, legal requirements and rebound effects, avoid perverse incentives, and be reviewed at appropriate intervals;
- All material sources of leakage must be taken into account and minimised with deductions applied for residual leakage. Estimation of leakage to be robust and conservative due to uncertainty;
- The quantified emission reductions or removals should be attributable to the mitigation activity;
- Aggregate duration of crediting periods should be activity-appropriate;
- Activities have robust monitoring including robust and conservative measurement, consideration of uncertainty, assignment of responsibilities, and quality control.

The Assessment Framework contains several areas related to Robust Quantification where the ICVCM has signalled its intention to increase the future stringency of requirements.

Carbon-crediting programs should regularly review and update their quantification methodologies to ensure environmental integrity. Therefore, in the next iteration of the Assessment Framework, the ICVCM will include a minimum elapsed time (e.g., every five years) for this review and update to take place. The ICVCM will consult with relevant stakeholders to understand existing practice and the best periodicity for this review cycle.

The ICVCM also understands the importance of a consistent approach to calculating CO<sub>2</sub> equivalence and will introduce requirements to align approaches used by carbon-crediting programs with the agreed values used internationally, i.e., the 100-year Global Warming Potential (GWP) values from the 5th IPCC assessment report, in the next iteration of the Assessment Framework.

The ICVCM emphasises the importance of robust quantification and the need to create robust and sufficiently refined methodologies to lower the risk that credited emission reductions or removals are overestimated, and will continue to consider ways to set criteria that reduce the likelihood of overestimation and criteria that will ensure that the ambition of the baseline is enhanced upon update and/or review.<sup>3</sup> The ICVCM will also consider whether to require quantification methodologies to ensure that the approach to updating and reviewing the baseline increases the ambition of the baseline over time.

In relation to JREDD+, the ICVCM will consider whether to require carbon-crediting programs to have provisions stipulating that any registered Project-based mitigation activity within a Jurisdictional REDD+ Program takes into account the provisions of that Jurisdictional REDD+ Program where required by the jurisdiction.

Finally, the ICVCM will also undertake a work program in relation to robust quantification under its Paris Alignment work program. See section E on Continuous Improvement of the Assessment Framework.

*See Criteria 5.1 to 5.3 and Criteria 10.1 to 10.8 in the Assessment Framework.*

<sup>3</sup> See also Continuous Improvement work program on Paris Alignment in the context of baselines that relate to assessing how baseline scenarios and baseline emission and removal quantification can take into account and be aligned to Paris Agreement goals, the host country NDC and the LT-LEDs of the host country, if any.



## 8 No Double Counting



**The GHG emission reductions or removals from the mitigation activity shall not be double counted, i.e., they shall only be counted once towards achieving mitigation targets or goals. Double counting covers double issuance, double claiming, and double use.**



Double counting of carbon credits and/or GHG emission reductions or removals undermines the integrity of the VCM. Double counting can manifest in a number of ways and the ICVCM requirements ensure that the carbon-crediting programs manage the risks of double counting.

**Double issuance:** This occurs when two or more carbon credits coexist at the same time for one GHG emission reduction or removal, under the same or different carbon-crediting or other programs. Double issuance can also occur where two or more mitigation activities have overlapping GHG accounting boundaries. The carbon-crediting program must have provisions avoiding issuance of more than one credit in relation to the same GHG emission reduction or removal in such cases.

**Double use:** This occurs when one carbon credit is claimed towards multiple mitigation targets/goals (e.g., once each by two different entities or twice by one entity).

**Double claiming with mandatory domestic mitigation schemes:** This occurs when a carbon-crediting program issues a carbon credit in respect of GHG emission reductions or removals that are covered by a mandatory domestic mitigation scheme (e.g., emissions trading system). In the context of the ICVCM, it is considered that a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement does not constitute a mandatory domestic mitigation scheme. While a NDC may be put into effect through a variety of instruments, including mandatory domestic mitigation schemes, it is considered to be separate from the latter.

The Integrity Council has established a CCP Attribute in relation to host country authorisation for use towards 'other international mitigation purposes' pursuant to Article 6 of the Paris Agreement (see section D below). The question of how to manage double counting in all its forms in the context of Article 6, and whether double claiming with NDCs should be avoided on the basis of a corresponding adjustment as set out in Article 6 implementing guidance, will be addressed in the ICVCM work program, described in section E Continuous Improvement of the Assessment Framework.

**Double claiming with mitigation incentivisation schemes:** This occurs when a carbon-crediting program issues a carbon credit for a GHG emission reduction or removal for which another environmental credit related to GHG emission mitigation is being issued and traded under a different environmental credit market (such as Renewable Energy Certificates).

At the Program-level, the carbon-crediting programs must have provisions in place that prevent double registration of mitigation activities and double issuance of carbon credits. In addition, carbon-crediting programs must also have provisions that prevent double use of carbon credits within their registry.

At the Category-level, carbon crediting programs must seek to avoid double issuance through provisions to identify potential overlaps in cases where there is a material risk of overlapping claims. In cases where there is risk of double claiming, carbon-crediting programs must ensure either that overlapping activities are not issued credits or that any relevant mitigation impacts are not counted towards the achievement of targets or obligations under the mandatory domestic mitigation scheme. Finally, for Categories where there is a material risk of double claiming, the carbon-crediting program must have provisions to ensure that carbon credits are not issued for GHG emission reductions or removals achieved by a mitigation activity where units related to the same climate impacts of the mitigation activity are traded in other environmental markets.

*See Criteria 6.1 to 6.5 for No Double Counting in the Assessment Framework.*

# C. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

## 9 Sustainable Development Benefits and Safeguards



**The carbon-crediting program shall have clear guidance, tools and compliance procedures to ensure mitigation activities conform with or go beyond widely established industry best practices on social and environmental safeguards while delivering positive sustainable development impacts.**



In a high-integrity VCM, carbon-crediting programs take steps to ensure that mitigation activities adhere to environmental and social safeguards and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Carbon-crediting programs have measures in place to ensure that, in the context of the host country, mitigation activity proponents inform how SDG impacts are consistent with SDG objectives, respect human rights and comply with relevant safeguards. Program-level processes ensure that mitigation activity proponents assess environmental and social risks associated with proposed mitigation activities, taking into account the size and scale of the relevant mitigation activity.

Where the context requires, mitigation activities are required to ensure free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) processes with IPs & LCs, protect and improve livelihoods, protect and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services, enhance climate resilience and adaptation, reduce pollution, and be transparent about the sharing of benefits from the mitigation activity with IPs & LCs.



Under Program-level criteria and requirements in the Assessment Framework, carbon-crediting programs must meet the CORSIA requirements to Safeguards System and Sustainable Development Criteria. In addition to the relevant CORSIA requirements, carbon-crediting programs must ensure compliance with relevant national requirements, applicable laws and rules of the relevant jurisdiction. They must also assess risks of negative environmental and social impacts associated with relevant safeguards. In that context, the Assessment Framework builds on the work of widely applied best-in-class standards including the World Bank, International Finance Corporation, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, United Nations Environment Programme, the Cancun Safeguards, and the International Labour Organization Fundamental Conventions, among others.

The Program-level criteria contain numerous requirements applicable to how the carbon-crediting programs ensure mitigation activities have addressed risks relating to safeguards and sustainable development and, where appropriate, have included measures to address them in validated design documents. These requirements cover:

- Labour Rights and Working Conditions;
- Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention;
- Land Acquisition and Involuntary Resettlement;
- Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources;
- Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, and Cultural Heritage;
- Respect for Human Rights, Stakeholder Engagement;
- Gender Equality;
- Robust Benefit-Sharing;
- Cancun Safeguards.

In addition, carbon-crediting programs are required to ensure mitigation activities provide information on consistency with host country SDG objectives, how any SDG benefits are delivered, and what standardised tools or methods, if any, were used.

The ICVCM is aware that carbon-crediting programs have recently or are currently developing new and expanded requirements in this area and, as a result, carbon credits issued in the past might not have been subject to the more advanced criteria currently applicable to the carbon-crediting programs. The ICVCM has therefore created Category-level criteria applicable to all carbon credits, including those that might have been issued earlier, to address this issue.

At the Category-level, mitigation activities must meet CORSIA requirements related to Safeguards System (do no net harm provisions) and Sustainable Development. In addition, where a Category also operates under a third-party linked certification scheme or third-party linked robust set of requirements relevant to safeguards and to sustainable development benefits, or specific further requirements of the carbon-crediting program, the carbon-crediting program must provide information for the assessment process in the Assessment Platform.

The Assessment Framework contains areas related to Sustainable Development Benefits and Safeguards, listed below, where the ICVCM has signalled its intention to increase the future stringency of requirements at both the Program-level and Category-level.

The ICVCM recognises that approaches to sustainable development benefits and safeguards are currently evolving and that this is a clear area for improvement in the VCM. The ICVCM will consult with relevant stakeholders on Program-level requirements to understand how current practice can be improved (see section E Continuous Improvement of the Assessment Framework) and how to incorporate any increases in stringency with criteria set out under section C.7 of the Assessment Framework into its next iteration to ensure:

- The program rather than the proponent assesses the social and environmental risks;
- Consistency with conservation objectives for terrestrial and marine habitats, including with regard to invasive alien species, avoiding conversion of high conservation value habitats and protecting habitats of endangered species, including areas needed for habitat connectivity;
- Promotion of more sustainable use of resources, including energy, water and soil;
- Best practice for IPs & LCs consultation and FPIC processes to be more inclusive of women and vulnerable and/or marginalised groups, and in particular to participate in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of any resettlement activities, with full consent;
- Avoidance of negative impacts on IPs & LCs' protected territories and resources, nor on their development priorities and governance; respect for areas inhabited by or believed to be inhabited by uncontacted or isolated IPs & LCs;
- Transparency on use and management of revenues for benefit sharing;
- Gender assessment and gender action plan and use of gender disaggregated data to monitor, assess and report on gender impacts;
- Validation and verification requirements related to environmental and social safeguards.

At the Category-level, the ICVCM is aware that further work is needed to improve sustainable development benefits and safeguards associated with mitigation activities. For the next iteration of the Assessment Framework, and through the Continuous Improvement work program, the ICVCM will draw upon available safeguards and SDG impact measurement and management protocols including third-party certification requirements to develop further criteria and a risk and impact rating framework for Categories.

The ICVCM will consider requiring methodologies to submit evidence of the level of change achieved and the degree to which sustainable development benefits can be attributed to the mitigation activity. The ICVCM will also consider requiring methodologies to include provisions promoting net positive sustainable development benefits.

*See Criteria 7.1 to 7.11 for Sustainable Development Benefits and Safeguards and Criteria 11.1 and 11.2 in the Assessment Framework.*

## 10 Contribution Towards Net Zero Emissions



**The mitigation activity shall avoid locking-in levels of GHG emissions, technologies or carbon-intensive practices that are incompatible with the objective of achieving net zero GHG emissions by mid-century.**



Contributing to the global transition towards net zero emissions is a global imperative and inscribed as the long-term goal under the Paris Agreement: achieving a balance of greenhouse gas emissions and removals in the second half of this century. For compatibility with the global goal of net zero, mitigation activities, even if they lead to short-term emission reductions, should be discouraged if the result locks in an increase in long-term GHG emissions.

The ICVCM has therefore determined that in order to ensure that CCP-Approved carbon credits are not misaligned with the contribution to net zero, certain Categories are ineligible for CCP-Approval. These Categories include mitigation activities that:

- Directly lead to an increase in the extraction of fossil fuels, such as Carbon Capture and Storage technologies used for Enhanced Oil Recovery;
- Relate to unabated coal-fired electricity generation;
- Involve any other unabated fossil fuel-powered electricity generation other than new gas-fired generation as a part of increased zero-emissions generation capacity in support of national low-carbon energy transition plans;
- Focus on road transport that rely on the continued use of solely fossil-fuelled engines.

The approach put forward by the ICVCM ensures an initial step towards aligning carbon-crediting programs and Categories that are compatible with and mindful of the IPCC recommendations and with the development and energy transition priorities of developing countries. It allows for new net zero emissions from gas-fired generation in the context of transition planning and implementation, the use of carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS) technology, as long as use of those technologies result in a net decrease of emissions, and hybrid vehicles, which represent important GHG reduction opportunities through efficiency and remain necessary elements of national policies for a large part of the world. CCP-Approval for these approaches will require carbon-crediting programs to ensure that new or revised methodologies require mitigation activity proponents to assess the compatibility of the mitigation activity with the transition to net zero, in reference to the net zero objectives of the relevant host country.



Finally, in the next iteration of the Assessment Framework, the ICVCM will consider enhancing the assessment of compatibility with the transition to net zero to all (both new and existing) active methodologies. This could be accomplished by requiring a dedicated section in all methodologies requiring mitigation activity proponents using the methodology to describe how the activities eligible under that methodology are compatible with a transition towards net zero in the relevant host country, including any expected contribution.

*See Criteria 12.1 to 12.2 for Contribution Towards Net Zero of the Assessment Framework.*

# D. CCP ATTRIBUTES

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Attributes can be used to identify additional features related to the mitigation activity for which the carbon credit has been issued. Such identification enables mitigation activity proponents to showcase the features of the mitigation activity and allows buyers to purchase carbon credits that match their preferences. To facilitate the identification of these additional features, the ICVCM has included CCP Attributes in this Assessment Framework.

Carbon credits that are CCP-Approved as a result of the assessment process may then, in accordance with the Assessment Procedure, additionally be tagged with relevant CCP Attributes. A carbon credit may have more than one CCP Attribute, but each must be distinguished from other CCP Attributes that may be allocated to the carbon credit.

Attribute 1 relates to ‘Host country authorisation pursuant to Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.’ This attribute refers to whether the host country has authorised the carbon credit (‘mitigation outcomes,’ the GHG emission reductions or removals represented by the carbon credit) for ‘other international mitigation purposes’ under guidance adopted pursuant to Article 6 (specifically cooperative approaches referred to in Article 6, paragraph 2) of the Paris Agreement. Some buyers are keen to purchase carbon credits in respect of which there is a host country authorisation for Article 6 purposes. This attribute facilitates identifying such carbon credits.<sup>4</sup>

Attribute 2, ‘Share of Proceeds for Adaptation,’ refers to whether the mitigation activity makes a voluntary contribution to the [Adaptation Fund](#) of the UNFCCC.

Attribute 3 is ‘Quantified positive SDG impacts.’ This attribute refers to whether the mitigation activity quantifies a positive contribution to Sustainable Development (excluding SDG 13). It differs from requirements in section 4.C.7 of the Assessment Framework (criteria related to Sustainable Development Benefits and Safeguards) because the attribute relates to quantification of SDG impacts. This will facilitate the identification of carbon credits with quantified positive impacts. Such quantified positive SDG impacts must align with the sustainable development priorities of the host country, where those are relevant to the mitigation activity.<sup>5</sup>

Other attributes may be developed at the discretion of the ICVCM.

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<sup>4</sup> This issue is also connected to section 4.B.6 Assessment Framework (criteria related to No Double Counting) and the work program to be undertaken by the ICVCM described in section E below. The ICVCM will undertake a work program on related matters (see section E below).

<sup>5</sup> This issue is also connected to section 4.B.6 of the Assessment Framework (criteria related to No Double Counting) and the work program to be undertaken by the ICVCM described in section E below. The ICVCM will undertake a work program on related matters (see section E below).

# E. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

In line with best practices in standard setting, the Integrity Council has designed a process for continuous improvement of the CCPs and the Assessment Framework. The process ensures the continued relevance and effectiveness in meeting the stated objectives of the Integrity Council.

Work on developing the next iteration of the Assessment Framework begins after the release of this first iteration. It will include input by multi-stakeholder work programs detailed in the sections below. It will include consultation processes (public and via workshops with multi-stakeholder groups such as carbon-crediting programs, project developers, academics, IPs & LCs, etc.) and analysis necessary to inform its development.

The process for developing the next iteration of the CCPs and the Assessment Framework begins in the second half of 2023 with the aim of publishing in 2025 and implementation in 2026.

## Paris Alignment

### Corresponding Adjustments pursuant to guidance on Article 6, paragraph 2 of the Paris Agreement

It is broadly understood that double counting must not occur where carbon credits are transferred internationally for use towards NDCs under the Paris Agreement. This understanding is also reflected in Article 6 guidance agreed at the UNFCCC [COP26](#) in 2021. There is, however, an active debate in the VCM about how to manage double counting in all its forms in the context of Article 6, and whether double claiming with NDCs should be avoided on the basis of a corresponding adjustment as set out in Article 6 implementing guidance, in the context of companies using carbon credits towards voluntary climate commitments. The ICVCM considers that this issue remains open after UNFCCC [COP27](#) and needs further study.

As countries move to implement systems to deliver on their Paris Agreement commitments the VCM and host country systems will increasingly interact. The ICVCM and VCMI will co-lead a joint work program to consider:

- Identification and assessment of scenarios related to corresponding adjustments;
- Impacts of corresponding adjustments and implications for carbon credit integrity.

## Share of Proceeds for Adaptation Finance

In addition to the CCP Attribute for a Share of Proceeds for Adaptation Finance (SOPA)<sup>6</sup>, the Integrity Council will establish a work program to consider:

- Whether SOPA should be mandatory or voluntary;
- Potential exemptions based on mitigation activity type or size based on the mitigation and adaptation impacts, and on benefits and revenues to communities participating in GHG mitigation activities/programs in developing countries;
- The readiness of buyers of carbon credits to make such a contribution;
- The merits of voluntary compared to mandatory approaches;
- The appropriate destination of any carbon credits/revenue;
- The impact on market participants and the incentives created.

## Baselines and NDC alignment

The Integrity Council will establish a work program to consider:

- How baseline scenarios and baseline emission and removal quantification can take into account and be aligned to the Paris Agreement goals, the host country Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and the Long-term Low-Emission Development Strategies (LT-LEDs) of the host country, where appropriate.

## Sustainable Development Benefits and Safeguards

In addition to the requirements under section 4.C.7 Sustainable Development Benefits and Safeguards and the CCP Attribute for quantified positive SDG impacts<sup>7</sup>, the Integrity Council recognises that approaches to environmental and social safeguards are currently evolving and that this is a clear area for improvement in the VCM. The ICVCM will consult with relevant stakeholders to understand how current practice can be improved in order to develop new requirements for the next iteration of the Assessment Framework. The work program will include all elements listed in table 7.12 of the Assessment Framework.

## Permanence

The ICVCM recognises the evolving market practice around ensuring permanence and measuring and addressing reversals. A work program will address the following aspects of permanence and addressing reversals:

- Monitoring and compensation periods and/or reserve requirements, including consideration of methods to provide for longer monitoring and compensation periods (e.g., one hundred years), to consider whether monitoring and compensation periods should count from the start of the first crediting period or from the vintage of the mitigation outcome, and to consider options for transferring the monitoring and compensation oversight to the carbon-crediting program or the jurisdiction, including taking into account emerging and existing best practice among carbon-crediting programs;

<sup>6</sup> See section D, CCP Attribute 2: Share of Proceeds for Adaptation

<sup>7</sup> See Section D, CCP Attribute 3: Quantified positive SDG impact



- Pooled buffer reserves, their design, sufficiency (including periodic stress testing considering a range of scenarios), feasibility, and possible new designs;
- Reversal risk assessment tools and procedures (including risks presented by climate change);
- Insurance products and mechanisms;
- Different approaches to permanence.

In addition, the Integrity Council plans the following work programs to commence in 2024:

### **Digital MRV**

The ICVCM recognizes the importance and limitations of Digital Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (D-MRV) for the evolution and future best practice of the VCM. A work program on these issues will consider how remote sensing data, machine learning, AI and Web3 as applied to the VCM, for both jurisdictional and project-based crediting approaches could support enhanced transparency, integrity and efficiency of the VCM. Topics to be considered in relation to D-MRV might include:

- D-MRV in the context of carbon credit quality assessments and review, including consideration of whether a universal standard for data quality and management would be useful across the market;
- Minimum data resolution levels required to conduct project-specific assessments;
- Accuracy and Attribution methodologies and best practices;
- Acceptable uncertainty levels in data and its application in the VCM;
- Peer review requirements for data, data sets and research methods related to D-MRV and the VCS.

### **Market Transparency, Standardisation, and Scalability**

The ICVCM considers that there are opportunities to improve market standards around transparency and data infrastructure for credits, building on existing initiatives. This work program will include:

- Universal tracking and transparency infrastructure (registry requirements and interoperability) for the global carbon market leveraging existing and emerging technologies and initiatives;
- Credit pricing disclosure and tracking systems;
- Guidance on reporting on revenue;
- Standardised contracts.

## Oversight of VVBs and MRV systems

The ICVCM considers that there are opportunities to improve market standards around how carbon-crediting programs oversee VVBs and MRV systems. This work program will include:

- Best practice for accreditation, training and competency requirements for validators and verifiers;
- Review of existing oversight mechanisms of VVB performance and procedures including systematic monitoring and consequences for poor performance;
- Information and disclosure requirements for VVB bodies;
- Approaches to independent spot checks, document review and completeness checks of validation and verification documents as well as registry requirements;
- Approaches to triage, root-cause analysis and learning lessons when quality issues emerge for a project or credit type Category or methodology.

## Simplified Approaches for Small Projects

The ICVCM considers that there may be opportunities to develop simplified approaches for small mitigation activities while maintaining high integrity and carefully assessing potential unintended consequences that such approaches could create. This work program will include consideration of:

- Definition and cut-off for small mitigation activities and eligibility requirements for issuing organisations and programs;
- Standardised assumptions with appropriate allowance for conservativeness;
- Existing frameworks that can simplify and streamline risk assessments;
- Sample-based approaches;
- Consideration of nationally regulated mechanisms for accreditation and verification of credits.

## Jurisdictional Crediting Approaches

The ICVCM considers that it would be beneficial to further evolve special considerations for jurisdictional crediting approaches, including areas such as:

- Permanence;
- Additionality, including prior consideration and applicability of financial consideration;
- Establishing standardised baselines;
- Retroactive crediting (and consideration may be relevant for non-jurisdictional approaches);
- Nesting provisions.





THE INTEGRITY COUNCIL  
FOR THE VOLUNTARY CARBON MARKET



SECTION

# ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

January 2024, Version 2



# SECTION 4

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# PART I

# REQUIREMENTS

# FOR CARBON-

# CREDITING

# PROGRAMS

---

The Assessment Framework contains the requirements for carbon-crediting programs and requirements for Categories of carbon credits (Categories).

The Assessment Framework should be read in conjunction with the Summary for Decision Makers, the Definitions and the Assessment Procedure.

The Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (Integrity Council or ICVCM) also notes that the Summary for Decision Makers contains an explanation of the rationale for the criteria and requirements in this Assessment Framework and an explanation of the approaches that will be taken in the assessment process in relation to certain Categories. Reading the Summary for Decision Makers is therefore recommended.

In this Assessment Framework, all Category criteria and requirements apply to all Categories except for Jurisdictional REDD+. Certain Category-level requirements are specific to Jurisdictional REDD+ Programs. This is the case for additionality (see criteria 8.9 and 8.10) and permanence (see criterion 9.5), and in those sections, only those requirements need to be met by Jurisdictional REDD+ Programs. However, no specific provisions were necessary for Jurisdictional REDD+ Programs in other Category-level requirements, notably robust quantification, so all of the criteria in section 10 apply. This means that for carbon-crediting programs with Jurisdictional REDD+ Programs, it will be important to note which criteria are applicable. As a result, this specific approach for Jurisdictional REDD+ Programs will have implications for how the assessment by the Categories Working Group (CWG) and, if relevant, the Multi-Stakeholder Working Group (MSWG), is undertaken.

# A. GOVERNANCE

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CORSIA-eligible programs are required to provide information on their CORSIA eligibility. CORSIA-eligible programs will have to provide relevant information for the additional requirements detailed in the Assessment Framework and included in the ICVCM Assessment Platform.

Carbon-crediting programs that have not yet applied for CORSIA eligibility will be required to demonstrate to the Integrity Council that they meet the requirements of CORSIA through their application to the ICVCM, as set out in the ICVCM Assessment Platform. They must also have to demonstrate that they meet the additional requirements detailed in the Assessment Framework included in the ICVCM Assessment Platform.

Carbon-crediting programs that have applied to CORSIA but have not achieved CORSIA eligibility should contact the [ICVCM](#) before applying as set out in the Assessment Procedure.

# 1. EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

“

**The carbon-crediting program shall have effective program governance to ensure transparency, accountability, continuous improvement and the overall quality of carbon credits.**

”

## CRITERION 1.1: EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

**Table 1.1**  
**Effective governance**

### Requirements

- a) In addition to CORSIA requirements related to governance framework, the carbon-crediting program shall:
- 1) have a board comprised of independent board members who assume fiduciary responsibility for the organisation and operate according to robust bylaws;
  - 2) publish an annual report that contains the organisation's revenues, expenses, and net assets over the past year and provides an overview of the organisation's mission, major programs and activities, and governance;
  - 3) have processes in place to ensure corporate social and environmental responsibility;
  - 4) have robust anti-money laundering processes in place;
  - 5) follow practices consistent with robust anti-bribery and anti-corruption guidance and regulation.

## CRITERION 1.2: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT, CONSULTATION, AND GRIEVANCES

**Table 1.2**  
**Public engagement, consultation, and grievances<sup>1</sup>**

### Requirements

- a) In addition to CORSIA requirements related to public engagement, consultation and grievances, the carbon-crediting program shall have a process for:
- 1) robust and transparent local and global stakeholder consultation, which provide for public comment and issue resolution;
  - 2) addressing grievances, for which the process shall be clear and transparent, ensure impartiality and where appropriate, confidentiality, in the filing and resolution of grievances and for which any applicable fees shall not impede legitimate access to the grievance process by civil society organisations or of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPs & LCs).

<sup>1</sup> See Criteria 7 in relation to safeguards relating to IPs & LCs

## 2. TRACKING

“

**The carbon-crediting program shall operate or make use of a registry to uniquely identify, record and track mitigation activities and carbon credits issued to ensure credits can be identified securely and unambiguously.**

”

### CRITERION 2.1: EFFECTIVE REGISTRIES

Table 2.1

**Effective registries** (retirement and addressing erroneous issuance)

#### Requirements

- a) In addition to CORSIA requirements related to carbon credits in the carbon-crediting program registry, the carbon-crediting program shall:
- 1) require identification of the entity on whose behalf the carbon credit was retired;
  - 2) require the identification of the purpose of retirement;
  - 3) have procedures to address erroneous issuance of carbon credits that identify remedial measures (e.g., cancellation, compensation through replacement) and the entities responsible for implementing these.



## 3. TRANSPARENCY



**The carbon-crediting program shall provide comprehensive and transparent information on all credited mitigation activities. The information shall be publicly available in electronic format and shall be accessible to non-specialised audiences, to enable scrutiny of mitigation activities.**



### CRITERION 3.1: INFORMATION

Table 3.1  
Information

#### Requirements

- a) In addition to CORSIA requirements, the carbon-crediting program shall ensure that in relation to each mitigation activity that requests registration or that is registered, all relevant documentation relating to the mitigation activity is made publicly available (subject to confidentiality and proprietary, privacy and data protection restrictions) including:
  - 1) all necessary information, such as spreadsheets used for calculations, to enable third parties to assess the social and environmental impacts of the mitigation activity and to replicate the GHG emission reduction or removal calculations (including baseline quantification), and assessment of additionality;
  - 2) a mitigation activity design document that includes:
    - i. a non-technical summary;
    - ii. detailed information on the mitigation activity, including its location and proponents;
    - iii. a description of the technologies or practices applied;
    - iv. the environmental and social impacts;
    - v. the methodology used;
    - vi. information on how the methodology is and has been applied for the purpose of determining the baseline, demonstrating additionality and quantifying GHG emission reductions or removals;
  - 3) For Categories listed in 9.1 b) 1, information relating to the monitoring and compensation period.
- b) The carbon-crediting program shall ensure all relevant program documents are publicly available and have processes to ensure that where requests are made in relation to information that is missing from its website and/or registry, that information is provided (subject to confidentiality and proprietary, privacy and data protection restrictions) and made public alongside other relevant public information.

## 4. ROBUST INDEPENDENT THIRD-PARTY VALIDATION AND VERIFICATION

“

**The carbon-crediting program shall have program-level requirements for robust independent third-party validation and verification of mitigation activities.**

”

### CRITERION 4.1: ROBUST INDEPENDENT THIRD-PARTY VALIDATION AND VERIFICATION

Table 4.1

#### Robust independent third-party validation and verification

##### Requirements

- a) In addition to CORSIA requirements, in relation to validation of mitigation activities and verification of GHG emission reductions and removals, the carbon-crediting program shall:
  - 1) require validation and verification bodies (VVBs) to be accredited by a recognised international accreditation standard (e.g., according to the current edition of ISO 14065 and ISO 14066, or per rules relating to the UNFCCC Kyoto Protocol Clean Development Mechanism or Paris Agreement Article 6, paragraph 4 Supervisory Body);
  - 2) have a process for managing VVB performance, including systematic review of validation and verification activities, reports and remedial measures to address performance issues including measures to ensure that poor VVB performance is reported to the relevant accreditation body, and provisions to suspend or revoke the participation of a VVB in the carbon-crediting program.

## B. EMISSIONS IMPACT

### 5. ROBUST QUANTIFICATION OF GHG EMISSION REDUCTIONS AND REMOVALS

“

**The GHG emission reductions or removals from the mitigation activity shall be robustly quantified, based on conservative approaches, completeness and sound scientific methods.**

”

## CRITERION 5.1: METHODOLOGY APPROVAL PROCESS

**Table 5.1**  
**Methodology approval process**

### Requirements

- a) In addition to CORSIA requirements related to Clear Methodologies and Protocols and their Development Process, the carbon-crediting program shall have a process for developing and adopting updates to existing quantification methodologies.
- b) Approved methodologies or general carbon-crediting program provisions shall address the following essential components:
  - 1) applicability or eligibility criteria;
  - 2) determination of the accounting boundary;
  - 3) determination of additionality (to the extent this is not covered in other general carbon-crediting program provisions);
  - 4) establishing the baseline scenario;
  - 5) quantification of GHG emission reductions or removals;
  - 6) monitoring practices.
- c) The carbon-crediting program shall require that, prior to approval, new methodologies and major revisions of existing methodologies undergo review by a group of independent experts and a public stakeholder consultation.
- d) The carbon-crediting program shall have procedures to review, suspend and/or withdraw the use of methodologies where the carbon-crediting program has determined, based on evidence, that GHG emission reductions or removals are being overestimated or that additionality might not be ensured.



## CRITERION 5.2: REQUIREMENTS FOR QUANTIFYING GHG EMISSION REDUCTIONS OR REMOVALS

**Table 5.2**  
**Quantifying GHG emission reductions or removals**

### Requirements

- a) In addition to CORSIA requirements<sup>2</sup>, the carbon-crediting program shall:
- 1) clearly define a carbon credit as one metric tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent of GHG emission reductions or removals;
  - 2) disclose the Global Warming Potential (GWP) values used to calculate the CO<sub>2</sub> equivalence;
  - 3) define the length of crediting periods, including the total length of combined crediting periods;
  - 4) provide guidance on steps and requirements for renewal of the crediting periods and any renewal of the crediting period shall include a reassessment of the baseline scenario, including whether the conditions and barriers at the start of the mitigation activity still prevail, and an update of relevant parameters used to calculate emissions reductions and removals;
  - 5) assess the overall uncertainty of emission reductions or removals associated with an activity type and/or require that the mitigation activity proponent assess the overall uncertainty in accordance with an approved methodology. In estimating overall uncertainty all causes of uncertainty shall be considered, including assumptions (e.g., baseline scenario), estimation equations or models, parameters (e.g., representativeness of default values); and measurements (e.g., the accuracy of measurement methods). The overall uncertainty shall be assessed as the combined uncertainty from individual causes;
  - 6) have a systematic approach to ensuring the conservativeness of quantification methodologies it approves for use;
  - 7) require in its program documents that existing government policies and legal requirements that lower GHG emissions (e.g., feed-in tariffs for renewable energy, minimum product efficiency standards, air quality requirements or carbon taxes) be included when determining the baseline emissions. The carbon-crediting program may have provisions to consider the level of enforcement of such policies and legal requirements as well as any associated grace periods.

<sup>2</sup> CORSIA "Eligibility Criterion", "Carbon offset credits must be based on a realistic and credible baseline" and "Carbon offset credits must be quantified, monitored, reported and verified"

## CRITERION 5.3: EX-POST DETERMINATION OF EMISSION REDUCTIONS OR REMOVALS

Table 5.3

### Ex-post determination of emissions reductions or removals

#### Requirements

- a) Carbon credits that are issued *ex-ante* are not CCP-eligible. Where a carbon-crediting program supports both *ex-ante* and *ex-post* issuance, it shall have procedures in place to transparently identify units that are issued *ex-ante* and are thus ineligible under the ICVCM.

## 5.4 NEXT ITERATION OF THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Table 5.4

### Next iteration of the Assessment Framework

Threshold	Requirements
Relating to Criterion 5.1	Carbon-crediting programs should regularly review and update their quantification methodologies to ensure continued environmental integrity. In the next iteration of the Assessment Framework, the ICVCM will include a minimum elapsed time (e.g., every five years) for this review and update. The ICVCM will consult with relevant stakeholders to understand existing practice and the best frequency for this review cycle.
Relating to Criterion 5.2	The ICVCM understands the importance of a consistent approach to calculating CO <sub>2</sub> equivalence and will introduce requirements in the next iteration of the Assessment Framework to align approaches used by carbon-crediting programs with the agreed values used internationally (e.g., 100-year GWP values from the 5th IPCC assessment report). <sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Or such other values as Parties to the UNFCCC may adopt as GWP values for use in national GHG inventories and for accounting for NDCs.

## 6. NO DOUBLE-COUNTING

“

**The GHG emission reductions or removals from the mitigation activity shall not be double counted, i.e., they shall only be counted once towards achieving mitigation targets or goals. Double counting covers double issuance, double claiming, and double use.**

”

### CRITERION 6.1: NO DOUBLE ISSUANCE (DOUBLE REGISTRATION)

Table 6.1  
No double issuance (double registration)

#### Requirements

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall have provisions to:
- 1) prevent the registration of any mitigation activity that has been registered under another carbon-crediting program and is still active under that program; and
  - 2) ensure that it does not issue carbon credits for GHG emission reductions or removals where another program has issued credits to the same mitigation activity and/or for the same GHG emission reductions or removals and has not cancelled those credits for the purpose of avoiding double issuance.

### CRITERION 6.2: NO DOUBLE USE

Table 6.2  
No double use

#### Requirements

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall have registry provisions that prevent the further transfer, retirement or cancellation of a carbon credit once it has been cancelled or retired.

# C. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS AND SAFEGUARDS

## 7. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS AND SAFEGUARDS

“

**The carbon-crediting program shall have clear guidance, tools and compliance procedures to ensure mitigation activities conform with or go beyond widely established industry best practices on social and environmental safeguards while delivering positive sustainable development impacts.**

”



## CRITERION 7.1: ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL RISKS

**Table 7.1**  
**Assessment and management of environmental and social risks**

### Requirements

- a) In addition to CORSIA requirements relating to Safeguards System and Sustainable Development Criteria, the carbon-crediting program shall require mitigation activity proponents to:
  - 1) abide by national and local laws, objectives, programs and regulations and, where relevant, international conventions and agreements;<sup>4</sup>
  - 2) assess associated risks of negative environmental and social impacts with regard to the safeguards contained in criteria 7.2 to 7.8 (inclusive), taking into account the scope and scale of the mitigation activity;
  - 3) ensure free, prior and informed Consent (FPIC) processes for IPs & LCs, where applicable, and conduct stakeholder consultations, including local stakeholders, as part of project design and implementation in a manner that is inclusive, culturally appropriate, and respectful of local knowledge, take these consultations into account and respond to local stakeholders' views.
- b) Where, pursuant to criterion 7.1 a) 2) above, the mitigation activity proponents have assessed that the mitigation activity poses risks of negative environmental and/or social impacts with regard to any of criteria 7.2 to 7.8 (inclusive) the carbon-crediting program shall require the mitigation activity proponents to:
  - 1) include measures, commensurate with the identified risks, to minimise and address such negative environmental and/or social impacts, in validated design documents prior to registration;
  - 2) include information on the measures implemented pursuant to criterion 7.1 b) 1) above, commensurate with the identified risks in the monitoring report.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf)  
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/what-are-human-rights/international-bill-human-rights>

## CRITERION 7.2: LABOUR RIGHTS AND WORKING CONDITIONS

**Table 7.2**  
**Labour rights and working conditions**

### Requirements

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall require mitigation activity proponents to ensure that the mitigation activity:
  - 1) provides safe and healthy working conditions for employees;
  - 2) provides fair treatment of all employees, avoiding discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities;
  - 3) prohibits the use of forced labour, child labour, or trafficked persons, and protects contracted workers employed by third parties.
- b) The carbon-crediting program shall require that mitigation activity proponents confirm in validated design documents that the mitigation activity adheres to the above safeguards or that it has put in place the measures referred to in criterion 7.1 b) 1) above.

## CRITERION 7.3: RESOURCE EFFICIENCY AND POLLUTION PREVENTION

**Table 7.3**  
**Resource efficiency and pollution prevention**

### Requirements

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall require mitigation activity proponents to ensure that the mitigation activity minimises:
  - 1) pollutant emissions to air;
  - 2) pollutant discharges to water, noise and vibration;
  - 3) generation of waste and release of hazardous materials, chemical pesticides and fertilisers.
- b) The carbon-crediting program shall require that mitigation activity proponents confirm in validated design documents:
  - 1) whether the mitigation activity results in pollutant emissions to air, pollutant discharges to water, noise and vibration, the generation of waste, the release of hazardous materials, chemical pesticides and fertilisers;
  - 2) where the mitigation activity results in any of the impacts listed in 1) above, that it has put in place the measures referred to in criterion 7.1 b) 1) above.

## CRITERION 7.4: LAND ACQUISITION AND INVOLUNTARY RESETTLEMENT

**Table 7.4**  
**Land acquisition and involuntary resettlement**

### Requirements

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall require mitigation activity proponents to ensure that the mitigation activity avoids, or where this is not feasible, minimises forced physical and or economic displacement.
- b) The carbon-crediting program shall require that mitigation activity proponents confirm in validated design documents:
  - 1) whether the mitigation activity results in forced physical and/or economic displacement;
  - 2) where the mitigation activity results in the impacts listed in 1) above, that it has put in place the measures referred to in criterion 7.1 b) 1) above.

## CRITERION 7.5: BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF LIVING NATURAL RESOURCES

**Table 7.5**  
**Biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of living natural resources**

### Requirements

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall require mitigation activity proponents to ensure that the mitigation activity:
  - 1) avoids, or where this is not feasible, minimises negative impacts on terrestrial and marine biodiversity and ecosystems;
  - 2) protects the habitats of rare, threatened, and endangered species, including areas needed for habitat connectivity;
  - 3) does not convert natural forests, grasslands, wetlands, or high conservation value habitats;
  - 4) minimises soil degradation and soil erosion;
  - 5) minimises water consumption and stress in the mitigation activity.
- b) The carbon-crediting program shall require that mitigation activity proponents confirm in validated design documents:
  - 1) whether the mitigation activity has negative impacts on terrestrial and marine biodiversity and ecosystems, on habitats of rare, threatened, and endangered species, on soil degradation and soil erosion, and on water consumption and water stress;
  - 2) where the mitigation activity results in any of the impacts listed in 1) above, that it has put in place the measures referred to in criterion 7.1 b) 1) above.

## CRITERION 7.6: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, LOCAL COMMUNITIES, AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Table 7.6

### Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, and cultural heritage

#### Requirements

- a) Where the mitigation activity directly or indirectly impacts IPs & LCs, including livelihoods, ancestral knowledge and cultural heritage, the carbon-crediting program shall require mitigation activity proponents to ensure that the mitigation activity:
  - 1) recognises, respects and promotes the protection of the rights of IPs & LCs in line with applicable international human rights law, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples;<sup>5</sup>
  - 2) identifies the rights-holders possibly affected by the mitigation activity (including customary rights of local rights holders);
  - 3) when relevant to circumstances, has applied the FPIC process;
  - 4) does not force eviction or any physical or economic displacement of IPs & LCs, including through access restrictions to lands, territories, or resources, unless agreed upon with IPs & LCs during the FPIC process;
  - 5) preserves and protects cultural heritage consistent with IPs & LCs protocols/rules/plans on the management of cultural heritage or UNESCO Cultural Heritage conventions.
- b) Where the mitigation activity directly or indirectly impacts IPs & LCs, including livelihoods, ancestral knowledge and cultural heritage, the carbon-crediting program shall require that mitigation activity proponents confirm in validated design documents that the mitigation activity adheres to the above safeguards or that it has put in place the measures referred to in criterion 7.1 b) 1) above.

## CRITERION 7.7: RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Table 7.7

### Respect for human rights, stakeholder engagement

#### Requirements

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall require mitigation activity proponents to ensure that the mitigation activity:
  - 1) avoids discrimination and respects human rights;
  - 2) abides by the International Bill of Human Rights<sup>6</sup> and universal instruments ratified by the host country;
  - 3) takes into account and responds to local stakeholders' views.
- b) The carbon-crediting program shall require that mitigation activity proponents confirm in validated design documents that the mitigation activity adheres to the above safeguards, or that it has put in place the measures referred to in criterion 7.1 b) 1) above.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/what-are-human-rights/international-bill-human-rights>

## CRITERION 7.8: GENDER EQUALITY

---

**Table 7.8**  
**Gender equality**

### Requirements

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall require mitigation activity proponents to ensure that the mitigation activity:
    - 1) provides for equal opportunities in the context of gender;
    - 2) protects against and appropriately responds to violence against women and girls;
    - 3) provides equal pay for equal work.
  - b) The carbon-crediting program shall require that mitigation activity proponents confirm in validated design documents that the mitigation activity adheres to the above safeguards or that it has put in place the measures referred to in criterion 7.1 b) 1) above.
- 

## CRITERION 7.9: ROBUST BENEFIT-SHARING

---

**Table 7.9**  
**Robust benefit-sharing**

### Requirements

- a) Where the carbon-crediting program requires arrangements for benefit-sharing with IPs & LCs, the carbon-crediting program shall require that mitigation activity proponents:
    - 1) include in validated design documents information on how benefit-sharing arrangements that are appropriate to the context and consistent with applicable national rules and regulations will be designed and implemented through a benefit-sharing plan;
    - 2) confirm in validated design documents that the draft and final benefit-sharing plan have been shared with the affected IPs & LCs in a form, manner, and language understandable to them;
    - 3) make benefit-sharing outcomes that result from the benefit-sharing plan publicly available, subject to applicable legal restrictions.
-



## CRITERION 7.10: CANCUN SAFEGUARDS

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**Table 7.10**  
**Cancun Safeguards**

### Requirements

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall, for all REDD+ mitigation activities, require that the mitigation activity is consistent with all relevant Cancun Safeguards as set out in paragraph 71 of decision 1/CP.16 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.<sup>7</sup>
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## CRITERION 7.11: ENSURING POSITIVE SDG IMPACTS

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**Table 7.11**  
**Ensuring positive SDG impacts**

### Requirements

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall require that mitigation activity proponents, in validated design documents:
- 1) provide information on how the mitigation activity is consistent with the SDG objectives of the host country, where the SDG objectives are relevant, and such is feasible;
  - 2) demonstrate, if applicable, through qualitative assessment how the mitigation activity delivers positive SDG impacts for certain SDGs (excluding SDG 13), if any;
  - 3) provide information on any standardised tools and methods that were used to assess the SDG impacts.
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<sup>7</sup> <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/cop16/eng/07a01.pdf>

## 7.12: NEXT ITERATION OF THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

**Table 7.12**  
**Next iteration of the Assessment Framework**

Threshold	Requirements
<i>Relating to Criterion 7 in general</i>	The ICVCM Framework recognises that approaches to environmental and social safeguards are currently evolving and that this is a clear area for improvement in the VCM. The ICVCM will consult with relevant stakeholders to understand how current practice can be improved (see section E of the Summary for Decision Makers) and how best to incorporate the requirements in the table below into the next iteration of the Assessment Framework.
<i>In relation to criterion 7.1</i>	Requirements ensuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>assessment by the carbon-crediting program of the environmental and social risks associated with the mitigation activity, activity type, or host country, which take into account the scope and scale of a mitigation activity;</li> <li>validation and verification requirements related to environmental and social safeguards;</li> <li>best practice with regard to local stakeholder consultations and FPIC processes for IPs &amp; LCs, in particular how these can be designed to be more inclusive and reflect the views of women and vulnerable and/or marginalised groups.</li> </ul>
<i>In relation to criterion 7.3</i>	Requirements ensuring that the mitigation activity promotes more sustainable use of resources, including energy and water.
<i>In relation to criterion 7.4</i>	Requirements ensuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the meaningful and informed participation of affected individuals and communities in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of resettlement activities, including, where applicable, FPIC;</li> <li>that where avoidance of displacement is not feasible, displacement only occurs with the consent of affected parties, with full justification and appropriate legal protection and compensation and is accepted by affected communities.</li> </ul>
<i>In relation to criterion 7.5</i>	Requirements ensuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consistency with conservation objectives for terrestrial and marine habitats;</li> <li>compliance with international, national and local laws regulating the introduction of invasive alien species of flora and fauna affecting biodiversity;</li> <li>no conversion of natural forests, grasslands, wetlands or high conservation value habitats;</li> <li>the protection of habitats of rare, threatened, and endangered terrestrial and marine species, including areas needed for habitat connectivity;</li> <li>the minimisation of soil degradation, soil erosion, water consumption, and water stress in the mitigation activity area.</li> </ul>

**Table 7.12 [continued]**  
**Next iteration of the Assessment Framework**

Threshold	Requirements
<i>In relation to criterion 7.6</i>	<p>Requirements ensuring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• avoidance of negative impacts on land, territories, and resources protected under relevant laws and regulations concerning IPs &amp; LCs;</li> <li>• avoidance of negative impacts on the self-determined climate, conservation, and sustainable development priorities, decision-making mechanisms, and forms of self-government of IPs &amp; LCs as defined by them in alignment with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)<sup>8</sup> and ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples;<sup>9</sup></li> <li>• respect for areas inhabited by or believed to be inhabited by uncontacted or isolated IPs &amp; LCs;</li> <li>• translation of relevant documents into relevant and appropriate languages(s) including with regard to Article 13 of the UNDRIP.</li> </ul>
<i>In relation to criterion 7.8</i>	<p>Requirements ensuring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a gender assessment and gender action plan;</li> <li>• use of gender disaggregated data to monitor, assess and report on gender impacts.</li> </ul>
<i>In relation to criterion 7.9</i>	<p>Requirements ensuring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• transparency on use and management of revenues for benefit sharing.</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C169](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C169)

# PART II

# REQUIREMENTS

# RELATING TO

# CATEGORIES

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# B. EMISSIONS IMPACT

## 8. ADDITIONALITY



**The GHG emission reductions or removals from the mitigation activity shall be additional, i.e., they would not have occurred in the absence of the incentive created by carbon credit revenues.<sup>10</sup>**



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<sup>10</sup> There are multiple approaches for additionality that, depending on the type of mitigation activity, can provide strong assurances without the need for an investment analysis.

## CRITERION 8.1: ADDITIONALITY DEMONSTRATION

**Table 8.1**  
**Additionality demonstration**

### Requirements

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall meet CORSIA requirements relating to additionality.<sup>11</sup>
- b) The carbon-crediting program shall have provisions that:
  - 1) meet the requirements of **critterion 8.2 below** (existing host country legal requirements); **AND**
  - 2) meet the requirements of **critterion 8.3 below** (consideration of carbon credits); **AND**
  - 3) consistent with **critterion 8.4 below** (additionality approaches), meet the requirements of **critteria 8.5 to 8.8 below** (investment analysis, barrier analysis, market penetration/common practice, standardised approaches).
- c) Where a carbon-crediting program considers that its alternative additionality approaches meet the same threshold of additionality as achieved by the requirements in **critteria 8.4 to 8.9 below** in relation to one or more Categories it may, per section 3 of the Assessment Procedure, submit an explanation of such and shall make such explanation publicly available.
- d) Jurisdictional REDD+ Programs shall be required to meet the CORSIA requirements<sup>12</sup> relating to additionality and the requirements relating to additionality set out in **critteria 8.9 to 8.10**.

## CRITERION 8.2 EXISTING HOST COUNTRY LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

**Table 8.2**  
**Existing host country legal requirements**

### Requirements

- a) In addition to CORSIA requirements related to additionality, the carbon-crediting program shall:
  - 1) ensure that the mitigation activity is registered only if the resulting carbon credits represent emission reductions or removals that exceed those required due to relevant legal requirements that are enforced. For high-income countries<sup>13</sup>, all legal requirements shall be deemed to be enforced. For countries other than high-income countries, legal requirements shall only be deemed to be unenforced based on authoritative and up-to-date information of non-enforcement that is relevant and applicable to the mitigation activity;
  - 2) require that the evaluation of 1) above to be conducted either by the mitigation activity proponents and be validated by a VVB and/or the carbon-crediting program. The evaluation shall be conducted:
    - i. prior to the registration of the mitigation activity; and
    - ii. at an appropriate frequency thereafter, for example, at each renewal of a crediting period or at every verification where the crediting period is longer than five years.

<sup>11</sup> CORSIA "Eligibility Criterion", "Carbon offset programs must generate units that represent emission reductions, avoidance, or removals that are additional".

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> [https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/new-world-bank-group-country-classifications-income-level-fy24#\\_ftn1](https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/new-world-bank-group-country-classifications-income-level-fy24#_ftn1)

## CRITERION 8.3 CONSIDERATION OF CARBON CREDITS (PRIOR CONSIDERATION)

**Table 8.3**  
**Consideration of carbon credits (prior consideration)**

### Requirements

Consideration of carbon credits may be demonstrated by either Approach A AND/OR Approach B below.

#### Approach A: Demonstration through evidence

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall:
- 1) require mitigation activity proponents to provide publicly available documented evidence of the consideration of carbon credits (e.g., stakeholder consultations) prior to the start date of the mitigation activity, and for the documented evidence to be assessed by a VVB and/or by the carbon-crediting program as part of validation of the mitigation activity; **AND**
  - 2) require mitigation activity proponents to provide the documented evidence to the carbon-crediting program no later than one year after the start date of the mitigation activity; **AND**
  - 3) limit the allowed time period between the documented date of the evidence and the later date of registration of the mitigation activity to a reasonable period of time; **AND/OR**
  - 4) allow mitigation activity proponents to provide publicly available or credible third-party attested evidence that they considered carbon credits prior to the start date of the mitigation activity and shall require that the evidence be assessed by a VVB and/or the carbon-crediting program.

#### Approach B: Alternative approach based on limitation of time between start date and validation/ submission for registration

- b) The carbon-crediting program shall have provisions that establish a reasonable maximum period between the start date of the mitigation activity and validation by a VVB (and/or the carbon-crediting program) or submission for registration, taking into account the time needed to submit the relevant documentation (e.g., two to three years, depending on the Category type).

## CRITERION 8.4 ADDITIONALITY APPROACHES

**Table 8.4**  
**Additionality approaches**

### Requirements

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall have provisions requiring the mitigation activity to demonstrate additionality through any of the following:
- 1) an investment analysis combined with a market penetration/common practice assessment per **criteria 8.5 and 8.7 below** (optionally combined with further approaches);
  - 2) a barrier analysis combined with a market penetration/common practice assessment per **criteria 8.6 and 8.7 below** (optionally combined with further approaches);
  - 3) a standardised approach per **criterion 8.8 below** (optionally combined with further approaches).

## CRITERION 8.5 ADDITIONALITY APPROACH - INVESTMENT ANALYSIS

**Table 8.5**  
**Investment analysis**

### Requirements

- a) Where a carbon-crediting program allows use of investment analysis to demonstrate additionality, it shall require all of the following:
- 1) a suitable financial indicator, such as the net present value (NPV) or internal rate of return (IRR), to be used in the calculation;
  - 2) the calculation of the financial indicator to include all relevant costs (CAPEX, OPEX) and all revenues, including subsidies or official development aid, where applicable;
  - 3) the assumptions, data and conclusions in the investment analysis to be:
    - i. transparently documented in the documentation submitted for registration;<sup>14</sup>
    - ii. appropriately justified and substantiated by evidence; **AND**
    - iii. consistent with information presented to the company's decision-making management and investors/lenders;
  - 4) that all parameters and assumptions used in the analysis are internally consistent (i.e., cash flows shall be expressed in either real or nominal terms consistently, and the calculation shall be consistent with the indicator used, such as project IRR or equity IRR);
  - 5) in case of the benchmark analysis, that the financial benchmark used is consistent with the weighted average cost of capital (or the cost of equity, as applicable) that is commonly applicable to the country, sector and type of mitigation activity;
  - 6) in case of the benchmark analysis, that additionality is demonstrated if the analysis shows that:
    - i. the mitigation activity would not meet the required financial benchmark without carbon credit revenues; **AND**
    - ii. the economic performance of the mitigation activity increases decisively through carbon credit revenues; **AND**
    - iii. carbon credit revenues can raise the economic performance at or above the required financial benchmark;
  - 7) that the period of assessment shall reflect the period of expected operation of the underlying mitigation activity or shall be a period of at least ten years and include the value of the assets at the end of the assessment period;
  - 8) in case of the investment comparison analysis:
    - i. that the alternative scenarios considered are mutually exclusive and provide the same type of products or service levels as the mitigation activity, where applicable;
    - ii. that additionality is demonstrated if the analysis shows that the mitigation activity would not be the economically most attractive scenario in absence of carbon credits;
  - 9) that a sensitivity analysis shall be conducted to show whether the conclusion regarding the financial attractiveness is robust to reasonable variation in the critical assumptions;
  - 10) that all elements of the investment analysis are assessed as part of the validation by a VVB and/or the carbon-crediting program.
- b) Where a carbon-crediting program considers that its alternative additionality approaches meet the same threshold of additionality as achieved by the requirements above in relation to one or more Categories it may, per section 3 of the Assessment Procedure, submit an explanation of such and all relevant provisions to the ICVCM and shall make such explanation publicly available.

<sup>14</sup> Note criteria 3.1 a) and b) in relation to information being made publicly available subject to confidentiality and proprietary, privacy and data protection restrictions.

## CRITERION 8.6 ADDITIONALITY APPROACH: BARRIER ANALYSIS

**Table 8.6**  
**Barrier analysis**

### Requirements

- a) Where a carbon-crediting program allows the use of barrier analysis to demonstrate additionality, it shall require all of the following:
- 1) that the types of barriers that may be considered are limited to the following:
    - i. financial barriers (e.g., loans or other forms of financing are not accessible for the type of mitigation activity and country due to financier's assessment of risks);
    - ii. institutional barriers (e.g., the investor not being the beneficiary of cost savings associated with the investment);
    - iii. information barriers (e.g., lack of awareness in households of the lifecycle costs of energy efficient appliances); OR
    - iv. other barriers specific to the mitigation activity and/or region where the mitigation activity is implemented if these barriers are explicitly identified and elaborated in the relevant quantification methodology or other program documents;
  - 2) that the mitigation activity proponents shall be required:
    - i. to identify specific barriers, and where possible, quantify such barriers; AND
    - ii. to provide verifiable evidence to demonstrate each identified barrier and verifiable evidence that the carbon credit revenues are the decisive element in overcoming each identified barrier; AND
    - iii. to demonstrate that at least one other alternative to the mitigation activity does not face significant barriers, including the barriers faced by the mitigation activity;
  - 3) that the evidence used shall be applied conservatively. In case of uncertainty in the level of the identified barrier, the evidence or the value shall be interpreted to assure that it is very unlikely<sup>15</sup> that the effect of the barrier is overestimated. Such evidence may include independent studies, publicly available surveys, relevant market data, or data from national or international statistics;
  - 4) that all elements of the barrier analysis are assessed as part of the validation by a VVB and/or the carbon-crediting program.
- b) Where a carbon-crediting program considers that its alternative additionality approaches meet the same threshold of additionality as achieved by the requirements above in relation to one or more Categories it may, per section 3 of the Assessment Procedure, submit an explanation of such and all relevant provisions to the ICVCM and shall make such explanation publicly available.

<sup>15</sup> The term very unlikely is used per IPCC (zero to ten percent probability) and how it defines confidence levels, and to the extent any multi-stakeholder working group assesses a Category against this requirement, the assessment would be guided by the IPCC usage.



## CRITERION 8.7 ADDITIONALITY APPROACH - MARKET PENETRATION/COMMON PRACTICE

**Table 8.7**  
**Market penetration/common practice**

### Requirements

- a) Where a carbon-crediting program allows market penetration/common practice assessments to demonstrate additionality, it shall require all of the following:
- 1) market penetration/common practice approaches to be appropriately defined in terms of recent uptake or existing stock/diffusion of technologies, services or practices in relation to a realistic maximum market size or potential, taking into account any constraints for the uptake of the relevant technology, service, or practice;<sup>16</sup>
  - 2) an appropriate geographical boundary for assessing market penetration/common practice for the type of technology, service or practice, taking into account relevant market boundaries, where applicable;
  - 3) that the additionality assessment is only passed if the market penetration/common practice approach does not surpass an appropriate threshold defined by the carbon-crediting program, taking into account the type of mitigation activity;
  - 4) that all elements of the market penetration/common practice assessment, including adherence to the provisions above, are assessed as part of the validation by a VVB and/or the carbon-crediting program.

## CRITERION 8.8 ADDITIONALITY APPROACH – STANDARDISED APPROACHES

**Table 8.8**  
**Standardised approaches**

### Requirements

- a) Where a carbon-crediting program allows use of standardised approaches to demonstrate additionality, it shall set out a clear process by which the carbon-crediting program may develop standardised approaches, including objective justification of criteria and expert review, and require all of the following:
- 1) that the standardized approach is to be defined at an appropriate level of aggregation of technologies/ activities and at a high level of stringency comparable to criteria 8.1 to 8.7;
  - 2) that methodological approaches and data used to derive each standardised approach shall be made publicly available, together with a detailed explanation justifying the assessment of additionality;
  - 3) that analysis underlying each standardized approach shall be reviewed regularly (e.g., every three years), to ensure that any changing circumstances are appropriately reflected (e.g., reduced costs for the relevant technology). Any update resulting from a review is not required to retroactively apply to registered mitigation activities;
  - 4) that the adherence of a mitigation activity to the criteria of the standardized approach is assessed as part of the validation by a VVB and/or the carbon-crediting program.
- b) Where a carbon-crediting program considers that its alternative additionality approaches meet the same threshold of additionality as achieved by the requirements above in relation to one or more Categories it may, per section 3 of the Assessment Procedure, submit an explanation of such and all relevant provisions to the ICVCM and shall make such explanation publicly available.

<sup>16</sup> This requirement does not preclude the carbon-crediting program's program documents from allowing the assessment to exclude the mitigation activity itself, where appropriate.

## CRITERION 8.9 ADDITIONALITY FOR JURISDICTIONAL REDD+ PROGRAMS: DEMONSTRATION OF NEW MITIGATION ACTIONS OR ENHANCED IMPLEMENTATION OF ONGOING MITIGATION ACTIONS

Table 8.9

### Jurisdictional REDD+: Demonstration of new mitigation actions or enhanced implementation of ongoing mitigation

#### Requirements

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall have provisions in place that require:
  - 1) the Jurisdictional REDD+ Program proponent to:
    - i. submit an implementation plan (meaning a comprehensive and strategic implementation document(s), containing the scope of the program and planned actions that may include, *inter alia*, policies, laws, proposed regulatory frameworks, technical assistance programs, enforcement measures, regulations, legal rights frameworks, and/or incentive mechanisms);
    - ii. identify the new mitigation actions or enhanced implementation of ongoing mitigation actions and demonstrate that they are designed for the purpose of significantly addressing key drivers of deforestation and degradation at jurisdictional scale in order to reduce emissions (and where applicable, enhance removals). This information shall be included in the implementation plan;
    - iii. report on the implementation of the new mitigation actions or enhanced implementation of ongoing mitigation actions in monitoring reports;
  - 2) validation/verification of the requirements in 1) above by a VVB and/or the carbon-crediting program;
  - 3) the Jurisdictional REDD+ Program proponent to provide evidence to the carbon-crediting program demonstrating that expected revenues from carbon credits (or results-based finance) are decisive for enabling the implementation of the Jurisdictional REDD+ Program (for example, by providing information on how expected revenues catalyse mitigation actions and/or how expected revenues are instrumental in financing the mitigation actions).
- b) Where a carbon-crediting program considers that its alternative additionality approaches meet the same threshold of additionality as achieved by the requirements above it may, per section 3 of the Assessment Procedure, submit an explanation of such and all relevant provisions to the ICVCM and shall make such explanation publicly available.

## CRITERION 8.10 ADDITIONALITY FOR JURISDICTIONAL REDD+ PROGRAMS: CONSIDERATION OF CARBON CREDITS

**Table 8.10**  
**Jurisdictional REDD+: Consideration of carbon credits**

### Requirements

The requirements of Approach A or Approach B shall be met.

#### Approach A: Demonstration through evidence

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall have provisions in place that:
  - 1) require the Jurisdictional REDD+ Program proponent to provide documented evidence that the Jurisdictional REDD+ Program proponent considered carbon credits or results-based finance related payments prior to the implementation of the new mitigation actions or the enhanced implementation of ongoing mitigation actions;
  - 2) specify that the documented evidence in 1) above may include either or both of:
    - i. a formal document of intent (e.g., notification; minutes of meetings of relevant jurisdictional authorities; investment documents; proof of participation in readiness activities) showing a decision to participate in voluntary carbon markets or a results-based finance framework; or
    - ii. proof of a public stakeholder consultation on the proposed Jurisdictional REDD+ Program.

#### Approach B: Alternative approach based on limitation of time

- b) The carbon-crediting program shall have provisions that establish a reasonable maximum period between the start date of the mitigation activity and validation by a VVB (and/or the carbon-crediting program) or submission for registration, taking into account the time needed to submit the relevant documentation for the Jurisdictional REDD+ Program under the carbon-crediting program.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> The carbon-crediting program must address the risk that carbon credits are issued in respect of declining deforestation or degradation rates during this time period that do not result from the new mitigation actions or enhanced implementation of ongoing mitigation actions (referred to in criterion 8.9 a) 1) ii).

## 8.11 NEXT ITERATION OF THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

**Table 8.11**  
**Next iteration of the Assessment Framework**

Threshold	Requirements
<i>In relation to criterion 8.1</i>	The ICVCM may consider requiring reassessment of additionality at renewal of the crediting period for certain Categories.
<i>Prior consideration</i>	The ICVCM recognizes the important role that prior consideration of carbon credits plays in ensuring the additionality of credited mitigation activities and that current market practice addresses this issue in a variety of ways. In the next iteration of the Assessment Framework, the ICVCM will consider criteria that limit the allowed time period based on an assessment of the reasonable amount of time to produce documentation and/or a reasonable amount of elapsed time between activity start date and registration, including for Jurisdictional REDD+ Programs.
<i>In relation to criterion 8.3</i>	The ICVCM may exclude criterion 8.3 Approach B and criterion 8.3 Approach A a) 4 in order to ensure that carbon-crediting programs have developed requisite rules to address additionality in line with criterion 8.3 Approach A a) 1) to 3).
<i>In relation to criterion 8.9 and 8.10</i>	The ICVCM may exclude criterion 8.9 Approach B and criterion 8.10 Approach B in order to ensure that carbon-crediting programs have developed requisite rules to address additionality in respect of prior consideration of carbon credits and/or results-based finance and the applicability of financial additionality to Jurisdictional REDD+ Programs. <sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Note also the Continuous Improvement Work Program on jurisdictional approaches.

## 9. PERMANENCE



**The GHG emission reductions or removals from the mitigation activity shall be permanent or, where there is a risk of reversal, there shall be measures in place to address those risks and compensate for reversals.**



### CRITERION 9.1 CATEGORIES TO WHICH PERMANENCE REQUIREMENTS APPLY

**Table 9.1**  
Categories to which permanence requirements apply

Requirements
<p>a) The CORSIA requirements relating to permanence<sup>19</sup> shall be met.</p> <p>b) The following Categories of mitigation activity are considered to have a material risk of reversal. Carbon credits issued for mitigation activities in the Categories below may only be CCP-Approved if all the requirements in criteria 9.2 to 9.5 related to permanence are met:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) storage and protection of carbon in biogenic reservoirs, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. conservation and avoided conversion (e.g., grassland/rangeland management, avoided deforestation);</li> <li>ii. agriculture soil carbon sequestration;</li> <li>iii. forestry sequestration (improved forest management, afforestation/reforestation, agroforestry);</li> <li>iv. wetland and marine ecosystem restoration/management (including seagrasses, saltmarshes, mangroves, peatlands).</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>c) The carbon-crediting program shall assess the risk of reversals and where material risk is identified, have appropriate measures to avoid material risks of reversals for the following Categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) mitigation activities involving the displacement of non-renewable biomass;</li> <li>2) biochar;</li> <li>3) CCS with geological storage;</li> <li>4) enhanced weathering;</li> <li>5) CCS with mineralization;</li> <li>6) CO<sub>2</sub> in concrete utilization.</li> </ol> <p>d) Jurisdictional REDD + Programs shall be required to meet only the requirements for permanence set out in criterion 9.5 below.</p>

<sup>19</sup> CORSIA "Eligibility Criterion", "Permanence - Carbon offset credits must represent emissions reductions, avoidance, or carbon sequestration that are permanent. If there is risk of reductions or removals being reversed, then either (a) such credits are not eligible or (b) mitigation measures are in place to monitor, mitigate, and compensate any material incidence of non-permanence".



## CRITERION 9.2 COMPENSATION FOR REVERSALS

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**Table 9.2**  
**Compensation for reversals**

### Requirements

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall cancel a carbon credit for each tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent reversed. OR
  - b) The carbon-crediting program shall require the mitigation activity proponents to cancel a carbon credit for each tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent reversed.
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## CRITERION 9.3 MONITORING AND COMPENSATION PERIOD

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**Table 9.3**  
**Monitoring and compensation period**

### Requirements

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall in relation to Categories listed in criterion 9.1 b) 1) above:
    - 1) require a monitoring and compensation period for such mitigation activities of at least forty years from the start of the first crediting period or to at least the end of the crediting period, whichever is the later;
    - 2) require mitigation activity proponents<sup>20</sup> to monitor and report any reversals for the full monitoring and compensation period and compensate for avoidable reversals;
    - 3) refrain from issuing further carbon credits until avoidable reversals have been compensated;
    - 4) draw upon the pooled buffer reserve if avoidable reversals are not compensated per a) 2) above;
    - 5) treat cessation of monitoring and verification as an avoidable reversal.
- 

<sup>20</sup> Or the carbon-crediting program or host country, if applicable.

## CRITERION 9.4 COMPENSATION MECHANISM

**Table 9.4**  
**Compensation mechanism**

### Requirements

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall, in relation to Categories listed in criterion 9.1 b) 1), above:
- 1) require estimation of the reversal risk using a clearly defined methodology that is made publicly available;
  - 2) require or incentivise mitigation activity proponents to take measures to mitigate potential reversal risks;
  - 3) define and apply clear criteria for determining whether a reversal is avoidable or unavoidable;
  - 4) implement a pooled buffer reserve to compensate for reversals to which all relevant mitigation activities contribute, and from which reversals from any contributing mitigation activities may be compensated (in order to meet the requirements of criterion 9.2);
  - 5) with respect to the pooled buffer reserve:
    - i. ensure that the proportion of carbon credits placed in the pooled buffer reserve are at least twenty percent of the total carbon credits issued to contributing mitigation activities; OR
    - ii. ensure that the carbon credits placed in the pooled buffer reserve are proportional to the reversal risk of the mitigation activity over the full length of the monitoring and compensation period and account for the risk that the mitigation activity proponents do not compensate for avoidable reversals; AND
    - iii. make publicly available information on the pooled buffer reserve contents, including origin of carbon credits (e.g., mitigation activity, activity type and vintage).

## CRITERION 9.5 JURISDICTIONAL REDD+ PERMANENCE

**Table 9.5**  
**Jurisdictional REDD+ Permanence**

Requirements
<p>a) In relation to a Jurisdictional REDD+ Program, the carbon-crediting program shall:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) implement a pooled buffer reserve to which each participating Jurisdictional REDD+ Program proponent shall contribute and from which reversals that occur within in the accounting boundaries of the Jurisdictional REDD+ Program while the Jurisdictional REDD+ Program proponent is participating in the carbon-crediting program may be compensated;</li> <li>2) require that the percentage of carbon credits that a Jurisdictional REDD+ Program proponent must place into the pooled buffer reserve is proportional to the reversal risk and adequate to compensate for potential reversals for a minimum of forty years from the start of the first crediting period;</li> <li>3) where a reversal exceeds the total contribution to the pooled buffer reserve made by the relevant Jurisdictional REDD+ Program proponent prior to the reversal, require the participating Jurisdictional REDD+ Program proponent to replenish the pooled buffer reserve to return the pooled buffer reserve to a percentage proportionate to the risk per 9.5 a) 2) above;</li> <li>4) require that all the carbon credits in the pooled buffer reserve contributed by that Jurisdictional REDD + Program proponent be immediately cancelled when that Jurisdictional REDD + Program proponent leaves the carbon-crediting program;</li> <li>5) provide evidence to support 9.5 a) 2) above.</li> </ol>

## 9.6 NEXT ITERATION OF THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

**Table 9.6**  
**Next iteration of the Assessment Framework**

Threshold	Requirements
<i>In relation to permanence</i>	The ICVCM will consider longer monitoring and compensation periods (e.g., one hundred years) and shifting the monitoring and compensation oversight to the carbon-crediting program or the jurisdiction aligned with existing and emerging best practice among carbon-crediting programs. Given the relative newness of Jurisdictional REDD+ approaches and the lack of experience with jurisdictional programs to date, the ICVCM will continue to analyse the adequacy of the Jurisdictional REDD+ permanence criteria and consider specific criteria related to permanence for future iterations of the Assessment Framework. <sup>21</sup>
<i>In relation to criterion 9.4</i>	In the next iteration of the Assessment Framework, the ICVCM will require the carbon-crediting program to have provisions in place to ensure the continued operation of the pooled buffer reserve until the latest date of expiry of the monitoring and compensation period of all registered and completed mitigation activities. This may be, for example, when the carbon-crediting program ceases to exist or is otherwise prevented from operating the pooled buffer reserve.

<sup>21</sup> Note also the Continuous Improvement Work Program on permanence.

## 10. ROBUST QUANTIFICATION



**The GHG emission reductions or removals from the mitigation activity shall be robustly quantified, based on conservative approaches, completeness and sound scientific methods.**



### CRITERION 10.1 ROBUST QUANTIFICATION OF EMISSION REDUCTIONS OR REMOVALS

Table 10.1

Robust quantification of emission reductions or removals

#### Requirements

- a) Quantification approaches shall meet CORSIA requirements.
- b) The quantification approaches in quantification methodologies and other program documents applicable to the Category shall ensure conservativeness so that:
  - 1) it is likely<sup>22</sup> that the quantified emission reductions or removals from the mitigation activities using that quantification methodology and other program documents are not overestimated, taking into account the overall uncertainty in quantifying the emission reductions or removals;
  - AND**
  - 2) it is very unlikely<sup>23</sup> that emission reductions or removals from a mitigation activity using the quantification methodology and other program documents can be very significantly overestimated.
- c) The overall uncertainty to be taken into account per criterion 10.1 b) 1) above shall include all causes of uncertainty, including in assumptions (e.g., baseline scenario), estimation equations or models, parameters (e.g., representativeness of default values) and in measurement approaches (e.g., the accuracy of measurement methods) and overall uncertainty is required to be assessed as the combined uncertainty from individual causes.
- d) The carbon-crediting program shall ensure overall conservativeness per criterion 10.1 b) and robust quantification through the specific provisions in criteria 10.2 to 10.8 below.<sup>24</sup>
- e) Where a carbon-crediting program considers that its alternative quantification approaches meet the same threshold as the requirements achieved in criteria 10.2 to 10.8 below in relation to one or more Categories it may, per section 3 of the Assessment Procedure, submit an explanation of such and shall make such explanation publicly available.

22 The term likely is used per IPCC (sixty-six to one hundred percent probability) and how it defines confidence levels, and to the extent any multi-stakeholder working group assesses a Category against this requirement, the assessment would be guided by the IPCC usage.

23 The term very unlikely is used per IPCC (zero to ten percent probability), and as described above (see footnote 21).

24 One possible means, among others, to ensuring conservativeness, is through applying in the quantification methodology a discount factor commensurate to the overall uncertainty of quantified emission reductions.

## CRITERION 10.2 BOUNDARY FOR THE MITIGATION ACTIVITY

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Table 10.2

### Boundary for the mitigation activity

#### Requirements

- a) The following approaches are considered to enable conservativeness and robust quantification:
- 1) the quantification methodology or applicable program documents require mitigation activity proponents to account for all significant emission sources or sinks altered by the mitigation activity, unless the omission leads to a more conservative quantification of emission reductions or removals and the omission is duly justified in the quantification methodology;
  - 2) the quantification methodology or applicable program documents require mitigation activity proponents to delineate the boundary of the mitigation activity (e.g. physical, administrative, geographic, jurisdictional, as appropriate) including the altered emission sources and sinks and, where practicable, the location of the emission sources and sinks unless the omission leads to a more conservative quantification of emission reductions or removals and the omission is duly justified in the quantification methodology.
-



## CRITERION 10.3 DETERMINATION OF THE BASELINE SCENARIO AND QUANTIFICATION OF BASELINE EMISSIONS OR REMOVALS

Table 10.3

### Determination of the baseline scenario and quantification of baseline emissions or removals

#### Requirements

- a) The following approaches are considered to enable conservativeness and robust quantification:
- 1) the quantification methodology or applicable program documents ensure that the baseline scenario to be used is selected in a conservative manner, including by:
    - i. considering different scenarios, including the best available technology (BAT) or practice in the country/region of the mitigation activity or statistically relevant historical information;
    - ii. considering uncertainties in choosing between different candidate baseline scenarios;
    - iii. ensuring that existing government policies and legal requirements are considered in determining the baseline scenario (i.e., as long as their enforcement is widespread, except for high-income countries where government policies and legal requirements are considered enforced); and
    - iv. ensuring that rebound effects (i.e., an increase in product use or service level as a result of the implementation of a mitigation activity, e.g., when introducing energy-efficient appliances) are accounted for;
  - 2) the quantification methodology or applicable program documents ensure that the overall degree of conservativeness in the quantification of baseline emissions or removals is based on the level of the overall uncertainty, taking into account the choice of assumptions, models, parameters, data sources, measurements methods and other factors;<sup>25</sup>
  - 3) the quantification methodology or applicable program documents ensure that any potential perverse incentives for the mitigation activity proponent to inflate quantified baseline emissions (or depress baseline removals) are taken into account; and
  - 4) the quantification methodology or applicable program documents ensure that the baseline scenario and quantification of baseline emissions or removals are updated or reviewed at a frequency that appropriately reflects changing circumstances. These circumstances could include changes in government policies and legal requirements.

<sup>25</sup> For example, in the Category of avoided unplanned deforestation, conservativeness could be facilitated through ensuring that the baseline for expected deforestation in the crediting period, or key parameters for setting the baseline, are provided by the carbon-crediting program or an independent third party chosen by the carbon-crediting program and ensuring that the baseline is derived from larger-scale jurisdictional or regional activity data, if this is available and such is possible, and based on an assessment of risk of deforestation in the mitigation activity area.

## CRITERION 10.4 QUANTIFICATION OF EMISSIONS OR REMOVALS FROM THE MITIGATION ACTIVITY

Table 10.4

### Quantification of emissions or removals from the mitigation activity

#### Requirements

- a) The following approaches are considered to enable conservativeness and robust quantification:
- 1) the quantification methodology or applicable program documents use approaches to quantify emissions or removals from the mitigation activity that are conservative in light of the uncertainties, taking into account the choice of assumptions, models, parameters, data sources, default factors, measurements methods and other factors;
  - 2) the quantification methodology or applicable program documents use comparable quantification approaches for both baseline and mitigation activity emissions or removals.

## CRITERION 10.5 QUANTIFICATION OF LEAKAGE EMISSIONS

Table 10.5

### Quantification of emissions or removals from the mitigation activity

#### Requirements

- a) The following approaches are considered to enable conservativeness and robust quantification:
- 1) the quantification methodology or related program documents ensure that all relevant potential sources of leakage associated with the type of mitigation activity are considered;
  - 2) the quantification methodology or related program documents includes all material sources of leakage in the quantification of emission reductions or removals, except where the omission of leakage sources is conservative, and consider the following potential sources of leakage, where material:<sup>26</sup>
    - i. Upstream/downstream emissions;<sup>27</sup>
    - ii. Activity-shifting;
    - iii. Market leakage;
    - iv. Ecological leakage;
  - 3) the quantification methodology or related program documents ensure minimization of any material sources of leakage emissions through requirements in the respective quantification methodologies (e.g., through requirements that avoid leakage);
  - 4) the quantification methodology or related program documents ensure estimation and deduction of any residual leakage emissions in the quantification of emission reductions or removals including through specific tools or standardized approaches; and
  - 5) the quantification methodology or related program documents ensure that the estimation of leakage emissions is robust and conservative in the light of the uncertainties, taking into account the choice of assumptions, models, parameters, data sources, measurements methods and other factors.

<sup>26</sup> Some methodologies may include leakage emissions directly in the calculation of (net) emission reductions, while others may account for leakage emissions separately. Whether an increase in emissions caused by a mitigation activity is formally designated as “leakage” is not important, as long as all material effects of an activity on emissions are accounted for.

<sup>27</sup> i. to iv. – see Definitions.

## CRITERION 10.6 ATTRIBUTABILITY OF THE QUANTIFIED EMISSION REDUCTIONS OR REMOVALS TO THE MITIGATION ACTIVITY

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Table 10.6

### Attributability of the quantified emission reductions or removals to the mitigation activity

#### Requirements

- a) The following approaches are considered to enable conservativeness and robust quantification:
- 1) the quantification methodology or related program documents ensure that the credited emission reductions or removals result from the implementation of the mitigation activity and not from changes in exogenous factors that are not related to the mitigation activity.
- 

## CRITERION 10.7 AGGREGATE DURATION OF ALL CREDITING PERIODS

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Table 10.7

### Aggregate duration of all crediting periods

#### Requirements

- a) The following approaches are considered to enable conservativeness and robust quantification:
- 1) the quantification methodology or related program documents ensure that aggregate crediting periods are short enough to allow for a progressive increase in ambition over time; and
  - 2) the quantification methodology or related program documents ensure that crediting periods are appropriate to the type of mitigation activity, based on, *inter alia*, the rate of technological change, lifetime of equipment used in the baseline scenario or change in the regulatory environment.
-

## CRITERION 10.8 MONITORING APPROACHES

**Table 10.8**  
**Monitoring approaches**

### Requirements

- a) The following approaches are considered to enable conservativeness and robust quantification:
- 1) the quantification methodology or applicable program documents ensure robust monitoring by:
    - i. requiring the establishment of an operational and management plan for monitoring that addresses the assignment of responsibilities of various parties and the operational process of monitoring;
    - ii. specifying the monitoring approach(es) for all parameters needed for the quantification of emission reductions or removals;
    - iii. ensuring that the approaches related to use of measurements, sampling, data from third parties (e.g., studies, statistics, satellite data) or default values are robust, statistically representative or conservative;
    - iv. ensuring that the choice of the approaches, data, measurement methods or default values appropriately addresses uncertainty and leads to a conservative estimate of emission reductions or removals;
    - v. requiring appropriate quality assurance and quality control measures, such as cross-checking the monitoring results with other sources of data; and
    - vi. requiring a plan or procedure for conservative treatment and deduction of emission reductions or removals in case of unexpected interruption or errors in monitoring equipment or procedures;
  - 2) the quantification methodology or applicable program documents may provide for alternative monitoring approaches to be used when the mitigation activity becomes inaccessible for temporary periods (e.g., is in a conflict zone, or where human movement restrictions are in place, e.g., due to pandemic).

## 10.9 NEXT ITERATION OF THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

**Table 10.9**  
**Next iteration of the Assessment Framework**

Threshold	Requirements
	The ICVCM emphasises the importance of robust quantification and the need to create robust and sufficiently refined methodologies to lower the risk that credited emission reductions or removals are overestimated and will continue to consider ways to set criteria that reduce the likelihood of overestimation and criteria that will ensure that the ambition of the baseline is enhanced upon update and/or review. <sup>28</sup>
<i>In relation to Jurisdictional REDD+</i>	The ICVCM will consider whether to require carbon-crediting programs to have provisions requiring that where it has a registered Project-based mitigation activity within a Jurisdictional REDD+ Program <sup>29</sup> (as defined), that the Project-based mitigation activity takes into account the provisions of that Jurisdictional REDD+ Program where the Jurisdiction requires it.
<i>In relation to criterion 10.3</i>	The ICVCM will consider whether to require quantification methodologies to ensure that the approach to updating and reviewing the baseline increases the ambition of the baseline over time.

28 See also the Continuous Improvement work program on Paris Alignment in the context of baselines that relates to assessing how baseline scenarios and baseline emission and removal quantification can take into account and be aligned to Paris Agreement goals, the host country NDC, and the LT-LEDs of the host country, if any.

29 See definitions: A "Project-based mitigation activity within a Jurisdictional REDD+ Program" refers to a project-based mitigation activity aimed at reducing emissions and/or enhancing removals (reduced emissions for deforestation and forest degradation, enhancement or conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests) that is located within a jurisdiction covered by a registered Jurisdictional REDD+ Program and for which the accounting boundaries overlap with the Jurisdictional REDD+ Program.

## 11. NO DOUBLE-COUNTING

“

**The GHG emission reductions or removals from the mitigation activity shall not be double counted, they shall only be counted once towards achieving mitigation targets or goals. Double counting covers double issuance, double claiming, and double use.**

”

### CRITERION 11.1: NO DOUBLE ISSUANCE (OVERLAPPING CLAIMS)

Table 11.1  
No double issuance (overlapping claims)

#### Requirements

- a) For Categories where there is a material risk of overlapping claims, the carbon-crediting program shall have provisions to identify potential overlaps between different mitigation activities and ensure that where there are overlapping GHG accounting boundaries between mitigation activities, it will only issue one carbon credit for the GHG emission reductions or removals that occur within the GHG accounting boundaries of more than one mitigation activity, including by:
  - 1) disallowing registration of any mitigation activity whose GHG accounting boundaries overlap with the GHG accounting boundaries for carbon-crediting of another mitigation activity;
  - 2) disallowing carbon credits for GHG emission reductions or removals that occur within the GHG accounting boundaries of another mitigation activity, under the same program.
- b) The carbon-crediting program ('program A') shall also have provisions in place to apply, where practicable, the requirements set out in a) above in respect of mitigation activities registered under another carbon-crediting program ('program B'), that have GHG accounting boundaries that overlap with mitigation activities that are registered with the carbon-crediting program (program A).



## CRITERION 11.2: NO DOUBLE CLAIMING WITH MANDATORY DOMESTIC MITIGATION SCHEMES

Table 11.2

### No double claiming with mandatory domestic mitigation schemes

#### Requirements

- a) For Categories where there is a material risk of double claiming, the carbon-crediting program shall have provisions to ensure either that:
- 1) mitigation activities that generate GHG emission reductions or removals that overlap with mandatory domestic mitigation schemes (e.g., emissions trading systems or renewable energy quotas) are not registered and/or carbon credits are not issued; or
  - 2) when carbon credits are associated with GHG emission reductions or removals that are also covered by the mandatory domestic mitigation scheme, the mandatory domestic mitigation scheme has measures in place to ensure that any relevant impacts of the mitigation activity (e.g., the GHG emission reductions achieved or the kilowatt-hours of renewable electricity produced) are not counted towards the achievement of targets or obligations under the mandatory domestic mitigation scheme (e.g., by cancelling allowances from the emissions trading system before issuing carbon credits).

## CRITERION 11.3: NO DOUBLE CLAIMING OF GHG MITIGATION ARISING FROM OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL CREDITS

Table 11.3

### No double claiming of GHG mitigation arising from other environmental credits

#### Requirements

- a) For Categories where there is a material risk of double claiming, the carbon-crediting program shall have provisions to ensure that carbon credits are not issued for GHG emission reductions or removals achieved by a mitigation activity where units related to the same climate impacts of the mitigation activity are traded in other environmental markets or accounting frameworks (e.g., Renewable Energy Certificates generated from renewable energy projects).

# C. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS AND SAFEGUARDS

## 12. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS AND SAFEGUARDS

“

**The carbon-crediting program shall have clear guidance, tools and compliance procedures to ensure mitigation activities conform with or go beyond widely established industry best practices on social and environmental safeguards while delivering positive sustainable development impacts.**

”

The Program-level criteria contain numerous requirements applicable to how carbon-crediting programs ensure mitigation activities have addressed risks relating to safeguards and sustainable development. See also Table 7.12 above in relation to the next iteration of the Assessment Framework, the Continuous Improvement work program that will address all points listed in Table 7.12 and Attribute 3 relating to Quantified SD benefits.

The ICVCM is aware that carbon-crediting programs have more recently or are currently developing new and expanded requirements in this area and, as a result, carbon credits issued in the past might not have been subject to the more advanced criteria in section 7 that apply to CCP-Eligible carbon-crediting programs. As such, in order to establish criteria applicable to all carbon credits, including those that might have been issued earlier, the ICVCM have created the baseline Category-level criteria in 12.1 and 12.2 below.

## CRITERION 12.1 SAFEGUARDS

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**Table 12.1**  
**Safeguards**

### Requirements

- a) Mitigation activities shall meet CORSIA requirements related to Safeguards systems.
  - b) Where a Category is typically also operating under a third party-linked certification scheme or third party-linked robust set of requirements that are relevant to safeguards (e.g., IFC Environmental and Social Performance Standards) or to specific further requirements of the carbon-crediting program relating to safeguards, the carbon-crediting program shall provide such information for the assessment process in the Assessment Platform.
- 

## CRITERION 12.2 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS

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**Table 12.2**  
**Sustainable Development benefits**

### Requirements

- a) Mitigation activities shall meet CORSIA requirements related to sustainable development.
  - b) Where a Category is typically also operating under a third party linked certification scheme or third party-linked robust set of requirements<sup>30</sup> that are relevant to sustainable development benefits, or to specific further requirements of the carbon-crediting program relating to sustainable development, the carbon-crediting program shall provide such information for assessment in the Assessment Platform.
- 

<sup>30</sup> For example, Gold Standard SDG Impact Tool (operated by the Gold Standard), Sustainable Development Verified Impact Standard (SD Vista) (operated by Verra), Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards (CCB) (operated by Verra).

## 12.3 NEXT ITERATION OF THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

**Table 12.3**  
**Next iteration of the Assessment Framework**

Threshold	Requirements
<i>General</i>	The ICVCM is aware that further work is needed to improve sustainable development benefits and safeguards associated with mitigation activities. For the next iteration of the Assessment Framework, and through the Continuous Improvement work program, the ICVCM will draw upon available safeguards and SDG impact measurement and management protocols including third party certification requirements to develop further criteria and a risk and impact rating framework for Categories.
<i>In relation to criterion 12.2</i>	<p>The ICVCM will consider requiring methodologies to require evidence of level of change achieved and the degree to which sustainable development benefits can be attributed to the mitigation activity.</p> <p>The ICVCM will consider requiring methodologies to include provisions promoting net positive sustainable development benefit.</p>

## 13 CONTRIBUTION TO NET ZERO TRANSITION

“

**The mitigation activity shall avoid locking-in levels of GHG emissions, technologies or carbon-intensive practices that are incompatible with the objective of achieving net zero GHG emissions by mid-century.**

”

### CRITERION 13.1 CATEGORIES INCOMPATIBLE WITH CONTRIBUTION TO NET ZERO TRANSITION

Table 13.1  
Categories incompatible with contribution to net zero transition

#### Requirements

- a) Carbon credits issued under Categories listed in criterion a) 1) below are not eligible to be CCP-Approved:
- 1) categories:
    - i. mitigation activities that directly lead to an increase in the extraction of fossil fuels (e.g., exploration and extraction of fossil fuels);
    - ii. mitigation activities relating to coal-fired electricity generation;
    - iii. mitigation activities that involve any other unabated fossil fuel-powered electricity generation, other than new gas-fired generation that is part of increased zero-emissions generation capacity in support of national low carbon energy transitions;
    - iv. mitigation activities focused on road transport that rely on the continued use of solely fossil fueled powered engines.

## CRITERION 13.2 CONTRIBUTION TO NET ZERO TRANSITION

**Table 13.2**  
**Contribution to net zero transition**

### Requirements

- a) Carbon-crediting programs shall ensure that new or revised methodologies require mitigation activity proponents to assess compatibility of the mitigation activity with transition to net zero by reference to the net zero objectives of the host country.

## 13.3 NEXT ITERATION OF THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

**Table 13.3**  
**Next iteration of the Assessment Framework**

Threshold	Requirements
<i>In relation to criterion 13.2</i>	The ICVCM will consider extending assessment of compatibility with transition to net zero to existing active methodologies, by requiring a dedicated section in all methodologies requiring that mitigation activities using the methodology describe how the mitigation activity is compatible with a transition towards net zero in the relevant host country, including the potential contribution of the mitigation activity.



# PART III

# REQUIREMENTS

# RELATING TO CCP

# ATTRIBUTES

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## CCP ATTRIBUTE 1: HOST COUNTRY AUTHORIZATION PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 6 OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT

**Table 1**  
**CCP Attribute 1: Host country authorization pursuant to Article 6 of the Paris Agreement**

### Requirements for the CCP Attribute

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall have a unique tag for this CCP Attribute that shall be different from other CCP Attributes.
- b) The carbon-crediting program shall ensure an Article 6 authorization associated with the carbon credits has been provided by the host country before it grants the carbon credits the Attribute of Article 6 authorization and marks the carbon credits accordingly in the carbon-crediting program registry.
- c) The carbon-crediting program shall make the information received in relation to Article 6 authorizations publicly available and ensure the information is kept up to date on its website.
- d) The carbon-crediting program shall prepare regular reports on the status of carbon credits associated with Article 6 authorizations and make these reports publicly available, including data disaggregated by host country, mitigation activity and vintage. The carbon-crediting program shall provide each host country with information relating to carbon credits associated with Article 6 authorizations by that country, including information relating to mitigation activities and vintages.<sup>31</sup>
- e) The carbon-crediting program shall regularly seek evidence of the appropriate application of corresponding adjustments pursuant to Article 6 authorization by the host country. If such evidence cannot be obtained within two years of the required application of corresponding adjustments pursuant to Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, the carbon-crediting program shall withdraw this Attribute from carbon credits in its registry and inform the relevant account holders.

<sup>31</sup> This provision facilitates the application of corresponding adjustments by host countries in cases where the “first international transfer” for OIMP has been defined as the “use or cancellation”, in accordance with paragraph 2.b of the Article 6, paragraph 2 (decision 2/CMA.3).

## CCP ATTRIBUTE 2: SHARE OF PROCEEDS FOR ADAPTATION

Table 2

### CCP Attribute 2: Share of Proceeds for Adaptation

#### Requirements for the CCP Attribute

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall have a unique tag for this CCP Attribute that shall be different from other CCP Attributes.
- b) The carbon-crediting program shall ensure that the following requirement has been satisfied before it grants the carbon credits the Attribute of a Share of Proceeds for Adaptation and marks the carbon credits accordingly in the carbon-crediting program registry:
  - 1) the mitigation activity proponents have provided satisfactory information to demonstrate that:
    - i. a monetary contribution that the mitigation activity proponents have confirmed is equivalent to five percent of the revenue associated with the issued carbon credits has been made to the Adaptation Fund; and/or
    - ii. at least five percent of issued carbon credits have been forwarded to a dedicated registry account managed by or on behalf of the Adaptation Fund.
- c) The carbon-crediting program shall make the information in relation to monetary contributions and/or carbon credits forwarded to the Adaptation Fund publicly available on its website and ensure the information is kept up to date.

## CCP ATTRIBUTE 3: QUANTIFIED POSITIVE SDG IMPACTS

Table 3

### CCP Attribute 3: Quantified positive SDG impacts

#### Requirements for the CCP Attribute

- a) The carbon-crediting program shall have a unique tag for this CCP Attribute that shall be different from other CCP Attributes.
- b) The carbon-crediting program shall ensure the following requirements have been satisfied before it grants the carbon credits the Attribute of quantified positive SDG impacts, and marks the carbon credits accordingly in the carbon-crediting program registry:
  - 1) the SDG impacts of the mitigation activity have been monitored and quantified ex-post using a method, tool or standard<sup>32</sup> recognised by a CCP-Eligible carbon-crediting program;
  - 2) the application of the method, tool or standard<sup>33</sup> demonstrates quantified positive impact for one or more SDGs (other than SDG 13);
  - 3) the quantification of the positive SDG impacts according to the method, tool or standard has been verified by a VVB.

<sup>32</sup> Including third-party linked certification scheme or third-party linked robust set of requirements.

<sup>33</sup> Carbon-crediting programs can refer to or be guided by existing methods of quantification including Gold Standard SDG Impact Tool (operated by the Gold Standard), Sustainable Development Verified Impact Standard (SD Vista) (operated by Verra), Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards (CCB) (operated by Verra) or other relevant programs.





THE INTEGRITY COUNCIL  
FOR THE VOLUNTARY CARBON MARKET

# 5

SECTION

# DEFINITIONS

January 2024, Version 2



# DEFINITIONS

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The following definitions are applicable to the Core Carbon Principles, the Summary for Decision Makers, the Assessment Framework and the Assessment Procedure and may be revised or updated from time to time.

## **APPLICATION**

A detailed Application containing appropriate supporting information, documentation and evidence by the applicant carbon-crediting program submitted through the Assessment Platform.

## **ASSESSMENT PLATFORM**

The secure online Application and Assessment Platform for Program-level requirements as referred to in the Assessment Procedure.

## **ASSESSMENT REPORT**

The document prepared by the Integrity Council on the basis of the Application from the carbon-crediting program containing, at a minimum, summary information about the applicant carbon-crediting program, and an assessment of whether the carbon-crediting program satisfies the requirements set out in the CCPs and the Assessment Framework, including agreed remedial actions, if any.

## **BASELINE SCENARIO**

A description of the situation and the outcome that is predicted or assumed to occur in the absence of the incentives created by the carbon credits and their associated mitigation activities, while holding all other factors constant.

## **CANCELLATION**

The permanent removal of a carbon credit in an electronic registry without claiming the associated emission reductions or removals towards any voluntary or mandatory targets or other purposes. Cancellation may include the following purposes: compensating for reversals; compensation for any previous excess issuance; administrative cancellation for the purpose of re-issuing carbon credits for the same emission reductions or removals under a different carbon-crediting program. Only one single use should be associated with each cancellation and the use should be clearly specified.

## **CARBON CREDIT**

A tradeable intangible instrument that is issued by a carbon-crediting program, representing a GHG emission reduction to, or removal from, the atmosphere equivalent to one metric tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent. This is calculated as the difference in GHG emissions or removals from a baseline scenario to the emissions or removals occurring under the mitigation activity, and any adjustments for leakage. The carbon credit is uniquely serialised, issued, tracked and retired or administratively cancelled by means of an electronic registry operated by an administrative body, such as a carbon-crediting program.

## **CARBON-CREDITING PROGRAM**

A standard-setting program that registers mitigation activities and issues carbon credits.

## **CATEGORY (OF CARBON CREDITS)**

A group of carbon credits that have the following characteristics in common: (1) the carbon credits are from the same type of mitigation activity as defined by the Integrity Council; (2) the mitigation activity is registered under the same carbon-crediting program and complementary standard as applicable; (3) the emission reductions or removals were quantified using the same version of the same quantification methodology, including any tools or modules referred to in the quantification methodology; and (4) the carbon credits have other common features as defined by the Integrity Council in its assessment of Categories of carbon credits, as necessary, such as the geographical location or technical features.

## **CATEGORY ASSESSMENT**

An assessment by the Integrity Council of which Categories meet the relevant CCPs using the criteria and requirements applicable to the Category-level in the Assessment Framework.

## **CCP-APPROVED**

Categories of carbon credits deemed approved pursuant to the Category-level assessment. Such credits may be tagged by CCP-Eligible programs.

## **CCP ATTRIBUTE**

A CCP Attribute refers to a characteristic associated with a carbon credit, such as quantified positive SDG impacts.

## **CCP-ELIGIBLE PROGRAM**

A carbon-crediting program that has satisfied the relevant CCPs and the Program-level criteria and requirements in Part I of the Assessment Framework and in respect of which a Decision approving the carbon-crediting program has been taken by the Governing Board.

## **CORSIA**

The Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation, a global GHG emissions reduction program developed by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to address the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of international air travel.

## **CORSIA-ELIGIBLE PROGRAM**

A carbon-crediting program that has been approved by the ICAO Council to supply CORSIA Eligible Emissions Units as listed on the CORSIA website.

## **CREDITING PERIOD**

The period in which verified GHG emission reductions or removals attributable to a mitigation activity can result in the issuance of carbon credits.



## CWG

A multi-stakeholder working group that operates pursuant to terms of reference that will be made public on the ICVCM website. The CWG will be tasked to review different categories of carbon credits, including their underlying methodologies, based on, *inter alia*, publicly available academic literature, information from ratings agencies and ratings organisations, and other public information. The CWG will review Categories of carbon credits at the highest possible level of aggregation across the VCM and will not review individual mitigation activities or carbon credits.

## DECISION

Per the Assessment Procedure, a decision of the Governing Board of the ICVCM that includes supporting rationale.

## DOUBLE CLAIMING

A type of double counting in which the same GHG emission reduction or removal is claimed by two different entities towards achieving mitigation targets or goals: once by a country, jurisdiction or other entity that reports lower GHG emissions or higher GHG removals for the purpose of demonstrating achievement of a mitigation target or goal, and once by the entity retiring the carbon credit for the purpose of making a GHG emission offsetting claim.

## DOUBLE COUNTING

A situation in which a single GHG emission reduction or removal is counted more than once towards achieving mitigation targets or goals. Double counting can occur through double issuance, double use, and double claiming.

## DOUBLE ISSUANCE

A type of double counting in which more than one carbon credit is issued for the same emission reduction or removal. Double issuance leads to double counting if more than one of these carbon credits is claimed towards achieving mitigation targets or goals.

## DOUBLE USE

A type of double counting in which a single carbon credit is claimed twice towards achieving mitigation targets or goals.

## EVALUATION REPORT

The document prepared by the Integrity Council containing, at a minimum, an assessment of whether the Category satisfies the relevant criteria and requirements set out in the CCPs and the Assessment Framework, including remedial actions agreed by the relevant carbon-crediting program, if any, and which may, but is not required to, include policy considerations and recommendations. It may also include additional information provided by the CCP-Eligible program, if any.

## GHG EMISSIONS REDUCTION

A net reduction in anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions by sources.

## GHG EMISSIONS REMOVAL

A net enhancement of anthropogenic removals by sinks.

## GREENHOUSE GAS (GHG)

Greenhouse gases are those gaseous constituents of the atmosphere, both natural and anthropogenic, that absorb and emit radiation at specific wavelengths within the spectrum of thermal infrared radiation emitted by the Earth's surface, the atmosphere itself, and by clouds. This property causes the greenhouse effect.

## INDEPENDENT REVIEW

An Independent Review is intended as a final arbitration process, as further set out in the Terms and Conditions for assessment.

## JURISDICTION

The administrative unit such as a nation, state, province, region, department or district, or an ecoregion or other defined area, specified in the jurisdictional program description.

## JURISDICTIONAL REDD+ PROGRAM

A type of mitigation activity which is implemented by a Jurisdictional REDD+ Program Proponent and for which emission reductions and removals are quantified at the scale of a national or sub-national jurisdiction (the REDD+ Jurisdiction). Such programs may include multiple mitigation actions in the forestry sector, including the sustainable management of forests and the conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. They may include multiple actors, including governmental authorities and/or non-state actors.

## JURISDICTIONAL REDD+ PROGRAM PROPONENT

A form of mitigation activity proponent that seeks the registration of a Jurisdictional REDD+ Program with a carbon-crediting program. This is a public entity or authority. See also MITIGATION ACTIVITY PROPONENT.

## LEAKAGE: ACTIVITY-SHIFTING

A type of leakage where the mitigation activity causes emissions to shift location. Mitigation activities can shift emissions to locations not targeted, or emissions not monitored, by the activity. An example is the displacement of agricultural activities from land that is afforested.

## LEAKAGE: ECOLOGICAL

A type of leakage where a mitigation activity affects emissions indirectly in areas that are hydrologically connected. An example is carbon dioxide emissions from soils in a wetland if the water level is lowered due to the implementation of the mitigation activity.

## LEAKAGE: MARKET

A type of leakage where mitigation activities have an impact on the supply or demand of an emissions-intensive product or service, thereby increasing or decreasing emissions elsewhere. For example, forest management or conservation activities may reduce timber harvests within an intervention area, leading to increased harvesting in other areas to meet demand for wood products.

## LEAKAGE: UPSTREAM/DOWNSTREAM EMISSIONS

A type of leakage where emissions occur upstream or downstream of a mitigation activity and are impacted by the mitigation activity. An example is the emissions associated with the production of a fuel or feedstock used under the mitigation activity (e.g., methane emissions from natural gas production).

## MITIGATION ACTIVITY

An activity that reduces anthropogenic emissions of a GHG or enhances removals by sinks relative to GHG emissions or removals in the activity's baseline scenario and seeks registration and issuance of carbon credits under a carbon-crediting program. The term refers to activities that may be implemented at different scales, including projects, programmatic approaches, policies, jurisdictional REDD+ programs, and other interventions. They may also be implemented at one or more sites.

### **MITIGATION ACTIVITY PROPONENT**

The legal entity requesting the registration of a mitigation activity and issuance of carbon credits under a carbon-crediting program. The mitigation activity proponent may be a public or private entity. See also JURISDICTIONAL REDD+ PROGRAM PROPONENT

### **MITIGATION ACTIVITY WITHIN A JURISDICTIONAL REDD+ PROGRAM (PROJECT-BASED)**

Refers to a project-based mitigation activity aimed at reducing emissions and/or enhancing removals (e.g., reduced emissions for deforestation and forest degradation, enhancement or conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests) that is located within a jurisdiction covered by a registered Jurisdictional REDD+ Program and for which the accounting boundaries overlap with the Jurisdictional REDD+ Program.

### **MULTI-STAKEHOLDER WORKING GROUPS (MSWG)**

Multi-Stakeholder Working Groups (MSWGs) that operate pursuant to terms of reference that will be made public on the ICVCM website. The MSWGs will be tasked to assess relevant criteria and requirements of specific Categories, including their underlying methodologies based on, *inter alia*, public classifications of Categories, publicly available academic literature, information from ratings agencies, carbon-crediting program-specific information, including information submitted as part of its Application, and other public information relating to Categories.

### **NEW MITIGATION ACTIONS OR ENHANCED IMPLEMENTATION OF ONGOING MITIGATION ACTIONS**

Refers to new or enhanced implementation action taken by a Jurisdiction that is explicitly designed and reasonably expected to address key drivers of deforestation and degradation in order to reduce emissions (and where applicable to the relevant Jurisdictional REDD+ Program, enhance removals) and may include, *inter alia*, policies, laws, technical assistance programs, enforcement measures, regulations, legal rights frameworks and/or incentive mechanisms. See Criterion 8.9 of the Assessment Framework.

### **PROGRAM DOCUMENTS**

The documents adopted by carbon-crediting program that specify requirements, procedures and administrative and operational aspects of the carbon-crediting program. These documents include, but are not limited to, general carbon-crediting program standards, quantification methodologies, procedures, provisions, manuals, guidance and forms.

### **PROGRAM-LEVEL ASSESSMENT**

An assessment by the Integrity Council of whether an applicant carbon-crediting program satisfies the relevant principles in the CCPs using the Program-level criteria and requirements in Part I of the Assessment Framework.

### **REMOVAL**

Removal refers to the anthropogenic removal of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from the atmosphere and durable storage of the carbon in terrestrial or geological reservoirs or products.

### **RETIREMENT**

The permanent removal of a carbon credit in a registry for the purpose of claiming the associated emission reductions or removals towards compliance requirements or voluntary goals. Only one single use should be associated with each retirement and the use should be clearly specified.

## START DATE

The calendar date on which the mitigation activity proponent committed to implementing the mitigation activity (e.g., the date when contracts for the purchase or installation of equipment required for the mitigation activity were executed or the date when the first expenditures are incurred). In the case where a mitigation activity does not involve expenditure, it refers to the date when the first physical actions were taken to implement the mitigation activity (e.g., the discontinuation of the cultivation of land so that natural revegetation or succession may occur).

## SUSPENSION DECISION

A Suspension Decision is a Decision by the Governing Board that, as a minimum, contains the grounds for the suspension, sufficient information for the carbon-crediting program to understand how the Integrity Council came to the view that suspension was necessary and proportionate, and the conditions to be satisfied by the carbon-crediting program for the program or Categories to be reinstated.

## TERMINATION DECISION

A Termination Decision is a Decision by the Governing Board that, as a minimum, contains the grounds for the termination, and sufficient information for the carbon-crediting program to understand how the Integrity Council came to the view that termination was necessary and proportionate.

## VALIDATION

The process of independent, third-party evaluation of a mitigation activity requesting registration under a carbon-crediting program by an accredited Validation and Verification Body (VVB) against the program provisions of the applicable carbon-crediting program.

## VALIDATION AND VERIFICATION BODY (VVB)

An independent third-party entity that is accredited for performing validation and/or verification audits. Verification and validation bodies are often also referred to as auditors.

## VERIFICATION

The process of periodic independent, third-party *ex-post* evaluation by a VVB of requests by a registered mitigation activity to issue carbon credits against the program provisions of the applicable carbon-crediting program.

## VINTAGE

The calendar year in which the emission reduction or removal associated with a carbon credit took place. Because the verification process is conducted after the emission reductions or removals have occurred, carbon-crediting programs may issue carbon credits after the vintage year.

## WORKING DAY

A day on which banks are open for normal business in London, United Kingdom.



THE INTEGRITY COUNCIL  
FOR THE VOLUNTARY CARBON MARKET

SECTION

# 6

## ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

January 2024, Version 2

# SECTION 6

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## Purpose of this Assessment Procedure

- 1.1 This document sets out the procedure for carbon-crediting programs to be assessed as CCP-Eligible programs and for the assessment of Categories of carbon credits (Categories) as CCP-Approved so that CCP-Eligible programs are able to tag CCP-Approved carbon credits. It also identifies how CCP-Approved carbon credits may, where they meet the requirements in the CCP Attributes section of the Assessment Framework, be tagged in respect of such attributes. This Assessment Procedure should be read in conjunction with the Summary for Decision Makers, Assessment Framework, Definitions, which apply to this Assessment Procedure, and Terms and Conditions. Readers may also wish to review the Introduction and Feedback Statement.
- 1.2 The Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (Integrity Council or ICVCM) may adopt further procedures, terms of reference documents and guidance to support implementation of this Assessment Procedure and may revise or update this Assessment Procedure from time to time.
- 1.3 The Integrity Council's governance structure and operational functions<sup>1</sup> that are relevant to this Assessment Procedure are set out below:
  - (a) The Governing Board has overall responsibility for the Integrity Council's decisions and work. It appoints the leadership of both the Expert Panel and the Executive Secretariat. Governing Board committees comprising independent members of the Governing Board make recommendations to the full Governing Board and the Governing Board may delegate decisions within an agreed scope of delegation to such committees;
  - (b) The Expert Panel makes recommendations to the Governing Board on various topics, including development and application of the CCPs and Assessment Framework and areas of continuous improvement, as well as carrying out other tasks as set out in this Assessment Procedure under the oversight of the Governing Board;

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<sup>1</sup> As set out in the Integrity Council's [Modalities & Procedures](#).

Note that in this Assessment Procedure the term Integrity Council may be used to indicate the Secretariat together with (a) the Expert Panel and/or its members and (b) any relevant committee of the Governing Board delegated to have assessment functions, each undertaking functions in accordance with the functions assigned to them in the Modalities & Procedures. References to the Governing Board include a reference to the committee that has the relevant delegated functions.

- (c) The Executive Secretariat (Secretariat) provides operational support to the Governing Board (including its committees), to the Expert Panel and to any multi-stakeholder working groups and work programs, for example for standard-setting, assessment, assurance, oversight, market formation, communications and governance activity;
- (d) Multi-stakeholder groups including external experts provide input and advice to the Integrity Council, including its Governing Board and relevant committees.

## Overview of Assessment

- 1.4 Assessment to enable identification of CCP-Approved carbon credits is achieved by the following steps:
  - (a) **Assessment of carbon-crediting programs (“Program-level assessment”):** The Integrity Council assesses whether applicant carbon-crediting programs satisfy the relevant CCPs using the Assessment Framework. Carbon credits will only be deemed CCP-Approved if they are issued by a carbon-crediting program that has been assessed to fulfil these principles and criteria and requirements. See section 2 of this Assessment Procedure;
  - (b) **Assessment of Categories of carbon credits (“Category assessment”):** The Integrity Council assesses which Categories meet the relevant CCPs using the criteria and requirements applicable to Categories in the Assessment Framework. Carbon credits will only be deemed CCP-Approved if they belong to a Category that has been assessed under this Assessment Procedure to fulfil these principles and criteria and requirements. See section 3 of this Assessment Procedure;
  - (c) **Identification of CCP-Approved carbon credits:** Following the completion of the previous two steps, CCP-Eligible programs will identify which carbon credits are CCP-Approved and tag them as such in its program registry together with any relevant CCP Attributes. The identification and tagging by carbon-crediting programs will be overseen by the Integrity Council. See section 4 of this Assessment Procedure.
- 1.5 Assessment of an applicant carbon-crediting program will tend to precede assessment of Categories, but the Integrity Council may at times choose to assess certain Categories before assessment of the applicant carbon-crediting program has been completed, in which case assessment of Categories in relation to that applicant carbon-crediting program will remain pending until completion of the Program-level assessment and will be finalised only if and when the applicant carbon-crediting program is decided to be CCP-Eligible (including CCP-Eligible conditional on remedial action being completed).

## Confidentiality during the assessment process

- 1.6 All information received from applicant carbon-crediting programs per sections 2 and 3 of this Assessment Procedure will be used for the purpose of assessing the carbon-crediting program and Categories against the Assessment Framework and related processes under this Assessment Procedure. Further provisions relating to confidentiality are set out in the Terms and Conditions.

## Stakeholder input

- 1.7 In line with its Governing Principles and Mandate<sup>2</sup> including Inclusion, Transparency and Continual Improvement, the Integrity Council encourages feedback from any stakeholders.
- 1.8 Stakeholders may provide input at any time ([info@icvcm.org](mailto:info@icvcm.org)), including in relation to specific Applications or Category assessments. Input will be acknowledged within five working days. Stakeholder input will be made public on the ICVCM website, unless it is offensive, irrelevant or presents other material risk to the Integrity Council process, in which case the fact of the submission, but not the contents, will be listed on the ICVCM website.

## Feedback

- 1.9 Feedback on the Integrity Council's work is welcome at any time and may be submitted to [info@icvcm.org](mailto:info@icvcm.org), including the word "feedback" in the subject line of the email. Feedback will be acknowledged within five working days.

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<sup>2</sup> [Key Governing Principles and Mandate](#)

# 2 ASSESSMENT OF CARBON-CREDITING PROGRAMS

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- 2.1 This section sets out the procedure by which the Integrity Council assesses carbon-crediting programs against the CCPs and the criteria and requirements in the Assessment Framework (Program-level) in order to take a decision to approve or not approve the carbon-crediting program as CCP-Eligible.

## Application by a carbon-crediting program to the Integrity Council

- 2.2 Any carbon-crediting program that issues carbon credits may apply to the Integrity Council for assessment of its program.
- 2.3 Any carbon-crediting program that wishes to be assessed should notify the Integrity Council of its intention to apply by sending an email to [applications@icvcm.org](mailto:applications@icvcm.org). The Secretariat will endeavour to provide the carbon-crediting program with login instructions for the Assessment Platform no later than ten working days following the notification.
- 2.4 To apply, the carbon-crediting program must submit the detailed application with appropriate supporting information, documentation and evidence (Application), through the Assessment Platform.
- 2.5 As part of the Application, the carbon-crediting program must reply to all the questions and submit all necessary documents required in the Assessment Platform and must agree to the Terms and Conditions, through the Assessment Platform. The carbon-crediting program may withdraw its program Application at any time before a final decision has been taken by the ICVCM on the approval pursuant to 2.22 below, by emailing [applications@icvcm.org](mailto:applications@icvcm.org). A withdrawn Application means that the Application and Category assessments being undertaken in accordance with section 3 of this Assessment Procedure will not be further processed, and the carbon-crediting program's withdrawal will be made public on the ICVCM website.
- 2.6 Following submission of the Application, the Secretariat will provide the carbon-crediting program with an estimate of the expected timeframe for the assessment, based on its current workload.

- 2.7 In accordance with the Assessment Framework, for CORSIA-eligible carbon-crediting programs, certain sections of the Assessment Framework refer to CORSIA eligibility and requirements. The ICVCM Application under this Assessment Procedure is completed by reference to that CORSIA eligibility and documents supplied in the application submitted to CORSIA.
- 2.8 A carbon-crediting program that has not applied for CORSIA must complete all sections of the ICVCM Application by providing the information, documents and evidence that would be required under CORSIA and as indicated in the Assessment Platform.
- 2.9 A carbon-crediting program that has applied to CORSIA but has not achieved CORSIA eligibility must contact the Secretariat before applying under this Assessment Procedure ([applications@icvcm.org](mailto:applications@icvcm.org)).
- 2.10 Following submission of the Application by a carbon-crediting program and confirmation of completeness by the Secretariat, the Application will be made public, on the ICVCM website, subject to any redactions agreed between the Integrity Council and the carbon-crediting program where there is a compelling rationale for confidentiality.
- 2.11 The Integrity Council's carbon-crediting program assessment will be treated as confidential during the assessment. The Integrity Council will publish Decisions of the Governing Board relating to carbon-crediting program Applications, including reasons for the Decision as set out in this section.

## Processing Applications

- 2.12 The Integrity Council will aim to present an assessment Decision for consideration by the Governing Board within four calendar months of receipt of the completed Application (two months if CORSIA-eligible), subject to workload. The expected timeline is subject to change. The Secretariat will notify the applicant carbon-crediting program as soon as practicable if the assessment is expected to take longer, including due to requests to provide further information, or remedial actions.
- 2.13 On receipt of an Application submitted through the Assessment Platform, the Integrity Council will perform an initial completeness review of documentation submitted. The Secretariat will notify the carbon-crediting program of any apparent gaps in information, documentation or evidence submitted through the Assessment Platform, which must be resolved by the carbon-crediting program in order for the assessment to proceed. Where the Application is complete, the Secretariat will notify the carbon-crediting program that the Application is complete and that the Application will proceed to the assessment stage.
- 2.14 Complete Applications will be processed in the order in which they are confirmed as complete.

## Application assessment

- 2.15 The Integrity Council will process the Application and prepare a draft Assessment Report, on the basis of the Application submitted by the carbon-crediting program and, where applicable, other relevant public documentation and stakeholder comments submitted per 1.7-1.8 above, if any, identified by the Integrity Council as relevant to the Application.
- 2.16 The Integrity Council will communicate with the carbon-crediting program to resolve any issues identified during the assessment and preparation of the draft Assessment Report. The carbon-crediting program may submit additional information, documentation or evidence in order to resolve such issues.
- 2.17 Where the Integrity Council identifies issues that require changes to the carbon-crediting program's program documents, or other carbon-crediting program processes in order to meet the CCPs and the criteria and requirements of the Assessment Framework, the Secretariat will notify the carbon-crediting program of the required changes. These may be classified as minor changes, such that approval is not subject to completion of those changes, or may require remedial actions that must be resolved before the carbon-crediting program can be approved. Any required minor changes and/or remedial actions will be included in the draft Assessment Report.
- 2.18 The draft Assessment Report will include, as a minimum, summary information about the Program, its Application, any remedial actions, and recommendations from any relevant committee and from the Expert Panel. The Integrity Council shall provide the draft Assessment Report to the relevant carbon-crediting program and the carbon-crediting program may submit information to explain how its program documents or other documents address the issue underlying any remedial action. The Integrity Council may revise the draft Assessment Report on the basis of that information.
- 2.19 The draft Assessment Report and a recommendation for the Decision for one of (a) to (c) in 2.20 below, will be submitted to the Governing Board.
- 2.20 The Governing Board shall consider the draft Assessment Report and the recommendation for the Decision and whether to take a Decision to:
- (a) Approve the carbon-crediting program as CCP-Eligible; or
  - (b) Approve the carbon-crediting program as CCP-Eligible conditional on completion of remedial actions; or
  - (c) Reject the Application of the carbon-crediting program.
- 2.21 Where the Governing Board considers it is likely to take a 2.20 (b) or (c) Decision, the Integrity Council shall provide a copy of the final Assessment Report and draft Decision to the carbon-crediting program for its review and comments prior to any Decision per 2.22. The carbon-crediting program may request a hearing, in accordance with section 6 of this Assessment Procedure. After the hearing, if held, the Governing Board shall take a Decision per 2.22 that also takes into account written and oral information from the hearing.
- 2.22 The Governing Board shall consider the final Assessment Report and recommendation for the Decision and take one of the Decisions set out in 2.20 above.



## Notification and publication

2.23 The Integrity Council will publish the Decision on the ICVCM Website.

2.24 Where the Decision is a 2.20 (b) decision, the Approval is conditional upon the remedial actions being completed to the satisfaction of the Integrity Council, based on information submitted by the carbon-crediting program. Until the completion of the remedial actions to the satisfaction of the Integrity Council, the CCP-Eligible program may not tag any carbon credits as CCP-Approved or with CCP Attributes per section 4 below.

2.25 A carbon-crediting program that has been rejected per a Decision under 2.20 (c) may resubmit an Application no earlier than six months from the date of that Decision.

## CCP-Eligibility of the Program

2.26 Subject to suspension or termination of eligibility pursuant to section 5 of this Assessment Procedure, an approved carbon-crediting program is CCP-Eligible from the date of the CCP-Eligibility Decision until such time as a new or revised version of the Assessment Framework has been published, the new or updated Application by the carbon-crediting program has been processed and a Decision made in accordance with the Assessment Procedure (including any update or revision thereof).

2.27 A CCP-Eligible program may be subject to Interim Review of its CCP-Eligibility in accordance with the provisions on Interim Review contained in section 5 below.

# 3 ASSESSMENT OF CATEGORIES

3.1 In order to enable CCP-Eligible programs to tag carbon credits as CCP-Approved, the Integrity Council will undertake an assessment of Categories<sup>3</sup> against the criteria and requirements relating to Categories set out in the Assessment Framework. This section describes that assessment process and how a Decision that a Category is/Categories are CCP-Approved is taken by the Integrity Council. This section may be revised and supplemented with further provisions from time to time based on experience of the Integrity Council.

## Grouping of Categories for assessment

- 3.2 The Integrity Council will convene a multi-stakeholder Categories Working Group (CWG) to assess Categories that will operate pursuant to terms of reference that will be made public on the ICVCM website.<sup>4</sup>
- 3.3 The CWG will be tasked to review Categories, based on, *inter alia*, public classifications of Categories<sup>5</sup>, publicly available academic literature<sup>6</sup>, information from relevant carbon-crediting programs, ratings agencies, and other public information relating to Categories. The CWG will take into consideration any decisions that impose restrictions and/or changes in scope or applicability of relevant Categories that have been taken by carbon-crediting programs.
- 3.4 Based on the information listed in 3.3, the CWG will prepare an initial analysis. The initial analysis of the CWG will result in Categories being provisionally grouped for assessment into one of the following groups:
- (a) Internal assessment process;
  - (b) Multistakeholder assessment process;
  - (c) Very unlikely to meet the criteria and requirements of the Assessment Framework.

3 Assessment will be of categories of credits under active methodologies unless otherwise requested by a carbon-crediting program

4 The Terms of Reference will be made public in due course.

5 For example, the [Berkeley Voluntary Registry Offsets Database](#)

6 In relation to additionality requirements, literature may be used to support an assessment that the Category is additional in the event that the relevant carbon-crediting program documents do not meet all of the relevant criteria and requirements.

- 3.5 The CWG’s initial analysis will be reviewed by the Integrity Council and recommendations on the grouping of the Categories for the assessment will be made to the Governing Board. The recommendation shall include the initial analysis and may, but is not required to, include policy considerations in respect of any one or more Categories. The Governing Board will take a decision in relation to the groupings for assessment in accordance with 3.4 above. The groupings for assessment will be made public on the ICVCM website, along with relevant information. The groupings of Categories are subject to change during the assessment process based on findings in the assessment.
- 3.6 A CCP-Eligible program, or a carbon-crediting program that has notified the Integrity Council of its intention to apply to be assessed pursuant to section 2 of this Assessment Procedure may, at any time, exclude one or more of its methodologies from further assessment under this Assessment Procedure, via the Assessment Platform or by emailing the Secretariat ([applications@icvcm.org](mailto:applications@icvcm.org)). In relation to methodologies that are excluded by the carbon-crediting program, the Secretariat will maintain a public list on the [ICVCM website](#) of excluded methodologies or versions thereof per applicant or CCP-Eligible program.

### Assessment of Categories

- 3.7 For Categories grouped per “(a) Internal assessment process,” the Integrity Council will prepare a draft Evaluation Report per 3.12 and a recommendation for a Decision to the Governing Board pursuant to 3.13 (a) below.
- 3.8 For Categories grouped per “(b) Multistakeholder assessment process,” the Integrity Council will appoint and convene Multi-Stakeholder Working Groups (MSWGs), that will operate pursuant to terms of reference that will be made public on the ICVCM website.<sup>7</sup>
- 3.9 The assessment of Categories in group “(b) Multistakeholder assessment process,” will be sequenced based on current market share and market trends and the Secretariat will publish an indicative sequencing of assessments.
- 3.10 The MSWGs will be tasked to assess relevant criteria and requirements of specific Categories, including their underlying methodologies, based on, *inter alia*, public classifications of Categories,<sup>8</sup> publicly available academic literature<sup>9</sup>, information from ratings agencies, carbon-crediting program specific information including information submitted as part of its Application, and other public information relating to Categories. The MSWGs will take into consideration any decisions that impose restrictions and/or changes in the scope or applicability of relevant Categories that have been taken by carbon-crediting programs.
- 3.11 Based on the information listed in 3.10, MSWGs, with the support of the Integrity Council, will prepare assessments of whether the Category/Categories meet(s) the relevant criteria and requirements in the Assessment Framework. The MSWGs may make one of the following assessments and may, but is not required to, include policy considerations in addition to its assessment.
- (a) The Category/Categories meet(s) the relevant criteria and requirements for CCP-approval;
  - (b) The Category/Categories meet(s) the criteria and requirements for CCP-approval if the relevant carbon-crediting program(s) take(s) remedial action;

<sup>7</sup> The Terms of Reference will be made public in due course.

<sup>8</sup> For example, the [Berkeley Voluntary Registry Offsets Database](#).

<sup>9</sup> See footnote 7 above.

- (c) The Category/Categories does not/do not meet the relevant criteria and requirements for CCP-approval.
- 3.12 Each Category assessment and policy considerations, if any, will be reviewed by the Integrity Council and the Integrity Council will prepare a draft Evaluation Report on the basis of each Category assessment and any policy considerations, if any. The Integrity Council may, but is not required to, include further policy considerations. The Integrity Council shall provide the draft Evaluation Report to the relevant carbon-crediting program. Where the assessment is a 3.11 (b) or (c) assessment, the carbon-crediting program may submit information to explain how its program documents or other documents address issues underlying the assessment. The Integrity Council may revise the draft Evaluation Report on the basis of that information. The draft Evaluation Report and a recommendation for the Decision for one of 3.13 (a) to (c) below, will be submitted to the Governing Board.
- 3.13 The Governing Board shall consider the draft Evaluation Report and the recommendation for a Decision and other relevant information, including policy considerations, if any, and whether to take a Decision that:
- (a) The Category/Categories meet(s) the relevant criteria and requirements for CCP-approval;
  - (b) The Category/Categories meet(s) the relevant criteria and requirements for CCP-approval if the relevant program takes remedial action;
  - (c) The Category/Categories does not/do not meet the relevant criteria and requirements for CCP-approval.
- 3.14 Where the Governing Board considers it is likely to take a 3.13 (b) Decision the Integrity Council shall provide a copy of the final Evaluation Report and draft Decision including the remedial action to the carbon-crediting program prior to any Decision per 3.16. The carbon-crediting program may request a hearing, in accordance with section 6 of this Assessment Procedure. After the hearing, if held, the Governing Board shall take a Decision on the Category/Categories per 3.16 below that also takes into account written and oral information from the hearing.
- 3.15 Where the Governing Board considers it is likely to take a 3.13 (c) Decision, the Integrity Council shall provide a copy of the final Evaluation Report and draft Decision to the carbon-crediting program prior to any Decision per 3.16. The carbon-crediting program may request a hearing, in accordance with section 6 of this Assessment Procedure. After the hearing, if held, the Governing Board shall take a decision on the Category/Categories per 3.16 below that also takes into account written and oral information from the hearing.
- 3.16 The Governing Board shall consider the final Evaluation Report and recommendation for the Decision and take one of the Decisions set out in 3.13 above.
- 3.17 Where the Governing Board takes a 3.13 (a) Decision, the Decision will be made publicly available on the ICVCM website in accordance with 3.22 below.
- 3.18 Where the Governing Board takes a 3.13 (c) Decision, the Integrity Council will immediately notify the Decision to the relevant carbon-crediting program and will make the Decision public on the ICVCM website.
- 3.19 Where the Governing Board takes a 3.13 (b) Decision, the Secretariat will immediately notify the Decision to the relevant carbon-crediting program and will make the Decision public on the ICVCM website. The Decision shall specify the remedial action to be taken by the carbon-crediting program.

- 3.20 Where the Decision is a 3.13 (b) Decision, the CCP-Approval of the Category is conditional upon the remedial action being completed to the satisfaction of the Integrity Council, based on information submitted by the carbon-crediting program. Until the completion of the remedial action to the satisfaction of the Integrity Council, the CCP-Eligible program may not tag any carbon credits in the relevant Category as CCP-Approved or with CCP Attributes per section 4 below. Completion of remedial action shall be determined by a subsequent Decision of the Governing Board, which will be made publicly available on the ICVCM website in accordance with 3.22 below.
- 3.21 For Categories grouped per 3.5 based on options in 3.4 as “(c) Very unlikely to meet the criteria and requirements of the Assessment Framework,” upon the completion of the assessment for Categories grouped (a) and (b), the Integrity Council will prepare a draft Evaluation Report and a recommendation for a Decision to the Governing Board to be taken pursuant per 3.16 above. Where the Decision is not a 3.13 (c) Decision, the Governing Board shall provide further detailed reasoning in the Decision.

### Timing of Publication of Decisions granting CCP-Approval

- 3.22 The Integrity Council may coordinate the timing of publication of Decisions awarding CCP-Approval to Categories with the relevant carbon-crediting program(s) to enable the carbon-crediting program to identify and prepare to tag relevant CCP-Approved carbon credits.

### CCP Attributes

- 3.23 A CCP-Eligible program may tag CCP-Approved carbon credits with relevant CCP Attributes where the criteria and requirements in relation to CCP Attributes as set out in the Assessment Framework have been met.

### CCP-Approval

- 3.24 A carbon credit that has been tagged as CCP-Approved shall retain the CCP-Approved tag until it is retired or cancelled.
- 3.25 Subject to termination or suspension of the CCP-Eligible program and/or the CCP-Approval of the Category per section 5 of this Assessment Procedure, the CCP-Approval of the Category applies to all issued carbon credits included within the Category at the date of the CCP-Approval Decision. The CCP-Approval also applies to all carbon credits in the Category that are issued by the CCP-Eligible program after the date of the CCP-Approval Decision.
- 3.26 Where a CCP-Eligible program includes a new Category within its scope (for example, due to a new version of a methodology, a new methodology, or a new approach to address non-permanence risks) or wishes to seek the approval of a Category that was previously withdrawn per 3.6 above, it may request assessment of that Category in order for it to be included as a CCP-Approved Category in accordance with this section 3 and further procedures that may be developed by the Integrity Council.

# 4 APPLYING ASSESSMENT DECISIONS

## Tagging of carbon credits as CCP-Eligible

- 4.1 A CCP-Eligible program may tag carbon credits as CCP-Approved where all of the following conditions are met:
  - (a) The issuing carbon-crediting program has been determined by the Integrity Council to be CCP-Eligible pursuant to section 2 of this Assessment Procedure;
  - (b) The carbon credit belongs to a Category that has been determined by the Integrity Council to be CCP-Approved pursuant to section 3 of this Assessment Procedure.
- 4.2 Each CCP-Eligible program will work with its registry to identify the carbon credits to be tagged as CCP-Approved and that may be tagged with relevant CCP Attributes. The carbon-crediting program shall document in writing the process and information used to identify which carbon credits are to be tagged as CCP-Approved and with relevant CCP Attributes.
- 4.3 The carbon-crediting program shall be responsible for the accuracy of tagging of CCP-Approved carbon credits in the program registry and for the accuracy of tagging of CCP Attributes.

## Integrity Council Assurance of Accuracy

- 4.4 The Integrity Council will be responsible for assurance over the tagging of CCP-Approved carbon credits by CCP-Eligible programs, including the tagging of CCP Attributes.
- 4.5 The Integrity Council will seek to achieve high confidence that carbon credits are tagged accurately and may place reliance on information in the relevant carbon-crediting program registry concerning the carbon credits.
- 4.6 Assurance may include the following steps:
  - (a) Review with the carbon-crediting program of the CCP-Approved carbon credit identification process;
  - (b) Audit by the Integrity Council and/or the CCP-Eligible program of the identification process and information used;



- (c) Positive confirmation through sampling of CCP-Approved tagged carbon credits in the program registry, to confirm the tagged carbon credits match the Categories specified in the relevant Decision. CCP Attributes may also be sampled;
  - (d) Negative confirmation through data analysis of the set of CCP-Approved tagged carbon credits to ensure that carbon credits that do not match the Categories and conditions specified in the Decision in various respects are not tagged.
- 4.7 In the event that any incorrect tagging is identified, the CCP-Eligible program will be required to correct the incorrect tagging within five working days and to notify the Integrity Council when the correction is completed. The Integrity Council may extend its sample and/or perform follow-up assurance as it deems appropriate to ensure that incorrect tagging has been resolved.
- 4.8 Assurance processes may lead to investigations and/or Interim Review processes as described in section 5 below.
- 4.9 The Secretariat will prepare a periodic assurance report for consideration by the Governing Board.

# 5 ONGOING ASSURANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

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## Ongoing Assurance

- 5.1 The aim of the Integrity Council's ongoing oversight and assurance is:
- (a) To promote transparency, which encourages greater scrutiny of mitigation activities and carbon-crediting programs;
  - (b) To ensure CCP-Eligible programs are complying with the CCPs and Assessment Framework;
  - (c) To be alert to thematic issues (real or perceived) that warrant follow up or lessons to be shared, to ensure high integrity is maintained.

## Responsibility of Programs

- 5.2 A CCP-Eligible program shall adhere to the governance, program documents and practices as set out in its Application and to enforce the requirements of the methodologies, tools, standards and other documents that have formed the basis for approval as CCP-Approval in relation to Categories.
- 5.3 A CCP-Eligible program shall comply with the criteria and requirements set out in the Assessment Framework.
- 5.4 A CCP-Eligible program shall ensure it has procedures for handling questions and complaints from mitigation activity proponents and third parties, including stakeholders, about its tagging of CCP-Approved carbon credits and other aspects of its compliance with the ICVCM Assessment Framework. The procedures shall be notified to the Integrity Council. The Integrity Council may redirect stakeholder complaints received under section 6 below to the relevant CCP-Eligible program, if appropriate.
- 5.5 A CCP-Eligible program should notify the Integrity Council as soon as possible (subject to any legal restrictions) where:
- (a) It anticipates, or has implemented, a material change in its governance, program documents and practices that formed part of its Application, such as a merger or transfer of decision-making powers, in respect of the CCP-Eligible program or of a CCP-Approved Category, including changes related to documents and tools. A material

change is one that could reasonably be expected to affect the Integrity Council's eligibility Decision for a carbon-crediting program or approval Decision for a Category;

- (b) A material failure to comply with the criteria and requirements set out in the Assessment Framework has or is likely to have occurred.
- 5.6 The Integrity Council may undertake an Interim Review of a CCP-Eligible program or CCP-Approved Category as a result of a notification pursuant to 5.5.
- 5.7 A CCP-Eligible program shall provide an annual report to the ICVCM containing information on the application of the Assessment Framework and CCP-Approval during the relevant year, including CCP-Approved tagging, complaints and revisions and updates to documents relevant to the CCP-Eligible status of the program, based on a template to be developed by the Integrity Council.

### Performance monitoring by the Integrity Council

- 5.8 The Integrity Council will, at its discretion, monitor the performance of CCP-Eligible programs and CCP-Approved Categories. Monitoring will be risk-based and through actions that may include:
- (a) Review of data and market intelligence;
  - (b) Reviewing issues and themes that arise through the CCP-Eligible program's own oversight and complaints process (as reported per section 5.7 above);
  - (c) Spot-checks and sample-based auditing;
  - (d) Monitoring complaints and issues arising in the VCM;
  - (e) Thematic analysis of any trends and patterns emerging from the above actions;
  - (f) Ongoing consultation and input through ICVCM work programs;
  - (g) Inviting input from stakeholders on areas for possible improvement.

### Investigations

- 5.9 Where the Integrity Council considers, in its sole discretion, an investigation is necessary to resolve identified issues:
- (a) It may inform the CCP-Eligible program, and the CCP-Eligible program shall work in good faith to resolve identified issues with the Integrity Council;
  - (b) Necessary investigation will be led by the CCP-Eligible program, but the Integrity Council reserves the right to investigate if required;
  - (c) The Integrity Council may raise issues or request or perform spot-checks, on a risk-based approach informed by market intelligence, thematic analysis and grievances raised and the CCP-Eligible program will seek to address those issues and accommodate spot-checks;
  - (d) The Integrity Council will consider adequacy and effectiveness of resolution and improvement actions arising from investigations.

- 5.10 The Integrity Council may initiate an assessment based on available information at its own discretion at any time where it suspects misuse of the Integrity Council brand, CCP trademark or risk of market confusion, such as where an organisation has not been assessed as CCP-Eligible by the Integrity Council but has made claims in relation to the CCP, such as a claim to be CCP compliant.

### Interim Review

- 5.11 The Integrity Council may initiate an Interim Review of the CCP-Eligible program or of a CCP-Approved Category, at its sole discretion, if it becomes aware of a material change or if it has cause to suspect material failings, including but not limited to:
- (a) Material, or repeated instances of non-compliance with the CCPs and Assessment Framework criteria and requirements;
  - (b) In relation to a carbon-crediting program CCP-Eligibility Decision, failure to implement minor changes or complete remedial actions;
  - (c) Non-disclosure by the carbon-crediting program of a material change, as required by 5.4;
  - (d) Changes in the CORSIA application requirements, Emission Unit Eligibility Criteria and/or other changes in CORSIA that have implications for the ICVCM;
  - (e) For a CORSIA-Eligible program, the lapsing or revocation of CORSIA eligibility;
  - (f) An apparent non-adherence by the CCP-Eligible program to its governance and practices as set out in its Application where the non-adherence may reasonably be expected to lead to a material breach of the CCPs and Assessment Framework;
  - (g) Material failure to cooperate with the Integrity Council's investigations and/or to respond to reasonable requests made in accordance with published processes;
  - (h) Failure to rectify material issues or errors that have been identified during any investigation;
  - (i) Fraud or gross negligence, false disclosure to the Integrity Council, publishing or allowing misleading information to be released.
- 5.12 Where, in accordance with 5.11, the Integrity Council considers initiating an Interim Review:
- (a) The Integrity Council will analyse the case and prepare a proposal on the scope and modalities of any Interim Review required, for example re-performing a section(s) of the Assessment Procedure and provide a recommendation to the Governing Board;
  - (b) The Governing Board will make a Decision on initiating an Interim Review;
  - (c) Where the Governing Board decides to initiate an Interim Review, the Integrity Council will communicate with the CCP-Eligible program as appropriate to gather information, clarify issues or agree upon remediation actions;
  - (d) The Integrity Council will prepare a report including its findings, required remedial actions, if any, and make a recommendation for a draft Decision for one of 5.13 (a) to (c).

- 5.13 The Governing Board will review the report and consider whether to take a Decision to:
- (a) Close the Interim Review due to resolution of the identified issues, including any agreed remediation plan;
  - (b) Suspend the CCP-Eligibility of the carbon-crediting program or the CCP-Approval of the Categories, as applicable, in accordance with this section 5;
  - (c) Terminate the CCP-Eligibility of the carbon-crediting program or the CCP-Approval of the Categories, as applicable in accordance with this section 5.
- 5.14 Where the Governing Board considers it is likely to make a 5.13 (a) recommendation, the draft Decision shall be provided to the CCP-Eligible program. The Governing Board shall adopt a Decision to close the Interim Review due to resolution of the identified issues. The fact of the Interim Review and its closure, but not the Decision, shall be made public on the ICVCM website.
- 5.15 Where the Governing Board considers it likely to take a 5.13 (b) or (c) decision, the draft Decision will be provided to the CCP-Eligible program in accordance with the provisions below, as applicable. The CCP-Eligible program may request a hearing in accordance with section 6 of this Assessment Procedure. The Decision of the Governing Board shall take into account written or oral information provided in the hearing.

### Suspension of CCP-Eligibility or CCP-Approval

- 5.16 The Integrity Council reserves the right to suspend the eligibility of a CCP-Eligible program or approval of CCP-Approved Categories following an Interim Review completed in accordance with this section 5, where, in the view of the Governing Board, such suspension is necessary and proportionate in order to protect the functioning of the VCM and reputation of the Integrity Council.
- 5.17 Where the Governing Board has determined pursuant to the Interim Review that suspension is appropriate:
- (a) The Integrity Council will provide the CCP-Eligible program with the draft Suspension Decision. The draft Suspension Decision shall as a minimum contain: the grounds for the suspension, sufficient information for the carbon-crediting program to understand how the Integrity Council came to the view that suspension was necessary and proportionate, and the conditions to be satisfied by the carbon-crediting program for the program or Categories to be reinstated;
  - (b) The carbon-crediting program will have a response period of eight weeks to provide a rebuttal and/or undertake remediation and provide evidence of such remediation to the Integrity Council. In exceptional circumstances, the Integrity Council may, due to the seriousness and/or urgency of the issue, provide a shorter response period to the carbon-crediting program, of not less than five working days;
  - (c) The carbon-crediting program will have the right to a hearing in front of the Governing Board in accordance with section 6 below, prior to any Decision. The Decision of the Governing Board shall take into account written or oral information provided in the hearing;

- (d) The Governing Board shall review and may revise the draft Suspension Decision based on the hearing, if any, or rebuttal and/or remediation by the program, including determining that suspension is no longer required, in which case it shall not suspend the CCP-Eligibility of the carbon-crediting program/the CCP-Approval of the Category, as applicable.
- 5.18 The Governing Board shall consider the revised draft Suspension Decision pursuant to section 5.14 and shall take a Decision to:
- (a) Not suspend the carbon-crediting program;
  - (b) Suspend the carbon-crediting program, in which case the Suspension Decision shall as a minimum contain: the grounds for the suspension, sufficient information for the carbon-crediting program to understand how the Integrity Council came to the view that suspension was necessary and proportionate, and the conditions to be satisfied by the program for the carbon-crediting program or Categories to be reinstated. The Suspension Decision shall have immediate effect.
- 5.19 The Suspension Decision shall be notified immediately to the carbon-crediting program. Within two working days of a Suspension Decision being notified pursuant to section 6 of this Assessment Procedure, a non-confidential version of the Decision will be made public on the ICVCM website.
- 5.20 During a period of suspension of the CCP-Eligibility of a carbon-crediting program, the carbon-crediting program is not permitted to tag any carbon credits as CCP-Approved or tag any carbon credits with CCP Attributes or identify any new mitigation activities as CCP-Approved.
- 5.21 During a period of suspension of the CCP-Approval of a Category, the carbon-crediting program is not permitted to tag any carbon credits of that Category as CCP-Approved or tag any carbon credits of that Category with CCP Attributes or identify any new mitigation activities of that Category as CCP-Approved.
- 5.22 As soon as the carbon-crediting program has fulfilled, to the satisfaction of the Integrity Council, the relevant condition(s) for lifting the suspension as set out in the Suspension Decision, the Integrity Council shall prepare a draft Reinstatement Decision containing sufficient information on how the carbon-crediting program has resolved the issues that were the grounds for suspension and how it has met the conditions for reinstatement, for consideration by the Governing Board.
- 5.23 The draft Reinstatement Decision shall be provided to the carbon-crediting program. The carbon-crediting program shall have two working days to comment on the draft Reinstatement Decision. The Integrity Council shall review the comments and may revise the draft Reinstatement Decision.
- 5.24 The Governing Board shall consider the draft Reinstatement Decision and the recommendation and shall, unless otherwise decided by the Governing Board, adopt the Reinstatement Decision. The Reinstatement Decision shall have immediate effect and shall be made public on the ICVCM website.
- 5.25 Upon publication of the Reinstatement Decision, the carbon-crediting program may tag carbon credits issued during a suspension period as CCP-Approved and CCP Attributes and may identify any new mitigation activities as CCP-Approved, if applicable.



5.26 Where the carbon-crediting program does not fulfil, to the satisfaction of the Integrity Council, the relevant condition(s) for lifting the suspension as set out in the Suspension Decision, including any conditions relating to timeframes, the Governing Board may consider whether the Interim Review and the suspension process are sufficient for the Governing Board to consider termination, in which case, the provisions relating to termination in this section shall apply.

### Termination of CCP-Eligibility or CCP-Approval

5.27 The Integrity Council reserves the right to terminate the CCP-Eligibility of a carbon-crediting program or CCP-Approval of a Category. Circumstances under which CCP-Eligibility or CCP- Approval designation may be terminated include but are not limited to the most severe examples of the circumstances listed in 5.11 above, that raise material doubt as to the carbon-crediting program's competence, conduct and/or commitment to meeting the criteria and requirements of the CCPs and the Assessment Framework, overall or in respect of the Categories in question, in the opinion of the Governing Board.

5.28 Termination Decisions may be taken by the Governing Board only after an Interim Review, and after any related Suspension Decision, as set out in this section 5.

5.29 Where the Governing Board has determined pursuant to the Interim Review that termination is appropriate:

- (a) The Integrity Council will provide the carbon-crediting program with the draft Termination Decision. The draft Termination Decision shall as a minimum contain: the grounds for the termination, and sufficient information for the carbon-crediting program to understand how the Integrity Council came to the view that termination was necessary and proportionate;
- (b) The carbon-crediting program will have a response period of eight weeks to provide a rebuttal and/or undertake remediation and provide evidence of such remediation to the Integrity Council. In exceptional circumstances, the Integrity Council may, due to the seriousness of the issue, provide a shorter response period to the carbon-crediting program, of not less than two weeks;
- (c) The carbon-crediting program will have the right to a hearing in front of the Governing Board in accordance with section 6 below prior to any Decision. The Decision of the Governing Board shall take into account written or oral information provided in the hearing.

5.30 The Governing Board shall consider the revised draft Termination Decision pursuant to 5.27 above and shall take a Decision to:

- (a) Not terminate the CCP-Eligibility of the program/the CCP-Approval of the Categories;
- (b) Terminate the CCP-Eligibility of the program/the CCP-Approval of the Categories, in which case the Termination Decision shall as a minimum contain: the grounds for the termination and sufficient information for the carbon-crediting program to understand how the Integrity Council came to the view that suspension was necessary and proportionate. The Termination Decision shall have immediate effect.

5.31 The Decision shall be notified immediately to the carbon-crediting program. Within two working days of a Termination Decision being notified to the carbon-crediting program, a non-confidential version of the Decision will be made public on the ICVCM website.

- 5.32 The termination of CCP-Eligibility of a carbon-crediting program means that, unless otherwise decided by the Governing Board and communicated in the relevant Termination Decision, no further carbon credits may be tagged as CCP-Approved or tagged with CCP Attributes and no new mitigation activities may be identified as CCP-Approved.
- 5.33 Carbon credits tagged prior to the date of the Termination Decision are not affected by the Termination Decision.

### Sharing Lessons and Continual Improvement

- 5.34 The Integrity Council will maintain a confidential record of issues with the implementation of the Assessment Framework and the Assessment Procedure that it identifies or that are notified to it.
- 5.35 The Integrity Council will periodically provide a summary report of anonymised and aggregated trends in issues identified for the Governing Board. Where trends are apparent, the Governing Board may request the Integrity Council to consider the trends and provide a recommendation to the Governing Board on implications, if any, for the next update or revision to the Assessment Framework or Assessment Procedure.
- 5.36 The Integrity Council may convene carbon-crediting programs and other stakeholders in order to share experiences of applying the Assessment Procedure and seek feedback on its application.

# 6 HEARINGS, INDEPENDENT REVIEW, COMPLAINTS

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## Complaints (programs and stakeholders)

- 6.1 Pursuant to section 1, 1.7 to 1.9, stakeholders may provide input to the ICVCM at any time, in accordance with those provisions.
- 6.2 Carbon-crediting programs and stakeholders that wish to make a complaint relating to the Integrity Council and/or any CCP-Eligible program, may submit such a complaint to [complaints@integritycouncil.org](mailto:complaints@integritycouncil.org), including the word “complaint” in the subject line of the email. All information received will be treated as confidential. Complaints should be made as soon as possible after the event giving rise to the complaint. Complainants must provide their contact details (i.e., complaints must not be anonymous) or the complaint will not be considered further.
- 6.3 The Secretariat will aim to acknowledge the complaint within five working days and to investigate and aim to complete the investigation within two months. The Secretariat may, but is not required to, inform the complainant of the outcome of its investigation. If the Secretariat considers the complaint will require a more complex review or investigation with a longer timeframe, including cases involving third parties, the Secretariat will inform the complainant of this.
- 6.4 The Secretariat may forward a stakeholder complaint to a CCP-Eligible program where the complaint relates to processes or documents managed by the CCP-Eligible program and is not a complaint about the CCP-Eligible program’s performance in relation to or compliance with the Assessment Framework or ICVCM and will inform the stakeholder accordingly.
- 6.5 Where the complaint pertains to the governance and operational functions of the Integrity Council, the Secretariat may use external experts to consider the matter and shall inform the complainant.
- 6.6 The Secretariat will maintain a confidential record of complaints.
- 6.7 The Integrity Council will periodically provide a summary report of anonymised and aggregated trends in complaints for the Governing Board. Where trends are apparent, the Governing Board may request the Integrity Council to consider the trends and provide a recommendation to the Governing Board on implications, if any, for the next update or revision to the Assessment Framework or Assessment Procedure.

## Hearings (programs)

- 6.8 A carbon-crediting program may request a hearing in relation to any draft Decision addressed to it per sections 2, 3 and 5 that it considers does or may have implications for it. The request shall be made by emailing the Secretariat at [info@icvcm.org](mailto:info@icvcm.org).
- 6.9 The hearing may be in-person or virtual and will be organised by the Integrity Council and conducted by the Governing Board. Logistics arrangements will be consulted with and then communicated to the carbon-crediting program. The Integrity Council will provide to the carbon-crediting program all relevant information that forms the basis of the draft Decision (including draft Assessment Report or draft Evaluation Report and any draft Decision, as applicable), except where information is subject to confidentiality requirements or other legal restrictions.
- 6.10 The carbon-crediting program may make written submissions for the hearing, including evidence to support the submissions and be represented by persons of its choosing, except that no representative shall have been previously employed by or worked for the Integrity Council in the last two years or served on the Governing Board or the ICVCM Experts in the last two years. Representatives shall confirm that they have no conflict of interest per the Conflicts of Interest Policy at the start of the hearing.
- 6.11 The hearing will be conducted in English and the carbon-crediting program may present such written or oral information as it considers necessary.
- 6.12 Written submissions prior to and information presented in the hearing shall be taken into account by the relevant committee of independent members of the Governing Board in the finalisation of the draft Decision, as set out in sections 2, 3 and 5 of this Assessment Procedure.

## Independent Review (programs)

- 6.13 A carbon-crediting program may request Independent Review by an arbitral panel of any of the following:
- (a) Decisions of the Governing Board;
  - (b) Actions or inactions by the Integrity Council that are alleged to be in the scope of but appear to the carbon-crediting program to be materially inconsistent with the Assessment Procedure or Assessment Framework.
- 6.14 An Independent Review request shall be made by emailing the Secretariat at [info@icvcm.org](mailto:info@icvcm.org).
- 6.15 The Independent Review is intended as a final arbitration process, as further set out in the Terms and Conditions.



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