

Title: FAQs for Carbon Market Practitioners

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1. What are the Core Carbon Principles?

The Core Carbon Principles (CCP) are a set of 10 principles that establish a global benchmark for high-integrity carbon credits. They address the quality of emissions impact and environmental and social impact of categories of carbon credits and governance of the independent carbon-crediting programs that issue them. The CCP label will make it easier for purchasers to identify high integrity carbon credits and will lead to greater confidence in the market, attracting private capital at scale into projects, particularly in the Global South, that reduce or remove billions of tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions reductions and removals that would not otherwise occur.

Climate finance raised through CCP-labelled carbon credits will support UN Sustainable Development Goals because all new projects will be required to make a positive contribution to sustainable development and adopt robust measures to protect people and the environment.

2. What is the Integrity Council?

The Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (ICVCM) is a non-profit independent governance body operating in the independent project-based carbon markets. The Integrity Council aims to promote high-integrity, scalable, independent, project-based carbon markets. The Integrity Council is assessing carbon-crediting programs and methodologies it has sorted into categories. It oversees programs in the voluntary carbon market to ensure integrity by setting the rulebook, auditing programs, making spot checks and responding to issues that arise.

The Integrity Council held a public consultation to achieve widespread consensus around a global benchmark for high-integrity carbon credits, reflected in the CCP rulebook. The consultation ran for 60 days in line with international best practice and received well over 5,000 comments from more than 350 submissions, showing the level of commitment to high integrity across the whole market. The consultation was overseen by the British Standards Institute (BSI), which has over one hundred years of experience in standard setting.

3. How is the Integrity Council funded and what kind of organization is it?

The Integrity Council is a self-regulatory initiative with an Executive Secretariat, a Governing Board and an Expert Panel. It has modelled its governance structure and operations on other self-regulatory bodies.

The Integrity Council corporate structure is a UK not-for-profit company ([here](#)), currently funded by philanthropy and grants. It does not currently charge a fee for the assessment process. ICVCM aims to be transparent about its operations. You can find more information about ICVCM [here](#).

4. How does the Integrity Council assess the carbon market?

The Integrity Council assesses carbon-crediting programs that apply to it, and it assesses the methodology types for projects (called Categories) that those programs operate. The Integrity Council does not assess individual projects or carbon credits. This means there are two assessment processes: the Program assessment and the Category assessment. Categories are types of carbon credits, and each Category may contain many different methodologies (sometimes called Protocols).

5. What is program assessment?

When the Integrity Council assesses carbon-crediting programs, it assesses them for adherence to the CCPs that relate to governance: effective governance, transparency, tracking and robust third-party verification. You can read those requirements [here](#).

When a carbon-crediting program submits its application for assessment ([link to Assessment Platform](#)), the Integrity Council checks the documentation is complete, according to the requirements in the Assessment Framework, and then publishes the application [here](#).

If the Governing Board determines that a carbon-crediting program fulfils the Assessment, it will become CCP-Eligible. CCP-Eligible Programs can label carbon credits from CCP-Approved Categories (see FAQs 6 and 7 below) with the CCP label.

6. What is the Categories assessment, and does it assess methodologies or projects?

There is a starting premise that ICVCM will assess all the methodologies (sometimes called Protocols) that an applicant carbon-crediting program operates. The carbon-crediting program can decide to exclude some methodologies. If it does, these will be listed both in its application [here](#), and in the list of excluded methodologies [here](#). At any time during assessment, the carbon-crediting program can also withdraw other methodologies, and that withdrawal will be made public in the list of excluded methodologies.

If a carbon-crediting program has not applied to the Integrity Council, their methodologies will not be assessed in the Category assessment. This means the program cannot label any carbon credits as CCP carbon credits.

7. How are methodologies being assessed and approved?

Each Category of carbon credits contains many methodologies from different applicants or CCP-Eligible programs. The methodologies are grouped into the Category because they have similarities (e.g., deal with the same sector such as energy).

Categories of carbon credits have gone through an initial sorting, allocating them into one of three types of assessment: internal assessment (by ICVCM experts and staff); multistakeholder assessment (by external and ICVCM experts in working groups); and a group of methodologies that are unlikely to meet the CCPs and Assessment Framework rules and so are not being prioritized. You can see how they were sorted [here](#).

The Integrity Council is also still allocating some of the methodologies that have a small market share (including new ones under which none or few carbon credits have yet been issued). If you cannot find a methodology on our webpages, please contact us [here](#).

Assessment is now underway and expected to last throughout 2024. The Integrity Council hopes to complete most work by the end of September 2024 but will continue to run the assessment phase for carbon-crediting programs that apply and as new methodologies are submitted for assessment.

During internal and multi-stakeholder assessment, the methodologies in the Category are assessed for adherence to the CCP Assessment Framework rules (available [here](#)). The Integrity Council expects that while robust methodologies operating at best practice will meet the CCP rules, not all methodologies, or only certain versions of those methodologies will do so. It is also possible that the CCP rules may only be met where the methodology is used in specific regions or after a cut-off date, for example.

Information about the above is included in the Decisions of the Integrity Council Governing Board when they are published [here](#). This means it is important to read the Decisions of the Governing Board, to check if a specific methodology version in a specific region has been approved. CCP-Eligible programs can only label carbon credits as CCP when the carbon credits are from an CCP-Approved Category.

Some Categories, or specific methodologies within those Categories, will not pass the CCP Assessment. In other cases, the Integrity Council might make the approval subject to actions to improve the methodology, meaning only carbon credits issued after the methodology has been improved could be labelled as CCP carbon credits. Decisions by the Governing Board always provide a rationale to explain the reasoning behind the decisions. Before rejection Decisions, or Decisions requiring action by the CCP-Eligible Program to improve the methodology, (remedial actions), the CCP-Eligible Program will have had a formal opportunity to give the Integrity Council further information and also to have a hearing about the matter.

8. How are decisions of the ICVCM taken?

All assessment Decisions are taken by the Governing Board voting members, in accordance with its [operating rules](#), and the [Assessment Procedure](#), based on a recommendation from the Standards Oversight Committee (a sub-committee of the Governing Board) and a report produced by the ICVCM executive secretariat on the assessment by experts and the executive secretariat. The relevant carbon-crediting program receives the report before a Decision is taken and can provide further information and/or request the opportunity to present that information (called a Hearing).

In its Decisions, the Governing Board provides reasons (called rationales) to explain and support the decision it takes. You can find Decisions [here](#).

9. How will carbon credits be labelled as CCP carbon credits?

When the Integrity Council has decided to approve a Category of carbon credits, the CCP-Eligible Program will be responsible for identifying and labelling the right carbon credits. They do that in accordance with the [Assessment Procedure](#) and the forthcoming Tagging Manual (for CCP-Eligible Programs).

Project developers who think an ICVCM Decision means their project is entitled to have the CCP label, should get in touch with the CCP-Eligible Program that registered their project.

CCP Approval of a methodology by the Integrity Council means that previously issued carbon credits under that methodology (that have not yet been retired or cancelled) can be CCP-labelled carbon credits, in accordance with any other conditions contained in the Decision.

10. How will the market find CCP labelled carbon credits?

The registries of CCP-Eligible Programs will have search functions enabling CCP labelled credits to be found. We will publish a user guide to help buyers find and identify CCP labelled carbon credits.

CCP-Eligible Programs will be able to use ICVCM logos in accordance with our logo rules.

The terms “CCP aligned” “CCP compliant” and “CCP equivalent” and similar, are not terms used by the ICVCM and we will take action against entities that make false or misleading claims about their ICVCM status or the status of credits. You can inform us of such behaviour here ([link to info](#)).

11. How will the Integrity Council make sure CCP-Eligible Programs only label the right carbon credits?

The Integrity Council will oversee the labelling by CCP-Eligible Programs as part of its ongoing oversight of the CCP rules. It will conduct spot checks and periodically review public registry information and may undertake investigations. If we are informed of potential false or erroneous labelling, we may also take the above or other appropriate action.

12. What is the relevance of the ICAO CORSIA system to the ICVCM?

To be CCP-Eligible, carbon-crediting programs that are already eligible under the Pilot Phase of the International Civil Aviation Organization Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) need to demonstrate their CORSIA eligibility and also that they meet the CCP's additional high-integrity program-level criteria around effective governance, credit tracking, transparency and robust, independent third-party validation and verification and sustainable development benefits and safeguards.

If a carbon-crediting program is not CORSIA eligible, it can apply for assessment with ICVCM and will need to provide evidence that it would meet CORSIA requirements and meets the additional CCP criteria.

All carbon-crediting programs regardless of CORSIA status must provide evidence they meet the criteria for other CCPs including the ICVCM program level rules relating to sustainable development benefits and safeguards, no double-counting and robust quantification.

The ICVCM also considers CORSIA eligibility in relation to some parts of the Category rules and assessment, where requirements relating to how carbon-crediting programs manage core methodological issues, such as additionality, also refer to CORSIA. For example, "The carbon-crediting program shall meet CORSIA requirements relating to additionality."

Overall, the ICVCM also retains flexibility to manage how it deals with the CORSIA status of each carbon-crediting program.

13. What will happen to carbon-crediting programs and Categories that do not meet the CCP requirements?

During the assessment process, where it appears that a carbon-crediting program or a Category (or a methodology within it) cannot meet the CCP requirements, the relevant program will have

an opportunity to provide information, including through a hearing, to the ICVCM before a Decision is taken by the Governing Board.

In its Decisions, the Governing Board provides reasons (called rationales) to explain and support the decision it takes. You can find Decisions [here](#).

Carbon-crediting programs that are “Approved as CCP-Eligible conditional on completion of remedial actions,” will have to complete those actions to be CCP-Eligible and do so before any carbon credits can be labelled as CCP approved. If the Integrity Council approves the CCP-Eligible Program while requiring only minor changes (which are listed as such), the program’s eligibility is not subject to completion of those changes. Carbon-crediting programs that are rejected can address the issues identified and reapply to be CCP-Eligible after 6 months.

In the Category assessment process, where remedial action is required in a Governing Board Decision for a Category (or a methodology contained within it), the relevant carbon-crediting program will need to complete those remedial actions before the relevant carbon credits can be CCP labelled. In this case, only carbon credits issued under the version of the methodology that incorporates the remedial actions can be CCP labelled.

Note: If a carbon-crediting program excludes particular methodologies for assessment, the carbon credits issued from projects using those methodologies cannot become CCP-labelled even if the program becomes CCP-Eligible.

14. What is the difference between the Category assessment tracks?

In late 2023, an initial analysis of Categories was carried out by internal and external experts on the [Categories Working Group](#), and Categories were allocated to three tracks; internal assessment, multistakeholder assessment or the track for Categories that appear unlikely to be able to meet the CCP requirements.

All Categories, regardless of tracking, will be thoroughly assessed for adherence to the CCPs and relevant Assessment Framework requirements and criteria. The multistakeholder track includes external methodological experts as the technical complexity of the Category requires multiple experts.

Categories, with the track under which they are assessed, are listed on the [website](#). The methodologies being assessed in each multi-stakeholder group can also be found on the [Carbon crediting methodologies by ICVCM Category webpage](#). We will continue to update these pages over the assessment process. Please contact the ICVCM on info@icvcm.org if you are unable to find what you are looking for on these pages.

15. What are Attributes under the ICVCM and how do they relate to the CCPs?

CCP Eligible Programs can optionally also tag CCP-labelled carbon credits with additional CCP Attributes. There are three attributes:

- Attribute 1: Corresponding Adjustments. Where a CCP labelled credit is also being accounted for under the Paris Agreement by the country in which the project is located, the CCP-labelled carbon credit can also be tagged with this attribute, in accordance with the Assessment Framework requirements.
- Attribute 2: Share of Proceeds for Adaptation: Where a project is issuing carbon credits that are CCP labelled and making a contribution to the costs of adaptation in accordance with the Assessment Framework, it can also be tagged with this Attribute.
- Attribute 3: Quantified Positive SDG Impacts: Where a project that is issuing carbon credits that are CCP-labelled is also quantifying (measuring, recording and reporting) its impact on the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), it can be tagged with this Attribute.

Some carbon-crediting programs have their own labels that address the content of the Attributes above. Where that is the case, the carbon-crediting program may decide only to use its own label, and this can encompass the CCP Attribute so long as the own label does not contradict the Attribute. The Assessment Procedure and Tagging Manual (to be published soon) guide how carbon-crediting programs use Attributes.

16. How does the ICVCM relate to Article 6 of the Paris Agreement?

For carbon markets to deliver scaled GHG mitigation, sustainable development and climate finance, we need a high-integrity benchmark across all carbon markets worldwide. Article 6 of the Paris Agreement sets the frame for government-to-government cooperation in accordance with the Paris Agreement objective of holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change.

The CCPs set a global integrity threshold for the independent carbon market that can also be utilised by countries when designing systems under Article 6, paragraph 2 of the Paris Agreement (cooperative approaches with bilateral trades between countries); using the CCP quality mark to set the standard for what they authorize under Article 6, paragraph 2, and relying on carbon-crediting programs that are CCP-Eligible to be defined as cooperative approaches under the Article 6, paragraph 2 rules.

The Article 6.4 mechanism sets up a UNFCCC operated carbon crediting program. The new projects that start under Article 6.4 are expected to meet high-integrity standards and will set a reference point for integrity alongside the ICVCM Assessment Framework.

The ICVCM will continue to ensure positive alignment with developments in Article 6 over time.

17. How can countries use the CCPs to incentivise mitigation action by corporates?

The CCPs are a global threshold for integrity in the voluntary (independent) carbon markets that have been recognized internationally, including by some domestic policy makers and regulators as a high-integrity framework. Regulators can incentivise voluntary action by companies by recognizing the CCPs, enabling buyers to use CCP labelled credits as part of their decarbonisation efforts, with confidence. This recognition may be through [regulatory frameworks, guidance](#) or [endorsement](#).

18. How can countries use the CCPs in their domestic systems?

Governments are increasingly recognizing the role the CCPs can play in helping them to incentivise action and deliver on their own domestic mitigation objectives. For example, domestic carbon taxes and emissions trading systems could allow carbon credits with CCP labels to be surrendered for compliance.

The CCPs can serve as a reference point for governments seeking to encourage and enable the development of independent project-based carbon markets. Host countries can use the CCP rulebook to guide them on which programs and types of projects are of high quality. Countries seeking to support voluntary action by corporates can endorse CCP-labelled credits as meeting quality use requirements.

19. What is the end-to-end integrity framework?

The [Integrity Council is collaborating with VCMI and other organisations](#) to deliver end-to-end integrity to help companies be clear about where to find guidance for each stage of their climate action journey – from measuring their emissions and making plans to reduce them to the credible use of high-integrity carbon credits.

ICVCM sets standards on the supply side and focuses on the markets on which carbon credits trade. VCMI's [Claims Code of Practice](#) ensures integrity on the demand side. This means that companies use carbon credits in addition to – not instead of – decarbonization, and can make credible claims.