

Project Sustainable Development Goal Contributions

1 ABSTRACT

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have generated much interest among corporations, investors, NGOs, multi-lateral agencies, development banks, and governments. Many VCS projects are already using this framework to demonstrate that their projects are delivering substantive non-GHG benefits. However, each developer has been using its own approach for measuring a project's SDG impact, which has led to inconsistent measures of SDG contributions. Accordingly, Verra is considering offering an optional process to enable project proponents to credibly communicate, in a standardized way, how their projects have contributed to the SDGs.

2 BACKGROUND

Many projects certified under the VCS Program contribute to one or more SDGs, though the VCS Program has not yet set out processes for evaluating projects' SDG contributions. VCS project proponents can currently use the [Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards](#) to demonstrate their non-carbon benefits, and in the future will also be able to use Verra's [Sustainable Development Verified Impact Standard \(SD VISta\)](#)¹ to demonstrate their SDG contributions. Both of these approaches will require significant levels of effort and audit cost beyond what is required for standalone VCS projects. While many VCS project proponents have pursued, or indicated interest in pursuing, joint certifications (i.e., VCS and CCB or VCS and SD VISta), other project proponents may prefer a streamlined evaluation process relying on a single certification.

In consideration of the above, Verra is considering the development of a new reporting framework that speaks directly to the SDG contributions generated by VCS projects. Such a process will facilitate the credible communication of a project's contributions to the SDGs, while being less comprehensive than CCB or SD VISta validation and verification.

3 PROPOSAL

Verra proposes to offer project proponents the preparation of a *Project SDG Contributions Statement*, which would be completed by Verra staff. The *Project SDG Contributions Statement* would be prepared based on an evaluation carried out by Verra staff of a *Project SDG Contributions Report*, which would be completed by the project proponent.

¹ SD VISta is currently under development and will be able to be used concurrently with the VCS Program or other standards, or on its own. SD VISta is a third-party assessed standard with its own set of requirements covering project design, stakeholder engagement, safeguards and impacts on stakeholders, natural capital and ecosystem services. Please contact Verra if you have questions regarding SD VISta.

Within the *Project SDG Contributions Report* (a draft of the report template can be accessed [here](#)), project proponents would identify specific SDG Targets to which their project has contributed, expressed in terms of official SDG Indicators, and provide evidence of its contributions. Evidence would be drawn from VCS validated project descriptions and verified monitoring reports, and supplemented by evidence from reputable and recognized sources.

To enable low cost and broad uptake of this proposal, Verra staff (as opposed to a validation/verification body) would evaluate the reports and create the *Project SDG Contributions Statement* (an example based on a VCS-verified project can be accessed [here](#)). Verra's *Project SDG Contributions Statement* would be a standardized representation of a project's contribution to the SDG Targets identified and substantiated in the *Project SDG Contributions Report*. Verra would charge a fee to cover the cost of its review of USD 1,500 per report.

Both the *Project SDG Contributions Report* (submitted by the project proponent) and *Project SDG Contributions Statement* (generated by Verra) would be publicly available on the project's record on the Verra project database. This formal statement issued by Verra could be used by project proponents for communications purposes. Furthermore, in the future, Verra may highlight projects with SDG Contributions Statements among other sustainable development-related activities on its website, recognizing the growing interest in this topic from project supporters, investors and other stakeholders.

Standardized, externally assessed and project-specific *Project SDG Contributions Statements* could replace or support the general assertions about SDGs that many carbon market intermediaries are already making in their communications about certain projects. This will add to the validity of such claims and help to avoid "SDG-washing". The *Project SDG Contributions Statement* might add to a project's narrative in ways that increase the value of a project's Verified Carbon Units (VCUs) and/or engage new investors.

Verra recognizes that not all VCS projects have reason to document their SDG contributions through the processes described above. Therefore, Verra envisions that the processes described above would be optional.

Verra is requesting feedback on the following:

- As drafted, how might the *Project SDG Contributions Statement* provide value to VCS project developers? Do any of the value propositions identified above *not* apply to VCS projects of which you are aware? Do you have any to add?
- Is it important to you that the *Project SDG Contributions Statement* feature a photo of the project, the logo of the project proponent and/or implementer, or both? Which is more important?
- Do you have recommendations for how the *Project SDG Contributions Statement* could be improved graphically or content-wise?

- The *Project SDG Contributions Report* will require demonstration of project impacts at the SDG Target level – one level below Goals. Would you prefer the *Project SDG Contributions Statement* feature icons at the SDG or SDG Target level? In other words, which of the following is most preferable:



(goal-level icon)

OR



(target-level icon)

- What level of effort do you think it would require for project proponents to complete the proposed *Project SDG Contributions Report* template with appropriate justifications?
- In order to substantiate a project's SDG claims, would project proponents need data that is readily available, challenging to access, or would they need to conduct additional monitoring of project activities to generate appropriate data?
- In recognition of the fact that many SDG impacts cannot be measured within a project's lifetime, Verra proposes recognizing contributions based on either *demonstrated impact* or *implementation of activities to impact* an SDG Target. Do you support this idea? Why or why not?
- Do you have recommendations for how the proposed process (report preparation, review and statement creation, post on project database) for *Project SDG Contributions Report* could be improved or made more efficient?
- What is your comfort level with Verra taking on the evaluation of a project's contribution to the SDGs, rather than a validation/verification body?