



Public Consultation on the VCS Program

6 February 2023

1 INTRODUCTION

The VCS Program is the world's most widely used greenhouse gas (GHG) crediting program. It drives finance toward activities that reduce and remove emissions, improve livelihoods, and protect nature. The VCS Program combines scientific rigor, transparency, and innovative thinking to enable ambitious climate action; it is a critical and evolving component in the urgent ongoing effort to stabilize the global climate and achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Since Version 4 of the VCS Program was released in 2019, there have been significant changes to the context in which the VCS operates, such as the increase in ambition of both state and non-state actors, with a focus on halving emissions by 2030 and reaching net zero global emissions by mid-century. Meeting this ambition will require a significant increase in the scale and pace of emissions reductions enabled through both government policy and voluntary action. Verra is renewing the VCS Program to meet this challenge, enhancing both the integrity of the program and the scale of its impact. Stakeholder input is a critical next step.

This open consultation invites stakeholders to identify big-picture priorities and ideas to enable the VCS Program to deliver climate action at the scale, pace, and integrity needed to support global climate ambitions. Verra also welcomes input on near-term updates that could improve the usability of the VCS Program. These ideas will help inform the next update to the VCS Program, planned for mid-2023.

Where the consultation identifies ideas or issues that require more thinking or evaluation, we will consult further with stakeholders on specific proposals, similar to the consultations conducted in advance of previous program updates. This open consultation is only the first stage of the process to align the VCS Program with the integrity, scale, and pace of action needed to achieve global climate ambitions.

1.1 Consultation Process and Timeline

The planned timeline for the consultation is set out in the table below.

Tentative Date(s)	Activity
6 February – 7 April 2023	Open consultation
22 February 2023	Consultation webinar
April – May 2023	Review comments and prepare responses
June 2023	Publish public comments and Verra's responses

Please provide comments and responses to the questions in the 'Requested Feedback' section below. Comments may be submitted via the [Consultation Form](#) by 7 April 2023. After the consultation, we will review and incorporate the feedback into our planning for upcoming VCS Program updates.

We look forward to your feedback. As you engage in this consultation, please direct any questions to programupdates@verra.org.

2 REQUESTED FEEDBACK

While the scope of the consultation is open, with guiding questions listed below, stakeholders are encouraged to be as specific as possible in identifying improvement opportunities and providing the underlying rationale. Recommendations that relate to a specific clause or section in a VCS Program document can be made using the response table in Question 14. All responses are optional. Verra requests feedback on the following:

- Our vision for the renewed VCS Program is to strengthen credibility and integrity, and to enable global climate action to support halving emissions reductions by 2030 and achieving net-zero global emissions by mid-century. To help gauge which topics are most important, please provide a priority score (between 1-lowest and 5-highest priority) for each of the following based on your overall priorities for the VCS Program:
 - Expanding or limiting the VCS Program Scope to include or avoid additional activities/sectors
 - Aligning and integrating the VCS Program with the global carbon market and other climate initiatives, such as Article 6 of the Paris Agreement
 - Linking to or aligning with government or jurisdictional programs and policies, including supporting increased ambition
 - Enhancing the approach to ensure the additionality of VCS projects, the permanence of recognized carbon removals, and avoiding double counting or claiming of emissions benefits
 - Enhancing protections and benefits for indigenous peoples and local communities, natural ecosystems, and sustainable development from VCS projects
 - Integrating new technologies, such as digital monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV), tokenization, and web 3.0 opportunities
 - Other (specify below)

If you selected 'other,' please elaborate on your priority topic(s) for the future development of the VCS Program.

INTEGRITY

2. What improvements do you recommend to strengthen the credibility and integrity of the VCS Program or better align with the VCS Principles¹?
3. How could Verra improve the VCS Program approach to additionality, permanence, or avoiding double counting or double claiming?
4. Stakeholder consultation on VCS projects and sustainable development safeguards are key components of the VCS Program to avoid unintended consequences of VCS projects. What enhancements do you recommend to the requirements and processes related to project consultation and safeguards to protect and support indigenous peoples and local communities, avoid environmental harm, and promote sustainable development?
5. What guidance or requirements should the VCS Program provide to support high-integrity uses of VCU's to support global climate outcomes?

SCOPE

6. Considering the types of emission reduction and removal (ERR) activities necessary to achieve global net zero emissions, are there any key ERR activities that are *not* currently addressed in the scope of the VCS Program and available methodologies that Verra should include (please list and explain why)?
7. Are there any ERR activities or VCS methodologies that should be avoided, reviewed, or phased out in the scope of the VCS Program (please list and explain why)?
8. How could the VCS better support emissions reductions or removals beyond government policy requirements and incentives while enabling improvements to government policies and programs over time?

INNOVATION

9. Verra is always looking for ways to align the VCS Program with the latest science and research. What scientific developments or emerging technologies do you think Verra should explore and integrate into the VCS Program requirements, processes, or methodologies?
10. How can the VCS Program help accelerate the development and deployment of new emissions reduction or removal technologies and practices?
11. How can the VCS Program support and align with improvements in scientific knowledge necessary for achieving global climate ambitions?

USABILITY AND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

12. Verra is focusing on improving operational excellence throughout our registration and issuance processes, and on enhancing interoperability between the VCS and other Verra programs (e.g. the Sustainable Development Verified Impact Standard, the Climate, Community, and Biodiversity Standards, and the Plastic Waste Reduction Standard). How can Verra improve the operation of the VCS Program or interoperability across programs?

¹ The VCS Principles are found in the *VCS Standard v4.4*, Section 2.2.1: Relevance, Completeness, Consistency, Accuracy, Transparency, and Conservativeness

13. What updates would you recommend to make it easier to design, finance, implement, report on, validate, or verify VCS projects?
14. In the VCS Program documents, definitions, and templates, are there any clauses or sections that are difficult to understand or implement? Are there any errors or oversights in specific clauses or sections that need to be addressed? Please enter your specific recommendations in [this downloadable Excel sheet](#) and upload your responses in the Consultation Form.
15. Do you have feedback on how updates to the VCS Program are developed, consulted on, and communicated?

OTHER

16. Do you have any other general comments or feedback on the VCS Program that are not covered in your responses above?