



REDD Methodologies Working Group

Terms of Reference

April 10, 2024

Background

Verra is a global leader helping to tackle the world's most intractable environmental and social challenges. As a mission-driven nonprofit organization, Verra is committed to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, improving livelihoods, and protecting natural resources by working with the private and public sectors. We support climate action and sustainable development with standards programs and tools that credibly, transparently, and robustly assess environmental and social impacts and enable funding for sustaining and scaling up projects that verifiably deliver these benefits. Verra's Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) Program is the world's leading GHG crediting program, with over 2,100 registered projects in over 100 countries that have generated more than 1.2 billion Verified Carbon Units.

Deforestation is currently the source of 12 to 20% of GHG emissions globally. Keeping forests standing is an immediate and cost-effective way of contributing to urgently needed, impactful climate action. Since its inception, REDD+¹ has served as a revolutionary method of driving finance to protect standing forests. It has also empowered local communities to maintain these forests and their biodiversity and can contribute to governments' climate commitments under the Paris Agreement.

In November 2023, Verra launched the first component of a comprehensive new REDD methodology, [VCS Methodology VM0048 Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, v1.0](#), which incorporates various new approaches and methodological elements. The first component, [VCS Module VM0055 Estimation of Emission Reductions from Avoiding Unplanned Deforestation, v1.0](#), provides methods for estimating emission reductions achieved by interventions that reduce unplanned deforestation. Verra also launched [VCS Tool VT0007 Unplanned Deforestation Allocation \(UDef-A\), v1.0](#), which is key to implementing the new approach in VM0055 for setting project baselines based on the relative risk of deforestation. Other

¹ REDD stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, and the "+" refers to forest conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

components of VM0048 will be developed during 2024. Verra aims to replace all components of current REDD methodologies ([VM0006 Methodology for Carbon Accounting for Mosaic and Landscape-scale REDD Projects, v2.2](#); [VM0007 REDD+ Methodology Framework \(REDD+MF\), v1.7](#); and [VM0015 Methodology for Avoided Unplanned Deforestation, v1.2](#)) with VM0048 or complementary methodologies.

The design, implementation, and monitoring of REDD projects is inherently complex. In developing the remaining VM0048 modules, Verra seeks to incorporate improved conceptual and methodological frameworks and technologies that make project design more robust and monitoring more accurate.

In addition, geospatial data, analytical methods, and other technological developments (e.g., ground-level, air-borne, and space-borne light detection and ranging [LiDAR]) have evolved rapidly over the last few decades. These technologies have the potential to substantially improve the reliability, accuracy, and efficiency of forest carbon accounting.

As the leading standards setter of the voluntary carbon market, Verra aims to continuously improve VCS Program rules, requirements, and methodologies, as well as to incorporate new technological, analytical, and information developments that increase reliability, accuracy, and efficiency. All this will lead, upon implementation, to more robust REDD projects and less contestable results.

Objectives

Verra is establishing a new REDD Methodologies Working Group (WG) to support the further development of its new REDD methodology and the Jurisdictional and Nested REDD (JNR) Framework, as well as the continued science-based evolution of the VCS Program's rules and requirements related to REDD activities.

The purpose of the WG will be to offer strategic guidance on REDD-related topics including the following:

- Identifying improved conceptual and methodological frameworks and technologies that could be advantageously incorporated into the remaining components of VM0048 (Avoiding Planned Deforestation [APD] and, possibly, Avoiding Unplanned Degradation [AUDeg]) and the JNR Framework, and providing concrete advice on the best avenue for implementation
- Identifying potential improvements to the VCS Program's fundamental processes related to REDD (e.g., baseline setting, permanence, monitoring, and verification) that can facilitate the development of the remaining components of VM0048 and the evolution of the JNR Framework

- Evaluating opportunities, challenges, and risks stemming from the scaled-up use of Verra’s new REDD methodology and the JNR Framework, and providing advice on how to address these promptly
- In collaboration with the new Forest Carbon Technology Working Group, identifying new relevant data sources, analytical approaches, and technological developments and the best avenue to test and, eventually, incorporate these into existing or new methodologies. Such data sources, analytical approaches, and technological developments could help to do the following:
 - Improve the accuracy, efficiency, and robustness of VCS REDD methodologies
 - Make project design and implementation easier and more robust
 - Make project monitoring and verification more accurate and rigorous
- In collaboration with Verra’s Sustainable Development Program Development and Innovation Team, identifying ways to achieve the following:
 - Enhanced quantification of the environmental (other than climate change mitigation) and socio-economic benefits of REDD projects
 - Strengthened inclusion, implementation, and monitoring of social and environmental safeguards in VCS REDD projects

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the WG is to provide insight and advice on the topics listed in the “Objectives” section above. Members will respond to Verra’s questions and ideas and provide science-based, evidence-supported, actionable recommendations. Recommendations might result in updates to existing VCS REDD modules, the development of new VCS REDD modules, or updates to VCS Program concepts, rules, and requirements related to REDD.

Member Composition and Commitment

Verra anticipates inviting approximately 10 to 15 individuals to join the WG. WG members will have diverse experience and expertise and will serve in a voluntary capacity. Participants in the WG should meet one or more of the following **selection criteria**:

- Strong knowledge of and technical expertise in forestry, forest ecology, forest ecosystem services, and related themes

- Strong knowledge of and technical expertise in remote sensing data, GIS, spatially explicit modeling as applied to the evaluation of forests, deforestation, land use and land-use change, and carbon accounting
- Familiarity with VCS Program rules and requirements or voluntary carbon markets related to REDD
- Good understanding of existing relevant standards and regulated and voluntary crediting mechanisms
- Sound knowledge of national policies and international agreements related to forests, climate change, and biodiversity
- Familiarity with the challenges/opportunities associated with the implementation of forest carbon projects in developing countries
- Strong understanding of relevant new or emerging markets and demand/finance opportunities and trends

Verra seeks a diverse group of global experts representing academic institutions, government agencies, multilateral organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and civil society groups. Members will be selected to maximize the diversity of geographic representation and knowledge of ecological conditions. Participation in the WG is without remuneration and is expected to run indefinitely, starting in June or July 2024.

WG member responsibilities will include providing inputs in the form of electronic documents via email and participating in monthly 60- to 90-minute conference calls. On an as-needed basis, members may be asked to dedicate time and effort to tasks such as reviewing technical literature, running exploratory analyses, and addressing questions. No in-person meetings are expected, though side meetings at relevant conferences in which members are participating may be organized.

Operation of the WG

Verra will convene the WG, and Verra staff will be responsible for preparing, organizing, and facilitating WG meetings, collecting and organizing additional input from the WG and other stakeholders as needed, facilitating communication and consultation with other stakeholders, and defining and advancing concrete actions/solutions. Verra may create smaller ad hoc groups to address specific topics depending on need, and participant interest, availability, and expertise. The WG will provide guidance and technical input to Verra but will not have decision-making power. The products of this WG may lead to changes to the VCS Program, as well as potential changes to other Verra standards, rules, requirements, and tools.



Members of the WG will adhere to the Verra Advisory Group Code of Conduct, which ensures that all Verra WG members act in a manner that is appropriate and aligned with Verra's ethical standards and values. The working language of the WG will be English.

Termination

WG members or Verra may give written notice of termination of member participation in the WG at any time. Verra reserves the right to inactivate or terminate the WG at any time. Notices should be sent to forestcarbon@verra.org.

Application for Membership

Interested individuals are invited to apply for membership in the WG until May 3, 2024. Please send your resume/CV and a brief description of how you meet the above selection criteria to forestcarbon@verra.org. Verra aims to make appointments to the REDD Methodologies Working Group by early June 2024 and plans to convene the first meeting in June or July 2024. The appointment of WG members will be at Verra's sole discretion via direct invitation and from the list of applicants.