

# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

## Independent Expert Review of Revisions to VM0042 *Improved Agricultural Land Management, v2.1* and VMD0053 *Model Calibration Validation, and Uncertainty Guidance for Biochemical Modelling for Agricultural Land Management, v2.1*

July 17, 2025

### INTRODUCTION

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 helping reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve livelihoods, and protect natural resources across 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. We also enable funding for sustaining and scaling projects that verifiably deliver these benefits. We work in any arena where we see a need for clear standards, a role for market-based mechanisms, and an opportunity to generate significant environmental and social value.

The [Verified Carbon Standard \(VCS\) Program](#) is Verra's flagship program. It allows vetted projects to turn their greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions and carbon dioxide removals into tradable carbon credits called Verified Carbon Units (VCUs). Since its launch in 2006, the VCS Program has grown into the world's largest voluntary GHG program with over 2,400 registered projects in 126 countries that have cumulatively generated more than 1.3 billion VCUs.

An integral component of the VCS Program is the [VCS Methodology Development and Review Process, v5.0 \(MDRP\)](#), which outlines procedures and rules for the development of new or revised VCS methodologies, modules, and tools. A key component of the rigorous process includes review by a group of independent experts to ensure the methodology or revision aligns with current scientific knowledge, research, and best practices. Independent experts review the technical rigor, accuracy, and consistency of the draft methodology as per Section 3.5 of the *MDRP*.

### SCOPE OF WORK

Verra is accepting proposals for an independent expert review of a major revision to the VCS methodology [VM0042 \*Improved Agricultural Land Management, v2.1\*](#) and to the VCS module

*VMD0053 Model Calibration, Validation, and Uncertainty Guidance for Biogeochemical Modeling for Agricultural Land Management Projects, v2.1.*

The ongoing major revisions to VM0042 and VMD0053 will be incorporated into versions 3.0 of the methodology and module. The major components of the revisions include (not an exhaustive list):

1. Standardization of land stratification, soil sampling procedures, and soil sample processing and laboratory analysis for determining changes in soil organic carbon (SOC) stocks
2. New guidance for setting baselines that can accommodate flexible crop rotations by averaging baseline data for multiple crops. This “blended baseline” can then be compared to the project scenario regardless of changes to crop rotation patterns that may occur due to market conditions, weather fluctuations, or other variables.
3. Expanded clarifications on the purpose of repeated measurements when following a “measure and model” approach (Quantification Approach 1) to quantify SOC stock changes
4. Improved rigor and consistency of SOC modeling as part of QA1 to quantify SOC stock changes
5. Aligning the woody biomass quantification approach with VCS methodology *VM0047 Afforestation, Reforestation, and Revegetation, v1.1*
6. Aligning the livestock and productivity leakage quantification pathway with *VMD0054 Module for Estimating Leakage from ARR Activities, v1.0*
7. Ensuring consistency between VCS methodology *VM0032 Adoption of Sustainable Grasslands through Adjustment of Fire and Grazing, v2.0 (under development)* and VM0042, v3.0 for grazing projects implemented on pastures and rangelands, clarifying each methodology’s applicability in terms of agricultural management, land use, and land cover
8. Ensuring alignment of the quantification approaches for methane emissions with VCS methodology *VM0051 Improved Management in Rice Production Systems, v1.0*
9. Specifying monitoring and reporting requirements and guidance to comply with *VCS Standard, v4.7* requirements, specifically Section 3.2.7 on baseline reassessment and Section 3.19.10 on the release of chemical pesticides and fertilizers
10. Adding a new appendix to demonstrate if a C stock change or GHG source is negligible
11. Including upstream emissions of fertilizer manufacturing in the project boundary

Under the scope of the major revision to VM0042, Verra has worked with diverse technical contributors to prepare the following draft revision documents:

1. A red-lined version of the draft VM0042, v3.0

2. Draft of the new *Soil Sampling and Analysis Handbook* (addressing item 1 above)
3. A red-lined version of the draft VMD0053, v3.0, including an accompanying new Model Calibration and Validation Report (MVR) Template

Verra is therefore requesting proposals for an independent expert review of the above-listed documents. Proposals for review may be submitted for one of the following:

- Full review of all draft revision documents
- Focus on soil sampling and analysis: Review of *Soil Sampling and Analysis Handbook* and related proposed revisions in draft VM0042, v3.0, Sections 6, 8, and 9
- Focus on biogeochemical modeling: Review of draft VMD0053, v3.0, new Model Calibration and Validation Report Template, and related proposed revisions in draft VM0042, v3.0, Sections 6, 8, and 9
- Focus on woody biomass: Review of related proposed revisions in draft VM0042, v3.0, Sections 6, 8, and 9

The independent expert review is expected to start during the public consultation period. Verra welcomes proposals from academics, researchers, practitioners, consultants, VVBs, or other experts with demonstrated experience in agronomy and using VM0042 and VMD0053.

The requirements for the independent expert review are set out in Sections 3.3.2–3.3.2 and 3.5.1–3.5.4 of the *MDRP, v5.0*.

Principal tasks and responsibilities will include, at a minimum, the following:

- 1) **Review documents and issue a draft Independent Expert Report.** Independent experts review the draft revision documents and submit a draft Independent Expert Report issuing findings to Verra using the template provided in Annex 1, as per Section 3.5.1 of the *MDRP, v5.0*.
- 2) **Iterate with Verra to resolve independent expert findings** as per Section 3.5.3 in the *MDRP, v5.0*. Verra may arrange a meeting or series of meetings to discuss findings and how they may be clarified or resolved within the draft revision documents. Additionally, Verra may request input on new topics raised in feedback received during the public consultation. Where findings identify major risks that cannot be addressed within a reasonable timeframe, the methodology is put on hold or rejected by Verra (see Section 3.5.4 of the *MDRP, v5.0*).
- 3) **Issue final Independent Expert Report.** Independent experts issue a final, signed version of the Independent Expert Report to Verra using the template provided in Annex 1, as per Section 3.5.3 of the *MDRP, v5.0*.

The expected time commitment in number of working days for the revision of the above-listed documents as part of the major revision is as follows:

Scope of revision	1) Review documents and issue draft of Independent Expert Report	2) Iterate with Verra to resolve findings	3) Issue Independent Expert Report	Total days
1) Full review of all draft revision documents	3	1	2	6
2) Review focused on soil sampling and analysis	1.5	0.5	1	3
3) Review focused on biogeochemical modeling	1	0.5	0.5	2
4) Review focused on woody biomass quantification	0.5	0.5	0.5	1.5

## QUALIFICATIONS

Verra will evaluate experts' qualifications based on the following criteria:

- 1) Relevant expertise in the subject matter demonstrated by record of scientific publications, reports, and project experience, including:
  - Depth of knowledge of agricultural land management projects, including challenges around soil sampling, soil carbon analysis, and the use of biogeochemical models
  - Degree of innovative thinking in relation to coming up with new solutions
- 2) Experience with VCS project development, GHG accounting, or VCS methodology development demonstrated by relevant experience
- 3) Cost, including making sure that the proposed level of effort is consistent with the outcomes
- 4) Availability to comply with the proposed timeline
- 5) Ability to perform an independent review, without risk of bias that could impact the integrity of the methodology

## MILESTONES, DELIVERABLES, AND TIMELINE

The main deliverables and expected timeline resulting from this assignment are as follows:

Deliverable	Timeline
1) Review documents and issue draft Independent Expert Report	September 2025 Within three weeks of receiving the drafts from Verra
2) Iteration with Verra to resolve findings	September–October 2025 Within three weeks from Verra receiving the draft Independent Expert Report
3) Issue Independent Expert Report	November 2025  Within one week of verbal confirmation from Verra that all findings have been resolved

## RESPONSES TO THE RFP

Respondents are requested to submit the following materials:

- Completed Proposal Response Template, provided in Annex 2 and also available as a Word document, that indicates the respondent’s qualifications, experience, rate, and ability to conduct the review
- Completed Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form, provided in Annex 3 and also available as a Word document, that indicates the respondent’s ability to perform an independent review without risk of bias
- Separately appended resume/CV (not to exceed two pages)
- If applicable, indication of specific topic to which review will be limited: soil sampling and analysis, biogeochemical modeling, and/or woody biomass quantification

All application materials submitted to Verra will be kept confidential.

Proposals must be submitted by email with the methodology development ID# M0264 in the subject by close of business on August 15, 2025, to [methodologies@verra.org](mailto:methodologies@verra.org). Verra will likely ask the top candidates clarifying questions about their proposal. Verra plans to finalize the selection of the consultant by August 31, 2025, with the work to begin as soon as possible after then.

### Legal Nature of RFP

This RFP is an invitation for proposals, and Verra is under no legal obligation to accept any proposal nor proceed with the RFP. Verra reserves the right to amend the requirements at any time.

## Annex 1 – Independent Expert Report Template (subject to changes)



# INDEPENDENT EXPERT REPORT: TEMPLATE

Methodology Title	
Version	
Sectoral Scope(s)	
Document Reviewed	
Date of Issue	
Expert Assessor	
Contact	

## 1) INTRODUCTION

Verra is managing the revision to VM0042 and VMD0053, v2.1 (ID# M0264). Per Section 3.5 of the VCS Methodology Development and Review Process, v5.0, a methodology revision requires a review by a group of independent experts to ensure the revision aligns with current scientific knowledge, research, and best practices, assuring the technical rigor, accuracy, and consistency of the proposed edits.

Based on their experience in agricultural land management and project development for the carbon market, Verra hired \_\_\_\_\_ to provide an expert assessment of the proposed methodology. The expert assessor's assessment focused on:

- a. Scientific rigor: Assessment of whether the proposed revisions to VM0042 and VMD0053 reflect the most recent scientific knowledge of GHG emissions in agricultural systems

- b. Technical assumptions, relevance, accuracy, and/or conservativeness of:
  - i. The new soil sampling and analysis handbook
  - ii. The approach to baseline setting under a diverging crop rotation
  - iii. The biogeochemical modeling requirements
  - iv. The woody biomass quantification
  - v. The remaining minor edits throughout VM0042

## 2) ASSESSMENT APPROACH & FINDINGS

The expert assessor reviews the draft methodology that was published for public consultation and provides feedback to Verra. Verra prepares responses to the expert assessor's findings and updates the methodology accordingly. The expert assessor reviews the responses and provides confirmation that the planned updates address the findings. See Section 6 for detailed expert assessment feedback.

## 3) ASSESSMENT CONCLUSION

The expert assessor completes the expert assessment of the draft revisions to VM0042, v2.1 and VMD0053, v2.1 and confirms that the draft methodology and proposed updates adhere to the criteria established.

## 4) EXPERT QUALIFICATIONS

\_\_\_\_\_ has authored \_\_\_\_ peer-reviewed scientific publications to date. A detailed list of \_\_\_\_\_ employment, education and qualifications, and research publications is available on here: \_\_\_\_\_

## 5) SIGNATURE

Signed for and on behalf of:

Name of entity: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of signatory: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 6) EXPERT FEEDBACK

Section – Description of the Section			
#	Paragraph from Draft Methodology	Comment	Verra's Response and/or Update



## Annex 2 – Proposal Response Template

Evaluation Criteria	Response
<b>Scope of Proposal:</b> Indicate the proposed scope of review	<input type="checkbox"/> Full review of all draft revision documents (red-lined version of the draft VM0042, v3.0, <i>Soil Sampling and Analysis Handbook</i> draft, red-lined version of the draft VMD0053, v3.0, including an accompanying new Model Calibration and Validation Report [MVR] Template)  <input type="checkbox"/> Focus on soil sampling and analysis: Review of <i>Soil Sampling and Analysis Handbook</i> and related proposed revisions in draft VM0042, v3.0, Sections 6, 8, and 9  <input type="checkbox"/> Focus on biogeochemical modeling: Review of draft VMD0053, v3.0, new Model Calibration and Validation Report Template, and related proposed revisions in draft VM0042, v3.0, Sections 6, 8, and 9  <input type="checkbox"/> Focus on woody biomass: Review of related proposed revisions in draft VM0042, v3.0, Sections 6, 8, and 9
1) Relevant expertise in the subject matter, including: -Depth of knowledge of agricultural land management projects, including challenges around soil sampling, soil carbon analysis, and the use of biogeochemical models -Degree of innovative thinking in relation to coming up with new solutions  Please list relevant scientific publications, reports, and project experience.  (maximum 300 words)	
2) Experience with VCS project development, GHG accounting, or VCS methodology development. Please list relevant experience.  (maximum 300 words)	
3) Cost proposal. Provide both daily rate and total cost in USD.  (maximum 100 words)	
4) Availability to comply with the proposed timeline.  (maximum 100 words)	
5) Ability to perform an independent review, without risk of bias that could impact the integrity of the methodology.	Please complete (sign and pdf) the Conflict of Disclosure Form provided in Annex 3.

## Annex 3 – Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form

### Conflict of Interest Disclosure Revision to VM0042, v2.1, and VMD0053, v2.1 Reviewers

<b>Name:</b> (of collaborator)	<b>Position/Role:</b> (of collaborator)
<b>Organization:</b> (of collaborator)	<b>Methodology / Tool / Module:</b> <u>Revision to VM0042, v2.1, and VMD0053, v2.1</u>

#### Instructions

Conflict of Interest (“COI”):

A COI is a situation in which a personal interest interferes with or is perceived to interfere with your ability to carry out your responsibilities in an impartial, unbiased, and objective manner. There are three categories of COIs: potential, perceived, or actual. Each category could potentially pose risks for Verra, your relationship with our organization, the integrity of the consultancy and the resulting methodology, and your personal and professional reputation.

In undertaking your review responsibilities, you have an ongoing duty to be transparent and are required to disclose any potential, perceived, or actual conflicts of interest within five (5) business days of being aware of the situation. When in doubt, please make a disclosure.

#### Disclosure

1. Do you have any affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity that develops projects under the proposed methodology? ☐ Yes (Verra will contact you regarding next steps) ☐ No
2. Do you have interests, financial\*, personal\*, or otherwise, related to project development (interests that concern the broader support of climate mitigation are permissible). ☐ Yes (Verra will contact you regarding next steps) ☐ No

If you answered “Yes” to #1 or #2, or if you have a situation that is different from them, please provide details in the space below. Please include names of organizations, activities, and relevant relationships.

\*Personal interests arise when a Reviewer or their immediate relative obtains an advantage, profit, right, or share or may benefit in any manner from the project development.



\* Financial interests arise when the Reviewer or their immediate relative has been or is currently engaged in discussions to have, directly or indirectly, through business or investment, an ownership or investment interest in any project development.

I have declared all relevant interests on this form and will continue to raise relevant interests as and when they arise.

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Signature

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Date