

SD VISTA NATURE FRAMEWORK PILOT PROJECTS TERMS OF REFERENCE

July 5, 2023

These Terms of Reference define the objective, scope, responsibilities, and criteria related to pilot project application and selection for the Sustainable Development Verified Impact Standard (SD VISta) Nature Framework and biodiversity methodology.

1. Context

Verra's mission is to support climate action and sustainable development with standards programs that credibly, transparently, and robustly assess environmental and social impacts and enable funding for sustaining and scaling up these benefits.

Under its [SD VISta Program](#), Verra is developing a new [Nature Framework](#) and biodiversity methodology, with the objective of unlocking new finance at scale to support high-quality nature conservation and restoration activities globally. The SD VISta Nature Framework (Nature Framework) encompasses concepts and core principles for nature credits, while the biodiversity methodology provides generalized measurement steps and characteristics of a standardized unit.

Following the methodology, project proponents will be able to verify biodiversity outcomes and issue tradable nature credits as standalone assets. Companies and investors will be able to buy the nature credits to support high-quality projects and local communities while derisking their value chains and contributing to a nature-positive world.

Nature credits will therefore contribute to the ambitious, recently adopted Global Biodiversity Framework goals and targets by increasing private sector funding for biodiversity initiatives.

To ensure the appropriateness and usability of the Nature Framework and biodiversity methodology within various ecosystems, geographies, and project contexts, Verra is seeking organizations to pilot the draft requirements and usability of the templates on their relevant conservation or restoration projects.

2. Piloting Objective

The piloting process aims to test the clarity, reasonableness, local appropriateness, scalability, and ease of use of the Nature Framework and biodiversity methodology in real-life projects.

3. Benefits for Pilot Projects

By participating in the pilot process, projects will receive the following benefits:

- Having the opportunity to help shape the Nature Framework and biodiversity methodology
- Joining a pipeline of projects ready to start the registration process once Verra publishes the biodiversity methodology

4. Scope and Responsibilities

Pilot project proponents will be responsible for developing a simplified draft project description (PD) template (provided by Verra) and submitting it with supporting documents for Verra's review. The draft PD should include detailed project design and implementation information and define how the project conforms to the draft Nature Framework and biodiversity methodology requirements.

Verra will conduct a desk review of the information and provide pilot projects with technical support, including guidance and clarifications regarding the draft Nature Framework and biodiversity methodology requirements.

During the piloting, the review and revision of project documents will help Verra refine the draft Nature Framework and biodiversity methodology. Participants will provide guidance and advice for Verra's consideration but will not have decision-making power.

5. Pilot Project Characteristics

The pilot is open to project proponents interested in providing insights while testing the implementation of the Nature Framework on the ground in projects that span a diverse range of ecosystems, activities, and geographies.

In order to properly pilot the Nature Framework and biodiversity methodology, each project is expected to have the necessary approvals from appropriate authorities to claim ownership of its benefits, and a certain maturity level (e.g., capacity to collect data, knowledge of the project area's legal and policy characteristics or threats, and, if possible, progress in project implementation).

6. Pilot Project Selection

Verra seeks to select 15 projects to pilot the draft Nature Framework and biodiversity methodology, distributed across the following criteria:

- Activity: conservation and/or restoration of ecosystems
- Ecosystem: terrestrial, coastal, marine, or freshwater
- Intervention: natural or managed (e.g., agriculture)
- Diverse locations and biomes
- Land or rights holders: Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and Local Communities (LCs), private entities, or governments

In addition to the above characteristics, Verra will also consider additional attributes when selecting projects:

- Ownership and management of projects (with priority to IPs and LCs)
- Magnitude of potential biodiversity benefits or outcomes
- Scalability and replicability
- Technical capability of the proponent
- Availability of startup funding
- Buyer or investor commitment

7. Piloting Activities and Estimated Timeline

Over five to eight months between August 2023 and March 2024, project proponents must be able to commit to the following without remuneration:

1. Participating in one or two 60- to 90-minute introductory webinars providing an overview of the draft Nature Framework and biodiversity methodology requirements and the PD template
2. Submitting an initial draft PD approximately one month after the introductory webinar (estimated October 2023)
3. Submitting a second draft PD three weeks after receiving Verra's comments (estimated mid-November 2023) that addresses those comments and incorporates any updated draft Nature Framework and biodiversity methodology requirements

4. Participating in two or three 60-minute calls with Verra staff to discuss the status of the draft PD and share information about the project throughout the piloting process

8. Operation

Verra staff will organize calls, facilitate communication, and consult with other stakeholders as needed during the piloting. The working language of the pilot project documentation, webinar, and coordination calls will be English.

9. Application

Interested project developers are invited to apply for piloting by August 4, 2023, via this [application form](#). If you have questions about the Nature Framework and biodiversity methodology, please contact [Amy Thom](#), Manager, Sustainable Development Innovation (athom@verra.org).

Verra aims to select pilot projects by August 25, 2023, and to hold an introductory piloting webinar in early September. The appointment of pilot projects will be at Verra's sole discretion via direct invitation from the list of applicants.