

# CCB Program Rules

Version 3.1



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# 1 | Introduction

The Climate, Community & Biodiversity (CCB) Program provides a global program and standard for land-use projects that intend to create net benefits for climate change mitigation and adaptation, local communities and biodiversity. The *CCB Program Rules* (this document) is the overarching program document and provides the rules and requirements governing the CCB Program, and describes the constituent parts of the program such as the project validation and verification process, procedures for combining with other standards, using the CCB label on qualifying greenhouse gas (GHG) units, and the approval requirements for validation/verification bodies.

## 1.1 VERSION

CCB Program documents are labeled with a version number and program documents are correspondingly version controlled. *CCB Version 3* is the third working version of the CCB Program, having been preceded by the first and second editions of the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* and one previous edition of the *Rules for Use of the Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards*.

*CCB Version 3* was released on 12 December 2013. *CCB Version 3* is comprised of all the program documents labeled v3.x, where x is a running number starting at zero. Individual program documents may be updated from time to time, as developments require, and their version numbers will be incremented using the v3.x format. Such updated documents still form part of version 3 and the CCB Program edition should be referred to as *CCB Version 3* regardless of the version numbers of the individual program documents. Where documents are updated, an appendix to the document will clearly state the updates made and their effective date. CCB stakeholders will be informed of the updates and the updates will also be catalogued on the VCS website. Readers shall ensure that they are using the most current version of this and all other program documents, unless another version is justified.

*CCB Version 3* includes the third edition of the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards*, and all new validations shall be conducted against the most recent version (3.x) of this document. Each verification shall be conducted against the most recent validated project description using the same edition of the *Standards* that was used for that validation. The *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards v3* (and related templates) shall therefore be used for verifications of projects validated against the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards v3*, and v1 or v2 (the first or second editions, respectively) and related templates shall be used for the verification of projects validated to those editions.

All other *CCB Version 3* program documents apply to all projects (regardless of date of validation).

New versions of the CCB Program will be issued on a periodic basis when major revisions are required. Development of new versions of the program will include public stakeholder consultation and will be announced on the VCS website and to CCB stakeholders.

The CCB Program documents for previous versions of the CCB are available on the VCS website and these should be referred to for the rules and requirements under such previous versions of the CCB.

## 2 | Overview of the CCB Program

### 2.1 PROGRAM OBJECTIVE AND AIMS

The CCB Program establishes the rules and requirements that operationalize the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* to enable the validation of land-based projects and the verification of climate, community and biodiversity benefits of such projects. A project is understood to be a set of actions or activities applied to a defined geographic area for specific purposes. The CCB Program objective is to stimulate and promote land management activities that credibly mitigate global climate change, improve the well-being and reduce the poverty of local communities, and conserve biodiversity.

The CCB Program aims to:

- 1) Encourage effective and integrated project design that is suitable to local conditions and likely to achieve significant climate, community and biodiversity benefits;
- 2) Demonstrate strong project design at an early stage – when support from key stakeholders including investors, governments and other important local, national and international partners is crucially needed – through validation;
- 3) Demonstrate the adoption of best practices and the delivery of social and environmental benefits of a land-based projects through verification; and
- 4) Enable streamlined linkages with GHG accounting standards to provide a basis for evaluating a carbon project's social and environmental impacts.

### 2.2 PROGRAM HISTORY

The CCB Program was developed through a multi-stakeholder process by the Climate, Community & Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA), a partnership of CARE, Conservation International, The Nature Conservancy, the Rainforest Alliance and the Wildlife Conservation Society. *CCB Version 1*, which comprised solely the first edition of the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards*, was released in May 2005 after a two-year development process based on input from community and environmental groups, companies, academics, project developers and others with expert knowledge or affected by the standards. Prior to their release, *CCB Version 1* was tested on projects in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas and peer reviewed by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) in Indonesia, the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) in Costa Rica and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) in Kenya.

*CCB Version 2* was released in December 2008. *CCB Version 2*, which initially comprised only the second edition of the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards*, was revised to respond to the evolving context for land-based carbon based on feedback from a wide range of users of the standards

such as project developers, representatives of local communities and indigenous peoples, investors, offset buyers, non-governmental organizations and government agencies. The revision process included two public comment periods of 60-days and 30-days respectively and was overseen by a multi-stakeholder Standards Committee. The *Rules for the Use of the Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* were added to *CCB Version 2* in June 2010 to provide guidance on the evaluation of projects using the CCB Program.

*CCB Version 3* was released in December 2013. *CCB Version 3* is built around the third edition of the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* and a significantly updated edition of the *Rules for the Use of the Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards*. The *Rules for the Use of the Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards v3.0* were applicable on 12 December 2013 and the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards v3.0* was required for use with new projects from 20 July 2014. The two main objectives of the revision from *CCB Version 2* to *Version 3* were to incorporate substantial feedback received from users and other stakeholders to ensure that the CCB Program remained robust, practical and continued to meet the demands of the users, and to facilitate the access of smallholder and community-led projects to carbon finance. This revision process, overseen by a multi-stakeholder Standards Committee, was accompanied by two 60-day public comment periods in 2013. Version 3.1 of this document, the *CCB Program Rules*, was released in June 2017. The main objectives of this update were to better align the terminology and formatting of the CCB Program with the VCS Program and to introduce templates to standardize project and validation/verification body reporting.

## 2.3 PROGRAM SCOPE

The CCB Program provides the standard and framework for independent validation of land-based projects, and the verification of climate, community and biodiversity benefits of such projects. The scope of the CCB Program covers all those activities related to land-based projects related to the generation of net positive benefits for climate, community and biodiversity, including projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation or from avoided degradation of other ecosystems, and projects that remove carbon dioxide by sequestering carbon (e.g., reforestation, afforestation, revegetation, forest restoration, agroforestry and sustainable agriculture). The scope does not include the generation of credits for GHG emission reductions and removals, carbon footprint assessments or carbon neutrality claims.

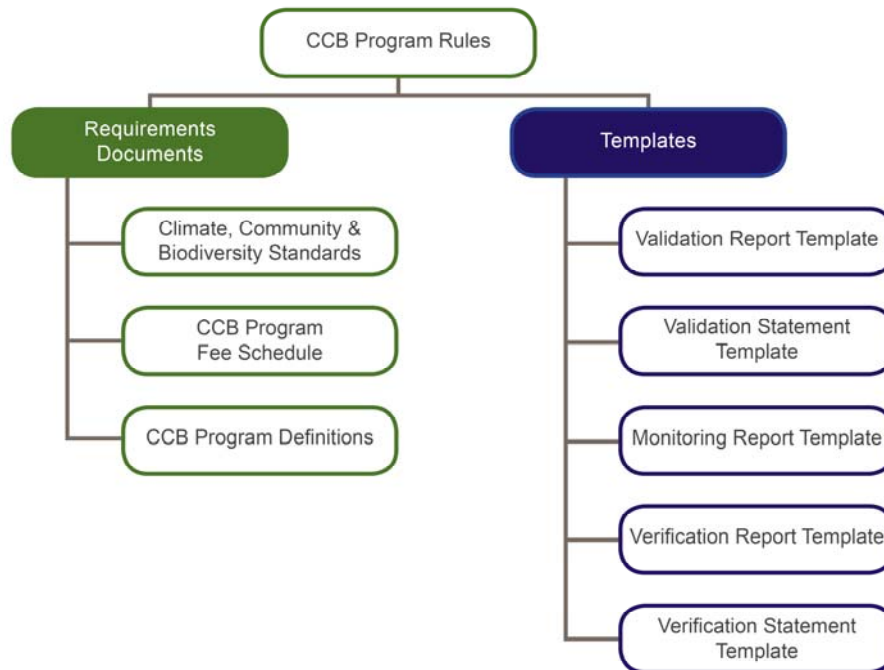
Participation is voluntary and based on objective criteria. The CCB Program is not discriminatory to project proponents, jurisdictional proponents, validation/verification bodies, VCS registries or GHG programs seeking recognition under the CCB Program.

## 2.4 PROGRAM DOCUMENTS

The rules and requirements for the CCB Program are set out in the program documents. Project proponents seeking validation and verification to the CCB Program shall ensure that projects meet with all applicable rules and requirements set out in these documents.

The structure of the program documents is summarized in Diagram 1. The *CCB Program Rules* is the overarching program document, providing the rules and requirements governing the CCB Program and describing the constituent parts of the program such as the project validation and verification process, procedures for combining with other standards, using the CCB label on qualifying greenhouse gas (GHG) units, and the approval requirements for validation/verification bodies. Complementing the *CCB Program Rules* are requirements documents and templates.

**Diagram 1:** Program Documents



In addition to the *VCS Program Guide*, the program documents currently include the following:

1) Requirements Documents

- a) *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards*. Provides the requirements for developing projects that deliver credible and significant climate, community and biodiversity benefits in an integrated and sustainable manner.
- b) *CCB Program Fee Schedule*. Provides the fees related to the various parts of the CCB Program.

2) Templates

- a) *CCB Templates*. Templates for project descriptions, validation reports, validation statements, monitoring reports, verification reports and verification statements.
- b) *CCB & VCS Templates*. Templates for the concurrent validation and monitoring of the CCB Program and VCS Program implementation, including project descriptions, validation reports, validation statements, monitoring reports, verification reports and verification statements.



- 2.4.1** From time to time, guidance is issued to supplement the CCB Program's rules and requirements. The Climate, Community & Biodiversity Alliance and its member organizations have developed documents that provide recommendations and examples to support the use of the CCB rules and requirements. CCB Program guidance currently includes the following:
- 1) Guidance for the Use of the Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards (CCBA and Rainforest Alliance)
  - 2) VCS+CCB Project Development Process (CCBA and VCS)
  - 3) Social and Biodiversity Impact Assessment Manual for REDD+ Projects (Conservation International and Forest Trends Association)
- 2.4.2** The operating language of the CCB Program is English. CCB Program and guidance documents may be translated into other languages to facilitate local use. However, the English versions of CCB Program documents, and the interpretation of same, shall take precedence over any other language translations.

## 2.5 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.5.1** Project proponents are the entities with overall control and responsibility for projects or programs that can demonstrate the legal right to control and operate the project (i.e., project ownership). A project may have one project proponent, or there may be a number of project proponents who collectively have overall control and responsibility for a project or program. If a project has multiple project proponents it must designate a primary project proponent that will serve as the point of contact between VCS and the project. Project proponents establish and operate projects and programs in accordance with the CCB rules. They are responsible for providing the project description, monitoring report and supporting documentation (including evidence of project ownership, the legal right to control and operate project activities) to facilitate validation and verification.

Note – In order to aid the readability of the CCB Program documentation, the documents use project proponent in the singular. For projects with multiple project proponents, “project proponents” should be substituted in place of “project proponent”, as appropriate.

- 2.5.2** Validation/verification bodies are organizations that are approved to validate projects and verify climate, community and biodiversity impacts. Validation/verification bodies evaluate whether a project has met each of the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* criteria and any other CCB rules following the process for validation or verification to the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards*. The list of validation/verification bodies is available on the VCS website.
- 2.5.3** VCS registries are approved and contracted by the VCS to provide registry services for the CCB Program. For projects that use both the CCB and VCS Programs, VCS registries are responsible for ensuring that all required project documents have been submitted to the registry, applying CCB labels to GHG credits and maintaining custody and records of project ownership.

- 2.5.4** The CCB Program is managed by the VCS, which is an independent, non-profit organization incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia in the United States. The VCS is responsible for managing, overseeing and developing the program. It maintains an impartial position and does not develop projects, nor does it provide validation, verification or consulting services related to the CCB Program.

One of the VCS' roles is to oversee and ensure the integrity of the application of the CCB Program with respect to each project. The VCS conducts reviews of projects and CCB label issuance requests. The VCS is also responsible for overseeing the validation/verification bodies operating under the CCB Program. Where the VCS identifies shortcomings in a validation/verification body's performance, it may provide feedback and require the validation/verification body to address non-conformities. The VCS reserves the right to exclude auditor organizations from the validation/verification bodies list at its discretion.

It reserves the right not to approve the validation or verification of projects or approve the issuance of CCB-labeled GHG credits where it deems that projects are not in compliance with the CCB rules or may otherwise impact the integrity of the CCB Program, and to suspend projects where it deems that they have not been in compliance with the CCB rules. The VCS also reserves the right to take action against VCS registries in accordance with the provisions set out in the agreements signed with the VCS. The rights and obligations of VCS registry operators are set out in such agreements.

- 2.5.5** The CCB Steering Committee oversees the strategic direction and ongoing development of the CCB Program. A list of steering committee members is available on the VCS website.

# 3 | Project Requirements

## 3.1 LINKING TO OTHER PROGRAMS AND THE CCB LABEL

Verification to the CCB Program does not result in the issuance of tradable climate, community and biodiversity benefits. Social and environmental accounting standards that do result in issuance of units for such benefits may be used in combination with the CCB Program.

**3.1.1** A label is a permanent marker added to each issued GHG credit that makes it easier for investors and credit buyers to identify credits issued by a project proponent whose project has met certain rules and requirements. A successful verification under the CCB Program and a carbon accounting standard enables the addition of a CCB label to verified emissions reductions units listed on a registry (see Section 3.1.2 below).

The label may not be used for carbon units issued from projects that are validated but not verified to the CCB rules and requirements: validation demonstrates that a project has been designed so that it *is likely to deliver* multiple benefits, while verification demonstrates that multiple benefits *have been delivered*.

The carbon units to which the CCB label is applied must have been generated during the project monitoring period that is covered by the CCB verification. This means that the CCB label may only be applied to carbon units for which the vintage period is entirely included in the period covered by the CCB verification.

**3.1.2** Project proponents issuing CCB-verified GHG credits under a GHG accounting standard (e.g., VCS) shall apply the CCB label to all eligible GHG credits. The manner in which the GHG credits are labeled is dependent on whether the project has completed verification under the CCB Program before or after GHG credit issuance:

- 1) Where the project has completed verification under the CCB Program prior to issuing GHG credits, all eligible GHG credits (i.e., those issued from a verification period covered by the CCB verification) shall be labeled at issuance.
- 2) Where the project proponent issues GHG credits prior to the project completing verification under the CCB Program, all eligible GHG credits shall be retroactively labeled upon successful completion of CCB verification for that period. Only the project proponent or owner of the GHG credits may request the addition of retroactive labels to already issued credits.

Retroactive labeling is not required in the following circumstances:

- 1) Project proponents that can provide evidence to the registry administrator of a sales contract for GHG credits (e.g., Verified Carbon Units) that was executed prior to 1 July 2015 are not

be subject to mandatory CCB labeling for the volume of GHG credits identified in the contract.

- 2) Because the mandatory labeling requirement become effective 1 January 2016, retroactive labeling is not required for GHG credits issued prior to 1 January 2016.

Note – If the GHG credits to be labeled after issuance are Verified Carbon Units (VCUs), the retroactive label fee specified in the document *VCS Program Fee Schedule* will be applied.

## 3.2 RECOGNIZED GREENHOUSE GAS PROGRAMS

**3.2.1** In order to be recognized by the VCS as a substitute for *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* Climate Section, a GHG program shall have requirements that ensure the use of a defensible methodological approach (e.g., a methodological approach that follows good practice guidance that includes procedures for delineating the conditions under which the methodological approach can be applied) and that projects meet all other requirements of that section of the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards*. Criteria for eligibility as a recognized GHG program are as follow:

- 1) The GHG program administrator is an entity or institution that does not have involvement in GHG project development which would represent a conflict of interest in administering the GHG program.
- 2) The GHG program standard was developed through a process of public stakeholder consultation or is the implementation of regulations that themselves have been developed through a process of public stakeholder consultation.
- 3) The GHG program standard is publicly available.
- 4) The GHG program administrator maintains a public record of all projects for which certification statements are issued.
- 5) The GHG program has the complementary objectives and scope to the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* Climate Section and includes rules and requirements on establishing that GHG emissions reductions or removals are real, measureable, permanent, additional, and independently audited.
- 6) The GHG program is applicable to GHG projects and the emission reductions or removals generated by such projects (for example, it is not a certification that applies at the organizational level).
- 7) The GHG program provides a methodological approach that meets the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* requirements CL1.1, CL2.1, CL3.1 and CL4.1 of a defensible methodological approach to estimating total GHG emissions from land use activities under a without-project scenario, the with-project scenario, and resulting from leakage.
- 8) The GHG program standard requires monitoring, reporting, and verification of changes in relevant GHGs pools and sources.

- 3.2.2** All recognized GHG programs are listed on the VCS website. The listing for each recognized GHG program identifies which documents are equivalent to the project description and the monitoring report. Applications for acceptance by the VCS as a recognized GHG program can be sent by written request to the VCS. As of the publication of this document, the VCS Program is the only recognized GHG program.
- 3.2.3** When a GHG program is recognized by VCS, templates for streamlined validation and verification of the CCB Program and the recognized GHG program will be created. As the VCS Program is the only recognized GHG program to date, this document refers to streamlined templates and processes for joint CCB and VCS projects.

### 3.3 VALIDATION AND VERIFICATION WITH A RECOGNIZED GHG PROGRAM

- 3.3.1** In order to use a recognized GHG program to substitute for *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* Climate Section, the project must *inter alia* have the same name, the same project area, the same project proponent, the same project start date (i.e., the date on which activities that lead to the generation of GHG emission reductions or removals are implemented), the same activities and the same without-project scenario in both programs.
- 3.3.2** Project proponents have two options to demonstrate that a project has met the validation requirements of the CCB Program and a recognized GHG program:
- 1) Projects that have not completed validation under a recognized GHG program prior to validation to the CCB Program shall use the combined template for the recognized GHG program and the CCB Program document (e.g., the *CCB & VCS Project Description Template*)
  - 2) Projects that have completed validation under a recognized GHG program prior to validation to the CCB Program may use the *CCB Project Description Template* and insert references to the publicly available validated project description for the recognized GHG program as appropriate.
- 3.3.3** In order to demonstrate that a project has met the verification requirements of the CCB Program and a recognized GHG program, the combined template for the recognized GHG program and the CCB Program document (e.g., the *CCB & VCS Project Monitoring Report Template*) shall be used to demonstrate that the project meets the requirements for verification of the recognized GHG program. The time period documented for verification must be the same under both the CCB Program and the recognized GHG program.
- 3.3.4** If a project meets the requirements of a recognized GHG program resulting in a waiver of the Climate Section of the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards*, the project must be verified to the CCB Program at the same time and every time that it is verified to the recognized GHG program. It may be verified to the GHG program without being verified to the CCB Program.

- 3.3.5** If a project is not successfully validated or verified to the standards of a recognized GHG program at the time of its validation or verification to the CCB rules, it shall use the *CCB Project Description Template* or the *CCB Monitoring Report Template* to demonstrate conformance with the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* Climate Section (CL1-3 of the first edition).

### 3.4 AVOIDANCE OF DOUBLE COUNTING

- 3.4.1** Project proponents are required to identify the tradable climate, community and biodiversity benefits of the project such as emissions reductions, water credits, etc., and specify how double counting is avoided, particularly for credits for emissions removals or reductions sold on the voluntary market and generated in a country participating in a compliance mechanism.<sup>1</sup>

Whether for compliance or voluntary purposes, credits must represent real reductions, and the simultaneous inclusion of the project activities in voluntary *and* compliance accounting will lead to double counting.

- 3.4.2** If the benefits generated from a project (i.e., GHG emissions) are included in an emissions trading program or take place in a jurisdiction and sector in which binding limits are established on the relevant benefit, then any use of the benefit as a credit would result in double counting.

Even if the project is clearly additional to the without-project land-use scenario, the inclusion of the project's benefits in sector or jurisdiction compliance reporting will make available credits that can potentially be sold to other covered entities and/or permit additional negative impacts in covered sectors in that jurisdiction. The *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* require that a project achieves net positive climate, community and biodiversity benefits, and the net positive benefits would not be achieved if the project's benefits enable additional negative impacts in covered sectors.

- 3.4.3** Project proponents should provide evidence that the credits generated by the project have not or will not be used in the program or for the purpose of demonstrating compliance with the binding limits that are in place in that jurisdiction or sector. Such evidence could include the following:
- 1) A letter from the program operator or designated national authority that GHG credits generated by the project have been cancelled from the program, or national cap as applicable;
  - 2) Purchase and cancellation of GHG allowances equivalent to the GHG emissions reductions or removals generated by the project related to the program or national cap;

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<sup>1</sup> See G5.9 in the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards Version 3* and CL1.5 in *Version 2*.

- 3) Evidence from the program operator, designated national authority or other relevant regulatory authority stating that the specific GHG emission reductions or removals generated by the project or type of project are not within the scope of the program or national cap.

**3.4.4** There may be specific situations where projects reduce GHG emissions from activities that are included in an emissions trading program or take place in a jurisdiction or sector in which binding limits are established on GHG emissions, but there exists a reduced risk for double counting. Such examples include the following:

- 1) The absence of enforceable regulation to meet a binding limit on GHG emissions, such as the implementation of a national or relevant sectoral cap and emissions trading program;
- 2) The extent to which the host country is adrift of any binding limit on GHG emissions;
- 3) The absence of sufficient political will in the host country to comply with any binding limit on GHG emissions, including policies and regulation such as national or relevant sectoral cap and emissions trading program.

For example, if a UNFCCC Annex 1 country were to fail to comply with its Kyoto Protocol reduction commitment, it is possible that double counting of the environmental benefit associated with any GHG emission reduction or removal projects hosted in that country might not occur. Likewise, there may be post-2012 scenarios where similar uncertainties may exist, such as if non-Annex 1 countries were to adopt non-binding or no-lose reduction commitments. However, given the uncertainties associated with these scenarios and the possibility that a country could miss its target, but still have in place functioning elements of domestic policy that would make projects non-additional, such situations must be evaluated by the validation/verification body on a case-by-case basis.

## 3.5 PROJECT DOCUMENTATION

### Project Description

**3.5.1** The project proponent shall prepare a project description (PD) that provides a detailed description of the project. The project description explains how the project has been designed, the ways in which the project meets each of the requirements of the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards*, how the project will be implemented and how success in terms of climate, community and biodiversity benefits will be measured. The project proponent shall use one of the following documents:

- 1) Projects that are using the CCB Program independent of a recognized GHG program: the *CCB Project Description Template*.
- 2) Projects that are using the CCB Program together with a recognized GHG program: the combined project description template for that program (e.g., the *CCB & VCS Project Description Template*).

Note – If a project is validated under the VCS Program prior to completing validation under the CCB Program, the project proponents shall complete the *CCB Project Description Template* and include references to the *VCS Project Description* where appropriate.

- 3.5.2** If a project includes multiple activities to reduce emissions (e.g., a project that is implementing activities to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) and also for afforestation, reforestation and revegetation (ARR)), the project proponent shall prepare a single project description that describes each activity.

### Monitoring Report

- 3.5.3** The project proponent shall prepare a monitoring report that describes, in detail, for each relevant *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* criterion and indicator, how the project was implemented during the period covered by the verification and what outcomes and impacts have been generated since the start of the project and over the current monitoring period. The project proponent shall use one of the following documents:

- 1) Projects that are using the CCB Program alone: the *CCB Monitoring Report Template*
- 2) Projects that are using the CCB Program together with a recognized GHG program: the combined project description template for that program (e.g., the *CCB & VCS Monitoring Report Template*)

- 3.5.4** The monitoring period of the monitoring report shall be a distinct time period that does not overlap with previous monitoring periods.

- 3.5.5** Project proponents shall adhere to all instructional text within the project description and monitoring report templates.

### Project Description Deviations

- 3.5.6** The validated project description is used during verification to determine if a project has been implemented in accordance with its design. Minor changes to the validated project design are allowed at verification. Significant changes in the project activities or substantial changes in the impacts of the project that are not described in a validated project description would make verification impossible, and need to be addressed via a project description deviation. Both of types of modifications to the original project description should be documented in the verification report.

- 3.5.7** Either a new validation or the validation of a project description deviation is required at the time of verification if any of the following situations occur:

- 1) There has been a change in the project area as defined in the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards*, except in grouped projects which meet validation and verification requirements defined in *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* G1.13-15.



- 2) There has been a significant change in the project activities, such as significant changes in the scope (e.g., inclusion or exclusion of reforestation or reducing emissions from deforestation) or scale of the activities.
- 3) There has been a substantial change in the expected climate, community, or biodiversity impacts of the project, for example, a substantial change in the type of positive or negative impacts, or the affected communities or community group(s).
- 4) There has been a change of the project proponent(s) responsible for implementation.
- 5) For projects that met the requirements of the Climate Section waiver and did not use *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* CL1 – CL4 for the previous validation, there has been a revision of project description and a new validation undertaken to demonstrate conformance with a recognized GHG program, for example resulting in changes to the project's without-project scenario.
- 6) Information is provided to demonstrate that the project meets the requirements of a Gold Level that was not included in the project description for an earlier validation.

The validation/verification body will decide if the project's situation requires a full new validation or the validation of a project description deviation based on the significance of the deviation from the existing project design. The process for validation of a project description deviation is set out below in Sections 4.4.1 – 4.4.5.

- 3.5.8** A project description deviation may be used to update the project to go from the first or second editions to the third edition of the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards*.
- 3.5.9** The full indicator(s) impacted by the project description deviation shall be replaced in the project description and a new project description shall be issued. The changes, including indicator(s), date of change(s), and brief description of the change(s), shall be documented in the Document History section of the project description.
- 3.5.10** The project description deviation shall be described and justified in the monitoring report. This shall include a description of when the changes occurred and the reasons for the changes. The deviation shall also be included in all subsequent monitoring reports.

### Language of Project Documentation

- 3.5.11** The language in which project documents may be developed depends on the template used.
- 1) Where projects use the CCB Program independent of a recognized GHG program, the *CCB Project Description Template* and/or *CCB Monitoring Report Template* may be completed in a locally appropriate language, if the validation/verification body has competency in that language.

In cases where the project description and/or monitoring report are developed in a language other than English, at least a summary of the project description and/or monitoring report

shall be developed in English. Requirements of this summary are set out in Section 3.5.12 below.

- 2) The *CCB & VCS Project Description Template* and the *CCB & VCS Monitoring Report Template* shall be completed in English.

**3.5.12** For projects located in countries for which English is not a widely used language among communities, the project proponent shall develop at least a summary of the project description and/or monitoring report in a relevant local or regional language. This shall be the same summary disseminated to communities.

- 1) The project description summary shall include at least information required for the cover page and information about the summary of project benefits sections of the relevant project description template and G1.1-9 of the third edition of the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards*.
- 2) The monitoring report summary shall include, at least, the information required for the cover page and information about the summary of project benefits sections of the relevant monitoring report template, a short description of any project description deviations and, for grouped projects, identification of project areas to be added during the verification, and any other information on monitoring results showing that the project has delivered net positive climate, community and biodiversity benefits.

### Commercially Sensitive Information

**3.5.13** All information in the project documents shall be presumed to be available for public review, though commercially sensitive information (e.g., trade secrets, financial, commercial, scientific or other information whose disclosure could reasonably be expected to result in material financial loss or gain, prejudice the outcome of contractual or other negotiations or otherwise damage or enrich the person or entity to which the information relates) may be protected where it can be demonstrated that such information is commercially sensitive. The project proponent may protect commercially sensitive information by submitting, via the process set out in Section 4.3 below, a public project description and a private project description. The private project description will not be publicly available. The public project description differs from the private project description only in that it does not contain commercially sensitive information.

**3.5.14** The validation/verification body shall check that any information designated by the project proponent as commercially sensitive meets the CCB Program definition of commercially sensitive information. Information in the project documents related to the determination of the baseline scenario, demonstration of additionality, and estimation and monitoring of GHG emission reductions and removals shall not be considered to be commercially sensitive and shall be provided in the public versions of the project documents.

# 4 | Validation and Verification Requirements

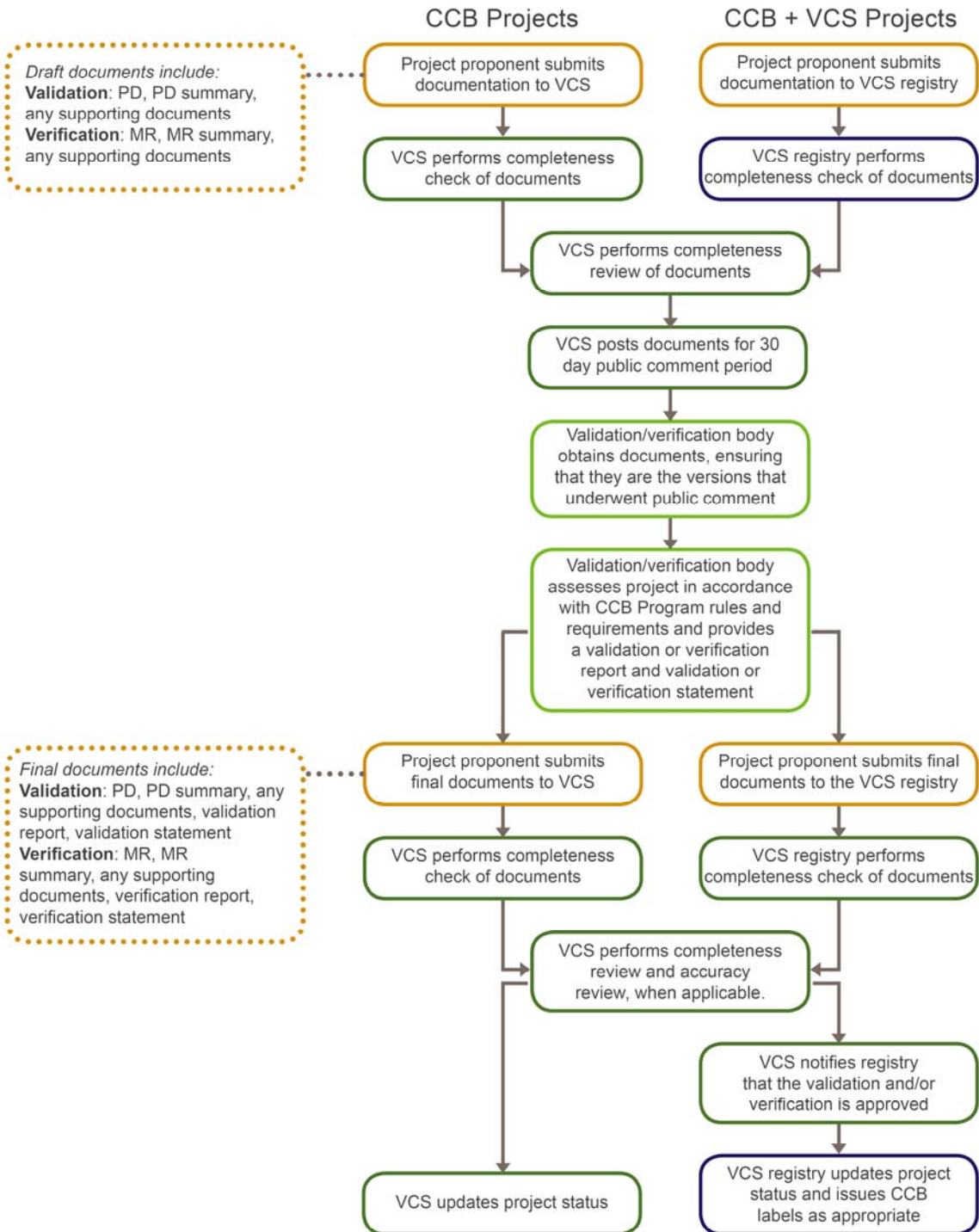
## 4.1 OVERVIEW OF PROJECT VALIDATION AND VERIFICATION

Validation is the independent assessment of the project by a validation/verification body that determines whether the project design complies with the CCB rules. Verification is the periodic ex-post independent assessment by a validation/verification body of the climate, community and biodiversity impacts that have occurred or are on track to occur as a result of the project during the monitoring period, conducted in accordance with the CCB rules.

The project shall be validated and its implementation verified as set out in Diagram 2 below, which illustrates the different tracks for projects using the CCB Program alone and projects using the CCB and VCS Programs together. Note that project proponents that use the CCB and VCS Programs together shall refer to VCS Program documents, particularly the *VCS Registration and Issuance Process*, and comply with all of the requirements therein.

Implementation is considered to be successful if the project has generated, or is on track to generate, net positive climate, community, and biodiversity benefits in accordance with its validated design.

**Diagram 2:** Validation of Project Design and Verification of Successful Project Implementation



## 4.2 GENERAL VALIDATION AND VERIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

### Project Validated and Verified by a Validation/Verification Body

- 4.2.1** The project shall be validated and its climate, community and biodiversity benefits shall be verified by a validation/verification body that meets with the eligibility requirements set out in Section 5 below.
- 4.2.2** Validation and verification of the project may be undertaken by the same validation/verification body, noting the rules on rotation of validation/verification bodies set out in Section 4.2.3 below. Validation may occur before the first verification or at the same time as the first verification.

### Validation/Verification Body Rotation

- 4.2.3** Rotation of validation/verification bodies is required in respect of validation and verification, as follows:
- 1) Validation and the first verification of a project may be undertaken by the same validation/verification body. However, the subsequent verification shall be undertaken by a different validation/verification body. For example, if validation and verification were undertaken at the same time, the subsequent verification would have to be undertaken by a different validation/verification body. If validation were undertaken first (i.e., separately), the first verification could be undertaken by the same validation/verification body, but the subsequent verification would have to be undertaken by a different validation/verification body.
  - 2) A validation/verification body may not verify more than six consecutive years of a project's climate, community and biodiversity impacts. The validation/verification body may undertake further verification for the project only when at least three years have been verified by a different validation/verification body. Notwithstanding these rules, where projects have monitoring periods longer than six years, noting the requirements in Sections 4.5.1 – 4.5.2 below, a validation/verification body is permitted to verify more than six consecutive years of a project's climate, community and biodiversity impacts and the subsequent verification shall be undertaken by a different validation/verification body.

### Audit Period Deadline

- 4.2.4** VCS shall receive the validation and/or verification report and validation and/or verification statement within one year of the initiation of the relevant public comment period.
- 4.2.5** The one-year deadline, as described in Section 4.2.4, can be re-started at any time before it is over by posting the most recent versions of relevant documents for a new public comment period, using the procedure set out in Sections 4.3.4 – 4.3.10 below.

## Negative Audit Conclusions

- 4.2.6** Where the project does not meet the criteria for validation or verification by the end of the one-year audit period, the validation/verification body shall produce a negative validation or verification conclusion and provide the validation or verification report and project description or monitoring report to the VCS. The CCB status of the project on the project record on the VCS project database will be updated to *withdrawn* or to the status achieved prior to the start of the validation or verification audit (e.g., *validation approved* or *verification approved*), if applicable. With the consent of the project proponent, these documents will be posted to the project record on the VCS project database.
- 4.2.7** The project shall be ineligible for validation or verification until such time as corrective action is taken and the (same) validation/verification body has provided a positive validation or verification. The project shall reinitiate the validation or verification process, including a new public comment period. The validation/verification body shall determine whether a new site visit is needed.

## Validation and Verification Requirements for Grouped Projects

- 4.2.8** Grouped projects are projects to which additional project areas, which meet pre-established eligibility criteria, may be added subsequent to prior validation.
- 4.2.9** Validation and verification of grouped projects shall assess conformance of the project with the requirements for grouped projects set out in the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards*.
- 4.2.10** New project areas shall be validated, based on the information reported in the monitoring report, against the applicable set of eligibility criteria. The validation/verification body shall specify which instances meet the eligibility criteria for inclusion in the project. Such validation shall be reported in the verification report.
- 4.2.11** Where, due to the number of project areas, it is unreasonable to undertake an individual assessment of each initial or new instance, the validation/verification body shall document and explain the sampling methods employed for the validation of such instances. Sampling methods used for the validation of new project areas shall be statistically sound.

## 4.3 VALIDATION AND VERIFICATION PROCESS

- 4.3.1** Validation/verification to the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* is based on a review of the project documents provided by the project proponent and appropriate fact finding by the validation/verification body during a project site visit. The validation/verification body is expected to use expert knowledge and professional judgment to assess available evidence to determine which of the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* criteria are satisfied by the project as designed and documented.

The team conducting the audit should include expertise in the following areas:

- 1) Proficiency in a relevant local or regional language for the project location
- 2) Relevant agriculture, forestry and/or other land use experience in the project country or region
- 3) Relevant social and cultural expertise
- 4) Relevant ecological and biodiversity expertise.

**4.3.2** The project proponent shall assist with the validation/verification audit by providing the validation/verification body with the necessary documentation and other evidence to show how the project satisfies each *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* criterion and indicator. In a timely manner, the project proponent shall submit additional evidence as needed and requested, respond to questions from the validation/verification body, and assist in arranging meetings with communities and other stakeholders as requested and required. The burden of proof in the validation/verification process ultimately rests with the project proponent.

**4.3.3** Sections 4.3.4 – 4.3.30 below set out the requirements for validation and verification of projects using the CCB Program. Note that although requirements are set out in these sections for projects using the CCB Program together with the VCS Program, these sections do not set out the full rules and requirements of the VCS Program. Projects using the VCS Program must also follow the full rules and requirements set out in VCS Program documents, including the VCS documents *VCS Standard, AFOLU Requirements, and Registration and Issuance Process*.

### Pre-Audit

**4.3.4** The project proponent, or its authorized representative, shall submit documents for public comment.

- 1) Projects using the CCB Program independent of the VCS Program shall submit the following documents to VCS via [CCBStandards@v-c-s.org](mailto:CCBStandards@v-c-s.org):
  - a) Prior to validation: draft project description, draft project description language summary (as necessary to meet the requirements set out in Sections 3.5.11 – 3.5.12).
  - b) Prior to verification: draft monitoring report, draft monitoring report language summary (as necessary to meet the requirements set out in Sections 3.5.11 – 3.5.12).
- 2) Projects using both the CCB Program and the VCS Program shall submit the following documents to VCS via the VCS registry:
  - a) Prior to validation: draft project description, draft project description language summary (as necessary to meet the requirements set out in Sections 3.5.11 – 3.5.12).
  - b) Prior to verification: draft monitoring report, draft monitoring report language summary (as necessary to meet the requirements set out in Sections 3.5.11 – 3.5.12).

- 4.3.5** A completeness check of the submitted documents will be conducted to ensure that all required project documents have been submitted using the appropriate templates and the appropriate version of the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* has been applied.
- 1) For projects using the using the CCB Program independent of the VCS Program, VCS shall perform the completeness check.
  - 2) For projects using both the CCB Program and VCS Program, the registry shall perform the completeness check.
- 4.3.6** The project proponent, or its authorized representative, is invoiced for the CCB validation or verification fee when the project proponent submits documents per Section 4.3.4. The fee rate is set out in the *CCB Program Fee Schedule*. Payment of this fee must be received before the VCS commences its initial completeness review (per Section 4.3.7).
- 4.3.7** VCS will conduct a completeness review of the submitted documents to ensure that all relevant sections of each of the documents have been completed with appropriate data types and that climate, community and biodiversity benefits are not being double counted (as set out in Section 3.4).
- 4.3.8** A CCB project record will be created on the VCS project database, as set out below, when validation documents are posted for public comment.
- 1) For projects using the CCB Program independent of the VCS Program, VCS shall create the CCB project record.
  - 2) For projects using both the CCB Program and VCS Program, the VCS registry shall create the CCB project record (or add it to the VCS project record, if one already exists).
- 4.3.9** VCS shall post draft project documents for a 30 day public comment and update the project status as follows:
- 1) When draft validation documents have been submitted, per Section 4.3.4, the project's CCB status shall be updated to *under validation*.
  - 2) When draft verification documents have been submitted, per Section 4.3.4, the project's CCB status shall be updated to *under verification* or *verified, under verification*.
  - 3) When draft validation and draft verification documents have been submitted, per Section 4.3.4, the project's CCB status shall be updated to *under validation and verification*.

The VCS reserves the right not to publish documents at its discretion.

- 4.3.10** When project documents are posted to the VCS project database, the validation/verification body and the project proponent, or its authorized representative, shall be notified that a public comment period has begun. The maximum period allowed for the completion of the audit is one-year from the first day of the public comment period (see Sections 4.2.4 – 4.2.5).



## Validation/Verification Body Audit

**4.3.11** The public comment period for the project documents to be validated or verified shall be open on the VCS project database before the opening meeting between the validation/verification body and the project proponent (such opening meeting representing the beginning of the validation process). The validation/verification body is responsible for checking that the relevant documents are open for comment on the VCS project database and shall not conduct the opening meeting or otherwise begin validation or verification until such time as the project's status is updated to *under validation*, *under validation and verification* or *under verification*. The validation/verification body shall provide VCS with dates of the site visit as soon as they have been established.

**4.3.12** The validation/verification body shall address any and all comments from the public comment period as defined in Sections 4.6.4 and 4.6.7, and abide by the rules set out in Section 4.6.6 with respect to comments.

**4.3.13** Validation and verification audits shall include a visit to the project site. The purpose of the site visit is to confirm the validity of the written project description or monitoring report and to ensure that the project meets the rules and requirements of the CCB Program. The on-site audit process normally includes interviews with project proponents and stakeholders, and a review of supporting records, documents and reports.

The validation/verification body may conduct a verification audit without a site visit only in a case where both of the following criteria are met:

- 1) The posting of the current project description and/or monitoring report for public comment is within three years of the first day of the public comment period for the audit during which the same validation/verification body last conducted a CCB site visit; and
- 3) The validation/verification body decides that current information provided by the project proponent combined with information from the last CCB site visit conducted by the same validation/verification body provides sufficient evidence for issuance of an opinion about whether the project meets the rules and requirements of the CCB Program.

**4.3.14** The project proponent shall provide notification of a planned and upcoming validation/verification body site visit to communities and other stakeholders, preferably with 30 days' notice. Such notification shall indicate the validation/verification body name, audit team leader, dates and locations of the audit, contact details, and means of communicating with the audit team.

**4.3.15** A validation/verification body shall document the audit and its decision using the template that corresponds to the document being audited (e.g., for validation of a project using the CCB Program independent of a recognized GHG program, the *CCB Validation Report Template*; for verification of a project using both the CCB and VCS Programs, the *CCB & VCS Verification Report Template*).

The validation/verification body shall adhere to all instructional text within the template.

- 4.3.16** In the case that there are non-conformities, deficiencies or weaknesses of the project design or implementation with respect to the CCB rules, these shall be identified and justified by the validation/verification body in the validation or verification report at the indicator level. The validation/verification body should raise findings (e.g., corrective action requests or clarification requests) for any such deficiency. These shall be outlined clearly and specifically so that the project proponent may respond to any open issue(s) and undertake appropriate corrective action. Draft validation and verification reports are not submitted to the VCS and are not made public.
- 4.3.17** Upon receiving a draft validation or verification report, the project proponent shall address all identified corrective action or non-conformity requests to the satisfaction of the validation/verification body. The project proponent must take remedial actions, including, but not limited to, modifying the project design in the case of validation, or providing new or revised documentation or supporting evidence, so that it can satisfy the design or implementation requirements of the CCB Program.
- 4.3.18** A validation/verification body may determine that the project proponent is required to share with communities and other stakeholders information about major changes in the project description or the monitoring report that occur between the public comment period, or the version of these documents originally shared with communities and other stakeholders and the issuance of a validation/verification statement.
- 4.3.19** The validation report and the verification report shall be accompanied by a validation statement and a verification statement, respectively. Validation and verification statements shall be completed using the appropriate template. The validation and verification statements shall be translated into English.
- 4.3.20** Any significant revisions to the final approved versions of the project description or monitoring report compared with the versions posted for public comment shall be reflected in final versions of any necessary summaries.
- 4.3.21** The final validation or verification report and the validation or verification statement shall remain the property of the project proponent, the validation/verification body and the VCS, and shall remain confidential until the project proponent consents to their public release by submitting them along with final versions of the project description or monitoring report and any necessary summaries to a registry or to VCS. This is intended to encourage projects to be audited with the CCB Program without having to fear that a non-passing report could be used against them.

### Post-Audit

- 4.3.22** After the audit has been completed and the validation/verification body has issued a validation and/or verification report and statement, the project proponent, or its authorized representative, shall submit final documents to VCS.

- 1) Projects using the CCB Program independent of the VCS Program shall submit the following documents to VCS via CCBStandards@v-c-s.org:
  - a) After validation is complete: project description, project description language summary (as necessary to meet the requirements set out in Sections 3.5.11 – 3.5.12), validation report and validation statement.
  - b) After verification is complete: monitoring report, monitoring report language summary (as necessary to meet the requirements set out in Sections 3.5.11 – 3.5.12), verification report and verification statement.
- 2) Projects using both the CCB Program and the VCS Program shall submit the following documents to VCS via the VCS registry:
  - a) After validation is complete: project description, project description language summary (as necessary to meet the requirements set out in Sections 3.5.11 – 3.5.12), validation report and validation statement.
  - b) After verification is complete: monitoring report, monitoring report language summary (as necessary to meet the requirements set out in Sections 3.5.11 – 3.5.12), verification report and verification statement.

**4.3.23** A completeness check of the submitted documents will be conducted to ensure that all required project documents have been submitted using the appropriate templates and the appropriate version of the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* has been applied.

- 1) For projects using the using the CCB Program independent of the VCS Program, VCS shall perform the completeness check.
- 2) For projects using both the CCB Program and VCS Program, the registry shall perform the completeness check.

**4.3.24** VCS will conduct a completeness review of the submitted documents to ensure that all relevant sections of each of the documents have been completed with appropriate data types and that climate, community and biodiversity benefits are not being double counted (as set out in section 3.4).

**4.3.25** The VCS may, at its discretion, undertake an accuracy review of the project documents and validation and/or verification report and statement, the scope of which is to ensure full adherence of the validation or verification to CCB Program rules and requirements. The accuracy review process is set out in Sections 4.3.28 – 4.3.30, below.

Note – for projects using both the CCB Program and VCS Program, a VCS accuracy review shall be conducted at the same time as a CCB accuracy review, per the process set out in the VCS document *Registration and Issuance Process*.

**4.3.26** VCS shall post final project documents and the validation and/or verification report and statement to the project record on the VCS project database and update the project status as follows:

- 1) When final validation documents have been submitted, per Section 4.3.22, the project's CCB status shall be updated to *validation approved*.
- 2) When final verification documents have been submitted, per Section 4.3.22, the project's CCB status shall be updated to *verification approved*.

The VCS reserves the right not to publish documents at its discretion.

**4.3.27** A project's validation or verification to the CCB Program rules and requirements shall not be considered approved until:

- 1) The validation or verification report and the validation or verification statement are posted on the VCS project database. This transparency is essential to maintain the credibility of the CCB validation and/or verification process and its value in the marketplace.
- 2) The project's CCB status is updated to *validation approved* or *verification approved* on the VCS project database.

A project is not considered to have achieved the Gold Level unless this designation is shown on the VCS project database.

### Accuracy Review Process

**4.3.28** Where the VCS undertakes an accuracy review (as defined in Section 4.3.25), the project proponent and validation/verification body shall be notified that the VCS is undertaking a review.

- 1) For projects using the CCB Program independent of the VCS Program, VCS shall notify the project proponent (or its authorized representative) and validation/verification body of the review.
- 2) For projects using both the CCB Program and VCS Program, the VCS registry administrator shall notify the project proponent (or its authorized representative) and validation/verification body of the review.

**4.3.29** Where no findings are raised during the accuracy review, the VCS or the VCS registry administrator, for projects using both the CCB and VCS Programs shall inform the project proponent (or its authorized representative) and validation/verification body that the validation or verification is approved.

**4.3.30** Where material non-conformances are identified during the accuracy review, the validation/verification body shall respond to the findings issued (e.g., corrective action requests and clarification requests) by the VCS, in accordance with the following procedure:

- 1) The validation/verification body shall provide a written response to each finding, undertake, (or ensure that the project proponent undertakes, as appropriate) revisions to the project

- documents where necessary, and submit all revised documents to the VCS. The VCS reviews such documents within 10 business days.
- 2) Where the findings are addressed to the satisfaction of the VCS, the VCS (or the VCS registry administrator, for projects using both the CCB and VCS Programs) shall inform the project proponent and validation/verification body that the validation or verification is approved.
  - 3) Where the findings are not addressed to the satisfaction of the VCS, the VCS may issue a further round of findings (not to exceed a total of three rounds of findings).
  - 4) Where the findings are not addressed to the satisfaction of the VCS after the third round and/or where the VCS otherwise determines that the project proponent has failed to demonstrate compliance with CCB rules and requirements, the validation and/or verification shall not be approved. The VCS notifies the project proponent and the validation/verification body of the same. The findings may be addressed and the request resubmitted three months after such notification, except where the project is ultimately deemed by the VCS to not qualify under the CCB Program.
  - 5) Where no response is received from the validation/verification body within 60 business days from the date the findings were issued, the VCS reserves the right to assume that the project proponent does not intend to pursue approval of validation and/or verification under the CCB Program. Where the VCS determines this to be the case, the project validation and/or verification shall not be approved, and the VCS notifies the project proponent and the validation/verification body of the same. The request for approval of validation and/or verification may be resubmitted three months after such notification, except where the project is ultimately deemed by the VCS to not qualify under the CCB Program.

## 4.4 VALIDATION OF PROJECT DESCRIPTION DEVIATIONS AND RE-VALIDATION

### Validation of Project Description Deviations

- 4.4.1 The validation of project description deviations, as described in Sections 4.4.1 – 4.4.5, follows the CCB validation process, as set out in Section 4.3, but only addresses areas of the project description where changes have occurred and shall only be permitted at verification.
- 4.4.2 The project description deviation shall be validated to the edition of the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* to which the project was initially validated and does not require the project switch to the most recent edition of the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards*.
- 4.4.3 The public comment period and, if necessary, the validation/verification body's site visit for the validation of the project description deviation may be concurrent with the public comment period and site visit for the verification.
- 4.4.4 Only the sections of the project description changed through the project description deviation will undergo public comment; any comments received on sections not changed through the deviation

will be treated as comments received outside of a public comment period, per Sections 4.6.8 - 4.6.10 below.

- 4.4.5** A new validation statement shall be issued concurrent with the verification statement. The new validation statement shall be completed using the *CCB Validation Statement Template* and shall include the following:
- 1) Reference to the original validation of the project and the validation of any previous project description deviations, including dates of each; and,
  - 2) Reference the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* indicators and project description sections updated through the project description deviation.

### Re-Validation Process

- 4.4.6** The process for new validations is the same as for the initial validation, as set out in Section 4.3. When a new validation is required, per Section 3.5.7, the audit shall be successfully completed and validation statement issued before, or concurrent with, the completion of the next verification and the issuance of the verification statement. The validation statement for a new validation due to significant changes in project activities or project impacts shall be completed using the *CCB Validation Statement Template* and include the following:
- 1) Date of initial validation; and,
  - 2) Brief summary of changes in project activities or project impacts.

## 4.5 REPETITION OF VERIFICATION AUDITS FOR THE LIFE OF THE PROJECT

- 4.5.1** A project shall be verified under the CCB Program within five years of issuance of the validation statement.
- 4.5.2** Verification audits shall be repeated for the life of the project and no more than five years may pass between the dates of issuance of each consecutive verification statement. Project proponents may choose to verify more frequently, as this serves as confirmation that the project has been implemented in conformance with its validated design and achieved its intended impacts.
- 4.5.3** If a recognized GHG program is used in lieu of the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* Climate Section, the project must be verified to the recognized GHG program each time that it is verified to the CCB Program.

## 4.6 COMMENTS ON CCB PROJECTS

- 4.6.1** Comments are information relevant to past, present or future validations or verifications about whether the project, especially as represented in documentation posted on the VCS project database, meets the rules and requirements of the CCB Program. Some comments may be categorized as complaints (e.g., those comments that are objections or dissatisfactions relating to

the activities of projects that may lead to the suspension of a project's CCB validated or verified status and/or to an approved validation/verification body status; see Section 7.1 Complaints).

### Public Comment Period

- 4.6.2** The public comment period is when members of the public are invited to submit comments to the VCS about whether the project meets the CCB rules and requirements. During the public comment period, comments are invited on, but not limited to, specific draft project documents on the VCS project database that are pertinent to an ongoing validation and/or verification audit. Comments may be submitted to the VCS in English, French, Spanish or Portuguese.
- 4.6.3** The public comment period shall last a minimum of 30 days, but the validation/verification body or project proponent, at their discretion and on agreement of both parties, can request a longer period of the VCS.
- 4.6.4** The public comment period should be completed before the start of the validation/verification body site visit, so that the validation/verification body may make appropriate enquiries onsite about any comments received. In the event that the public comment period ends after the site visit is complete, the validation/verification body shall give full consideration to any comments received and may need to return to the project site to do so.
- 4.6.5** The VCS collates and publishes any comments that it receives and sends them to the validation/verification body and the project proponent.
- 4.6.6** The validation/verification body shall acknowledge receipt of the comments from the VCS and assess how the project proponent has responded to the issues raised by public comments. The project proponents may respond to public comments through revisions to the project description/monitoring report or other documented efforts.
- 4.6.7** The validation/verification body shall take these comments into account when determining whether the project meets the CCB rules and requirements. The validation or verification report shall describe how each comment was addressed by the project proponent.

## Comments Received Outside the Public Comment Period

- 4.6.8** Comments received after a project proponent has engaged a validation/verification body and information about the project has been posted on the VCS project database, but before the public comment period has opened are sent to the validation/verification body and project proponent but are not published by VCS. The commenter is informed by the VCS that comments resubmitted during the next public comment period will be published and addressed in the validation or verification report.
- 4.6.9** Comments received after a public comment period and before an audit is approved by the VCS are sent to the validation/verification body and project proponent but are not published by the VCS.
- 4.6.10** Comments received outside an audit period are sent to the validation/verification body that conducted the previous CCB validation or verification and to the project proponent. These comments are not published by the VCS but the commenter is informed by the VCS that comments resubmitted during the next public comment period will be published and shall be addressed in the validation or verification report.

Comments received outside an audit period are also compiled by the VCS and sent to the next validation/verification body that is engaged for a validation or verification for the project proponent, who may request information from the project proponent about how comments received outside the audit period have been addressed.

## 4.7 WITHDRAWAL, EXPIRATION AND SUSPENSION

- 4.7.1** Project proponents shall inform the VCS if they wish to withdraw a project from the CCB Program. The project record will remain in the VCS project database with any documentation that was submitted to the VCS or CCBA with the CCB status *withdrawn* and the stage of withdrawal, (e.g., “prior to finalization of CCB validation or verification”).
- 4.7.2** A project shall have its *validation approved* or *verification approved* CCB status revoked when the time limits detailed in this document are not met (e.g., when verification is not completed within five years of issuance of the validation or verification statement). The project will remain in the VCS project database with any documentation that was submitted to the VCS or CCBA and a notification that the project’s CCB status has expired.
- 4.7.3** Project proponents shall abide by the rules and requirements of the CCB Program, and the VCS reserves the right to suspend a project’s validated or verified status at any time, at its own discretion. The suspended project will remain in the VCS project database with any documentation that was submitted to VCS or CCBA with a clear notification in the CCB status that the project has been *suspended* along with the reason for the suspension. In the event that the VCS receives information that suggests that a project is failing to meet the rules and



requirements of the CCB Program, suspension of the project will follow the VCS complaints and appeals procedure set out in Section 7.

- 4.7.4** A project that was withdrawn, expired or suspended shall undergo the full assessment process, beginning with validation, in order to achieve validated or verified CCB status.

## 5 | CCB Program Accreditation

**5.1.1** Validation/verification bodies are eligible to provide validation and verification services under the CCB Program if they have been approved by the VCS and are:

- 1) Accredited by the CDM Executive Board as a Designated Operational Entity for the sectoral scope 14, Afforestation and Reforestation, 15, Agriculture (the validation/verification body shall hold such accreditation for the sectoral scope(s) applicable to the type of project undergoing validation or verification);
- 2) Accredited as a Certification Body for sustainable forest management audits under the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) (the validation/verification body shall hold such accreditation in the geographical area of the project to be evaluated); or
- 3) Accreditation under *ISO 14065* for scope Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) for scope 15, Agriculture, Forestry, Land Use.

**5.1.2** Validation/verification bodies shall make a written request to the VCS to be recognized as an approved validation/verification body by submitting evidence of their qualification and the name, address, email and phone number of a contact person. Approval is based on the qualification list above and demonstration that the applicant has the personnel competencies, robust structure and procedures, and experience to competently conduct validation and/or verification of multiple benefit assertions with impartiality, objectivity, independence, freedom from conflict of interests, freedom from bias, lack of prejudice, neutrality and fairness.<sup>2</sup>

**5.1.3** VCS maintains a current list of all approved validation/verification bodies on the VCS website.

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<sup>2</sup> The validation/verification body may simultaneously undertake audits of the project against other standards (e.g., VCS, FSC and CDM).

## 6 | The VCS Project Database

- 6.1.1** The VCS project database provides the public interface to all CCB project information. It provides full transparency on project documentation and information on project proponents.
- 6.1.2** A CCB project record is created on the VCS project database when its draft project description is posted for public comment (see Section 4.3.8).
- 6.1.3** The project is considered to be part of the CCB project pipeline if its CCB status (i.e., the project's qualification with respect to the CCB Program) is *under validation* or *under validation and verification*. It is considered validated on the database if its status is one of the following: *validation approved*, *validated*, *under verification*, and *verified* if its status is *verification approved*, or *verified*, *under verification*. It is considered inactive if its status is one of the following: *validation declined*, *validation expired*, *withdrawn*, or *suspended*.
- 6.1.4** Final versions of project documents and validation/verification reports and statements are published on the VCS project database upon successful completion of a validation or verification (see Section 4.3.26).
- 6.1.5** The VCS project database provides clear indication of a project's current CCB status.

# 7 | Complaints and Appeals Procedure

Project proponents, validation/verification bodies and other stakeholders may submit enquiries to the VCS at any time. In addition, the CCB Program provides a complaints procedure and an appeals procedure.

All expenses, internal and external, incurred by VCS in handling complaints and appeals shall be paid by the entity filing the complaint or appeal. Prior to initiation of the handling process, the VCS will inform the entity filing the complaint or appeal of its estimated handling cost. Where the outcome of a complaint or appeal is to overturn an earlier decision made by the VCS, the entity filing the complaint or appeal will not be liable for covering such expenses.

## 7.1 COMPLAINTS

**7.1.1** A complaint is an objection to a decision taken by the VCS or an aspect of how it operates the CCB Program, or a claim that the CCB rules have had an unfair, inadvertent or unintentional adverse effect. Project proponents and other stakeholders are provided with the following complaints procedure:

- 1) The complaint shall include the following information:
  - a) Name of the complainant.
  - b) Name of organization, if relevant.
  - c) Contact information for the complainant.
  - d) Details of the complaint.
  - e) Declaration of any conflict of interest in submitting the complaint.
- 2) The complaint shall be addressed to the CCB Program Manager and emailed to [CCBStandards@v-c-s.org](mailto:CCBStandards@v-c-s.org) with the word *complaint* in the subject line. An email response is provided to the complainant from the VCS acknowledging receipt of the complaint.
- 3) The VCS appoints an appropriate person to handle the complaint, who will organize an analysis (involving external experts, as required) and determine any appropriate action required.
- 4) The VCS prepares a written response and provides this to the complainant. The response to the complaint is brought to the attention of and approved by the VCS CEO.
- 5) All information submitted by the complainant with respect to the complaint is kept confidential by the VCS.

**7.1.2** Complaints about entities (by the clients of such entities) that provide services under the CCB Program, such as validation/verification bodies and VCS registries, shall be pursued via the respective entity's complaint procedure. Where the complaint is not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant and the complaint is in relation to the respective entity's interpretation of the CCB rules, the complainant may submit a complaint to the VCS. Note that other stakeholders may also choose to submit complaints to entities providing services under the CCB Program where such entities have complaints procedures for third parties (i.e., non-clients).

## 7.2 APPEALS

**7.2.1** Where a complaint, submitted as set out in Section 7.1, has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, complainants are provided with the following appeals procedure:

- 1) The appeal shall include the following information:
  - a) Name of the appellant.
  - b) Name of the organization, if relevant.
  - c) Contact information for the appellant.
  - d) Details of the appeal, including reference to the original complaint.
- 2) The appeal shall be addressed to the chair of the VCS Board and emailed to [chairvcsboard@v-c-s.org](mailto:chairvcsboard@v-c-s.org) with the word *appeal* in the subject line. An email response is provided to the appellant from the chair of the VCS Board acknowledging receipt of the appeal.
- 3) The VCS Board organizes an analysis, involving external experts (as required).
- 4) The VCS Board prepares a written response and provides this to the appellant, copying in the VCS CEO. The VCS Board's decision is final and binding.

**7.2.2** All information submitted by the appellant with respect to the appeal is kept confidential by the VCS and the VCS Board.

## 8 | Logo Use and Communications

- 8.1.1** The *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards* logo may be used for materials about CCB validated and CCB verified projects upon specific written approval by the VCS. A request for logo use shall be sent to [logo@v-c-s.org](mailto:logo@v-c-s.org), including a copy of the relevant document or material and a description of its intended use.
- 8.1.2** A CCB validated and/or verified project may communicate this status through oral or written means and shall do so in a way that accurately represents the level of approval achieved and the validated or verified climate, community and biodiversity benefits.
- 1) Statements about a project that has been validated but not verified shall ensure that any reference to the use of the CCB Program refers only to the quality of project design and to projected benefits and does not suggest that a verification has been completed.
  - 2) Statements shall accurately portray the approved, Silver, or Gold Level validation or verification completed and shall always identify which Gold Level criteria are achieved (for projects using the second and third editions of the *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards*).
  - 3) Project proponents shall ensure that statements regarding CCB status are used only for the project and activities specifically described in the project documents that have been validated or verified

## APPENDIX 1: DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version	Date	Comment
v2.0	21 Jun 2010	Initial version released under <i>CCB Version 2</i> (no <i>Rules</i> document existed under <i>CCB Version 1</i> )
v3.0	12 Dec 2013	Main updates (all effective on issue date): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Added new terms and definitions</li> <li>2) Added project eligibility requirements</li> <li>3) Added Climate Section waiver for projects using <i>CCB Version 3</i></li> <li>4) Clarified requirements for the content of project design documents and project implementation reports, including adding cover page requirements</li> <li>5) Added provisions for gap validations</li> <li>6) Added provisions for comments received outside of the public comment period</li> <li>7) Clarified language requirements for project documentation</li> <li>8) Added provisions for project listings and labeling</li> </ol>
v3.1	21 Jun 2017	Main updates (all effective on issue date, unless otherwise stated): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Changed the document name from <i>Rules for the Use of the Climate, Community &amp; Biodiversity Standards</i> to <i>CCB Program Rules</i></li> <li>2) Overall re-formatting to include numbered sections (throughout)</li> <li>3) Reorganization of content to remove information included in templates and move content most frequently used to the beginning of the document (throughout)</li> <li>4) Changed the following terms and document titles (throughout):               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <i>Approved Auditor</i> to <i>validation/verification body</i></li> <li>b) <i>Gap Validation</i> to <i>project description deviation</i></li> <li>c) <i>Right of use</i> to <i>project ownership</i></li> <li>d) <i>Projects using the programmatic approach</i> to <i>grouped projects</i></li> <li>e) <i>Project design documentation</i> to <i>project description</i></li> <li>f) <i>Project implementation report</i> to <i>monitoring report</i></li> <li>g) <i>Rules for the Use of the Climate, Community &amp; Biodiversity Standards</i> to <i>CCB Program Rules</i></li> <li>h) <i>Fee Schedule for the Climate, Community &amp; Biodiversity Standards</i> to <i>CCB Program Fee Schedule</i></li> </ol> </li> <li>5) Removed the 'Terms and Definitions' section, as all definitions are now included in the CCB Program document <i>CCB Program Definitions</i></li> <li>6) Introduced a new versioning scheme for the CCB Program (Sections 1.1 and 2.4)</li> <li>7) Introduced a requirement for the use of templates for project documentation (Sections 1.1, 2.4, 3.3.2 – 3.3.3, 3.5, 4.3.15 and 4.3.19).</li> </ol>

		<p>Effective for documents submitted for public comment from 01 January 2018.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8) Updated the roles of the VCS and CCBA in the management of the CCB Program (Sections 2.5.4 – 2.5.5 and throughout)</li> <li>9) Incorporated 01 July 2015 update regarding the <i>CCB Program Fee Schedule</i> and CCB labeling requirements (Section 3.1.2(1))</li> <li>10) Clarified the entities that can request retroactive CCB labels (Section 3.2.1(2))</li> <li>11) Introduced a requirement for language summaries to include information about the <i>Summary of Project Benefits</i> (Section 3.5.12)</li> <li>12) Updated the requirements for rotation of validation/verification bodies (Section 4.2.3)</li> <li>13) Clarified the process to reinitiate the one-year audit period (Section 4.2.5)</li> <li>14) Clarified the procedure to be followed for negative audit conclusions (Sections 4.2.6 – 4.2.7)</li> <li>15) Introduced a new document submission and review process (Section 4.3)</li> <li>16) Updated the timing of CCB Program fees in relation to project document submission and review (Section 4.3.6). Effective for fees incurred from 01 January 2018.</li> <li>17) Clarified when site visits are required for an audit (Section 4.3.13)</li> <li>18) Introduced a process for VCS to conduct in-depth accuracy reviews of project documentation (Sections 4.3.28 – 4.3.30)</li> <li>19) Clarified the process by which project description deviations must be included in project documentation (Section 4.4)</li> </ol>
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