

Jurisdictional and Nested
REDD+ (JNR) Validation
and Verification Process

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1 | Introduction

The JNR validation and verification process is the process by which jurisdictional baselines and jurisdictional REDD+ programs (hereinafter referred to individually or collectively as *jurisdictional element(s)*) are validated, and by which jurisdictional programs are verified, under the VCS Program. Such validations and verifications consist of a public stakeholder consultation hosted on the VCS project database, an independent assessment by a validation/verification body and, in certain cases, a peer review by a JNR expert panel. Note that projects nested in jurisdictional programs and standalone projects operating under Scenario 1 are subject to the process for project validation and verification set out in the *VCS Standard*, and this document (the *JNR Validation and Verification Process*) should not be used for such project validations and verifications.

The purpose of this document is to lay out the steps involved in the JNR validation and verification process and to provide practical guidance on the process. The document is intended for use by jurisdictional proponents, validation/verification bodies, JNR expert panels and any other parties involved in the process.

This document will be updated from time-to-time and readers shall ensure that they are using the most current version of the document.

2 | JNR Validation and Verification Process

2.1 OVERVIEW

Diagram 1 summarizes the JNR validation and verification process, which is further described in the sections that follow.

Diagram 1: Steps in the JNR Validation and Verification Process

2.2 STEP 1: DEVELOPMENT OF JURISDICTIONAL ELEMENT DOCUMENTATION

- 2.2.1** The jurisdictional proponent shall prepare the jurisdictional element documentation that will be subject to the jurisdictional validation and/or verification process.
- 2.2.2** In the case of Scenario 1 jurisdictions developing a jurisdictional baseline only, the jurisdictional proponent shall document the baseline using the *VCS JNR Baseline Description Template*.
- 2.2.3** In the case of Scenario 2 and Scenario 3 jurisdictions developing a jurisdictional REDD+ program, the jurisdictional proponent shall document the program using the *VCS JNR Program Description Template*. It shall also prepare a non-permanence risk report using the *VCS JNR*

Non-Permanence Risk Report Template, which may be included as an annex to the jurisdictional program description or provided as a standalone document.

- 2.2.4** In the case of Scenario 2 and Scenario 3 jurisdictions verifying GHG emission reductions and/or removals from a jurisdictional REDD+ program, the jurisdictional proponent shall prepare a monitoring report using the *VCS JNR Monitoring Report Template*. It shall also prepare a non-permanence risk report using the *VCS JNR Non-Permanence Risk Report Template*, which may be included as an annex to the jurisdictional monitoring report or provided as a standalone document.
- 2.2.5** Where jurisdictions are transitioning from one scenario to another (eg, from Scenario 1 to Scenario 2), the jurisdictional proponent shall prepare the relevant documentation described in the sections above.

2.3 STEP 2: PUBLIC STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

- 2.3.1** A 60-day public stakeholder consultation is required of jurisdictional baselines and jurisdictional REDD+ programs undergoing validation, as well as jurisdictional programs undergoing verification.
- 2.3.2** The jurisdictional proponent shall submit the relevant jurisdictional element documentation to a VCS registry in accordance with the listing process set out in VCS document *JNR Registration and Issuance Process*. Where peer review is required (see Section 2.5.1 for requirements on peer review), the jurisdictional proponent shall concurrently submit to the VCSA (at secretariat@v-c-s.org) the name, contact information and qualifications of one or more proposed local JNR experts. This means that the jurisdictional proponent shall have considered candidates for the JNR expert panel prior to submitting the documentation to the VCS registry. The VCSA assembles the expert panel in accordance with Section 4.2.2.
- 2.3.3** Where peer review is required, the VCSA invoices the jurisdictional proponent for the JNR validation and verification process administration fee upon receipt of the jurisdictional element documentation¹.
- 2.3.4** Upon receipt of the jurisdictional validation and verification administration fee (where applicable), the VCSA reviews the documentation to ensure that it is of sufficient quality to enable its assessment under the JNR validation and verification process. Where it is deemed necessary, the VCSA may require the jurisdictional proponent to revise the documentation before accepting it for public stakeholder consultation.

¹ Given that the development of jurisdictional baselines and jurisdictional REDD+ programs is currently in a piloting phase, the VCSA is reviewing the most appropriate way to address the costs associated with the JNR validation and verification process. As such, the fee structure with respect to covering the cost of such process is under review and will be handled on a case by case basis in the interim.

- 2.3.5** The jurisdictional element is listed on the VCS project database for the purpose of inviting public comment. The consultation is also announced on the VCS website. Any comments shall be submitted to the VCSA at secretariat@v-c-s.org and respondents shall provide their name, organization, country and email address.
- 2.3.6** At the end of the public stakeholder consultation period, the VCSA provides all and any comments received to the jurisdictional proponent, validation/verification body and JNR expert panel, and posts them on the VCS project database. The jurisdictional proponent shall take due account of such comments, which means it will need to either update the jurisdictional element documentation or demonstrate the insignificance or irrelevance of the comment. The jurisdictional proponent shall demonstrate to the validation/verification body and the JNR expert panel what action it has taken.

2.4 STEP 3: VALIDATION/VERIFICATION BODY ASSESSMENT

- 2.4.1** The jurisdictional proponent shall seek approval from the VCSA for its choice of validation/verification body by submitting an email to secretariat@v-c-s.org. Such approval may be requested before, after or during Step 2 above. The validation/verification body should ensure that the VCSA has approved its selection before it contracts with the jurisdictional proponent.
- 2.4.2** The public stakeholder consultation period shall be completed before the validation/verification body issues its draft validation or verification report. The validation/verification body is responsible for ensuring that the jurisdictional proponent has taken due account of all and any comments received during the public stakeholder consultation period.
- 2.4.3** For validation, or verification where peer review is required, the validation/verification body shall produce a *draft* validation or verification report. The draft report shall be prepared in accordance with the VCS rules and best practice, and using the *VCS JNR Validation Report Template* or the *VCS JNR Verification Report Template*, as appropriate. The scope and requirements of the validation/verification body assessment are set out under Section 3. It is not necessary for the jurisdictional proponent to respond to the validation/verification body's findings at this stage, except where clarification is required for the validation/verification body to complete its draft report. The validation/verification body shall provide the jurisdictional proponent with its draft report, and the jurisdictional proponent shall then provide the report and any updated jurisdictional element document to the VCSA.
- 2.4.4** For verification where peer review is not required, the validation/verification body shall produce a (final) verification report, following the relevant requirements in Section 2.4.3 above (noting that all and any of the validation/verification body's findings shall be responded to). As a result of any such findings, the jurisdictional proponent may need to amend the monitoring report and/or non-permanence risk report. The validation/verification body shall provide the jurisdictional proponent with its final verification report and the latest version of the monitoring report and non-permanence risk report, and the jurisdictional proponent shall provide same to the VCSA. The process then proceeds to VCSA review (Section 2.6).

2.5 STEP 4: JNR EXPERT PANEL PEER REVIEW

- 2.5.1** A peer review by a JNR expert panel is required as part of the validation of a jurisdictional element, or the revalidation of an updated jurisdictional baseline at the time of verification. Where a jurisdictional baseline is not updated at verification, peer review is not required.
- 2.5.2** The purpose of the peer review is to evaluate the appropriateness and scientific rigor of any underlying data and assumptions used in developing the jurisdictional element, including, but not limited to, those related to development of the baseline and monitoring plan. The peer review also provides important local perspectives on the process used for developing the jurisdictional element. The scope of the peer review is set out in further detail in the *VCS JNR Peer Review Report Template*.
- 2.5.3** The JNR expert panel shall consist of three JNR experts, to include one local expert and two international experts.
- 2.5.4** As set out in Section 2.3.2 above, the jurisdictional proponent shall submit one or more proposed local JNR experts to the VCSA when requesting to be listed for public stakeholder consultation. The VCSA reviews the list of proposed local JNR experts and selects an appropriately qualified expert to serve on the JNR expert panel, in accordance with the procedure set out in Section 4.2.2.
- 2.5.5** The VCSA also invites two appropriately qualified international experts to serve on the JNR expert panel. JNR experts shall complete a conflict of interest form and same shall be accepted by VCSA before they are formally accepted to participate on the JNR expert panel. International JNR experts are approved in accordance with the procedure set out in Section 4.2.1.
- 2.5.6** The VCSA contracts all members of the JNR expert panel, using its standard agreement, to undertake the peer review. The VCSA appoints one of the three experts to coordinate the peer review, though it maintains overall responsibility for managing the panel peer review.
- 2.5.7** The VCSA shall provide the expert panel with the validation/verification body's draft validation or verification report and the most recent version of the jurisdictional element documentation.
- 2.5.8** The expert panel shall undertake its review of the jurisdictional element and produce a report using the *VCS JNR Peer Review Report Template*. The report shall be provided to the VCSA, who in turn shall provide it to the jurisdictional proponent and validation/verification body.
- 2.5.9** The jurisdictional proponent shall take due account of the peer review report, which means it will need to either update the jurisdictional element documentation to address the findings in the report or demonstrate their insignificance or irrelevance.
- 2.5.10** The validation/verification body shall resume its work on its assessment of the jurisdictional element. In light of the peer review report, it may raise new findings or amend any previous findings. The jurisdictional proponent shall address such findings and shall also demonstrate to

the validation/verification body what action it has taken in respect of any findings raised in the JNR peer review report. The validation/verification body shall then produce a final validation or verification report, which it shall provide, together with the latest version of the jurisdictional element documentation, to the VCSA.

2.6 STEP 5: VCSA REVIEW

- 2.6.1** The VCSA reviews the jurisdictional element documentation and the validation and/or verification report to ensure that the validation and/or verification has been conducted in accordance with the VCS rules. Where the VCSA finds shortcomings, these shall be addressed by the validation/verification body.
- 2.6.2** Where the VCSA approves the validation and/or verification report, it shall notify the jurisdictional proponent, validation/verification body, JNR expert panel and VCS registry administrator of same.

2.7 PROCEDURE FOR CLARIFICATION AND FACILITATION BY THE VCSA

- 2.7.1** The jurisdictional proponent, validation/verification body and/or JNR expert panel may request that the VCSA provides clarification with respect to the VCS rules. The VCSA will consult all necessary parties before providing any clarification and will notify the jurisdictional proponent as well as the validation/verification body and JNR expert panel when such clarification is provided.
- 2.7.2** Where the jurisdictional proponent is unable to concur with the validation/verification body with respect to the resolution of all findings and finalization of the jurisdictional element documentation, it may request that the VCSA facilitates discussions between the parties to attempt to resolve the situation.

3 | Validation and Verification Requirements

3.1 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1.1** For the purposes of this document, validation is the independent assessment of a jurisdictional element (including review of the jurisdictional baseline description or jurisdictional program description and non-permanence risk report) by a validation/verification body to determine whether the jurisdictional element complies with the VCS rules. Verification is the periodic ex-post independent assessment of the GHG emission reductions and/or removals that have occurred as a result of the jurisdictional REDD+ program during the monitoring period (including review of the jurisdictional monitoring report and non-permanence risk report) by a validation/verification body.

- 3.1.2** The validation and verification requirements set out in the *VCS Standard* apply, *mutatis mutandis*. Additional requirements with respect to validation and verification are set out in this Section 3 and shall be adhered to.

3.2 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- 3.2.1** The jurisdictional element shall be validated and GHG emission reductions and/or removals verified by a validation/verification body that meets with the following requirements:
- 1) Is accredited under sectoral scope 14; and
 - 2) Has completed at least five project validations under sectoral scope 14. Project validations can be under the VCS Program or an approved GHG program and projects shall be registered under the applicable program.
- 3.2.2** The validation report shall be accompanied by a validation representation, which shall be prepared using the *VCS JNR Baseline Validation Deed of Representation Template* or *JNR Program Validation Deed of Representation Template*. The verification report shall be accompanied by a verification representation, which shall be prepared using the *VCS JNR Program Verification Deed of Representation Template*. The validation/verification body shall ensure that such deeds are properly executed as a deed in accordance with applicable local laws and the organization's own constitutional documents (eg, signature by directors or requirement of the entity's seals).
- 3.2.3** The verification statement shall state the volume of GHG emission reductions and/or removals generated during the monitoring period that have been verified, as well as any action that need be taken in respect of the jurisdictional buffer pool (in accordance with the procedures set out in VCS document *JNR Registration and Issuance Process*).
- 3.2.4** The VCS project database can display separate vintages within one verification period. For example, where the verification period is 1 January 2012 to 30 June 2013, the jurisdictional or project proponent may wish to have one VCU issuance record for the 2012 VCUs and a separate VCU issuance record for the 2013 VCUs. The creation of such separate VCU issuance records in respect of one verification period is only possible where the monitoring report and associated verification report specifies the vintage breakdown. Thus, the monitoring report and associated verification report will need to specify the number of GHG emission reductions and/or removals generated in the corresponding years. Vintage breakdown may be specified at a finer granularity than calendar years, and where vintage dates are specified with day, month and year, corresponding VCU issuance records can be created in the VCS project database accordingly. Where the vintage breakdown or the day, month and year start and end dates for the vintage period are not provided, there can only be one VCU issuance record in respect of the verification report (ie, the VCS registry administrator shall not arbitrarily assign a vintage breakdown where none is specified in the verification report).

Note – Due to the intricacies of accounting for GHG emission reductions and/or removals in

nested and standalone ARR and IFM projects with harvesting, such projects may not break down verification periods into vintage periods when any year within the verification period has a negative number of GHG emission reductions and/or removals. For such projects, the vintage period shall be equivalent to the verification period.

4 | JNR Expert Approval and Selection Process

4.1 SOLICITATION OF INTERNATIONAL JNR EXPERTS

4.1.1 From time to time the VCSA will issue calls for international JNR experts, and invite specific individuals to apply to become approved international JNR experts. Applications shall be submitted in accordance with the procedure set out under Section 4.2 below.

4.2 APPROVAL AND SELECTION PROCESS

4.2.1 Applicants shall be approved as international JNR experts as follows:

- 1) The applicant shall complete the JNR expert application form, available on the VCS website, and submit this together with two references, at least one of which shall be a professional non-academic reference, to the VCSA at secretariat@v-c-s.org. There is no fee for submitting an application.
- 2) The VCSA performs a preliminary inspection of the application to determine whether it merits a full review, requesting further information where necessary. The VCSA reviews the expert against the criteria set out in Section 4.2.3. Where the applicant passes the preliminary inspection, the VCSA performs a full review of the application.
- 3) The VCSA will notify the applicant of the outcome of the full review within 20 business days of receiving the application.
- 4) Upon VCSA approval, the international JNR expert is added to the list of approved international JNR experts, available on the VCS website.

4.2.2 Local JNR experts shall be selected to serve on expert panels as follows:

- 1) The jurisdictional proponent sends the VCSA its list of proposed local JNR experts, in accordance with Section 2.3.2. The VCSA performs a preliminary inspection of the experts' qualifications to determine whether a full review is warranted, requesting further information where necessary. The VCSA reviews the expert against the criteria set out in Section 4.2.3. Where an applicant passes the preliminary inspection, the VCSA requests the expert to submit a JNR expert application form and a conflict of interest form.

- 2) The VCSA will notify the jurisdictional proponent whether a proposed expert has been selected to serve on the JNR expert panel within 20 business days of receipt of the expert's application and conflict of interest forms.
- 3) Where none of the jurisdictional proponent's proposed experts is selected for service on the JNR expert panel, the VCSA requests the jurisdictional proponent to identify and propose further local JNR experts.

4.2.3 The assessment criteria for JNR experts are as follows:

- 1) JNR experts (both local and international) should meet with the following criteria:
 - a) Have at least 5 years of relevant work experience or an equivalent combination of education and work experience in two or more of the following topic areas, and the combined experience of experts on a JNR expert panel must cover all of the topic areas:
 - i) Drivers of deforestation and degradation, and related socio-economic issues.
 - ii) Development and/or assessment of REDD+ baselines and/or reference levels at the jurisdictional scale for relevant activities (ie, deforestation, degradation and/or enhancements).
 - iii) Modeling, measuring and monitoring forest carbon stocks and emissions, including remote sensing, GIS and statistical techniques.
 - iv) Accounting of GHG emission reductions and/or removals, including estimation of leakage emissions from relevant activities, at the jurisdictional scale.
 - v) AFOLU non-permanence risk assessments.
 - vi) Institutional and legal frameworks relevant to REDD+ programs, baselines and/or reference levels.
 - vii) Policy, programmatic and/or project GHG mitigation approaches relevant to REDD+ programs.
 - viii) Safeguards and benefit sharing approaches for REDD+ programs.
 - ix) Any additional relevant topic areas listed in the *AFOLU Requirements* for AFOLU experts on REDD, IFM, WRC and/or ARR.
 - b) Be well versed in current scientific thinking and best practices associated with REDD+ program design and implementation, as well as forest carbon accounting and reporting.
 - c) Have regional expertise or experience that may be relevant to the assessment of the particular jurisdictional REDD+ program or jurisdictional baseline undergoing validation or verification.
- 2) Local JNR experts shall have extensive local expertise and experience specific to the context of the jurisdictional REDD+ program or jurisdictional baseline undergoing validation or verification, at a minimum, for the following topic areas:
 - a) Drivers of deforestation and degradation, and related socio-economic issues.

- b) Institutional and legal frameworks.
 - c) Policy, programmatic and/or project GHG mitigation approaches.
- 3) Preference will be given to JNR experts that have prior experience reviewing UNFCCC national forest inventories, FCPF Readiness Preparation Proposals (R-PPs) or Emission Reduction Programme Idea Notes (ER-PINs), UN-REDD National Programmes, Forest Investment Programme (FIP) pilot countries or another jurisdictional REDD+ program or jurisdictional baseline under the VCS Program or another GHG program. Each JNR expert panel shall have at least one JNR expert with such experience.

APPENDIX 1: DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version	Date	Comment
v3.0	8 Oct 2013	Initial version released under <i>VCS Version 3</i> .

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