

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

ANALYSIS OF ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND METHODS FOR THE USE OF FOREST REFERENCE EMISSIONS LEVELS WITH INCREASING TRENDS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE JNR REQUIREMENTS

18 November 2021

1. INTRODUCTION

The Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) Jurisdictional and Nested REDD+ (JNR) Framework, first released in October 2012, is the world's first accounting and verification framework for jurisdictional (i.e., government-led) REDD+ programs and nested projects. It was designed as a market-ready accounting and crediting framework to catalyze high-impact forest conservation activities that produce important co-benefits for the communities that maintain them while also supporting national governments in reaching their long-term climate goals.

JNR Version 4, last updated on 15 April 2021, incorporates several changes to facilitate closer integration of project activities with jurisdictional programs and reflect the latest science, best practices, and state-of-the-art technologies. The new version of the JNR Framework, which is aligned with all UNFCCC requirements, establishes the highest-quality, market-ready framework for accounting and crediting emission reductions at multiple scales, helping to future-proof REDD+ activities.

Verra is working to broaden the scope of the JNR Framework to include options, activities, carbon pools and gases that are not currently covered in Version 4. A critical part of this work is the development of requirements for the estimation of jurisdictional forest reference emissions levels (FRELs) with increasing trends or adjustments.

The JNR Requirements currently only allow for the use of a historical average to estimate FRELs. However, under certain national circumstances (such as those found in areas historically registering high forest cover and low deforestation and degradation rates), historical averages may significantly underestimate future emissions. This could potentially reduce the incentives and the ability of jurisdictional governments and project proponents to take actions to mitigate those future emissions. On the other hand, assuming increasing trends where their use is not justified, or overestimating them, may result in the generation of 'hot air'.

Consequently, Verra is analyzing:

- Which jurisdictional circumstances may justify the use of a FREL with an increasing trend or an adjustment;
- Defining criteria to identify such circumstances (and means to quantify/qualify the selected criteria);
- How to determine minimum levels at which the selected criteria would justify the use of increasing emission trends or an adjustment;
- Which methodological approaches result in credible FRELs with increasing emission trends or adjustments;
- Whether different jurisdictional circumstances and historical emission profiles may require different approaches to estimate emission trends or adjustments, and if so, which methods should be applied in each case; and
- Whether a time limit should be established for the application of FRELs with increasing trends or adjustments and, if so, how such limit should be determined.

Verra is seeking a consultant to inform its consideration of the issues detailed above. The consultant should have expertise and experience in deforestation modeling and jurisdictional FREL estimation for REDD activities. Verra will use the outputs from this work to put forward a detailed set of updates to the JNR Requirements around FRELs with increasing trends. These updates will undergo a 30-day public consultation in August and are anticipated to be finalized and published in October.

2. SCOPE OF WORK

In order to achieve the objectives set out above, the consultant should carry out the following tasks:

1. Gather and review relevant information

The information to be analyzed includes:

- The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility's Carbon Fund Methodological Framework;
- GFOI's Methods and Guidance Document;
- The Architecture for REDD+ Transactions Program's REDD+ Environmental Excellence Standard;
- The Green Climate Fund's Terms of reference for the pilot programme for REDD+ results-based payments;
- The JNR Requirements, versions 3.4 (which include requirements for increasing trends) and 4 and related VCS documents;

- Relevant Party submissions to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (e.g., FREL submissions by Colombia, Vietnam, Congo, Suriname, Bhutan) and their corresponding Technical Assessment Reports;
- VCS methodologies for avoided unplanned deforestation projects (VM0006, VM0007, VM0009, VM0015, VM0037); and
- Relevant academic papers.

Additionally, the consultant should carry out consultations with Verra's JNR Advisory Group (JNR AG) (as arranged by Verra) and other recognized experts, as needed, in order to consider their input on the different conditions and approaches proposed for the use and estimation of FRELS with increasing trends and adjustments.

2. Identify jurisdictional circumstances that could justify the use of FRELS with increasing trends

Based on the information gathered as part of Activity 1 above, the consultant should do the following:

- a. Identify the circumstances that are likely to result in an increase in emissions from deforestation and degradation and that would justify applying an increasing trend for the construction of the FREL or an adjustment. This could include, for instance, a history of high forest cover and low deforestation in the jurisdiction, legacy emissions from peatland decomposition in deforested or degraded forest areas, etc.
- b. Determine criteria that could serve to identify the existence of the jurisdictional circumstances identified in the previous activity. These should include an explanation on how the length of the historical period from which information will be analyzed should be determined.
- c. Identify indicators to assess quantitatively or qualitatively the criteria proposed above.
- d. Determine the values or conditions at which the selected criteria would justify the use of increasing emission trends or an adjustment.
- e. Assess under which conditions a FREL should no longer be considered eligible to include increasing trends or adjustments. Such conditions could include, for instance:
 - A time limit from the start of the first FREL registered with an increasing trend or an adjustment (in which case, the length of a validity period should be proposed); and
 - Where a jurisdiction may no longer meet the established criteria.
- f. Recommend a set of circumstances, criteria, indicators and minimum values/conditions that could serve as the basis for new requirements under the JNR framework.

Expected output:

Product 1: A document summarizing the analysis of jurisdictional circumstances, criteria and indicators mentioned above and describing the recommended options for each one of them drafted as requirements (draft and final versions as milestones).

3. Identify methodological approaches leading to credible FRELs with increasing trends or adjustments

Based on the information gathered as part of Activity 1 above, the consultant should:

- a. Identify and assess existing methodological approaches, analyzing the pros and cons of each one of them, including with respect to:
 - Robustness;
 - Transparency;
 - Data requirements; and
 - Cost.
- b. Assess if different jurisdictional circumstances and historical emission profiles may require different approaches to estimate emission trends or adjustments (or justify the need for one or the other), and if so, which methods should be applied in each case.
- c. Recommend a methodological approach for estimating FRELs with increasing trends or adjustments under the JNR Requirements.

Expected output:

Product 2: A document summarizing the assessment of methodological approaches and describing in detail the recommended approach and proposing requirements text (draft and final versions as milestones).

4. Obtain and incorporate feedback from Verra, the JNR Advisory Group and the JNR Stakeholder Group

The consultant should present draft versions of products 1 and 2 to the JNR Advisory Group (AG) and the JNR Stakeholder Group (SG), then produce final versions of each considering all feedback received.

Expected output:

Presentations on Products 1 & 2

3. QUALIFICATIONS

The consultant should have:

- A deep understanding of deforestation and forest degradation dynamics.
- Significant experience in deforestation and degradation modeling at the jurisdictional level.
- Significant understanding of approaches for estimating REDD FRELs with increasing trends proposed by relevant GHG programs (e.g., ART, FCPF), as well as those arising from country submissions to the UNFCCC and academic publications.

To meet these diverse skills and qualifications, proposals including multiple entities are encouraged (i.e., from a team comprised of two or more entities).

4. MILESTONES, DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE

The duration of this consultancy will be approximately two months and may be renewed subject to the mutual agreement of Verra and the consultant.

Milestone	Deliverables	Estimated date of completion
Start date	Signed contract one week before	17 January 2022
Collection and review of information	None	31 January 2022
Draft Product 1	Draft	7 February 2022
Presentation to AG and SG	Presentation	mid-February 2022
Product 1	Final version incorporating feedback from AG and SG and comments from Verra	21 February 2022
Draft Product 2	Draft	28 February 2022
Presentation to AG and SG	Presentation	Early March 2022
Product 2	Final version incorporating feedback from AG and SG and comments from Verra	14 March 2022

5. RESPONSES TO REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Respondents should feel free to submit clarifying questions on any of the above information.

Respondents are requested to submit the following as part of their proposals:

- High-level technical proposal (not to exceed four pages) for the scope of work and deliverables including a work plan. Applicants are encouraged to describe any innovations/added value propositions that they feel would enhance the scope of work requirements.
- One-page summary of consultant or consulting team qualifications (resumes/CVs, not to exceed two pages each, may be appended).

All proposals and documents submitted to Verra will be kept confidential.

All documents must be submitted to Liz Guinessey at eguinessey@verra.org by the close of business on 13 December 2021. We will finalize the selection of the consultant by 20 December 2021.

Legal Nature of RFP

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

About Verra

Founded in 2005, Verra is a non-profit organization based in Washington D.C. that supports efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve livelihoods and protect ecosystems and the services they provide. We support climate action and sustainable development with standards and programs that credibly, transparently and robustly assess environmental and social impacts and enable funding for sustaining and scaling up these benefits.