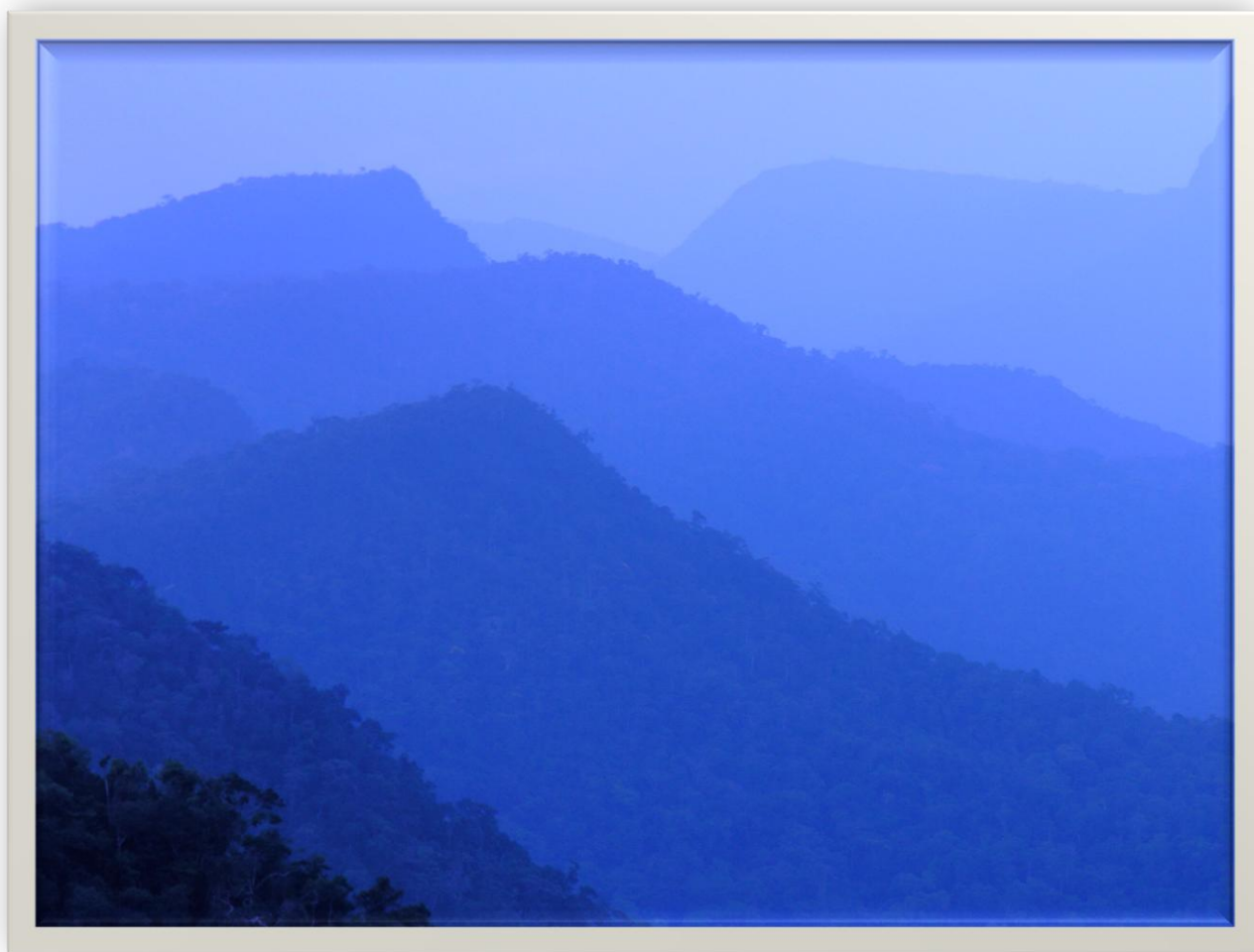


REDD PROJECT DEVELOPERS GUIDE BOOK



Cordillera Azul National Park, Peru (photo by Álvaro del Campo, Field Museum)

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Introduction

The purpose of this Guidebook is to provide helpful insights to individuals and organizations on the steps involved in developing a REDD carbon offset project. We compile best practices, examples, tips, and lessons learned from REDD project developers, validation and verification bodies, and VCS and CCB. Our intent is to help REDD projects register their projects as efficiently as possible.

We touch on each step of project development and implementation. Our hope is that this document will continue to grow and gather new insights and information as more projects move through the REDD pipeline. We provide brief overviews of each step and explain the terms in REDD. But we assume a minimum familiarity with carbon offset projects and we do not intend to provide a primer on carbon offset projects in general.

The Guidebook is a companion to – and in no way replaces or supersedes – the VCS and CCB standards, guidelines, and methodologies. Project developers need to ensure that they conform with all current requirements applicable to their project.

Overview

REDD projects are extremely complex. To be successful long-term, the project developer must design and implement activities that simultaneously promote social, biodiversity, and climate benefits while considering both short- and long-term impacts. Strong government, community, and team relationships are crucial for success. In addition, the project must appropriately document its decisions and gather sufficient evidence to back its assertions and claims.

In a perfect world, a typical project cycle would be:

1. Pre-project feasibility study/team assembly
2. Project design and design documentation completion
3. Project validation
4. Project implementation
5. Project verification
6. On-going monitoring and re-verification at periods determined by the project

Often projects take a different path due to financial or time constraints and the project cycle becomes:

1. Pre-project feasibility study/team assembly
2. Project design and implementation; project documentation completion
3. Project validation / Project verification
4. On-going monitoring and re-verification at periods determined by the project

Both approaches are acceptable and have pros and cons that we discuss later in the document. We describe each step in the Guidebook. Because many experiences and suggestions apply to both design and implementation, or to both validation and verification, this Guidebook follows the second path. We divide it into three sections:

1. Project initiation – This section identifies tips for gathering a robust team and identifies issues to consider when starting the process.
2. Project design and implementation – This section outlines lessons learned and clarifications provided to date to assist projects in completing this stage as efficiently as possible.
3. Project validation and verification – This final section provides an overview of the project validation and verification process, including tips on soliciting bids, reviewing proposals, and making the process as easy as possible for the project and the validation and verification firm.

1. Project Initiation

It is extremely important to begin a project with careful planning. A project that has a strong team and has planned to ensure sufficient funding for the entire process will be far more successful. Many projects have done part of the work but lacked crucial skill sets and/or continued funding, which prevented them from completing the work and accomplishing their goals.

The REDD Project Team

Successful documentation of a REDD project is complex and requires a wide array of skills and knowledge. Bringing together an appropriate team from the start is crucial for the success of the project. Organizations developing a REDD project may not have all skill sets in-house and should seek outside expertise as possible. Moving forward without a robust team will inevitably lead to delays and greater costs, either in project development or during project validation and verification.

Creating a project team

Below we list the expertise essential in a REDD project team. As project developers gather their teams, they should consider whether these experiences are present or how to supplement the team with outside experts as necessary to expedite project development, validation, and verification.

1. Forest carbon stock sampling and measurement expert (to ensure the project's carbon stock sampling plan is in accordance with the requirements and is as efficient as possible)
2. Remote sensing imagery and classification expert
3. Modeling expert in projecting deforestation
4. Financial planning/Accounting expert (to demonstrate additionality and develop a viable financial plan)
5. Legal expert (to assist with documenting land tenure, right of use in the project area, and rights to carbon offsets sales questions; important in developing offset sales agreements with buyers)
6. Project documentation and validation/verification skills (to develop the documentation for the project and anticipate the required evidence so that it can be gathered throughout the process; also important to ensure that the project is stating its status and timeline accurately to communities, governments, and other interested parties)
7. Social anthropologist (to assist in designing project activities consistent with the needs and desires of the affected communities; especially important if the project is seeking CCB validation and verification)
8. Biodiversity expert (to design project activities consistent with the needs of the local flora and fauna; especially important if the project is seeking CCB validation and verification)
9. Government relations expert (to maintain communications with the local, regional, and national government on the status of the project and on expected project income)

A common observation from current project developers is that much time and money can be saved by avoiding cut corners early in a project. For example, hiring an attorney to ensure no other entities have legal ownership claims in the project area has two benefits: (1) it allows you to provide the project validator with substantive evidence and (2) it prevents an overlapping claim from being discovered later in the project, which will cause costly delays or reduction in verifiable credits.

Bringing in Experts

If an organization or existing team does not already include all expertise mentioned above, it may engage experts to supplement its team. When soliciting assistance from outside experts, it is important to consider the following:

1. *Previous experience in VCS and CCB project work*

Individuals and organizations with previous experience developing VCS and CCB projects will be able to assist more fully, since they will be able to explain the process and understand the project's needs. Others may have the needed skill but will be learning the process along with the project, which may lead to rework or delays as the team moves along the learning curve.

2. *Previous experience in your region*

While all REDD projects have certain similarities, there exist distinct ecological and social differences among regions, which are important to the project's success. In addition, experts with experiences in the project's region are more likely to have familiarity with regionally appropriate sources of data.

3. *Location vs. anticipated role*

In seeking the best fit for the project team, keep in mind that there may be little to no additional cost incurred when using someone located far away. With internet capabilities including phone, it is possible for team members to participate effectively from anywhere in the world.

4. *Availability*

It is important to confirm the availability of the hired experts for the duration of the project development, implementation, and audit process. Projects take a long time to design and implement, often with shifting schedules. The project needs to be able to rely on its team throughout the process. Experts may work successfully on multiple projects at a time, but it is critical to ensure that their continued participation is possible, if timeframes shift.

5. *Contracting*

For clarity and accountability on both sides, it is important to draw a formal contract that specifies deliverables, requirements, timelines, penalties for missed targets, and if possible, bonuses for exceeding targets.

Managing the Team

Once the team is established, the team leader should be assigned the task of communication and coordination. The team leader should have the authority to make decisions. Both the team leader and team members should be accountable to commitments made to the team and to communities. While generalizations about team management would be inaccurate, we suggest a few pointers to help smooth the process.

1. Team motivation and alignment

The REDD development process has attracted private sector consultants, academics, foresters, philanthropists, conservationists, landowners, government, and community activists. A more diverse population of potential actors is difficult to imagine. Each player is motivated in a combination of ways to participate in a given project. Some are driven by motivation for a profit, but many are driven by an interest in biodiversity conservation and/or community sustainable development. When compiling a team, it is helpful to ensure that the member's motivations align with the project. Including a player that is not motivated introduces risk to the project.

2. Scheduling challenges

Determining a timeline at the start of a REDD project is extremely difficult and subject to frequent change. Since REDD is still a very new process, many of the players will likely have minimal or no experience with REDD. The team leader should factor in delays and false starts attributable to the substantial learning curve associated with REDD. Even in fully experienced teams, delays or false starts are frequent as new information about the project area and affected communities and biodiversity is uncovered. Validators and verifiers often are very busy and may not be able to start when the project wants, without advanced notice. The project may have lots of findings to address, and the validation or verification process may take longer than the project anticipated.

3. Project risks

Key players will struggle with the risky nature of the REDD process. Much is not known regarding the future of REDD and particularly the financial aspects. Risk-averse players may focus excessively on expensive and time-consuming details, in an attempt to reduce the unknowns. Risk-tolerant players may wish to forge ahead disregarding necessary steps and information that delay the project. The team leader must constantly weigh the costs and benefits of project decisions, such as which carbon pools to include/exclude, or when to fund a research project to determine variables if conservative variables can be used from the literature. Hundreds of decisions must be made for each project that will have bearings on the final output of credits for sale.

4. Team health and safety

Once the decision has been made to go ahead with the project, the pressure to move ahead quickly with field operations can be intense. The team leader should not rush into activities in the field without thoughtful consideration of health and safety issues for project participants. Many REDD projects are conducted in remote areas far from medical assistance and law enforcement. A health and safety plan that includes proper equipment, enough personnel, reasonably safe transportation (easily the most dangerous part of a project), a contingency for medical evacuation, and that addresses security issues should be prepared prior to putting project personnel at risk. Some risks are unavoidable and can only be managed. Some risks are avoidable and a responsible team leader will not permit project team participants to accept the risk.

5. Confidentiality

REDD projects, even those developed for social welfare purposes, are basically private sector business enterprises since the endpoint is sale of voluntary emission reductions. Since project participants will gain access to privileged information about the project, each should sign a non-disclosure agreement. Reasonable exceptions for project participants at the local level are of course expected, but key team members that have access to critical information about the project have the ability to damage the project by sharing it, either intentionally or unintentionally, with inappropriate parties. Some projects have required key team members (whether full time or not) to sign a non-compete agreement to prevent the team member from leaving the team and unfairly using knowledge and contacts gained through the project.

Developing a Project Plan

Once the project team is established and roles and responsibilities are defined, a project plan should be developed that lays out the steps, players, products, timeline, and budget. A risk assessment for the plan should be included that identifies risks for budget overruns and timeline slippage. A plan for communication should be developed that addresses electronic communication, language barriers, and reporting requirements. The budget should include a contingency line for unexpected costs and an individual expenditure approval limit for key players when appropriate. The hardest task will be managing expectations of the players, especially funders who may not be as familiar with REDD project development.

Information Management System

Projects have numerous options to choose from for project management and data collection and compilation. Projects should consider many factors in their decision-making, such as access to and knowledge of the programs by all team members, coordination with field data collection to minimize the transfer of data and the potential for incorrect data entry, and language to be used. REDD projects handle an extraordinary amount of data and a thoughtful selection of the systems to be used for data collection and analysis is critical.

2. Project Design and Implementation

Every project will be unique and the design and implementation must be appropriate for the project and its location. This section aims to provide some high-level clarifications and tips to help developers design and implement the project most efficiently. This section should continue to grow as more project developers undertake the process and share their experiences.

Periodically, VCS, CCB, REDD project developers, and auditors (Validation and Verification Bodies, or VVBs) meet in person to identify points of confusion or challenges for projects. These meetings are very helpful in ensuring a common understanding. Questions and discussions often get very detailed and provide excellent insight for all groups. Much of the content of this Guidebook stems from these meetings, but some discussions are too detailed to fit nicely into this structure. To ensure dissemination of the information, the minutes from the workshops held to date are included in Appendix A. Workshop discussions are held in the context of the requirements and methodologies in place at that time. Requirements have changed and the project developer should ensure that the latest version of documents is being used.

Defining the project proponent

The project proponent is the organization (or organizations) that can control the activities by virtue of conducting them or of financing them. The project proponent should be the group whose sudden, unannounced departure would cause the project to fail. It is possible to have more than one project proponent.

A project proponent can have the right of use but not own the credits resulting from the project. In such a case an agreement must transfer the credits to a different party. For example, a landowner may confer the right to use the land to the project proponent but retain the ownership of any credits generated from the activities. There would be a legal agreement between the landowner and the project proponent stating the terms of the agreement.

Some VCS AFOLU requirements may appear to mean that a project proponent can have the project validated without demonstrating right of use. These requirements are intended to support projects that may have right of use for most of the project areas but have some landowners wishing to see that the project will be “real” before signing an agreement. In these instances, the project proponent must be able to show that it will have total right of use for the project area in the future.

Demonstrating right to use

Under VCS, the project proponent must demonstrate the right to use the project area. The VVBs must determine that the information provided by the project proponent is complete and truthful, and in line with the VVBs’ requirement to provide a reasonable level of assurance in the validation and verification process. Project proponents are responsible for ensuring that proper documentation and/or interviews are provided. VVBs have mentioned ensuring that land titles and rights of use are evaluated to ensure

no overlapping rights exist, ensuring that subsurface mineral or exploration rights are evaluated, and ensuring that ancestral rights or other land-use rights are evaluated. Attorneys or anthropologists can be of great assistance to projects in ensuring these evaluations are done correctly.

Right of use is not equal to the right to sell. During project validation the project proponent must provide evidence of the right of use. Simply put, the project proponent must show that it has the authority to carry out the activities that avoid the deforestation and protect the carbon. This authority can come in a number of ways. Two options are (i) owning the land or (ii) having an agreement with the land owner(s) authorizing the entity to conduct the activities on their behalf. Implicit right of use does not come simply from not being told to stop doing the activities.

Field work

Carbon stock data collection and monitoring of forest cover are two of the most important topics for REDD projects. Both are critical and can be costly in terms of time and effort. The project's carbon stock sampling program should be clearly and explicitly defined in the project documentation. Justification for the approach used such as how strata were identified and how samples were collected should also be included and should be based on reputable sources. A good sampling program should include resampling, internal audits, team training and other best practices. Evidence of the training, audits, sampling program, data collected, resampling approach and other steps should be maintained to be reviewed by the VVB during validation and verification. Because VVBs develop their sampling approaches based on risk, a project that explains and provides evidence that their carbon stock sampling plan is scientifically sound may be able to reduce the amount of resampling conducted by the VVB, decreasing the time and cost for the validation and verification.

Project documentation

The documentation for a REDD project is likely to be extensive. For project transparency, ease of validation and verification, and documentation maintenance long-term, it is important that the documentation is internally consistent and as simple as possible.

In general, a description of the project activities should include the scale, scope, timeframe, and responsible parties. Where appropriate, a discussion of why the responsible parties are competent to implement the activities will be helpful. A discussion of how the project activities will reduce deforestation (how they confront the drivers of deforestation) is required. Depending on the proposed activities, it may also be helpful to include a brief discussion on why the activities are the most appropriate for the project area. When CCB validation is also being sought, the impact of the activities on community groups and biodiversity must be discussed.

There is no requirement to quantify the emissions reduced by a particular activity or to assess which activities will contribute the most to avoided emissions. It is acceptable to present them as a suite of activities designed to combat deforestation in the project area.

The financial plan should include enough detail to demonstrate that the project proponent has considered all activities. It is not required to show line items for each activity.

Evidence collection

Collecting sufficient and appropriate evidence to support all project assertions is vital. As projects work through the process, they should ensure that they can defend every assumption, decision, and statement recorded in the project documentation. It is by far easiest to collect the evidence and organize it as the project proceeds rather than going back at a later time. This also ensures that the project does not need to conduct rework at a later time due to a faulty or unsupportable assumption or decision made early in the project design. Evidence can include a wide variety of items: from direct data collected by the project or outside organizations to peer-reviewed papers, documented internal procedures, meeting minutes, emails or letters or other correspondence, and interviews with team members or community members or outside experts. Data collected directly and evidence provided by reputable sources independent of the project (for example, IPCC, government ministries) are the best sources of evidence when possible, but are not the only acceptable forms. Often a combination of evidence sources serves best to justify an assumption or assertion.

Project quality control

The project must develop internal systems and processes to ensure the quality of its data collection, compilation, and storage. The exact process that works best will differ from project to project but some method is needed for checking field work and data collection, reviewing data entry to prevent errors, and ensuring the safe long-term storage of data and project information.

3. Project Validation and Verification

The VCS and CCB websites provide the procedures and requirements for project validation and verification in great detail. Projects that wish to register and sell credits and have them tagged as verified by VCS and CCB must complete project validation and verification by an accredited third party. This process demonstrates that projects are designed and implemented in accordance with the requirements of both Standards, and that the carbon, biodiversity, and social assertions made by the project are true with a reasonable level of assurance. In this section we assume that a project is seeking both VCS and CCB validation and verification. If a project wishes to do only one or the other, the information remains the same.

Validation is a systematic, independent evaluation of a project's plan against criteria established by the VCS and CCB. It is a forward looking process that assesses whether the predicted carbon, social, and biodiversity impacts are reasonably likely to occur and that the program would be in compliance with the VCS and CCB standards. Validation is an important milestone and should not be taken lightly.

Verification has a different focus. In validation, the focus is on whether or not the proposed plan conforms to the VCS and CCB requirements and would lead to verifiable credits. In verification, the focus is on whether the project plan was implemented correctly and sufficient evidence exists to confirm that the GHG emissions reductions and social and biodiversity benefits claimed by the project are correct.

Retaining a Validation and Verification Body (VVB)

The first step in the validation and verification process is obtaining the services of an approved VVB.

Vendor list – VCS maintains a list of approved VVBs for each project type on its website. The project should review this list to determine the appropriate list of VVBs to receive the request for proposals. If the project will want to use the same organization for both validation and verification, it is important to check that those receiving the request are approved to do both.

Request for proposal - It is important to include enough information in the request for proposals to enable the VVBs to provide a detailed quote and to enable the project to compare bids. Many VVBs have forms they require each project to complete in addition to the standard request for proposal. These forms can be obtained from the VVBs website or directly from the main contact at each organization.

Ideally, the project documentation (PD) is completed prior to the request for proposals being sent. In this instance, the VVB may request a copy so that they can become more familiar with the project prior to issuing a bid. It is important for the project to ensure that confidentiality agreements are in place prior to distributing copies of the PD to validators. This will help ensure that “early” versions of the PD are not in circulation later and that the project's details will remain confidential until finalized.

It is possible to request a bid without the project documentation being completed. If this is required because of timing issues or other special circumstances, it is important for the project to communicate with the VVBs to explain the issue. Not all VVBs are willing to provide a proposal without a PD being

completed, but most will be willing to work with a project if there are extenuating circumstances. At a minimum the request for proposals should have the following information:

- Location (description of project, types of forest, boundary file)
- Access (seasonal weather or transportation issues)
- Size of project (number of sample plots)
- Languages of project team and communities
- Availability of the project team and deadlines needing to be met (long vacations planned, sales agreements in place, grandfathering requirements)
- Resources from the project to support the process (i.e. how fast can you respond to questions or findings)
- Logistical support available for planning the audit/safety issues/equipment needs
- Overview of project activities, ownership
- Political or social issues in the area
- Standards for the validation and verification and specific methodologies used
- Special circumstances or unique features of project requiring special expertise or background

The request for proposal process for verification only or for joint validation and verification is almost identical to that described in the validation section. The biggest difference is that the verification scope will include the timeframe for review and the actual project boundary details.

Some projects may choose to do validation and verification at the same time. This is allowable and can often save time and money in the review process. However, there is associated risk. Implementing the project prior to validation adds a risk that the project may implement a plan that does not meet the requirements of VCS and the methodology. Some errors may be easy to correct. If the error is in collecting the correct data however, it may not be possible to go back and collect it after the fact. In this case, credits may be lost. Several tactics, listed below, help minimize this risk:

- Including a project team member with previous VCS and CCB experience
- Conducting the first verification event shortly after the project begins to minimize the number of credits potentially affected
- Conducting internal monitoring events to ensure that the monitoring plan is being followed

Selecting a VVB

Once all of the proposals have been received, the project will need to evaluate them. Certain terms common to GHG validation and verification may not be familiar to the project, even with previous contracting experience. For example:

Level of Assurance – Validators and verifiers will never be able to review every document, every piece of data, and interview everyone involved in the project. To do so would be both cost and time prohibitive. Instead they “sample” the evidence based on their risk analysis, which guides them to the areas with the greatest potentials for mistakes or omissions. Because they only sample the evidence, the level of assurance for their resulting opinion is usually designated as “reasonable.” This means that they are reasonably sure that the stated emissions reductions are free of material misstatements and in conformance with the standard requirements. The term reasonable may seem to indicate a less than ideal level of assurance, but this is the highest

level used and the level required by most buyers. At times, a “limited” level of assurance is used. This is typically only employed for auditing beyond the standard scope or for projects unable to provide sufficient documentation and evidence.

Materiality – Material nonconformances or misstatements must be corrected prior to the VVB issuing a positive validation or verification opinion. Materiality can be both quantitative and qualitative. For example, incorrect documentation of the project start date is a material nonconformance. An incorrect start date does not satisfy the VCS and CCB requirement to identify and document the project’s start date. While it does not affect the total number of credits that the project generates, it must be corrected so that the project is in conformance with the rules of the program. Alternatively, suppose an incorrect unit conversion factor is used. This may be material if it changes the results by more than the materiality threshold (typically +/-5% or +/- 1% for large projects, but defined by methodologies and programs) or it may be immaterial if it does not. Sometimes, many small immaterial issues result in an overall error that is material. The level of materiality for the requested service will be defined in the proposal and can be further explained by the VVB. It is important to note that the evaluation is at the emissions reduction level, not at the individual variable level for quantitative misstatements. If a project underreports and wishes not to correct the error, the project may be able to request a methodology or monitoring plan deviation and demonstrate that the underreporting does not cause other errors or affect future monitoring events.

Deviations - The VCS Standard allows deviations relating to the criteria or procedures for measurement or monitoring. Measurement and monitoring are considered separately. For REDD projects, this means that deviations from the methodology are allowed for the criteria or procedures for measurements relating to baseline development and the monitoring event. Deviations must be approved by the VVB and require evidence that the deviation improves accuracy or conservativeness

While it is often tempting to select the lowest cost, this is not always the best means for selecting a VVB. The project may wish to consider:

- Experience of audit team (experience in the region or with the type of vegetation present, previous use of this methodology or data collection techniques, experts to be used if needed for financial, legal or social analysis)
- Languages
- Schedule
- Cost
- Referrals/references

Experienced audit teams will work more quickly and feel more comfortable navigating the process. Previous experience with the project’s selected methodology, while not necessary, will expedite the team’s understanding of the project’s approach. Experience in the region or with the type of project activities the project is undertaking will allow the VVB to be more knowledgeable about typical baseline data sets as well as typical data challenges and opportunities.

The schedule is important and is often presented as milestones that occur a set amount of time after a previous milestone. For example, the schedule may say: Initial findings will be delivered 2 weeks from the day that all project documentation is received. This allows flexibility in the schedule when steps take longer than anticipated. In general, most projects will underestimate the amount of time required to respond to findings.

Ensuring an understanding of what is included in the cost is also important. Does it include the costs of travel for the site visit? Does it include only one round of clarifications and corrective actions or two? If additional work is required, what is the rate for the additional work and how is the notification and approval process established?

References are important to enable the project to ask questions regarding the proposer's audit style and timeliness. Some organizations tend to be more formal, issuing questions and corrective action requests only in writing. Others tend to prefer to discuss the issues via telephone before formally issuing the findings. Both styles are acceptable and the project should ensure that the audit style is a good fit for their team. Audit styles also vary based on the individual, so references that worked with the specific proposed auditor(s) are always more valuable.

Contracting

Once the winning bidder has been selected, the contract negotiation process will begin. Most validation firms have their own standard agreements that have been specifically designed to include the pertinent information for GHG validation and verification. As with all contracts, terms can be negotiated and this process may take some time depending on the organizations involved. It is recommended that accountability for missed deadlines by either party be addressed in the contract.

Assessment of the project

Whether for validation, verification or a joint assessment, the VVB will usually follow a similar process. When a project is seeking validation and verification against multiple Standards, additional steps may be involved. Details on both processes are available on the VCS and CCB websites. The information here is meant to provide an overview only.

Often the VVB will begin a validation by conducting a desk review of the documents provided. The VVB will then issue any initial findings for the project to address. Usually the validator will hold a conference call with the project team to ensure that the team understands the issues. Remember however that the validator cannot provide consulting services. They can explain the requirement and how the project failed to meet the requirement but they cannot suggest ways to resolve the issue. Once any initial findings have been addressed, the validator will conduct the site visit. The site visit is used to confirm the project boundaries as defined at the time, interview relevant parties, and gather additional evidence. Additional requests for information or findings may be issued following the site visit. Typically, validators will identify potential issues as they are found, so that there are no "surprises" when the formal findings are received.

Exact language used to categorize findings varies from validator to validator. In general, findings can be categorized as:

Nonconformance (NCR, Corrective Action Request (CAR)) – These findings indicate an area where the project does not conform with requirements of the Standard or methodology. These may be errors in calculations or qualitative nonconformances. Material nonconformances must be addressed prior to the validator issuing a positive opinion.

Clarifications (New Information Requests) – As the name suggests, these are areas where the validator would like more information regarding a topic. Depending on the nature of the request, the project may simply provide an explanation to the validator, submit documentation, and/or add the information to the project documentation.

Opportunity for Improvement – During the validation process, the validators may identify areas where the project could strengthen its processes to minimize the risk of misstatements moving forward. The validator will identify these as opportunities for improvement. The project does not need to respond to opportunities identified.

At the verification stage, the VVB will assess the monitoring report and undertake data testing. Testing will involve conducting a site assessment, which will include interviews with project staff, observation and review of on-site records, review of established program practices and data, and the assessment of the accuracy of monitoring and reporting systems. The verifier will conduct risk-based sampling to review data collection and processing as well as any calculations, models, or other project specific tools. Common issues identified during assessments include the following:

- Inadequate evidence available (all project-specific methodology deviations, factors, baseline assertions and other project specific information must be supported by evidence)
- Evidence not readily available to be provided and reviewed (evidence should be organized and limited to relevant items only)
- Incomplete monitoring plan (project must include all parameters and the means for gathering, compiling, and recording the data and calculations)
- Standard requirements and methodology not followed (all requirements and steps outlined in the applicable Standards and methodologies must be followed and documented)
- Incomplete project documentation (transparent, complete documentation helps the audit process move much more quickly)

VVB Opinion

Once the validation and/or verification is complete, the VVB will provide a draft report for the project to review and approve. Once the report is finalized the VVB will issue the report and an opinion as to whether the project successfully passed or failed. The verification opinion and report will also document the number of credits verified per year of the verification. This assigns a vintage year to each credit. At this time, the project can submit its documentation and register the credits to be sold. This process is not covered in this Guidebook at this time.

Tips for Navigating the Validation and Verification Process

Deployment of the following tips will not guarantee successful validation and verification, but they should help reduce the learning curve.

- Ensure that you have read and met the requirements of the most recent versions of VCS Standard, applicable Methodology and Guidance Documents;
- Ensure that you have read and met the requirements of the most recent versions of CCB Standard, and applicable Guidance Documents;
- Ensure that there are dedicated staff and resources available during the validation and verification to attend site visits, and tend to all activities necessary;
- Ensure that there is a transparent data trail that provides sufficient evidence and documentation to support the program and the data gathered;
- When using evidence and documentation, ensure that it is sufficiently reliable (e.g. an invoice provided by utility is more reliable than an unsubstantiated estimate);
- Document and justify all risks, assumptions and uncertainties with the project; and
- Ensure that data collection and monitoring processes are clearly documented and effective.

4. Additional Resources

Additional resources for Project Developers are available at:

VCS link

CCB link

CCB Training Modules Link

Forest Trends

CI methodology document

REDD Workshop description and appendix with minutes. Note that minutes reflect the version in use at the time and some language may have changed.