

VCMI Grant RFP Outline | Priority 1: Recommendations for an assurance and accountability model for corporate use of VCMI Claims Guidance

1. Background

About VCMI and the Grants Committee: The Voluntary Carbon Markets Integrity (VCMI) Initiative is a multistakeholder platform to drive credible, net zero aligned participation in voluntary carbon markets (VCMs). VCMI's goal is to ensure VCMs make a significant and meaningful contribution to climate action and limit global temperature from rising to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, while also supporting the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To learn more about VCMI, we encourage you to read our Consultation Report and Roadmap, both of which are available on our website [here](#).

During this phase of VCMI, we seek to inform our ongoing and future work, as well as provide resources to others in the emerging VCMs governance space. We have identified several critical issues for which unbiased, rigorous, and accessible analyses are needed to help inform the development of VCMs governance. The initial focus of VCMI and its Grants Committee will be on:

- 1) Recommendations for an assurance and accountability model for corporate use of VCMI Claims Guidance
- 2) Identifying the framework and architecture for ensuring “end to end” transparency around the voluntary use of carbon credits

VCMI will issue RFPs for each of these issues. Further issue areas will be launched in response to the needs of VCMI and the field during 2022.

This funding opportunity requests proposals for the delivery **a report and set of recommendations for an assurance and accountability model for corporate use of VCMI Claims Guidance**.

Due date: An advanced draft deliverable is due by 15 April 2022, and a final deliverable, which incorporates comments by VCMI, is due by 20 May 2022.

2. Priority issue description and deliverable details

Priority issue/ problem statement

VCMs – being voluntary – are largely privately governed. On the supply-side, standard-setting/ carbon crediting bodies develop and approve methodologies that project developers must adhere to if their aim is to be issued a “carbon credit” from that entity. Other processes are also aiming to strengthen transparency on quality of carbon credits, including the IC-VCMI, who are currently completing their guidance on ‘Core Carbon Principles’.

On the demand-side, while there is growing attention to corporate climate accountability more broadly, there remains a gap around private assurance models for determining the accountability and credibility of claims made relating to the voluntary use of carbon credits. VCMI is filling this gap by developing Corporate Claims Guidance with input from its stakeholder consultation groups, for publication in May 2022.

Further work is needed to develop an assurance model which provides governance and accountability for the use of VCMI's Claims Guidance in the near-term.

Deliverable details

Those tendering for the RfP shall describe how they will deliver a report containing the essential components below:

- Evidence-based recommendations for the design of an assurance model for ensuring accountability in the use of VCMI's Claims Guidance. This assurance model must be able to provide comfort to regulators, investors, consumers, CSOs and corporates themselves that claims made are understandable, properly substantiated and credible.
- An explanation for how the recommended assurance model would be governed and enforced, the underpinning corporate implementation requirements, sustainability of the system, and identification of key risks and how they would be mitigated.

The report and recommendations shall be based on:

- a) A thorough review and mapping of the existing corporate climate action standards landscape to show where assurance model options link to, use, and build upon existing processes wherever possible in order to avoid duplication and unnecessary additional costs for corporate users of VCMI's guidance. These should include, inter alia: financial regulation, corporate climate reporting, carbon market and associated assurance frameworks, trading standards, certifications and labelling, and advertising standards (e.g., disclosure and reporting via CDP, the TCFD, net-zero targets framework by SBTi, corporate climate action frameworks including the Climate Action 100+ Net Zero Benchmark, Transition Pathway Initiative and World Benchmarking Alliance, transition financing framework by the Climate Bonds Initiative, scenarios by IEA/NGFS, Race to Zero Starting Line criteria, new/ongoing standard-setting processes such as the International Sustainability Standards Board climate standard, EU CSRD/EFRAG, UK Transition Plan Taskforce, UNSG Expert Group).
- b) A systematic appraisal of at least three different assurance model options according to key 'best practice' criteria for private assurance frameworks, in order to underpin evidence-based recommendations.
- c) Considerations and recommendations for linking of the assurance model with relevant regulatory regimes for corporate claims, and assurance systems which govern the supply of credits, to promote integrated "end to end" integrity of VCMs transactions.
- d) Targeted engagement with expert stakeholders to stress test the recommendations.

The recommendations should align with emerging VCMI Claims Guidance and build on existing VCMI products, including the Consultation Report, Supplementary Documents, Consultation Feedback Synthesis and VCMI's Roadmap for further work.

The report should also provide a basis for a next phase of work on the 'Pathway to Regulation', which will focus on the longer-term approaches and processes to align and integrate voluntary best practice and private assurance models into public policies and regulations. This means including initial recommendations for links between the VCMI assurance model and policy instruments and providing suggestions for further work on the 'Pathway to Regulation'.

The report and recommendations should be clear, practical and implementable. It should include an Executive Summary and at least three intuitive graphics (e.g., tables/ graphs/ infographics) to capture and clearly convey important findings/ key messages.

Ways of working

To accomplish the objectives, the Grantee will be expected to work flexibly and with close engagement with the VCMI Secretariat and other relevant VCMI Grantees to enable ongoing coordination with the evolving Claims Guidance. This may include interaction with other VCMI stakeholders, including, the VCMI Expert Advisory Group, and potentially with the VCMI Country Contact Group.

3. Submission Requirements

To be considered for this funding opportunity, applicants must include all requested materials, send to vcmi@merid.org by 5 pm ET on Tuesday 8 March with the subject line: *VCMI Grant RFP | Priority 1: Recommendations for an assurance and accountability model for corporate use of VCMI Claims Guidance.*

We only accept electronic submissions. **We only accept proposals that are submitted using the form attached.**

4. Evaluation criteria

- a. Expertise of the applicant
- b. Overall quality and detail of the proposal
- c. Cost-effectiveness
- d. Demonstrated capacity to deliver the analysis on time, at a high quality, and within budget

5. Award and Reporting

The successful applicant will be notified electronically. After the award letter has been accepted, Meridian Institute, which serves as the Secretariat for VCMI, will send the successful applicant a grant agreement and any other required documents for execution. Prior to finalizing the grant award, Meridian Institute will perform a due diligence check on the applicant. The grantee will submit the first invoice for payment after the award documents and due diligence has been completed. The agreement will set forth the other dates for invoicing.

The grantee will be required to provide brief, periodic status reports to VCMI on the progress of the funded project in the form provided by VCMI. A final report with the last invoice will also be required.

6. Deliverable

The report must be of high quality, robustly supported with endnotes conforming to a widely accepted standard (e.g., APA) and include, as appropriate, illustrative graphs, charts and data. Grantees will be required to give VCMI non-exclusive use of the document, in full or in part, including publication on its website and through other means of distribution.

Questions? If after having read this RFP thoroughly, you have an unanswered question about this funding opportunity, you may contact VCMI with your query at: vcmi@merid.org and lweissgold@merid.org

VCMI Grant Submission Form

Please follow this format when submitting your proposal, using the same order and fields set forth below and submit your completed application to: vcmi@merid.org. Please limit your submission to no more than 4 pages.

1. Basic Information:

- a. Name of your organization:
- b. Address:
- c. Organization contact name and phone/cell number:

2. Expertise and Qualifications

- a. If you are submitting on behalf of an organization, briefly describe the mission of your organization, how it relates to this RFP.
- b. List the individuals who would work on this project, their role, expertise, and qualifications

3. Project Proposal

- a. Describe the content of the written work and approximate length. Please provide an annotated outline of the deliverable and topics to be covered, including an initial, high-level description of the different assurance model options you would consider and criteria you would use to systematically appraise them.
- b. Describe your methodologies for addressing the priority issue (literature search, interviews, survey, data analytics, etc.).
- c. Outline proposed research sources (primary and secondary), anticipated graphs and other visuals. The analysis should include an Executive Summary.
- d. Provide a project timeline (i.e., date of outline, first draft, second and final drafts). Please ensure sufficient time for VCMI feedback on drafts.
- e. Provide a budget. Please detail by line item: cost of personnel, overhead, including any subgrantees, graphics, layout, software, etc.
- f. Other relevant information

4. Supporting Documentation

VCMI is interested in funding an individual or entity with a strong record of developing high quality analysis related to this priority area on time and within budget. Please submit up to three (3) letters of support or reviews that can speak to these attributes.