

Request for Proposals: Branding of VCMI Claims

Introduction

VCMI is seeking proposals from qualified branding agencies (the consultant) to develop the branding, design, and labelling of its Claims. This will include the naming of VCMI Claims and Claim tiers, design of an appropriate label(s)/stamp(s) for VCMI Claims (similar to an [‘eco label’](#) or mark), development of a unique brand for VCMI Claims, and delivering associated guidance and copywriting alongside VCMI Claims. The branding of VCMI Claims will be developed beside complementary work to identify associated tiers for VCMI Claims, and existing research on appropriate Claim Names.

Background

VCMI published its [Claims Code of Practice](#) (Claims Code) in June 2023. This Claims Code is a rulebook for companies on credible use of high-quality carbon credits on the path to net zero. It also tells them what they can credibly claim about this use. By implementing the Claims Code, companies can receive recognition in the form of a VCMI Claim.

Equally, the Claims Code (and, as an extension, VCMI Claims) will help the following groups as a point of reference:

- Individuals, businesses, and other buyers of goods and services seeking to make climate-friendly purchases;
- Investors and other stakeholders who want to judge the credibility of companies’ climate ambitions and actions, including use of carbon credits alongside broader decarbonization efforts;
- Governments and their regulatory agencies considering how to incentivize companies to use carbon credits credibly and structure claims to be truthful, clear and informative, through government-developed or endorsed corporate reporting requirements, advertising and consumer protection standards and other policies, measures, or guidance.

The Claims Code released in June included three tiers for future VCMI Claims (Silver, Gold, and Platinum) – see [p. 26 of the Claims Code for more details](#). It is important to note that:

- no Claim names, labels, or designs were prepared for these tiers in the June release, and
- it is possible that VCMI will release additional tiers (or entry-level/on-ramp options).

The development of VCMI Claim names and labels, as well as identifying and pursuing any additional tiers, is taking place from August-November 2023, with the intention to release them to the public in November 2023 as ‘additional modules’ to the Claims Code.

VCMI has already undertaken some desk-based market research to develop criteria for VCMI Claim names and a shortlist of Claim names, with the aid of an Insights consultancy. This work is expected to continue through 2023 to garner more insights from experts in the Voluntary Carbon Market and in corporate branding/marketing (in particular, those with expertise in developing eco labels) on the VCMI Claims (naming, design, and associated guidance for corporates).

The Claim labels to be released at the end of 2023 represent a huge milestone for VCMI. They have the potential to drive/encourage more ambitious climate action, support existing progress and commitments from companies, and deliver on other VCMI goals. VCMI Claims are a catalyst for driving behaviour change – for companies, consumers, and investors alike. They will be public facing labels, though their development and the standards/guidelines behind them are complex to a lay

audience. There are also wider implications and relevance to the voluntary carbon market. Developing an appropriate brand for VCMI Claims is therefore a balancing act of accuracy and marketability. The consultant will play a key role in this process and in delivering a high-quality product – building a brand that companies and people will trust.

Further information about VCMI is available at the end of this document.

Scope of Work

The successful consultant will join the 'Claims Branding Project Team' and be expected to lead the development, branding, and design of the VCMI Claim labels and work at-pace in collaboration with the VCMI Secretariat, VCMI's market research/insights consultancy, web design lead(s), and other relevant consultants working to deliver the project.

The consultant is primarily responsible for running an extensive branding exercise for VCMI's Claim labels. This will include naming of the Claims and Claims tiers, design and copywriting of the label as well as associated guidance/guidelines (e.g. taglines and supporting materials for use of the label, branding guidelines, advice to corporate marketing teams regarding use of the label as part of Claims etc.).

The consultant will also be expected to/responsible for:

- Delivering high-quality design drafts to deadline;
- Assimilating existing market research and insights already prepared by the claims branding project team to ensure they are up to date and informed of important findings to date (e.g. suggested design principles, naming conventions, best practice for eco labels and stamps etc.), and to consider how VCMI Claims will sit alongside other product labels;
- Delivering the VCMI Claims branding (including naming and labelling) in a highly iterative and collaborative process, including through:
 - o Feedback from the VCMI Secretariat;
 - o Formal guidance from the VCMI Stakeholder Forum (which includes representatives across civil society, business, government, academia etc.), for example in the form of roundtables and surveys;
 - o Outputs from focus groups and user testing run by the market research team, such as: 1. roundtables with branding and marketing experts working at the business-climate nexus, in particular with those who may have experience developing eco labels, 2. User testing with corporates implementing the Claims Code, 3. Focus groups with lay audiences;
 - o Guidance from the market research team, especially based on outputs from the above focus groups/user testing;
 - o Collaboration with the Web team to publish the accompanying guidance to VCMI Claim labels and other public-facing aspects.
- Preparing and delivering drafts of the Claims Labels in-line with the above iterative process;
- Engage with the project as a true partner/member of the team, in a collaborative manner, offering expertise and advice on the development of the project, and implementing/considering findings from other parts of the team;
- Attend meetings with the wider Claims branding project team, and where necessary, on a 1-1 basis, and engage with roundtables and focus groups, in particular where design drafts a main point of discussion;

- Providing copywriting services as part of the branding process - to ensure written components of the label design (such as Claim names, taglines, and associated guidelines include accurate, transparent, and clear language);
- Implementing and building on existing VCMI brand guidelines/identity, and, if necessary for the project, developing an entirely new branding identity for VCMI Claims¹;
- Preparing 'branding guidelines' (and any other required associated documents) for use of VCMI Claim labels by corporates/organisations, and working with the web team to ensure new branding and Claims are appropriately reflected on VCMI's own website.

Several factors important to the design of VCMI Claims are still to be determined, including the overarching name of the Claim and the names of Claim tiers, in addition to the number of tiers. The consultant will be expected to engage in discussions on these issues with the project team and include them in branding work.

The consultant will not be required to undertake user testing or run focus groups. That process is being managed through an existing market research firm. The consultant will be required to collaborate with that firm and draw on their findings and expertise.

Drafting process

The drafting process will take place in-line with planned roundtables and focus groups throughout early August to early October 2023. The number of drafts is flexible depending on feedback received. See the proposed timeline below for a guide.

Draft high-level timeline

VCMI expects the consultant to have a draft of the Claim labels (and a branding concept) **by 11 September** in order to inform two feedback sessions; a roundtable and a focus group. The first draft will be based on existing work from the Claims branding project team, including existing market and design research, shortlisted Claim names, and feedback from the VCMI Stakeholder Forum. Further design iterations and branding work will be prepared and tested in September and October, with final brand, Claim names, Claim labels, and associated (brand) guidelines to be delivered in November. A draft timeline is included below.

VCMI Milestone	Proposed Due Date
Roundtable with members of VCMI Stakeholder forum	8 August
RfP for Claim Branding closes	21 August
Project kick-off call and project initiation	W.C. 28 August
Roundtable with members of VCMI Stakeholder Forum and Focus Group 1 (Branding experts) (11 September Branding milestone – first draft of VCMI Claims)	W.C. 18 September (exact date TBC)

¹ While VCMI has its own existing brand and visual identity, it is not yet determined whether VCMI Claims will be developed as part of the VCMI brand, or as part of an entirely new visual identity and unique label. For this reason, the consultant should work from the basis of developing a new brand.

Focus Group 2 (branding experts) (9 October Branding milestone – second draft of VCMI Claims)	W.C. 16 October
<i>Possible focus groups with end-users and consumers (TBD)</i>	W.C. 23 October
Iterative process on final version with Claim branding project team	30 October-10 November
Final brand delivered to VCMI for use by corporates	13 November (TBC)

The above timeline is draft and based upon other project deliverables.

Proposal Requirements

Proposals should include:

- The consultant’s qualification and experience in undertaking similar work – in particular, a detailed description of the agency’s previous work in designing labels/stamps as part of a broader branding exercise.
 - Examples of similar previous work (e.g. a portfolio).
- A statement or outline of approach – including how the consultant intends to undertake the branding project, work collaboratively with the wider team, meet critical deadlines etc.
- A detailed budget, including all costs associated with the work.
- A detailed internal timeline for the project, in-line with the high-level timeline provided in this document.
- Any questions or concerns about the project.
- Details of any NGO or charity discount offered by the consultant, or pro-bono offer such work.

Submissions

To be considered for this project, applicants must submit a proposal including proposal requirements mentioned above to info@vcmintegrity.org by 5 pm ET on Monday 21 August. No extensions to this deadline will be permitted. Please use the subject line: ‘VCMI Claims proposal.’ We only accept electronic submissions.

About VCMI

The Voluntary Carbon Markets Integrity Initiative (VCMI) is an international non-profit organization with a mission to enable high-integrity voluntary carbon markets (VCMs) that deliver real and additional benefits to the atmosphere, help protect nature, and accelerate the transition to ambitious, economy-wide climate policies and regulation.

The organization is fully aligned with the goals of the Paris Agreement and is committed to a world on track to limiting global warming to below 1.5 degrees and net zero emissions by mid-century, achieved through a just transition that enhances equality and sustainable development for all.

VCMI collaborates with stakeholders from civil society, the private sector, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and governments, to realize the full potential of high-integrity voluntary carbon markets.

It works to foster a shared vision for high-integrity VCMs to make a meaningful contribution to climate action while also supporting the achievement of the UN SDGs. VCMI connects and aligns with, and amplifies, initiatives that share this vision.

On the demand-side, the VCMI Claims Code of Practice is a rulebook on how companies can make voluntary use of carbon credits as part of credible, science-aligned net-zero decarbonization pathways. It builds trust and confidence in how companies engage with VCMs, assisting them in making credible climate claims.

On the supply-side, the VCM Access Strategy Toolkit provides guidance for countries to engage in high-integrity VCMs in support of national climate and economic prosperity.

VCMI is an independent non-profit organization housed in Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors. VCMI was announced by COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma on 31 March 2021, and has received co-funding from the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, Ballmer Group, the Bezos Earth Fund, Google LLC, the Packard Foundation and the UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

<https://vcmintegrity.org/>