Request for Proposals: Independent evaluation of VCMI's Access Strategies program

1. Background

About VCMI: The [Voluntary Carbon Markets Integrity Initiative](#) (VCMI) is an international non-profit empowering companies, governments and non-state actors to realize the full potential of high-integrity voluntary carbon markets (VCMs). VCMI provides guidance on how different actors can make voluntary use of carbon credits to make a meaningful impact on climate action. The Claims Code of Practice enables companies to make 'Carbon Integrity' Claims, recognizing their achievements in going above and beyond science-aligned emissions cuts to accelerate global net zero. The Access Strategies Program supports host-country governments to establish policies and processes necessary to build and strengthen a cohesive governance of VCMs that underpin their country's participation in high-integrity carbon markets.

Through the Access Strategies program, VCMI offers support to policymakers in low-and middle-income countries to access high integrity VCMs in complement to Article 6 and compliance markets, and channel finance into priority sectors. The program takes a country-specific perspective, considering prior experiences, national circumstances and existing carbon finance mechanisms and infrastructure. This includes providing information and supporting stakeholder engagement to inform decision-making on how to direct investment from high integrity carbon markets into mitigation action and align VCMs with other financial instruments to deliver national climate and economic priorities.

The VCM [Access Strategy Toolkit,](#) is designed for use by policymakers and government officials in countries hosting carbon crediting projects, providing a starting point for policymakers to guide their thinking, discussions, and preparation for developing carbon finance access strategies. It provides high-level guidance to support countries in deciding whether, why, how, and when to engage with VCMs, considering interplay and complementarity with Article 6 in order to develop a holistic approach across carbon finance mechanisms.

Further information on Access Strategies projects and knowledge products are available [here](#).

VCMI requests proposals for an impact evaluation of VCMI's Access Strategies Program since its inception (see section 2 below for more detail). The report's analysis will be unbiased, rigorous, and accessible to help inform the next phase of VCMI's Access Strategies program.

Due date: The assessment methodology and data collection approach should be agreed by **14 April 2025**, with the final deliverable, incorporating at least one round of comments from VCMI, by **2 June 2025**.

2. Priority issue description and deliverable details

<u>Priority issue</u>

VCMI is seeking independent analysis regarding:

- The short- and long-term impact and effectiveness of VCMI's Access Strategies Program, including but not limited to:
- To what extent the program has increased capacity within developing countries, regions and sectors to strategically access high integrity VCMs finance.
- To what extent have project objectives been met, with tools, resources and capacities developed used beyond the original project implementation timeframes.
- The cumulative impact of VCMI's access strategies projects and knowledge products against priority assessment criteria.
- Whether and to what extent projects are delivering against the key themes identified in the VCM Access Strategy Toolkit, and recommendations set out in Pollination's Report '*The Role of VCMI and Philanthropic Funders in supporting country carbon market readiness'*, including forward looking recommendations for future Access Strategies implementation.

<u>Deliverable details</u>

WHAT: Those tendering for the RfP shall describe how they will deliver an impact evaluation report containing the essential components below:

- Executive Summary
- Impact evaluation of the Access Strategies Program as a whole (e.g. including strategy, governance, delivery mechanism, partnerships, etc)
- Impact assessment of specific projects / activities / products and tools:
- A quantitative assessment of project impact (where possible) primarily focusing on private finance mobilized and emissions reduced/removed.
- A qualitative assessment of project impact based on interviews with host country policymakers, relevant implementation partners, and private sector beneficiaries to gauge to what extent the program has increased capacity to strategically access high integrity VCMs finance (across countries, regions and sectors).
- An assessment of the usefulness of VCMI knowledge products and events in driving knowledge exchange, replication and catalyzing carbon market finance flows.
- Robust evaluation criteria and methodology
- Recommendations for how to improve the effective implementation of the access strategies program in order to maximize impact / transformational change.

HOW: The report and recommendations shall be based on:

a) A thorough review and evaluation (qualitative and quantitative) of the impact and effectiveness of VCMI's Access Strategy program interventions, both at the portfolio wide and individual project level. This should include assessing success against priority criteria used for access strategy project delivery:

- Potential for transformative impact, including sustainability and scaling beyond life of the intervention
- Demand-driven, with clear need for intervention and evidence of political commitment, where relevant
- Proven capability and strong partnership(s) for delivery
- Contributes to geographic and sectoral coverage within grants portfolio
- Reasonable cost for delivery

b) Interviews (assumed virtual) with key stakeholders including access strategy delivery partners, host country policymakers directly benefiting from the VCMI grants, and broader relevant carbon market stakeholders.

c) Evaluating projects on delivery of recommendations listed in the report: *The Role of VCMI and Philanthropic Funders in supporting country carbon market readiness*.

d) VCMI will provide all necessary project specific information and documentation, to be treated confidentially where not already in the public domain. Up to a maximum of 20 funding interventions could be considered in scope for the report. Please note that access strategy projects are small scale, typically between $50-150k, and delivered over the course of 3-12 months (see examples here). Not all of these projects will have been completed at the time of review. For those that remain open, an evaluation of impact should be included to the extent possible at that moment in time and could include reporting on expected or likely impact.

Ways of working

To accomplish the objectives, the delivery partner will be expected to work flexibly and with close engagement with the VCMI Secretariat and other relevant VCMI Grantees and Partners to enable ongoing coordination. This may include interaction with other VCMI stakeholders, including the VCMI Country Contact Group.

Deliverable style and formatting

The report must be objective, non-biased, with transparent methods and assumptions. It must not favor or pre-judge any particular outcomes or recommendations. To the extent possible the report should align with key principles and lexicon used in existing VCMI products (e.g. the Toolkit).

The report and recommendations should be clear and practical. The report should be no longer than 20 pages, including an Executive Summary of cumulative portfolio wide impacts, and individual project evaluations (Annexes may be provided in addition). As much as possible, the report should use graphics (e.g., tables/ graphs/ infographics) to capture and clearly convey important messages and the key results.

3. Submission Requirements

To be considered for this funding opportunity, applicants must include all requested materials, and send to info@vcmintegrity.org, with *george.hodgetts@vcmintegrity.org* in copy, by 5 pm ET on 5 March 2025 with the subject line: '*FAO Policy*: *VCMI Access Strategies Report RFP submission.'*

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

4. Evaluation criteria

- Expertise of the applicant
- Overall quality and detail of the proposal
- Cost-effectiveness
- Demonstrated capacity to deliver the analysis in good time, and at a high quality.

5. Award and Reporting

The successful applicant will be notified electronically. After the award letter has been accepted, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (RPA), which serves as the fiscal sponsor for VCMI, will send the successful applicant a contract and any other required documents for execution. Prior to finalizing the award, RPA 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 contractor 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. The successful applicant 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. It is not anticipated that any travel will be required for this project.

Questions? If after having read this RFP thoroughly, you have an unanswered question about this opportunity, you may contact VCMI with your query at: george.hodgetts@vcmintegrity.org

VCMI Proposal Submission Form

The purpose of the proposal document is to outline and provide a comprehensive overview of a project seeking funding or support from VCMI. The document serves as a detailed plan that communicates the project's objectives, strategies, and expected outcomes. Below is a summary of the document's key elements:

- **Project Overview:** This section includes basic project information such as the title, applicant details, project timeline, and the total funding requested.

- **Organization and Project Team:** Provides an overview of the applying organization, including its mission and track record. It also details the expertise and roles of the project team and any external collaborators.

- **Project Details:** A comprehensive description of the project's scope, objectives, strategies, and the beneficiaries or target population it aims to serve.

- **Project Timeline & Deliverables:** Outlines the project's timeline with SMART KPIs, key milestones, and expected outcomes. A Gantt chart may also be included for a visual representation.

- **Project Risk Management:** Identifies potential risks and the mitigation strategies in place, with a focus on ongoing risk assessment throughout the project lifecycle.

- **Budget & Resources:** Breaks down the project's expenses and funding requirements, including justifications for each expense, as well as potential income sources or partner contributions.

- **Monitoring & Evaluation:** Describes how the project's success and impact will be measured through KPIs and metrics, as well as how results will be communicated to stakeholders.

- **Post Funding & Long-term Viability:** Explains how the project will have lasting impact, including plans for sustainability, knowledge sharing, and future funding or partnerships beyond the initial grant.