Project Plan Template

*Last updated February 2023*

General Instructions and Document Overview

This template guides and structures the Project Plan, to assess project eligibility and to authorize the methods and data sources that will be used to calculate emissions reductions.

To complete this Project Plan Template, please refer to the instructions listed under the section headings. For the title page, please complete the information listed in the box. Instructions may be deleted from the final submitted document.

Through the Project Plan, the project developer will identify:

1. The protocol used to generate offset credits;
2. An initial assessment of the project’s viability to produce permanent, additional, verifiable, enforceable, and real emissions reductions (the PAVER requirements that all offsets must meet);
3. Relevant stakeholders to the project’s success and how information will be shared between parties;
4. Any deviations from the protocol including rationale for these deviations, and any anticipated issues in fulfilling protocol requirements;
5. How the project will verify emission reductions.

Following the submission of the Project Plan, members of The Offset Network Executive Committee will assess this Project Plan for eligibility. The committee will either offer feedback to improve the project or the project will be accepted as a good fit for the program. All the information you provide in the Project Plan can be used as a foundation for the creation of the Project Description Document (PDD) that you will submit to the Offset Network once the project has been fully developed, which is essential if you plan to pursue peer verification and eventually generate peer-reviewed carbon offsets through the Offset Network.

For more information regarding peer-reviewed offsets or the peer verification process please visit: [https://offsetnetwork.org](https://offsetnetwork.org/project-pathways)

The information you provide in the Project Plan will be assessed by The Offset Network Executive Committee members for the following qualities:

* Whether the protocol chosen is acceptable and appropriate to the project.
* Whether the project meets the eligibility requirements of the chosen protocol and the peer-reviewed project pathways, which stipulate offset credits must not be marketed for sale. \*Note: The Executive Committee recommends that projects also remain local to the developing institution (within 100 miles). In addition, the Executive Committee strongly recommends that if a project will result in greater than 60,000 tCO2e carbon offsets annually, the project developer consider traditional carbon offset project pathways.
* How the protocol methodology is being applied to your specific project to estimate reductions achieved and credits to be generated, including data sources to be used; this includes any proposed minor deviations from the protocol’s methods of reporting, monitoring, and estimating reductions.
* Whether the project meets the additional checks in the additionality Appendix.
* Whether relevant project stakeholder contact info is provided and channels of communication and information sharing are established for the project.

We welcome queries early on in the project development process about the likely eligibility of a project, and encourage campuses to work with the Offset Network to develop promising project ideas that engage students and build skills for a growing job market while testing novel climate change solutions.

*This template draws from the existing template guidance provided by: Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) - Project Description Template. Additionally, the Offset Network Project Plan Template v1.2, and the Project Plan Instructions v1.0, informed the content and creation of this Project Plan Template.*

[Project Title]

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| General Project Information | |
| Project Title | *Name of project* |
| Date Submitted | *When did you submit this plan to The Offset Network Executive Committee?* |
| College or University | *Academic institution developing the project* |
| Prepared by | *Individual responsible for preparing this report* |
| Contact | *Telephone, email address, website for office, physical address etc.* |
| Method of Project Review | *Identify the method of project review you plan to pursue. If pursuing peer verification, you may include any additional related information, such as a potential verifier (via OffsetNetwork.org).* |

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# 1. Introduction

Project Summary

Provide a project title, briefly summarize the project, including the project purpose and objectives, and how it seeks to achieve atmospheric reductions of greenhouse gases (GHGs). Identify the specific type of GHG activity the project represents.

## 1.1 Site Details

Provide an image of the site and the surrounding landscape; this image can be a map, KLM file or aerial photograph. Indicate the project size in units appropriate to the project type (e.g. acres/hectares, MWs, number of individuals, etc). Additionally, include information about the condition of the site prior to project initiation. Describe common uses for the area and how people access the project site. Include all relevant project dates.

* Image
* Project Size:

## 1.2 GHG Impact

Provide a description of the following:

1. The ways the project will impact GHG emissions: include those Sources, Sinks and Reservoirs (SSRs) of GHG emissions that are anticipated to represent larger than a 3% (de minimis) contribution to the project impact and will be included in the GHG Assertion calculation.
2. The technologies or measures of behavior changes to be employed by the project.

## 1.3 GHG Assertion

Please include an estimate of total emissions reductions/sequestration expected in tCO2e per year and the time frame over which these reductions are expected. Accuracy is not the highest priority, and may be more difficult to identify for biological sequestration projects - nonetheless please provide an estimate and identify your confidence in the estimation.

## 1.4 Program Inclusion

Identify the GHG program that the project will be submitted and registered with (or, state ‘The Offset Network’ if you plan to pursue peer-reviewed offsets). Indicate the protocol which this project will follow. Provide rationale for the choice of the GHG program and the protocol.

Provide the following details about the methodology used: name, version, registry or developer, and applicable URL (or, if URL is unavailable, include the methodology as an appendix).

Describe why you chose this methodology, and why it is applicable to the proposed project.

## 1.5 Roles & Responsibilities

List the key project participants and describe their roles; include the offset project funder, project owners, project developers, project implementers, technology providers, etc.

Identify the management structure of the project and how different groups will coordinate and manage respective responsibilities involved with the project. Additionally, identify the chain of custody of carbon offset credits; which project stakeholder(s) will possess the credits after verification?

Offset project funder: name of institution/organization and how they will fulfill the role

Project owners:

Project operator:

Subcontractors:

Contact information: e-mail address and phone number

Use this space to describe the management structure of the project.

## 1.6 Relevant Stakeholder Outcomes & On-going Communication

Explain the anticipated outcomes of the project for each of the stakeholders identified in 1.5; are these outcomes related to learning objectives, sustainability goals, or something else? For example, the project funder’s anticipated outcome might be to reduce their carbon footprint while the project developer may hope to create a unique learning experience for students through project development. Provide an explanation as to how these parties will remain in contact throughout the course of the project, regarding project updates and other project related tasks.

Use this space to describe the outcomes and methods of communication in narrative format; < 500 words.

## 1.7 Co-benefits

One of the goals of the Offset Network is to catalyze and support offset projects that provide educational and research opportunities for students, faculty, and staff. The Offset Network also aims to foster the development of local and small-scale projects with meaningful co-benefits. Please describe the anticipated co-benefits of this offset project, including any student involvement and academic research that may result.

Use this space to describe the outcomes and methods of communication in narrative format; < 500 words.

## 1.8 Environmental Impact Assessment

Identify and explain if an environmental impact assessment will be required, by law or by one of the project stakeholders, to implement the project activities.

Use this space to provide a brief explanation about environmental impact assessment.

## 1.9 Chronological Project Plan

Please include the actual or expected project commencement date, verification dates, and other key timeline components as much as is possible to estimate at this time.

**Project Dates**

**(Actual or Expected)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Timing** | **Description** |
|  | Project Commences |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  | Verification |
|  | Project Ends |

Add additional project dates to the timeline above.

# 2. Project Eligibility

In determining the project eligibility to be included in the Offset Network program, the Executive Committee will review the proposed project’s fulfillment of the eligibility requirements as stated within the specific project protocol and assess the additionality argument. These are the determinant factors for whether the project may possibly produce legitimate carbon offset credits, whereas the rest of the Project Plan informs other critical aspects that may impact project success.

## 2.1 Eligibility Requirements from the Protocol

List any eligibility requirements listed in the protocol and describe how the project meets those requirements. Additionally, provide all information needed to validate the eligibility of the project.

Use this space to list the eligibility requirements and explain why the project is eligible; length will vary depending on eligibility requirements set forth in protocol.

## 2.2 Additionality

Answer each question within this section, covering Legal Requirements, Project Finances, Project Context, Project History, Protocol-specific Additionality Questions, Relevant Literature, and how you performed your additionality assessment.

Legal Requirements Is any part of the proposed project required by law, regulation, court order, or other binding requirement?

Project Finances Please discuss project financing. Describe any non-financial benefits of the project to the project participants.

Project Context Describe any technical (management plan, new technology adoption, etc), economic/sectoral, social, or site-specific considerations that led to the project’s development or might impact the project’s outcome.

Project History Please describe the history of the development of the project from the project’s first conception through the present, emphasizing the involvement of your campus and others involved from the offset industry in project planning, development, and implementation. E.g. When was the project first conceived? When did the campus and others from the offset industry get involved? What has been the extent of your involvement?

Protocol-specific Additionality Questions Please list and respond to any additionality questions specified in the protocol, either by answering them in this space, or referring to answers in 2.1.

Relevant Literature Please list, and describe the relevance of, any peer-reviewed articles documenting the additionality and effectiveness of the proposed offset project type on emissions. If the peer reviewed literature documents the environmental quality of the proposed project type, including review of how additionality, leakage, and permanence are accounted for in the protocol, this may be sufficient to demonstrate the additionality of the project.

How did you perform your additionality assessment?Please discuss who was interviewed, what documents were consulted, and/or what analyses were performed.

## 2.3 Additionality Checkbox

Fill in the below check boxes to identify your confidence in the additionality of the project. Check all that apply (please check at least one box from each of the two sections below).

Section 1:

 *I cannot think of a reasonable scenario in which the project would have happened without the offset project.*

 *I can think of one or several scenarios in which the project is non-additional, but none seem likely.*

 *I can easily think of one or several scenarios in which the project is non-additional.*

 *It seems that the project would most likely have occurred without the assistance of the offset project.*

Section 2:

 *I am very confident that the project is additional.*

 *It is highly likely that the project is additional.*

 *It is clear that the offset program helped make the project happen, but I am not confident that the offset credits were necessary for the project to go forward.*

 *The additionality of the project is questionable.*

 *The additionality of the project is unlikely.*

Please provide a detailed description of the reasons for your answers.

Please provide summary lists that identify those factors supporting the additionality of the project and the factors pointing to the possibility that the project is not additional.

Below, create a summary list identifying the factors supporting the additionality of the project and those that point to the possibility that the project is not additional. For the purposes of proving additionality, brainstorm reasons that someone may propose that a similar project would have been done without this carbon offset project.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Supports Additionality** | **Does Not Support Additionality** |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

Use this space to provide several scenarios in which a similar project would have happened without this carbon offset project’s intervention.

# 3. Emissions Reduction Data, Methods, and Calculations

Please follow the protocol in filling out this section. This will help to ensure an understanding of the records that need to be kept, the monitoring approach, the assessment of the project impact calculation, and that you are applying the protocol methodology to the proposed project in a way that will receive a positive verification.

Many of the below sections may request information that is not yet available from the project and will become available once the project is implemented. Should this be the case, at a minimum, please provide written answers, to the best of your ability, under each heading in this section outlining how you intend to identify and determine this information through project development. Provide a brief narrative if specific details are not available.

## 3.1 Project Sources, Sinks, and Reservoirs

***Baseline***

List of included emissions sources:

List of excluded emissions sources:

List of sinks and reservoirs:

***Project***

List of included emissions sources:

List of excluded emissions sources:

List of sinks and reservoirs:

## 3.2 Data Sources

Use this space to write a brief summary of how you expect project data will be collected, calculated, and managed.

Provide the following:

* Expected key data sources that will inform calculation of the project impact.
* How the data will be collected.
* How the data will be monitored.

If some of these data sources and methods are still unclear, provide the information to the best of your ability.

## 3.3 Determination of the Baseline Scenario

Describe the baseline scenario and how that scenario was determined. Explain what alternative baseline scenarios were considered and why they were eventually excluded.

## 3.4 Estimation of Emissions Reductions/Sequestration

Please follow the methodology used in the protocol to estimate the impact of the project on emissions and carbon storage. Also, provide information regarding the confidence in your estimation.

## 3.5 Explanation of Methodological Choices and Protocol Deviations

Identify the chosen protocol. What, if any, alterations do you anticipate making to the protocol? These can include any proposed changes from the protocol reporting, monitoring, and verification requirements to accommodate the peer review process. Include the rationale for changes.

Minor changes can be approved through the peer review process. Major changes may require going through the Protocol Development Pathway to get a revised protocol approved through expert review.

Use this space to write a summary of the methodological choices you made and the reason for them; ~300 words

# 4. Risk Assessment & Future Consideration

Please describe how your project meets each of these quality standards. The purpose of this section is to make sure that you have thought through each of these quality criteria when designing the project.

## 4.1 Double Counting

Double counting is considered to have occurred if the reductions achieved by the project are claimed twice, either by more than one entity, or twice by one entity. Double counting can also occur if the same emissions reductions are sold as carbon credits to two different buyers. Double counting may result, if an entity that has implemented a project within its emissions inventory boundaries, for example: an energy efficiency project for an entity owned building, that both counts this improvement in its emissions inventory as well as selling carbon credits from that same project.

Submitting a project to the Offset Network requires a signed attestation against double counting whereby the project implementer agrees that any credits generated by the project will not be sold, and that the credits will be counted once and only once against the funding institution’s carbon footprint.

Consider answering the following questions in your narrative to describe how your project actively avoids double counting:

* Who will own the credits?
* Have attestations against double counting been signed?
* Was the project implemented within your organization’s emissions inventory boundaries?

## 4.2 Leakage

Leakage occurs when a project that reduces emissions in one place causes an increase in emissions elsewhere. The most common cause of leakage is when a project reduces GHGs by reducing the production of a product without also causing an equivalent decrease in demand for that product. For example, if an offset project or program increases carbon storage on forest lands by reducing timber harvesting without also causing a corresponding reduction in the use of timber, it should be assumed that more timber will be harvested elsewhere as a result to meet the demand for timber. This increased production of timber from elsewhere has emissions impacts that must be accounted for.

Protocols should account for the possible leakage that may result from a given project, but it is ultimately the responsibility of the project owner to ensure potential sources of leakage are identified and that monitoring procedures are established to track these sources.

Please describe possible opportunities for leakage to occur and how these possible sources will be monitored and managed over the project lifespan. Consider the following questions in your narrative to describe how your project reduces and accounts for leakage:

* Does the project result in a reduction in production of any product?
* Does the project provide sufficient profits to a project participant so that production may increase?
* If leakage does occur, what monitoring procedures are in place to track these sources?
* Will future maintenance needs exceed the project operator’s capacity?

## 4.3 Permanence

Permanence is a concern for carbon storage projects, like forestry and soil carbon projects, because of the risk that the carbon will be released back into the atmosphere. The project has climate benefit only for as long as the carbon remains stored; to the extent that carbon sequestered by a project is released back into the atmosphere, the project has no benefit to the climate. Please detail the possible risks of project reversal; consider answering the following questions in your narrative to describe the possible risks of project reversal, and how these risk factors will be mitigated and accounted for:

* How will unintentional risks to permanence, such as fire, flood, and geologic events, be accounted for and minimized?
* How will intentional risks, such as the discontinuation of the project, be minimized?
* If carbon storage is reversed, what will be done to mitigate the effects?

## 4.4 Additional Risks

Provide information regarding any additional risks that may impact the project.

# 5. Project Monitoring Plan

Please use the project protocol as a guide in building the project monitoring plan.

Using the project protocol as a guide, how do you anticipate monitoring will occur? Who will be responsible? Identify the data that is important to the project impact to monitor, and the timeframe, methods, and conditions required for successful monitoring activity.

The creation of a project monitoring plan should also include monitoring of the baseline scenario as the baseline scenario is prone to change especially in industry sectors like agriculture, building management, and others.

This Project Monitoring Plan is optional and is only meant to facilitate thinking about future monitoring.

You may use this space to create the Project Monitoring Plan.

# 6. Project Verification

If you are planning to pursue Peer Verification, please specify an institution that has been identified to possibly perform validation and verification, or which institutions may act as verifiers.

# 7. Additional Information

Please provide any additional information you think will be useful in reviewing program eligibility concerning the Project Plan.

# 8. Document Author(s) & Contact

Please add the name of the document author and any other relevant contact(s) and provide their contact information. The below table may be copied if necessary.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Contact Name |  |
| Contact Title |  |
| Contact Email |  |
| Contact Telephone |  |

# 9. Appendix

Please use appendices for supporting information. If no appendix is required, please delete this appendix, including title and instructions.