

Requirements for joining the NCS Investment Accelerator

The NCS Investment Accelerator is a campaign that aims to scale natural climate solutions (NCS) by bringing together NCS corporate champions and aggregating existing and new commitments to invest in high-quality Natural Climate Solutions (NCS) leading to emission reductions and removals credits as part of ambitious corporate climate strategies through compliance and voluntary carbon markets. The campaign is coordinated by the [NCS Alliance](#).

This document captures the criteria that define which companies are eligible to contribute; the format of the accepted NCS commitments; the list of the voluntary standards accepted by the NCS Investment Accelerator; and the annual tracking requirements.

Eligibility Criteria

The use of NCS should raise climate ambition, being used to go above and beyond the necessary internal decarbonization (abatement) required at the level of each company in order to meet and exceed Paris Agreement-aligned goals. Companies joining the campaign and committing to invest in NCS as part of their climate change strategy must also demonstrate ambitious action to reduce all greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in line with these global goals to limit climate change, including FLAG (forest, land use, and agriculture) emissions as relevant.

Companies are **eligible to join** the NCS Investment Accelerator if they demonstrate¹ that they:

1. Have a strategy that is consistent with the Paris Agreement and follow the mitigation hierarchy. Corporates should use NCS credits in the context of applying the GHG mitigation hierarchy to reduce scope 1-3 emissions in support of sector decarbonization at a rate consistent with achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement, and undertaking other actions such as low carbon policy advocacy, scaling renewables and investing in low carbon technologies.
2. Develop and publish a company plan to address all value chain emissions. The plan should outline specific actions and levers to address Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions in line with the mitigation hierarchy, including an explanation of NCS use for remaining emissions.
3. Take action: start within their own supply chain first. For some companies, forests, agriculture or land use are part of their business – in this instance NCS

¹ To demonstrate commitment to these principles, particularly requirements 1 and 2, companies will be required to submit evidence that their corporate climate change strategy and commitments have been assessed as consistent with the Paris Agreement goal. This could take the format of – for instance but not limited to – evidence of an SBTi Science-Based Target, participation in the [Race to Zero](#) campaign (through joining one of the Race to Zero business partners, currently: Business ambition for 1.5, The Climate Pledge, B Corp Climate Collective, Exponential Roadmap Initiative, Business Declares, SME Climate Hub, Pledge to Net Zero, The future Net Zero standard with CBN Expert Community, Planet Mark, or any Partner that is subsequently added to <https://racetozero.unfccc.int/join-the-race/>), or similar initiatives.

should be used first within the value chain to avoid and reduce emissions and improve resilience of agricultural land to global warming impacts e.g., no deforestation commitments.

4. Advocate for climate policy. Effective corporate strategies recognize the importance of policy advocacy, in order to drive and encourage local, national and international policies that both support and strengthen investments in NCS among other climate mitigation solutions.
5. Commit to long term purchase agreements. Committing to future purchase secures investment and enables longer term project development on landscape level and high impact projects.
6. Invest in high quality NCS credits. Investments in NCS projects and programs should secure the maximum sustainable climate benefit possible and minimize any negative social or environmental consequences as outlined in the quality criteria in line with the NCSA quality definition (p.8-10 in [Natural Climate Solutions for Corporates](#)).
7. Report transparently and secure third-party verification. Independent verification and reporting should be used to validate the quantity and quality of gross emissions/NCS credits retired.

These criteria reflect the NCS Alliance's principles for 'Planning a credible climate strategy including NCS' and 'Guidelines for using NCS credits as part of a corporate climate strategy' as published in [Natural Climate Solutions for Corporates](#).

Upon joining the Campaign, companies will be asked to:

- To make a quantitative commitment to invest in high-quality NCS credits annually through 2025.
- Allow the NCSA to publish the company commitment, including use of logo and information provided in the commitment form.
- Publicly communicate about their commitment to NCS, using the NCS Investment Accelerator communications guidance as appropriate.
- Become a NCS champion to promote a positive narrative and encourage peer companies to join the campaign as well.
- Update their commitment as their strategy around NCS changes over time.
- Disclose annually their use of NCS credits by providing the total of NCS credits retired in tCO₂e directly to the NCS Alliance, or provide the NCS Alliance with a link to full disclosure in an appropriate registry, platform or report if available.

Commitment format

Companies joining the NCS Investment Accelerator campaign will be asked to provide quantitative commitments to invest in NCS credits annually for years 2021 (or year of joining) through 2025 (inclusive).

What is **acceptable to be included** in the NCS Investment Accelerator Campaign commitment:

- Existing and new commitments to invest in NCS credits quantified in tCO₂e from 2021 through 2025 and if possible beyond.
- All NCS credits, generated from conservation, restoration or improved management of ecosystems, irrespective of whether they generate emissions reductions or removals², as long as the credits meet the “Defining quality of NCS credits” principles as presented in [‘Natural Climate Solutions for Corporates’](#).
- All NCS credits that will be retired under compliance schemes and voluntary markets registries.
- NCS credits that will be used for compensation and neutralization of emissions, as well as inset credits³.
- NCS commitments already announced through other initiatives with requirements to join that are consistent with those of the NCS Investment Accelerator (e.g It.org, LEAF, BASCS ..).

What is **not relevant** for the NCS Investment Accelerator Campaign commitment:

- Investments in R&D or enabling systems to scale NCS but not directly tied to credits.
- Emissions avoidance and reductions from non-natural sources (energy, transportation, buildings, etc).
- Engineered/industrial (ex: carbon capture technologies) and hybrid (ex: cookstoves, biochar, bioenergy) climate solutions.
- Investments in supply or value chain that do not generate emissions reductions or removals credits developed to independent standards with third party verification.
- NCS credits produced and sold to other entities.
- For financial institutions, emissions reductions or emissions removals that are generated through direct investments, funds or corporate lending that are not retired by the institution itself.

Accepted Standards

NCS Credits from the following voluntary standards, which adhere to the NCS Alliance’s principles for defining high-quality credits as developed by the supply-side

² The NCS can be related to avoided deforestation; reforestation; avoided peatland impact; peatland restoration; cover crops; trees in cropland; avoided coastal impact; coastal restoration; other types of interventions.

³ As of October 2021, there are no independent standards and methodologies available for the standardized quantification and 3rd party verification of NCS inset activities (i.e. investment in NCS within a company’s value chain). Standards are, however, in development and should be deployed when available by companies wishing such NCS investments to contribute to the NCS Investment Accelerator.

eligibility Working Group of the NCSA (published in [Natural Climate Solutions for Corporates](#)) would qualify⁴:

- American Carbon Registry (ACR) †‡
- Climate Action Reserve (CAR) †‡
- Gold Standard (GS) †‡
- Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) †‡
- Global Carbon Council (GCC) *‡
- Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) †‡
- Joint Implementation (JI) †
- UK Woodland Code †
- Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) of the Australian Government †
- Architecture for REDD+ Transactions (ART) ‡
- China GHG Voluntary Emission Reduction Program ‡

NCS credits retired under compliance schemes will also be accepted.

Annual Tracking

Companies will be asked to share annually a number of datapoints to enable to track how the market has been able to respond to the demand for high-quality credits. Information tracked includes total annual GHG emissions (Scopes 1, 2 and 3) of the company; number of NCS credits (in tCO_{2e}) voluntarily retired or under compliance scheme, in the previous year. For the full list of tracked data, see the NCS Investment Accelerator Registration Form.

Published information

The information on NCS commitments and retired credits submitted by the companies will be aggregated into aggregate annual amounts. The companies contributing to the NCS Investment Accelerator will be listed on the webpage but they will not be linked to their commitments. If requested, the company name will be linked to its own corporate website providing more information on its journey towards net-zero.

Questions and more information

Please direct any questions about the NCS Investments Accelerator to ncsalliance@wbcsd.org

⁴ Codes:

† These carbon offset programmes have been endorsed by the ICROA Code of Best Practice guidance ([Link](#))

‡ These standards have been approved by the ICAO Council to supply CORSIA Eligible Emissions Units as assessed by the ICAO CORSIA Technical Advisory Body ([Link](#))

* Conditionally Endorsed by the ICROA Code of Best Practice guidance

Note: New standards may be added to this list as and when they meet the relevant quality criteria, including those related to 'inset' credits.