

# Template Instructions:

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# Project Plan

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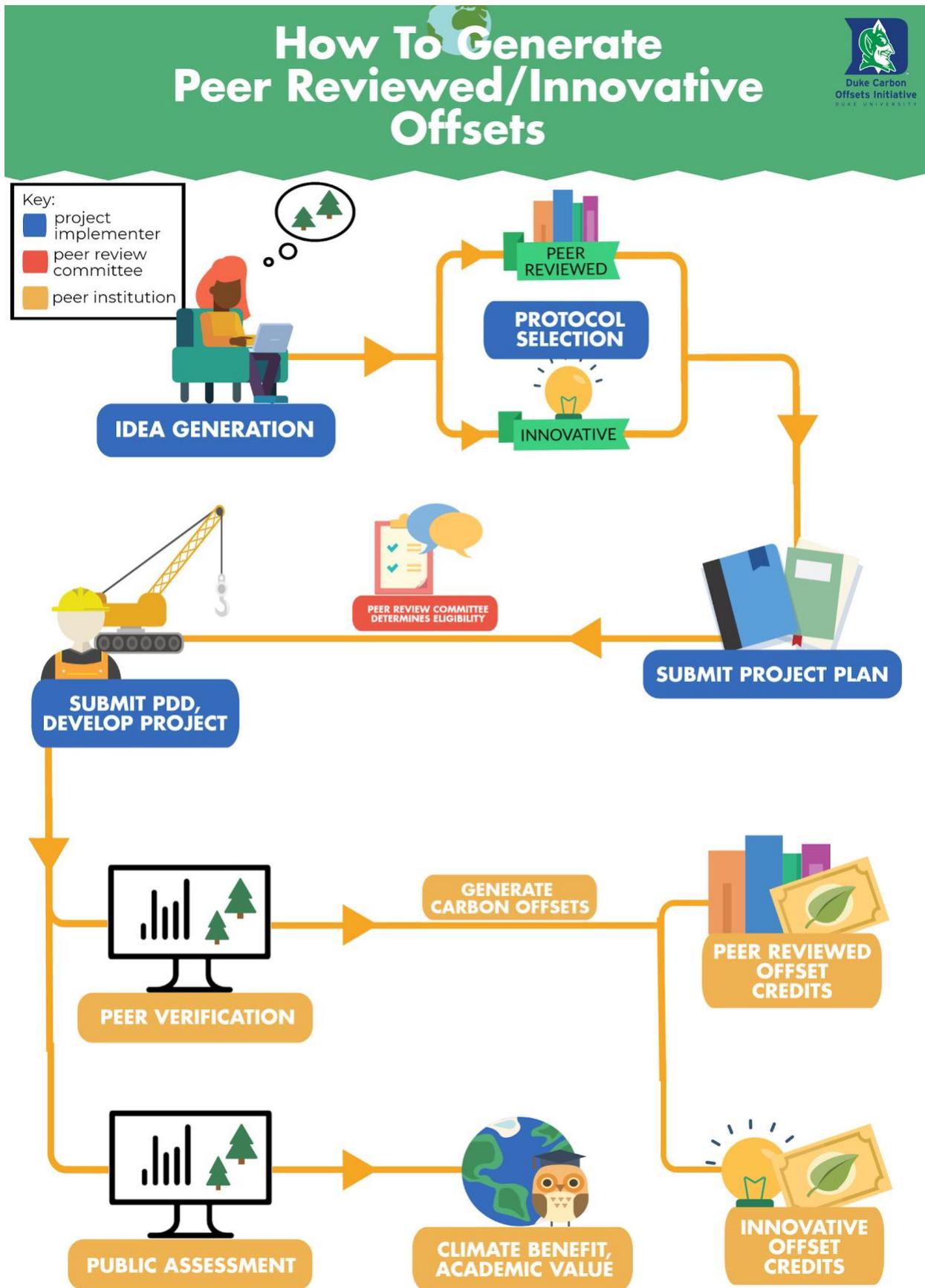
## Document Overview

This Project Plan for peer reviewed and innovative offsets is used to assess project eligibility and to authorize the methods and data sources that will be used to calculate emissions reductions. Through the Project Plan, the project organizer will identify:

1. The protocol applied 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: either as an academic exercise to test novel projects using the "Public Assessment" pathway, to generate credits for use towards fulfilling academic climate commitments using a "Peer Institutional Verifier", or to produce marketable credits using an accredited 3<sup>rd</sup> party verifier.

Following the submission of the Project Plan, the Peer Review Committee who 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 of 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 implemented, that is essential if you plan to pursue peer-verification and eventually generate carbon offset credits.

The following infographic explains the project pathways available depending on your selection of protocol (Peer Reviewed or Innovative) and your selection of review method (either Peer Verification or Public Assessment).



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Walking through this infographic, the first step is project Idea Generation; next Protocol Selection is determined by your project idea – this requires selecting either Peer Reviewed (the use of an existing registry program approved protocol) or Innovative (the use of a novel protocol or adjusted approved protocol); next Submit the Project Plan; then the Peer Review Committee reviews the Project Plan and determines the project’s eligibility for the Offset Network Program. After approval, you build the PDD and may develop the project; next you move forward with your selected verification pathway (selected in the Project Plan stage of the project); Peer Verification generates carbon offset credits in either the Peer Reviewed or Innovative credit category (depending on your protocol selection); Public Assessment is intended for more experimental projects that are not seeking to generate carbon credits but instead test a novel project for viability and scalability.

For more information regarding Peer Reviewed and Innovative projects or the Peer Verification and Public Assessment processes please visit: [www.offsetnetwork.org/project-pathways/](http://www.offsetnetwork.org/project-pathways/).

The information you provide in the Project Plan will be assessed by the Peer Review Committee 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 and Innovative project pathways, which stipulate projects must not be marketed for sale, may only address scope 3 emissions, must result in less than 60,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e carbon offsets, and must remain local (within 1-day round trip travel; within the same state; or within 100 miles) of the funding entities campus, study abroad campuses, or research field sites.
- 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.

The goal of peer reviewed and innovative offsets is to provide the campuses with the chance to implement their own projects in a way that is not too costly, but that has equal or higher climate benefit and certainty than credits purchased from the offsets market through existing registries. When a campus is involved in the development of an offset project, either as an initiator of the project, or a partner in its implementation, it can have broad benefits that market purchases do not have. The campus’ involvement can mean that the educational institution will have a better understanding of the factors that go into implementing the project, and therefore greater certainty that the projects are additional and realize other co-benefits. They also enable the campus community to be involved in actively implementing projects that reduce emissions, getting projects off the ground that wouldn’t have happened otherwise, and providing students with the experience of being involved in the project development, and emissions accounting processes.

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Innovative projects play an important role by testing potential emissions reduction strategies, and by supporting research in new technologies and activities, emissions accounting, and behavior change. The benefits of this exploration and research can go far beyond the impacts of any one offset activity to offer new project types to the offset market as a whole. But smaller, campus-involved, and innovative project types can be more costly. Smaller projects have larger per-credit reporting, monitoring, and verification costs; being involved in project conception and development is often more costly than buying credits off of the market from existing projects; getting a new protocol accepted through an offset registry takes substantial time and financial resources. Our goal is to provide a way for campuses to support these beneficial projects with manageable cost.

The peer review and innovative offset project tracks lower verification costs and support the creation of smaller and medium-scale projects by simplifying existing protocols or developing novel protocols without overly burdensome accounting requirements (that are more appropriate for large-scale projects). As a novel project development pathway supported by Second Nature and AASHE Stars, thresholds have been set limiting the carbon offset credits that generate from these projects by making them non-marketable and only able to address scope 3 emissions of the funding institutions' carbon footprint. Through the Second Nature guidance document on carbon offsets, Innovative projects are restricted to 10% of total emissions and only scope 3 emissions may be offset. Peer Reviewed offsets are also restricted to scope 3 and the total impact of Innovative and Peer Reviewed may not exceed 30% of the total emissions footprint (total = scopes 1, 2, and 3). By relying on academic staff, students, and to complete this work through peer review we recognize the reporting, monitoring, and verification may be less rigorous than third party review by an accredited verifier.

The steps we are taking to build threshold limitations for these projects balance the need for legitimacy in GHG accounting, with the role the academic community can play in developing novel project ideas to expand the projects offered by the voluntary offset market. In this way we are providing risk assurance to colleges and universities that are willing to pioneer in innovative directions and develop further climate change mitigation strategies by providing these schools a path to use these projects towards carbon neutrality commitments.

Following the academic model of peer review, we are developing an iterative methodology with room for public comment and seek to continue to improve this process as project experience is gained. As we generate project data we will evaluate the legitimacy of Peer Reviewed and Innovative projects against those of the voluntary market registries and hope to reveal that our projects represent equally valuable or even more valuable greenhouse gas abatement activities.

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## 1. Introduction

Provide a project title, 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 project the project represents.

### 1.1 Site Details

Include geographic and physical location information fully defining the extent of the project and framing it within its surrounding landscape, including a KLM file, aerial photograph or map. Indicate the project size in units appropriate to the project type (e.g. acres/hectares, MWs, number of individuals etc). Describe common uses for the area and how people access the project site.

Additionally, please describe the condition prior to project initiation and relevant dates.

### 1.2 GHG Impact

Please describe the ways in which 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 later in this document.

Please give a detailed description of the technologies, measures, or behavior changes to be employed by the project, and conditions prior to implementing the project.

### 1.3 GHG Assertion

Please include an estimate of total emissions reductions/sequestration expected in tCO<sub>2</sub>e per year and the time frame over which these reductions are expected. This estimation is meant to assist in determining the impact of the project and therefore to inform the financial decision to move forwards. 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 (The Offset Network).

Please specify the methodology used, including name, version, and registry or developer. Please provide a URL, or if a URL is not available, please attach the methodology as an appendix.

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

### 1.5 Roles & Responsibilities

Please describe the key project participants and their roles, including individuals at the purchasing campus, project owners, project developers, project implementers, technology

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providers, relevant regulatory bodies, and the contact for the GHG Program (include contact info). Identify the management structure of the project and how different groups will coordinate and manage respective responsibilities involved with the project.

## 1.6 Relevant Stakeholder Outcomes & On-going Communication

Explain the anticipated outcomes of the project for each stakeholder and how these various parties will remain in contact with each other regarding project updates and other project related tasks.

## 1.7 Environmental Impact Assessment

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

## 1.8 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.

## 2. Project Eligibility

In determining the project eligibility to be included in the Offset Network program, the Peer Review 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. The determination of project eligibility will be made in line with the forthcoming rubric for assessing project eligibility that will be accessible on [offsetnetwork.org](http://offsetnetwork.org).

### 2.1 Eligibility Requirements from the Protocol

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

### 2.2 Additionality

Beyond the eligibility requirements listed in the protocol, please perform an extended additionality assessment by answering the questions below. Please consult the guidelines for assessing additionality described in Appendix 1 in filling out this section.

#### 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. Are there multiple revenue streams or are offsets the main source of revenues? Was the project profitable without offset income? How much of an

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effect does offset income have on project revenues and on project profits? Describe any non-financial benefits of the project to 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. Second Nature will maintain a website listing such articles.

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 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.*

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- 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.*
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## 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 for the reasons for your answers.

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

## 3. Emissions Reduction Data, Methods, and Calculations

Please follow the protocol in filling out this section. This will help to ensure understanding of the records that need to be kept, the monitoring approach, 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 under each heading in this section outlining how you intend to identify and determine this information through project development.

### 3.1 Project Sources, Sinks, and Reservoirs

#### **Baseline**

List of included emissions sources:

List of excluded emissions sources:

#### **Project**

List of included emissions sources:

List of excluded emissions sources:

### 3.2 Data Sources

Identify key data sources that will inform the calculation of the project impact and how that data will be collected and monitored.

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## 3.3 Determination of the Baseline Scenario

Please describe the baseline scenario and how that scenario was determined. What alternative baseline scenario were considered and why were they eventually excluded? (Refer to the General Protocol v1.4 section 3.2 “Determination of the Baseline Scenario for additional guidance in evaluating potential baseline scenarios.)

## 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

Please describe any methodological choice you anticipate making in estimating the emissions impact of the project that you would like to be peer reviewed.

## 3.6 Deviations from the Protocol

Please describe any proposed changes from the protocol reporting, monitoring, and verification requirements to accommodate the peer review process. Minor changes can be approved through the peer review process. Major changes may require going through the innovative offset project process to get a revised protocol approved through expert review.

## 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 is 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.

### 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 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

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result to meet 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 Proponent 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. 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?

## 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, and how these risk factors will be mitigated and accounted for.

## 4.4 Additional Risks

Please 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. 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.

Identify the data that is important to the project impact to monitor and the timeframe, methods and conditions required for successful monitoring activity.

## 6. Project Verification

Please identify the type of project verification that will be pursued by the project - selecting between 3rd party GHG program accredited verifier or Peer Verification. If selecting Peer Verification please specify if an institution has already been selected to perform 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(s) and provide their contact information.

**Author Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

