



# **Terms of Reference for the HCV Resource Network Technical Panel**

**HCV Resource Network Technical Panel guidelines –**

**Version 1- October 2008**

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# Introduction

The Steering Group (SG) of the HCV Resource Network (HCV RN) has established a globally representative Technical Panel (TP) composed of experts in the use and interpretation of the HCV concept, to provide elements of quality control and governance for use of the HCV framework. The TP will be overseen directly by a Quality Control (QC) sub-committee of the Network's Steering Group (SG). The overall way in which the TP will function has been detailed elsewhere (see document "HCV Resource Network Technical Panel: Mechanism for Operation, Version 2, October 2008"); this document sets out more specific terms of reference for the TP.

## 1 Main Technical Panel responsibilities

The main responsibilities of the TP are, at the request of the SG, to:

- Provide a quality control function for the HCV Resource Network;
- Provide technical expertise within and on behalf of the HCV Resource Network.

## 2 Main Technical Panel activities

The Technical Panel's main activities are the following:

- 2.1** To provide a peer-review service for HCV assessments, national interpretations or other processes undertaken either in the context of natural resource certification or as a stand-alone process.
- 2.2** To respond to requests for timely recommendations on the consistent and appropriate use of the HCV concept in HCV assessments and in policy documents, initiatives or standards, according to the Guiding Principles of the HCV Resource Network Charter.
- 2.3** To play a leading role in identifying the need for further development of the HCV concept, and undertaking that development e.g. practical guidance on the interpretation and use of the HCV concept in new countries, biomes, ecosystems or sectors.
- 2.4** To inform the SG of important developments in the use of the HCV context as these arise and are brought to TP members' notice, in particular but not limited to:
  - Where the HCV concept is undergoing national interpretations or revisions;
  - Where the HCV concept is being used in new natural resource sustainability standards or certification schemes;

- Where the HCV concept is being used in provincial, regional or national land use planning frameworks;
- Where the HCV concept is being applied to new contexts, e.g. for non-forest ecosystems or for the purposes of conservation planning as part of conversion to agriculture or plantations;
- Where the inappropriate use of HCV terminology in policy development, or the emergence of similar or competing schemes or frameworks could devalue or undermine the common understanding of the HCV concept as set out in the Charter;
- Where the HCV concept has been flagrantly misused or misinterpreted in specific applications (e.g. site-level projects), in ways which place the integrity of the concept at risk.

## **3 Main commitments of TP members**

### ***3.1 General commitments***

- a. To support the HCV Resource Network Charter (NB: All TP members must be signatories to the Network's Charter).
- b. To attend one physical TP meeting a year (2-3 days) facilitated by the Secretariat, and to follow up as agreed to at the TP meeting.
- c. To inform the Secretariat of non-attendance at TP meetings well in advance and comment on the main issues to be discussed beforehand.
- d. To ensure all activities of the Panel are in line with the anti-trust commitment in the HCV RN Charter.
- e. To respond to communication from the Secretariat as matters arise.
- f. To ensure that when undertaking any work on HCV (whether consultancy, review or development of the concept) which is **not** on behalf of the TP that it is explicitly clear (see Annex 3 for Guidance for TP members working on HCV individually).

### ***3.2 Peer review***

- a. To declare any Conflict of Interest to the Secretariat prior to commencing any review. See Annex 1 for further explanation of TP members' commitment with respect to Conflict of Interest.
- b. To sign and honour a confidentiality agreement with relation to peer reviews undertaken on behalf of the TP. See Annex 2 for further explanation of TP members' commitment with respect to Confidentiality.
- c. To undertake peer reviews as requested in line with the methodology and

guidance developed by the TP including:

- meeting all agreed deadlines;
- working with other TP members to reach a consensus for Category 1 or Category 2 reviews.

See “Reviewing HCV reports” (Version 1, October 2008) - Annex 2, for details of the peer review process and different categories of peer review.

### ***3.3 Support for clarification and development of the concept***

- a. To notify the SG via the Secretariat of any important developments in the HCV concept.
- b. To consider non-urgent requests for clarification or interpretation of aspects of the use of the HCV concept with wide-ranging implications at its annual meeting.
- c. To either agree on recommendations on interpretation and use of the HCV concept at the annual meeting or agree on a work plan to resolve the issue.
- d. To provide recommendations on interpretation and use of the HCV concept to be considered by the SG when requested to do so.

## **4 Rules of appointment and membership**

The Technical Panel will be governed by the SG through its Quality Control sub-committee. Decisions on appointment and renewal of TP members will be made by the SG, based on a review of the recommendations of the QC sub-committee as detailed in the Mechanism for Operation of the TP. The practical elements of this appointment process are the following:

- 4.1** Terms for membership of the Panel are for a maximum period of three years, with the option to seek re-appointment at the end of this period.
- 4.2** The first year will be considered a probationary period and the QC sub-committee will review each member at the end of this period and decide whether or not to confirm the full 3-year appointment.
- 4.3** When initially setting up the panel, one third of members will be appointed for 1 year, one third for 2 years and one third for 3 years (to initiate a staggered rotation of members). Members appointed for 1 year will automatically be re-appointed if the 1-year review (4.2) is satisfactory. Members appointed for 2 years can then seek re-appointment for a full 3-year term if they wish to do so. Members will be randomly allocated to each term.
- 4.4** If TP members miss two consecutive annual meetings, the HCV-RN QC sub-committee may request a withdrawal from the Panel.

## 5 Remittance/fees

- 5.1 TP members can have all costs for attending the annual meeting reimbursed, but will not normally be paid fees.
- 5.2 The time required by TP members to undertake their reviews will be paid for by the organisation requesting the review.
- 5.3 For urgent requests for clarification or interpretation of aspects of the use of the HCV concept, the time required for TP members recommendations will be paid for by the organisation requesting clarification / interpretation.
- 5.4 Non-urgent requests for clarification / interpretations (considered at the TP annual meeting) will not normally be paid for.
- 5.5 All TP members will be paid the same fee rate. This will normally be US\$750/day unless a reduced fee of US\$500 per day is agreed in advance. This would normally be when the work undertaken is for small companies or non-profit organisations, particularly in the developing world.

# Annex 1: Conflict of Interest

## *Introduction*

The HCV RN recognises that potential conflicts of interest may arise for members of the TP and will therefore attempt systematically to identify and manage these conflicts, and to ensure that they do not compromise the integrity and objectivity of the work of the TP.

Conflicts of interest occur when there is a connection between a TP member and a piece of work being undertaken by the TP. Examples includes:

- a TP member has been involved directly in an HCV assessment being peer reviewed;
- a TP member has worked recently (within the last 2 years) or is currently undertaking work for the organisation requesting a peer review or requesting the HCV assessment;
- a TP member has financial or personal connections to the organisation that requested or undertook an HCV assessment;
- a TP member could benefit personally from the outcome of a task being undertaken by the TP.

All TP members are asked to complete a Conflict of Interest declaration outlining potential conflicts, and to inform the HCV RN Secretariat of any other conflicts which arise prior to undertaking any work. The HCV RN will consider any potential conflicts of interest whenever it engages members of the TP to carry out specific work (Terms of Reference, Section 3), and in particular where members of the TP are requested by the HCV RN:

- to review specific reports, policies, maps, HCV interpretations or other relevant documents produced by third parties;
- to conduct a Peer Review of an HCV assessment;
- to participate in a specific project to provide support for clarification and development of the concept.

In particular, consideration will be given to potential conflicts arising from the declared interests of the TP members and any other staff likely to be involved in the project or review.

If any potential conflicts are identified:

- measures to remove or manage the potential conflict must be identified;
- the identified measures must be implemented.

If, after the implementation of the identified measures, a potential conflict is likely to remain which could affect the TP's ability to deliver an adequate service, or if the

perception of such a conflict is likely, the HCV RN secretariat will formally notify the HCV RN Steering Group and request guidance before allowing the work to progress.

### ***TP Member commitments***

All TP members are committed to declare any Conflict of Interest to the Secretariat prior to commencing any Peer Review or other work requested by the HCV RN.

It is the responsibility of each TP member to consider all connections that may give rise to a conflict, including any previous business associations, involvement in campaigns, or other work related to the companies or organisations concerned, or in the area concerned.

## **Annex 2: Confidentiality**

### ***Introduction***

The HCV RN recognises that the TP members, in the course of carrying out specific projects to fulfil its commitments for the HCV RN (Terms of Reference section 3), and in particular through the provision of TP Peer Review services to specific clients, may come into contact with sensitive information concerning a client, or conduct work for individuals or organisations with competing interests. This statement is intended to ensure that TP members do not disclose confidential information about TP Peer Review applicants or their business, without prior permission.

### ***TP Member Commitments***

All TP members are committed to sign and honour a confidentiality agreement in relation to Peer Reviews undertaken on behalf of the Network, and agree to abide by the following commitments:

- During the period of the review and at any time thereafter TP members agree to keep entirely confidential all the information provided as part of the Peer Review process, including within their own organisation;
- TP members may only disclose the information provided as part of the Peer Review process to such other members of the Technical Panel as need to know for the purposes of an adequate review (e.g. for reaching a consensus view on a TP Peer Review Report);
- TP members will maintain this information as confidential unless it is put into the public domain by the Peer Review applicant or a third party;
- If an HCV assessment report is not made public, TP members will not reveal any of the information provided as part of the Peer Review process.

## **Annex 3: Guidance for Technical Panel members working on HCV individually**

HCV Technical Panel members remain free to work on HCV policies, assessments, reviews and other projects or applications of the HCV concept, independently of their membership of the HCV Resource Network TP, and are encouraged to use the templates, guidance and other materials developed by the TP as a basis for ensuring that work carried out independently is consistent with the HCV RN charter and the recommendations of the HCV RN TP.

When working independently on any HCV-related project (i.e. where not specifically requested in writing by the HCV Resource Network to conduct such work), TP members may legitimately state their membership of the TP as evidence of relevant HCV experience. However, whenever such a statement is made, TP members must also clearly state that they are participating in the project:

- either as individuals or on behalf of a named organisation;
- wholly independently of their membership of the TP and of the HCV Resource Network;
- must make no claim to act or speak on behalf of the HCV TP, the HCV Resource Network, or its Steering Group.