The Climate Registry

The Climate Registry's Reporting Program & Membership Options
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1. What is Greenhouse Gas Accounting and Reporting?

What is a greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory?

A GHG inventory, more commonly known as a "carbon footprint," is a representation of an organization's impact on global climate change over a specific time in terms of the amount of greenhouse gasses emitted either directly or indirectly.

Organizations impact climate change when they engage in activities that release greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere, as well as in activities that reduce or sequester greenhouse gas emissions. Organizations also indirectly impact climate change by affecting the operations of their suppliers and customers through purchasing decisions or product and service design.

Most GHG inventories, including those reported to TCR, are organized by "Scopes." Scopes of emissions are used to distinguish between greenhouse gasses that are directly emitted, and those that are indirectly emitted. (Indirect emissions are GHGs that are emitted elsewhere, by other parties on an organization's behalf.) Dividing emissions into Scopes helps to prevent double counting of any one emissions source.

- **Scope 1 emissions** are direct emissions that take place at facilities under an organization's control (generally related to the combustion of fossil fuels or emissions from man-made chemicals).
- **Scope 2 emissions** are indirect emissions associated with the purchase of electricity, heat, cooling or steam. There are emissions associated with these purchases; however, the emissions are produced outside of an organization's direct control.
- **Scope 3 emissions** include all other indirect emissions. Examples of Scope 3 emissions categories include employee commuting, business travel and supply chains.
- Due to the fact that net carbon emissions from biomass are assessed at the national level, **biogenic CO_2 emissions** from biomass and biofuels combustion are reported separately from the Scopes.

The emissions that an organization reports within these Scopes are determined by geographical boundaries (where the emissions occur), operational boundaries (what operations or business units are included) and organizational boundaries (which GHGs or Scopes are included). Complete inventories reported to TCR include the seven major, internationally-recognized GHGs: Carbon dioxide (CO_2), Methane (CH_4), Nitrous oxide (N_2O), Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), Perfluorocarbons (PFCs), Sulfur hexafluoride (SF_6) and Nitrogen trifluoride (NF_3).

If you'd like to learn more about the types of emissions that may fall under your organization's control, please see Chapters 2 through 5 of the General Reporting Protocol. TCR offers its members additional resources for determining the emissions that should be included in an organization's GHG inventory in the password-protected Reporting Toolkit.

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Are there different kinds of greenhouse gas inventories? What kinds of GHG inventories are reported to The Climate Registry (TCR)?

There are a number of different kinds of GHG inventories, varying significantly in both scale and purpose. Inventories can range from national and community inventories (quantifying emissions from entire countries in the former or governmental jurisdictions in the latter) to supply chain inventories, life cycle assessment inventories and reduction project inventories.

TCR members report **corporate inventories.** Corporate inventories are quantifications of the greenhouse gases emitted by an organization's operations ("organization" in this sense may refer to a local government, business, academic institution, or charity), and include emissions that fall within their

geographical, organizational, and operational boundaries. Corporate inventories enable organizations to identify opportunities to reduce emissions as well as track changes over time. The Climate Registry's General Reporting Protocol provides step-by-step instructions for calculating corporate greenhouse gas inventories from organizations across all sectors. For more information on reporting boundaries, please see Chapters 2-5 of the General Reporting Protocol.

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What are the benefits of building and reporting a greenhouse gas inventory for an organization?

The disclosure of organizational climate risks and environmental performance is rapidly becoming the norm in many sectors. Reporting and verifying a GHG inventory with TCR can help your business to stay ahead of competitors and credibly convey your organization's climate efforts to stakeholders. A clear and consistent GHG inventory can:

- Set a baseline and track environmental performance over time in order to set and achieve GHG reduction goals;
- Save money by helping to identify specific areas of opportunity within your organization for emissions reductions and improved efficiency;
- Inform broader sustainability and/or corporate social responsibility (CSR) reporting;
- Provide metrics and performance indicators for other sustainability concerns, like water, energy, and waste management;
- Give you a competitive advantage ahead of potential mandatory reporting regulations or carbon pricing systems;
- Establish your organization as a sustainability leader in the eyes of vendors, customers and other key stakeholders.

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2. The Climate Registry's GHG Reporting Program

2a. How much does it cost to become a member of The Climate Registry (TCR)? What are the benefits of membership?

TCR's annual membership fees are determined by annual revenue amounts for commercial organizations or annual budget amounts for non-profit, academic or governmental institutions. Annual fees range from $1,000 to $12,000 for commercial organizations and $750 to $5,500 for non-profit, academic and government institutions. Please see the Cost of Membership section on our website for more information on our membership fees.

Membership to The Climate Registry includes the following, among other benefits:

- **Introductory call & orientation** – orient your organization to TCR's GHG reporting program through a personalized welcome call;
- **Access to CRIS, TCR's proprietary greenhouse gas accounting and reporting software** – voluntarily report and verify your annual carbon footprint, target emissions reductions opportunities, and benchmark carbon management performance;
- **Online trainings and reporting toolkit** – TCR's tools and resources will help you build and manage your greenhouse gas inventory;
- **Live help desk support** – TCR's dedicated help desk provides hands-on member support from 9am – 5pm Pacific, Monday through Friday;
- **Networking** – webinars, briefings, priority invitations and discounts to workshops and events— network and learn from leading companies at members-only events and webinars;

- **E-Newsletter** – stay abreast of TCR program updates and relevant information on best practices, carbon management and climate policy;
- **Use of The Climate Registry logo** – use The Climate Registry logo to show your commitment to operating more efficiently, sustainably, and competitively.

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2b. What is required of TCR members?

TCR members report and verify their emissions on a voluntary basis – thus, there are no "requirements" associated with membership. Members can report as little information, or as much information, as they would like on an annual basis. However, there are specific requirements associated with the measurement, reporting, and verification of transitional or complete inventories. Members who hope to report and verify transitional or complete inventories must adhere to those reporting requirements in order to receive a positive verification. For more information on what is required for transitional and complete reporting, please see "What are the differences between complete, transitional, basic and historical reporting?" below, or Chapters 1 and 7 of the General Reporting Protocol.

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2c. Where can I find a list of current TCR members?

A list of all current TCR members can be found on the Our Members page of our website.

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2d. Does TCR offer trial memberships?

TCR does not offer trial memberships at this time. However, we would be happy to schedule a live demonstration of the CRIS software and a walk through of our Reporting Toolkit resources. Please contact our help desk at help@theclimateregistry.org for more information.

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2e. What is the General Reporting Protocol (GRP)? What is new in GRP version 2.1 (GRP v. 2.1)?

The General Reporting Protocol (GRP) outlines the best-practice greenhouse gas accounting policies and emissions calculation methodologies that our members adhere to when reporting to our voluntary program. The GRP is developed and maintained through a comprehensive public stakeholder process that aggregates input from industry experts across multiple sectors, environmental non-governmental organizations, companies, regulatory agencies and individuals.

GRP 2.1 is the third update to the GRP since its initial publication in March of 2008. GRP 2.1 was released in February of 2016, and was primarily issued to incorporate guidance from the GHG Protocol's new *Scope 2 Guidance*. The new Scope 2 reporting requirements included in GRP 2.1 ensure that organizations are able to accurately, completely and transparently report for emissions associated with their purchased electricity. These updates reflect the rapid changes in renewable energy markets that have occurred since the publication of GRP 2.0, and allow organizations to more accurately reflect the choices they have made about their energy procurement. Updates in GRP 2.1 include:

- Members are required to report two Scope 2 totals for complete reporting using a location-based and market-based method (Chapter 14). Chapter 14 describes the emission factor hierarchy for each method.
- Transition to a new simplified list of TCR Eligibility Criteria for contractual instruments under the market-based Scope 2 method (Chapter 14). This replaces the REC quality criteria and REC

eligibility criteria in GRP v. 2.0 and ensures that emission factors used to calculate the market-based method Scope 2 total are consistent with GHG accounting best practices.

- Members reporting a complete inventory will now report indirect emissions of CO_2 from the combustion of biomass (Chapter 5).
- Members reporting a complete inventory will also now report indirect Scope 2 emissions from purchased or acquired heating and district cooling. In GRP v. 2.0, these emissions could be reported as optional Scope 2 emissions (Chapter 5).
- Updated definition of the materiality threshold for verification to incorporate both Scope 2 accounting methods (Chapter 19).

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2f. What is CRIS?

CRIS, which stands for Climate Registry Information System, is the online tool that TCR members use to quantify and report their emissions.

Since TCR members have different approaches for collecting and reporting their GHG emissions data, CRIS provides a number of different data entry options that allow members to choose the approach that aligns best with their own internal processes. In general, members will enter in information about their emissions sources and input annual "activity data" (fuel consumption, electricity consumption, etc.) for those sources. CRIS will then assign an appropriate (and best-available) emission factor, calculate the emissions, and aggregate emissions totals into user-friendly reports.

TCR members receive access to the CRIS software alongside live help desk assistance to support its use.

You can find CRIS and all of our members' public GHG emissions data on a separate website: https://www.cris4.org. To view public reports, please register for a new account and log in with those credentials.

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2g. Does CRIS offer additional report types or data export options than what is available on the CRIS public reports page?

Yes. While only verified entity- and facility-level emissions summaries are made available on the public reports page, CRIS offers TCR members a suite of detailed private reports. Members can choose a report type that suits their needs from a list of options in CRIS. Reports can provide a comprehensive overview of emissions data, or they can be tailored to show data for specific facilities or regions. Data reported in CRIS can be easily exported in Excel format as well.

Some TCR members choose to use the CRIS tool to measure and report their emissions, but do not undergo verification. These members can rely on CRIS' private reports to export and analyze their organization's inventory details.

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3. Membership Options and Requirements

3a. Can I report my organization's emissions to TCR at the entity level?

Yes. While TCR encourages reporting at the facility level (i.e., disclosing the emissions associated with each facility under your organization's control separately, rather than aggregating emissions to an entity-wide total), it is not required.

While reporting at the entity level reduces the burden of data entry in CRIS, facility-level reporting increases transparency and enables organizations and their stakeholders to more accurately identify opportunities for emission reductions.

Organizations who report completely at the entity level must, at minimum, report the total emissions associated with their entity's operations separated by Scope, GHG, and activity type.

3b. Can I report for my organization's subsidiaries or distinct business units separately from a parent company?

Yes. TCR allows subsidiaries, government agencies, or progressive business units to report separately from their parent companies or government jurisdictions. If you are planning on reporting separately, keep the following things in mind:

1. If you are going to report separately from your parent company, you will need to join TCR as a separate member.
2. You must use the same consolidation methodology as your parent company to report your emissions (e.g. both parent and subsidiary use the operational control approach).
3. If your parent organization verifies its emissions, emissions from all subsidiaries must be included in that inventory.
4. If a subsidiary joins TCR as a separate member from its parent company, the emission totals of the subsidiary must be the same in both the subsidiary's independent report and the parent company's report.
5. Subsidiaries must disclose the name of their parent company in their public CRIS report.

3c. Can I report my organization's GHG emissions on a fiscal year basis?

No. In order to provide consistency and comparability across inventories reported to us, TCR does not allow fiscal year reporting. All reporting should be done on an annual, calendar year basis (Jan 1 – Dec 31). Each emissions year must correspond with one calendar year of data.

In practicality, many utility bills will not adhere perfectly to this time schedule. TCR requires that these utility bills be prorated, and provides a pro-rating tool to members to accommodate that process.

3d. Is my organization required to establish a base year with TCR?

No. Establishing, adjusting or updating a base year is not required when reporting to TCR. However, establishing a base year is a requirement of WRI's GHG Protocol Corporate Standard (international best practice for reporting), and is important for organizations that plan to track their emissions over time. Setting a base year helps organizations identify a benchmark for achieving measurable emissions reductions, and allows them to receive recognition for those voluntary efforts. Therefore, we encourage setting a base year as a best practice. Base year inventories that are set under TCR's program must be complete inventories that are verified to a Reasonable Level of Assurance (more information on levels of assurance can be found in TCR's General Verification Protocol).

3e. Is my organization required to report to TCR every year? Or can there be gaps in the years of data that we report and verify?

Both reporting and verifying emissions with TCR's program are entirely voluntary for each emissions year and membership type. However we recommend that you consistently report your organization's emissions inventory on an annual basis in order to effectively track progress in measuring and managing emissions over time.

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3f. My organization has reported a carbon footprint or greenhouse inventory to another standard or program. Is this data compatible with TCR's reporting program and CRIS reporting tool?

If your organization has reported and verified a greenhouse gas inventory to another standard or platform (e.g. EPA Climate Leaders, Carbon Disclosure Project, ICLEI, self-reported), this data can be reported as an historical inventory to TCR. Please contact our help desk to discuss how we can assist you in transferring any previously reported inventories into CRIS.

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3g. Are there any special requirements for reporting a historical inventory to TCR?

Yes. While historical data has not been reported and verified through TCR's program, the data must:

- Have transparently defined inventory boundaries;
- Be third-party verified;
- Be entered into CRIS.

If the historical data was verified by an independent, third-party verifier, TCR does not require historical data to be re-verified. However, members must submit attestation of verified data from a credible verifier (or equivalent form of written proof) along with the original emissions report.

If your organization's historical reports have not been previously verified, you must enlist a credible verifier to review your inventory before it can be accepted by TCR and published to our public reports page.

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3h. Why is there a distinction for historical data?

TCR works to promote transparency throughout its program as one of the primary principles of reporting. Where different methodologies, emissions factors or verification processes have been used to report and verify members' GHG emissions, TCR labels the data as historical in order to maintain consistency and transparency.

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3i. What are the differences between complete, transitional, basic and historical reporting?

TCR's voluntary reporting program provides several different reporting options to fit a variety of sustainability goals and capacities for greenhouse gas reporting.

Members reporting a **complete inventory** to TCR report:

- All Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions of all seven internationally recognized GHGs (Carbon dioxide (CO_2), Methane (CH_4), Nitrous oxide (N_2O), Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), Perfluorocarbons (PFCs), Sulfur hexafluoride (SF_6) and Nitrogen trifluoride (NF_3));
- Direct or indirect emissions of CO_2 from biomass combustion;
- All emissions of the above Scopes and gasses from operations in Canada, Mexico and the United States (worldwide reporting is optional).

Additionally, complete inventories include the reporting of two Scope 2 totals according to the location-based and market- based methods. (Please see Chapter 14 of the [General Reporting Protocol](#) for more information on Scope 2 reporting.) Members who report a complete inventory and undergo third-party verification earn Climate Registered™ status. Their TCR-approved inventory reports are then published to TCR's public reports page.

Transitional reporting is intended to ease members into the GHG emissions reporting and verification process. Members reporting transitional inventories specify their own inventory boundaries, which may contain less information than what is required for complete reporting. Transitional inventories must still adhere to GRP-approved quantification methods and may still undergo be third-party verified. The boundaries that are set by transitional reporters are made public via the Self-Defined Boundary Form in CRIS alongside a verified transitional report.

Basic reporting is intended to be an introduction to TCR's reporting program, and does not prescribe any requirements for reporting. Instead, members reporting basic inventories aim to report as much information as they are able to and, skip the third-party verification process. Basic inventories are not made available on the CRIS public reports page.

Historical inventories are GHG inventories or carbon footprints that were previously reported to a program other than TCR's voluntary program (or self-reported) and third-party verified. Entering historical data in CRIS allows members to centralize previous GHG inventories and to track emissions trends over time without requiring modification of previous reports or re-verification.

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3j. Which version of the IPCC's Assessment Reports do The Climate Registry's program and protocols rely on?

Global warming potentials in TCR's General Reporting Protocol 2.1 are based on the IPCCC's Fifth Assessment Report (AR5). However, TCR members who are tracking emissions over time can choose to apply global warming potential (GWP) standards from previous assessment reports (SAR, TAR or AR4) to their inventories in order to maintain consistency with previously reported GHG inventories.

Although not required, it is considered best practice to use GWP values from the most recent Assessment Report (AR5, at the time of publication).

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4. Third-Party Verification

4a. What is verification? Am I required to verify my organization's emissions?

Verification is a third-party audit of an organization's greenhouse gas inventory by a TCR-approved verification body. It ensures that inventories reported to TCR are free from misstatements and conform to TCR's protocols. Verification is not required for TCR members, but only verified inventories are made publicly available on our website and the CRIS public reports page to ensure that only credible, high quality data is put into the public domain.

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4b. What is the cost of verification?

Verification is an additional, separate cost to membership. Due to the variability of factors behind verification costs, TCR cannot provide estimates for the cost of verification. We recommend that you consult directly with a TCR-approved verification body for estimates, and reference the Verification Forms & Resources page of our website to get an idea for the factors that affect the cost of verification. TCR also offers a streamlined and cost-effective verification option (known as Batch Verification) for members with relatively simple and small GHG inventories

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