



Third Party Code guidance: Environment and sustainability

Introduction

In this new era of epidemic and pandemic risk, CEPI’s mission—to accelerate the development of vaccines and other biologic countermeasures against epidemic and pandemic threats so they can be accessible to all people in need—is more important than ever before. Our ambitious goal, to develop vaccines against a novel viral threat in as little as 100 days, could give the world a fighting shot at stopping the next pandemic in its tracks.

CEPI requires all Third Parties (including (i) individuals, organisations and companies that provide or are intending to provide goods or services, (ii) Awardees receiving funding, and (iii) other business partners of CEPI to abide by CEPI’s Third Party Code (TP Code), which can be found on www.cepi.net.

Recognising CEPI engages with organisations across different jurisdictions, each subject to distinct legislation and at varying maturity levels of their compliance frameworks, CEPI has produced some guidance which may be helpful for some Third Parties. This guidance is not intended to replace the need for independent review and assessment by our Third Parties of their own compliance framework and their adequacy. This guidance is not legal advice.



Why is this guidance important?

Climate change is one of the greatest threats to global health. Research and innovation are vital to understanding our changing planet and developing health solutions, yet they also carry a significant environmental footprint. Laboratories use 3–10 times more energy per square metre than a typical office and are responsible for approximately 2% of global plastic waste. Large-scale fieldwork, data processing, clinical trials, and international travel all contribute to carbon emissions.

Major research funders are increasingly requiring funded organisations and researchers to demonstrate environmentally sustainable practices. Aligning with these expectations helps protect the communities CEPI's work exists to serve.

Baseline requirements – local legislative compliance

As a minimum, all Third Parties must comply with all applicable local and national environmental laws and regulations, based on the country where they operate. Third parties should start by identifying the environmental laws, regulations, licence or permit conditions, and other legally binding requirements that apply in each location where they operate.

This may include, but is not limited to:

- Environmental permits and licences required for operations
- Proper handling, storage and disposal of hazardous materials and waste
- Compliance with emissions reporting and pollution prevention obligations
- Adherence to local occupational health and safety standards related to environmental hazards
- Compliance with regulations on water use and discharge

They should then determine which obligations are mandatory as a matter of law or contract, and which additional measures reflect recognised standards, funder expectations, or best practice. On that basis, third parties should implement policies, procedures, controls, training, monitoring, and reporting arrangements appropriate to their activities and risk profile.

Third Parties should regularly review whether their activities remain in compliance with evolving local requirements and should designate responsibility for environmental compliance within their organisation.

Continuous improvement

Beyond baseline compliance, CEPI encourages all Third Parties to pursue continuous improvement in environmental sustainability, particularly where aligned with the expectations of research funders. The Wellcome Trust's Environmental Sustainability Funding Policy is an

example and sets out expectations for both researchers and organisations. A selection of the key principles included in this policy are:

Key expectations for researchers include:

- Design research using the most sustainable approach available
- Reduce, reuse and recycle resources, equipment, materials and consumables
- Minimise travel; where travel is essential, use the lowest-carbon mode and class of transport, including for example Use low-carbon transport for journeys of up to 10 hours instead of flying
- Offset remaining travel emissions through accredited carbon credits
- Publish all research outputs (including null results) to avoid duplication of effort

Key expectations for organisations include:

- Achieve LEAF, My Green Lab or equivalent laboratory accreditation
- Maintain an organisation-wide sustainability policy with science-based targets for Scope 1 and 2 emissions
- Establish arrangements to purchase third-party accredited carbon credits (e.g. Gold Standard, Verra)
- Maintain inventories of existing equipment and resources to enable reuse
- Sign or align with the principles of the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice (UK-based organisations)

CEPI's view of good and better practice

CEPI has no single expectation of an environmental sustainability programme for our Third Parties, recognising that the organisations we work with vary in size, complexity and geographical context and undertake a range of activities. The table below has some suggestions of good and better practice – however, each organisation should consider its own context and should not rely on this as guidance. This does not constitute legal advice.

Element	Good practice	Better practice
Environmental policy and governance	Organisation has a written environmental policy. An individual has designated responsibility for sustainability.	Policy includes science-based targets for Scope 1 & 2 emissions with a plan toward net zero. Senior leadership actively champion sustainability.
Reduce, reuse and recycle	Recycling facilities are available and used. Equipment is shared where practical. Single-use plastics are avoided where reusable alternatives exist.	Systematic inventory of equipment and materials enables reuse before new purchases. Life-cycle assessments inform procurement decisions.
Sustainable travel	Travel policy encourages virtual alternatives. Low-carbon transport is used where feasible. Economy class is the default.	Travel decision tools (e.g. air travel justification tool) are used systematically. All residual travel emissions are offset through accredited carbon credits.
Sustainable procurement	Environmental considerations are included in procurement decisions. Sustainable alternatives are chosen when available.	Procurement policy requires consideration of environmental criteria. Suppliers are assessed on their sustainability credentials and encouraged to set science-based targets.
Measuring and monitoring	Organisation tracks energy consumption and major emissions sources.	Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions are measured and reported using the GHG Protocol. Laboratories hold LEAF, My Green Lab or equivalent accreditation. Progress is reviewed annually.
Training and awareness	Staff are aware of the organisation's sustainability policy and their responsibilities.	Regular training is provided on sustainable practices. Sustainability is embedded into induction programmes and project planning processes.

Key sources for further information

- Wellcome Environmental Sustainability Funding Policy
- Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice
- LEAF – Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework
- My Green Lab
- Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi)
- Greenhouse Gas Protocol – Standards & Guidance
- NIHR Carbon Reduction Guidelines for Clinical Trials
- RAND Europe – Advancing Environmentally Sustainable Health Research
- Gold Standard (carbon credits)
- Verra – Verified Carbon Standard

There are a number of ways in which Third Parties can contribute to shared learning on environmental sustainability. CEPI encourages Third Parties to share relevant learnings, examples of good practice, and activities they are undertaking to strengthen their environmental and sustainability practices.

Third Parties are encouraged to share practical examples, lessons learned, and initiatives that may be helpful to others working to improve environmental sustainability in research, development, manufacturing, procurement, travel, or operations.

Key sources for further information

Please reach out to your CEPI contact, or to compliance@cepi.net

Speaking up

CEPI prioritizes the prevention of misconduct and promotes a culture of openness and transparency. All Third Parties and other individuals are encouraged to report to CEPI concerns of non-compliance with the TP Code. If you have concerns regarding breaches of this TP Code, please report such breaches immediately to CEPI. We rely on you to help make sure that CEPI is aware of and can correct any issues that may not be in line with our ethical standards.

Where possible, you can report to your contact person within CEPI. You may also report to CEPI management if necessary.

CEPI has also selected a trusted external and independent third party specialized in compliance reports, with whom the whistleblower may communicate freely through the following [electronic channel](#). The channel also offers anonymous reporting options.

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