Microsoft Carbon Dioxide Removal Procurement Cycle

Frequently Asked Questions

Version 2.0

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Resources

1. **What resources should I review prior to applying?**

   Microsoft is providing several resources for organizations to prepare before applying to our Procurement Cycle. We highly recommend that organizations review these materials and self-determine whether their projects meet our requirements. This FAQ supplements, but does not replace, the information in these core documents.

   - Guidance document
   - Cover letter
   - Criteria for high-quality carbon dioxide removal (especially useful for project type details)

2. **There is no documentation in the criteria for my project type. Should I still apply?**
   If your project meets the prerequisites we cite in our Guidance document, yes.

General questions

Application submission process

3. **How do I apply?**
   There are two ways to access the application:
   a. Through our webpage at http://aka.ms/carbonremoval.
   b. Directly through http://aka.ms/carbonremovalapplication.
   We strongly encourage option (a) as our webpage provides resources that we recommend reviewing before you apply.

4. **What can I expect after I submit my application?**
   We are committed to a thorough review of each proposal for all prerequisites and criteria through a **two-step application process**. The first step starts once a proposal is submitted directly through http://aka.ms/carbonremovalapplication. We conduct a thorough prerequisite review which encompasses all prerequisites and criteria, co-authored by our advisor Carbon Direct, Criteria for high-quality carbon removal. When a project meets our minimum prerequisites, it moves on to our due diligence phase. This includes a secondary application to further investigate how the project meets the specifications laid out in our Criteria for high-quality carbon removal.

   In general, given the novelty of the carbon removal space, the complexity of many pathways to removals, and the lack of strong, common standards, **it takes 2-3 months to complete this process** and come to a decision on whether a project is desirable. We encourage applicants to submit a proposal with plenty of time ahead of any key deadlines on the applicant's side. For those applicants aiming for a **long-term offtake agreement, be aware that diligence and negotiation can easily take 6-9 months** or more, depending on specifics.

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5. **Why is this now called a "procurement cycle" and not an "RFP"?**
   After two cycles of an initial RFP, we feel it is time to shift towards an ongoing, rolling procurement cycle. We now have a growing portfolio of carbon removal credits and are shifting our focus towards a greater number of multi-year offtake deals. Reviewing and negotiating these types of contracts are more appropriate for a rolling procurement cycle throughout the year. Our qualitative criteria, review process, and standards all remain the same.

6. **Is there a way to review the proposal after submission in case we need to make an amendment to a project?**
   After submitting your proposal, you will be able to review your submission as part of your confirmation receipt. However, you will not be able to make amendments to the proposal. If you need to make a material change to your proposal, email mscdr@microsoft.com and we may be able to accommodate the request.

7. **Is there a way to save my proposal as a draft so that the information can be completed later, or does it need to be completed all at once?**
   Yes, you will be able to save the progress of your proposal and return to it. Our application will automatically save your progress as you complete it. You will need to click on the same link to return to where you left off in your application.

   Note: If you are submitting multiple proposals, please complete one proposal end-to-end before starting another, otherwise you may lose the progress of your first proposal. Alternatively, you may want to coordinate with another member of your organization who can submit the other proposal at the same time.

8. **Can I just submit the forms by email?**
   No. We will only accept proposals submitted through http://aka.ms/carbonremoval or http://aka.ms/carbonremovalapplication.

9. **Why am I receiving a Procurement Cycle email?**
   Your organization has been identified by Microsoft as a potential partner for carbon removal projects. If you would like to opt-out of future communications and our mailing list, write to us at mscdr@microsoft.com

10. **My organization is interested in participating in this procurement cycle but I am not the right point of contact. What should I do?**
    Write to us at mscdr@microsoft.com and indicate the right point of contact. If you wish to be removed from our mailing list, please state that in your email.

11. **Can I submit more than one proposal?**
    Yes. We welcome more than one project submission that meets our prerequisites. Once you complete one proposal, you can start your next proposal by using the same link, or revisiting http://aka.ms/carbonremoval.

12. **After I submit my proposal, will I be done with providing information?**

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No. If your project meets our prerequisite requirements, you will be required to submit a secondary application in our Due Diligence phase. Please see the "Due Diligence" section of this FAQ for more details. You can preview a static version of the Due Diligence application here.

Timeline and extensions

13. **What is the last day I can submit my carbon dioxide removal project proposal?**
To be considered for our FY23 portfolio, the last day you can submit a proposal is July 15, 2022. We strongly recommend you submit your proposal as soon as possible because we will review proposals in the order received. We will fill our portfolio on a rolling basis.

    For those proposals without tonnage available in FY23, there is no deadline to submit.

14. **How long is the Microsoft carbon removal procurement cycle open for?**
Our procurement cycle will be open on a rolling basis throughout our Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23), which runs July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023. However, to be considered for our FY23 portfolio, the last day you can submit a proposal is July 15, 2022. We will accept both one-time proposals and long-term offtake/forward purchase proposals. We plan to refresh our guidance on a regular basis.

15. **What is FY2023 or FY23?**
FY2023 and FY23 both refer to Microsoft's upcoming fiscal year, which runs from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023.

16. **What if I don't submit my proposal by July 15th?**
We will still accept and review your proposal, but it will only be considered towards our future portfolio(s).

17. **Can I get an extension to the FY23 procurement cycle timeline?**
No. Due to our business objectives, we are unable to provide extensions beyond July 15th at the close of business (5 PM Pacific Daylight Time).

18. **If my organization does not submit a project by July 15th, will there be a future opportunity?**
Yes. Please still submit long-term offtake agreements and other spot purchase proposals to be considered for future years.

19. **If I submit my proposal prior to July 15th, am I be guaranteed to be considered for your FY23 portfolio?**
All proposals that are submitted before July 15th will be considered for our FY23 portfolio. However, projects that demonstrate large volumes of high-quality tonnage, available in FY23 will be prioritized. If we fill our portfolio prior to the review of your project, we will still review and consider it for FY24 and/or multi-year purchases.

20. **Given that you will be reviewing projects for your FY23 proposal after the July 15ᵗʰ deadline, what is your timeline to review proposals for multi-year offtakes or other forward-purchase arrangements?**

    We will accept these proposals throughout the fiscal year, and we will prioritize reviewing them *once* we finish reviewing the proposals offering tonnage in FY23. At present, we anticipate turning to forward purchase proposals in the near term, but we still recommend that you submit such proposals as soon as possible.

21. **What is the maximum amount of time I have to submit my proposal?**

    Our procurement cycle is on a rolling basis, therefore the only deadline to remember is July 15ᵗʰ to be considered for our FY23 portfolio. However, if your proposal remains incomplete for more than 30 days, your progress will be deleted and you will need to start over.

22. **What happens if I start an application but forget to complete it?**

    After 30 days of inactivity, your progress will be deleted and you will need to start over.

23. **Can I reach out to you to learn of my results? Can I ask my Microsoft Account Executive (AE) or Partner Development Manager (PDM) to learn my results?**

    Given our high volume of submissions, we ask that you please do not email us about your proposal status. We will notify all applicants of their status throughout the review cycle. Additional email traffic to our small team will slow down proposal review.

Investment

24. **Is this procurement cycle for the Microsoft Climate Innovation Fund?**

    The Climate Innovation Fund is a separate investment fund. Your submission under this procurement cycle **does not** constitute a request for investment from the Climate Innovation Fund. Read more about the [Climate Innovation Fund](#).

25. **Will Microsoft consider a proposal for making investments into a portfolio of carbon projects?**

    Not via this procurement cycle, which is only for purchasing net-negative carbon dioxide removal tonnage. We may consider long-term offtake agreements if you have net-negative tons available in future years. If you are seeking project finance or other investments, please read more about the [Climate Innovation Fund](#). Please note that participation in this procurement cycle and application to the Climate Innovation Fund are not mutually exclusive. Participating in one does not preclude you from participating in the other.

Publication and confidentiality

26. **Can you clarify what information will become public?**

    Through this procurement cycle, we will collect market intelligence that we want to share broadly to help accelerate the development of a robust carbon dioxide removal market. We plan to share all material in the proposal that is not marked as **Confidential**. This includes information from projects that are not selected for the carbon removal procurement cycle. We will not share attachment files.

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While specific project-level pricing data will not be made public by Microsoft, Microsoft will use aggregate proposal pricing information with no reference to source in median, average, and other anonymized analyses. Microsoft may share the aggregated datasets broadly in the public domain.

27. **How will you publish the results of this procurement cycle?**
Following our review period, we will publish responses to all questions not marked as confidential. We believe this transparency is critical to provide greater market insight to develop the emerging carbon dioxide removal market.

28. **Can you please provide more detail on any policies or protections for proprietary information shared within the questions marked as "Confidential?"**
Any information that is shared with Microsoft in response to questions that are marked **Confidential**, or attachments, in proposals will not be shared publicly and will only be viewed by those directly working on the procurement effort. See above for more information on how we plan to use pricing data.

29. **If something is submitted and is marked "confidential," but Microsoft would like to make it public, what is your process for communicating Microsoft intend to publicly share such information to an applicant?**
We are committed to protecting our partners' trust and intellectual property. If Microsoft subsequently sees a purpose in sharing any information marked **Confidential**, we will discuss this directly with the project applicant and gain explicit written permission before doing so. If the submitter objects to sharing such confidential information, we will honor that request.

30. **Please advise how answers to questions marked in the questionnaires as confidential info will be secured and protected from public disclosure.**
The information submitted as confidential answers will be stored and secured on a protected Microsoft SharePoint site to which only those individuals who are working directly on the procurement cycle have access.

31. **If an organization has a pre-existing NDA with Microsoft, will the information submitted as part of the procurement cycle be published?**
By submitting your proposal, you are agreeing to allow this procurement cycle process to override the pre-existing NDA. Specifically, information that pertains to your proposal, not marked as **Confidential,** including relevant attachments.

Review and announcement

32. **Who will review these submissions?**
The Microsoft Carbon Removal Team will review submissions and will make portfolio decisions. We will also ask our 3rd party advisors, who are under NDA with Microsoft, to review submissions. Note that by submitting your proposal, Microsoft has the right to share your contact information if our 3rd party advisors require additional information from you.

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33. **When will we be informed of the results?**
    Due to the volume of applications, our team will update organizations of their status to the best of our ability but cannot commit to updates on a regular schedule.

34. **How will winning submissions be announced publicly?**
    The project proposals that are chosen will be announced via a public communication on behalf of Microsoft in full coordination with the awarded organizations after contracting is complete.

Portfolio construction

35. **We would like to submit a portfolio of projects with a combination of different projects. How should we do this?**
    We welcome multiple project submissions. Please submit ONE proposal per project. Note that we may construct our own portfolio, potentially including only parts of any portfolio of projects you suggest. **Proposals that contain more than one project in the same application will not be considered.**

Supplier onboarding

36. **If I want to sell Microsoft carbon removal credits, will I have to be onboarded into your supplier system?**
    Yes. Microsoft cannot contract with organizations that are not enrolled in our system. Learn more about those requirements in advance of your proposal submission at [Doing Business with Microsoft | Microsoft Procurement](#)

37. **How long does it take for an organization to be onboarded?**
    It can take anywhere from 4-6 weeks. Please prepare to provide all relevant details for a smooth onboarding process.

38. **Will my organization be subject to a background check?**
    Yes. Microsoft requires all organizations to go through a background check as part of the onboarding process.

39. **What happens if my organization fails to be onboarded, or declines to continue the onboarding process?**
    If an organization fails to be onboarded in the amount of required duration, or elects to discontinue the process, all contract negotiations will be terminated.

40. **Is there a preferred payment structure? Does Microsoft wish to receive any payment terms for delivered carbon dioxide removals? What type of contract does Microsoft envisage using for the purchase of the carbon dioxide removals?**
    Microsoft has a standard Statement of Work (SOW) template. We will discuss details of this approach, including payment structure, with selected project candidates.

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41. **Please confirm which Microsoft entity we would be facing as the buyer.**
    Microsoft Corporation will be the buyer.

Net negativity, offsets, and avoided emissions

42. **What do you mean by carbon removal, or net-negative tons?**
    This means the gross carbon dioxide removal *minus* any emissions that result from the project.

43. **Are offsets the same as carbon removal?**
    Some projects that have issued offset credits might qualify as carbon removal. Those that include carbon dioxide removal practices like reforestation or afforestation could qualify. The removal components of avoided emissions or emissions reduction projects may qualify, if they have credible, science-based, and verifiable quantification methodologies.

    Projects that **only** reduce or avoid emissions would *not* qualify.

44. **How does Carbon, Capture, Use, and Storage (CCUS) relate to negative emissions?**
    We are seeking projects that remove more carbon from the atmosphere than they emit, on a life-cycle basis (e.g., a CCUS project that removes carbon originally from the atmosphere). CCUS projects that capture carbon originally from fossil sources would not be of interest for this procurement cycle unless paired to a larger carbon dioxide removal project.

Due diligence process

45. **What questions will projects be expected to answer in the application?**
    You should be prepared to answer specific questions related to overall risks, baselines, additionality, leakage, durability risks, and environmental justice.

46. **Can I preview the application before I start it?**
    Yes, you can preview a static version of the [application here](#). Note that not all questions will apply to your project type.

47. **What key points will you cover on nature-based removals in general?**
    We will focus primarily on measuring greenhouse balance changes, carbon stock changes and baselines, and land use history and alternative uses.

48. **What key points will you cover on forestry projects?**
    We will focus primarily on leakage risks, carbon stock measurement, and any harvest plans.

49. **What key points will you cover on soil projects?**
    We will focus primarily on carbon accounting, measurement, and baselines, as well as protections for landowners enrolled.

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50. **What key points will you cover on BiCRS and biochar projects?**
We will focus primarily on energy feedstocks, all revenue-producing outputs for BiCRS projects. For biochar, we will focus primarily on disposition, production conditions, and calculation of durability term.

51. **What key points will you cover on DAC projects?**
We will focus primarily on energy requirements, new energy build required, and capture medium, including that supply chain and end of life considerations.

52. **What key points will you cover on mineralization projects?**
We will focus primarily on the sustainability of feedstock, feedstock processing, and measurement of mineralization.

53. **Will all projects go through Due Diligence?**
Only projects that meet our prerequisites will be invited to complete additional questions as part of due diligence.

54. **What questions should we expect in the due diligence stage of this application process, should our project advance to that phase?**
You can expect our due diligence questions to investigate how the project meets the specifications laid out in our Criteria for High-Quality Carbon Removal. You can preview a static version of the [Due Diligence application here](#).

Vintage

55. **What are your rules on past vintages?**
We have no restrictions on past vintages being offered in FY23. We strongly prefer more recent credits.

56. **How do vintage and durability terms relate?**
Vintage is the year when the carbon removal occurred and was verified to have occurred. Durability term is how long, in years, the volume of carbon dioxide will very likely remain sequestered from the atmosphere and is unlikely to experience a premature reversal.

57. **What are your preferences and rules on future vintages?**
We welcome proposals with future vintages that will be *ex post* verified. We will review projects in chronological order of their first tonnage availability. In the case that you plan to issue *ex ante* credits, please indicate if there is a current pathway to *ex post* verification or if Microsoft would need to conduct a secondary verification.

Questions on specific application elements

Organization Questions

58. **Are all organization questions required?**

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Yes. You must answer all questions about your organization at least once.

59. **What happens if I submit more than one proposal? Do I have to fill out the organization questions every time?**
    No. We only require your organization submit the Organization Questions once. In subsequent proposals, please answer "No" to "Organization Questions" when prompted after your first proposal submission.

60. **What constitutes a 'legal action'? Which jurisdictions are included? If our corporate policy is not to disclose that information, how will that impact our prospects of selection?**
    Please disclose final enforcement actions or settlements that resulted in a fine or penalty. This includes both criminal and civil legal proceedings. We will not accept submissions that omit this disclosure.

General project information

61. **What is your preference between natural and engineered carbon dioxide removal?**
    We plan to procure from both categories for the lifetime of this program. However, we plan to increase the proportion of highly durable solutions (which are often engineered) steadily over time. We will judge submissions on the same criteria, as outlined in the guidance document and our criteria for high-quality carbon removal document.

62. **What project types will Microsoft consider for this procurement cycle?**
    Microsoft will consider the following removal project types. If your project does not fit under one of these categories, please select 'other' and specify type in the comment box.

    - Forestry (removal only)
        o Afforestation/ Reforestation
        o Improved Forest Management
        o Agroforestry/Silvopasture
    - Soil improvement that results in additional carbon storage (removal only)
    - Coastal blue carbon (removal only)
    - Direct air capture and storage
    - Carbon dioxide mineralization (terrestrial, including enhanced weathering)
    - Ocean alkalinity enhancement
    - Biomass conversion with carbon removal and storage (BiCRS) (including BECCS)
    - Biochar
    - CO_2 utilization (removal only; please be sure to specify the source of the CO_2)
    - Other (please specify)

63. **Will Microsoft accept proposals for avoided deforestation and/or REDD+ projects?**
    Microsoft would be interested in any project that demonstrates clear carbon removal accounting. Historically, we have found that carbon removal accounting is tricky for REDD+ projects. If you conclude that you can demonstrate otherwise with your project, we are open to considering it.

As a broad note, within the Microsoft Carbon Removal program, we prioritize removal and not avoidance because we are striving to achieve net-negativity by 2030, to stimulate a carbon removal market now and in the future, and to focus on emissions reductions within our own value chain. Our philosophy in addressing Microsoft's scopes 1, 2, and 3 emissions is absolutely to reduce and only then remove.

64. **For improved forest management, avoided forest conversion, and jurisdictional REDD+ project types, one typically measures the avoided carbon loss. What is Microsoft's preferred approach for measuring and presenting solely the 'removal' component?**
We are open to any carbon dioxide removal attribution methodology that represents science-based, credible, and straightforward quantification. We will follow up with selected candidates as needed.

65. **What are your preferences regarding storing captured carbon dioxide in products like concrete, beverages, etc.?**
Storing carbon dioxide captured from the atmosphere in products can help monetize and scale carbon removal technologies. For this procurement cycle, such carbon dioxide must be stored in products that are durable over the course of years, which would rule out some product types (e.g., beverages). Microsoft is also cautious not to double-count carbon removals, i.e., Microsoft would not accept such removals if they were also credited towards a regulatory market.

66. **Is Microsoft willing to consider enhanced oil recovery (EOR) projects that use carbon dioxide captured from the atmosphere? Would the emissions from petrochemical end-use need to be considered in a life-cycle assessment (LCA)?**
We will consider any such proposal with additional scrutiny on the life-cycle emissions analysis to ensure that it is net-negative. Yes, emissions from end-use must be counted in an LCA.

67. **What additional information on life cycle assessments will we need to provide?**
We may request analysis of projects that reach the due diligence phase. These will use standardized templates for each carbon removal technology. Note that life-cycle assessments will be critical primarily for engineered solutions.

68. **My project involves burning some fossil fuels; does that mean we are automatically disqualified?**
No. We will consider projects that capture more carbon dioxide than they emit in carbon dioxide equivalent.

69. **Given that Microsoft seeks to spur innovation and support under-represented communities, will you consider contracts with projects that have not yet been validated or verified and require an offtake agreement with a buyer to move forward?**
Yes, we will consider this, presuming we can account for uncertainties around validation and delivery in contract terms.

70. **Would Microsoft consider projects in development with uncertainties around volume but with a commitment to provide periodic supply forecasts?**

In this situation, we suggest that you provide a guaranteed volume for any future year, which could be subsequently supplemented in an additional agreement.

71. **How many years do you consider for "future years"?**
We have no time cap for future years. Our specific question about future tonnage reaches to FY36 only, but we may be interested in tonnage beyond that year.

72. **What are Microsoft preferences, if any, on location?**
We have no strong preference for a particular location, as our Scopes 1, 2, and 3 emissions occur worldwide. Therefore, we seek a globally diversified portfolio. Some locations may require additional scrutiny and due diligence, such as proposals for reforestation in jurisdictions with demonstrated deforestation problems.

73. **Our project takes place in several locations. How shall we describe that location when asked?**
If the project is spread over a large area or multiple locations, please provide a representative latitude and longitude coordinate(s). For such projects, a shapefile will be very helpful. Please note that our application format cannot upload non-standard file types. If a shape file is available online, please provide a link. Otherwise, we will follow up during any due diligence to get such a file.

74. **Our project will incorporate presently undecided locations in future years/vintages. How shall we describe this?**
Please describe the area or region in which the whole project will be located.

75. **Will Microsoft require the retirement of the removals it procures?**
Yes, we want this option. Suppliers must be prepared to retire removals on the appropriate registry (e.g., Verra Registry for VCS credits).

76. **Will you require the transfer of the legal title of the carbon dioxide removal tonnage to Microsoft?**
Yes.

Volume, pricing, and delivery

77. **What should we specify under delivery terms?**
Indicate what you propose to provide to Microsoft, on what delivery schedule, and under what terms.

78. **What is the latest delivery to be counted in FY23?**
We will accept delivery until the end of June 2023 to count against Microsoft's FY23 requirement in this procurement cycle. We strongly prefer delivery earlier than June so we have time to confirm proof of execution and quality. Delivery after June 30, 2023 would be considered against future fiscal years.

Certification and registration

79. **Does Microsoft have any preference for a particular registry or registries? Which registries does Microsoft currently have accounts set up with?**
    No. We will discuss our retirement approach with project teams during contracting for selected projects.

80. **What do you mean by independent verification?**
    At minimum, we seek an independent audit by a qualified third-party organization against a credible monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) methodology. Regardless of certification status, we will ask selected candidates to provide additional information on the scientific basis of their project.

81. **Will this retirement also require a corresponding adjustment or discount under the Paris Agreement?**
    For post-2020 removals, retirement may require a corresponding adjustment if the project has been counted toward Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) achievement and if Microsoft cannot count the purchase against Scopes 1-3 emissions in the same country.

Durability term

82. **What are your preferences regarding durability?**
    We prefer as long term as possible, all other factors being equal. We are considering how to negate our emissions over their atmospheric lifetime (i.e., over centuries). At the same time, we recognize that shorter durability terms have an important place in our portfolio. We have no maximum durability term—the form is limited to 10,000 years only for practical purposes. We recognize some geologic storage solutions may last much longer.

83. **When should our durability guarantee start and end?**
    Your durability guarantee should start in the year you propose Microsoft would receive *ex-post* verified net-negative tonnage. It should end when you will no longer commit (e.g., via contractual guarantee) that reversals will be monitored for, reported, and compensated.

    Durability guarantee is **not necessarily** the same as the period over which a project may issue credits. We expect that once a ton is removed it will then remain sequestered from the atmosphere for the durability term.

    For past vintages, please calculate durability guarantee from the proposed year of delivery to Microsoft. For illustration, net-negative tonnage with vintage 2020 from a reforestation project with a commitment (e.g., contractual guarantee) for monitoring, reporting, verification, and compensation of reversals through 2046, would have a 24-year term if sold to Microsoft this year (CY2022/FY2023).

    For future vintages, compare the first year of certification to the last year of monitoring, reporting, verification, and compensation for reversals. In the same project example as above,

negative tonnage of vintage 2030 and sold to Microsoft that year would have a <u>15-year</u> guarantee.

Reversals

84. **How will Microsoft look upon projects for which the reversals are insured by other offsets, which may or may not be only from removals?**

   In a buffer pool system, we strongly prefer a like-for-like insurance arrangement. Whereby, if you propose a tonnage reserve or buffer to compensate for project shortfall or failure, removals constitute that reserve.

Technology needs

85. **What do you mean by "technology needs"?**
   We aim to understand how the Microsoft technology suite might help accelerate or expand the impact of your work. This is **not** a factor in our procurement decisions, but rather a mechanism to determine if there is an additional basis for partnership beyond procurement of credits.

   Thank you for your interest in the Microsoft Carbon Dioxide Removal Procurement Cycle.
   If you have any further questions, please email mscdr@microsoft.com.