



Oxford Offsetting Principles Practitioners Forum

Embedding the Oxford Offsetting Principles in Standards and Policies

Principle 4(E) of the [Oxford Offsetting Principles \(OOPs\)](#) speaks directly to the need to incorporate the Principles into regulation and standard-setting for net zero. The net zero standard and policy landscape is fast evolving. Multiple standards with different mandates are developing cross-sectoral guidance on net-zero aligned pathways for companies and other non-state actors, for instance the [Science Based Targets Initiative \(SBTi\)](#) and [International Organisation for Standardisation \(ISO\)](#). Whereas competition between standards can lead to innovation and higher ambition, it can also lead to complexity and fragmentation. Enhancing interoperability is important to creating convergence on net zero standards and, in turn, fine-tune their operationalisation at an organisational level. While the OOPs have been integrated into some standards and policies, there is still scope for and value added by scaling up their integration and alignment, towards their translation into more specific prescriptive guidance on the net zero journey. This could include advocating for specific interim and long-term carbon removal targets to build up the volumes needed without deterring emissions reduction or nature targets. It could also include supporting the development of governance institutions and recognised industry standards that would ensure that carbon removals are effective, well-monitored, and have clear liability.

1. Adoption of the OOPs into existing standards and policies

The Oxford Offsetting Principles have been reflected or integrated into a range of domestic, regional and international standards and policies. The [White House's Voluntary Carbon Markets Joint Policy Statement and Principles](#) recognise them explicitly in relation to the importance of supporting greater purchase volumes of carbon removals. Other standards or policies might not directly integrate or explicitly reference OOPs, but are still aligned with or reflect OOP grounded approaches. For example, the [EU Carbon Removals and Carbon Farming Certification \(CRCF\)](#) recognises the need to counter hard to abate residual emissions activities for capturing CO₂ from the atmosphere and durably storing it. Iterations of [Bill SB308 in California, then named the Carbon Dioxide Removal Market Development Act](#), also mandate a clear ramping up of durable carbon removals. Others still, like the [Voluntary Carbon Markets Integrity Initiative \(VCMI\)](#), build off the foundation provided by the OOPs. There is, however, variation in the integration and use of OOPs within this landscape. Hallmarks of Principle One, Two, and Three are typically expressed more than Principle Four which

highlights the need for more holistic organisational engagement with and development of net zero aligned offsetting portfolios. However, concepts embedded in Principle Four are becoming increasingly prominent, for example, in relation to the need to track interventions that lie in actions beyond greenhouse gas inventories.

2. Prospects to further incorporate the OOPs into emerging standards and policies

There is an opportunity for the OOPs to inspire the design of future standards and policies as well as add more nuance in relation to the implementation of existing ones. Guidance grounded in science is crucial in instilling trust for organisations currently operating in a shifting regulatory landscape. High-level alignment with the OOPs can also provide more clarity to typically fragmented and complex sustainability regulations. The increasing interoperability of the OOPs with standards and policies can allow companies to confidently integrate portfolio transitions over time, in line with [Switzerland's Climate and Innovation Act](#)'s mandating of corporate carbon removal purchases as well as the [Science Based Target Initiative's](#) proposed interim neutralisation milestones in the next iteration of the Corporate Net Zero Standard.

What is further needed is more specific illustrative guidance of how OOP requirements can translate into practice, particularly in providing clarity and certainty around the incorporation of durable removals in net-zero aligned transition pathways across industries. For example, practical guidance would facilitate the design and operationalisation of transitional net zero aligned offsetting portfolios in different sectors. Such guidance can be particularly important in assisting organisations with limited capacity, such as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), to determine neutralisation pathways. This guidance could be further implemented in the context of government procurement schemes and its application to insetting as well as offsetting efforts.

3. Practical Example: The OOPs x European Union's sustainability regulations

The European Union (EU) has recently introduced a suite of Sustainability Regulations, including the [Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive \(CSRD\)](#), the [Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive \(CSDDD\)](#), and the [Taxonomy for Sustainable Activities](#). Against such changes in the regulatory landscape, organisations are presented with new challenges and opportunities in implementing net-zero aligned transition pathways. To date, organisations are faced with limited financing for and incentives to invest in carbon credits, particularly considering fears of engaging in greenwashing. The OOPs can assist with this, offering a clear pathway for organisational net zero alignment claims. The EU's regulations also set the foundation for stronger compliance frameworks to ramp up investment in high-quality durable carbon markets, recognising limitations of nature-based solutions on the one hand, and the cost curve challenges of carbon removals on the other. Synergising the OOPs with existing regulations can help organisations navigate some of these complexities, including to disaggregate between compliance and goal-setting targets in their net zero aligned transitions, enabling them to focus on cutting their organisations emissions whilst scaling-up their investments in high-quality durable CDR to ensure a clear neutralisation pathway.