

# COMMUNICATION AND CLAIMS POLICY

DRAFT VERSION 1.0 | 2021

## 1. Introduction

LandScale is designed to generate credible landscape-level sustainability insights that can be used to advance and incentivize sustainability at scale. Donors, investors, commodity buyers, and other stakeholders can trust claims linked to LandScale assessments because:

- They have been generated using a holistic framework and robust assessment methodology that has been co-developed by a consortium of NGOs, with input from a wide variety of subject matter experts and pilot users.
- All published LandScale results will have undergone both a local review and LandScale validation. As part of the local review, each assessed metric is reviewed by stakeholders that have subject matter expertise on the metrics relevant to the landscape or knowledge of the landscape so that they can evaluate the reliability of the results. The LandScale validation complements the local review to confirm whether the assessment has followed the standardized good practices defined in the LandScale guidelines and review the selection and quality of data and methods that underpin the assessment. Any findings from the local review or LandScale validation that call into question the quality of draft results or limitations to their interpretation must be resolved prior to publication of the assessment results.
- Any public claim must be based on assessment results that are published on the LandScale platform. This provides transparency regarding the information underlying claims as well as context for the claims, including a holistic picture of sustainability performance beyond the specific indicator(s) about which claims are being made.

## 2. Definition and Types of Claims

A written communication is considered a claim if the LandScale name, LandScale logo, or platform URL are used in association with a statement about the completion status or results of a validated LandScale assessment.

Assessment results are considered to be validated if they have undergone both a local review and LandScale validation.

Whilst validation is sufficient to make a private claim (ie. a direct communication to a specific recipient or audience), publication of the assessment on the LandScale platform is required to make a public claim (ie. publicly accessible communications, such as on websites, via social media, or in sustainability or impact reports). LandScale strongly encourages the publication of validated assessment results wherever possible.

Supplemental independent verification (i.e., by a third party that is not local to the landscape and is not part of the LandScale team) is not necessary to make a claim. However, a protocol for supplemental independent verification is available on request should additional assurance regarding the quality of the underlying data be desired.

LandScale recognizes three categories of claims:

1. **Assessment milestone claim:** Communication of the completion status of a LandScale assessment. Three assessment milestones are recognized, as described further in Section 4 below: Pillar, Holistic, and Holistic+.

**Sample claim:**

- A Holistic LandScale assessment was completed for District X in July 2021, the results of which are available on the LandScale reporting platform.

2. **Landscape performance claim:** Communication of the sustainability status or trends for one or more LandScale indicators or metrics for the given landscape.

**Sample claims:**

- **Trend:** From 2010 to 2020, the rate of deforestation in landscape X decreased by 84% to a recent low of 144 ha (0.17% of the landscape) per year.
- **Trend:** From 2018 to 2020, access to electricity increased by 20%, resulting in 80% of the population in the landscape having access to electricity.
- **Status:** As of 2020, Landscape X has an extensive protected area network, with 37% of its total land area and 67% of its natural forests under effective long-term protection.

3. **Contribution to landscape performance claim:** Statement that links the actions of specific organization(s) to landscape sustainability outcomes to which these actions contribute (as measured by specific LandScale indicators or metrics).

**Sample claim:**

- In accordance with landscape X's watershed restoration plan, company X planted 16,000 native trees and trained 1,400 farmers in the landscape on soil conservation practices between 2014 and 2017. This contributed to a 19% reduction in sedimentation in the landscape's three main rivers between 2016 and 2020.

Claims (whether public or private) may not be made on the basis of LandScale results that have not been validated. That is, the LandScale name, platform URL, and logo may not be used in communications about the completion status or results of a LandScale assessment that has not undergone local review and LandScale validation. Given that custom indicators and metrics are not included in the scope of the LandScale validation, the LandScale name and logo may not be used when communicating these results, even if they are published on the platform.

At this time, the LandScale name, platform URL, and logo may not be used on products.

The LandScale logo may not be used in association with any written statement other than the categories of claims defined in this policy unless written permission has been obtained from LandScale. Therefore, the LandScale logo cannot be used alongside statements that a LandScale assessment is being conducted in a specific landscape until an assessment milestone has been achieved.

### 3. Eligibility to Make Claims

Any party that can meet the requirements for the type of claim they wish to make is eligible to make that type of claim, subject to the steps for review and approval outlined in Section 7.

## 4. Requirements for Assessment Milestone Claims

This type of claim can be made when any of the following assessment milestones have been achieved and the local review and LandScale validation have been completed for the indicators assessed to achieve that milestone:

- **Pillar:** Any individual pillar with at least 60% of required indicators<sup>1</sup> have validated results.
- **Holistic assessment:** At least 60% of all required indicators in each of the four pillars have validated results. Prior completed pillars validated within 1 year of this milestone submission may be incorporated without further need for validation.
- **Holistic+ assessment:** At least 75% of required indicators across all pillars have validated results. If either of the above two milestones have been validated within 1 year of this milestone submission, they may be incorporated in these results without further validation.

## 5. Requirements for Landscape Performance Claims

LandScale encourages the use of its name and logo in association with communication of the status or trends in landscape performance, subject to the following requirements and best practices:

### Requirements

- The communication should include the permanent LandScale platform URL for the assessment report publication.
- The date or date range the result(s) relate to is clearly stated (e.g., status as of 2020 or trend from 2016 to 2021).

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<sup>1</sup> Note that “required” indicators are those that are categorized as Core or Landscape-Dependent that were determined applicable under the requirements in Step 3. As the thresholds are based on the percent of indicators, the actual number of indicators will be based on the next highest whole number of indicators, e.g., if there are four required indicators in a pillar, a 60% threshold will be rounded up to 3 indicators. Additionally, all required metrics in an indicator must be measured for the indicator to be included.

- The result from the most recent LandScale assessment must be included as part of the communication. For example, it would not be appropriate to communicate the status of landscape performance in 2017, without referencing the trend based on an updated LandScale assessment for the same landscape from 2020.
- Claims may not state or imply that a given landscape is sustainable. Doing so would require defining a threshold for landscape-level sustainability, which is not possible to do in a consistent way given the diversity of landscapes. However, users are encouraged to communicate results related to multiple landscape goals and indicators included in the assessment.
- If the claim is being made at the indicator level, all required performance metrics for the indicator should be assessed and reported. However, recommended metrics do not need to be assessed.
- If the claim is being made at the metric level, then all of the information required to assess the metric must be reported. For example, performance metric 3.1.2.1 requires reporting of the number of unresolved land and resource conflicts or grievances **AND** the area of land subject to such conflicts. In this case, both the number of conflicts and the area subject to such conflicts needs to be reported; if only one of these criteria were to be reported this would be considered an incomplete performance metric result.

### Additional Best Practices

- The language used when communicating results should be as clear and precise as possible. Oversimplification and/or extrapolation of results should be avoided.
- Wherever possible, current landscape performance should be described in relation to past performance (i.e., conveying the direction and magnitude of the trend) and/or in relation to future targets or milestones.

## 6. Requirements for Contribution to Landscape Performance Claims

This type of claim recognizes the actions or investments that specific actor(s) are taking or have taken to drive improvements in the sustainability performance of the landscape. Contribution claims are based on the idea of shared causality – that is, that observed sustainability improvements may be

the result of inputs or contributions from multiple actors and, in some cases, also from exogenous causes, such as global market trends, technology improvements, or weather cycles. When crafting a contribution claim, care should be taken not to imply that a result is solely attributable to the given contribution. Attribution claims would entail a much higher burden of proof than contribution claims and typically require research methodologies that are beyond the scope of LandScale currently.

In order for LandScale to validate a contribution claim, the claimant must provide the following information when requesting approval to use the LandScale name, logo, or platform URL.

- 1) Description and suitable evidence of the named actor's (or actors') contributions towards the observed trends, which, if the claim is approved, must be provided as publicly available documentation alongside the claim.
- 2) Completion and validation of the Landscape Partnership module. If this has not been completed by the assessment owner, then the prospective claimant should contact the assessment owner to request the completion of this module.
- 3) Description of the way(s) in which the contribution is believed to support the landscape performance or trends to which the contribution will be linked. This information may be provided as a results chain or narrative explanation alongside the claim. If there is a pre-existing landscape-level theory of change or action plan that identifies the given contributions as means to support desired sustainability improvements then this document may fulfill this requirement. If not, then the prospective claimant should develop its own results chain and explanation as to how the given contribution will drive or has driven desired sustainability improvements. Further guidance on the development of a credible results chain is expected to be published by LandScale in 2022.

## 7. Process for Making Claims

The requirements and approval process for making claims differ depending on: a) the type of claim being made; and b) whether the prospective claimant wishes to use the LandScale logo alongside the claim. Specifically:

- Any claim that will involve use of the LandScale logo requires prior review and approval from LandScale.

- Any contribution claim or any performance claim made at the level of an indicator requires prior review and approval from LandScale, whether or not the logo will be used.
- Prior review and approval is optional for assessment milestone claims and performance claims made at the level of a metric for which the LandScale logo will not be used.

The purpose of LandScale review and approval of claims is to maintain the credibility of LandScale and its logo and to provide claimants with greater confidence in the accuracy of their communications. The LandScale review and approval process is free, except for landscape contribution claims, which require more detailed review. Price quotes for reviewing landscape contribution claims are available on request from the LandScale team.

Following is a summary of review and approval requirements for each combination of claim type and logo usage.

**Table 1. Review and approval requirements for different types of claims and logo use scenarios.**

<b>Type of claim</b>	<b>Claimant wishes to use the LandScale logo in association with the claim</b>	<b>Claimant will not use the LandScale logo but may still use the LandScale name or platform URL</b>
Assessment milestone claim	Review required - free service	Review optional - free service
Landscape performance claim - indicator level	Review required - free service	Review required - free service
Landscape performance claim - metric level	Review required - free service	Review optional - free service
Contribution to landscape performance claim	Review required - for a fee	Review required - for a fee

At present, LandScale is only able to review claims written in English.

If review is required for the claim that you wish to make - or if you elect to have your claim reviewed on an optional basis - there are four steps to request review and approval for your claim:

- 1) Register to access the LandScale platform, which will require you to sign Terms & Conditions for use of the LandScale name and logo.
- 2) Fill in the claims request form. If you wish to make a landscape contribution claim, you will be asked to make a payment for the service of reviewing the claim and its supporting evidence.
- 3) Address feedback on the proposed claim from the LandScale team, if any.
- 4) Once the LandScale team has approved the claim, follow the link provided to download the logo files.

If LandScale identifies the usage of the LandScale name, logo, or platform URL that contravenes our Terms and Conditions or these guidelines, claimants will be asked to retract or revise the communication immediately in accordance with the Terms and Conditions and these guidelines.

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