

Higg Facility Environmental Module (FEM) Verification Protocol

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.1 General

1.1.1.1 Cascade is the global nonprofit alliance driving systemic transformation to combat climate change and support decent work in the consumer goods industry. Formerly the Sustainable Apparel Coalition, Cascade unites a diverse, worldwide ecosystem of over 300 retailer, brand, manufacturer, supplier, service provider, government, academic, and nonprofit members.

1.1.1.2 Cascade catalyzes pre-competitive collaboration for maximum impact, anchored by the stewardship of the Higg Index frameworks — implemented through the Worldly technology platform — and recent acquisition of the Better Buying and Sustainable Furnishings Council tools. While these methodologies are central to its work, they are part of a broader strategy to mobilize collective action, challenge industry norms, and build an industry that gives back more than it takes to the planet and its people.

1.1.2 Higg Index

1.1.2.1 Developed by Cascade, the Higg Index is a suite of tools that enables brands, retailers, and facilities of all sizes — at every stage in their sustainability journey — to accurately measure and score a company or product's sustainability performance. The Higg Index delivers a holistic overview that empowers businesses to make meaningful improvements that protect the well-being of facility workers, local communities, and the environment.

1.1.2.2 For those just starting to implement sustainable practices, The Higg Index guides their important first steps, helping to distinguish strengths and weaknesses in the supply chain. For those already deeply engaged, it has more advanced potential, such as benchmarking sustainability performance against other Cascade members, identifying macro risks, and performing targeted research and analytics.

1.1.2.3 With the Higg Index, Cascade aims to accomplish the following goals:

1.1.2.3.1 Provide a consistent measurement framework for companies to evaluate and communicate their social and environmental impacts.

1.1.2.3.2 Identify strategic opportunities to implement changes that drive meaningful sustainability improvements.

1.1.2.3.3 Prioritize a safe and healthy work environment to improve the well-being and treatment of workers across the value chain.

1.1.2.3.4 Measure the impacts of products, operations, and value chain activities to identify and implement improvements that preserve the natural world.

1.1.2.3.5 Eliminate the need for do-it-yourself approaches, allowing companies to quickly and easily share data with value chain partners and optimize resources to reduce associated waste and costs.

1.1.2.3.6 Identify shared opportunities for improvement across the value chain related to protecting human rights and reducing environmental impacts.

1.1.3 Facility Environmental Module (FEM) Overview

1.1.3.1 The Higg Facility Environmental Module (Higg FEM) informs manufacturers, brands, and retailers about the environmental performance of their individual facilities, empowering them to scale sustainability improvements.

1.1.3.2 The Higg FEM provides facilities with a clear picture of their environmental impacts. It helps them identify and prioritize opportunities for performance improvements.

1.2 PURPOSE

1.2.1 The objective of the Cascade Higg FEM Verification Program is to ensure Higg FEM data provided and shared through the Worldly platform is credible and trusted.

1.2.2 The purpose of the Higg FEM Verification Protocol is to communicate the objectives, scope, process, and interpretive guidance for the Higg FEM Verification program. This includes:

1.2.2.1 Ensuring that appropriate information is provided to facilities that utilize this program.

1.2.2.2 Ensure that appropriate information is provided to Verifier Bodies responsible for conducting Higg FEM verifications.

1.2.2.3 Providing a consistent verification program

1.2.3 Individuals and groups to whom this Protocol applies includes:

1.2.3.1 Cascade Staff

1.2.3.2 Verification Program Manager (VPM)

1.2.3.3 Verifier Bodies & Verifiers

1.2.3.4 Facilities utilizing the Verification Program.

1.3 DEFINITIONS

- 1.3.1 **“Foundational Environmental Performance (FEP) Module”** is based on the FEP framework which establishes the minimum baseline of environmental management practices, legal compliance obligations, and critical environmental risk prevention controls that all facilities across the consumer goods industry are expected to meet. FEP questions are a defined subset of Higg FEM Level 1 questions.
- 1.3.2 **“Higg Facility Environmental Module (FEM)”** – This is the set of ‘questions’ that are answered by facilities to generate the Higg FEM self-assessment score. The questions are housed in the Worldly platform. These answers and supporting documents are what is ‘Verified’ (aka assured) by the Verifier Body.
- 1.3.3 **“Worldly”** means the website through which users can access the Higg Index.
- 1.3.4 **“Higg Index”** tools help organizations drive systematic change by identifying, understanding, and measuring areas of improvement. They are organized into three categories:
- 1.3.4.1 **Higg Product Tools:** *The Higg Product Module (Higg PM) and Higg Materials Sustainability Index (Higg MSI) provide insights into environmental impacts of materials and products so designers and organizations can better understand and monitor the impacts of different production choices.*
- 1.3.4.2 **Higg Facility Tools:** *The Higg Facility Environmental Module (Higg FEM) and Higg Facility Social & Labor Module (Higg FSLM) provide insights into social and environmental performance of manufacturing facilities so users can identify opportunities for continuous sustainability improvement.*
- 1.3.4.3 **Higg Brand & Retail Tool:** *The Higg Brand & Retail Module (Higg BRM) enables brands and retailers in textiles, apparel, and footwear to evaluate their sustainability performance and strategically enhance their overall impact.*
- 1.3.5 **“Quantitative Metrics”** refers to quantitative (numerical) values input in the Higg FEM (e.g., production volume, energy and water use quantities, wastewater discharge quantities, waste generation quantities, baseline and improvement quantities, etc.). Quantitative Metrics may also be referred to as “Impact Metrics” in certain Cascadia resources.
- 1.3.6 **“Verification”** - The methods and processes by which a Verifier Body obtains appropriate evidence in order to express a conclusion on the reliability and accuracy of the Higg FEM self-assessment data (that is, the outcome of the measurement or evaluation of results against defined criteria).
- 1.3.7 **“Verification Program Manager (VPM)”** – This is the oversight organization for the Verification program. The role of an oversight organization is to provide quality assurance to the verification process. This may include, but is not limited to, vetting and management of service providers (e.g., Verifier Bodies), application of quality assurance procedures, risk assessment, and general project management.

- 1.3.8 **“Verified Module (Higg vFEM)”** - The result of the Verification process, indicating the accuracy/reliability of the self-assessment data and corrected data as needed. A Verifier Body will access and complete a Higg vFEM on the Worldly platform.
- 1.3.9 **“Verifier Body (VB)”** – A company that is qualified and approved to perform the Verification process in accordance with the defined procedures and protocols.
- 1.3.10 **“Lead Verifier”** - The individual in the Verifier Body who is responsible for the verification and its performance, and for the report that is generated.
- 1.3.11 **“Verifier”** - The individual(s) conducting the verifications (includes Lead Verifier and other members of the verification team). NOTE: Where Cascale expressly intends that a requirement or responsibility be fulfilled by the Lead Verifier, the term “Lead Verifier” rather than “Verifier” is used.
- 1.3.12 **“Quantitative Metrics Verifier”** - The Verifier who is responsible for the accuracy of quantitative data in the Higg FEM.
- 1.3.13 **“Verification Team”** —All Verifiers and staff performing the verification.
- 1.3.14 **“Time Ordinance”** - is binding guidance which defines the time-based verification scope of Higg FEM questions. This guidance is applicable to Verifiers while conducting Verification.
- 1.3.15 **Use of ‘shall’ or ‘should’:** The word ‘shall’ indicates a requirement and the word ‘should’ indicates a recommendation.

1.4 VERIFICATION MINDSET

- 1.4.1 Moving out of the audit mindset requires a new vocabulary. Below are changes to traditional auditing terminology:

Table 1 Verification Terminology

Audit Terminology	Verification Terminology
Audit	Verification
Auditor	Verifier
Interview	Dialogue
Non-Compliant Criteria	Missing Criteria
Corrective Action Plan (CAP)	Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)

1.5 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1.5.1 Roles and responsibilities are summarized in the table below:

Table 2 Roles and Responsibilities for Higg FEM Verification

Who	Roles and Responsibilities
VPM	• Following VPM policies defined in Cascale/VPM Agreements. • Managing the Verifier Body Application Process. • Vetting VB Applicants. • Determining Eligibility of Verifier Bodies. • Conducting Quality Assurance. • Providing required information and data to Cascale. • Responding to program queries through Cascale /VPM Support desk.
Verifier Body	• General - o Engaging in Verification procedures and processes. - o Ensuring competent Verifiers are allocated in the verification process. - o Ensuring Verifiers act ethically and honestly. - o Providing necessary oversight and support to Verifiers. - o Ensuring necessary quality controls are in place to produce reliable and accurate results. • Lead Verifier - o Responsible for the verification and its performance, and for the quality of verification report that is generated. - o Ensures verification protocols are followed. • Verifier - o Conducting the verification (includes Lead Verifier and other members of the verification team). • Quantitative Metrics Verifier - o Responsible for the accuracy of quantitative data reported in the Higg FEM. • Report Reviewer - o Responsible for reviewing and verifying the accuracy Verification response and verified data reported in the Higg FEM. • Higg FEM Scheme Manager - o Overall responsibility for the performance and quality of the Verifications for a VB. - o Point of contact with Cascale to answer queries or to discuss issues for all activities globally. - o Responsible for ensuring that Verifiers are up to date with training and updates from Cascale and VPM.

Cascale	• Programmatic oversight including strategy, capacity, quality, and financial sustainability. • Managing the VPM. • Serving as the ultimate decision-maker on issues escalated by the VPM.
Worldly	• Providing and managing data systems and platforms (Worldly). • Redirecting verification queries to Cascale /VPM through Support desk.
Facility	• Completing the self-assessment. • Completing facility survey at the end of verification. • Provide documentation to Cascale/VPM (as applicable). • Provide documents, participate in interviews/meetings, etc. as required by VB to make Verification assessment. • Reviewing and finalizing the vFEM on the Worldly platform.

2 VERIFIER BODIES

2.1 APPLICABILITY

- 2.1.1 Only Cascade approved Verifier Bodies shall be permitted to conduct a valid verification. Competency and other VB requirements are provided in Higg FEM Verifier Body Program Requirements.
- 2.1.2 Only Cascade approved Verifiers, associated with an approved Verifier Body can make verification determinations.
- 2.1.3 A list of approved Verifier Bodies shall be maintained by the VPM, and Verifier Body approval status is activated/deactivated on the Worldly platform accordingly.

2.2 VERIFIER DESIGNATIONS

- 2.2.1 There are three (3) Higg FEM verifier designations as follows:
 - 2.2.1.1 *Higg FEM Chemical Specialist Verifier*
 - 2.2.1.2 *Higg Generalist Verifier*
 - 2.2.1.3 *Higg FEM Quantitative Metrics Verifier*
- 2.2.2 A Higg FEM Chemical Specialist Verifier can conduct verification of all Higg FEM questions.
- 2.2.3 A Higg FEM Generalist Verifier can conduct verification of all Higg FEM questions (including Foundational Environmental Performance (FEP) Module) except for Level 2 and 3 Chemicals Management Section questions unless the following condition is met:
 - 2.2.3.1 *A Higg FEM Generalist Verifier can conduct Verification of Level 2 and 3 Chemicals Management Section questions if, based on applicability responses in the Chemicals Management Section, the facility is classified as not using chemicals in production processes. This includes the following facility categories:*
 - 2.2.3.1.1 Facility that uses Chemicals in Operation only, Maintenance/Tooling/Equipment only, Only uses Spot Cleaner in production, and/or Facility that has minimal chemical use.
- 2.2.4 A Higg FEM Quantitative Metrics Verifier is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of quantitative data in the Higg vFEM (e.g., energy and water consumption data, wastewater discharge data, and waste quantity data, etc.)
 - 2.2.4.1 *Quantitative Metrics Verifiers shall be an approved Higg FEM Generalist or Chemical Specialist Verifier.*

3.2 VERIFICATION SCOPE

- 3.2.1 Verification shall cover all Higg FEM sections and applicable questions.
- 3.2.2 The scope of each FEM Question shall be verified in accordance with the Time Ordinance Category listed in the [Higg FEM Verifier Field Guide](#) and available on the Worldly platform.
- 3.2.3 Quantitative environmental data from the full calendar year of the Higg FEM reporting year (January 1 to December 31) shall be in scope. For example, for FEM2026 the data reporting scope is from January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2026.
- 3.2.3.1 *If a facility has not been in operation for the full calendar year, additional notes (in the self-assessment) or Verifier Comments shall be provided for each applicable Higg FEM question to describe any gaps in data. For example, if a facility moved to a new location during the reporting year and had only accumulated 7 months of resource consumption data at the new location, the facility can still complete the Higg FEM self-assessment and have it verified.*
- 3.2.4 Verification shall cover the entire facility site including all owned and operated onsite processes, equipment and areas noted in the Site Observations section of this document. Verification shall cover the entire facility site including all owned and operated onsite processes, equipment and areas noted in the Site Observations section of this document.
- 3.2.4.1 *If a process or piece of equipment at a facility began operating during the Verification year (the year the Verification is being conducted), it is not applicable in the Higg FEM reporting year and should not be included in the applicability selections. For example, if a screen-printing process was installed in 2026, it is not in scope of the FEM2025 (CY 2026) verification.*
- 3.2.4.2 *In cases where the above applies, Higg FEM questions related to material handling, storage, disposal and worker safety for the processes/equipment shall be in scope. For example, a facility is expected to appropriately store and dispose of any associated wastes generated from a new process; however there would be no waste quantity to report in the FEM reporting year.*
- 3.2.5 One (1) Higg FEM is required for each legal business entity as defined by the applicable business license/operating permit except in the following circumstance:
- 3.2.5.1 *Where multiple manufacturing units (facilities) are located at the same premises with different business licenses, however the facilities are fully owned and operated by a single legal business entity, one (1) Higg FEM can be completed. **Note:** If the separate facilities are not legally owned/operated by a single parent business entity with a valid operating license, which includes ownership of all facilities, separate Higg FEMs must be completed for each facility.*

- 3.2.5.2 *Where a material or component supplier of the facility with a separate business license is located at the same premises and supplies 100% of its materials/services to the facility, its operations can be included in the facility's Higg FEM. **Note:** If the material or component supplier provides materials or services to other facilities, it must not be included in the facility's Higg FEM scope and would require a separate Higg FEM.*
- 3.2.6 Facilities located at two separate physical locations (i.e., different legal addresses) must complete one (1) FEM per location regardless of ownership (e.g., if two facilities are located at different physical locations, but their operations are covered under one (1) parent business license, separate FEMs are still required.)
- 3.2.7 Where multiple facilities which require separate FEMs are located at the same premises, verification activities may be combined (i.e., on the same or consecutive days) if appropriate. For example, the facilities are part of a manufacturing group with the same overarching environmental management programs.
- 3.2.7.1 *Where verification activities for multiple facilities are combined as per the above, it is the responsibility of the VB/Verifier to ensure all verification activities required in this protocol are applied at each facility.*
- 3.2.7.2 *If there are questions or clarifications regarding facility scope and FEM module allocation, users should contact Cascade at verification@cascale.org.*

3.3 HIGG FEM VERIFICATION (FOR FEM2026)

- 3.3.1 Higg FEM Verifications occurring in the FEM2026 cadence (calendar year 2027) shall only include verification of Higg FEM Level 1 questions.
- 3.3.1.1 *Facility users will complete the full Higg FEM Self-Assessment, however only Higg FEM Level 1 questions can be verified.*
- 3.3.2 Higg FEM Generalist Verifiers shall be able to conduct Verification of all Higg FEM Level 1 questions.
- 3.3.3 Unless specifically noted, all applicable requirements outlined in this Protocol shall apply to Higg FEM Level 1 Verification of FEM2026.

3.4 FOUNDATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE MODULE

- 3.4.1 From cadence FEM2026 (CY 2027) onwards, the FEP module is available as a standalone module, separate from the full Higg FEM, available for both self-assessment and verified assessment on the platform.
- 3.4.2 The Self-Assessment and verification scope of the FEP module shall be the previous 12 months from the time FEP was completed. For example, if a facility completes FEP in May 2027, the FEP module verification shall consider facility performance from May 2026 to April 2027.

- 3.4.3 A first time Higg FEM user choosing to complete FEP module shall not be able to upgrade to a full FEM once verification is initiated on the platform (i.e., module status is VRP). Should such a user wish to complete the full Higg FEM, they shall only do so in the next cadence cycle.
- 3.4.4 Higg FEM Generalist Verifiers shall be able to conduct Verification of all FEP questions.
- 3.4.5 FEP questions shall be verified in accordance with the Foundational Environmental Performance (FEP) Module How to Higg Guide.
- 3.4.6 All FEP questions shall be verified as per the requirements of the 'Current' time ordinance category as listed in the [Higg FEM Verifier Field Guide](#).
- 3.4.7 Unless specifically noted, all applicable requirements outlined in this Protocol shall apply to the FEP module.
- 3.4.8 For further information regarding FEP module, please refer to the [FEP Technical Paper](#) and the [FEP HowtoHigg Guide](#).

3.5 VERIFICATION TYPE (ONSITE OR OFFSITE)

- 3.5.1 Verifications shall be conducted onsite or offsite.
- 3.5.2 The following considerations/limitations should be noted for Verifications that are conducted offsite:
 - 3.5.2.1 *The verified results of an offsite verification (which include but are not limited verified scores, levels achieved) shall not be shared publicly nor shall they be shared via the Cascadia Higg FEM Performance Communication toolkit.*
 - 3.5.2.2 *An offsite verified assessment can be shared with connections of a facility through their Worldly account.*
 - 3.5.2.3 *If a facility chooses to have their Higg FEM self-assessment verified offsite and completes the verification process (the Higg vFEM status is changed to VRF), it will not be possible for the facility to switch the Higg vFEM to an on-site verification OR complete a new self-assessment to be verified onsite within the same assessment year (i.e., facilities shall only have one verified Higg FEM per year).*
 - 3.5.2.4 *Before completing an offsite verification, facilities should confirm with all relevant business partners that they will not be expected to complete an onsite verification.*
 - 3.5.2.5 *If a facility has achieved Level 1 in Chemicals Management section, is classified as using chemicals in production, and answered questions in Level 2 and 3, a Higg FEM Chemical Specialist Verifier is required to complete the offsite verification.*
 - 3.5.2.5.1 For FEM2026, Level 2 and 3 Chemicals Management questions will not be included in the Verification scope.

3.6 VERIFICATION FEES

3.6.1 Fees associated with Verification shall be negotiated and agreed upon between the organization requesting the Verification and the Verifier Body.

3.6.2 Verifier Bodies shall include at a minimum the following information as itemized information or costs in Higg FEM Verification Proposal/Quotations to facilities

3.6.2.1 *Number of Verification Person-Days Onsite / Offsite*

3.6.2.2 *Time and Cost for Verification reporting and internal quality review*

3.6.2.3 *Cost for travel disbursements*

3.6.2.4 *Verification Access Fee*

3.6.2.5 *Total Higg FEM Verification Fee*

3.7 VERIFICATION DURATION

3.7.1 Higg FEM Verification requires multiple activities/engagements to produce a finalized Higg FEM (vFEM). As required by this Protocol, these include verification preparation, onsite or offsite verification activities and post-verification quality assurance and reporting

3.7.2 Cascale has developed guidance on the required and recommended number of person days for onsite and offsite verification activities. This guidance is provided in Appendix A.

3.7.3 VBs shall use the guidance and requirements in Appendix A when determining the duration of onsite or offsite verification activities.

3.7.4 Where applicable, Verifier Bodies shall ensure that verifications meet the minimum required duration listed in Appendix A.

3.7.5 Onsite or offsite Verification activities shall not be less than one (1) person day.

3.7.6 Cascale does not define the required amount of time for verification preparation and post-verification quality assurance and reporting.

3.7.7 If Verifier Bodies have questions on determining the number of person days required for verification, they should contact the VPM at FEM@Sumerra.com.

3.8 REPEAT VERIFICATION

3.8.1 A Repeat Verification is defined as the same verifier conducting a facility verification in two (2) consecutive Higg FEM cycles.

3.8.2 Except under extraordinary circumstances (i.e., countries/regions where there are a limited number of verifiers available), verifiers should not conduct consecutive verifications.

- 3.8.3 If a Repeat Verification is required, the VB shall register the Verification by completing the Higg FEM Repeat Verification Form [here](#).
- 3.8.4 No formal approval from the Cascale or VPM shall be required and once the form is completed, the Repeat Verification can be conducted.
- 3.8.5 Repeat Verifications may be subject to additional quality assurance checks by the VPM.
- 3.8.6 VBs are expected to plan appropriately and allocate the necessary staffing resources to avoid repeat verifications to the extent possible.

4 VERIFICATION PROCESS

4.1 VERIFICATION PREPARATION

- 4.1.1 VB shall assign Verifier(s) to the Higg vFEM on Worldly no later than 10 working days prior to the start date of the verification.
- 4.1.2 All Verifiers who perform verification activities as part of the verification shall be listed as Verifiers on the Worldly Platform. VBs must not list Verifiers who do not participate in the Verification.
- 4.1.3 Verifiers shall review the facility's self-assessment prior to the scheduled verification date to identify aspects of the facility's Higg FEM that may require additional clarification or facility preparation.
- 4.1.4 Quantitative Metrics Verifier shall review the quantitative metrics data reported in the facility's self-assessment prior to the scheduled verification date to identify data points that may require additional clarification or facility preparation.
 - 4.1.4.1 *This review shall include review of all source data (e.g., invoices, metering records, aggregated tracking totals, responses from the previous FEM Cadence displayed on the FEM (if applicable), historical consumption data, etc.) and other supporting evidence uploaded as attachments to the Higg FEM.*
- 4.1.5 Verifier/VB shall communicate a verification plan to the facility no later than 10 working days prior to the start date of the verification. Information in the verification plan shall include:
 - 4.1.5.1 *The number of person-days and calendar days required to complete the verification.*
 - 4.1.5.2 *The hours of verification (start and finish for each day)*
 - 4.1.5.2.1 Verification should be conducted during the facility's normal operating hours, and the verification start/finish time shall be mutually agreed upon between the facility and Verifiers/VB.
 - 4.1.5.3 *Contact details of Verifiers/VB (telephone number and email)*

- 4.1.5.4 *The expectations for the opening meeting, including who should be in attendance.*
- 4.1.5.5 *The expectation that onsite verification requires access to all areas of the facility and its grounds, photographs (respecting and avoiding sensitive or proprietary information).*
- 4.1.5.6 *The expectation that supporting evidence to verify the facility's self-assessment responses is required to be available for review.*
- 4.1.5.7 *If applicable, Verifier/VB should provide the facility with a list of supporting evidence that needs to be reviewed if it is not listed in the Higg FEM Guidance.*
- 4.1.5.8 *Any other relevant information or instruction to support the facility in preparing for verification.*

4.2 DATA COLLECTION

- 4.2.1 To achieve a verified assessment report that is of high quality and meets the user's needs, it is important to provide the following data in the Verified Higg FEM which will form the Verified Module (vFEM) and any associated scoring (if applicable) that can be shared:
 - 4.2.1.1 *Make the appropriate Verification Selection.*
 - 4.2.1.2 *Provide the right narrative in the Verifier Comments.*
- 4.2.2 The following data collection requirements shall apply to both verification of Higg FEM and the Foundational Environmental Performance (FEP) module.

4.3 COMPLETING THE VERIFICATION SELECTION

- 4.3.1 For each question and any sub-questions/data tables in the Higg FEM Self-Assessment, a Verification Selection shall be selected as follows:
 - 4.3.1.1 **'Accurate'** shall be selected when the self-assessment response is accurate as per the Verification Guidance ("how this will be verified" section) of the latest version of Higg FEM Guidance, and no change is required to the facility's self-assessment response.
 - 4.3.1.1.1 When Accurate is selected, Verifiers should add Verifier Comments, if:
 - *A comment is required in relation to the Time Ordinance Category of the question.*
 - *The information provided is not sufficient to explain circumstances.*
 - *The Verifier wants to provide additional information about circumstances.*
 - 4.3.1.2 **'Inaccurate'** shall be selected when the self-assessment response is not accurate as per the Verification Guidance ("how this will be verified" section) of the latest version of Higg FEM Guidance.

- 4.3.1.2.1 Verifiers shall provide the “Corrected Response” (e.g., a “Yes” answer becomes a “No”) and support the response by providing details in the “Verifier Comments” field.
- 4.3.1.3 *‘No Response’ shall be selected when the facility’s self-assessment does not include a response to the question, or the question was opened due to a change in applicability questions or level achievement.*
- 4.3.1.3.1 Verifiers shall provide the “Corrected Response” and support the response by providing details in the “Verifier Comments” field.
- 4.3.1.4 *Supporting evidence uploaded to the vFEM shall accurately reflect the verified vFEM responses.*
- 4.3.1.4.1 If the uploaded evidence is inaccurate, Verifiers shall remove the incorrect evidence and upload the correct evidence.
- 4.3.1.4.2 If the uploaded evidence cannot be removed, Verifiers shall provide a detailed Verifier Comment to explain the inconsistency in the FEM data and uploaded evidence.

4.4 VERIFIER COMMENTS

- 4.4.1 Verifier Comments may be best considered as an evidentiary statement. An evidentiary (aka assurance) statement is designed to support the Verification Selection (see above) of the Verifier.
- 4.4.2 Verifier Comments shall be included when this is required based on the Higg FEM question’s Time Ordinance Category listed in the [Higg FEM Verifier Field Guide](#)
- 4.4.2.1 *For example, when the FEM question Time Ordinance category is “Reporting and Current” and there is a difference observed in the current situation at the facility and the data or information reported for the reporting year, the Verifier shall include a comment to describe the difference and flag the question by selecting the “Flag” icon.*
- 4.4.3 All Verifier Comments shall be entered in English.
- 4.4.3.1 *In cases where a facility’s response is not in English, but it is accurate, the Verifier shall select “accurate” as the verification response and provide details (in English) in the Verifier Comment field to describe the facility’s input.*
- 4.4.3.2 *In cases where a facility’s response is not in English and is inaccurate, the Verifier shall select “inaccurate” as the verification response and provide the correct response and appropriate Verifier Comments in English.*
- 4.4.3.3 *Uploaded documentation is not required to be in English. However, it is expected all documents are appropriately reviewed by verifiers and any necessary Verifier Comments shall be provided in English (as noted above).*
- 4.4.4 In all cases where an answer to a question is noted as “Inaccurate” or “No Response” Verifier Comments shall be included. Generally, statements should provide sufficient details on:

4.4.4.1 Context

4.4.4.2 Details of methodologies used, observations, and evidence gathered.

4.4.4.3 Link to specific Higg FEM question or guidance criteria

4.4.4.4 An Example of Verifier Comments are provided in the Table below:

Table 3 Verifier Comments Example

Question	Does your facility track the consumption of water from all of the sources it utilizes?
Higg FEM Self-Assessment Response	Yes
Verification Selection	Inaccurate
Corrected Response	Partial Yes
Verification Comment Examples	
Poor Example	The facility did not track water use.
Good Example	Based on a review of water use tracking records and dialogue with the facility's environmental manager, the facility did not track water use from all sources. The facility did not track groundwater used for domestic purposes.

4.5 VERIFYING QUANTITATIVE METRICS IN THE HIGG FEM

4.5.1 Quantitative metrics are quantitative (numerical) values input in the Higg FEM (e.g., production volume, energy and water use quantities, wastewater discharge quantities, waste generation quantities, baseline and improvement quantities, etc.)

4.5.1.1 A list of Higg FEM Level 1 Quantitative Metrics questions is provided in Appendix C.

4.5.2 The accuracy of quantitative metric data shall be verified in accordance with the Higg FEM Guidance to ensure the reported values are accurate and verified against sufficient supporting evidence.

4.5.3 At least one (1) member of the Verification team shall be designated as the Quantitative Metrics Verifier who is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of quantitative data in the Higg vFEM.

- 4.5.3.1 *The Quantitative Metrics Verifier shall be listed on the 'Verification Details' page of the Higg vFEM and the Quantitative Metrics Verifier shall complete the relevant Quantitative Metrics Verification questions.*
- 4.5.3.2 *If the Verification Team consists of only one (1) Verifier, the Lead Verifier shall also be listed as the Quantitative Metrics Verifier.*
- 4.5.4 Review of quantitative metrics data shall include:
 - 4.5.4.1 *Review of source data (e.g., utility invoices, on-site meters, metering logs, etc.) against aggregated totals to ensure accuracy.*
 - 4.5.4.1.1 *Quantitative Metrics Verifiers shall request and review copies of all source data from the facility.*
 - 4.5.4.1.2 *Source data for each data collection period (e.g., month, week, day) shall be reviewed against the facility's tracking records and reported totals in the Higg FEM to verify the accuracy of reported data.*
 - 4.5.4.2 *Comparison of the current year with historical data including responses from the previous FEM Cadence displayed on the FEM (if applicable). Any significant changes (e.g., an increase or decrease of over 10%) or other data anomalies should be attributable to known changes at the facility. If not, further investigation should be conducted to verify data accuracy.*
 - 4.5.4.3 *Review of the reported unit(s) of measure and verify any unit conversions from source data to reported data are accurate.*
 - 4.5.4.4 *Review of any estimation methodologies/calculations used to ensure accuracy.*
 - 4.5.4.5 *Review of the data collection management systems, processes, and data sources (e.g., data collection procedures, invoices, on-site meters, metering logs, etc.)*
 - 4.5.4.6 *Review of the processes and tools used to collect, track, and aggregate data (e.g., spreadsheets calculations, unit conversions, etc.) to ensure automated calculations/formulas are correct.*

4.6 VERIFYING QUESTIONS THAT ARE UNLOCKED DURING VERIFICATION

- 4.6.1 If unanswered questions (main question or sub-questions) are unlocked during the Verification, due to a change in applicability questions or level achievement, the Verifier shall:
 - 4.6.1.1 *Select the verification response of "No Response."*
 - 4.6.1.2 *Update the facility response(s) to the extent possible.*

- 4.6.1.2.1 If there are questions that cannot be answered (for example Level 2 and 3 questions in the Chemicals Management section are unlocked and the verification is being conducted by generalist verifier), the verification response should be “No Response” and the facility responses should be left blank.
- 4.6.1.2.2 If a facility response is required to reach 100% verification completion percentage, the Verifier shall enter the ‘Negative’ response (e.g., No).
- 4.6.1.3 *In all cases, appropriate Verifier Comments must be provided to describe the situation.*

4.7 REPORTING

- 4.7.1 The Verifier shall complete the Higg vFEM module on Worldly in accordance with the requirements set forth in this protocol.
- 4.7.2 Onsite and Offsite Verification results must be input into the Worldly platform within 14 business days of completing the Verification process.
 - 4.7.2.1 *This means all verification selections, corrected responses (where required), and verifier comments must be input into Higg vFEM and the module must be placed in Verification Completed (VRC) status to initiate the facility’s review process.*
 - 4.7.2.2 *If a facility places the Higg vFEM into Verification Being Edited (VRE) status for the Verifier to make revisions, the Verifier must consult with the facility as required to address and resolve edits and convert the report back to VRC status within 7 business days of the module being placed into VRE status.*

4.8 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

- 4.8.1 The accuracy of all Verification Selections, Higg FEM response and quantitative data, and Verifier Comments in a Verified Higg FEM are the responsibility of the Lead Verifier and Verifier Body.
- 4.8.2 Before submitting the verified assessment report for facility review, the Verifier Body shall conduct an internal quality check.
- 4.8.3 The VB shall designate a Report Reviewer and list the name of the reviewer on the ‘Verification Details’ page of the Higg vFEM.
- 4.8.4 The Report Reviewer shall not be a Verifier who performed any verification activities as part of the verification.
- 4.8.5 Minimally, the report review shall ensure:
 - 4.8.5.1 *Correct use of spelling and grammar.*
 - 4.8.5.2 *Verification entries, including photos, do not contain employee names or any personally identifiable information for reasons of confidentiality and privacy.*

- 4.8.5.3 *Evidentiary Documents are attached, as applicable, where the Verification Selection is “Inaccurate”, and the Verifier has a copy or example of evidence.*
- 4.8.5.4 *All quantitative data reported in the Higg FEM was accurately verified in accordance with the Higg FEM Guidance - “How this will be Verified” requirements (e.g., production volume, energy, water, wastewater, air, and waste source, baseline, target, and improvement data).*
 - 4.8.5.4.1 The designated Quantitative Metrics Verifier shall be responsible for the accuracy of all quantitative data reported in the Higg FEM and shall complete the relevant Quantitative Metrics questions on the ‘Verification Details’ page of the Higg vFEM.
- 4.8.5.5 *If any Higg FEM questions response is inaccurate, “Inaccurate” must be selected as the Verification Selection and a corrected response is provided.*
- 4.8.5.6 *When applicable, any time the Verifier Comments field is filled, a thorough response must be provided that supports the verification selection and data narrative.*

4.9 FACILITY REVIEW

- 4.9.1 Once the verification is completed, the facility shall be notified via Worldly and shall access the verified assessment report online for review (status is VRC). The facility should do one of the following:
 - 4.9.1.1 *Reach out to the VB/Lead Verifier for clarifications, concerns, questions about the verified assessment report, especially with regards to question related issues and Verifier Comments.*
 - 4.9.1.1.1 A Verification can be placed in VRE status to make agreed upon edits. Once a Verifier has completed any agreed upon edits, the status is returned to VRC. From VRC status, the module can be changed back to VRE (for additional edits) or to VRF/VRD as noted below.
 - 4.9.1.1.2 During the VRE process, Verifier(s) shall review and consider all information and supporting evidence provided by the facility to ensure all verified responses align with the intent and criteria provided in the Higg FEM Guidance.
 - 4.9.1.1.3 Should the facility and Lead Verifier/ Verifier Body agree to change the verified assessment report at this stage of review (VRE), the Verifier can access the report again through the Worldly platform and make the agreed changes. Any changes a Verifier makes to the report after completion/ during this facility review phase must be agreed upon by the facility, and the facility shall be informed about the changes, so they can go back to the review (the changes) and accept the verification.

- 4.9.1.2 *Dispute the verified assessment report due to Verifiers not following Verification Protocol or complaints about Verifier Body / Verifier conduct. This changes the assessment status from “Verification Completed” to “Verification Disputed” (VRD). When doing this, the facility shall provide more detailed information about the Dispute, so the Cascale staff is well informed. For more information on the dispute process, please refer to the [Higg FEM Verification QA Manual](#).*
- 4.9.1.3 *Accept the verified assessment report, which changes the assessment status from “Verification Completed” (VRC) to “Verification Finalized” (VRF). Once finalized, facilities need to post the verified module so that their connections can view the verified scores (if applicable) and detailed results.*
- 4.9.1.3.1 Once a module is placed in VRF status, no further edits can be made.

4.10 EDITING A MODULE IN VRF STATUS

- 4.10.1 As noted above, once a module is placed in VRF status, no further edits can be made, however there may be exceptional cases in which it is necessary to revise confirmed data inaccuracies in the verified FEM (vFEM) after the status is set to VRF.
- 4.10.2 The VRF Change Request process allows for a vFEM to be reverted to an editable status to allow changes to be made.
- 4.10.3 Currently, VRF Changes are only permitted for confirmed inaccuracies in Quantitative Data (e.g., energy or water use data, quantitative data related to GHG emissions calculations, wastewater volume, or waste quantities, etc.) and select approved inaccuracies as determined by Cascale.
- 4.10.4 To initiate the VRF Change Request Process, the VB or facility shall contact Worldly support at support@worldly.io with their request and provide details of the inaccuracy, corrected value as well as the reason the facility did not identify the inaccuracy and use the VRE process before finalizing their module.
- 4.10.5 Cascale reviews the request to determine if the VRF Change request meets the permitted criteria to allow the revision(s) and responds to the user accordingly.
- 4.10.6 Once the change is completed, the Verifier/VB shall place the module in Verification Complete (VRC) status.
- 4.10.7 The facility shall review the revision and either:
- 4.10.7.1 *Accept the revisions (and re-finalize the module by placing it in VRF status, OR*
- 4.10.7.2 *Request further edits from the Verifier using the VRE process.*
- 4.10.8 A flow diagram showing the VRF Change process is provided in Appendix D.

4.11 QUALITY ASSURANCE / INTEGRITY

- 4.11.1 The VPM can choose to conduct any type of quality assurance procedures for any verified assessment as outlined in the [Higg FEM Verification QA Manual](#).
- 4.11.2 QA activities conducted by the VPM can result in invalidations of the verified assessment report, which means that the report can no longer be shared with end users and the full report is no longer available on Worldly.

5 VERIFICATION ACTIVITIES

5.1 OPENING MEETING

- 5.1.1 All Verifications shall begin with an Opening Meeting.
- 5.1.1.1 *Opening meeting attendees should include facility management, environmental manager(s) and other key staff members.*
- 5.1.1.2 *Verifiers shall use the Opening Meeting Slide Templates provided by Cascale in accordance with the [Higg FEM Verifier Field Guide](#).*
- 5.1.1.3 *The Opening Meeting should include discussion on the items listed in the table below:*

Table 4 Opening Meeting Agenda Items

Opening Meeting Agenda
• Introductions from both the verification team and facility management personnel. • Discussion of the objectives of Higg verification, including: - o A reminder that the Higg verification is not an audit, but rather it serves to verify the self-assessment submitted by the Facility. - o An explanation that Higg is not a pass-or-fail assessment/audit. - o A discussion of scoring, that there is no 'minimum score' in Higg. Instead, Higg focuses on performance monitoring of critical and minimum legal and industry standards and supporting facility in its continuous improvement. • A clarification of the scope of the Verification and criteria to be checked. • Discussion on the independence of the assessment team and the need for openness, transparency and ethics, including a review of the conflict of interest in that no Trainers or Consultants can act as Verifiers. • An agreement on how conflicts will be handled. • A review of the confidentiality associated with employee dialogues. • A review of the confidentiality associated with verification results. • Communication of criteria and reporting methodology. • An explanation of the next steps, including outcome of the verification

5.2 DIALOGUE WITH FACILITY STAFF

- 5.2.1 Dialogue shall be undertaken with the Facility Environmental Managers to establish the level of awareness of environmental issues across the facility and to help identify any issues or good practices on-site.
- 5.2.2 The Verifier shall also engage in dialogue with managers and with key staff who have specific roles and responsibilities related to managing environmental aspects or environmental management systems.
- 5.2.3 Verifiers should talk to a number of relevant workers, taking into account:
 - 5.2.3.1 *Different departments, including workers associated with managing waste, undertaking environmental monitoring as well as production workers.*
 - 5.2.3.2 *Health & safety representatives/personnel, where appropriate*
 - 5.2.3.3 *Environmental committee representative(s), if applicable*
 - 5.2.3.4 *New employees/trainees (to evaluate training quality)*
 - 5.2.3.5 *Employees from different shifts*
- 5.2.4 For offsite Verification, dialogue shall be undertaken via a teleconference or web-based call.
- 5.2.5 Verifiers shall ensure that problems raised by workers are discussed with management in a non-attributable way. Verifiers must ensure that the comments they report cannot be traced back to an individual worker.
- 5.2.6 Verifiers should leave a contact telephone number, preferably their mobile number and their local office phone number, with all workers the Verifier discussed with, in order for workers to alert the Verifier if there are reprisals or intimidation.
- 5.2.7 The Verifiers should keep a confidential note of who is being interviewed.

5.3 SITE OBSERVATIONS

- 5.3.1 All Verifications shall include site observations to evaluate physical conditions and implemented practices in all areas of the facility to establish evidence that activities are consistent with what the facility has presented in their Higg FEM self-assessment.
- 5.3.2 Verifiers shall observe all relevant areas at the facility as defined by the facility's Higg FEM self-assessment and the applicable Higg FEM guidance.
- 5.3.3 For Offsite Verification, Verifiers shall request and review appropriate photos or short video clips (hereafter referred to as 'photos') of all applicable facility areas and processes.
- 5.3.4 Areas to be observed include, but are not limited to, the items listed in the table below:

Table 5 Observation Areas

Observation Areas
• Site perimeter • Facility premises and surroundings • Production line(s) / areas • Raw material/chemical, hazardous & general waste storage areas and/or warehouse • Bulk storage areas • Utility Rooms/Areas - o Boiler rooms - o Compressor houses - o Generator rooms • Wastewater treatment plant including the inlet, treatment processes, and final discharge location (outlet) • Exhaust vents, stacks, or other air discharge points • All locked rooms/areas • Chemical operations area e.g., dyeing, washing, printing, spraying, or other chemical application • Chemical mixing and dosing area at production areas, and other locations where chemicals are being used, e.g., wastewater treatment plant • Temporary storage areas for chemicals • Safety equipment and PPEs storage area • Any other areas or processes that may result in environmental impacts.

5.4 PHOTOGRAPHS

5.4.1 Verifiers shall take photographs during the Verification to support onsite observations.

5.4.2 Photographs shall only be taken with the expressed permission of the Facility as they may contain or reveal confidential information.

5.4.3 Photos should include, but are not limited to, the items listed in the table below:

Table 6 Areas to Photograph

Photographs
• Outside general overview • Facility premises and surroundings • Inside general overview • General photos of production line(s) • Key activities and processes that have potential environmental impact, if present, such as: - o Waste handling and storage area(s)

- o Hazardous substance storage area(s)
- o Hazardous materials transfer area(s)
- o Bulk storage tanks and secondary containment area(s)
- o Wastewater treatment area / plant, including discharge point(s)
- o Water Discharge Point(s)
- o Raw material/chemical and waste storage warehouse/area(s)
- o Boiler room(s)
- o Exhaust vents, stacks, or other air discharge points
- o Waste collection area(s), both Hazardous and Non-hazardous
- o Compressor house(s)
- o Power generator room(s) /area(s)
- Area(s) of potential impact to soil and/or groundwater, including stained soil and/or distressed vegetation
- Abatement equipment
- Good practices

5.4.4 For Offsite Verification photos shall meet the following requirements:

5.4.4.1 *Accurately show the common practices, actions, and process that are occurring at the facility (no 'staged' photos)*

5.4.4.2 *Be recently taken (generally within 2 weeks of the Verification start date)*

5.4.4.3 *Be clearly viewable (proper lighting, proper camera angles, etc.)*

5.4.4.4 *Be provided in a manner that the Verifier can view (using common technology and in a commonly used format, such as .jpg or .pdf)*

5.4.4.5 *If appropriate, the photos should be labeled or explained to help the Verifier understand the photo, or context to the photo.*

5.4.5 The Verifier shall not use or show the Photos to anyone other than for the purposes of completing the Verification.

5.4.6 The Facility may request or require that the Verifier delete or destroy the photos when the Verification is complete.

5.5 CLOSING MEETING

5.5.1 All Verifications shall end with a Closing Meeting.

5.5.1.1 *Closing meeting attendees should include facility management, environmental manager(s) and other key staff members.*

5.5.1.2 Verifiers shall use the Closing Meeting Slide Templates provided by Cascale in accordance with the Higg FEM Verifier Field Guide.

5.5.1.3 The Closing Meeting should include discussion on the items listed in the table below:

Table 7 Closing Meeting Agenda Items

Closing Meeting Agenda
• A review of the Verification activities that took place • A Comment on staff cooperation (or lack thereof) • Overall evaluation and/or strengths of the facility (if any) • A summary of the areas of inconsistencies between the self-assessed and verified results • A reminder of the confidentiality of the results • Notification to the facility that Verification results will be available on Worldly and that the facility can review and post it on Worldly for benchmarking or sharing, if the facility chooses • The post-verification options available to facility: Finalizing the verified assessment (VRF), requesting edits from the Verifier/VB through the VRE process, and the dispute process (VRD) • Answer questions from the facility • A show of appreciation for the facility's support during the Verification

6 VERIFICATION RECORDS

6.1.1 The Verifier Body must keep all documents and evidence from the Verification through the entire verification process, including through any quality review activities that may take place, to justify the services performed and quality assessment processes.

6.1.1.1 *At minimum, documentation shall be retained in accordance with the VB's internal documentation retention policy or at the specified duration in any contractual agreements with the facility, whichever is longer.*

7 RELATED DOCUMENTS

[Higg FEM How to Higg Guidance](#)

[Higg FEM Verifier Field Guide](#)

[Higg FEM Verification Program Requirements for Verifier Bodies and Verifiers](#)

[Higg FEM Verification Quality Assurance Manual](#)

[Verifier Code of Professional Conduct](#)

[Higg FEM Verification Complaint Form](#)

8 DOCUMENT CHANGE LOG

Date	Section	Summary of Changes
2021-06-21	All	- On-site and Offsite Protocols combined into single document. - Incorporated the following Guidance/ Procedures - Guidance for Determining Person-Days for Higg Facility Environment Module (Higg FEM) Verification - Higg Verification Introduction (VPM-001)
2021-10-05 FEMVP202 1111.2	Definitions; New Section - 3.3; <i>Appendix A</i> <i>Person-Day Guidance</i>	Added content on Facility Foundations
	New Section - 4.1	Added requirements for pre-verification communications with facilities.
	Related Documents	Added links to Higg FEM Verification Complaints Form.
2022-04-28 FEMVP202 2041.3	Definitions; Table 2 (1.5.1); New Section – 4.5; <i>Verifying Quantitative Metrics in the Higg FEM</i> ; Added 2.3.2.2; Added 4.8.4.1	Added definition/responsibilities of Quantitative Metrics Verifier and requirements for the Verification of quantitative metrics.
2024-4-30 FEMVP202 4041.4	All	- Updated for Cascadia (formerly SAC) rebrand. - Changed references to Higg.org to Worldly
	Section 1.3	Added definitions for Core Verification, Foundational Environmental Performance and Essential Quantitative Metrics
	Section 2.2	Updated scenarios where a generalist can be used to Verify Level 2 and 3 Chemicals questions.
	Section 3.2	Updated guidance for when individual FEMs are required.
	Section 3.3	Added content on Higg FEM Core Verification.

	Section 4.1	Added requirement for Quantitative Metrics Verifiers to review quantitative data and supporting evidence prior to the planned verification date.
	Section 4.5	Clarified requirements for review of source data for quantitative metrics.
	Appendix B	Added Guidance for Observation of Higg FEM Verifications
	Appendix C	Added to clarify understanding of core question set
2024-11-01 FEMVP202 4111.5	Section 3.1	Updated Higg FEM Verification workflow diagram.
	Section 3.2	- Added requirement on applying Time Ordinance Category of FEM questions to Verification scope. - Added reference to Higg FEM Verifier Field Guide
	Section 3.3	Removed text on Core Verification. Defined Verification Scope (Level 1 only) for FEM2024.
	Section 4.4	- Added requirement for Verifier comments in relation to the Time Ordinance Category of FEM questions. - Added reference to Higg FEM Verifier Field Guide
	Section 5	- Added requirement to use the Opening/Closing Meeting slide templates provided by Cascade. - Added reference to Higg FEM Verifier Field Guide
	Appendix A	Added person day recommendation for facilities that report energy and water data separately.
	Appendix C	Replaced Core Verification Question list with Quantitative Metrics question list.
	Section 4.10 & Appendix D	Added criteria and requirements for editing a module in VRF status.
2025-10-30 FEMVP202 5101.6	Section 3.3	Defined Verification Scope (Level 1 only) for FEM2025.
	Section 3.5	Added requirements to list itemized costing in Verifier Body proposal/quotations.
	Section 3.6 & Appendix A	- Revised Guidance and Criteria for determining person day allocation - Added scenario with defined minimum required person day allocation.
	Section 4.1	Specified requirements for listing of Verifiers on Higg vFEM.

	Section 4.1 & 4.5	Included required review of responses from the previous FEM Cadence now displayed on the FEM, where applicable.
	Section 4.3	Specified verification requirements for uploaded evidence in the vFEM.
	Section 4.8	Added requirements for Report Reviewers
	Section 4.10 & Appendix D	Updated VRF change request process and workflow diagram
2026-09-30 FEMVP202 6091.7	Sections 1.3 & 3.4	Removed Facility Foundations and added information on FEP. Facility Foundations will be available on Worldly platform until December 31, 2026
	Section 3.1	Updated Higg FEM Verification workflow diagram.
	Section 3.2	Added clarification that users should contact Cascale with any questions regarding facility scope and FEM allocation.
	Section 3.3	Updated Verification Scope (Level 1 only) for FEM2026.
	Section 4.1	Added requirement that verification should be conducted during the facility's normal operating hours, and at a mutually agreed upon time.
	Section 4.9	- Added requirement that all supporting evidence submitted during the VRE processes must be reviewed and considered. - Updated Dispute information communication channel. Information should be now submitted to Cascale.
	Section 4.10	Updated VRF change request communication channel. Requests should now be submitted directly to Cascale for review.
	Section 5.5 (Table 7)	Added clarification on the post-verification options that must be explained to facility staff during the closing meeting.
	Section 7	Updated document reference links.
	Appendix A & B	- Updated provision numbering. - Add requirement to increase person day allocation by a minimum of 0.5 days when translation is required.

9 APPENDICES

9.1 APPENDIX A –PERSON-DAY GUIDANCE FOR VERIFICATION

Introduction

- 9.1.1 Facilities and VBs shall mutually agree on the number of person-days required for Verification.
- 9.1.1.1 *Verification (onsite or offsite) shall not be less than one (1) person day.*
- 9.1.1.2 *Verification (onsite or offsite) shall not be more than three (3) person days unless agreed upon by the facility and Verifier Body.*
- 9.1.1.3 *If non-local Verifiers are used and translation is required, a minimum of 0.5 person days shall be added to the person-day allocation.*
- 9.1.2 One (1) person-day corresponds to 8-hours working time for 1 Verifier. It excludes lunch breaks and breaks unless required by law in the country of execution of the verification.
- 9.1.3 Verification scheduling and preparation, travel time, and report writing are not in the scope of Verification person day allocation.
- 9.1.4 The number of person-days required to complete a Higg FEM Verification will depend on various criteria summarized below.
- 9.1.5 The number of person-days shall be determined by taking all the applicable criteria in this Appendix into consideration including the required and/or recommended number of person days listed below.
- 9.1.5.1 *During an onsite verification, Cascale requires a minimum number of person days for specific scenarios defined below that must be followed.*
- 9.1.5.2 *Where a required minimum number of person days is not specified, the recommended number of person days and criteria for determining number of person days shall be used to determine the person day allocation.*
- 9.1.6 This guidance is aimed to assist VBs determine the number of person-days for the purposes of quoting cost (if applicable) and scheduling and is applicable to Verifications conducted onsite or offsite.
- 9.1.7 This guidance is subject to updates based on feedback from Cascale membership and other Higg FEM program stakeholders.

Required Minimum Number of Onsite Person Day Scenarios

- 9.1.8 Cascale requires a minimum number of person days for the following scenarios:

Scenario	Facility/Verification Conditions	Minimum No. of Onsite Person Days Required
Note: The required number of person days listed below is the minimum number of person days required. Additional person days may be needed based on the criteria noted in this Appendix.		
1	All of the conditions below are met. • Level 1 Higg FEM Verification (Not FEP) • Facility Type (sipfacilitytype) is: Material Production including facilities that have other facility types in addition to Material Production • Industry Sector (sipindustrysector) is any of the following: • Apparel • Footwear • Home Textiles (includes bed linens, tablecloths, towels, cloth napkins, and similar products) • Is your facility using water for production use (watproduse)? Is: Yes	2
2	All of the conditions below are met. • Level 1 Higg FEM Verification (Not FEP) • Facility Type (sipfacilitytype) is: Finished Product Processing (Product Dyeing, Product Laundering and Product Finishing) including facilities that have other facility types in addition to Finished Product Processing. • Industry Sector (sipindustrysector) is any of the following: • Apparel • Home Textiles (includes bed linens, tablecloths, towels, cloth napkins, and similar products) • Facility Processes is any of the following: • Batch dyeing (piece dye) • Batch Dyeing (Jet / Rapid, Jig, Beam, Yarn Dye, etc) • Garment Dyeing • Industrial Wastewater is treated onsite (wwtreatindlocation1 or wwtreatindlocation2) Is: Treated Onsite OR Treated Onsite and Offsite	2

Recommended Minimum Number of Person Day Scenarios

9.1.9 Cascade recommends a minimum of two (2) person days for most Higg FEM Verifications.

9.1.10 Verifications of less than 2 person days should only occur when it is determined that due to facility size, operations, and/or number of applicable Higg FEM questions, that less than 2 person days will allow for appropriate verification of all Higg FEM questions and supporting data in accordance with this protocol.

Criteria for Determining Person Days

9.1.11 The Table below summarizes criteria that shall be considered by VBs when determining the number of person days required to complete Verification.

Criteria	Description
Foundational Environmental Performance (FEP) module verification	FEP questions are a defined subset of Higg FEM Level 1 questions, and this module is expected to require less time for verification
Water Use/Risk	More time is expected to verify facilities that are classified as High Water Users in the FEM and/or are located in an area of high water risk as additional Higg FEM questions apply.
Generation of Industrial Wastewater and/or Onsite Wastewater Treatment Operations	More time is expected to verify facilities that generate industrial wastewater and/or have onsite wastewater treatment operations as additional Higg FEM questions apply.
Tracking of energy and/or water use separately across multiple facility types	Vertically integrated facilities that have multiple facility types, as defined in the Site Information section of the Higg FEM, that track energy and/or water use separately (by facility type) will likely require additional time for verification of quantitative metrics.
Chemicals used in Production	More time is expected to verify facilities that use Chemicals in Production as additional Higg FEM questions apply.
Use of Translators	If non-local Verifiers are used and translators are required, a minimum of 0.5 person day shall be added to the person-day allocation.
Additional Considerations	Additional considerations should be given to: • Facility size (i.e. time required for facility observations). • Complexity and scope of operations. • Higg FEM question applicability of each FEM Section (i.e., how many questions apply to the facility). • Amount and complexity of environmental data (e.g., quantitative metrics) that requires verification.

9.2 APPENDIX B – HIGG FEM VERIFICATION OBSERVATION GUIDELINES

9.2.1 Introduction

- 9.2.1.1 *If an interested stakeholder that is not representative of a Verifier Body (e.g., brand, non-governmental organization, etc.) wishes to observe a scheduled verification, they must inform and obtain approval from the facility and VB to attend the verification. The observer(s) must confirm this directly with the facility and VB.*
- 9.2.1.2 *Once a facility has approved of the observation the observer shall follow the guidelines below.*
- 9.2.1.3 *Higg FEM Observations are not considered formal Cascale/VPM quality assurance (QA) activities conducted as part of the FEM QA Program, however any reported verification quality or other concerns will be investigated by the Cascale/VPM.*
- 9.2.1.4 *Higg FEM Observations shall not impact the verification process at the facility or verification outcomes.*

9.2.2 Observation Guidelines

- 9.2.2.1 *During the on-site verification observation, the observer(s) may periodically ask the Verifier questions for clarification, but this should not interfere with the Verification process. The observers must NOT:*
- *Actively participate in the verification.*
 - *Provide guidance or recommendations to the Verifier or facility.*
 - *Ask the facility questions about their self-assessment data.*
 - *Ask the facility questions about their compliance with Standards (e.g., the brand's Code of Conduct/requirements).*
 - *Interpret questions in the FEM data collection tool or FEM Content Guidance.*
 - *Join private worker interviews.*
 - *Observers must also follow any facility and/or Verifier requirements in addition to those listed above.*
- 9.2.2.2 *The presence of observers during the verification has the potential to impact the impartiality of the verification. Observers should look for any indication that their presence is having an impact, such as the facility trying to persuade a Verifier to enter specific data and take any necessary measures to avoid this.*
- 9.2.2.3 *If at any time the Verifier feels the presence of the observer is impeding their ability to conduct an impartial verification, the Verifier may ask the observer to leave. This should be reported to the VPM at FEM@Sumerra.com.*

9.2.3 Observation Feedback

9.2.3.1 The VPM is interested in receiving continued feedback on Verification activities. Observer(s) can provide feedback on the verification quality or any other observed concerns to the VPM at FEM@Sumerra.com.

9.2.3.2 Any input observers provide will not impact Verifier or VB scoring but will be used to make improvements to the verification process.

9.2.4 Ethics, Integrity, and Impartiality

9.2.4.1 All observers must follow Higg FEM Verifier Body Requirements as well as their own professional code of conduct related to ethics, integrity, and impartiality.

9.3 APPENDIX C – HIGG FEM QUANTITATIVE METRICS QUESTIONS (LEVEL 1)

If applicable, the questions listed below require reporting and verification of Quantitative Metrics in accordance with this Protocol.

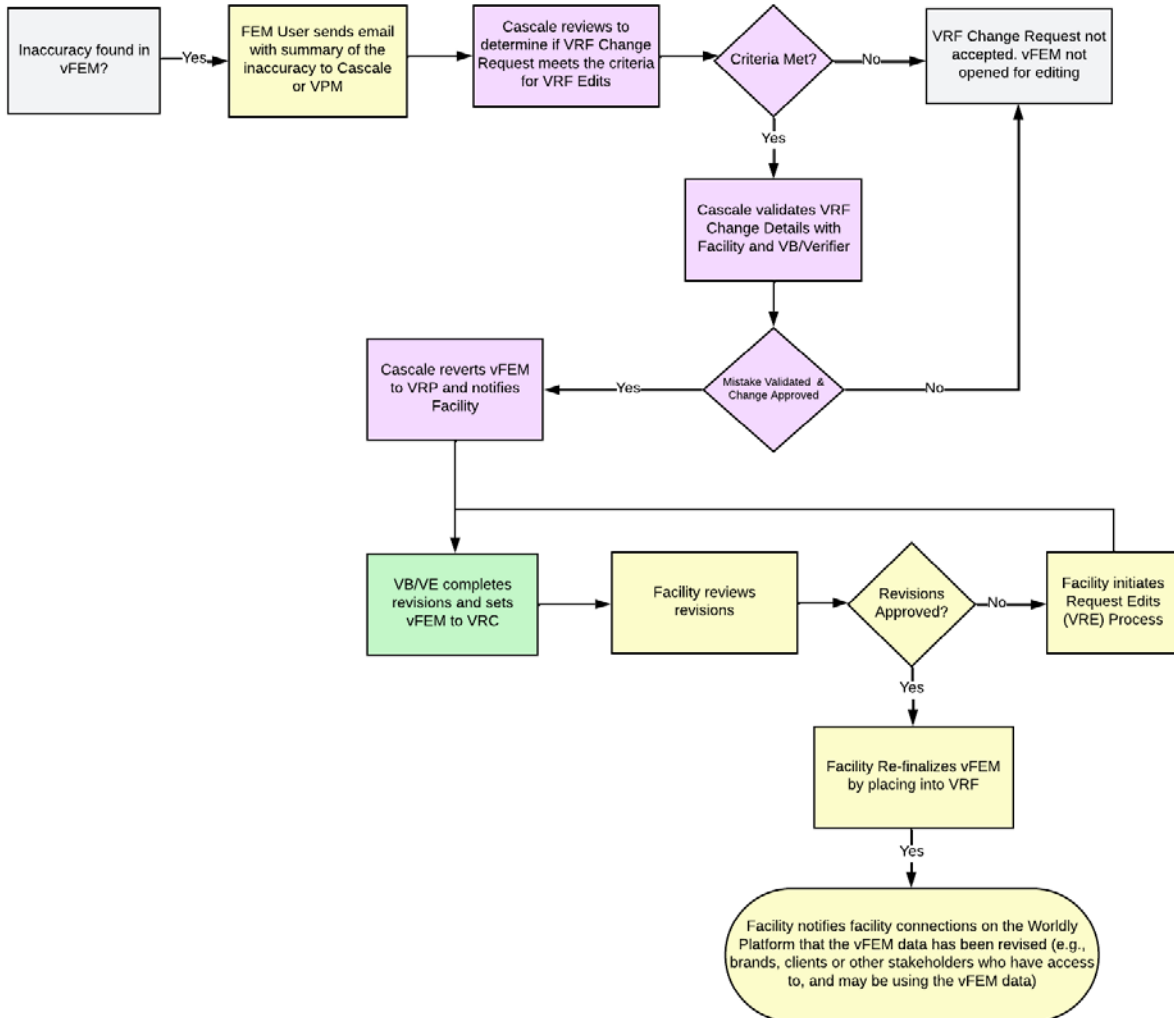
Higg FEM Section	Question Number (if applicable)	Question Text	Question Ref ID
Site Info & Permits	Q2	Total Number of Employees:	siptotalnumemployees
Site Info & Permits	Q3	What was your facility's annual volume?	sipfacilityannualprodvol
Energy	Q1	Select all sources of energy for your facility (exclude sources used for company owned and controlled vehicles)	ensourcefacility
Energy	Q2.1	Select all sources of energy/fuel for company owned and controlled vehicles:	envehicleheader
Energy	Q3	Does your facility purchase Energy Attribute Certificates (EACs) (e.g. Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs))?	ensourcepurcheac
Energy	Q4	Does your facility purchase Carbon Offsets?	enpurchco
Energy	Q7	Does your facility identify and track separately energy use in domestic vs. production?	ensourcetracksepdomprod
Energy	Q8	Does your facility track the use of every energy/fuel source used by company owned and controlled vehicles?	ensourcevehicletrackopt
Water	Q4	Does the water consumption you track and report include the rejected water quantity from incoming water pre-treatment?	watsourcetrackoptrejected
Water	Q5	Are you able to identify and track domestic and production water use separately?	wattrackdomprodsep
Wastewater	Q1	Does your facility track its wastewater volume?	wwtrackopt
Wastewater	Q2	Does your facility monitor the BOD5 Level of your wastewater?	wwmonitorBOD5
Wastewater	Q9	Does your facility track its industrial wastewater sludge generated in the reporting year?	wwsludgereporting
Wastewater	Q10	Does your facility track its domestic wastewater sludge generated in the reporting year?	wwsludgedomesticreporting
Air Emissions	Q6	Does your facility track refrigerant usage?	airrefrigtrack
Waste	Q3 & Q4	Does your facility track each non-hazardous waste stream your facility generates?	wstsourceeach
Waste	Q7 & Q8	Does your facility track each hazardous waste stream your facility generates?	wstsourcehtrackeach

9.4 APPENDIX D – HIGG FEM VRF CHANGE REQUEST PROCESS

Higg FEM VRF Change Request Process

Responsible Party

- FEM User (Facility, Verifier Body, Brand)
- Cascale/Verification Program Manager (VPM)
- Verifier Body/Verifier (VB/VE)



VRF Change Workflow version 1.3
 Created date: 2023-09-21
 Revised date: 2026-10-16