Overview of initiative to develop ICT Sector Guidance to support the GHG Protocol Product Standard

Introduction

This initiative aims to develop sector guidance for the carbon footprinting of ICT products (including goods and services) to support the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol Product Accounting and Reporting Standard. The output of the work will be published jointly by WRI, WBCSD, Carbon Trust and GeSI as ICT Sector Guidance and will be freely available on the www.ghgprotocol.org website.

The ICT Sector Guidance will be developed as a practical guide for use by people who are estimating carbon footprints related to ICT products and services. It will be written for practitioners and will address issues such as product life cycle boundaries, definitions for functional units, and specific data quality aspects for the sector. The aim is to provide consistent methodologies and approaches for practitioners to follow which will ensure increased transparency and the adoption of common global methodologies and assumptions. The document will also provide guidance for measuring the enablement effect of ICT products.

Objectives, Scope and Timeline

Generic guidance and standards exist for product carbon footprinting. However, these do not address the specific complexities of the ICT sector which is characterised by complex and multiple supply chains, magnitude of components, variability and uncertainty related to the use phase, and multiple services provided that each require specific functional unit and boundary definitions.

Increasingly, corporate and government customers are demanding carbon footprint data of the products and services that they are purchasing. There is also a growing awareness of the potential of ICT products and services to reduce the GHG emissions of other systems and processes. However, there are no common global methodologies or standards for addressing how to carbon footprint ICT products and services. Considering the complex nature of most ICT products, specific guidance is required.

The ICT Sector Guidance Initiative seeks to address this issue by developing common approaches and methodologies for carbon footprinting ICT products and services. The guidance will pull together existing work and research, and draw on current expertise and experience in the industry.

The intention is for the initiative to provide a guidance document that covers the following scope:
- An overview section providing general guidance
- Guidance related to ICT infrastructure (covering areas such as networks, data centres, hardware and software)
- Guidance related to ICT Service Applications (these will refer to a combination of the infrastructure guidance, and will in some cases also cover the enablement effect of the ICT application)
- Supporting default data, secondary emissions factors, references and glossary

The initial scope will focus on the three areas of: telecommunications networks, desktop managed services and remote collaboration.

The project was publicly announced in March 2011. The planned timetable is to issue drafts of sections available for public comment during the summer and fall of 2011, with publication planned for the end of 2011.

Organisation and Governance Structure

The Sector Guidance will be developed by a Technical Working Group consisting of ICT company representatives together with other technical experts.

A Stakeholder Advisory Group (drawn from interested stakeholders from government, business NGOs, academia and the general public) will provide critical feedback on draft documents throughout the process.

A Steering Committee will provide strategic direction and build consensus for the process.

The guidance development is convened by a secretariat of the World Resources Institute (WRI), the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), the Global e-Sustainability Initiative (GeSI) and the Carbon Trust. GeSI has a key role in promoting the work within the ICT industry through liaison with other ICT industry groups and trade associations. The Carbon Trust is acting as facilitator and co-ordinator for the process.

The full governance structure document is available at the www.ghgprotocol.org website.

Membership

Membership of the Technical Working Group (TWG) is open to all ICT companies (who are each asked to contribute a one-off payment of £10,000 to fund the process). The TWG may also invite technical experts who are willing and able to contribute to the group.

The Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) is open to all interested stakeholders. To register for the SAG go to www.ghgprotocol.org/feature/new-initiative-announced-help-ict-industry-measure-carbon-footprint

Contact

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