P04 — Methodological Sovereignty

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Methodological Sovereignty
“You own your data only if you own your method.”
Technical Layer

Definition

An organisation possesses genuine data sovereignty only if it also controls its methodology. Methodology must be: (a) documented in writing by the organisation, (b) aligned to a public standard (IPCC AR6, GRI 305, ISSB S2, Verra VM0042), and (c) reproducible by a qualified third party without reference to any vendor system. If the methodology belongs to a vendor, the organisation is 'controlled' at best.

Rationale

Vendors change pricing, pivot strategy, or cease operations. Organisations that outsource methodology without documentation lose all historical comparability overnight when a vendor changes its models. This is a form of retroactive data sovereignty collapse. The World Bank Sovereign Climate Reporting Framework (2022) and Cambridge Core Data & Policy Journal (2024) both identify methodology lock-in as the primary long-term risk in climate data infrastructure.

Implementation Steps

1. Write your own methodology document — not a reference to a vendor's documentation.
2. Anchor every calculation to a specific section of a public standard (e.g. IPCC AR6 WG3 §2.3).
3. Have the methodology reviewed by an independent expert at least once per year.
4. When vendors update their models, log the change and restate historical figures if material.
5. Store the methodology document in your own systems, not exclusively on a vendor platform.

Compliance Checklist

	Criterion	What it means
?	**Own methodology document exists**	A document you wrote describes how each metric is calculated.

	Criterion	What it means
?	**Anchored to public standard**	Each calculation references a specific section of IPCC AR6 / GRI / ISSB.
?	**Independently reproducible**	A qualified analyst could reproduce your results using only your document.
?	**Vendor-change log maintained**	Changes to vendor models that affect your figures are documented.

Regulatory References

- IPCC AR6 — Annex II (Methodologies for GHG inventories)
- GRI 305 (Emissions) — 2016, mandatory methodology disclosure
- World Bank — Sovereign Climate and Nature Reporting Framework (2022)

Recommended Tools and Platforms

GHG Protocol Corporate Standard IPCC Emission Factor Database (EFDB) GRI 305 reporting tool

Keywords

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