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1.5°C



WWF RESOURCE GUIDE FOR ASSET OWNERS

SELECTING, APPOINTING AND MONITORING
YOUR INVESTMENT MANAGER

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Planta Fotovoltaica Santa Fe in San Lorenzo, Argentina. © Jason Houston / WWF-US



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INTRODUCTION

The Paris Agreement, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's special report on global warming of 1.5°C, have established a consensus on the need to quickly reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. However, investment flows are currently not aligned with these ambitions.

Asset owners should be inclined to address climate change because of their long-term duty to safeguard the pensions of, or provide insurance to the assets of, current and future generations. WWF research (2018) has indicated that asset owners' public equity and corporate bond portfolios are not yet aligned with the Paris climate goals.

Climate misalignment exposes asset owners to climate-related financial risks. The financial industry (e.g. [Mercer](#)) and academic research (e.g. [Cambridge University, London School of Economics](#)) find that aligning investments with the Paris climate agreement's goal to keep global warming well below 2°C will ultimately lead to both higher investment returns and lower financial risks than no action would.

Climate misalignment even risks perpetuating an environment that puts asset owners' core business at risk. Allianz CEO Oliver Bate has called climate change and sustainability the organisation's overarching priority, [stating](#) that 'if we make the dividend payments but have no planet for our children - we will fail'. And Frank Elderson, chair of the Network on Greening the Financial System (NGFS), has [said](#) that 'A transition to a green and low-carbon economy is not a niche nor is it a "nice to have" for the happy few. It is crucial for our own survival. There is no alternative.'

As a consequence, a growing number of asset owners are convinced of the need to align their investments with the Paris climate goals and contribute to a [just transition](#), and the feasibility of doing so. Asset owners hold a unique position in the financial system, and can create a demand for climate-related products and services from their service providers. Investment managers are particularly critical for asset owners, as they manage – whether internally or externally – their assets on the basis of the mandates awarded to them. The selection of experienced investment managers is therefore crucial if asset owners want all their assets to be managed in line with their own climate-related beliefs, policies and targets.

There is a growing body of resources that can support asset owners' assessment of investment managers' climate performance. This paper provides an overview of the existing resources (guidance, net zero investor initiatives, investment managers' climate performance research) and formulates recommendations on how asset owners can use these resources for investment manager engagement and selection.¹ Annex 1 collates key findings of various sources into one table.

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- 1 Additional relevant resources to assess investment manager climate action concern their engagement activities with portfolio companies. This can include membership to collective engagement initiatives (e.g. Climate Action 100), etc.) and the use by investment managers of resources that assess portfolio company performance (e.g. Climate Action 100+ benchmark, Transition Pathway Initiative, Science-Based Targets initiative etc.). WWF decided not to include these resources in this guide, however, because they do not directly assess investment managers (i.e. Climate Action 100+ benchmark, Transition Pathway Initiative, Science-Based Targets initiative etc.) and because Climate Action 100+ membership does not cover an investment managers' full climate strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ASSET OWNERS ON HOW TO INTEGRATE RESOURCES INTO INVESTMENT MANAGER SELECTION, APPOINTMENT AND MONITORING

WWF recommends that asset owners integrate Paris climate alignment considerations into their investment manager selection, appointment and monitoring process. They can notably – in collaboration with their investment advisors, if relevant – use the resources mentioned in this publication, or other relevant resources, for the following actions:

Mandate requirements and request for proposals (RFPs):

- Include the information and insights obtained from climate guidance documents, investor initiatives and frameworks and climate performance assessments in mandate requirements and RFPs;
- Encourage investment managers to include their climate commitments and actions as an integral part of their response to the RFPs, and notably how they intend to improve their performance against the climate performance assessments that are included in the RFPs.

Investment manager selection and appointment:

- Favour investment managers that score well on the selected climate performance assessments;

- Favour investment managers that are a member of the [net-zero asset manager initiative](#) (NZAMI) or that have committed to setting targets under the [science-based target initiative](#) (SBT);
- Favour investment managers that are taking immediate action towards achieving net-zero in line with [WWF's criteria for credible net-zero commitments by financial institutions](#).

Investment manager monitoring:

- Track the climate performance of selected investment managers to assess progress, and integrate the findings into conversations with the investment managers;
- Encourage relevant actors (e.g. data and index providers) to develop resources that allow for a comprehensive and robust climate alignment assessment of the whole investment management industry.



Windturbines near the North Sea coast. © Michel Gunther / WWF

RESOURCES FOR ASSET OWNERS TO SUPPORT INVESTMENT MANAGER SELECTION, APPOINTMENT AND MONITORING

GUIDANCE

WWF asset owner climate guide

WWF has published a [climate guide to asset owners](#) on how they can align their investments with the Paris climate goals, including recommendations on how they can engage with investment managers.

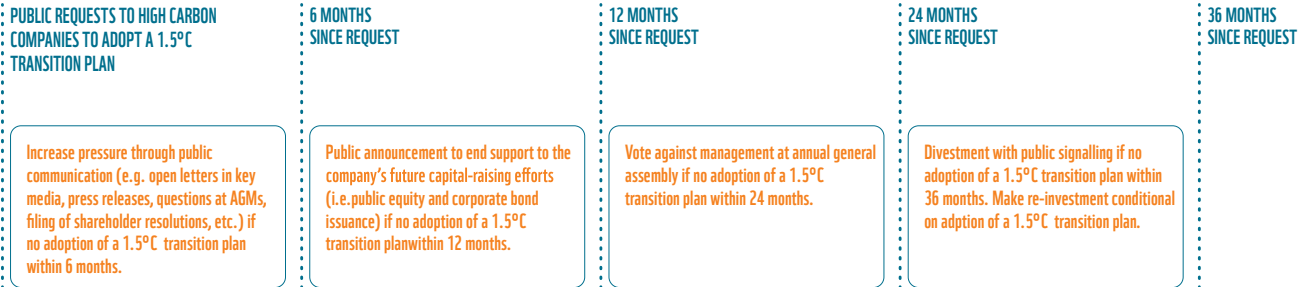
The guide encourages asset owners to include climate alignment considerations in new requests to proposals and/or amend existing mandates, as well as to make climate change a core criterion in the selection procedure of investment managers: investment managers should demonstrate a robust track-record that shows capacity to assess and address the climate issue and indicate how climate inclusion may alter the existing portfolio strategy, the investable universe, tracking error, liquidity, financial risk and return expectations and time horizons.

More specific recommendations that are included in the guide, and that are ideally integrated into the above-mentioned requests to proposals, are for asset owners to:

- Require investment managers to engage with high carbon portfolio companies (see an illustrative escalation strategy in the figure below) and align proxy voting with the climate objectives of the asset owners. Investment managers are to support climate-related resolutions in AGMs of portfolio companies, interact with the proxy voting advisors on climate change, and disclose their voting records so that their consistency with the asset owners’ climate objectives can be scrutinised.
- Require investment managers to deliver reporting aligned with the recommendations of the taskforce on climate-related financial disclosures (TCFD), and notably to report climate alignment of their mandated portfolio using forward-looking climate scenario analysis.

Finally, the guide encourages asset owners to publicly signal their requirements for investment managers to create market demand and increase impact.

FIGURE 1 ILLUSTRATIVE ENGAGEMENT ESCALATION STRATEGY



UN Principles for Responsible Investments (UN PRI) asset owner resources

UN PRI has produced [guidance](#) to help asset owners address responsible investment principles and ESG factors in their relationships with their investment managers. The guidance comprises five modules:

- Module 1 describes a process followed by an asset owner to develop a responsible investment policy and strategy. This also includes the development of a strategic approach to asset allocation that incorporates ESG considerations.
- Module 2 (forthcoming) will address the internal process of establishing mandate requirements, including key ESG considerations that will govern the investment manager, and drafting the RFP to reflect those requirements at a high level.
- Module 3 focuses on the selection process to identify the investment manager that has the responsible investment attributes in place to meet the ESG requirements specified by the asset owner in Module 2.
- Module 4 describes the manager appointment process to transfer the requirements specified in the mandate into legal documentation.
- Module 5 sets out a harmonised approach to investment manager monitoring, including tools and practical recommendations.

WWF believes that the UN PRI guidance provides relevant further details to the recommendations of the WWF asset owner climate guide, notably with regards to the practical steps and processes that an asset owner has to put in place to select competent investment managers. The PRI approach is focused on ESG more broadly, but the suggested processes can also be



applied to climate change more specifically. Alternatively, asset owners can pay particular attention to climate change within a broader ESG approach to investment manager selection.

NET-ZERO INVESTOR INITIATIVES AND SCIENCE-BASED TARGET SETTING FRAMEWORKS

Net Zero Asset Manager Initiative

The Net Zero Asset Managers Initiative (NZAMI) is a group of international investment managers committed to supporting the goal of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 or sooner - in line with global efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C - and to supporting aligning investments with net zero emissions by 2050 or sooner. At the time of publication, the initiative had 87 members with, collectively, \$37 trillion in assets under management.

The NZAMI initiative is managed globally by six Founding Partner investor networks, namely: Asia Investor Group on Climate Change (AIGCC), CDP, Ceres, Investor Group on Climate Change (IGCC), Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change (IIGCC) and Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI). The initiative is also endorsed by The Investor Agenda, of which the investor networks are all founding partners.

WWF believes that investment managers that sign on to the NZAMI show intent to bring their investments in line with the Paris climate goals. However, their commitment will need to be backed up with credible action and further scrutiny on the basis of additional resources is required.

UN-convened Net Zero Asset Owner Alliance

The UN-convened Net Zero Asset Owner Alliance (NZAOA) is a group of asset owners that has committed to ‘transitioning their investment portfolios to net-zero GHG emissions by 2050 consistent with a maximum temperature rise of 1.5°C above pre-industrial temperatures, taking into account the best available scientific knowledge including the findings of the IPCC, and regularly reporting on progress, including establishing intermediate targets every five years in line with Paris Agreement Article 4.9’. At the time of publication, the alliance had gathered 35 members with jointly \$5.5 trillion in asset under management.

The NZAOA has a particular focus on achieving emission reduction outcomes in the real economy. This includes setting short-term targets aligned with their net zero ambition, and work on creating the conditions for growing the investable universe for 1.5°C aligned climate solutions. The NZAOA is also engaging with key stakeholders, including many of the world’s largest investment managers. The rationale is that these are strategically positioned to steward and select portfolio companies in a way that supports the NZAOA members’ net-zero ambitions.

The NZAOA has notably focused on investment managers’ voting expectations. It has created [foundational guidelines](#) for asset owners to construct their own expectations of their asset managers’ proxy voting approaches. The guidelines document outlines a set of topics and principles to assess an asset manager’s overall approach to climate-related proxy voting. These guidelines are centered on four themes: governance, interest alignment, evaluation, and transparency.



WWF is a strategic and scientific partner to the NZAOA. We believe there is value for asset owners to join this initiative and participate in its dialogues with investment managers to better understand and improve their climate performance. In addition, asset owners will need to scrutinise investment managers' climate performance on the basis of additional resources.

Science-Based Target Initiative for Financial Institutions

The Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi) mobilises companies to set science-based targets and boosts their competitive advantage in the transition to a low-carbon economy. It is a collaboration between CDP, the United Nations Global Compact, World Resources Institute (WRI), and WWF.

SBTi launched a [framework for financial institutions](#) (SBT-FI) in October 2020 which includes target setting methods, target validation criteria and recommendations, target setting tools, and guidance for financial institutions to align their lending and investment portfolios with the ambitions of the Paris Agreement.

At the time of publication, 26 investment managers had committed to setting science-based targets. These investment managers will have two years (from their commitment date or the launch of the framework if they committed before October 2020) to adopt their targets on the basis of the framework.

WWF believes that investment managers that have committed to set science-based targets show intent to bring their investments in line with the Paris climate goals. However, their commitment and forthcoming targets will need to be backed by credible action and appropriately monitored on the basis of additional resources.



Geothermal Power Plant © Global Warming Images / WWF

INVESTMENT MANAGERS' CLIMATE PERFORMANCE RESEARCH

FinanceMap

[FinanceMap](#) is an online, publicly available platform – developed by InfluenceMap – that looks at the investment management sector through a climate lens, examining portfolios, investor-engagement processes, and shareholder resolutions. The twin objectives are to give asset owners and other key stakeholders insights into how the asset management sector is performing on climate change and to drive improvement within the sector by providing benchmarking information.

FinanceMap provides asset owners with two metrics:

- Paris alignment score. FinanceMap applies the Paris Agreement Capital Transition Assessment (PACTA) methodology managed by 2 Degrees Investing Initiative to a universe of 70,000 listed funds – held by over 1,000 investment manager groups – to assess the alignment of portfolios with the Paris Agreement. PACTA considers the underlying assets controlled by the companies in the portfolio and their future evolution with climate scenarios of the International Energy Agency (IEA). It covers sectors with significant climate risk: automotive, electric power, oil & gas production, and coal mining. FinanceMap then implements a method to weight these technology-level results into Sector and Portfolio Paris Alignment (PA) scores.² The Portfolio PA scores range from - 100% (highly misaligned) to + 100% (exceeding Paris alignment), with a deviation of 0% being Paris aligned under the IEA scenario used. It also shows sectoral and technology-level deviation.
- Engagement score. FinanceMap provides metrics on investor engagement with companies on climate, using a methodology developed by the FinanceMap team in consultation with leading global investment managers. It also gathers metrics on the filing and voting behaviour of investment managers on climate-relevant shareholder resolutions. The engagement score is currently available for 30 leading investment managers.

FinanceMap has found that the 30 leading investment management groups all show substantial Paris misalignment of their overall holdings, largely due to the prevalence of passive, index-linked investment strategies. There is, however, based on available disclosures, a significant variation in performance on company engagement and support for shareholder resolutions on climate change.

ShareAction

ShareAction has examined 75 of the most influential investment managers worldwide on responsible investment governance, climate change, biodiversity and human rights in its '[Point of No Returns](#)' research series – and has provided each investment manager with a score ranging from A to E. Their research shows an overall substandard approach to responsible investment: the combined assets under management (AUM) of those managers with a D or E rating is US\$36 trillion, constituting 64% of the total AUM assessed.

The picture that emerges from ShareAction's climate change analysis, while indicating a rising awareness of climate change as a financial risk, is largely one of insufficient progress from the industry's most influential players. It finds that just over half of the assessed investment managers include climate change in their policies and only a small percentage make specific commitments relating to portfolio decarbonisation. The focus of investment managers' engagement with companies remains firmly on the disclosure of climate-related data, with fewer investors concentrating their stewardship efforts around corporate strategy alignment with the goals of the Paris Agreement and the setting of climate-related targets. The assessment of portfolio climate alignment is also rarely used to inform investment and engagement strategies.

A follow-up [leading practice guide](#) offers a comprehensive range of case studies where asset managers have demonstrated a leading approach to responsible investment topics, including climate change. While some asset managers are making climate-related progress in the areas of voting policies and practices, net-zero commitments, robust engagement approaches, and climate-related reporting, the guide highlights that very few asset managers are showing such leadership across multiple areas. The guide also offers a 'checklist' of leading practice, which asset owners and consultants can use to frame discussions and set stronger expectations.

In a separate analysis, ShareAction has also examined the [voting practices](#) of 60 of the world's largest asset managers on 102 resolutions, of which 53 were either pure climate change or climate-related lobbying resolutions. The analysis, which also considered voting rationales, found that generally investors are still under-utilising their voting power and using private engagements as an excuse of not voting more assertively on climate-related resolutions.

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- Each Sector PA Score is a weighted average of the technology-level deviations for every technology within a sector. The technology deviation results are weighted both by the portfolio's exposure to each technology as well as the technology's importance to global emissions as determined by the IEA. A detailed methodology can be consulted [here](#).



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RESPOND

[RESPOND](#) (Resilient and Sustainable Portfolios that Protect Nature and Drive Decarbonisation) is an interactive online tool developed by WWF-Singapore that reviews asset managers' public disclosures about their implementation of responsible investment (RI). The tool is based on a [WWF framework](#)³ – that is aligned with the TCFD recommendations and the UN PRI – and consists of six pillars, 14 indicators and 95 sub-indicators.

In addition to including sub-indicators pertaining to overall ESG integration and internal sustainability governance, the framework includes issue-specific sub-indicators focusing on climate change, water risk, biodiversity loss, ocean sustainability as well as human and labour rights. The table below provides an overview of the framework's climate-related sub-indicators.

For its inaugural launch in January 2020, the RESPOND tool analysed the public disclosures⁴ of 22 European asset managers who all met the following three criteria: a minimum AUM of US\$200 billion, a presence in Asia, and disclosing an A+ UN PRI rating.⁵ For its 2021 release, in addition to updating the analysis of these 22 European asset managers, the RESPOND tool focused on eight Asian asset managers meeting the following two criteria: a minimum AUM of US\$200 billion, and being a PRI signatory. Key findings from the RESPOND 2021 analysis are available in this [report](#) and summarised in this [press release](#).

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- 3 See the appendix section of the report to view the full framework.
- 4 Materials reviewed include the latest annual, sustainability and RI reports, public statements and policies, press releases and other information posted on asset managers' websites. Each asset manager included is given the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the analysis of their disclosures.
- 5 Asset managers that disclosed receiving a rating of A+ on either the Strategy & Governance or the Listed Equity modules of the PRI Reporting Framework in 2018 or 2019.

TABLE 1 OVERVIEW OF THE WWF RESPOND CLIMATE-RELATED SUB-INDICATORS.

PILLAR	INDICATOR	CLIMATE-RELATED SUB-INDICATOR
Purpose	#1 Relevance of sustainability in organisation’s strategy and investment beliefs	#3 Does the asset manager publicly recognize that climate change poses long-term risks to business and society?
	#2 Industry collaboration and participation	#9-11 Does the asset manager support or are they involved in Investor Agenda, Climate Action 100+, IIGCC, AIGCC, UNEP FI, CDP and TCFD?
Policies	#3 Responsible investment policies	N/A
	#4 Issue specific policies	#20 a. Does the asset manager have a policy or statement explaining that climate change is incorporated into investment decision-making? b. Does the asset manager expect all portfolio companies to align to the TCFD recommendations? c. Does the asset manager expect all portfolio companies to set Science Based Targets? d. Does the asset manager’s voting policy have a statement on how climate-related issues will be voted?
Processes	#5 Research, stock selection, and monitoring	N/A
	#6 Active ownership	N/A
People	#7 Governance	#47 Is there board-level responsibility for climate risk, e.g. is climate risk management included in the board mandate?
	#8 Skills	N/A
	#9 Incentives	N/A
Products	#10 Product availability	N/A
	#11 Promotion of products to clients	N/A
Portfolio	#12 Risk assessment	#66 Does the asset manager conduct climate risk assessments or scenario analysis (e.g. PACTA) at the portfolio level? #67 Does the asset manager disclose the key features of the conducted scenario analysis, including selected scenarios and actions taken to address identified risks?
	#13 Metrics and targets	#68 Does the asset manager calculate and disclose its carbon footprint or intensity at the portfolio level? #70 Has the asset manager developed and explained a strategy or methodology for the decarbonization of its portfolio? #71 Has/will the asset manager set targets for aligning its portfolio to a 1.5-degree C scenario?
	#14 Disclosure	#73 Does the asset manager publish a TCFD report or align its public reporting with the TCFD recommendations? #81 Does the asset manager disclose the climate alignment of its portfolio?

Reclaim Finance

Reclaim Finance has developed and published [coal score cards](#) for 29 major investment managers based in Europe and the USA. The scoring of the investment managers' coal policies was based on responses to a questionnaire that covers three topics: climate alignment and engagement, dealing with coal in active management, and dealing with coal in 'passive' management. The research finds that:

- Less than half of the investment managers assessed have a public policy to phase out coal.
- Because these policies often allow for many exceptions, overall, only 25% of all the assets managed within the sample were covered by a coal exclusion criterion.
- Passive investments are particularly problematic, with less than 3% of passively managed investments currently being covered by a coal exclusion criterion.

As a consequence of these findings, the scoring for the investment managers is poor – with scores ranging between 0 and 52 out of 100.

Reclaim Finance has, in addition to the above mentioned research, built a [Coal Policy Tool](#) that aims to enable a broader understanding of coal policies adopted by financial institutions for their banking, investment and (re)insurance activities. The database covers 150 investment managers⁶, and uses five criteria to rate coal policies:

- The exclusion of coal mines, coal plants, and coal infrastructure from project finance (i.e. not applicable to investment managers);
- The exclusion of all financial services to companies planning new coal mines, coal plants or coal infrastructure projects;
- The exclusion of companies which are most exposed to the coal sector, based on their share of revenues or electricity production from coal;
- The exclusion of the largest coal producers and largest coal plant operators;
- The quality of the coal phase-out strategy.

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6 Amongst the 150 investment managers are also included the investment management arms of commercial banks and insurance companies: this distinction is needed because financial institutions that have various activities may only apply coal policies to a part of their activities, or adopt different criteria for different parts of their business. For example, an insurance company may adopt an ambitious coal policy to the assets it owns itself (i.e. as an asset owners), but not to its insurance or investment management activities: hence, the institution will receive a good score in the 'asset owner' category, but score poorly in the 'investment manager' or '(re)insurance' category.



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