Common Materials Framework

Guidelines for Aligning Your Existing Material Decision-Making Criteria With the CMF

mindful MATERIALS

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Introduction

Introduction
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Introduction

This guide is for designers, specifiers, and purchasers of building materials—owners and contractors—who have already developed a materials program or established internal guidelines for vetting products for impact.

Many firms have invested significant time and resources to develop and standardize their materials selection and vetting processes. This guidance helps you connect your existing program to the Common Materials Framework (CMF), aligning your approach with the broader industry to scale action.

The criteria outlined in CMF Prioritization v1.0 were intentionally designed to reflect what's already being requested or required by owners, architects, and designers. Chances are, much of your current program already maps to the CMF.

The CMF helps the industry speak a common language—enabling connected data, automated vetting, and streamlined reporting, all of which save time and money. While it doesn't define what "good, better, or best" means, it provides the foundation that makes those benchmarks possible.

Your materials requirements program is where those definitions take shape. The CMF simply gives you the shared structure and terminology to align strategy, communication, and workflows—driving measurable impact reduction across your projects.

Why this Guidance: AEC/O does this sound familiar?

You've been trying to decipher, unpack, and streamline what product is best when it comes to sustainable impacts? You care about multiple impact areas but have had a hard time in consolidating this information in one place that makes sense to enable firm wide action. You signed the AIA Materials Pledge, or work on a LEED, WELL, LBC projects, or similar and would like to automate reporting and compliance.

How this Guidance Will Help You

1: Use this guidance to align your firm's existing processes with the CMF, amplify your market signal, and contribute to collective progress toward transparency and performance at scale.

2: Discover how consistent demand signals and shared language—rooted in the Common Materials Framework—empower firms to work smarter, reduce redundancy, and accelerate meaningful impact across the built environment.

3: Learn why uniting firm-level materials programs under a shared framework matters. This guidance helps bring clarity to product impact requests and aligns the industry's voice around a common approach.

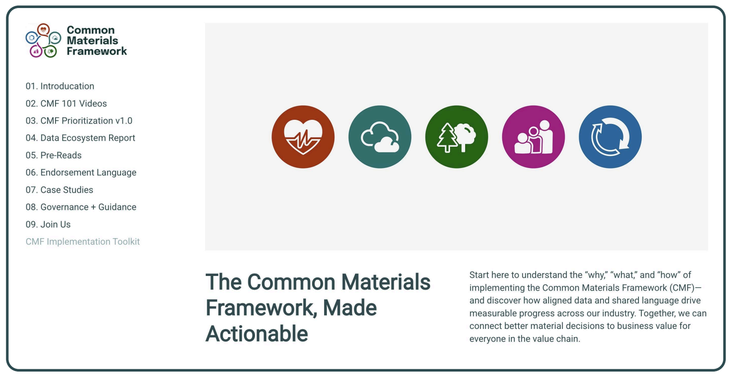
"Alignment is a journey. Our goal was to make it tangible—to help our teams see how every material choice contributes to impact."

–Jill Pedro, LPA

Forum Member

STOP: If you haven't read these resources, do so first.

Before you dive into implementation, explore these key resources to understand the CMF, focus your alignment, and see how shared data can accelerate impact across your organization.



Starter Guide

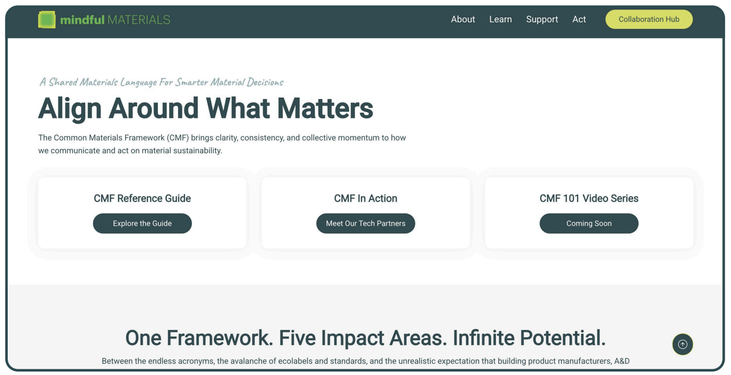
Start here to understand the why, what, and how of implementing the Common Materials Framework (CMF)—and see how aligned data and shared language drive measurable progress across the industry.

View Starter Guide

CMF Prioritization v1.0

Discover where to start with the CMF. CMF Prioritization v1.0 narrows hundreds of ecolabels and standards into a focused, high-impact subset—highlighting those most relevant and widely used across projects today and in the next three years.

Learn More



Data Ecosystem

The building industry has no shortage of data—but without shared infrastructure, it can't move at the speed or scale sustainability demands. mindful MATERIALS' Data Ecosystem Report introduces Data Ecosystem v1.0—a connected, CMF-aligned framework powering verified data flow across platforms, partners, and programs.

Learn More

Aligning Existing Materials Programs with the CMF

Step 1: Things to Consider When Getting Started
Step 2: Understanding the "Levels of Alignment"
Step 3: Using the Airtable Tool to Crosswalk
Step 4: Publishing and Promoting Your Program

Using the CMF to Develop Decision Making Criteria for Material Selection

These steps guide firms in aligning existing materials programs with the Common Materials Framework (CMF). By mapping your current criteria to the CMF, you can maintain the integrity of your internal approach while connecting it to a shared industry structure—making your program easier to communicate, compare, and scale.

Step 1: Things to Consider When Getting Started

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Aligning Existing Materials Programs with the CMF

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Step 1: Things to Consider When Getting Started

Define your approach. Start by clarifying your “why.” Decide whether your requirements apply broadly across all products or target specific categories. Umbrella requirements signal expectations across the market; category-specific ones allow deeper focus where data and maturity are strongest.

Acknowledge market variability. Start small but strategic. Data availability varies widely—some categories have robust reporting, others are still developing. Your requirements can send an important market signal, driving progress where it’s most needed.

Establish your criteria. Communicate clearly within your teams. Decide whether you’ll set baseline requirements, identify differentiators for preferred products, or both. Define what level of documentation you’ll accept—self-disclosed data, third-party verification, or certifications.

Leverage existing frameworks. Build on what works. Use the AIA Materials Pledge, LEED v5, or the Materials Pledge Reporting Guide to identify which categories to address first. Aligning with these standards supports consistency and simplifies communication.

Build relationships. Engage manufacturers, consultants, and internal champions early to strengthen your program and ensure shared understanding.

Validate and verify. Be consistent in confirming compliance. Decide whether certifications suffice or deeper data review is needed to build trust and streamline workflows.

Align your framework to the CMF. When refining an existing program, use the CMF to organize requirements by impact area and reference CMF Prioritization v1.0 to ensure interoperability.

Aligning Existing Materials Programs with the CMF

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If you reference certifications not yet included in CMF Prioritization v1.0, we'd love to hear from you. Your input helps shape future updates and ensures the CMF continues to reflect industry progress. Visit the Airtable Tool to provide your feedback.

Step 2: Understanding the 'Levels of Alignment'

There are multiple different ways any organization can align with the CMF, from high level to deeply data-driven, and a single materials program may demonstrate alignment at multiple levels. Firms, organizations, and rating systems requirements will all vary in their level of alignment with the CMF.

You can navigate through the CMF's structure and different levels and find relevant certifications associated with each level in the Airtable Tool.

If you're just getting started, use the endorsement materials in your toolkit to signal your alignment with the CMF.

Signaling Your Alignment With the CMF

Level 1: Impact Level Alignment

Level 2: Sub-Impact Level Alignment

Level 3: T.A.C.O. Level Alignment

Level 4: Metric/Data Level Alignment

If you're looking to future-proof your program at the leadership level, consider aligning at the Metric/Data level.

Level 1: Impact Level Alignment

Level 1: Impact Level Alignment

Aligning At This Level Means You:

Want to know at a high level that products you're considering are doing something toward a given impact area(s)

Accept any of the certifications referenced in this impact area within CMF Prioritization v1.0 (See Airtable Tool)

Note: If you are an AIA Materials Pledge Signatory, you should be aligning here at a minimum.

HOLISTIC IMPACT ENDORSEMENT | **LEVEL 1: IMPACT LEVEL ALIGNMENT** | LEVEL 2: SUB-IMPACT LEVEL ALIGNMENT | LEVEL 3: T.A.C.O. LEVEL ALIGNMENT | LEVEL 4: METRIC/DATA LEVEL ALIGNMENT

CMF Impact Areas

These are the five broad categories of sustainability impact first defined in the AIA Materials Pledge: Human Health, Climate Health, Ecosystem Health, Social Health and Equity, and Circular Economy.

In the CMF, we often refer to these as "impact areas" because each one captures a wide range of certifications and data points. Together, they form the top-level framework for organizing and interpreting material impacts holistically.

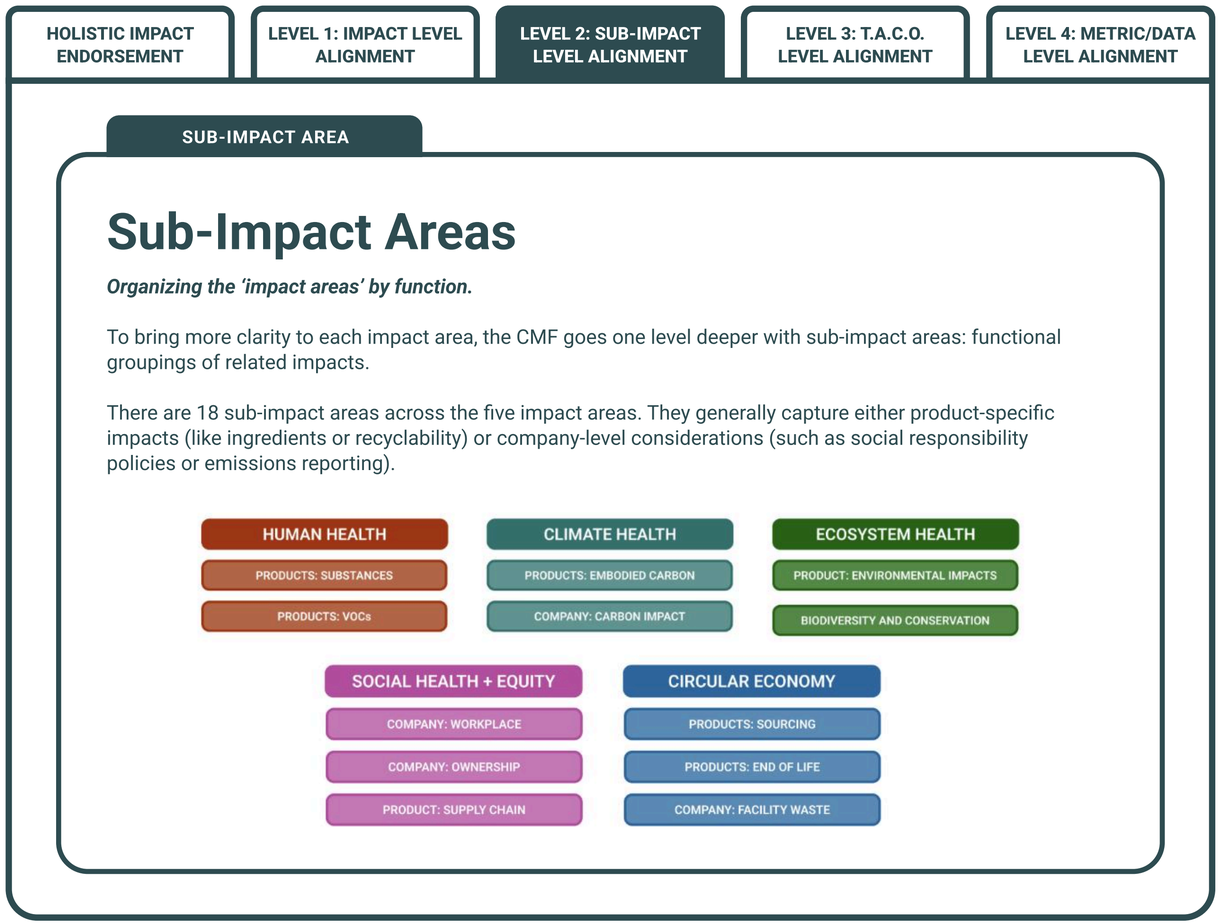
Level 2: Sub-Impact Level Alignment

Level 2: Sub-Impact Level

Aligning At This Level Means You:

Want to address a specific aspect of a given impact area in more detail

Want to emphasize compliance with certifications and ecolabels that address the sub-impact areas specifically



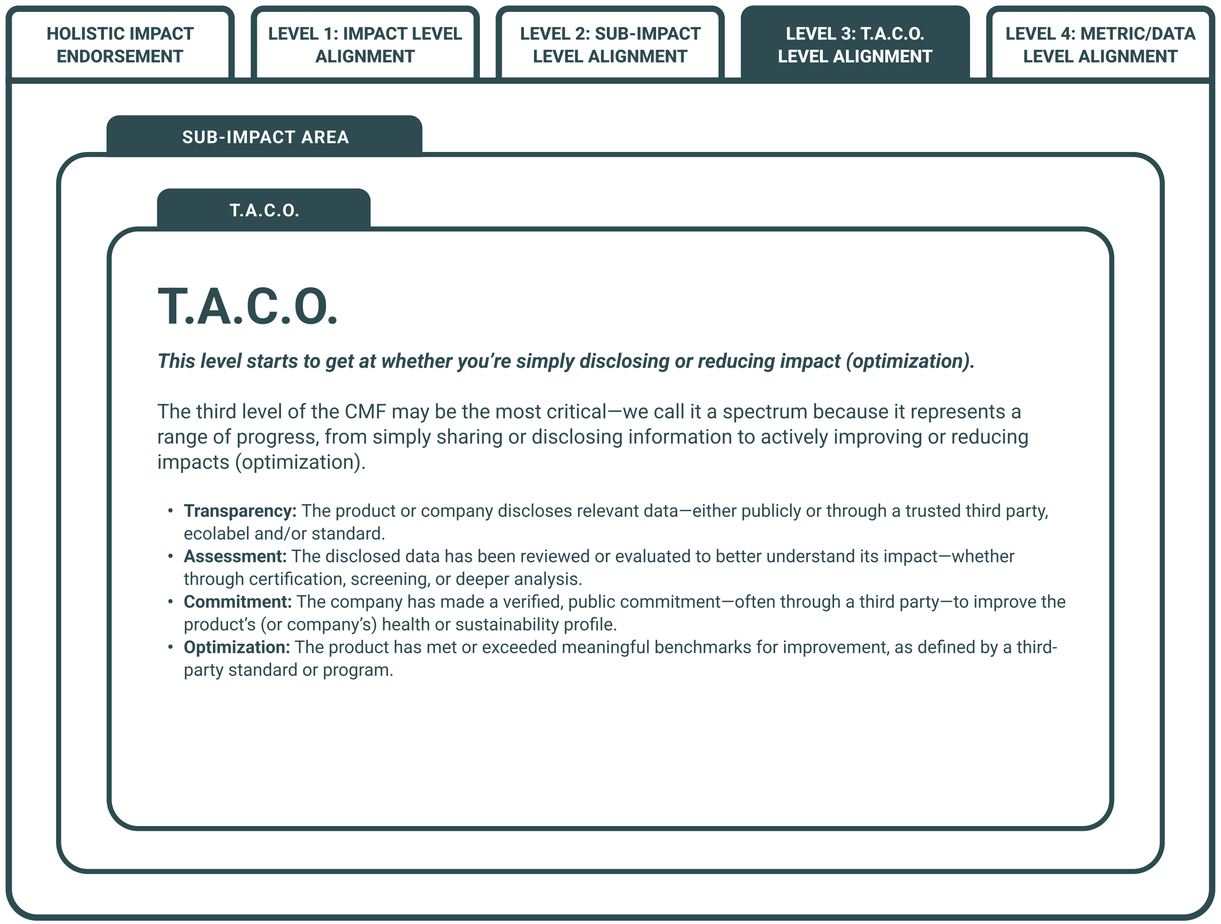
Level 3: T.A.C.O. Level Alignment

Level 3: T.A.C.O. Level Alignment

Aligning At This Level Means You:

Know that some certifications are more rigorous and perhaps want to prioritize those that demonstrate optimization (or reduction of impacts) versus transparency

Want to understand if products meet a particular benchmark you (or the industry) have established



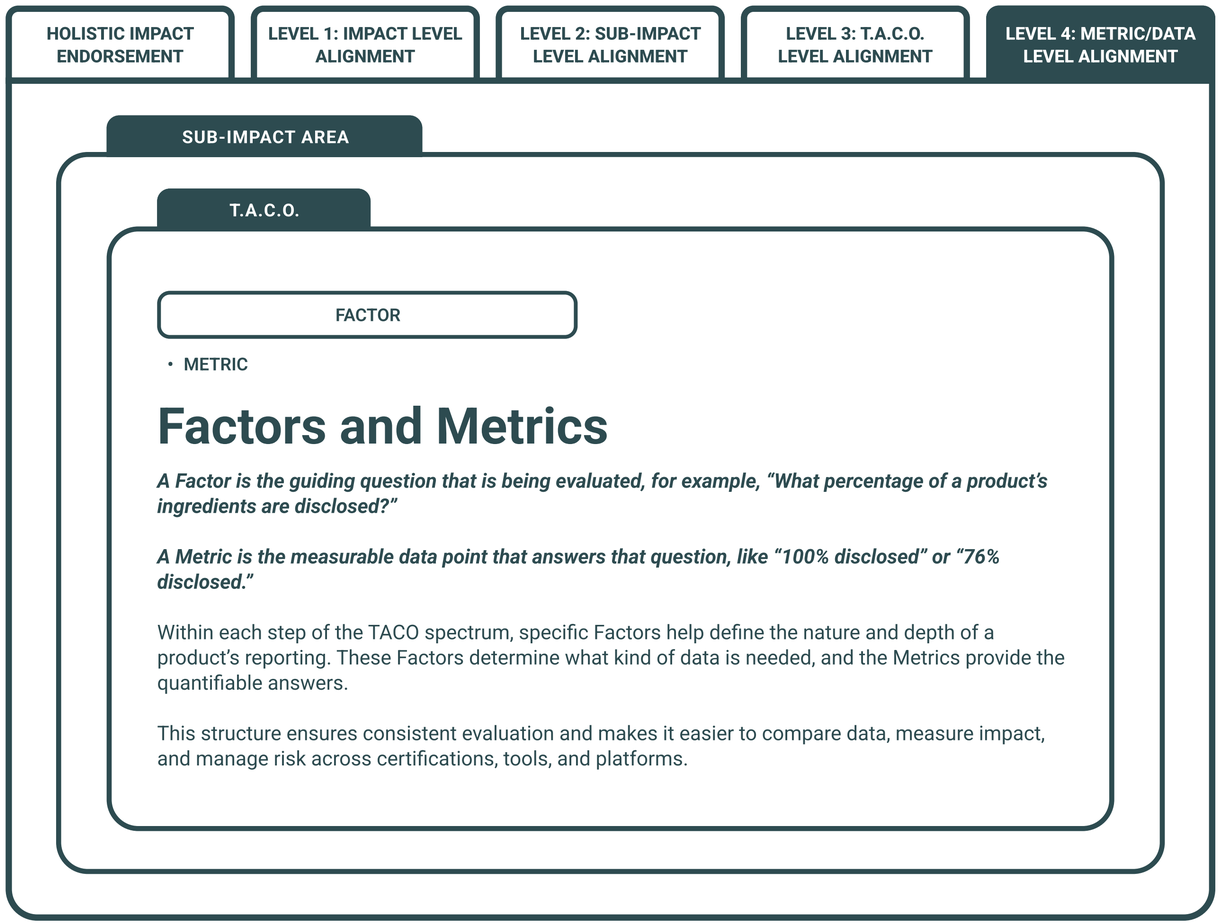
Level 4: Metric/Data Level Alignment

Level 4: Metric/Data Level Alignment

Aligning At This Level Means You:

Have set specific benchmarks or criteria for your project or program and need data to measure and track how you are doing toward those goals

Want to start generating project level impact reporting based on the products you're using



Aligning Existing Materials Programs with the CMF

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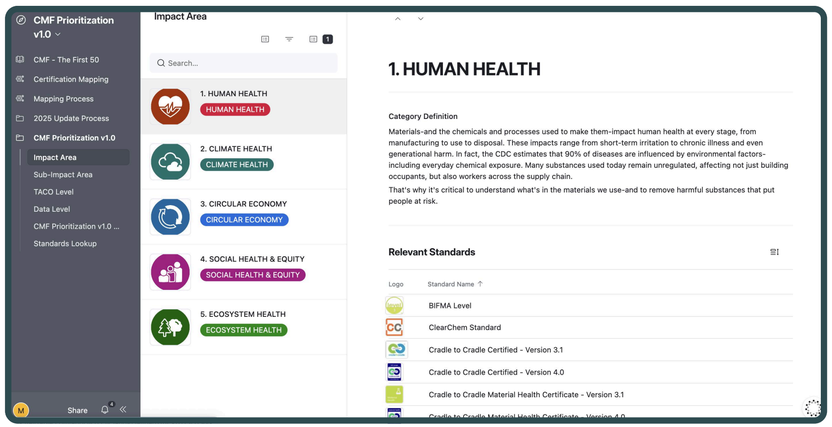
Step 3: Using the Airtable Tool to Crosswalk

To translate—or “crosswalk”—your materials program to the CMF, mindful MATERIALS has developed both high-level guidance and technical tools to make the process simple and actionable.

Ready to get started? Our interactive Airtable Tool helps mM members navigate the structure of the CMF, showing which certifications cover which factors and metrics—and where they fall within the T.A.C.O. spectrum for each sub-impact area.

Use the links below and the step-by-step instructions in this guide to crosswalk your current materials requirements with ease.

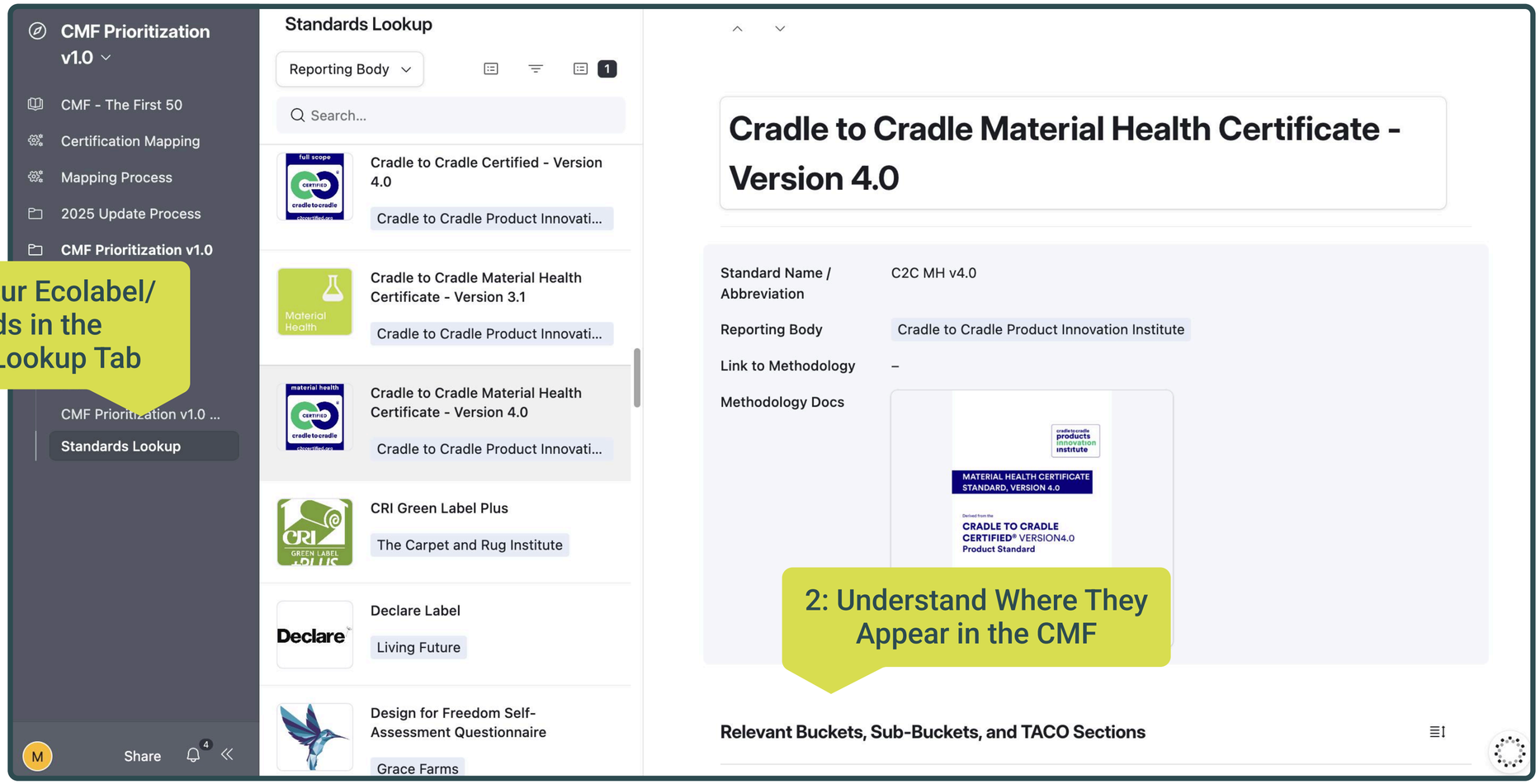


Note 1: Crosswalking has been completed between key North American green building rating systems—LEED, WELL, and the Living Building Challenge—and the CMF. Learn more about how CMF Prioritization v1.0 aligns with these programs Airtable Tool.

Note 2: This effort will expand to include global rating systems in 2026 and beyond. See the announcement.

Crosswalking Option 1: Standards Lookup to CMF Alignment

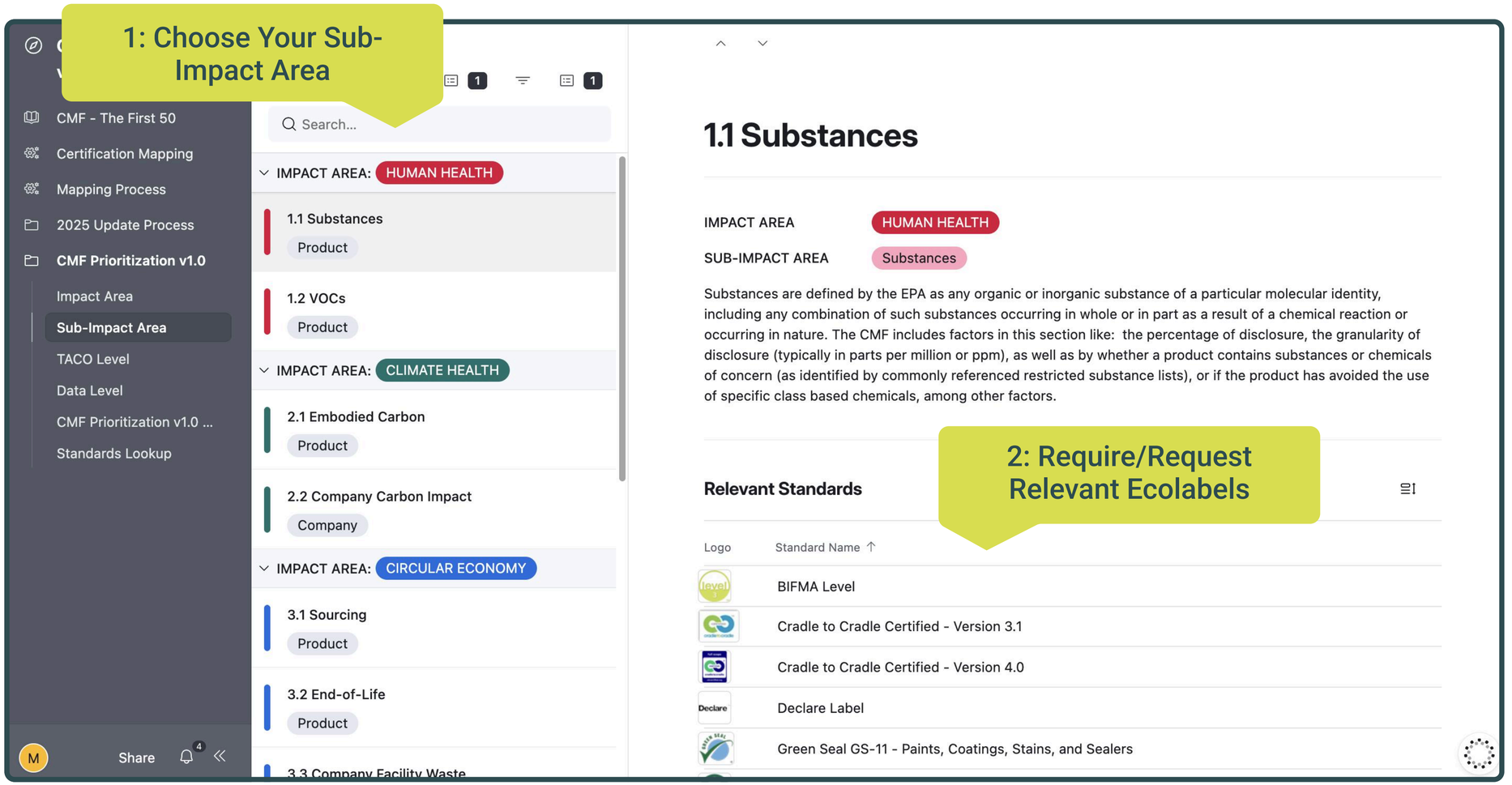
Use the CMF Prioritization v1.0 Airtable Tool to explore how ecolabels and standards connect to CMF impact areas. This helps you understand what's already represented in the market, identify gaps in available data, and begin shaping clear, achievable materials requirements for your projects or firm in alignment with the CMF Prioritization v1.0.



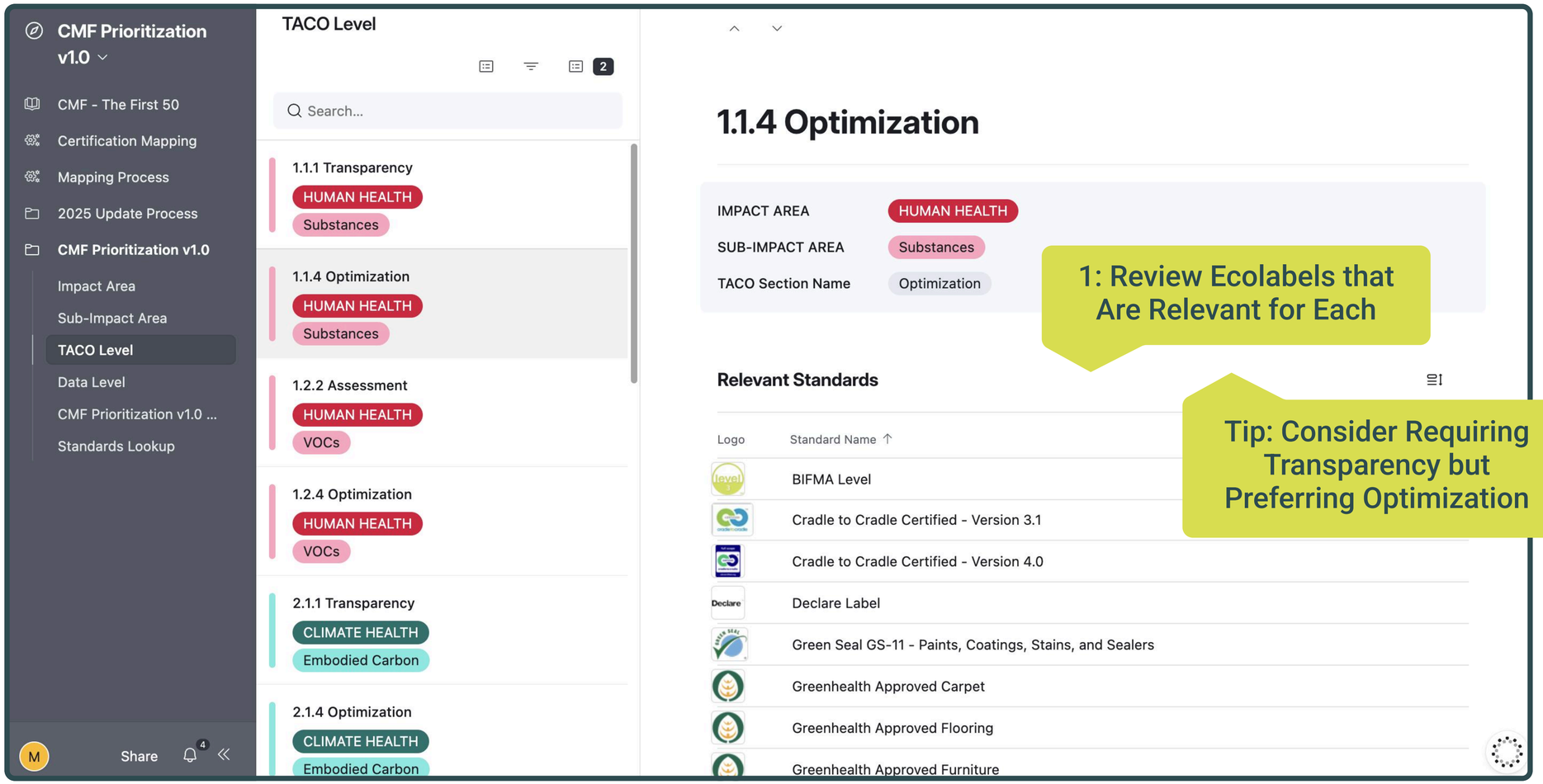
Crosswalking Option 2: Level Alignment to Standards

Use the CMF Prioritization v1.0 Airtable Tool to organize your materials requirements by impact area and depth of alignment. Choose the impact level you want to explore, review the relevant standards, and see where stronger data connections can advance your goals and inform future project requirements.

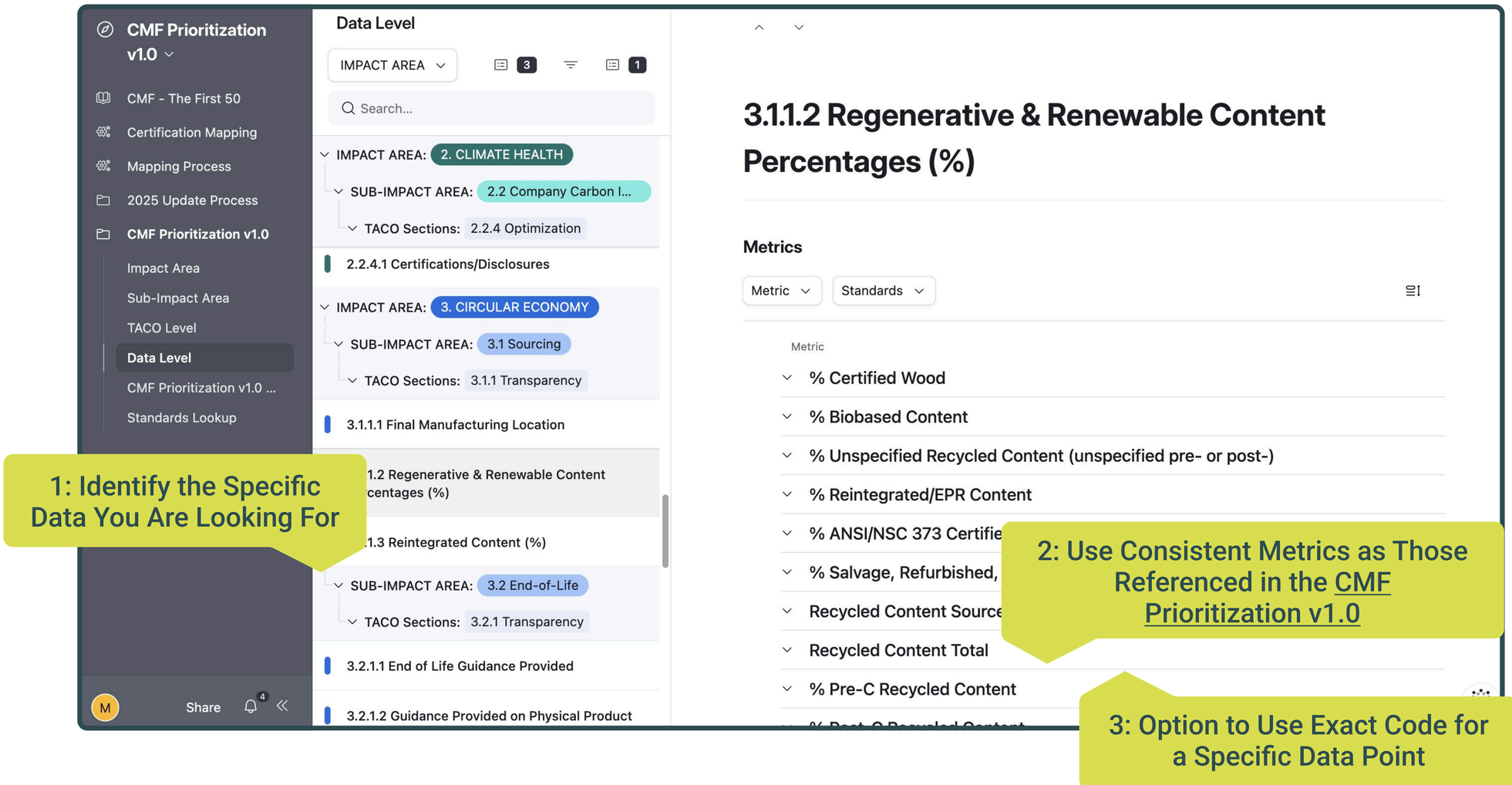
Option 2: Sub-Impact Area Level Alignment



T.A.C.O. Level Alignment



Data Level Alignment



Expert Level Tip: Understand the Syntax

The CMF's hierarchical structure uses a numbered syntax to represent each level. See the example below for a preview, and explore the Airtable Tool at the Data Level for a deeper dive (tutorial).

1. Human Health	Impact Level
1.1 Substances	Sub-Impact Level
1.1.1 Transparency	T.A.C.O. Level
1.1.1.1 Reporting Threshold Level	Factor Level
1.1.1.1.1 100ppm	Metric Level

Note: You're welcome to use the specific codes provided for data endpoints in your workflows or internal systems—but it's not required to benefit from the CMF or make better materials decisions. As the connected data ecosystem continues to develop, this shared syntax will simply make it easier to create consistent connections across certifications, databases, and workflow tools.

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Once your material requirements are set, decide how and where to share them. Promoting your CMF alignment helps partners understand your expectations and amplifies market demand for transparency and optimization, while simultaneously accelerating a clear market signal.

Internal Only

Communicate to your design, specification, and procurement teams what they're looking for when it comes to sustainability criteria and why. Understanding the reasoning behind the requirements goes a long way in encouraging team members to take action.

Shared With Partners

Share your requirements with partners and the mM team to amplify progress. Support collaboration by sharing resources and clarifying what's required, requested, and "nice to have."

Public

Consider publishing your materials requirements, as firms like Gensler and MSR Design have done. Doing so provides a clear reference for manufacturers, encourages industry-wide transparency, and inspires others to begin their own materials journey.

Tip: When publishing, it would be good to indicate the level of CMF alignment your program is current focused. If multiple levels, you could indicate level of alignment by impact area or sub impact area as well.

What's Next in Your Toolkit: The Common Give Resource

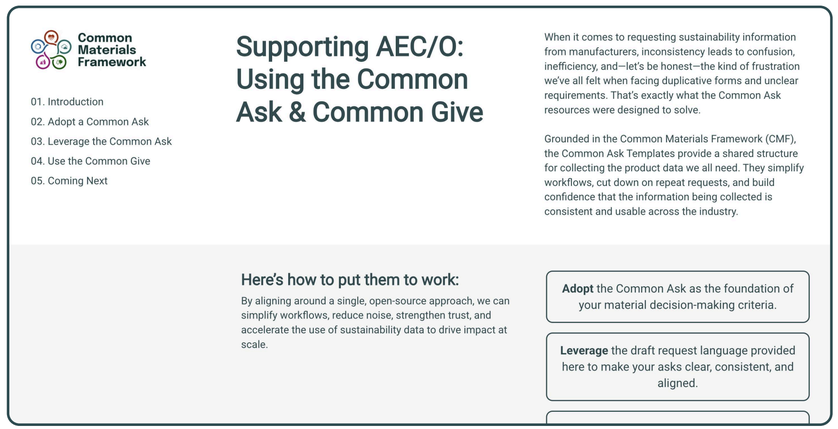
Tools for Accelerating a Common Ask/Give

Looking for step-by-step guidance on how to use the Common Ask?

We've created a separate resource: Supporting AEC/O: Using the Common Ask & Common Give It walks you through how to align project specifications and requests to manufacturers for their sustainability information with the CMF.

You'll find practical examples of digital and static CMF-aligned submission options, guidance for coordinating across internal teams and external partners, and tips for helping manufacturers respond more effectively—reducing duplicative asks and saving time for all.

The only way we will enable the ability to automate materials vetting is by aligning around a clear market signal, leveraging a common language and common ask resources.



View Common Ask & Give Resource

The CMF is more than a reference—it's a roadmap for action. By identifying your firm's priorities, aligning impact areas, and communicating clearly, you can cut duplication, build trust, and accelerate industry-wide progress.

Wherever you begin—broad endorsement, certification alignment, or detailed data tracking—each step strengthens the shared ecosystem and makes it easier for everyone to specify and deliver healthier, more sustainable materials.

Together, we can move from one-off requests to a coordinated approach that drives transparency, optimization, and lasting change across the built environment.