

# Measuring University Sustainability Performance with AASHE STARS

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# DISCLAIMER

I am not an employee of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). This presentation is not a pitch to sell a product to you or convince to make a purchase. This presentation is an educational conversation about a resource that has been declared beneficial to the advancement of sustainability performance at higher education institutions worldwide.

Any questions that are not answered from the presentation may be directed to an AASHE support staff member via the AASHE website.

Thank you!



What is  
STARS??



# Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS)

A global sustainability standard created by the **Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)** for higher education institutions of any type (private, public, community/technical/vocational, etc.) to measure their sustainability performance with a transparent, self-reporting framework.

# GOALS

1. Provides a framework for understanding sustainability in all sectors of higher education
2. Enable meaningful comparisons over time and across institutions using a common set of measurements developed with broad participation from the international campus sustainability community.
3. Create incentives for continual improvement toward sustainability.
4. Facilitate information sharing about higher education sustainability practices and performance.
5. Build a stronger, more diverse campus sustainability community..

# RATINGS



**85 POINTS**



**65 POINTS**



**45 POINTS**



**25 POINTS**



**UNSCORED**

Each STARS report and rating is only valid for **three years** from the date of publication.

- Update reports may be re-submitted as often as once a year.

(AASHE)

# MEASURES

ACADEMICS

ENGAGEMENT

OPERATIONS

PLANNING & ADMINISTRATION

INNOVATION & LEADERSHIP

(AASHE)

# ACADEMICS

## **CURRICULUM (45.00)**

Sustainability Course Offerings  
Undergraduate programs  
Graduate programs  
Applied Learning  
Sustainability Literacy Assessment

## **RESEARCH (23.00)**

Sustainability Research  
Center for Sustainability Research  
Responsible Research and  
Innovation



# ENGAGEMENT

## CAMPUS ENGAGEMENT (25.00)

Outreach and Communications  
Co-Curricular Activities  
Staff Engagement and Training  
Sustainability Culture Assessment

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT (25.00)

Civic Engagement  
Community partnerships  
Inter-campus collaboration  
Continuing education  
Shared Facilities (with Public)

# OPERATIONS

## **Buildings & Grounds (20.00)**

- Building design and construction
- Building operations and maintenance
- Water Use
- Ecologically Managed Grounds

## **Energy & Climate (26.00)**

- Energy Use
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions

## **Food & Dining (10.00)**

- Dining Service Procurement
- Food Recovery

## **Transportation (10.00)**

- Vehicle Fleet
- Commute Modal Split
- Air Travel

## **Procurement & Waste (20.00)**

- Sustainable procurement system
- Purchase goods
- Materials management
- Waste generation and recovery

# PLANNING & ADMINISTRATION

## **Coordination & Planning (11.00)**

- Sustainability Coordination
- Commitments and Planning
- Institutional governance

## **Social Equity (14.00)**

- Institutional Climate
- Racial and Ethnic Diversity
- Gender Parity
- Affordability and Access
- Student Success

## **Investment (10.00)**

- Sustainable investment Program
- Investment Holdings

## **Wellbeing & Work (11.00)**

- Health, Safety, and Wellbeing
- Employee Rights
- Pay Equity and Living Wage

# INNOVATION & LEADERSHIP

The credits in this category are optional and at most 1 point each. The max is 10 points.

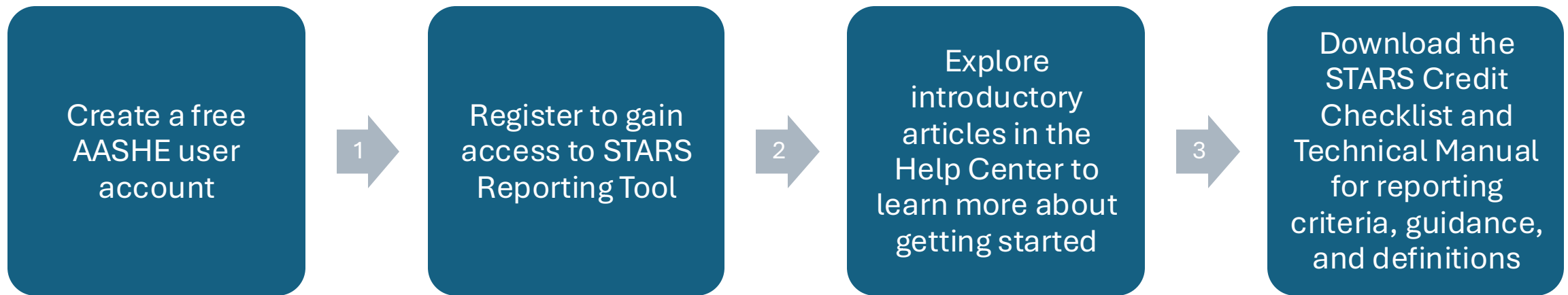
There are various practices that can be measured to acquire credits in I&L

Credits in this section may be additional practices to some submitted in a previous section.

Examples:

- Sustainability Course Inventory
- Sustainability Course Designation
- Sustainability Research Inventory
- Green Athletics Program
- Green Events Program
- Hospital Network
- Voter Education and Participation
- Biodiversity Assessment
- Sustainable Dining Recognition
- Bicycle Friendly Recognition
- Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

# FIRST STEPS



# DATA COLLECTION



## Identify the credits you want to pursue (you may choose to “Not Pursue” credits)

Not every credit is applicable to every institution, thus pursuing all credits is not a requirement



## Document your information in the Reporting Tool

No limit to users from your institution who can access the reporting tool  
Must be given access by STARS liaison at your institution

Gather information from campus stakeholders

All information must be documented via the Reporting Tool to count towards the ranking of your institution



## Access resources and get assistance

AASHE provides resources to assist with the STARS submission process  
Webinars, how-to guides, online customer service and support



## Quality assurance

Complete an assurance process to identify and resolve inconsistencies and errors in the report before submission (STARS review template)

# SUBMISSION & REVIEW

Two report types

- Scored reports
- Unscored reports

# SCORED REPORTS



## Requirements

A STARS subscription and a cover letter from a high-ranking executive at your institution (President/Chancellor or Vice President/Provost)



## STARS subscription fees

New Member: \$975  
Non-Member (first time): \$1525  
Member Renewal: \$585  
Non-Member Renewal: \$915



## A new executive letter is expected when there has been a change in leadership, or the institution is submitting for a higher rating

If the letter from the highest executive office is pending, a placeholder non-executive staff member not submit a letter on their behalf



## Subscription Discounts Available:

Low-Income Economy: 80% (LIC80)  
Middle-Income Economy: 60% (MIC60)  
Pay What You Can: Based on need (must apply)



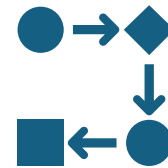
# REVIEW OF SCORE REPORT



Once you submit your report, AASHE staff will review your report.



Within 30 days, you will receive the review results (suggestions to edit).

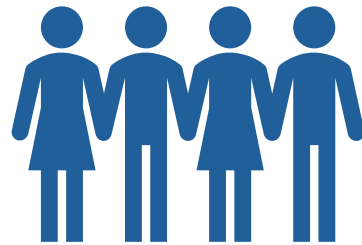


Then you have 60 days to fix issues and re-submit your report.



You will then receive your rating.

# UNSCORED REPORT

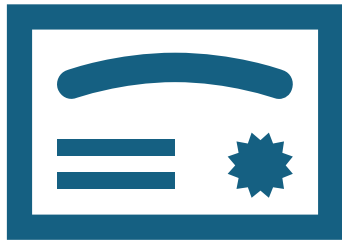


Good option for institutions that have limited staffing capacity

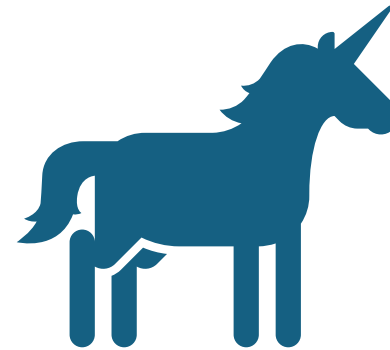


Able to share successes in sustainability performance to establish a benchmark for advancement opportunities

# FINAL SCORING



Final score and rating is based on percentage of points earned by pursuing relevant credits across Academics (AC), Engagement (EN), Operations (OP), and Planning & Administration (PA). Credits not relevant to your institution will not counted against the final score.



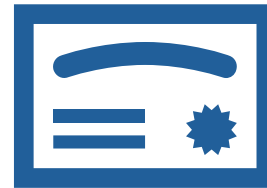
Innovation & Leadership point are considered Bonus Points for exemplary and path-breaking initiatives.

# RECOGNITION



**STARS only provides POSITIVE recognition, thus each badge represents sustainability leadership.**

Reporter scores are not published



**Recognition in The Princeton Review's *Guide to Green Colleges***



# CONSIDERATIONS

# CONSIDERATION #1

Public policy influences the adoption of sustainability in many higher education institutions

# CONSIDERATION #2

Public universities with STARS 2.2 ratings face barriers to fully institutionalize sustainability

# CONSIDERATION #3

Commit to both leading the transformation to a more sustainable world and to developing leaders with the necessary knowledge and skills



# CONSIDERATION #4

Intentional assessment of institutional sustainability performance  
can drive organizational change

# CONSIDERATION #5

Higher STARS 2.2 performance positively correlated with higher staffing levels

# References

Vanicor, G. (2023).

The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, & Rating System. (n.d.).  
*Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher  
Education*. <https://stars.aashe.org/about-stars/>