2026 Call for Proposals
Submission Packet

Introduction

This Call for Proposals provides a way for you to share your experience, knowledge, and skills in higher education sustainability at the AASHE's annual in-person conference and/or via AASHE's virtual educational programs (e.g., webinars, virtual workshops, online courses, etc). To help you submit a successful proposal, we recommend you review this packet, the [best practices for building your session](#) and the [submission template](#). Review and acceptance of proposals will start after the submission **deadline of April 10**. All proposals must be submitted electronically through [AASHE's Proposal Submission Form](#). Please visit the [AASHE 2026 Conference & Expo](#), the [AASHE Education website](#) or the [FAQ page](#), or email education@aashe.org with any questions regarding this [Call for Proposals](#).

Why Present with AASHE?

- ***Demonstrate thought leadership***: Gain recognition for your successes by sharing your experiences and lessons learned on the largest stage for sustainability in higher education.
- ***Strengthen your skills***: Each presentation is an opportunity to refine your presentation skills and to experiment with new audience engagement techniques.
- ***Advance the higher education sustainability movement***: From engaging attendees with your sustainability story to empowering others with insight, tools and solutions that have helped you, your participation will enhance the community's sustainability knowledge, skills and competencies.
- ***Build community***: Sharing your work is a great way to make connections and find partners within the AASHE community. It encourages increased peer-to-peer learning, networking and collaboration to support a stronger campus sustainability community.
- ***Save money***: Accepted presenters for conference sessions receive a discount applicable to the cost of a full conference registration. The specific amount of the discount varies based on the registration category.

Important Dates & Deadlines*

- **Call for Proposals submission period closes:** April 10, 2026
- **Proposal review:** April/May 2026
- **Acceptance/decline notifications:** mid to late June 2026
- **Presenter Registration Deadline**: September 11, 2026
- **Conference Dates**: October 4-6, 2026 (Baltimore, Maryland)

*Schedule and deadlines are subject to change.

Presenter Policies

If your proposal is accepted, you will be asked to agree to a set of presenter policies specific to the type of program you will be offering. These policies clarify our expectations for presenters and help us deliver exceptional educational experiences. Among other things, they specify that presenters grant AASHE an irrevocable, royalty-free, non-exclusive, and perpetual license to share presentation materials.

Program & Submission Structure

Submitters will select a session type, topic area, and session level for their submission. All proposals will go through the review process described below. **Up to six presenters may be associated with a proposal.** Please read the criteria informing the review process as you assemble your proposal.

Educational Program Formats

In-person AASHE Conference & Expo Session Formats

The conference will take place October 4-6 in Baltimore, MD (see the schedule-at-a-glance).

Field Reports (45 minutes)

Field reports showcase innovative, high-impact approaches led by higher education sustainability professionals. These sessions highlight lessons learned, challenges overcome, and practical strategies that can be adapted on other campuses.

Learning Labs (105 minutes)

Take a deep dive into sustainability skills and strategies in these hands-on, interactive sessions designed to strengthen sustainability-related competencies. With more time for engagement and discussions, these sessions encourage active participation and practical application, helping attendees leave with actionable insights.

Student Field Reports (45 minutes)

Part of the dedicated student track, these sessions provide a platform for students to share their sustainability projects, research, and campus initiatives with their peers and highlight student-driven impact. At least one presenter must be a current student or recent graduate.

Student Learning Labs (105 minutes)

Part of the dedicated student track, these interactive sessions are designed to equip and empower students with the skills and connections needed to drive change on their campuses and in their communities. Priority will be given to proposals that connect students to a network or organization that will be able to continue to support them after the conference.

Networking Meetings (45 minutes)

Connect, collaborate, and exchange ideas! These sessions bring together regional networks and other affinity groups (e.g., zero waste managers or community college representatives) to network, and discuss issues relevant to the group. With no formal presentation, the emphasis is on interactive dialogue and peer-to-peer sharing.

Pre-Conference Workshops (2.5 hours)

These extended learning sessions, held on Sunday, Oct. 3, provide in-depth professional development opportunities. Offered at an additional fee, these workshops are designed for deep engagement and skill-building. Presenters should have experience leading and facilitating professional development programs.

Lightning Talks (10 minutes)

These short, fast-paced presentations focus on one or two key ideas. They are designed to spark interest, inspire, generate curiosity and encourage follow-up conversation. These presentations should incorporate no more than 5 slides and these slides should prioritize visuals over text.

Virtual Education Formats

Virtual education programs are scheduled throughout the year (see [current programs](#)).

AASHE Webinars (1 hour)

Engage, learn, and get inspired! AASHE webinars explore the wide diversity of innovative and high-impact projects, initiatives and approaches for advancing sustainability in higher education. These interactive sessions led by speakers from within the AASHE community are offered live (typically on Wednesdays from 2–3 p.m. ET via Zoom). Free for everyone to attend, they are recorded for on-demand access by AASHE members via the [Campus Sustainability Hub](#).

AASHE Virtual Workshops (3 hours)

Deepen your sustainability expertise with an in-depth virtual workshop! These interactive, single-session events, typically held on Thursdays at 2 p.m. ET via Zoom, provide a focused, hands-on learning experience. Designed for those looking to strengthen sustainability-related skills, workshops offer deeper exploration than webinars or conference sessions. Facilitators receive modest compensation in recognition of their time and effort.

AASHE Online Courses (multiple sessions of 1 hour or more)

Expand your knowledge and build connections over time! AASHE Online Courses provide a longer learning journey, typically spanning 6–12 sessions. These live, interactive courses go beyond skill-building by fostering lasting relationships among participants. Sessions may include homework or practical applications between meetings. Course facilitators receive modest compensation for their dedication and expertise.

Alternative Formats

Have an innovative idea that doesn't fit these formats? We welcome creative proposals for sustainability education programs. Select this option in the submission form and share your vision—we'd love to hear how you'd like to engage and inspire the community!

Topic Areas

Topic areas describe the focus of your proposal and help participants find programs that are relevant to their interests. They generally align with the Sustainability Tracking Assessment & Rating System ([STARS](#)) version 3 impact areas. You will be required to select one primary topic area that best characterizes the focus of your proposal.

- **Curriculum** (e.g., academic programs in sustainability; sustainability across the curriculum efforts; sustainability literacy assessment; pedagogy for sustainability; and teaching/assessing sustainability competencies)
- **Research** (e.g., sustainability research institutes; incentives for sustainability research; research partnerships; and responsible research and innovation)
- **Campus Engagement** (e.g., communications and social media; co-curricular programs; student organizations; staff engagement and training; and sustainability culture assessment)
- **Public Engagement** (e.g., civic engagement and community service; advocacy; community partnerships; and inter-campus collaboration)
- **Buildings & Grounds** (e.g., building design and construction; building operations and maintenance; water use; ecologically managed grounds; and campus biodiversity)
- **Energy & Climate** (e.g., campus decarbonization; renewable energy; energy efficiency; greenhouse gas emissions inventories; and carbon offsets)
- **Food & Dining** (e.g., plant-based dining; sustainable food; and food recovery)

- **Procurement & Waste** (e.g., supply chain sustainability; zero waste programs; reuse; ecolabels; and recycling)
- **Transportation** (e.g., electric vehicles; air travel; commuting; bike programs; alternative fuels; and fleet management)
- **Coordination & Planning** (e.g., change leadership; sustainability plans; sustainability staff and offices; and assessment and reporting)
- **Investment** (e.g., investor engagement; divestment; and sustainability funds)
- **Representation & Access** (e.g., affordability; racial equity; diversity and inclusion; and social justice)
- **Wellbeing & Work** (e.g., employee compensation; worker safety; mental health; avoiding burnout; eco-anxiety; and wellness programs)

Session Levels

All submitters self-identify their proposals as introductory, intermediate, or advanced. AASHE defines each level as follows:

- **Introductory** - Material covered is foundational in nature, and sessions are designed for attendees with no prior background or are just starting in the domain of practice presented in the session.
- **Intermediate** - Material is designed for participants with a working knowledge of the topic and a few years of experience in the domain of practice.
- **Advanced** - Material is designed for participants with a detailed knowledge of the topic and specific experience applying or using this knowledge in a professional capacity over a long time.

Tips for Preparing a Successful Proposal

- **Start with your audience in mind**. Consider what you can offer that is likely to be relevant and useful to attendees and structure your proposal so as to make clear what they will take away from your session or program.
- **Engage the audience**. Consider [best practices for building your session](#) as a collaborative experience which taps into the expertise of the participants and leaves them feeling energized and inspired.
- **Focus your proposal on something specific** (e.g., the findings of a particular research project; a valuable skill or competency; or an especially successful initiative). We rarely accept proposals that provide a general overview of an institution's sustainability efforts.
- **Highlight the unique or novel aspects** of your proposal while still demonstrating relevance to other institutions. For example, if you are proposing a session about your institution's green fund, be sure to describe any special features that distinguish your green fund from other green funds and that might be useful for other green fund administrators to implement.
- **Go deep**! Many of our members are seeking advanced, in-depth content.
- **Be provocative**. We appreciate proposals that thoughtfully challenge conventional wisdom.
- **Emphasize the impacts** of your research or initiative (e.g., on sustainable behaviors, carbon emissions, or operational costs). Proposals that demonstrate significant real-world impact tend to be reviewed more favorably.
- **Describe the evidence** you will be using to support your presentation. We especially value presentations that are well supported with evidence and/or empirical research.
- **Find partners** from other organizations. Proposals that offer insights from multiple institutions engaged in similar work tend to be well received. Posting a message to the [AASHE Member Community](#) can be a good way to find potential partners.

- **Avoid sales pitches**. All sessions must be educational in nature. *Proposals that sound like advertisements of a product or service will not be accepted*. If you are a supplier of products or services, be sure your proposal focuses on a relevant topic, concept, or idea – not one of your products or services. In addition, we strongly recommend including a campus representative as a presenter to help make the content applicable to participants.
- **Become an AASHE member**.
  - **For the conference**: We give preference to submissions featuring people associated with AASHE member organizations, and *we typically don't accept proposals submitted by or featuring non-member businesses* (except as a benefit associated with sponsorship).
  - **For virtual education programs**: We require that at least one presenter is affiliated with an AASHE member organization. In addition, as offering a webinar is a benefit of Business Leader membership, we do not accept webinars that include businesses that are not Business Leader members.
- **Review the submission fields** and prepare your text in advance. Use this template to draft your proposal and use a character count to make sure you don't exceed the character limits.
- **Read the review criteria** (below). To be accepted, your proposal will need to score well on at least several of them.

Proposal Review Criteria

All complete proposals will be reviewed by AASHE staff. Our primary goal is to ensure that we offer a well-balanced mix of high-quality education programs that will meet the diverse interests of the AASHE community. Complete proposals will be reviewed and evaluated using the following criteria (note that we don't necessarily expect proposals to be strong on every criterion):

- The proposed session provides **broadly applicable lessons, tools and ideas**.
- The proposed session introduces **new, high-impact, and solutions-oriented** research or initiatives.
- The proposed session equips attendees with **new or enhanced skills**.
- The proposed session promotes **active learning** and makes effective use of audience engagement techniques.
- The proposed session reflects and/or contributes to **racial equity and social justice.**

Create a Proposal

All proposals must be submitted electronically through AASHE's Proposal Submission Form.

- Review the submission fields and prepare your text in advance by using this template.
- Remember to use a character count to make sure you don't exceed the character limits.
- You can save an incomplete proposal and come back later to submit it prior to the deadline.

Changing Your Proposal

To make changes to your proposal **before the submission deadline**, use the link provided in the email confirmation you received when submitting the proposal. If you make any edits to your proposal, **you must re-submit the updated proposal for it to be considered**. No changes will be accepted to proposals after the deadline. If your proposal is accepted, you will be able to make **minor edits** to your session as long as they don't change the overall focus.

Thank you and we look forward to your submission!