Request for Proposals (RFP)

Administrative and Operational Host the Carnegie Elective Classification for Sustainability

Introduction

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, in collaboration with the American Council on Education (ACE), seeks proposals from qualified higher education institutions, organizations, or consortia to serve as the administrative and operational host of the Carnegie Elective Classification for Sustainability. This elective aims to recognize and catalyze substantive and transformational actions in sustainability across diverse higher education institutions. The host institution will play a pivotal role in the pilot phase launch in 2025, supporting framework development, stakeholder engagement, and ongoing program operations and administration, which includes participation in its conceptual framing and strategic development as well as managing, developing, and advancing this classification.

The Carnegie Elective Classifications have a long history of recognizing and encouraging institutional excellence in higher education. Established as part of the broader Carnegie Classification system, which includes both universal and elective classifications, the elective classifications provide a framework for institutions to demonstrate leadership and innovation in specific areas of public purpose missions. The Carnegie Elective Classification for Sustainability is the latest addition to this system, aiming to address the global imperative for higher education to lead in advancing sustainability and climate action.

Serving as an administrative and operational host offers an institution, organization, or consortium a critical opportunity to shape the framework, benchmarks, standards, and evaluative systems that define excellence in sustainability in higher education. The host will also gain recognition as a national thought leader and innovator and drive systemic change in higher education.

Background

Sustainability is crucial now to address the climate crisis, resource depletion, biodiversity loss, and the economic and social impact of climate change. It is key to fostering a fair and livable world for current and future generations, economic resilience, and public health. Higher education plays a vital role in advancing sustainability by educating future leaders, developing a workforce for the green economy, fostering innovation, and conducting solutions-based research to address environmental and social challenges. The deliberate and intentional actions of higher education in sustainability demonstrate institutional and systemic commitment to solutions-based action. Colleges and universities serve as living laboratories for sustainable policies, programs, and practices as well as model responsible resource use, and collaborate with communities to drive systemic change and create a more robust and resilient future.

Over the past 18 months, we have engaged in a comprehensive feasibility study involving diverse organizational and institutional stakeholders focused on sustainability. Key insights from this study emphasize the need for a framework that:

- Collaborates with existing frameworks to address data collection and reporting burdens.
- Centers the voices and needs of underrepresented institutions, including HBCUs, HSIs, MSIs, rural institutions and Community Colleges.
- Integrates indigenous knowledge and an ecosystem approach.
- Emphasizes collaboration and a solutions-based mindset to drive transformational action in sustainability.
- Incorporates workforce development and career preparation for a green economy.

To further develop this initiative, we seek a host to partner with us in advancing the Carnegie Elective Classification for Sustainability.

Scope of Work

The selected administrative host will lead:

1. **Framework Development**

    o Refining the Carnegie Elective Classification for Sustainability framework in collaboration with ACE, the Carnegie Foundation, and other stakeholders.

    o Ensure the framework is inclusive and accessible to a diverse array of institutions.

    o Oversee the development of indicators, standard setting, and evaluative procedures that support a rigorous and independent assessment and institutions commitment to an accomplishment at advancing sustainability.

2. **Administrative and Operational Management**

    o Administer the application and review process, including developing tools and resources to support applicant institutions.

    o Identify, train and monitor the performance of a pool of reviewers in the rigorous and independent review process.

    o Ensure transparency, rigor, and consistency in the review of self-studies.

3. **Stakeholder Engagement**

    o Build and maintain relationships with and amongst participating institutions, sustainability experts, and advisory committees.

    o Host workshops, webinars, or capacity building to support applicants and foster a learning community.

    o Participate in the framing and execution of an agenda of research to advance the substance and processes of the sustainability classification.

4. **Evaluation and Reporting**

    ○ Collect and analyze data from applicant institutions to assess trends and impacts.

    ○ Provide annual reports on the classification's progress and outcomes.

5. **Outreach and Promotion**
    ○ Promote the classification to diverse higher education institutions.
    ○ Identify and advance appropriate value propositions regarding the elective classifications.
    ○ Develop marketing and communication strategies to raise awareness and encourage participation.

Eligible Applicants

- Accredited higher education institutions or consortia with a demonstrated commitment to sustainability.

- Nonprofit organizations with expertise in sustainability as well as organizational learning and development in higher education.

- Entities with experience managing large-scale framework development, standard setting, assessment, or programs in higher education.

Proposal Requirements

Interested institutions, organizations, or consortia should submit a proposal that includes:

1. **Institutional/Organizational Overview**
    ○ Description of the institution's commitment to sustainability and alignment with elective classifications' goals.
    ○ Experience in hosting large-scale, multi-stakeholder initiatives.

2. **Administrative Plan**
    ○ Approach to managing operations, developing the framework, establishment and oversight of assessment processes, and engaging stakeholders.
    ○ Strategies for ensuring inclusive participation and assessment.
    ○ Description of plans to foster communities and knowledge sharing amongst and across participating campuses to ensure broader field learning.

3. **Team Qualifications**
    ○ Key personnel involved and their expertise in sustainability, higher education, and program management.

4. **Resource Commitment**
    ○ Outline of resources the institution will commit to support this initiative (e.g., staff, facilities, technology).

5. **Budget**
    ○ Detailed budget outlining the costs associated with hosting the elective classification activities.
    ○ Description of potential funders.

6. **Timeline**
    ○ Proposed timeline for assuming responsibilities and achieving key milestones.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Demonstrated expertise and experience in sustainability and higher education.
- Strength and feasibility of the proposed administrative and operational plan.
- Commitment to ensuring participation of diverse institution types.
- Organizational capacity, stability, and available resources to manage the classification (or plan for securing them in collaboration with ACE and the Carnegie Foundation).
- Alignment with the goals, mission, and values of the Carnegie Elective Classifications.

Submission Process

- **Deadline**: March 4, 2025
- **Submission Method**: Proposals must be submitted electronically in PDF format to electiveclassifications@acenet.edu
- **Proposal length:** Proposals should be no more than five (5) pages
- **Questions**: Direct questions to Marisol Morales at mmorales@acenet.edu.

Timeline

- **RFP Release**: January 23, 2025
- **Informational Webinar:** February 7, 2025, 2 p.m. ET
- **Proposal Deadline**: March 4, 2025
- **Review and Interviews:** March 10–21, 2025
- **Selection**: April 15, 2025
- **Administrative Host Start Date**: June 1, 2025, or as negotiated

Conclusion

We look forward to partnering with an institution, organization, or consortia dedicated to advancing sustainability in higher education through the Carnegie Elective Classification for Sustainability. Your commitment will help drive substantive and transformational change, addressing the global climate crisis and promoting sustainability across diverse educational landscapes.

Terms and Conditions

- The Carnegie Foundation and ACE reserve the right to reject any or all proposals.

- The selected host will enter into a formal agreement with ACE and the Carnegie Foundation to define roles, financial responsibilities, and performance expectations.

Contact Information

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