

EN 6: Community Partnerships

Rationale

This credit recognizes institutions that have developed lasting, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial community partnerships to advance sustainability. As community members and leaders, educational institutions can be powerful catalysts, allies, and partners in creating a just, equitable, and sustainable future for their localities, regions, and beyond.

Applicability

Applicable to all institutions.

Points available

A maximum of 9 points are available for this credit.

Criteria

6.1 Sustainability-focused community partnerships

An institution earns 3 points when it has at least one **community partnership** that is **sustainability-focused**.

Measurement

Report on the current status of the institution's partnerships with external entities such as civil society organizations, government agencies, and businesses.

To qualify as sustainability focused, the primary focus of the community partnership must be on the integrated concept of sustainability or the interdependence of ecological and social/cultural/economic systems.

Documentation

Report the following information in the online Reporting Tool.

- Does the institution have at least one community partnership that is sustainability-focused? (required)

If Yes, the following field is also required:

- Narrative and/or website URL providing an overview of the institution's sustainability-focused community partnerships

6.2 Partnerships to support underrepresented groups and vulnerable populations

An institution earns 3 points when it has at least one community partnership that explicitly aims to support **underrepresented groups** and/or **vulnerable populations** in addressing the **sustainability challenges** they have identified.

Measurement

Report on the current status of the institution’s partnerships with external entities such as civil society organizations, government agencies, and businesses.

Documentation

Report the following information in the online Reporting Tool.

- Does the institution have at least one community partnership that explicitly aims to support underrepresented groups and/or vulnerable populations in addressing the sustainability challenges they have identified? (required)

If Yes, the following field is also required:

- Description of the institution’s community partnerships to support underrepresented groups and/or vulnerable populations in addressing sustainability challenges. Include information on the specific sustainability challenges that have been identified by community members and how the institution is supporting them in addressing those challenges.

6.3 Community partnership assessment

An institution earns 3 points when A) it has published guidelines for creating and maintaining reciprocal and mutually beneficial community partnerships and B) all of the institution’s community partnerships for sustainability (as reported in indicators 6.1 and 6.2) are subject to an assessment process that includes joint evaluation by the institution and its community partners. Partial points are available and earned as outlined in Table I.

Table I. Points earned for indicator 6.3

Criterion	Points available	Points earned
A. Institution has published guidelines for creating and maintaining reciprocal and mutually beneficial community partnerships.	1	
B. All of the institution’s community partnerships for sustainability are subject to an assessment process that includes joint evaluation by the institution and its community partners.	2	

Total points earned →	
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Measurement

Report on the current status of the institution's community partnership policies, guidelines, and practices.

To qualify, published community partnership guidelines must explicitly seek to ensure equity, reciprocity, and/or mutual benefit.

To qualify, an assessment process must address the reciprocity and mutual benefit of the partnerships and include feedback and/or assessment findings from community partners to the institution and from the institution to the community.

Documentation

Report the following information in the online Reporting Tool.

- Does the institution have published guidelines for creating and maintaining community partnerships that are reciprocal and mutually beneficial? (required)

If Yes, at least one of the following two fields is also required:

- Publication that includes the community partnership guidelines. Upload.
- Online resource that includes the institution's community partnership guidelines. Website URL.

- Are all of the institution's community partnerships for sustainability subject to an assessment process that includes joint evaluation by the institution and its community partners? (required). Yes, No, or Unsure.

If Yes, the following field is also required:

- Description of the institution's approach to community partnership assessment and how the results are used to improve reciprocity and mutual benefit

Glossary

Community partnership – A lasting, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial collaboration between a higher education institution and one or more other entities (e.g., a government agency, civil society organization, or business) to understand and address the core problems facing local, regional, national, and/or international communities.

Sustainability challenge – An issue or situation that threatens or undermines ecological integrity, racial equity and social justice, or the ability of future generations to meet their needs (e.g., biodiversity loss, poverty and inequality, and climate change), OR a goal or objective that contributes to the resolution of such an issue or situation (e.g., ecosystem health, universal human rights, and renewable energy generation). To identify sustainability challenges, it may be helpful to reference the

[targets embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), the principles outlined in the [Earth Charter](#), and/or the [Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries](#).

Sustainability-focused – The term sustainability-focused is used to indicate that a primary and explicit focus on the integrated concept of sustainability or the interdependence of ecological systems and social/cultural/economic systems is required.

Underrepresented groups – Social groups that have historically been denied access or suffered institutional discrimination and/or are currently underrepresented or disadvantaged relative to one or more dominant groups. Individuals from underrepresented groups may include, but are not limited to:

- Ethnic, national, religious, and linguistic minorities
- Incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals
- Indigenous peoples
- LGBTQ+ individuals
- Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers
- People with disabilities
- Racialized people
- Residents of economically divested areas
- Roma, Sinti, and Travelers
- Survivors and veterans of conflict
- Women

Vulnerable populations – Populations that are to some degree unable to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impacts of disasters. This includes children, pregnant women, elderly people, malnourished people, and people who are ill or immune-compromised. These groups are particularly vulnerable when a disaster strikes and take a relatively high share of the disease burden associated with emergencies. Poverty - and its common consequences such as malnutrition, homelessness, poor housing and destitution - is a major contributor to vulnerability. [Adapted from the work of the World Health Organization (WHO).]