Atlas Stage 1 Program FAQs

The Atlas Zero Waste Certification® Program has two components - The Student Fellowship and The Certification Process and Deliverables. The Atlas Fellowship is the program through which campuses can become Atlas Zero Waste Certified. All campuses can expect to follow the same steps outlined below to become Certified. Further information on the Atlas Zero Waste Certification® is available on our website.

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Steps to Getting Certified

1. Campuses identify Atlas Zero Waste Fellow(s) that will conduct the assessment for their campus.

2. Fellow(s) are trained and licensed to use the Atlas Zero Waste Campus Programs Checklist to gather information.

3. Fellows perform interviews with campus stakeholders, compile campus resources, and synthesize waste reports.

4. The Campus Programs Checklist is scored to give the campus its Zero Waste Score and certification level.

What are my campus’ options for signing up a student for the Fellowship?

There are a couple of options that have worked for campuses in the past. This list is not exhaustive, and we are always open to having a conversation with your campus to consider unique arrangements.

- **Option A**: Student already has a compensated on-campus internship, job, or research position and is interested in adding another project to their existing responsibilities. The campus does not have to submit a formal application for this option.

- **Option B**: A campus department creates a position for a student specifically to complete an Atlas Assessment for their campus. The campus does not have to submit a formal application for this option.

- **Option C**: A student wants to complete an Atlas Assessment of their campus and applies for funding and support from their campus to cover both the cost of the engagement and compensation for their work. The student/campus will need to submit a [formal application](#) for this option.
Why is this a Fellowship Program?

When we first piloted this project from 2017 - 2019, Atlas staff members traveled to campuses to conduct the assessment with identified stakeholders in-person over the course of 2-3 days. We learned a lot from that experience, but we always knew we would eventually transition this to a student-led model. By conducting these assessments ourselves we were able to troubleshoot and perfect the process to the point that we were ready to train students to do this work on their campuses.

- We believe in student leadership, and the value of equipping students with the training and resources they need to be changemakers.
- The Fellowship saves the campus the costs of travel and accommodation associated with an Atlas staff member coming to their campus, because it can be conducted by a student who is already on campus, or conducted completely remotely.
- The Fellowship saves the campus a tremendous amount of time and effort in tracking down this information. Through PLAN’s resources, training, and guidance - and the role of the Fellow(s) conducting the interviews - we’ve cut down significantly on the time and labor needed from sustainability staff. Unlike other sustainability assessments, this can be a relatively hands-off process.
- By running semester-long cohorts, we can work with multiple campuses at once, and create opportunities for students to collaborate across the country.
- The Fellowship provides students with the valuable learning experience of forming relationships with campus stakeholders and understanding the intricacies of their campus’ organizational and materials management systems. We see students grow tremendously through this project. Here are just a few recent testimonials:

  - “The Atlas Fellowship experience has been a highlight of my college experience! Throughout the fellowship I was able to meet amazing student leaders across the country, share ideas about sustainability, and learn about the intersectionality of waste and social justice. The fellowship allowed me to see my institution from a brand new lens and gave me many transferable skills I can take with me beyond graduation.”

  - “Being a part of the Zero Waste Atlas Fellowship was like being given a new pair of glasses through which to see my campus. Through interviews and interactions with a huge range of campus stakeholders I gained a much more intimate understanding of the waste management systems on my campus. I was able to largely self direct a large campus initiative that involves reaching out to campus stakeholders, facilitating meetings, interpreting and evaluating responses, and synthesizing findings to determine patterns, flaws and potential solutions to reduce campus waste. Working with PLAN gave me access to a wealth of support and resources to broaden my understanding of campus waste initiatives and sustainability more broadly. It was a great experience and gave me insight I never would have found about my campus otherwise.”
What is the timeline of this project?
Stage 1 takes place over the course of a typical semester - with some flexibility based on campus schedules and structures. For campuses that move on to other Stages of this project, the full timeline can be seen here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Stage 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perform a Holistic Campus-Wide Assessment</td>
<td>Establish a Campus-Wide Strategic Vision</td>
<td>Create a Zero Waste Action Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ Establish a baseline to assess institutional gaps</td>
<td>→ Visioning allows stakeholders to engage with possible long-term solutions without the limitations of current systems, logistics, staffing and budgets</td>
<td>→ Fill in specific details: implementation strategy, cross-departmental collaboration and management, cost of implementation, expected timeline of implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ Lays the foundation for institutional goal setting and the ability to benchmark and track progress</td>
<td>→ Does not need specific details</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>→ 1 Semester</td>
<td>→ 1 Semester</td>
<td>→ 1 Year (Fall/Spring and Summer)</td>
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What deliverables will my campus receive following completion of the Fellowship?
Every campus will receive:
- A Zero Waste Scorecard (examples can be found on this [page](#))
- Atlas Zero Waste Certification® badges if the campus scores above 59.5%
- A Program Scoresheet with a more detailed breakdown of the zero waste points
- A published final report that includes a summary of major findings in easy-to-read assessment tables, scorecard and scoresheet breakdowns, and a list of 10-15 main recommendations.
- The educational learning experience for the Fellow(s)

How is the Atlas Zero Waste Assessment different from other Zero Waste or Sustainability Assessments?
We have a detailed answer to this question on our [Atlas Zero Waste Certification](#) page under the drop-down menu titled “Certification FAQs”. If you have any further questions please feel free to reach out!

How does the Scoring Work?
We have a detailed breakdown on what we assess for and how scoring works on our [Certification Details](#) page. On this page you can also find all past campus scores who have participated in this assessment. If you have any further questions about scoring we are happy to discuss, please feel free to reach out!
What will the supervisor’s main responsibilities be?
The biggest commitment of the supervisor’s time will occur at the start of the Fellowship during campus on-boarding, and towards the end of the Fellowship when students are wrapping up interviews. Below are the estimated hour commitments for one supervisor, which may vary depending on the size of your campus:

**Weeks 0-2:**
- Prep for Campus Pre-Assessment: 1-2 hrs
- Campus Pre-Assessment & Stakeholder Identification Meeting with Atlas Team: 1.5 hrs
- Introduction emails to campus stakeholders: 1-3 hrs
- Schedule interviews: 3-6 hrs

**Weeks 6+:**
- Following up with unresponsive stakeholders on the Fellow’s behalf: 1-2 hrs
- Exit Interview with Fellow and Atlas team: 1 hr
- Reviewing report draft & providing feedback/clarification: 2-4 hrs

What will the Fellow’s main responsibilities be?
The Fellowship is designed to be completed in approximately 50 hours, over the course of an academic semester. The Fellow’s main responsibilities are:
- Complete Atlas trainings in preparation for the Fellowship (3%)
- Outreach and follow-ups with campus stakeholders (15%)
- Conduct interviews with campus stakeholders (60%)
- Attend weekly check-in and workshop meetings with Fellowship class & complete their exit interview with their campus supervisor and an Atlas staff member (22%)

Please see the current job description posted on our website for a more detailed explanation of expectations, timeline, etc.

What are the Time Requirements for Stakeholders Across Campus?
We will work with the Supervisor and Fellow(s) to identify a list of 20-25 stakeholders to interview for this assessment. Most stakeholders will be asked to participate in a verbal interview (in-person or digital) that usually lasts from 30 minutes to 1 hour. A handful of other stakeholders will be asked to fill out a brief questionnaire that will be sent to them via email (about 20 minutes).
How much does the Fellowship cost? (There are 3 Components to this answer!)

1. PLAN Membership:
   Atlas engagements are an add-on to PLAN’s Membership system because we want to make sure that we are able to provide year-round support and access to advising resources beyond this being a one-off assessment with no follow-up or opportunity for future engagement. Many of the resources, case studies, and toolkits referenced throughout this process are built into PLAN’s membership system. If your campus is not a member, you can explore more about membership and the costs [here](www.postlandfill.org/atlas).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Small schools 0-5k students</th>
<th>Medium Schools 5k-15k students</th>
<th>Large Schools 15k+ students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>$550</strong></td>
<td><strong>$775</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1000</strong></td>
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- This price is based on 4-year, predominately white institutions.
- Small, 4-year MSI’s begin at $350/yr.
- Small, 2-year community colleges or trade schools begin at $250/yr.

2. Fellowship and Atlas Zero Waste Assessment:
   The cost of the Fellowship and Assessment program is scaled depending on what type of institution your campus falls under. We built our pricing scale based on the staff time required of each component of the Atlas Assessment, including:
   - Fixed rate for Fellow training and Licensing to conduct the assessment
   - Fixed rate for supervisory role of Atlas staff (i.e. weekly check-ins, workshop, answering questions over email/call, etc.)
   - Customization of the Assessment to your campus’s facilities
   - Auditing and Scoring Assessment results
   - Producing your Zero Waste Scorecard and Scoresheets
   - Drafting and graphically designing the final report

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<th>Large Schools (15k+ students)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>$3,075</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,450</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,825</strong></td>
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**We have just updated Atlas pricing!** If you have been interested in Atlas and budgeted for our previous rates, please reach out – we will honor that until January 30, 2023.**
3. Compensation for the Fellow:
   As detailed below, we expect that the Fellow will spend roughly 50 hours on this project (5 hrs/week for 10 weeks - ish). We recommend small - medium campuses work with 1 Fellow, and we recommend 2 or more Fellows for Large campuses. We expect Fellows to be financially compensated or offered academic credit for their time.

Looking for creative ways to find funding?
Check out PLAN’s [Finding Funding on Your Campus Guide](#).

Financial Support Available through PLAN’s Movement Building Fund (MBF):
If you are a campus that is interested in the Atlas Fellowship Program, but find the cost to be a prohibitive factor, we want to hear from you! Please submit your application materials and complete the [Movement Building Fund Application](#) (also linked in the Fellowship Application Form). You may also elaborate upon the reason why cost is a prohibitive factor (i.e. COVID budget cuts) in your Letter of Endorsement and what your campus is able to contribute towards this program.

I want to do the Atlas Assessment! Where do I start?
Fantastic! We’re excited to work with you too! Reach out to schedule a meeting with our Program Director - Alex Freid to discuss what semester you’d ideally like to engage with us, what funding looks like for the assessment, and how you plan to secure and compensate a student fellow/s. You can also email us at [atlas@postlandfill.org](mailto:atlas@postlandfill.org).