



Student Green Energy Fund Charter

I. Introduction

The [American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment](#), signed by USF President Judy Genshaft in 2008, obligates USF-Tampa to conduct an annual greenhouse gas emissions inventory and develop a long-term [Climate Action Plan](#) (CAP) to reduce and, eventually, eliminate greenhouse gas emissions from the Tampa campus operations and infrastructure. In 2009, the USF Office of Sustainability was established to oversee these requirements ([USF Policy 10-051](#)). Since then, the Office has created a greenhouse gas inventory (baseline AY 2007-2008) and a CAP. One of the major sources of greenhouse gas emissions identified by the CAP is energy consumption by the University. The CAP concludes that energy consumption must be reduced to lower greenhouse gas emissions and energy costs.

The Student Green Energy Fee assists the University of South Florida with conserving energy, reducing energy costs, lowering greenhouse gas emissions, promoting renewable energy technologies, reducing water usage and/or increasing resource sustainability. With approval from the Florida Board of Governors on March 24, 2011, students at each campus vote in a study body referendum every three years to determine if they support the fee and at what rate. The most recent referendum for the Tampa Campus was certified by the Student Government Election Rules Commission during the 2020 General Elections. The next referendum will take place in the spring semester of 2023.

II. Fee Administration

The Fee is collectively managed by the Student Green Energy Fund (SGEF) Council, which consists of 15 individuals: 12 regular (voting) members, two alternates, and one Chair.

The USF Tampa Governor of Student Government or her/his delegate nominates six student members and one student alternate from the USF Tampa Campus upon the recommendation of the SG University and Community Affairs Department or other administrative unit of the SG designated by the SG Governor. SGEF Council Chair nominates six faculty/staff members and one faculty/staff alternate from the USF Tampa Campus.

All nominations are reviewed and accepted by the SGEF Council each year, with appointments made no later than July 31. All SGEF Council appointments are limited to nine months, starting August 1st ending April 30. SGEF Council members may seek additional (including consecutive) terms.

The SGEF Council Chair convenes the council, oversees procedural matters, and may cast a tie-breaking vote. A simple majority of voting members (seven) is required to vote on SGEF proposals and amend the SGEF Charter. The simple majority must consist of at least three student members and at least three faculty/staff members. Vote casting by electronic means (e.g., e-mail) may be permitted as needed but is not preferred. Alternate members may be called upon to vote if a simple majority of regular voting members cannot be achieved.

III. Fund Management

Fees are collected and maintained in a dedicated auxiliary account (“In the Auxiliary Trust Fund – Budget Basis”), and all expenditures for projects funded from the account are approved and paid from that account. The auxiliary fund is administered by Student Success. The SGEF Council Chair is the authorized signatory on the account. An objective cost review is conducted periodically in order to assure accurate estimates. Reports on project expenditures are made on a periodic basis. Unused funding for projects is returned to the fund for other projects.

Since the SGEF is maintained as an auxiliary account, a six percent withholding is required for administrative overhead. In addition, a minimum of five percent of the fees collected is held annually in reserve for contingencies and bad debt. A maximum of three percent of the fees collected can be used annually to fund a term-limited OPS staff position (“SGEF Manager”) to manage the fund, as approved by the SGEF Council.

IV. Fee Allocation

All current and actively enrolled students as well as current employees of USF may apply for SGEF funds.

Required Criteria for Proposals:

- proposals must align with the university’s commitment to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, waste, and/or energy costs
- address reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption, water usage, and/or resource sustainability on the USF Tampa Campus,
- proposals must include an educational component that informs the USF community about the results of the project,
- all relevant university paperwork (e.g., Space Impact Request, Event Request, etc.) must be completed and approved,
- all proposed competitive grant projects over \$5,000 must have immediate application (i.e., should not be “pure” research),
- must include a detailed timeline and projected completion date,
- budgets cannot include salaries or stipends for USF employees but can include stipends for undergraduate students and salaries (but not tuition) for graduate assistants,
- proposals must demonstrate that funding alternatives (such as fees, grants, etc.) are not available/applicable

- proposals should demonstrate the sustainability of the project after the budget period has ended

Preferred Criteria for Proposals:

- proposals should specify or estimate the return on investment (e.g., KWH reductions, GHG emissions reductions, and/or cost savings realized by the institution),
- project management teams should include a combination of faculty/staff and students,
- projects should seek internal/external funding matches or cost sharing with other units,
- proposals should show how the projects align with the USF Strategic Plan and/or Master Plan,
- (e.g., a statement from the benefitting unit committing to maintain the project after the budget period has ended), and
- projects should enhance student success and contribute to institutional sustainability.
- proposing and benefitting units must comply with the reporting requirements of the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment (<https://secondnature.org/signatory-handbook/measuring-progress/>) and the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (<https://stars.aashe.org>).

The SGEF Council will not reject a project solely based on financial payback or cost savings. Additionally, the council will not reject a project due to failure to meet a stated minimum GHG/energy or water use reduction per dollar spent. The council, however, may consider the expected performance of a project when deciding between competitive grants.

V. Proposal Process

Project proposals can originate from any source within USF-Tampa as they pertain to the USF Tampa Campus, including individuals, groups, and formal and informal bodies. It is anticipated that most awards will not exceed \$100,000, unless exceptional circumstances require additional funding. Proposals must be submitted online via <https://usflearn.instructure.com/enroll/A94AWL>

The SGEF Council has established a two-tiered grant system.

- **Fast Track Mini-Grant (up to \$5,000):** Typically, these mini-grants are educational or promotional. Project proposal is not required, however the SGEF Council may, at its discretion, require one.
- **Competitive Grant (\$5,001 and above):** Grant projects in this range assist the University with conserving energy, reducing energy costs, lowering greenhouse gas emissions, implementing renewable energy technologies, reducing water usage or increasing resource sustainability. Minimally, the SGEF Council will evaluate all project proposals in this grant category.

The SGEF Council may require additional consultation and greater oversight depending upon the complexity of the project with regard to purchasing volume, labor costs, number of contractors involved, high visibility or award amount.

These competitive grant projects will enjoy significant institutional support, attain extraordinary visibility and target outcomes that address critical needs congruent with SGEF Charter priorities. Project leaders will assemble a team of experts with complementary strengths to lead these large, complex projects to a successful conclusion.

There is no set due date for proposals. The SGEF Council reviews project proposal applications as received and maintains a queue of vetted and approved projects ranked by funding priority. As funds become available, the SGEF Council authorizes commencing specific projects.

All proposals must include:

- Project title;
- PI, Co-PI details;
- Organizations that will implement the project (to help determine any additional costs and resource restraints).
- Project description;
- Detailed budget and budget justification documenting existing human and financial resources for the project as well as projected ongoing resource needs (total cost of ownership for the life of the project) including major equipment, contracts/services (commissioning, monitoring, etc.), and personnel costs;
- Resource matching that might be provided by organizations (with appropriate commitment authority documentation);
- Proposed timeline for the project with major milestones and project end dates;
- Metrics on how success will be measured, **if applicable**;
- Estimated or calculated return on investment (energy, GHG emissions, cost savings), if possible; and
- Plan for sustainability of the project beyond the initial project period, **if applicable**.

VI. Evaluation Process

Submitted proposals are reviewed by members of the SGEF Council, as well as subject experts (faculty, staff and non-USF persons), who have extensive knowledge and experience in energy technologies and related fields.

The SGEF Council develops its own evaluation metrics, in concert with the SGEF Criteria, which are used in the development of proposal recommendations and prioritization. All SGEF Council members must identify any conflicts of interest for any project under review, and must refrain from voting accordingly. Award recipients are notified within approximately one week of the SGEF Council's funding recommendations. The SGEF Council may, at its own discretion, award

funding to projects on a contingency basis. Any contingencies must be addressed by the PI(s) of the proposed project before funding is allocated.

VII. Project Management

The SGEF Council, through its Chair and a dedicated SGEF Manager, provides administrative and budgetary oversight on all projects. The Principal Investigator (PI), in conjunction with the SGEF Manager and SGEF Council Chair, is responsible and accountable for all project components, including scale/scope, monitoring, maintaining, and metric measurements. **Project changes that necessitate 10 percent or greater alterations to any budget category must be approved by the SGEF Council before proceeding.**

Project reporting by the PI is required on a quarterly basis, mapping actual to identified success criteria with established metrics. The quarterly reporting requirement commences on the date that the SGEF Council releases project funding. A final project report is required within one month of the end of the project, unless otherwise determined by the SGEF Manager. Projects must be closed out with all accounting entries at the conclusion of the project. **The SGEF Council, in its discretion, may approve in writing any request for a no-cost extension, including amending the completion date and/or adjusting any affected reporting requirements.** It is expected that an appropriate level of project management will be applied by the implementing organization.

VIII. Charter Agreement

The SGEF Charter was drafted, reviewed, and approved by the Student Green Energy Fund Council.

IX. Charter Amendments

The SGEF Charter was amended on March 11, 2022 by a majority vote of the Student Green Energy Fund Council.