



MARYLAND GREEN SCHOOLS Application Overview

2025-2026



MAEOE

Maryland Association for Environmental &
Outdoor Education

410-777-9530

| www.maeoe.org

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P.O. Box 1103 Edgewater, MD 21037

This document outlines the acceptable requirements under each objective of the Maryland Green Schools application and can be used as a checklist as you prepare your application. Application guidelines & resources can be found at marylandgreenschools.org.



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OBJECTIVE 1: SYSTEMIC SUSTAINABILITY



Demonstrate that teachers and staff are integrating environmental literacy and sustainability into their curriculum, professional learning, and day-to-day practices.

1.1 Environmental Curriculum and Instruction

Demonstrate that outdoor, environment-based instruction is occurring through hands-on, authentic inquiry-based lessons on environmental issues.

- **Elementary and middle schools** must provide one example of outdoor/environmental instruction per grade level.
- **High schools** must provide one example of outdoor/environmental instruction in four different subjects (which may include multiple different sciences).

Required Information	Passing Examples	Passing Documentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Class name• Grade(s)• Date• Lesson/Activity name• Teacher name• Detailed description of how students are using the outdoors or nature in their learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs)• Lessons incorporating outdoor/schoolyard exploration• Environmentally-focused field trips• Student presentations on nature/climate-related subjects• Student debates on environmental policies• Outdoor/nature-themed arts education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Photos/videos of students participating in activities• Completed student work
	Non-Passing Examples	Non-Passing Documentation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Action projects without lesson content (e.g., sorting recyclables, creating outdoor artwork, trash pickups, removing invasive plants, installing bird boxes, etc.)• Lessons that do not demonstrate an environmental connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lesson plans (may supplement other documentation)• Blank student worksheets

OBJECTIVE 1: SYSTEMIC SUSTAINABILITY

1.2 Green School Awareness

Demonstrate that everyone in your school is aware of the Maryland Green School application process.

1.2.1 School-Wide Awareness - Staff

Demonstrate that all school personnel are aware of your school's Green School status and application.

Required Information	Passing Examples	Passing Documentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Date of meeting• Number of staff in attendance• Description of how your staff were made aware of your school's Green School application	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workshop led by a MAEOE Green Center, MAEOE Green Ambassador, or other county-designated Green Leader• Presentation conducted during an all-staff meeting by your school's Green Team• Staff brainstorming session on meeting the application requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff meeting agenda• Whole staff presentation• Staff sign-in sheet
	Non-Passing Examples	Non-Passing Documentation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Email correspondence with no additional action or follow-up• Meetings or workshops without all teachers present	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Photos showing only a small fraction of teachers engaging in the meeting

1.2.2 School-Wide Celebration

Demonstrate how your school celebrates being a Green School by hosting a school-wide, environmentally-focused event open to all students.

Objective 1.2.2 is not required for Sustainable schools (Application 5 and beyond).

Required Information	Passing Examples	Passing Documentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grades• Date of event• Celebration/event title• Detailed description of the event's environmental activities and how all grades participated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School-wide Earth Day celebration highlighting Green School accomplishments• Whole school shutting off lights for Earth Hour• Classes contributing to bird counts for the Great Backyard Bird Count or World Migratory Bird Day• Week-long morning announcements reminding students of Green School status and green actions• Attendance at the Youth Summit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Photos of students participating in activities• Newsletters or social media highlighting the event• Detailed event agendas
	Non-Passing Examples	Non-Passing Documentation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Activities that are not available to all students• Activities that do not acknowledge the Green Schools program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partner logos/websites• Staff headshots• Web images

OBJECTIVE 1: SYSTEMIC SUSTAINABILITY



1.3 Environmental Professional Development for Teachers

Demonstrate that **10% of instructional staff** have completed an environmental PD.

Instructional staff is defined as any staff that manages a gradebook.

- **New schools** must have all PD completed **within the past 2 academic years**.
- **Renewing schools** must have all PD completed **within the past 4 academic years**.

A teacher who has participated in multiple workshops may only be counted once.

Required Information	Passing Examples	Passing Documentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date of training • Teacher name • Description of PD and how it relates to the teacher's environmental education practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects WET/WILD/Learning Tree workshops • MWEE 101/201 online workshops by NOAA • MAEOE's virtual training on Using the Outdoors as a Classroom or any other MAEOE trainings listed on marylandgreenschools.org under Resources • MAEOE Conference attendance • Master Naturalist/Gardener certification • College degrees in an environmental field received in the last 2 years (for new schools) or 4 years (for reapplying schools) • MAEOE Environmental Educator Certification (see MAEOE.org for information and requirements) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate of completion • Screenshot of registration confirmation email • Training agenda • Photos of teachers attending their training
	Non-Passing Examples	Non-Passing Documentation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops taking place over 2 years (for new schools) or 4 years prior (for reapplying schools) • Workshops not demonstrating a clear environmental connection • Activities conducted as part of student programming • Personal field trips or vacations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photos of training that do not show the teachers in question or environmental activities • Promotional flyers or emails

OBJECTIVE 1: SYSTEMIC SUSTAINABILITY

1.4 Achieving Sustainable Schools

Demonstrate the steps your school and staff are taking to be sustainable.

Objective 1.4.2 is not required for Sustainable schools (Application 5 and beyond).

1.4.1 School-Wide Staff Sustainability

Demonstrate the sustainability practices your **teachers, staff, and other school personnel** have implemented school-wide to make your school green. *Any actions involving students belong under Objective 2.*

Required Information	Passing Examples	Passing Documentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Detailed description of practices being implemented by teachers/staff/personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reducing paper use via double-sided copying, electronic communications, etc.Reducing electricity via energy-efficient bulbs, motion-sensitive lights, de-lamping (removal of ½ of light bulbs), use of natural light, etc.Utilizing integrated pest managementIncentivizing carpooling or public transportationReducing impervious surfaces (blacktop, concrete)Reducing single-use plastics via reusable lunch containers, water bottles, utensils, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Photos of practices being implemented by staffPolicy documentsBlueprintsEmail or other correspondence
	Non-Passing Examples	Non-Passing Documentation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Practices being implemented by students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Photos of student practices

1.4.2 Systemic Partnership

Demonstrate one partnership with a central office or board **within the school system** that supports part of the Maryland Green Schools Program. *Any partnerships outside of your school system belong under Objective 3.*

Required Information	Passing Examples	Passing Documentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Detailed description of the partnership and how it supports an aspect of the Green Schools program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Managing food waste reduction with your district's food and nutrition officeManaging energy efficiency or school ground plants with your district's facilities servicesMonitoring recycling with your district's waste/recycling officeConducting programming with your district's Outdoor Education DepartmentIndependent schools may partner with their board of trustees, parish office/archdiocese, or funders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Photos of practices being implementedCompleted program or funding applicationsLetters/emails with your district partner addressing plans
	Non-Passing Examples	Non-Passing Documentation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Partnerships outside of your school system	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Partner logos/websitesStaff headshotsWeb images

OBJECTIVE 2: STUDENT ACTION

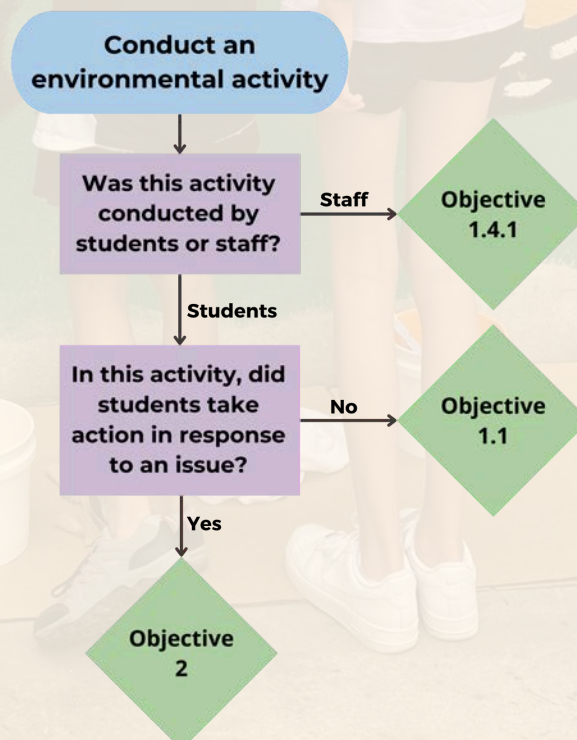
Demonstrate that students are taking a step beyond instruction and responding to environmental issues by planning, implementing, leading, and/or participating in sustainable practices.

Required Information	Passing Documentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date of activity • Activity title • Grade level(s) • Detailed description of the activity and how students are taking action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photos/videos of students conducting action • Completed student projects • Screenshots of social media posts
	Non-Passing Documentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson plans (may supplement other documentation) • Blank student worksheets • Photos without students or student projects • Receipts of materials purchases • Logos • Web images

Schools must document eight total actions that address at least three of the listed sustainability practices. Not all eight practices are required; however, each action must be distinctly different and can only count for one practice. A variety of ages and grades should be represented.

Application 5 and beyond schools need only provide four total actions that address four sustainability practices. [Click here to access the Application 5 and Beyond Checklist.](#)

Note that these are student actions, not curriculum or staff actions. If you're unsure if an activity belongs under Objective 2, use the figure to the right to help you determine where to place that activity.



OBJECTIVE 2: STUDENT ACTION

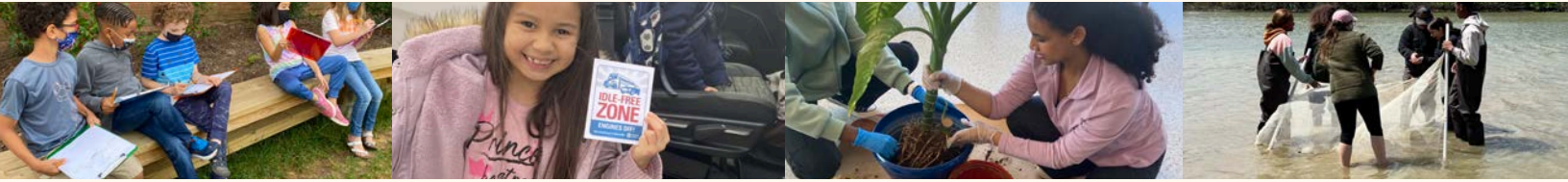


Demonstrate that students are taking a step beyond instruction and responding to environmental issues by planning, implementing, leading, and/or participating in sustainable action. Schools must document **eight total actions that address at least three of the following eight sustainability practices.**

Sustainable Practice	Passing Examples	Non-Passing Examples*
2.1 Water Conservation/ Pollution Prevention Addresses indoor and outdoor water use, erosion control, stormwater management, trash cleanups, and water quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installing a rain garden or no-mow zone Reducing impervious surfaces Installing riparian buffer zones to reduce runoff Conducting a stream cleanup Creating signs to turn off faucets in bathrooms Stenciling storm drains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting water quality testing without applying or sharing the findings Investigating the levels of erosion at a site without performing mitigation
2.2 Energy Conservation Addresses energy and electronics use and strategies to reduce carbon footprints.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labeling light switches with reminders to turn off lights Conducting an energy audit of the school and present findings to school administration Sharing energy-saving tips over morning announcements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determining one's own carbon footprint Conducting an energy audit without sharing the findings Staff installing energy-efficient lightbulbs
2.3 Solid Waste Reduction Addresses resource use, waste disposal, and waste management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating in no-waste lunches Creating a share table at lunch Sorting recyclables from trash Conducting composting Repurposing used materials into art projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff adding more recycling bins Installing water bottle refill stations without student involvement
2.4 Habitat Restoration Addresses native plant and animal habitat, strengthening local ecosystems, and invasive species removal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising native species, such as terrapins or sunfish, in the classroom for release Planting native trees, shrubs, pollinator plants, or bay grasses Removing invasive plants Building and installing bird boxes Implementing bird-proofing measures on windows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planting introduced/invasive trees, shrubs, or other plants Staff planting trees or other plants on behalf of students

**Refer to the flow chart on page 7 to help you determine if an activity belongs under Objective 2.*

OBJECTIVE 2: STUDENT ACTION



Demonstrate that students are taking a step beyond instruction and responding to environmental issues by planning, implementing, leading, and/or participating in sustainable action. Schools must document **eight total actions that address at least three of the eight provided sustainability practices.**

Sustainable Practice	Passing Examples	Non-Passing Examples*
2.5 Opportunities for Nature Exploration Addresses structures, signage, artwork, and events that encourage the use of nature in learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installing interpretive signage Creating or maintaining an outdoor classroom space Installing outdoor artwork Planting or maintaining an edible garden Participating in running events that show a clear environmental connection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installing an outdoor classroom without student involvement
2.6 Responsible Transportation Addresses sustainable options for school transportation and fossil fuels reduction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installing signs to designate a no-idle zone Handing out fliers to advocate for no idling or carpooling Advocating to the district for electric buses Participating in walking field trips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Riding the bus Riding electric vehicles
2.7 Healthy Indoor Environments Addresses healthy food and building maintenance choices to promote a healthy indoor environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating and using non-toxic cleaning products Keeping indoor plants to improve air quality Harvesting produce to be used in lunches Monitoring air quality and sharing results with the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring air quality without sharing or acting upon the findings
2.8 Citizen/Community/Participatory Science Addresses student participation in scientific research via submissions to GLOBE, iNaturalist, eBird, or other online databases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting a bird count and submitting sightings to eBird Participating in a bioblitz and submitting observations to iNaturalist Training and collecting water quality data for the Chesapeake Water Watch Project Training and collecting atmospheric or hydraulic data to submit to GLOBE Submitting monarch butterfly sightings or milkweed observations to Journey North Documenting storm damage on MyCoast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gathering data without submitting it to an online database

*Refer to the flow chart on page 7 to help you determine if an activity belongs under Objective 2.

OBJECTIVE 3: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP



Demonstrate that your school is forming long-term partnerships to foster environmental stewardship and cultivate community wellness through real-world connections.

3.1 Community Partners

Demonstrate long-term collaborations with outside organizations to support environmental education and sustainable practices. Schools must describe how these partnerships are long-term. The same partner may be used in both Objectives 3.1.1 and 3.1.2.

3.1.1 School Active in the Community

Describe at least one environmentally-focused partnership in which your school is working to benefit your community.

Required Information	Passing Examples	Passing Documentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Date of activity• Partner name• Detailed description of how your school partnered with an organization to benefit your local community• Explanation of how your school considers this a long-term partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Holding a reoccurring used clothing drive for a local church/charity• Conducting environmental service projects in an off-campus public space (including trash clean-up, native plantings, invasive species removal, community garden maintenance, etc.)• Harvesting produce from a farm to be donated to a local food bank• Visiting another school for students to teach other students about an environmental issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Photos of students participating in activities• Newsletters or social media highlighting the event• Detailed event agendas
	Non-Passing Examples <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Field trips that do not demonstrate students benefitting their community• Holding a canned food drive or other food drive that does not improve sustainability practices• Service projects without an environmental connection• Partnerships with only one occurrence across all of Objective 3	Non-Passing Documentation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partner logos/websites• Headshots• Photos without students or student projects present

OBJECTIVE 3: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP



3.1 Community Partners

3.1.2 Community Active in the School

Describe at least one partnership in which a community partner is benefitting the school.

These actions and projects occur on or near school grounds with support from the partner.

Required Information	Passing Examples	Passing Documentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Date of activity• Partner name• Detailed description of how your school partnered with an organization to benefit your school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A business providing funding or in-kind donations for an environmental activity or materials• Organizations delivering classroom presentations or assemblies on environmental topics• Organizations assisting with school campus projects (such as tree/garden plantings, bird box installation, rain garden installation, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Photos of students participating in activities• Newsletters or social media highlighting the event• Detailed event agendas
	Non-Passing Examples	Non-Passing Documentation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Field trips• Organizations providing services without an environmental connection• Partnerships with only one occurrence across all of Objective 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partner logos/websites• Headshots• Photos without students or student projects present

3.2 Additional Achievements (optional)

Share any environmentally-related awards, special recognition, certifications, or other achievements that your school, staff, or students have accomplished.

Required Information	Examples	Documentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Date of activity• Achievement title• Description of the achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Wildlife Habitat Award from NWF• County awards• Measurable energy savings awards• Green Ribbon School award• LEED Certification• Environmental professional development received more than 4 years ago• Students or teachers recognized for green efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Photos of the award or a special recognition event• Newspaper/newsletter articles• Copy of certificate/award

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS AND SURVEY



ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

Complete the following items at the end of your application.

Legal Permissions

Acknowledge your school's permission to upload your chosen documents and that the provided information is accurate. You may choose to give MAEOE permission to use the provided photographs in our promotional materials. Finally, for your application to be submitted, your school's principal must sign and date the application. Visit our [Online Portal Guide](#) to learn how to create your principal's login.

Green Team

List the teachers, students, and/or other personnel who assisted with compiling your school's application.

Top 5 Accomplishments

Provide one sentence for each of the five accomplishments your school is most proud of. These statements will be shared during the awards ceremony at the Youth Summit. You may also list any Green Centers or MAEOE Green Ambassadors you received assistance from.

Goals (Applications 4 and Beyond Only)

Schools completing Application 4 are being considered for Sustainable status, which means they must set goals for themselves for the next 4, 8, and 12 years. Sustainable schools, or schools completing Application 5 and beyond, will also provide written reflections on these goals and set goals for themselves for another 4, 8, and 12 years.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS AND SURVEY



SCHOOL METRICS SURVEY

The purpose of the School Metrics Survey is to quantify the impact of the green actions taken by your school to support sustainability and improve the environment. All survey quantifiers align with the sustainability practices outlined in Objective 2.

Schools are NOT expected to have an impact in every quantifier. This survey simply helps MAEOE document the collective impact of the Maryland Green Schools program and will not count against the school's application.

Due to the nature of the survey, **MAEOE recommends completing this part of the application last.**

Metrics Survey Quantifiers	Possible Data Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gallons of water saved• Erosion control projects• Stream cleaning• Reduction of impervious surfaces• Litter collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student action projects completed in Objective 2.1: Water Conservation/ Pollution Prevention• Community cleanup events• School facilities/utilities personnel• Utility bills
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• KWh of energy saved• Use of renewable energy• Efficient lighting fixtures• Delamped light fixtures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student action projects completed in Objective 2.2: Energy Conservation• School facilities/utilities personnel• Energy bills
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LBs of recycled materials• LBs of compostable materials• # of electronics, ink cartridges, etc. recycled	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student action projects completed in Objective 2.3: Solid Waste Reduction• Information from waste collection• TerraCycle recycling programs

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS AND SURVEY



Metrics Survey Quantifiers	Possible Data Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of native trees/shrubs planted • Native habitat creation • Bird box creation/ installation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student action projects completed in Objective 2.4: Habitat Restoration • Community events • Actions with partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trails, pathways creation • # of outdoor classrooms • Environmental art projects • # of times schoolyard used for learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student action projects completed in Objective 2.5: Opportunities for Nature Exploration • Actions with partners • Grants for outdoor space creation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No idle zones • # of staff/faculty carpooling, biking, walking, etc. to school • # of staff/faculty carpooling, biking, walking, etc. to school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student action projects completed in Objective 2.6: Responsible Transportation • Students' transportation information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of indoor plants • Edible gardens • Outdoor running/environmental festivals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student action projects completed in Objective 2.7: Healthy Indoor Environments • Community events • Actions with partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poster campaigns • Analyze data and identify solutions for environmental problems • Online data submission projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student action projects completed in Objective 2.8: Citizen/Community/Participatory Science • Community events • Actions with partners • Use of iNaturalist, etc. with students

DOCUMENTATION GUIDE

Documentation is required for all activities listed in the application. Keep in mind that professionals who do not know your school will be reviewing the application, so **please include detailed descriptions** for all activities.

Strong Documentation	Documentation to Avoid
Photos, videos, or other media of students in action	Photos with no students present
Completed student assignments, projects, worksheets, etc.	Lesson plans and blank student worksheets*
Workshop registration emails, certificates of completion, or sign-in sheets	Promotional fliers and emails
Screenshots of email correspondence between staff and partners, including the date	Staff headshots or partner organization logos
Links to public-facing websites	Links to websites without public access
Agendas describing plans for a near future event	<i>*While lesson plans would not pass as standalone documentation, they may supplement the examples listed on the left.</i>
Photos or screenshots of news articles or social media posts	

REMINDER: Documentation is NOT required for Sustainable schools (Applications 5 and beyond).

Before submitting documentation, double check that your files have first been downloaded to your desktop. **Files that are uploaded directly from school servers will be blocked.**

Recommended file formats:

- PDF files
- JPG images
- PNG images
- MP4 videos
- AVI videos
- MOV videos
- Links to public-facing websites (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo, Facebook, etc.)

DO NOT SUBMIT the following file formats:

- HEIC images
- ZIP files
- Google Drive files
- OneDrive files
- Links to school servers or websites without public access

Review the [Online Portal Guide](#) for further tips on uploading files.



APPLICATION CYCLES

All schools, including Sustainable schools, must reapply every four years to maintain their Green School Award. For new applicants, activities and programs from the past two academic years are eligible as application evidence. All subsequent applications may utilize activities and programs from the four years between awards. Applications are accepted every year.

Application Number	Eligible Activities	Application Type	Award Type
New (1st Application)	Activities occurring two academic years prior to submission (years 1-2)	Regular	Regular
2nd Application	Activities occurring after Application 1 (years 3-6)	Regular	Regular
3rd Application	Activities occurring after Application 2 (years 7-10)	Regular	Regular
4th Application	Activities occurring after Application 3 (years 11-14)	Regular with 4-year goals	Sustainable
5th Application	Activities occurring after Application 4 (years 15-18)	Sustainable	Sustainable Bronze
6th Application	Activities occurring after Application 5 (years 19-22)	Sustainable	Sustainable Silver
7th Application	Activities occurring after Application 6 (years 23-26)	Sustainable	Sustainable Gold
8th Application and In Perpetuity	Activities occurring after Application 7 (years 27+)	Sustainable	Sustainable Evergreen