



Governor's Award for
ENVIRONMENTAL
Excellence

2026



GUIDELINES



Pennsylvania

**Department of
Environmental Protection**

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Josh Shapiro, Governor

Department of Environmental Protection
Jessica Shirley, Secretary



Dear Friend,

On behalf of Governor Josh Shapiro, it brings me great pleasure to invite you and your organization to apply for the 2026 Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) works under the Governor's guidance to be a model environmental agency that moves at the speed of business and leads the way in science, innovation, and best practices to ensure clean air, land, and water for the health and safety of present and future generations.

As previous award winners have shown, creating a sustainable future for Pennsylvania is best done through partnerships between government agencies, communities, and organizations that exemplify impactful leadership. This year's Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence will recognize those leaders who have taken on the challenge of advancing environmental protection, education, and justice in the Commonwealth. I look forward to receiving applications from groups across Pennsylvania that exemplify this leadership and take on projects that, through collaboration and education, will prepare our Commonwealth to face current and future climate challenges.

This award is open to all Pennsylvania businesses, farms, government agencies, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations who have initiated, or participated in, the development of a project that promotes environmental protection in the state. By nominating your organization or an organization you know, you will help to lift up the amazing work that is going on around Pennsylvania, making our Commonwealth a leader in climate resilience while protecting Pennsylvanians and our shared resources.

Each year, these awards highlight forward thinking groups that are changing the environmental protection landscape. I know that the 2026 awards will recognize the organizations that are leaders in our Commonwealth's resiliency and determination towards environmental protection and justice. For more information about the Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence, please visit DEP's award website at www.dep.pa.gov/About/Awards/EnvironmentalExcellence.

We look forward to reviewing your application.

Sincerely,

Jessica Shirley
Acting Secretary



Project Eligibility

The Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence is open to any Pennsylvania business, farm, government agency, educational institution, non-profit organization and individual that has created, or participated in, the development of a project that promotes environmental stewardship in Pennsylvania. To be eligible for consideration, projects must have been completed between **November 1, 2024 and November 19, 2025.**

Examples of eligible projects include, but are not limited to:

- **Innovative Advances**
Companies, individuals, or projects that contribute to environmental protection through technological advances in pollution prevention, water treatment, renewable energy development and energy efficiency.
- **Sustainable Practices**
Companies, individuals, or projects that employ sustainable practices for the purpose of conserving resources, reducing waste, and promoting environmental resiliency.
- **Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation**
Companies, individuals, or projects that actively seek to limit, reduce, or adjust to long-term climate change through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation of impacts.
- **Energy Solutions**
Companies, individuals, or projects that offer best service/best price options for renewable energy strategies, meet demands in the restructured electricity market and promote economic development and investment in renewable and alternative energy.
- **Environmental Education**
Companies, individuals, or projects that create communication pathways, break down barriers, foster environmental education, address environmental concerns and challenges, and create awareness for responsible environmental practices.
- **Watershed Restoration**
Companies, individuals, or projects that display practicable engineering based on science, ensure future growth, and yield maximum environmental benefits for Pennsylvania's waterways.
- **Natural Areas**
Companies, individuals, or projects that protect our natural areas such as parks, forests, and open spaces by cleaning up pollution, planting trees, restoring habitat, or increasing our understanding of the treasures we already possess.
- **Environmental Justice**
Companies, individuals, or projects that increase the environmental education of people in designated Environmental Justice communities, protect or improve their natural environment, or increase their access to resources for environmental protection.



Evaluation and Selection

Projects will be selected for awards based on the seven criteria listed below:

- 1. Protection** – Projects must demonstrate, above all, a commitment to protecting the environment. DEP evaluates and awards points to projects that have implemented an environmental project in the most effective manner possible with measurable and demonstrable results.
- 2. Partnership** – Projects should demonstrate the involvement of employees, government officials and/or community members.
- 3. Environmental Education and Outreach** – Projects should teach others about environmentally responsible practices.
- 4. Innovation** – Projects effectively using innovative technology or approaches will receive additional consideration.
- 5. Climate Change** – Projects should consider the potential impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions or implementing strategies to adapt to climate change.
- 6. Sustainability** – Project should be implemented using sustainable practices or should enhance sustainability regarding consumption of food or energy, waste management, or other environmental influences.
- 7. Environmental Justice** – Projects should directly or indirectly benefit those who are or historically have been exposed to greater environmental health risks, particularly those living in Environmental Justice areas. *

** – to learn more about environmental justice factors, the Department of Environmental Protection's Environmental Justice Policy, and the Pennsylvania Environmental Justice Mapping and Screening Tool (PennEnviroScreen), please visit the DEP Website (<https://www.dep.pa.gov/PublicParticipation/OfficeofEnvironmentalJustice/Pages/Policy-Revision.aspx>)*



Application and Project Summary Guidelines

Application Guidelines

Applicants may submit one application per project. **If an organization completed multiple projects, they may submit one application for each project.** Projects that have previously received a Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence are not eligible for this award. Past winners may submit new projects for consideration. Projects that are required by a regulation, order, or permit condition are not eligible unless they demonstrate an additional benefit beyond what is mandated by the required activity.

To be considered, all applications must be submitted using DEP's online application form by **Friday, January 16, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.** Information must be typed in the online application form. The online application can be found by visiting www.dep.pa.gov/About/Awards/EnvironmentalExcellence.

Project Application Guidelines

Please complete the online application form to describe your project. The project application form should be **no more than 4 pages**. Applicants may submit additional supporting documents (i.e., photos, graphs, charts) but limit them to no more than 3 additional pages. The summary must be clear and concise. The description should include the following:

1. Name of organization
2. A brief paragraph about your organization
3. Title of project
4. A description of the project including the characteristics, objectives, goals, benefits and outstanding attributes
5. The environmental results achieved (waste eliminated, recycled, etc.)
6. An overview of the project's commitment to the public's best interest
7. An explanation of employee, government official and community member involvement
8. An overview of any innovative technologies and approaches used to achieve results
9. An explanation of how the project provides community education on environmentally responsible practices
10. An explanation of how the project addresses sustainability, climate change, pollution prevention, and/or environmental justice.



If you have any questions regarding your application, please contact the Policy Office at the Department of Environmental Protection.

The Policy Office
Department of Environmental Protection
P.O. Box 2063
Harrisburg, PA 17105-2063
ra-epgovenviroawards@pa.gov

As part of our continuing efforts to go green, we are requesting all application materials be submitted via DEP's online application system.

<http://www.ahs.dep.pa.gov/GovernorsAwardsApplication>.

***All applications must be submitted by
Friday, January 16, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.***