

## **ENCOURAGING ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS**

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The Encouraging Environmental Excellence (E3) Program recognizes an organization's exceptional achievements in environmental stewardship. Any business, industry, trade association, professional organization or local government of Ohio can be recognized for their commitment to environmental excellence. Applications are evaluated using environmental stewardship and related criteria developed by Ohio EPA. The goal of environmental stewardship is to reduce the impact of business or organizational activities on the environment beyond measures required by any permit or rule, producing a better environment, conserving natural resources and resulting in long-term economic benefits. Applicants must be in compliance with environmental laws and regulations. E3 Silver, Gold and Platinum applications include both written and onsite evaluations while there is no onsite evaluation for the Achievement Level. E3 applications are accepted at any time.

### **E3 ACHIEVEMENT BENEFITS**

- a certificate of recognition signed by the Director;
- a listing on the Ohio EPA website; and
- a decal with the E3 logo to display at the applicant's location.

### **E3 SILVER BENEFITS**

- a certificate of recognition signed by the Director;
- a listing on the Ohio EPA website and program highlights in Ohio EPA publications;
- an E3 flag to hang at the recipient's location; and
- an Ohio EPA news release touting the recipient's environmental accomplishments.

### **E3 GOLD BENEFITS**

- all E3 Silver benefits;
- the opportunity to work with Ohio EPA on a host of benefits that include enhanced environmental assistance, Director's meeting, reporting flexibility, reduced inspection frequency, reduced time to obtain permit modifications, frequent updates on environmental stewardship information, marketing opportunities to highlight environmental accomplishments and other options.

### **E3 PLATINUM BENEFITS**

- all E3 Gold benefits;
  - an E3 Platinum flag to hang at the recipient's location; and
  - a possible award ceremony at the recipient's location.
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## HOW TO PREPARE AN APPLICATION

**Achievement Level** – Applicants need to submit the following items to apply for the Achievement Level:

- Your contact information,
- Description of the operations of your business or organization including the number of employees;
- Description of the activities completed in one of the following environmental stewardship criteria: Sustainable materials and purchasing; Pollution prevention; Energy efficiency; Recycling programs; Organics diversion; Green building; or Renewable energy;
- How the applicant has made some level of progress in at least five additional environmental stewardship criteria from the fifteen listed below; and
- A general statement indicating the applicant is in compliance with environmental laws and regulations.

**Silver and Gold Levels** – Applicants need to submit the following items to apply for the Silver and Gold Levels:

- Your contact information,
- Description of the operations of your business or organization, and
- A narrative describing the activities that are part of an overall environmental stewardship program that: provides clear, concise, measurable results; details activities that result in environmental improvements; and addresses as many of the fifteen environmental stewardship criteria listed below as appropriate.

**Platinum Level** – Applicants need to submit the following items to apply for the Platinum Level:

- All items required for the Silver and Gold Levels
- Additional information describing how the organization's environmental stewardship efforts improve the social wellbeing of the local community, region and/or a larger geographic area, and how these efforts result in long term societal benefits.

**IMPORTANT:** It is important to address as many of the fifteen environmental stewardship criteria as possible in your narrative (see list below). The E3 Silver, Gold and Platinum Levels are evaluated using the fifteen environmental stewardship criteria that are each scored on a six-point scale.

- E3 Silver recipients must score three or higher on five of the environmental stewardship criteria
- E3 Gold recipients must score a three or higher on twelve of the environmental stewardship criteria, and
- E3 Platinum recipients must score a three or higher on twelve of the environmental stewardship criteria and address the six community and regional sustainability criteria.

**Contact information:** Applicants need to provide the name and address of the entity applying for recognition and the name, title and telephone number of a contact person who can answer questions regarding the organization applying for recognition.

**Description of the operations of your business or organization:** Applicants need to provide a summary of the organization's business activities and/or functions including the number of employees.

**Narrative of environmental stewardship program:** Achievement Level applicants can provide a summary of their efforts focusing on one of the environmental stewardship criteria and briefly describing progress in five additional criteria. Silver and Gold applicants need to submit a narrative describing the activities that are part of an overall environmental stewardship program. This narrative should address each of the applicable environmental stewardship criteria listed below.

**Expanded narrative of social sustainability information for Platinum Level:** Platinum Level applicants need to submit a narrative describing the activities that are part of an overall environmental stewardship program. This narrative should address each of the applicable environmental stewardship criteria listed below. They also need to provide additional information describing how their overall environmental stewardship program addresses the six community and regional sustainability criteria listed below or indicate why one or more of the criteria are not applicable.

**Applying for additional recognition:** Organizations receiving E3 program recognition can reapply for the same or different levels of recognition in subsequent years. Applicants need to demonstrate significant improvement if applying for a higher level (e.g., E3 Silver to Gold) or complete different or unique activities in their new application (e.g., reapplying for E3 Gold in a following year). Applicants interested in receiving additional recognition may only need to submit updated or partial information.

**Application format and additional information:** Applicants are encouraged to use the E3 online application at [http://ohioepa.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/2932/kw/e3](http://ohioepa.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/2932/kw/e3). Optional supporting documents, including charts, photographs, news clippings, news releases, publications or other materials may be included. Information submitted will be used by Ohio EPA to publicize your participation in the E3 program. Use your discretion in determining whether to include trade secret or confidential business information in your application. **Contact (614) 644-3469 or our hotline at (800) 329-7518 if you have any questions.**

## **SITE VISIT**

Achievement Level applicants do not receive a site visit as part of the review process. Applicants for the Silver, Gold and Platinum Levels may be asked to host a site visit. This site visit may be performed virtually. The purpose of this site visit is to provide reviewers with a better understanding of the application, to view the activities described in the application in operation and to clarify information provided in the application. A team of two or more reviewers will conduct the site visit. Information collected during the site visit will be used to make the final recommendation to the Director of Ohio EPA. The Director of Ohio EPA determines who receives recognition. Evaluation criteria for the site visit will be the same as that used for the application.

## **COMPLIANCE INFORMATION**

Achievement Level applicants must be in compliance with environmental laws and regulations at the time they submit their applications. Silver, Gold and Platinum Level applicants must be in compliance for a year prior to submittal of their application and during the application review process. Ohio EPA will perform a compliance evaluation. Additional information on this compliance evaluation is available at: <http://www.epa.ohio.gov/ocapp/ohioe3.aspx> or by contacting our hotline at (800) 329-7518.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP CRITERIA**

Ohio EPA evaluates E3 applications using the fifteen environmental stewardship criteria below. It is recognized that not all criteria may apply and some descriptions may apply to multiple criteria. E3 Silver, Gold or Platinum Level recognition is intended for a specific location of a business or organization in Ohio. All information provided needs to describe activities occurring at the specific location.

Please provide a narrative with information on how the organization or business is a leader in environmental stewardship in each criteria area below. The narrative should describe the systems and projects that the applicant uses to continuously improve upon its environmental performance. It is recognized that not all criteria may apply to your organization, but please fill out all relevant areas. Provide as complete information as possible. Provide numerical data where noted and describe the methods used to measure progress.

1. **Management commitment**: Describe management's commitment to environmental stewardship. Examples of management commitment may include: having a written goal; promoting environmental stewardship through your policy; rewarding individuals who promote environmental stewardship; and continuously improving environmental practices throughout the organization.
2. **Employee involvement**: Describe efforts to involve employees in the development and implementation of environmental stewardship activities. This may include training programs, recognition and awards, educating employees through the organization's publications, involving employees in re-designing products or processes, or otherwise using individual's ideas to reduce waste.
3. **Continuous improvement**: Describe how you use continuous improvement practices, including environmental management systems, to improve environmental quality and performance. Describe your key performance indicators and goals that you are pursuing. Please quantify results. This may include either incremental (progressive small steps) or breakthrough (giant step) actions.
4. **Innovation**: Describe how the applicant's environmental stewardship activities are innovative and compare it to standard practices being used elsewhere. Provide information on innovative research and development the organization uses to support this activity. Include a description of practices that exemplify outstanding creativity, introduce new approaches or advance emerging technologies.

5. Life cycle assessment: Describe any analysis completed to evaluate and quantify the environmental impacts of a product, material, process, activity or service throughout its entire life cycle, from design and formulation through end-use recycling or ultimate disposal. Some organizations use life cycle analysis to help modify their processes and products to realize cost savings and reduce environmental impacts. Describe how your organization uses life cycle analysis to identify opportunities to improve environmental performance and inform decision-makers in your organization. Please quantify environmental improvements from these efforts.
6. Sustainable Materials and Purchasing: Quantify the use of renewable, recovered or recycled materials. Describe how these materials are used to reduce environmental impacts. Describe your efforts to buy products or services that have a reduced environmental impact when compared with competing products or services. This comparison may consider raw materials, production, manufacturing, packaging, distribution, reuse, operation, maintenance or disposal of the product or service. This description should include any costs or savings resulting from these efforts.
7. Pollution prevention: Pollution prevention is source reduction and recycling. Describe the process modifications to improve efficiency, use of improved feedstocks, material substitutions, good operating and management practices, in-process recycling, and other efforts to reduce waste generation and conserve resources that have been implemented at the facility. Quantify the results including cost savings.
8. Energy efficiency: Quantify efforts to conserve energy and fuel use, use more energy efficient products and/or modify operations to improve energy efficiency. This description should include any costs or savings resulting from these efforts.
9. Recycling programs: Quantify your recycling activities and describe how recycling programs are used to reduce environmental impacts. This description should include in-process and onsite efforts, use of external recycling programs and any costs or savings resulting from these efforts. Indicate whether quantified recycling information has been reported to your solid waste management district or other organizations.
10. Organics diversion: Quantify your efforts to divert organics from the solid waste stream. Describe how your organics diversion program, including composting and anaerobic or enzymatic digestion, reduces environmental impacts. This description should include onsite efforts, use of external facilities and any costs or savings resulting from these efforts.
11. Green building: Quantify any environmental benefits derived from green building infrastructure, designs and materials, excluding energy efficiency improvements. Describe how these activities have been used to reduce environmental impacts. This description should include any costs or savings resulting from these efforts.
12. Green infrastructure and stormwater best management practices: Describe efforts to minimize storm water runoff beyond standard requirements for a storm water permit or required Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWP3). Describe how your organization's use of green infrastructure and stormwater best management practices reduce environmental impacts at the applicant's location.

13. Renewable energy: Describe renewable energy and alternative fuel projects at the applicant's location and quantify the environmental benefits. This description should include any costs or savings resulting from these efforts.
14. Economic benefits: Describe short and long-term cost savings of your environmental stewardship efforts, include information on how your organization accounts for environmental impacts and costs of internal operations. Quantify the investment required, cost avoided, efficiency achieved, and realized or estimated payback or return on investment.
15. Promotion and dissemination: Describe how information about your environmental stewardship activities is made available and shared with others internally and externally. Explain how this information is used to promote similar practices to other organizations.

## **COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY CRITERIA**

Sustainability is an important aspect of environmental stewardship and is composed of economic, environmental and social components. Ohio EPA evaluates E3 Platinum Level applications using the fifteen environmental stewardship criteria previously listed and the six community and regional sustainability criteria below. It is important for E3 Platinum Level applicants to describe how their overall environmental stewardship program addresses each of the six criteria listed below or indicate why one or more of the criteria is not applicable.

1. Product or Service Design: Describe how environmental considerations are used to modify your products, processes or services to improve the health, safety and vitality of consumers and the community.
2. Community Education: Describe how the organization's environmental stewardship efforts are used to educate and build networks with the local community and region to improve the overall quality of life. Describe how your organization's environmental impacts are shared in a transparent manner with the community and region.
3. Improving the Supply and Delivery Chain: Describe the organization's work with employees, suppliers and other organizations to improve sustainability at various points in their supply and product/service delivery chain.
4. Community and Regional Environmental Priorities: Describe how you address community and regional priorities through your environmental stewardship program.
5. Habitat and Biodiversity Improvements: Describe how your environmental stewardship activities protect and improve the natural habitat and biodiversity of the community and region.
6. Community Support: Describe philanthropic efforts and other ways your organization supports the community, the region and charitable groups that promote environmental stewardship.

Apply online at [http://ohioepa.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/2932/kw/e3](http://ohioepa.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/2932/kw/e3). Application materials are available at <http://www.epa.ohio.gov/ocapp/ohioe3.aspx> or by calling (800) 329-7518. ***Applicants are encouraged to call our hotline at (800) 329-7518 with questions anytime during the application process.***