# **Virginia**

# **Green Ribbon Schools Application**

2024-2025

**October 1, 2024**

**Virginia Department of Education**

**Post Office Box 2120**

**Richmond Virginia 23218-2120**

**Application Due Date: December 6, 2024, at 5 P.M.**

## Background

Thank you for your interest in completing the Virginia application for nomination to the U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools (ED-GRS), District Sustainability Award, or Postsecondary Sustainability Award. ED-GRS recognizes schools, districts, and postsecondary institutions taking a comprehensive approach to sustainability, incorporating environmental learning with improving environmental and health impacts.

Becoming a U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School, District Sustainability Awardee, or Postsecondary Sustainability Awardee is a multi-step process. The first step is to complete and submit this form to be selected as a nominee by your state education agency or equivalent.

Once selected as a nominee by the Virginia Department of Education, the second step of the process requires signatures certifying compliance with all applicable civil rights, Federal Student Aid, health, safety, and environmental statutory and regulatory requirements. You may view the certifications that you will be asked to make in the Nominee Presentation Forms [here](https://www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools/applicant.html).

Finally, your nomination materials, including the signed Nominee Presentation Form, documentation of progress in all areas of the award, and several photographs, will be sent to the U.S. Department of Education (ED). ED notifies national selectees in the spring, inviting them to send representatives to attend a ceremony in Washington, D.C. in the summer. Selection is based on documentation of the nominee’s progress in the three ED-GRS Pillars:

Pillar I: Reducing environmental impact and costs;

Pillar II: Improving the health and wellness of students and staff; and

Pillar III: Offering effective environmental and sustainability education.

Schools, districts, and postsecondary institutions demonstrating progress in every area will receive the highest scores. It may help to assemble a team with expertise across these areas to complete the application. You may also wish to consult [Green Strides](http://www.greenstrides.org) for programs related to each Pillar.

## How to Submit

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) will accept **electronic submissions only.** The applicant information page and the narrative must be submitted as Word documents. In addition, 5-10 photos (.jpg) are to be submitted as email attachments with the application. The name of each photo submitted should provide a brief description of the photo.

The completed GRS School Division Application must be sent to Laura Casdorph, Virginia Department of Education Science Coordinator, by e-mail [at laura.casdorph@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:at laura.casdorph@doe.virginia.gov) by Friday, December 6, 2024, at 5 p.m.

## Application Deadline

**Applications are due to the Virginia Department of Education by December 6, 2024.** In January, feedback will be provided to schools and divisions on the submitted application and each school or division will be given an opportunity for revisions to the original application. VDOE will send up to five nominations with revised applications to the U.S. Department of Education by February 14, 2025. Please contact Laura Casdorph, VDOE Science Coordinator, if you have questions when completing the application.

## Nominee Information

School, District, or Postsecondary Institution Name:

Category of Nomination (School, District, or Postsecondary):

Address:       City:       State:      Zip:      Social Media:

Top official: Title (Mr./Ms./Mrs./ Dr.):       First Name:       Last Name:

Position/Role (Principal/ Superintendent/ President):       Email:       Phone:

Lead Applicant (if different) Title (Mr./Ms./Mrs./ Dr.):       First Name:       Last Name:

Position/Role (Teacher/ Sustainability Director/ Facilities Director):       Email:       Phone:

**Check all that apply:**

Early Learning

Elementary

Middle

High

Public

Charter

Magnet

Non-Public

Two-Year

Four-Year

Community College

Career and Technical

Urban

Rural

Suburban

**Provide percentages, if any are relevant to your school, district, or institution:**

Pell Recipients:

Free and Reduced Price Lunch:

Minority:

Limited English Proficient:

Special Education:

Graduation Rate:

Attendance Rate:

**Provide the following:**

Total Enrolled:       Number of Schools:       Buildings:       Campuses:

## Documentation of Sustainability Achievement

**Summary Narrative: An Overview of Your Work Encompassing All Three Pillars**

Use 2-3 pages to provide a summary narrative describing your school, district, or postsecondary institution’s efforts to reduce environmental impact and costs; improve student and staff health and wellness; and provide effective environmental and sustainability education. This overarching summary should highlight the best of your work in every ED-GRS Pillar and Element. You can see the areas that you should address [here](https://www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools/eligibility.html) and view examples of summary narratives in past [Highlights Reports](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools/performance.html). The summary that you submit should be what you would like to see appear in a future Highlights Report if your institution is selected. Be sure to include relevant sustainability achievements, supporting data, unique partnerships, program participation, awards, and certifications.

**Narrative for Pillar I: Efforts to Reduce Environmental Impact and Costs**

Use 1-3 pages to describe how your school, district, or postsecondary institution is reducing environmental impact and costs by reducing or eliminating greenhouse gas emissions; improving water quality, efficiency, and conservation; reducing waste production; and using alternative transportation. Identify your energy-efficient facilities and practices, ecologically beneficial uses of grounds, and methods of disposal for solid and hazardous wastes. Use supporting data to demonstrate progress when possible.

**Narrative for Pillar 2: Efforts to Improve the Health and Wellness of Students and Staff**

Use 1-3 pages to describe how your school, district, or postsecondary institution improves the health and wellness of students and staff by integrating an environmental health program and promoting sound health and wellness practices. You should discuss contaminant, moisture, and asthma control, air quality, thermal comfort, pest management, water quality, and procurement, as well as nutrition and outdoor physical activity. Other components you may include are health education, health services, counseling, psychological and social services, sun safety, staff health promotion, and family and community involvement. Incorporate metrics when possible.

**Narrative for Pillar 3: Efforts to Ensure Effective Environmental and Sustainability Education**

Use 1-3 pages to describe how your school, district, or postsecondary institution ensures effective environmental and sustainability education throughout the curriculum. Provide examples of interdisciplinary learning about the key relationships between dynamic environmental, energy, and human systems. Demonstrate how your institution uses the environment and sustainability to develop STEM content, knowledge, and thinking skills, and teach all subjects in context. You should discuss how your school, district, or postsecondary institution develops and applies civic knowledge and skills to environmental and sustainability education. All STEM and civics work should be described as it relates to environmental and sustainability learning. Detail any environmental or sustainability literacy standards, show how these concepts are integrated into assessments, and describe environmental and sustainability literacy professional development. Include co-curricular opportunities such as field trips, study abroad, clubs, and service learning. This section should describe hands-on, place-based, project-based, authentic learning across the curriculum, not limited to one subject, such as science courses.

**Photos:** Please submit 5-10 photographs with descriptions including who, what, when, and where. Photos should be action shots, not posed. By sending these photos, you are giving your state nominating authority and the U.S. Department of Education permission to use them in our newsletter and social media. Please use normal fonts and margins in your narratives and include a brief description in the name of each photo. Please submit the photos individually as a .jpg.

## Scoring Matrix

In order to offer guidance in constructing the different components of the application, the scoring rubric that will be used by the Green Ribbon Schools Application Review Team is provided below. All portions indicated in the pillar descriptions as well as the bulleted items below are to be addressed in the narrative of each section. Samples of successful applications can be provided upon request. Please contact Laura Casdorph ([laura.casdorph@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:laura.casdorph@doe.virginia.gov)) if you have further questions concerning the expectations of the application.

Each school/division has been asked to provide a comprehensive response for each of the **three GRS Goal Areas** (pillars) using the subsection headings and guiding questions as navigation points in considering and structuring its answer. The three narrative sections should describe how the **school division** is:

1. *reducing* environmental impact and costs;
2. *improving* the health and wellness of students and staff; and
3. *providing* an effective program of environmental and sustainability education.

The narrative should strongly convey a **holistic “story”** about the school division’s efforts and successes. It should include quantitative and qualitative data where appropriate. Subsections will overlap, and the narrative within each is not expected to provide a one-to-one answer for each guiding question. In addition, each subsection provides an opportunity for pertinent work not specifically covered by the guiding questions, described as **“other innovative efforts…”** Therefore, points awarded per subsection may be amended to reflect and reward the school division’s innovation related to the focus of the activity. Subsection totals should not exceed the allotted points; however, additional explanation for a subsection or Goal Area may (and most likely, will) be **found in other narrative sections.**

The “Yes No” box structure is provided to help remind the reviewer if the guiding question prompt was addressed. A complete “story” should address many aspects of the guiding questions, but a noteworthy program will likely not include every component posed and will include others not asked. **The GRS application must be viewed as a whole.**

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| **Crosscutting Questions** | **\_\_\_\_/5 points** |
| **In the subsection narrative, the school division:** | |
| describes its participation in local, state, national, or international programs, which ask participants to **benchmark progress** related to the three Goal Areas; | **Yes** **No** |
| describes local, state, national, or international **awards** related to the three Goal Areas that it (schools, staff, and students) has received; and | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how its representative **stakeholders** involved in the daily operation of the division (e.g., students, faculty, administrators, and staff) discuss, plan, and implement ongoing environmental and sustainability efforts. | **Yes** **No** |

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| **Goal Area 1: Reducing Environmental Impact and Costs Element 30 Points** |

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| **1A: Energy Savings and Efficiency** | **\_\_\_/15 points** |
| **In the subsection narrative, the school division:** | |
| describes how it manages energy use through an **energy master plan**, energy conservation guidelines, or related processes or tools. | **Yes** **No** |
| demonstrates a **reduction in energy use** and/or in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and provides pertinent data. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how it **tracks resource use** and provides pertinent data. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how, and to what degree, it has **reduced its total non-transportation energy** use from an initial baseline. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how/to what degree its energy is obtained from on-site renewable, purchased renewable, or other **renewable energy sources.** | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how/to what degree it has constructed and/or renovated buildings that **meet “green” building standards** or improved energy conservation. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how, and to what degree, it has made progress toward reducing the **heat island effect** with cool roofs, reduced pavements, reflective pavement, etc. | **Yes** **No** |

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| **1B: Improved Water Quality, Efficiency, and Conservation** | **\_\_\_/5 points** |
| **In the subsection narrative, the school division:** | |
| describes how, and to what degree, it can demonstrate a **reduction in the total water consumption** from an initial baseline. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes its efforts for developing **water-efficient plant selection and landscaping** and the use of alternative water sources for any irrigation needs. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes its efforts and results in **reducing stormwater runoff** from the school site and/or reducing impermeable surfaces on its schools’ grounds. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how it ensures that the schools’ **water sources are protected** from potential contaminants including lead. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes its planning and results to develop schools’ grounds for **ecologically beneficial uses** such as rain gardens, habitats, and outdoor classrooms. | **Yes** **No** |

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| **1C: Reduced Waste Production** | **\_\_\_\_/5 points** |
| **In the subsection narrative, the school division:** | |
| describes how, and to what degree, it uses **paper that is post-consumer material,** fiber from forests certified as responsibly managed, etc. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how, and to what degree, it implements **waste reduction, recycling, and/or composting** to divert waste from landfill or incineration. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes its efforts and successes in maintaining an **inventory** of potentially hazardous materials used in its schools (e.g., science, art, cleaning, pests, etc.). | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how, and to what degree, it has **reduced/eliminated hazardous waste generation** over a measurable baseline. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes its **green cleaning custodial program**, including green cleaning products, services, advanced equipment, and/or policies. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how its purchasing practices promote environmentally preferable purchasing/**green purchasing**, as applicable (e.g., consumable products). | **Yes** **No** |

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| **1D: Use of Alternative Transportation** | **\_\_\_\_/5 points** |
| **In the subsection narrative, the school division:** | |
| describes how/whether it is **reducing its transportation energy** use through various means (e.g., walking, bicycling, mass transportation). | **Yes** **No** |
| describes its implementation of **green transportation practices** (efficient carpooling; no-idling loading areas; safe routes to school; etc.). | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how it has implemented practices and policies that focus on **transportation efficiency** and reduced environmental impact. | **Yes** **No** |

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| **Goal Area 2: Goal Area 2: Improving the Health and Wellness 30 Points** |

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| **2A: 2A: Integrated School Environmental Health Program** | **\_\_\_\_/15 points** |
| **In the subsection narrative, the school division:** | |
| describes its efforts with **Integrated Pest Management** (IPM), including IPM certification, inspections, monitoring, record-keeping, etc. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how, and to what degree, its efforts and practices have minimized or eliminated student and staff member **exposure to various contaminants**. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes the plan and timetable for inspecting/maintaining schools’ ventilation systems and **ensuring that the systems are clean and operating properly**. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how, and to what degree, it ensures that all classrooms and spaces are **ventilated consistent with applicable ventilation codes** and standards. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how it has taken specific and comprehensive actions to **prevent exposure to asthma triggers** in and around its schools and offices. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how it has taken specific steps to **protect indoor environmental quality** including comprehensive inspections and corrective actions. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes its maintenance of an **up-to-date Chemical Hygiene Plan** and enforcement in managing its students and staff members exposure to chemicals. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes its **routine inspections** and prompt action to a) **control moisture** (leaks, etc.) and b) clean/remove moldy materials promptly when found. | **Yes** **No** |

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| **2B: 2B: Nutrition and Fitness** | **\_\_\_\_/15 points** |
| **In the subsection narrative, the school division:** | |
| describes its implementation of the following programs (or programs with similar intent) across the division and results related to the targeted efforts. | **Yes** **No** |
| * **nutrition and fitness recognition** programs, such as the Governor’s Nutrition and Physical Activity Awards Program. | **Yes** **No** |
| * “farm to school” programs to use **local, fresh food**; * and/or "environmentally preferable" food purchasing programs; | **Yes** **No** |
| * school-site **gardens**; | **Yes** **No** |
| * comprehensive **wellness policies** and health and wellness committees. | **Yes** **No** |
| * comprehensive **nutrition education** K-12. | **Yes** **No** |
| * **UV protection** and skin health, such as the EPA's “Sunwise” Program. | **Yes** **No** |
| * the inclusion of student **health measures in reports** to the community. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes its practice related to **physical education** (including PE instructional minutes/grade level and time outdoors) outdoor education, etc. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes its efforts and progress to improve **staff** members’ wellness in the areas of nutrition and increased physical activity. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes its **partnership programs** with members of the community to improve students’ and staff members’ nutrition, fitness, and safety. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes its use of a **Coordinated School Health** approach or other health-related initiatives to address overall school health issues. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how it addresses nurse services for students’ needs, including the presence of **full-time school nurses** in the schools. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how it addresses and implements comprehensive programs to **support student mental health** and school climate (e.g., anti-bullying, etc.). | **Yes** **No** |

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| **Goal Area 3: Providing Effective Environmental Education 35 Points** |

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| **3A: Shared Responsibility for Environmental Learning** | **\_\_\_/20 points** |
| **In the subsection narrative, the school division:** | |
| describes its focus on **environmental and sustainability** literacy specifically reflected through division-wide emphases, lesson planning, and curriculum. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how, and to what degree, its emphasis and policy on environmental and sustainability literacy are **embedded in practices** and programs. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how, and to what degree, it has integrated environmental and sustainability concepts throughout instruction (**across subjects and grades**). | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how its “in-house” and purchased assessment materials across subjects and grades have **clear expectations for environmental concepts**. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes its emphasis on ensuring that teacher **professional development** in environmental and sustainability education is provided for **all** teachers, K-12. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes its innovative **policies, practices, and/or partnerships** that promote and support environmental education. | **Yes** **No** |

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| **3B: Use of the Environment and Sustainability to Develop Science, Mathematics, Engineering, and Technology Content** | **\_\_\_/5 points** |
| **In the subsection narrative, the school division:** | |
| describes how its program of studies makes available **environment-related courses and measures** (secondary schools and include pertinent measures). | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how it uses sustainability and the environment as a **context** or theme for learning science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes its use of sustainability and the environment as a context for connecting and learning green technologies and **career pathways.** | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how its environmental and sustainability focus and policy support an **age-appropriate understanding of natural systems**. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how its program ensures that all students participate in **Meaningful Watershed Education Experiences** (MWEE) and other outdoor education. | **Yes** **No** |

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| **3C: Development and Application of Civic Knowledge and Skills** | **\_\_\_/10 points** |
| **In the subsection narrative, the school division:** | |
| describe its focus on **outdoor learning** as a tool to a) teach subjects in context; b) engage the community; and c) develop important civic skills. | **Yes** **N** |
| describes how and to what degree, it promotes and encourages students to conduct **civic/community engagement projects** and the outcomes achieved. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes its **partnerships with the local community** to help advance a broader understanding of environmental sustainability. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes the implementation of its **environmental literacy plan**. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes its quantifiable measures, indicators, or benchmarks of progress toward the goal of its **students being/becoming environmentally literate**. | **Yes** **No** |
| describes how, and to what degree, its environmental and sustainability education efforts have shown **student academic and personal growth**. | **Yes** **No** |