

Louisiana Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools Program

Overview

In partnership with the [U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools](#) (ED-GRS) program, the Louisiana Department of Education works to recognize public and nonpublic early childhood, elementary, middle, and high schools, school systems, and higher education institutions (IHE) that are leading the way to promote sustainability and environmental education. Eligible applicants must demonstrate significant progress towards the following Pillars.

- I. Reducing environmental impact and costs
- II. Improving the health and wellness of schools, students, and staff
- III. Providing effective environmental and sustainability education, incorporating STEM, civic skills, and green career pathways

Recognition Process

Becoming a U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School (ED-GRS) is a two-step process. The first step is to complete and submit the application to the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE). A state committee scores the completed application. The LDOE will select up to five early learning centers, schools, or school districts and a single IHE based on responses and documentation of progress under the Pillars and Elements. If selected as a nominee for ED-GRS, then a federal review will be conducted. This federal review will determine the national cohort, which will be announced in April, generally on or around Earth Day, and recognized at an annual ceremony in the summer, typically in July, in Washington D.C.

State Review Criteria and Process

Selection will be based on documentation of the applicant's progress and high achievement in the Elements outlined in each of the three ED-GRS Pillars.

Pillar I: Reduced Environmental Impact and Costs

- Reduced or eliminated greenhouse gas emissions, using an energy audit or emissions inventory and reduction plan, cost-effective energy efficiency improvements, conservation measures, and/or on-site renewable energy and/or purchase of green power;
- Improved water quality, efficiency, and conservation;
- Reduced solid and hazardous waste production through increased recycling and composting, reduced consumption, and improved management, reduction, or elimination of hazardous waste; and

- Expanded use of alternative transportation through active promotion of locally available, energy-efficient options and implementation of alternative transportation supportive projects and policies.

Pillar II: Improved Health and Wellness

- High standards of [Whole School Whole Community, Whole Child health](#), including health, nutrition, and outdoor physical activity; and
- An [integrated school environmental health program](#) that considers occupant health and safety in all design, construction, renovation, operations, and maintenance of facilities and grounds, including cleaning and maintenance; mold and moisture; chemical and environmental contaminants; air quality and ventilation; and pests and pesticides.

Pillar III: Effective Environmental and Sustainability Education

- Interdisciplinary learning about the key relationships between dynamic environmental, energy, and human systems;
- Use of the environment and sustainability to develop STEM content knowledge and thinking skills to prepare graduates for the 21st-century technology-driven economy; and
- Development of civic engagement knowledge and skills and students' application of such knowledge and skills to address sustainability issues in their community.

Note that this is not a menu of options. To be eligible for the federal award, nominees must show progress in ALL of the above Pillars and Elements.

Preparing for the Application Process

Applications for the 2024-2025 school year will be released in September. It is recommended that a team be assembled to complete the application. Team members may include a facilities manager, physical education director, medical director or school nurse, food services director, curriculum director, finance department representatives, teachers, and students.

Numerous resources are available to assist with the application process. The [US-ED GRS Awards](#) website provides samples of past national winners, including Louisiana honorees. Additional information is available on the [U.S. Department of Education's Frequently Asked Questions](#) website. The [Green Strides School Sustainability Resource Hub](#) provides all schools with free information on the tools that help them move toward the Pillars of the recognition award. This award is not tied to any one program or standard but instead encourages schools to use any resources available. In an effort to assist interested applicants, the LDOE will also host a series of webinars to support potential applicants in understanding the three pillars of the application and the application process.

2024-2025 Application Timeline

| Date/Time | | Task/Activity | Link/Info |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| September | | LDOE Application Window Opens | Website |
| September 23 | 4:30-5:30 p.m. | Webinar- Green Ribbon Schools Introduction and Pillar I | Zoom link |
| October 21 | 4:30-5:30 p.m. | Webinar- Pillar II | Zoom link |
| November 18 | 4:30-5:30 p.m. | Webinar - Pillar III | Zoom link |
| December 9 | 4:30-5:30 p.m. | Webinar- Final Questions | Zoom link |
| December 16 | 5 p.m. | Applications due to LDOE | Submit via email |
| January | | Applications are reviewed | |
| February 1 | 12 p.m. | Louisiana Nominee(s) are notified* | |
| February 14 | 12 p.m. | Louisiana Nominations due to ED-GRS | |
| April | TBD | ED-GRS Honoree Announcement | ED-GRS Awards Website |
| Summer | TBD | ED-GRS Honoree Invitation to Recognition in Washington, D.C.* Recognition at the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) Meeting* | |

*Dates subject to change

Email environmentaleducation@la.gov with questions.