



***The Mississippi Department of
Environmental Quality's
Environmental Stewardship
Recognition Program***

**Environmental Star
Membership Application
Instructions**

**Applications are accepted annually from
July 1 – November 30**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Program Overview	1
II.	Application Form	
	Section 1 - General Information	2
	Section 2 - Environmental Stewardship Policy	3
	Section 3 - Type of Membership Requested	3
	Section 4 - Environmental Management Plan Requirements	4
	Section 5 - Environmental Project Achievements	6
	Section 6 - Certification	6
III.	Environmental Project Form	7
IV.	Community Service Project or Mentor Form	7
V.	Submission & Contact Information	8



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

enHance is the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality's environmental stewardship recognition program. The purpose of the program is to recognize organizations that have demonstrated environmental performance excellence in operations. Members must have initiated development of an environmental management plan, be committed to continuous improvement in operating practices, and have implemented one or more environmental projects that benefit the environment. Members of this program must not only meet environmental compliance requirements, but must demonstrate a commitment to "exceed compliance" through sustainable practices.

While it is anticipated that industries will be the primary participants, MDEQ recognizes that compliance with Mississippi's environmental requirements is not the only means to protect and improve the State's environment. Voluntary efforts, such as pollution prevention, recycling, energy efficiency and water use reductions play a critical role in environmental stewardship. Therefore, the enHance program is open to any organization that meets the criteria. The Environmental Star tier may include non-regulated businesses, schools, associations, community groups, and other similar organizations. Municipalities seeking to join the program have a separate application track. Further information on the municipality program can be found on the enHance website (www.enhance.ms).

Through participation in the enHance program, organizations are recognized as the premier environmental leaders in the state of Mississippi.

I. Application Form

Section 1. General Information

General applicant information - Please complete all fields.

1. Applicant - Enter the name of the business, organization, educational institution, or other entity that is applying for membership.
2. Physical Address - Enter the street address of the entity applying for membership.
3. Mailing Address - Enter the mailing address if different than the physical address.
4. Contact - Enter the name of the person responsible for the membership application process, along with correspondence information.
5. Description of Operations - Provide a brief description of the activities and/or mission of the organization.
6. Number of Employees - List the number of employees that work for the organization. *A minimum of 50 employees (including part-time employees) is required for membership into the Environmental Star tier.*
7. Building Space - List the total square footage owned or leased by the organization and the current occupancy as a percentage of the total square footage. *A minimum of 20,000 square feet of building space is required for membership into the Environmental Star tier.*

Section 2. Environmental Stewardship Policy

Each applicant is required to have a formal policy addressing environmental commitment and compliance. This policy should be signed by senior management, posted in a prominent location, communicated to all employees and available to the general public. When drafting the pledge consider such items as: commitment to voluntary and required environmental activities, pollution prevention at the source, continuous improvement, and communication methods.

Section 3. Type of Membership Requested

There is currently one membership level for businesses and organizations that do not hold environmental permits issued by the Mississippi Environmental Quality Permit Board or EPA: **Environmental Star**. Like the Industry Associate level, the Environmental Star level of membership is the entry level where organizations commit to improving environmental performance, develop an implementation plan, and initiate an environmental improvement project. Admission into this tier is based on the following requirements:

- 1) **Policy** – Has a signed environmental policy addressing environmental commitment. (See Section 2)
- 2) **Environmental Management Plan** – Has a plan for current and continuing environmental improvement actions; meets planning requirements including:
 - Organized an environmental team
 - Conducted an internal audit
 - Identified and prioritized environmental aspects and impacts
 - Established measurable objectives and measurement system to monitor (See Section 4.2)
- 3) **Environmental Enhancement Projects** - Has two active or completed voluntary projects to reduce environmental impacts. (See Section 5)

APPLICATION REVIEW: Applicants may be required to attend a meeting with the enHance staff at MDEQ to review and discuss the application, the results of the internal audit, and the proposed project(s). A site visit may also be conducted for any applicant into the program. The purpose of the site visit will be to review the application and proposed project(s) and to observe operations with regard to environmental management and environmental impacts. The site visit team will consist of MDEQ personnel from the pollution prevention division and others.

Section 4. Environmental Management Plan (EMP)

Each applicant is required to have an Environmental Management Plan (EMP). Key components must be met to fulfill the requirements of an EMP.

When responding yes or no to the application questions, please consider if the following general guidelines are being met. A summary checklist is provided at the end of the section.

A. Environmental Aspects and Impacts

An environmental aspect is how your organization, through an activity, product, or service, impacts the environment. An environmental impact is any change in the environment that results from an organization's activities, products, or services.

Conduct an audit. Activities, products, and services should be reviewed for environmental impacts. The Office Audit Form provides a guide for companies providing professional services (e.g. law offices, accounting firms) and other office-based organizations. It is recommended that in conducting the audit applicants seek the assistance of a mentor outside of their organization to get independent feedback. Audit forms are not submitted with the application, but applicants are advised to keep a copy of the audit form or other written documentation of the internal audit to produce to MDEQ upon request.

All applicants should consider known aspects such as:

- Natural resource usage (materials, water, energy, etc.)
- Daily operations, including, but not limited to:
 - Material handling and storage
 - Waste handling and storage
 - Security
 - Housekeeping
 - Accounting and purchasing
 - Shipping and receiving
 - Training
- Noise

Identify those aspects with the most significant impacts. Aspects should be prioritized, based on defined ranking criteria, in order to address those with the greatest potential impacts.

Set specific goals that are realistic within the framework of the organization and that can be measured. Progress against these goals should be tracked, using the Energy Star Portfolio Manager or similar program, available for free at www.energystar.gov. Have a procedure for continual review and communication of requirements.

B. Structure

Use a team approach with a team leader or "champion" that directs the environmental management process. The size of the team should be reflective of the size of the organization. The team should include, or at a minimum seek input from, employees in a variety of roles within the organization, including:

- Executives, partners, members, and professional associates
- Administrative support staff and human resources
- Mail clerks, runners, copy/print services
- Internet technology, electronic management
- Purchasing and accounting
- Maintenance and housekeeping staff

Team members should have specific, assigned responsibilities.

You can answer "yes" to PLANNING if you can answer yes to the following questions:

	YES	NO
a. Have conducted an internal audit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Have organized a team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Have identified environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Have identified environmental impacts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Have prioritized impacts and established measurable objectives and targets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Have established a measurement system for monitoring progress toward objectives and targets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 5. Environmental Project Achievements

Complete one project proposal form for each project submitted. The Environmental Star membership tier requires two active or completed voluntary environmental enhancement projects. One project must include a community service aspect or provide an impact to the community in which the applicant is situated or in which the applicant's business serves. All proposed projects must result in an environmental benefit. This may be reduced use of materials or natural resources, reduced waste generation, or similar results. Benefits should be quantified.

In order to be eligible for consideration, a project should have been initiated no earlier than the year prior to application submission. Additional project information is included in the following sections:

- III. Environmental Project Form
- IV. Community Service Project and Mentor Form

Section 6. Certification

Check the box to indicate that all information provided is correct to the best of the applicant's knowledge. The applicant should certify their commitment to environmental stewardship. "Commitment to Stewardship" is defined as a good faith effort to meet any obligations that now or in the future may be imposed upon the applicant by any state or federal environmental agency and to conduct its business in a manner that promotes continual environmental improvement.

The application should be signed by a Responsible Official of the entity applying for membership. A Responsible Official is defined as follows:

- for a corporation: a president, secretary, treasurer, or vice-president of the corporation in charge of a principal business function, or any other person who performs similar policy or decision-making functions for the corporation, or the manager of one or more manufacturing, production, or operating facilities
- for a partnership or sole proprietorship: a general partner or the proprietor, respectively;
- for an educational institution: a school superintendent, board member, or authorized representative with contractual authority to bind the terms and conditions of an agreement on behalf of the institution.

III. Environmental Project Form

A voluntary project that results in benefits to the environment can be submitted on this form. A voluntary project is one that achieves results beyond daily operations and basic compliance. The project must have been initiated within the last two years.

The form requires specific project information including:

1. Applicant name and contact information;
2. Project title;
3. Brief description of the activities and environmental benefits associated with the proposed enhancement project and the project implementation dates; and
4. Documentation of measures or projected results. Typical benefits include waste reduction (landfill waste, paper waste, or electronic waste) or decreased resource consumption (energy usage reduction, water usage reduction). Other examples of potential projects include protecting, preserving, or restoring land and reduced material consumption. Any project that can be demonstrated to contribute to the enhancement of the environment is eligible. If the project is complete, actual results should be reported. If the project is currently active, then the proposed reduction target amount and year should be reported.

An applicant for Environmental Star level of membership is required to have one environmental enhancement project.

IV. Community Service Project or Mentor Form

Applicants for the Environmental Star tier must submit this form. Applicants can choose one of two options: implementing a community service project or agreeing to serve as a program mentor for enHance.

Sample community service projects are included on the form, but additional types of community service projects will be considered. A community service project should demonstrate a significant community contribution and involve direct participation from the organization. Adequate documentation of activities should be provided. Project eligibility is determined by MDEQ. An applicant can alternatively choose to serve as a program mentor.

Serving as a program mentor may include providing guidance to other applicants on environmental management systems, assisting in audits, or similar activities. The mentor program will be coordinated through MDEQ.

V. Submission & Contact Information

Please submit the completed application package to MDEQ by one of the following methods:

1. E-mail (preferred): E-mail the completed package to enhance@mdeq.ms.gov and mail the signature page to the address listed below; OR
2. Mail: Mail the complete application package to:

enHance Membership Application
Attn: Khairy Abu-Salah
Mississippi DEQ
P. O. Box 2261
Jackson, MS 39225

For additional information contact Khairy Abu-Salah at: 601-961-5284 or at kabusalah@mdeq.ms.gov.

PLEASE NOTE:

- All applicants in the program must agree to share project information for the MDEQ website, newsletter articles, or other venues.
- Upon acceptance, members must agree to submit an annual report by July 31 for each year of membership.
- Information submitted to MDEQ is available for public review. Any exceptions to this must be requested in writing at the time of the submission. The request must describe the information to be treated as confidential and why the information qualifies for confidential treatment. The request must allow disclosure of the confidential information to authorized department employees and/or the United States EPA.

Reference: Mississippi Code Ann. §§ 17-17-27 and 49-17-39.

Further information on public records is available on the MDEQ website under "Freedom of Information Act" or by contacting the FOI Administrator at freedomofinformationcontact@deq.state.ms.us.