



## **Welcome!**

Welcome to the Montgomery County Green Business Certification Program (MC-GBC) Quickstart Guide!

You're embarking on a journey that distinguishes forward-thinking businesses from the rest. In today's world, achieving MC-GBC is not just about being recognized for green initiatives but also celebrating the spirit of innovation, responsibility, and a sustainable future. Every step you take towards environmental stewardship sends a clear message about the kind of business you operate and the values you uphold.

This guide is crafted to streamline your certification process, providing clear and concise steps to help you integrate sustainability into your business's core. Embracing this path is not just about environmental conservation—it's about redefining success in business. Harnessing environmental, social, and economic capital not only reduces risk but offers new opportunities, solid stakeholder relationships, and a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Let's embark on this transformative journey together and redefine what it means to be a thriving, green business in Montgomery County. Dive in, and let's make sustainability your business's second nature!

## **Benefits**

- **Dual Accreditation:** Benefit from both local recognition through Bethesda Green/Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection and national exposure via the Green Business Benchmark.
- **Branding Tools:** Receive a certificate, window decal, and program logo to showcase your Green Business Certification.
- **Online Exposure:** Get featured on Bethesda Green and Montgomery County Department of Environment Protection websites, complete with a bio highlighting your sustainability initiatives.
- **Amplified Marketing:** Tap into collaborative marketing efforts including campaigns, press releases, newsletters, and social media.
- **Collaborative Opportunities:** Engage in quarterly Green Business Cohorts to enhance green practices. More info.
- **Spotlight Series:** A chance to be part of the Green Business Spotlight series in collaboration with Georgetown University.



## ***Certified Green Business: A Quick Guide***

Your journey to certification is divided into 3 steps:

1. Getting Started
2. Certification
3. Recognition and Ongoing Engagement

### 1. *Getting Started:*

#### ***Preliminary Application***

- Fill out the [Preliminary Application](#) to help us gauge your needs and establish contact.
- You'll receive an email from our team confirming your submission and providing a link to the questionnaire for the Green Business Benchmark and Montgomery County certification.

#### ***Registration***

- Sign up via the link provided in our confirmation email.
- Landscaping/lawn care businesses\* will get a separate questionnaire with the confirmation email.

Each office location, whether standalone or within a business park, requires individual certification. If you have multiple locations, each must be certified separately. Only Montgomery County sites are eligible.

\* Landscape

businesses have a unique certification process, covering services like Garden Center, Design, Installation, and Maintenance.



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## ***Fees:***

- Certification and platform access cost is proportional to the size of your business based on the full-time employee count. This annual fee covers platform usage, support, materials, and other resources.

<b><i>Number of Full Time Employees</i></b>	
1-5 FTEs	\$375.00
6-15 FTEs	\$495.00
16-50 FTEs	\$937.00 (please note that for every additional location a 25% discount is allocated)
51+ FTEs	\$1,250.00 (please note that for every additional location a 25% discount is allocated)

- Reduced certification fees in the form of Green Business Scholarships are available for small businesses needing financial support, those serving underprivileged communities, and minority/woman owned businesses. If you think your business might qualify, please let us know on the Preliminary Application.



## 2. Certification:

### *Prerequisites*

Under the "Getting Started" tab on the Green Business Benchmark platform, you'll find five essential prerequisites for certification.

1. Form a sustainability committee or green team to champion your company's initiatives. During your first meeting, familiarize your team with the MC-GBC program and platform.
2. Complete the required GBB steps: fill out your Member Profile and undergo the GBB Assessment.
3. Craft a sustainability mission statement, outlining your business's key green commitments.
4. Highlight your accomplishments in your EcoProfile.
5. Notify all employees about your participation in the Montgomery County Green Certification Program and share your green mission.

### *Assessment*

- Complete Assessment - The GBB certification is the most automated and guided certification available. GBB's certification process is entirely online, and initiative based, so a company will receive points for each and every activity it has completed.
- Organization - Initiatives are organized by the business area they impact, such as building, cafeteria, transportation or office materials, and further marked by the effort, cost and greening impact of the initiative. This simple but flexible structure ensures a company can easily target and implement the efforts that best suit the company's needs and opportunities.

### **Need Assistance?**

Reach out to Mike Devlin, our Green Certification Associate, at [mike@bethesdagreen.org](mailto:mike@bethesdagreen.org). We offer free consultation for businesses pursuing certification.

For extensive environmental coaching, contact us at [info@bethesdagreen.org](mailto:info@bethesdagreen.org).



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- **Scoring** - Upon completion, you can view your progress in the dashboard. Based on your combined points your business will be initially placed into a recognition category (Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Platinum).

### *Dashboard*

- **Self-Paced Implementation:** Use the Dashboard for a personalized approach to adopting green initiatives. Prioritize initiatives that are impactful, feasible, and realistic.
- **Utilize Initiative Filter:** This tool allows you to sort initiatives based on parameters like completion status, category, and cost-efficiency.
- **Detailed Initiative Insights:** By clicking on the three-dot text bubble next to an initiative, you'll access a comprehensive overview, including steps for implementation and its eco-impact.
- **Delegate & Set Deadlines:** For every green initiative, assign a dedicated person or team and establish a target completion date.
- **Maximize Available Resources:** Explore resources available on the Bethesda Green website and the Green Business Benchmark platform to optimize your green efforts.



### ***Onsite Visit***

- Gold and Platinum levels require an onsite or virtual visit for certification. For Bronze and Silver levels, it's optional but advised.
- Bethesda Green provides free advisory services during these visits. Our team will review your application and coordinate a suitable visit time.
- The visit may involve clarifications or requests for documents, such as policies or sustainability plans.
- Office visits typically last 1.5 to 2 hours, with landscaper visits varying based on operations. Duration depends on your organization's size and intricacies.
- For offices, the visit includes a facility review and staff discussion. Landscapers should prepare for project site visits.
- Successful companies will be notified of their certification status within 10 days post-visit.

### 3. *Recognition & Engagement:*

#### ***Certification Packet***

- Businesses receive an email notification about their status, including documentation and scores. A physical certification packet from the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, including a certificate and program sticker, is mailed later.

#### ***Green Business Directory***

- Businesses should submit a bio for the Montgomery County Green Business Directory. A program logo indicating your tier of recognition is provided, and the Green Business



Benchmark portal offers a custom member seal linked to your business profile.

### ***Sustainability Story***

- Companies can share a Green Action Story, either through a video interview or a written feature, showcasing their unique green initiatives.

### ***Prepare For Recertification***

- Certification is a continuous process. The Montgomery County Green Business Certification is valid for three years however staying committed to green practices is essential.
- Throughout the year, Bethesda Green will continue to support businesses in their ongoing efforts, offering opportunities like joining green business events, engaging with peers in Green Business Cohorts, and maintaining progress through a Continuous Improvement Plan.