Quick Start Guide

Welcome!

Welcome to the **Montgomery County Green Business Certification Program** Quickstart Guide!

You're embarking on a journey that distinguishes forward-thinking businesses and recognizes them for taking steps to implement practices in their day-to-day operations that have a positive impact on the environment. 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 provide a background on the certification process and what to expect as a certified business. Let's embark on this transformative journey together and redefine what it means to be a thriving, green business in Montgomery County!

Why Certification Matters for your Business

Becoming a **Certified Green Business** isn't just about doing the right thing—it's about saving money, becoming more efficient and unlocking new opportunities while reducing your environmental impact. Here's how this certification will benefit your business:

- **Help you identify actions your business can take to reduce its environmental footprint** – this includes actions around energy or water savings, waste redution, sustainable purchasing, transportation, etc.
- **Earn Recognition & Credibility** – Get officially recognized by **Bethesda Green and the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection** as a sustainability leader.
- **Showcase Your Commitment** – Receive a **certificate, window decal, and program logo** to proudly display your Green Business Certification to customers, clients, and the community.
- **Boost Your Visibility** –
    - Be featured on **Bethesda Green and Montgomery County DEP websites and newsletters**, with a dedicated bio that highlights your sustainability initiatives.

- Gain access to **collaborative marketing efforts**, including social media videos, and county-wide green business campaigns such as being featured on the Ride On Buses.

- **Connect & Grow** – Join a community of like-minded businesses through our **quarterly Green Business Cohorts**, where you can exchange ideas, learn from experts, and strengthen your sustainability practices.

Certified Green Business: A Quick Guide

Your certification journey is divided into 3 steps:

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

1. *Getting Started:*

- Fill out the Preliminary Application to help us understand the nature of your business, gauge your needs and determine the certification fee based on the size of your business.
- Once submitted, you'll receive an email from our team confirming your submission, your certification fee and giving you access to the documents you will use to guide your certification process, track your progress and become certified.
- Depending on the nature of your business we will send you one of three Scorecards that you will use to get certified:
  - **Office/Building-Based:** Designed for businesses operating from a physical workspace, this certification helps you identify and implement sustainable practices and provides flexibility to accommodate different types of businesses. Certification is location-based, if you have multiple locations, each one should certify separately.
  - **Fully Remote:** Tailored for businesses with no physical office, this certification focuses on reducing environmental impact through remote work and home best practices.
  - **Landscaping/Lawn Care:** Built for businesses in outdoor services, this certification emphasizes eco-friendly landscaping techniques, water conservation, pesticide-free

practices, and responsible waste management.

Note: If a business doesn't fit into these categories, we will work on a case-by-case basis to help you get certified.

- Certification costs are based on the size of your business, ensuring fairness and accessibility. Pricing is determined by the number of full-time employees, with two part-time employees counting as one full-time equivalent.
- Payment will be required at the time you certify and renewal is required every three years.
- Scholarships are available for small businesses needing financial support, serving underprivileged communities, and/or minority/woman owned businesses. If you think your business might qualify, please let us know on the Preliminary Application.

Number of Full Time Employees	***Fee (Renewal every three years at time of re-certification)***
1-5	$275
6-15	$400
15-50	$750.00 (please note that every additional location certified receives a 25% discount)
51 and up	$1,250.00 (please note that every additional location certified receives a 25% discount)

2. *Certification*

- Once your eligibility is confirmed, we'll email your certification documents including an initial assessment (if applicable) and your scorecard which will help you track and implement green initiatives. Need guidance? You can schedule an online meeting for support or coaching.
- As you complete actions you'll earn points toward certification. Actions implemented in the past count as long as they are still providing an environmental benefit. Once you've met the required actions and reached your desired point level, you'll be ready to submit your application to certify—on your timeline and at the tier that best reflects your achievements.

Verification and Onsite Visit

- Depending on the nature of your business, scorecard points and the tier you have reached, we may conduct an in-person verification to validate the certification.
- The scorecard provides guidance regarding the information you will need to prepare, and have ready to share, to prove implementation of the actions you have checked as completed.
- If an in person visit **IS** required we will ask you to have the proof of implementation ready at the time of our visit. Generally office-based and landscaping businesses require in-person verification at the Gold or Platinum certification levels, and sometimes at Silver.
- If an in person visit **IS NOT** required we will ask you to submit proof of implementation online and may set up a call to discuss details. Fully remote businesses usually do not require an in-person visit.
- Office visits typically last around 1.5 hours, with landscaping visits varying based on operations. Duration of visit depends on your organization's size and how easily you can share proof of implementation.
- **After your business is verified we will confirm certification and tier within a week.**



3. *Recognition & Engagement:*

Certification Packet

- Once the certification is completed, businesses receive an email confirming the certification level and a program logo indicating the tier of recognition. A physical packet from the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, including a certificate and program decal is mailed later.

Green Business Recognition

- After certifying and submitting a bio for your business, we will add it to Montgomery County's Green Business Directory.

- We will also work to showcase your business in partnership with the county. This includes videos and social media posts, Ride On Bus campaigns, etc.

Stay Engaged

- Throughout the year, Bethesda Green will continue to support you in your ongoing sustainability efforts by offering recognition opportunities, educational events to help implement new actions, opportunities to engage with peers in a Green Business Cohort, etc.
- At any time, you can add new actions you may have implemented and accumulate points to move to higher certification levels. If you do not wish to make any changes your recognition will last for three years.
- After three years, your business will be required to re-certify. You will be able to utilize your old application and still get credit for the actions you have implemented assuming they are institutionalized and part of your day-to-day operations. Actions that require holding periodic meetings or participating in volunteer events, will have to be occurring periodically prior to your re-submission. We will evaluate any new actions you have implemented and will require you to have implemented at least three new actions to re-certify.