

CEQ-EPA Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators Application

Program History

The Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators (PIAEE) recognizes outstanding kindergarten through grade 12 teachers who employ innovative approaches to environmental education and use the environment as a context for learning for their students. Up to two teachers from each of EPA's 10 regions, from different states, may be selected for this award. Since the passage of the 1990 National Environmental Education Act, the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), administers this award to nationally honor, support and encourage educators who incorporate environmental education in their classrooms and teaching methods.

Eligibility

- Teach K-12 on a full-time basis in a public school that is operated by a local education agency¹, including schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs;
- Hold a current teaching license from the state (or valid reciprocity from the state for a license from another state);
- Have a minimum of 5 years of K-12 teaching experience, including at least 3 years of teaching environmental education;
- Anticipate a classroom teaching assignment involving environmental education for the upcoming school year;
- Citizen of the United States, its territories or possessions, or lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residency²;
- Has not been a recipient of this award in the past 5 years; and
- Completed, signed, and dated EPA Multimedia Consent Form, found at the end of this application.

¹ For this program, a local education agency is one as defined by section 198 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (now codified at 20 U.S.C. 7801(26)).

² The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services defines lawful permanent residency as any person not a citizen of the United States who is residing in the United States under legally recognized and lawfully recorded permanent residence as an immigrant, also known as "Permanent Resident Alien," "Resident Alien Permit Holder," and "Green Card Holder."

Application Requirements

There are 5 sections to the application:

Section 1: General information about the Teacher

Applicants must provide contact information, perform an eligibility review, and provide a summary of teaching experience.

Section 2: Essays

Applicants are required to respond to essay questions addressing the selection criteria, which includes Innovation (e.g., artificial intelligence), Achievement, Service to the Community, Leadership, and Integration.

Section 3: Sample Teaching Materials

Applicants must include sample teaching materials that demonstrate the teacher's work with students in **only** one or more of the following focus areas:

- Agricultural practices
- Artificial Intelligence
- Food waste
- Lead in drinking water
- Recycling
- School gardens
- Sustainability
- Using STEM in environmental education
- Water infrastructure
- Water quality and/or litter within waterways

Section 4: Letters of Support

Each application must include 3 signed letters of support from an administrator at the teacher's school, a fellow teacher, and a past or current student.

Section 5: Final Checklist

Applicants must complete a final checklist, certifying that they have completed all required sections of the applications.

Selection Criteria

Teachers must have an outstanding record of teaching. Each of the factors below is meant to illustrate the applicant's record of teaching. Applicants will be judged only by the responses to the questions in each of these five factors, as well as their sample teaching materials and letters of support.

Innovation (25 points)

- A. How does the teacher make learning about the environment unique, fun, and exciting for their students? For example, does the teacher use experiential or place-based learning in ways that go above and beyond the practices of other teachers; or does the teacher use artificial intelligence? Please be sure to demonstrate or exemplify this in the sample teaching materials.
- B. How does the teacher tailor their teaching methods to the needs of their student population?
- C. How does the teacher use any of the following topics as a basis to teach about environmental sustainability: agricultural practices; artificial intelligence; food waste; lead in drinking water; recycling; school gardens; sustainability; using STEM in environmental education; water infrastructure; water quality and/or litter within waterways?

Achievement (15 points)

- A. What positive changes has the teacher seen in student academic achievement and behavior or attitude because of participation in the teacher's environmental education program?

Service to the Community (20 points)

Many schools are part of communities that are heavily impacted by environmental pollution. While your community and school may or may not be considered one that is impacted by environmental pollution, please answer the following questions:

- A. How does the teacher extend environmental education beyond the classroom? Are the teacher's students participating beyond the classroom in environmental, conservation, or earth science extracurricular or community-based projects and activities?
- B. How does the teacher inspire the surrounding community, including parents/guardians and members of the community to participate in environmental education activities?
- C. Is the teacher working with a community to solve an environmental problem?

Leadership (15 points)

- A. How does the teacher serve as a model for students and teachers with his/her approach to teaching about one or more of the following environmental topics: agricultural practices; artificial intelligence; food waste; lead in drinking water; recycling; school gardens; sustainability; using STEM in environmental education; water infrastructure; water quality and/or litter within waterways?

Integration (10 points)

- A. How does the teacher help to integrate environmental education into the broader school curriculum or coordinate with other teachers to integrate environmental education into their academic subjects?

Sample Teaching Materials (10 points)

- A. Sample teaching material must only be on one or more of the following focus areas:
- Agricultural practices
 - Artificial Intelligence
 - Food waste
 - Lead in drinking water
 - Recycling
 - School gardens
 - Sustainability
 - Using STEM in environmental education
 - Water infrastructure
 - Water quality and/or litter within waterways

Letters of Support (5 points)

Winners

- Winners will receive a Presidential award plaque and up to \$2,500 to be used to further their professional development in environmental education.
- Award winners' local education agencies will also receive up to \$2,500 to fund environmental activities and programs. These funds cannot be used for construction costs, general expenses, salaries, bonuses, or other administrative expenses.
- A congratulatory letter from a senior official at EPA will be provided to each winner.

Submission Instructions

- All application contents are required to be submitted in English. If you wish to submit an application in a language other than English, please contact the PIAEE program by email at PIAEE@epa.gov.
- Applications will only be accepted by email.
- Email the complete application package, including all supporting materials, to PIAEE@epa.gov. Please include “Application for 2024-2025 PIAEE” in the subject line.
- All email applications must be received by **11:59 PM ET on June 2, 2025**.
- Please ensure that the required supporting materials are included with the application submission – a checklist is provided on the last page of the application.
- All applicants will receive an email confirmation that their application was received.

The public reporting and recordkeeping burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 10 hours per response. Send comments on the Agency's need for this information, the accuracy of the provided burden estimates, and any suggested methods for minimizing respondent burden, including using automated collection techniques to the Director, Collection Strategies Division, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2822T), 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20460. Include the OMB control number in any correspondence. Do not send the completed form to this address.

Application Section 1: Contact

Teacher Contact Information:				*required information	
Prefix:	*First Name:	*Last Name:	MI:	Suffix:	
<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	
*Primary Email Address:		<div></div>			
Secondary Email Address: <i>For communications outside the academic year</i>		<div></div>			
*Preferred Telephone:		<div></div>			
Secondary Telephone: <i>For communications outside the academic year</i>		<div></div>			

School Information:		
*School Name & Street Address:		
<div></div>		
*City:	*State:	*Zip:
<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
*School Email address:	<div></div>	
*School Website:	<div></div>	
*School Tax ID#:	*Phone #:	
<div></div>	<div></div>	
*Principal Name:	*Principal Email:	*Principal Phone:
<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>

*Grades:												
K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>

*Teaching Experience:	
How many years has the teacher taught K-12?	<div></div>

***Eligibility:**

Check each box to confirm that the teacher meets the general eligibility requirements.

<input type="checkbox"/>	The teacher educates K-12 full time in a public school (including a Bureau of Indian Affairs school) that is operated by a local education agency. ³
<input type="checkbox"/>	The teacher has a teaching license from the State (or valid reciprocity from the State for a license from another State).
<input type="checkbox"/>	The teacher has at least 5 years of teaching experience, and at least 3 years of teaching an environment-based curriculum and/or environmental education.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The teacher has a classroom teaching assignment involving environmental education for the coming year.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The teacher is a citizen of the United States, its territories or possessions, or lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residency. ⁴
<input type="checkbox"/>	The teacher has not been a recipient of this award in the past 5 years.

Where did you hear about this award program?

<input type="checkbox"/> EPA website	<input type="checkbox"/> EPA Headquarters Staff
<input type="checkbox"/> A friend or colleague	<input type="checkbox"/> EPA Regional Staff
<input type="checkbox"/> School Administration	<input type="checkbox"/> Press/Media
Other (Please Specify):	

³ For this program, a local education agency is one as defined by section 98 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (now codified at 20 U.S.C. 7801 (26)).

⁴ The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services defines lawful permanent residency as any person not a citizen of the United States who is residing in the United States under legally recognized and lawfully recorded permanent residence as an immigrant, also known as "Permanent Resident Alien," "Resident Alien Permit Holder," and "Green Card Holder."

Application Section 2: Essays

- Essays are listed under the following five headings: Innovation (e.g., artificial intelligence), Achievement, Service to the Community, Leadership, and Integration.
- Teachers should clearly address every question in each heading area in a separate, attached document. Teachers must include sample teaching materials and may reference the sample teaching materials throughout their essays.
- If the teacher's response to a question cites information provided in response to another question, or in the sample teaching materials, the response should clearly indicate where the information is located so that the reviewer may easily find it.
- Essay length, font type and size specifications:
 - The total length of the 5 essays must not exceed 9 pages. An essay may start on the same page as the ending of a previous essay.
 - Essays are to be typed in Times New Roman font, size 12, line spacing 1.5, and at margins no smaller than 1 inch.
 - Additional pages beyond 9 pages will not be read nor evaluated.

Essay 1: Innovation

- A. How does the teacher make learning about the environment unique, fun, and exciting for their students? For example, does the teacher use experiential or place-based learning in ways that go above and beyond the practices of other teachers; or does the teacher use artificial intelligence? Please be sure to demonstrate or exemplify this in the sample teaching materials.
- B. How does the teacher tailor their teaching methods to the needs of their student population?
- C. How does the teacher use any of the following topics as a basis to teach about environmental sustainability: agricultural practices; artificial intelligence; food waste; lead in drinking water; recycling; school gardens; sustainability; using STEM in environmental education; water infrastructure; water quality and/or litter within waterways?

Essay 2: Achievement

- A. What positive changes has the teacher seen in student academic achievement and behavior or attitude because of participation in the teacher's environmental education program?

Essay 3: Service to the Community

Many schools are part of communities that are heavily impacted by environmental pollution. While your community and school may or may not be considered one that is impacted by environmental pollution, please answer the following:

- A. How does the teacher extend environmental education beyond the classroom? Are the teacher's students participating beyond the classroom in environmental, conservation, or earth science extracurricular or community-based projects and activities?
- B. How does the teacher inspire the surrounding community, including parents/guardians and members of the community to participate in environmental education activities?
- C. Is the teacher working with a community to solve an environmental problem?

Essay 4: Leadership

- A. How does the teacher serve as a model for students and teachers with his/her approach to teaching about one or more of the following environmental topics: agricultural practices; artificial intelligence; food waste; lead in drinking water; recycling; school gardens; sustainability; using STEM in environmental education; water infrastructure; water quality and/or litter within waterways?

Essay 5: Integration

- A. How does the teacher help to integrate environmental education into the broader school curriculum or coordinate with other teachers to integrate environmental education into their academic subjects?

Application Section 3: Sample Teaching Materials

Sample teaching materials must be submitted separately as attachments to this application.

Content: Materials from one unit/curriculum or module that the teacher has taught on **only** one or more of the focus areas listed below. Indicate how these materials were used, and how the students responded to them.

- Agricultural practices
- Artificial Intelligence
- Food waste
- Lead in drinking water
- Recycling
- School gardens
- Sustainability
- Using STEM in environmental education
- Water infrastructure
- Water quality and/or litter within waterways

Source(s): The materials may be original to the teacher or may be from an existing education curricula source. If existing education curricula or activities are submitted, the source of the materials must be documented, and the topic must be on one or more of the focus areas listed above.

Length: The total length of the sample teaching materials must not exceed 5 pages. A brief description of how the materials are used must be included. Teachers may include up to 5 additional pages of photos, which must be clearly labeled. Photos are optional. Web links to supporting materials, such as photos (5 pages or fewer) and sound and/or video recordings (10 minutes or less of total playing time) may also be provided but must be accompanied by a brief description of the project. Reviewers will not attempt to find online content for invalid web links, so please make sure all web links are active.

Sample Teaching Material Titles:

Please identify the titles of the sample teaching materials in the space provided below.

Sample Teaching Materials Use and Student Response:

Please briefly indicate how these materials were used and how the students responded to them, within the space provided.

Application Section 4: Letters of Support

Each application must include a total of 3 signed letters of support. Letters must come from:

- An administrator from the teacher's school
- A fellow teacher
- A past or current student

Letters of support should not exceed 1 page and must include the following:

- Relationship to the teacher;
- Familiarity with the teacher and the work for which the teacher is being considered; and,
- Perspective on why the teacher's work is unique and innovative in the field of environmental education, and how the teacher inspires others to use environmental education.

The letters must be submitted as attachments to the application. In the boxes below, identify the individuals who provided letters of support for this teacher.

Letter 1: Administrator	
Name	Title
Organization/School	Email Address

Letter 2: Fellow Teacher	
Name	Title
School	Email Address

Letter 3: Past or Current Student	
Name	Address or Email

Application Section 5: Final Checklist

Before submitting, be sure your application package includes:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Completed application, with 5 essay responses.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Copy of teacher's teaching license, state teacher certificate, or copy of online record (an active web link). Do not send original certificates.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Sample teaching materials that include materials that demonstrate the teacher's work with students in only one or more of the following focus areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Agricultural practices ○ Artificial Intelligence ○ Food waste ○ Lead in drinking water ○ Recycling ○ School gardens ○ Sustainability ○ Using STEM in environmental education ○ Water infrastructure ○ Water quality and/or litter within waterways
<input type="checkbox"/>	Three letters of support
<input type="checkbox"/>	Signature
<input type="checkbox"/>	Completed, signed, and dated EPA Multimedia Consent Form, found at the end of this application.

Teacher Signature (print name)

Date

If needed, please refer to these [instructions for e-signing a PDF in Adobe Acrobat Reader](#).



Official U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Consent Form

For use with Video, Photo(s), or Voice Recording(s)

I, _____ (“the Contributor”), hereby authorize the
(Name)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) to film, record and/or photograph me or my child (where I am the child’s parent or
legal guardian), as part of the EPA Project or Event titled, _____
(Project Title)
 (“Event or Project”) occurring on or about _____ (“Recording(s) or Photo(s)”).
(Date)

I further grant a non-exclusive, no-cost, worldwide, transferable, perpetual, irrevocable license to digitize, modify, alter, edit, excerpt, adapt, create derivative works, publish, display, distribute, publicly perform, exhibit, transmit, broadcast, reproduce, and otherwise use the Recording(s) or Photo(s) for informational, educational and/or public relations/outreach purposes that are noncommercial in nature, and in so doing, use the Contributor’s name, image, likeness, appearance, and/or voice as they appear in the Recording(s) or Photo(s), in any and all media and formats and by any and all technologies and means of delivery whether now or hereafter known or devised. Further, I irrevocably grant EPA or parties working on EPA’s behalf, the right to use Contributor’s name, image, voice, likeness and professional biographical information, at no cost, in connection with any promotional activities or online publications related to the Event or Project.

I understand that if the Recording(s) or Photo(s) includes an Event, they may be live-streamed online; the Recording(s) or Photo(s) may also be publicly displayed and distributed in full or in part on EPA’s web site and/or on official EPA social media pages, including those on Facebook (www.facebook.com/EPA), YouTube (www.youtube.com/user/USEPAgov), Instagram (www.instagram.com/epagov), LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com/company/us-epa) and X, formerly known as Twitter (www.twitter.com/EPA). I waive the right to inspect or approve the finished product, including written or electronic copies, wherein the Contributor’s name, image, likeness, appearance, and/or voice appears. I understand that the videos, photos and/or voice Recording(s) may remain online indefinitely and may subsequently appear in EPA paper/online publications/social media graphics or other non-EPA publications that EPA deems appropriate to help promote or publicize the Event(s) or Project(s). I also understand and agree that EPA may be required to preserve, reproduce and/or distribute copies of the Work as required under the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552, the Federal Records Act, 44 U.S.C. chs. 21, 29, 31 & 33, EPA’s regulations at 40 C.F.R. Part 2, Subpart B or as otherwise required by U.S. law. I hereby agree to waive any and all compensation for myself and/or my custodian in regard to the above-referenced uses of the Recording(s) or Photo(s).

I understand that disclosure of the Contributor’s name, likeness and professional biographical information for the foregoing purposes is voluntary, and is collected and maintained under the authority of the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 552a; failure to disclose the personal information requested may result in the Contributor not being included in EPA multimedia products.

I hereby hold harmless and release and forever discharge the United States and EPA from all claims, demands, and causes of action which I, my heirs, representatives, executors, administrators, or any other persons acting on my behalf or on behalf of my estate or that of my custodian have or may have by reason of this authorization.

I am at least 18 years of age, and/or the legal guardian/custodian of the Contributor, and I am competent to contract in my own name or in the name of my child/ward for whom I am a legal guardian/custodian. I have read this release before signing below, and I fully understand the contents, meaning, and impact of this release.

Signature of Individual or other legally authorized person

Date

Print Name

Email (Optional)

Organization and/or Title

Project/Production Notes: