



Frequently Asked Questions

Spring 2010

OVERVIEW

- **What is Sustainable Jersey?** Sustainable Jersey is a certification program for municipalities in New Jersey that want to go green, control costs and save money, and take steps to sustain their quality of life over the long term.
- **What does the program offer municipalities?** It identifies **actions** that define what communities must achieve. It provides **tools and guidance** to enable communities to make progress. It links or creates **incentives** for municipalities that are making progress toward the actions.
- **Will municipalities get recognition for achieving certification?** The certification is a prestigious designation for municipal governments in New Jersey. Municipalities that achieve the certification are considered by their peers, by state government, and by the experts and civic organizations in New Jersey, to be among the leading municipalities. Municipalities that complete the certification requirements will be recognized at an annual awards event held at the New Jersey League of Municipalities Conference in November.
- **Is the State of New Jersey going to mandate participation in Sustainable Jersey?** No. The program is strictly voluntary.
- **How is the Sustainable Jersey certification different from other “green” certification programs?** Sustainable Jersey does not focus on just one issue, like curbing global warming. Our program encompasses a range of issues including global warming, pollution, biodiversity, land use, air and water quality, equity, buying local, local living economies, sustainable agriculture, and more. Also, the Sustainable Jersey certification process was developed specifically for New Jersey municipalities, so the actions, tools, and incentives directly apply to your needs.
- **Who are the Sustainable Jersey project partners?** The program is an initiative of the New Jersey State League of Municipalities’ Mayors’ Committee for a Green Future, the Municipal Land Use Center at the College of New Jersey, the New Jersey Sustainable State Institute at Rutgers University, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the Rutgers Center for Green Building, the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, and a coalition of New Jersey

non-profits, state agencies, and experts in the field.

- **How can I get a hardcopy of all program materials?** The program materials are predominantly web-based. On www.sustainablejersey.com, each action is provided in PDF form and can be downloaded and printed.
- **Can someone speak about Sustainable Jersey at our event?** To request a Sustainable Jersey speaker, contact Kristy Ranieri at events@sustainablejersey.com. We cannot guarantee speakers, but will do our best to accommodate your needs.
- **What does sustainability or sustainable development mean?** It means protecting the resources and systems that support us today so that they will be available to future generations. In short, it means preserving our civilization and the things we hold dear in perpetuity while enhancing our quality of life.

ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE CERTIFICATION

- **What is new in 2010?** In the second year of the program, Sustainable Jersey has been updated with new features, new and improved actions, and a refined point structure. The biggest change for 2010 is that the program is more flexible. Municipalities may now select from six priority actions (only four were offered in 2009). Previously, the points available for many types of actions were capped. For example, even if you had five amazing recycling advancements, you could only get credit for two. We have lifted those caps so you can get credit for more of the things you do. We also adjusted the point system to keep the level of effort required to achieve certification similar to the first year of the program. Since it is now easier to score points, and there are more points available, we have adjusted the minimum points for the bronze or first level of certification to 150 for new applications. Finally, we added a new level of certification, Sustainable Jersey Silver.
- **What are the levels of certification?** Sustainable Jersey Bronze means that a municipality has made a commitment to sustainability and taken the first significant steps. The Bronze Level of certification requires the establishment of a mandatory Green Team, implementation of 2 out of 6 priority actions, and a minimum total of 150 points. Sustainable Jersey Silver means that a municipality has made significant progress toward sustainability and is a statewide leader. The Silver Level of Certification requires the establishment of a mandatory Green Team, implementation of 3 out of 6 priority actions, and a minimum total of 350 points.
- **At what level were communities certified in 2009?** Communities that received Sustainable Jersey certification in 2009 are certified at the Bronze level. Certified communities can now apply for Silver certification if they fulfill the requirements detailed on the website, and uncertified communities can apply for either Bronze or Silver.
- **What are the program actions that municipalities must achieve in order to be certified?** Actions are the concrete steps municipalities can take to become more green and sustainable. Currently the program has identified over one hundred actions that you can choose from to reach the minimum points required for certification. Actions include ordinances, programs, policies and procedures, and facility improvements. Each action comes with detailed resources and step by step “how to” directions.
- **How do you become certified?** After registering, your municipality must achieve at least 150 points from your completed actions for the Bronze level or at least 350 points for the Silver level.

Every community must create a Green Team and select at least two (for Bronze level) or three (for Silver level) of the six priority actions: 1) energy audits for municipal buildings, 2) a municipal carbon footprint, 3) a sustainable land use pledge, 4) a natural resource inventory, 5) a water conservation ordinance, and/or 6) a fleet inventory. All actions taken by municipalities to score points toward certification must be accompanied by documentary evidence and will be reviewed by the project partners. Only efforts that meet the standards described in the actions will be accepted and counted toward a certification.

- ***Who created the actions?*** To create rigorous and broadly accepted standards and actions, Sustainable Jersey convened a working group of over 150 leaders from universities, non-profit organizations, the business community, and state, local, and county government. The working group researched and disseminated best practices, translated global and state imperatives into local actions, tested sustainability planning models, and developed community resources for the program.
- ***Are the actions flexible? Can we vary certain aspects and still get credit and financial incentives?*** Only efforts that meet the submission requirements described in the actions will be accepted and counted toward a certification. The submission requirements are provided with each action on www.sustainablejersey.com. All actions taken by municipalities to score points toward certification must be accompanied by documentary evidence and will be reviewed by the project partners.
- ***Can you get points/credit for actions that were already completed before beginning the certification process?*** Yes, actions taken by municipalities that already have been completed can count toward your certification total. For example, if you have had a green fair in the past year, then you can count this action and score 10 points. As applicable, the submission requirements for each action specify how recently an action must have been completed in order to qualify for points. An application for certification must be accompanied by documentary evidence and will be reviewed by the project partners.
- ***Is Sustainable Jersey interested in our frustrations or challenges dealing with agencies, existing laws, or other obstacles?*** Yes, please share your challenges, frustrations, experiences, as well as any possible solutions. We hope to identify problem areas for meeting future sustainability goals. We are also interested in your success stories in order to share them with other municipalities and the greater community. Please contact info@sustainablejersey.com

GUIDANCE AND TOOLS FOR MUNICIPALITIES

- ***What are the project tools?*** Each action has resources and tools to guide you. You get soup to nuts, turn-key guidance on how your municipality can complete each action. For example, the Energy Audits for Municipal Facilities section contains a condensed version of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) guide to performing energy audits, guidance on whom to involve, project costs, and a schedule, a sample Request for Proposal, sample cover letters, an overview of a success story, and a list of qualified New Jersey vendors.
- ***Can we get guidance as we go along?*** Registration with the program provides you with access to Sustainable Jersey workshops, trainings, and a resource center. The website provides all of the details you need to submit for each action. If you have questions as you work toward

certification, we are here to help you. Email certification@sustainablejersey.com or contact 732-932-5475 ext 551.

REGISTRATION AND CERTIFICATION

- **How do you register?** Fill out a registration form online <http://www.sustainablejersey.com/registration.php>. Registration requires that you: 1) pass a municipal resolution stating your intent to seek Sustainable Jersey certification and designating an entity to be in charge of the process (a sample resolution is available at the above web address), 2) select a municipal point of contact person and have them register with pertinent contact information, and 3) identify actions that may be implemented. This does not commit your municipality to these actions.
- **Who is eligible to be listed as the primary or secondary contact responsible for municipal registration?** While the contacts are typically municipal staff, elected officials, or other municipal representatives, other people may serve in this capacity as long as they are authorized by the governing body to do so. The municipal resolution stating the town's intent to pursue certification in the Sustainable Jersey program can designate a point of contact responsible for registering the municipality and managing the account. Please see the sample resolution here: http://www.sustainablejersey.com/SUSTAINABLE_JERSEY_MUNICIPAL_RESOLUTION.pdf
- **What happens after a municipality registers?** Once your registration is submitted and reviewed for completeness, you will be notified by email and provided with a user ID and password to access your municipal profile on the Sustainable Jersey website. When you log in, you will be able to begin filling out your application for certification.
- **How long does it take to get a confirmation of my registration?** Once you submit your town's registration online, please allow 1-3 days for the confirmation email with your account log in information to arrive at the email address provided during registration.
- **Can I change my password or contact information once registered?** Yes, once your registration is approved, use the log in information from your confirmation email to access your town's account. On the opening page, use the "edit account" link to change your profile.
- **Can entities other than municipalities (such as counties and sewage authorities) register for Sustainable Jersey?** Sustainable Jersey is only available to municipal governments; however representatives of other entities may participate through the Green Team or collaborative activities with the municipal government.
- **Once registered, will municipalities be able to see what other communities are working on for certification?** Sustainable Jersey will list all municipalities that become registered on the website. On the "Actions for Sustainable Communities" webpage, you are asked to select the actions that your municipality intends to complete -or already has completed -to become certified. When you register you will be asked if your municipality is willing to share your certification documentation with other municipalities and the public. Sharing is important, because we hope that municipalities will find ways to work together. For example, if you see that the towns around you plan to establish a green purchasing program, you could collaborate by joining the contracts.

- ***What is the deadline for applying for the certification and how long does the certification last?*** Municipalities may apply for certification at any time. Applications will be reviewed and approved on a rolling basis. The certification is good for three years from the time it is approved and the municipality is notified.
- ***Will the certification standards become more rigorous in future years?*** Only the lowest level of certification was offered in 2009. As of 2010, two tiers of certification are being offered and the number of points required to achieve certification has risen. In future years, more levels of certification, connoting more progress toward sustainability, will be offered. Municipalities wishing to renew their certification after three years will have to make additional progress.

PROGRAM GRANTS AND INCENTIVES

- ***What are some of the program incentives?*** The program provides links to funding information, such as Sustainable Jersey Small Grants funded by Wal-Mart, priority in the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) Municipal Energy Audit Program, other incentives such as Regional Greenhouse Gas Incentive (RGGI) carbon credit auction proceeds, and of course the Sustainable Jersey certification.
- ***What is the Sustainable Jersey Small Grants program?*** Wal-Mart Stores Inc., the New Jersey League of Municipalities' Education Foundation, and the NJLM Mayors' Committee for a Green Future (MCGF) have established the Sustainable Jersey Small Grants program. The grants are intended to support New Jersey municipalities participating in the Sustainable Jersey certification program. Wal-Mart provided \$200,000 to fund the grants program for New Jersey municipalities in 2009. The program awarded ten \$10,000 grants and four \$25,000 grants. Stay tuned to www.sustainablejersey.com for details on grants to be offered in 2010.
- ***How do I apply for a Sustainable Jersey Grant funded by Wal-Mart?*** To be eligible for the grants, you must: 1) be a New Jersey municipal government, or local partner organization that has the explicit endorsement of the official municipal governing body, 2) be registered with Sustainable Jersey and, 3) use the grant to implement an action that will score points towards your Sustainable Jersey certification. Municipalities do not have to achieve the Sustainable Jersey certification to be eligible. Applications and guidelines for 2010 grants will be posted at <http://www.sustainablejersey.com/resources.php>.
- ***What kinds of proposals are eligible for funding through the Sustainable Jersey Grants funded by Wal-Mart?*** The grants are intended to help municipalities that register for the Sustainable Jersey Program institute new greening and sustainability initiatives within their communities that will help the town achieve Sustainable Jersey Certification. All of the Actions for Sustainable Communities listed on the website at <http://www.sustainablejersey.com/actionlist.php> are eligible for grant funding; however proposals to complete actions like the Energy Audit that are currently funded by other programs will not be considered competitive.
- ***Can my town submit more than one grant application?*** Each municipality can submit only one grant application; however, the proposal may include more than one activity. For instance, a town may apply for a grant to fund a recycling campaign as well as a "buy local" campaign. If you are considering projects that would require more than one grant to fund them, we suggest that you decide which proposal is the strongest, most compelling project and submit that application in whichever funding category is most appropriate.

MORE INFORMATION

If your inquiry pertains to Training, Certification, Grants, Events, or Sponsorship:

Training@sustainablejersey.com

Certification@sustainablejersey.com

Grants@sustainablejersey.com

Events@sustainablejersey.com

Sponsors@sustainablejersey.com

To report a problem with the web site or for general inquiries: info@sustainablejersey.com

For urgent matters or press inquiries: Patricia Ruby: 732-932-5475x551

Visit the Web site: www.SustainableJersey.com