



ARKANSAS
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT



ARKANSAS
NSTEP
Natural State Environmental Program

Natural State Environmental Program (NStEP)

Frequently Asked Questions

How to Apply:

- **What is NStEP?**

The Natural State Environmental Program (NStEP) is a voluntary environmental stewardship program that recognizes and rewards organizations that are committed to environmental leadership those that go beyond environmental compliance and move toward the goal of sustainability. NStEP is open to all organizations that reside within the State of Arkansas that maintain twenty (20) or more full-time employees.

- **How do I apply to the program?**

Membership applications are accepted year-round and can be found by visiting E&E's ePortal System, at:

<https://eportal.adeq.state.ar.us/app/#/formversion/3b97dfb8-6041-4884-82d3-6d5be9cafc63>

- **Is there a deadline for submitting my application?**

There is no deadline regarding application submissions. Membership applications are accepted at any time throughout the year.

- **What happens after I submit my application?**

Upon receipt of a completed application, the NStEP Coordinator will notify your organization's point of contact of the receipt of the application. E&E Staff will review your organization's project proposals and compliance history. E&E will notify your organization regarding your membership status within ninety (90) days of receiving the completed application. **This timeline is dependent upon application completeness and volume of compliance history being reviewed.**

- **Are there any fees associated with membership in the program?**

There are no dues or fees associated with maintaining membership in the program. Membership in NStEP is entirely voluntary.

- **What kinds of businesses are eligible for membership in the program?**

Membership in the NStEP is open to all Arkansas organizations with a minimum of twenty (20) full-time employees. This includes industries, manufacturers, educational institutions, municipalities, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and more.

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General Information:

- **Where can I find my NStEP Member ID?**

Your NStEP Member ID is the central number located on your NStEP Certificate of Membership. Ex. NSTEP1902P.

- **Where can I find a copy of the NStEP Handbook?**

A copy of the NStEP Handbook can always be found on the NStEP webpage, <https://www.adeg.state.ar.us/nstep/>.

- **Who is my established point of contact for the Department?**

The established point of contact for NStEP will always be the active NStEP Coordinator. You may contact the current Coordinator, at 501.682.0648 or NStEP@adeq.state.ar.us.

- **How do I request to receive a specific incentive?**

When applying to the program, you are asked to select which incentives you would like to receive in the application itself. E&E Staff then review selected incentives to ensure that avenues to receive those incentive(s) are ready and available.

- **What activities would be considered environmental improvement projects?**

Projects that go beyond regulatory compliance and provide some sort of benefit to the surrounding environment, such as improvements to air or water quality, energy reductions, etc. The NStEP Beyond Compliance Project Ideas Flyer provides additional information. It can found on the NStEP webpage.

- **What if I'm unsure how to measure my project's environmental benefit?**

You are welcome to contact the acting NStEP Coordinator with questions. They can provide you with information on how to report your metrics.

- **What is considered "beyond-compliance"?**

Environmental regulations set the baseline for an organization's environmental importance. Going beyond compliance simply means finding ways to improve your organization's environmental performance further than what is required by regulatory requirements.

Program Requirements:

- **What is required of applicants desiring membership in the program?**

There are five (5) compliance-related requirements for the program:

- An entity cannot maintain a pattern of regulatory or permit violations, notices of violation, criminal penalties, or significant compliance advisories that indicate a lack of commitment to environmental leadership.



- There must be no evidence of serious violations of applicable local, state, and federal environmental laws and permits for a period of time immediately prior to the date of submitting an application.
 - There cannot be any conviction of environmental laws or out-of-court settlements of formal charges within five (5) years of applying to the program.
 - If the applicant entered into a settlement agreement of a Consent Administrative Order (CAO), the applicant must be monitored and in good standing with an agreed-upon compliance schedule.
 - Any businesses applying for membership in the program that operate under multiple locations under the same parent company have the choice of applying for membership based on a single location or may include multiple locations in a single membership, as long as they are located within the State of Arkansas.
- **Is my membership automatically renewed?**
NStEP memberships are not automatically renewed. If you would like to continue membership in the program, you are asked to submit a renewal application through [ePortal](#).
 - **As a Gold member, what if I do not fully develop an Environmental Management System by the end of my membership duration?**
In the event a Gold member may need an extension of the three-year maximum status, a formal request must be made to the NStEP Coordinator. Determinations of each request will be handled on a case-by-case basis.
 - **What do I do if my business changes ownership?**
DEQ should be notified of any changes in acquisition within thirty (30) days of the acquisition. If the company wishes to continue in NStEP, the company must submit a new application and wait for approval. No NStEP publications (logos, decals, certificates) may be used during this period.

Annual Report Requirements:

- **What is an annual report?**
All NStEP members are required to submit annual progress reports overviewing the achievements and measurements of their environmental improvement projects. These are submitted through E&E's [ePortal System](#).
- **When are annual reports due?**
Annual reports are due by January 1st of every year following an entity's admission into the program. For example, if your facility was admitted into the program on June 13, 2021, you would submit an annual report on January 1, 2022.

Frequently Asked Questions

Environmental Management System and Auditing:

- **What is ISO 14001?**

ISO 14001 is a standard for Environmental Management Systems, included in the ISO 14000 series alongside standards related to environmental auditing, environmental performance evaluation, environmental labeling, and life-cycle assessment.

- **How do I create an EMS that adheres to the standard of ISO 14001?**

ISO 14001 is not a technical standard, and should not replace technical requirements embodied in statutes or regulations. An EMS that adheres to these guidelines, however, is part of an overall management system that identifies and addresses environmental concerns through the allocation of resources, assignment of responsibilities, and ongoing evaluation of practices, processes, and procedures to achieve sound environmental performance.

- **Who can I contact to conduct external audits?**

Most local utility companies can conduct professional external audits. Contact your local utility to find out more.

- **What is P2 (Pollution Prevention)?**

Pollution Prevention can be defined as eliminating or minimizing the initial generation of waste at the source, or using environmentally sound on-site and off-site reuse. Waste treatment, recycling, or disposal is not considered pollution prevention. Prevention must start at the source. You can find additional information regarding P2 on EPA's website, at <https://www.epa.gov/p2/learn-about-pollution-prevention>.

- **Who can I contact if my facility is interested in conducting a waste audit?**

Depending on where your facility is located, you can contact your Regional Solid Waste Management District for more information. Unsure what district you belong to? Visit DEQ's website for more information, at <https://www.adeg.state.ar.us/sw/programs/rswmd.aspx>.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Visit E&E's website: <https://www.adeg.state.ar.us/nstep/> or contact Dalton Barnum, NStEP Coordinator, at 501.682.0648 or dalton.barnum@adeq.state.ar.us