



## Ten Strands Green Ribbon Technical Assistance Overview

*Last Updated August 2024*

**Purpose and Overview:** This document provides an overview of the Green Ribbon Program and how Ten Strands can provide technical assistance services to school communities seeking success with this recognition.

### WHAT IS THE GREEN RIBBON AWARDS PROGRAM?

The Federal Green Ribbon Program (ED-GRS), created by the U.S. Department of Education, recognizes schools, districts, and institutions of higher education for excellence in sustainability across three pillars:

- Pillar I: Reduce environmental impact and costs;
- Pillar II: Improve the health and wellness of schools, students, and staff; and
- Pillar III: Provide effective environmental and sustainability education

In California, applicants who can demonstrate achievement and earn points in the above pillars are recognized by [California's Green Ribbon Program](#) in one of four tiered levels:

- Bronze Level (Entry Level Commitment): 55-64.9%
- Silver Level (Mid Integration): 65-74.9%
- Gold Level (Full Integration): 75% or better
- Green Achiever: Exemplary Achievement with Full Integration - nominated for federal award



Applications typically open in early summer and are due by early fall, with award announcements made in the spring.

### WHY APPLY FOR THE GREEN RIBBON AWARDS PROGRAM?

California Green Ribbon Schools are recognized as some of California's most successful educational institutions in reducing environmental impact and costs, improving health and wellness, and providing effective sustainability education. Progress on the Green Ribbon Pillars helps school communities comply with statewide policy expectations and can provide additional benefits. These benefits include economic advantages, academic improvements, enhanced health and wellness for students and employees, and an overall boost in morale and school climate. See outcomes below.

Outcomes	Overview
<b>Policy Expectations</b>	California has several <a href="#">policies and expectations for California's TK–12 school communities</a> to enact related to environmental sustainability in facilities and operations, as well as integration of environmental and climate literacy in curriculum and instruction. Additionally, some school communities have adopted environmental and climate-themed policies at the local level; see data <a href="#">here</a> on how many district school boards have passed policies. Action on Green Ribbon Pillars supports school communities in compliance with these policies and expectations.

<b>Economic Outcomes</b>	Applying for the Green Ribbon Award can lead to significant cost savings for schools by encouraging initiatives that reduce energy consumption, waste, and resource use. This can free up funds for other priorities and attract potential grants and community support.
<b>Academic Benefits</b>	National studies and existing green school programs have indicated benefits such as increased student engagement, enhanced critical thinking skills, civic skills, preparation for future green jobs, and reduced behavioral problems. Additionally, the Green Ribbon Award promotes the integration of sustainability into the curriculum, ensuring that students gain essential climate literacy knowledge and skills. By embedding environmental education into everyday learning, schools prepare students to be informed, responsible citizens equipped to address future environmental challenges.
<b>Health and Wellness Benefits</b>	<p>An important benefit of taking action on the Green Ribbon pillars includes improved student and staff health and productivity. Reducing environmental impacts often has the co-benefit of health improvements (i.e., decreasing emissions means reducing on-site pollution, reduced solid and hazardous waste production reduces exposure to pollutants, etc.). The Green Ribbon program also prioritizes whole child health, focusing on nutrition, outdoor physical health, counseling, and reduced exposure to toxins.</p> <p>In addition to physical health improvements, taking action to achieve the Green Ribbon awards can have positive mental health outcomes. Anxiety around climate change has been on the rise in youth and can lead to depression and other mental health issues. To reduce the feelings of depression and helplessness associated with climate or eco-anxiety, students must not only learn about the causes of the environmental and climate crisis and potential solutions but also be allowed to take action and be in spaces with adults who care about, support, and are committed to environmental and climate action. <i>Learn more about climate anxiety and how to address eco and climate anxiety with trauma-informed practices <a href="#">here</a>.</i></p>
<b>Recognition and Networking with Other Green School Communities</b>	Applicants who seek Green Ribbon recognition will gain valuable access to resources, best practices, and a network of sustainability leaders who can support and amplify their sustainability initiatives. Earning the award brings significant recognition at the state level and opens the door to potential national accolades through the Federal Green Ribbon Program. This recognition elevates the school's profile as a leader in sustainability, positioning it as a model for other institutions and attracting positive attention from the broader community.

## WHAT RESOURCES EXIST FOR GETTING STARTED WITH GREEN RIBBON?

There are several great resources for getting started with the Green Ribbon Program:

- [California Environmental Literacy Initiative \(CAELI\) Green Ribbon Resources Page](#): This website is a project of CAELI's [Taking Green Ribbon to Scale Campaign](#). The website provides resources for taking action on the Green Ribbon Pillars and for a successful application.
- [CA Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools Webpage](#): This page includes access to the Green Ribbon application interest form, resources for applying, and past achievers.
- [U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Webpage](#): This page includes information on the Federal Green Ribbon program.

## HOW CAN TEN STRANDS SUPPORT YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY ACHIEVE GREEN RIBBON SUCCESS?

Ten Strands can provide Green Ribbon technical assistance services ranging from consultative services and coaching to customized project management. School communities may choose to

engage in all of the Green Ribbon services below, getting support from start to finish, or engage in services for one or more of the phases below.

Phases	Description of Activities
<b>Organizing for the Green Ribbon Application</b>	<p>During this phase, Ten Strands will support the school community (site, district, or County Office of Education (COE)) to identify a Green Ribbon Project Leader who will work closely with Ten Strands in each phase of the project, and serve as the “Lead Applicant” during the application process. The Lead Applicant will get permission from the Principal (for site) or Superintendent (for district or COE) to apply (note this administrator becomes “<i>Lead Administrator in the application</i>”).</p> <p>Ten Strands will also work closely with the Lead Applicant to develop a customized application project management organizer (see example <a href="#">here</a>), which outlines each section of the application and identifies key collaborators that will be involved. Ten Strands will then work with the Lead Applicant to co-host a kick-off meeting with application collaborators outlining the Green Ribbon process, internal goals, and how each collaborator will be involved.</p>
<b>Data Gathering for the Application</b>	<p>During this phase, the Ten Strands technical assistance team and Lead Applicant work together to gather data for each pillar of the application through various strategies, such as reviewing district and site-level documents (master plan, LCAP, SARC, etc.), utility bill data, interviews with key collaborators, focus groups, surveys, site walks, etc.</p>
<b>Writing and Submitting the Application</b>	<p>Ten Strands drafts the application responses based on the information from the data-gathering phase. Then, Ten Strands works with the Lead Applicant and other collaborators to review each section of the application with sample rubrics and support the Lead Applicant in submitting the final application. See <a href="#">rubric resources and sample applications here</a>.</p>
<b>Post Application Summary and Communication</b>	<p>Once the application has been submitted, Ten Strands will work with the Lead Applicant to complete a summary of highlights, concerns, and next steps based on key findings from the application. The summary can be used by the Lead Applicant in a presentation to key decision makers such as a District Leadership Team or Board of Education and can be used to communicate the completion of the project when thanking key collaborators for their contributions.</p> <p>Ten Strands will also provide support for communicating award success through different strategies, such as articles, press releases, video interviews, board presentations, etc.</p>

Fees for Ten Strands technical assistance services range from \$85 - \$235 an hour, depending on the service and the staff member providing it. Services and timelines are flexible and can be adapted to meet specific district needs.

For more information and to work with Ten Strands for Green Ribbon Technical Assistance, please contact Andra Yeghoian at [ayeghoian@tenstrands.org](mailto:ayeghoian@tenstrands.org).