

AF&PA's 2025 Sustainability Awards Program Rules

To showcase the industry's continuing commitment to sustainability, the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) recognizes excellence in sustainable practices in the United States (U.S.) pulp, paper, packaging, and wood products manufacturing industry through its annual Sustainability Awards Program.

Our Sustainability Awards Program includes three categories: 1) Leadership in Sustainability, 2) Innovation in Sustainability and 3) Diversity Equity and Inclusion.

Entries are accepted annually and awarded based on the quality of submissions.

Leadership in Sustainability Awards

The Leadership in Sustainability Awards recognize members' outstanding contributions toward meeting the industry's five *Better Practices, Better Planet 2030* goals through projects or programs. Some years an award for a given goal subcategory is not merited.

Applications will be available for the following five subcategories:

- **Safety:** Recognizes a member project or program that prevents serious injuries and fatalities (SIFs), consistent with the AF&PA Board's approval of a SIF program for the industry at its November 9, 2018, meeting.
- **Resilient U.S. Forests:** Recognizes a member project or program that enhances the diverse values of forests, such as water, carbon, biodiversity, recreation, and forest products.
- **Circular Value Chain:** Recognizes a member project or program that significantly increased the production of renewable and recyclable products.
- **Greenhouse Gas Reduction:** Recognizes a member project or program that significantly reduced greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Sustainable Water Management:** Recognizes a member project or program that advances sustainable water management within a local context.

The Innovation in Sustainability Award

AF&PA recognizes the scope of sustainability is broad and members develop innovative products, programs and projects that add to the industry's sustainability advancements. To recognize efforts not captured within the industry's established sustainability goals, we have an Innovation in Sustainability award. For example, products can receive awards if they are the first of their kind and create an entirely new market or are manufactured through an innovative manufacturing process. Simply increasing an attribute of an existing product (e.g., the brightness or minimal increases in recycled content) would not qualify.

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Diversity Equity and Inclusion Award

AF&PA is committed to positively impacting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) while also advancing the essential role the industry has in the local, regional, and national economies. AF&PA's DE&I Award recognizes members' efforts that increase economic and social equity and inclusion opportunities and support career development and advancement opportunities.

Recognition

Award winners will be publicly recognized during the annual AF&PA Presidents Forum on November 13 and 14, 2025 in Miami, Florida. They will receive an award plaque suitable for prominent display. AF&PA will coordinate publicizing the awards with the award winners. Announcements of the award winners and their respective projects or programs will be promoted by AF&PA through the AF&PA website, written communications – such as press releases, guest blogs and newsletters and social media. Additionally, AF&PA promotes winning projects in AF&PA's biennial Sustainability Reports.

Award winners may use the AF&PA Sustainability Award Winner icon on their company's website, printed customer materials, social media accounts and in presentations and the company's email signature in accordance with the terms and conditions of use. A company representative will be required to sign the terms and conditions of use and return to it to AF&PA before the logo can be used on company materials.

Selection Factors

- Originality
- Innovation
- Effect on the forest products industry (i.e., success is replicable)
- Effect on community or customer base
- Communication

Awards are given annually for each category or subcategory, depending on the quality and merit of the submissions. For additional information on the selection factors, see judging rubric.

Eligibility

- Any AF&PA company may apply for an award.
- All applications must be on behalf of the company and not individual employees. However, an applicant may include names of individuals and/or departments, divisions, etc., as part of the entry.
- Applicants may submit as many entries as they wish across the sustainability categories and subcategories. However, each such entry must be treated as a separate application.

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Entries may be made for any U.S.-based facility or applicant program that includes the U.S., regardless of the location of the applicant's headquarters.

Entrance Criteria

The Entry Form includes several questions that will help an applicant determine if it has a qualified entry. The only additional general criteria for entering are as follows:

- We recognize that applicants are undertaking sustainability projects or programs that span many years. To qualify for an award, a significant event in the implementation of the project or program should have occurred within the past two years. We recommend that the project submission reflects a demonstration of results, not just a plan.
- A multi-year project or program can win only one award for that project or program.
- The achievement must be one that goes beyond the requirements of federal, state, or local regulations.

Judging

The impartial judging committee will consist of a diverse panel of industry and non-industry experts. Judges likely will include representatives from federal agencies, non-profits, customers, and representatives familiar with the industry.

Format of Entry - Please Complete Applications Fully and Answer All Questions

The initial application on the official entry form requires:

- Contact information
- The title of your project
- A 200-word abstract
- A single PDF document containing
 - Summary: Describe how your product or project is innovative and advances our *Better Practices, Better Planet 2030* initiative.
 - Submissions for products should describe if they are the first of their kind and create an entirely new market or if they are manufactured through an innovative manufacturing process.
 - Industry Relevance: Describe how the product/project impacts the forest products industry and how can others replicate success in their own organizations.
 - Cost-Benefit Analysis: Identify the quantitative and qualitative benefits and costs of the product/project.
 - Stakeholder Impact: Detail the impact of the product/project on the local community or respective customer base.
 - Communication: Describe how success of the product/project was communicated to internal and external stakeholders.

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- Up to 4 photos. These could be a photograph, line drawing, illustration of the project or a sample of the product.
- Applicants progressing to the second round may be requested to provide more detailed information.

Submitting Your Entry

- Entries will not be returned and will become the property of AF&PA's Sustainability Awards program.
- The AF&PA Sustainability Awards program [may exercise publicity, publication, advertising and exhibition rights to all entries.](#)

All entries should be completed via the online award application form located in the Sustainability [section of the website.](#)

- Entries should be submitted in PDF format.
- You will be prompted to login to access this page. If you experience issues logging in, please contact webmaster@afandpa.org

The last day for applications is May 2, 2025

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