

Environmental Excellence Awards

The Supporting Statement

Introduction:

In 1995, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) established the biennial Environmental Excellence Awards to recognize partners, projects, and processes across the United States that use FHWA funding sources to go beyond environmental compliance and achieve environmental excellence. The Environmental Excellence Awards also recognize partners, projects, and processes that exemplify innovation and commitment to both the natural and human environment. Awardees must make an outstanding contribution that goes beyond traditional transportation projects and encourages environmental stewardship and partnerships to achieve a truly multi-faceted, environmentally-sensitive transportation solution that maintains or improves quality of life.

Part A. Justification.

1. Circumstances that make collection of information necessary:

Information collection for FHWA's Environmental Excellence Awards supports the agency's mission to "improve mobility on our Nation's highways through national leadership, innovation, and program delivery."¹ The Awards also exemplify key goals of the U.S. Department of Transportation, including accelerated project delivery and advancing a multi-model transportation system that provides connectivity for all users. The awards program highlights projects that reflect these goals in their processes and end results and encourages sharing of innovative practices. Information collection for the Environmental Excellence Awards supports program delivery that demonstrates effective and innovative implementation of federal directives from Congress, Administration priorities and executive orders, and Judicial decisions.

The Environmental Excellence Awards Program categorizes award recipients and nominations under the following topic areas: Organization and Process Innovation, Natural Environment, and Human Environment. Each topic area contains multiple categories. Categories under the Organization and Process Innovation topic area include: Accelerating Project Delivery; Collaboration and Partnership; Educational and Training Programs; Environmental Leadership; Environmental Research; and Programmatic Agreements. Categories under the Natural Environment topic area include: Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions; Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience; Ecosystems, Habitat, and Wildlife; Roadside Resource Management and Maintenance; and Wetlands, Watersheds, and Water Quality. Categories under the Human Environment topic area include: Community Considerations in Transportation Improvements; Nonmotorized and Multimodal Transportation; Demonstrated Advances in Nondiscrimination, Including Environmental Justice; Cultural and Historical Resources; and Context Sensitive Solutions. These categories help transportation stakeholders obtain information about the selected projects so that they can learn more about the projects and potentially bring these examples or similar efforts into their own agency practices.

2. How, by whom, and for what purpose is the information used:

FHWA accepts nominations for the Environmental Excellence Awards for any project, process, group, or individuals involved in a project or process that has used FHWA funding sources to make an outstanding contribution to transportation and the environment. Anyone may submit a nomination. A panel of judges with various backgrounds, disciplines, and expertise will review the applications and select the winning entries. FHWA organizes a ceremony to recognize award

¹ FHWA Mission: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/about/vmcv.cfm>

recipients. Information about the award recipients will be available on FHWA's Environmental Excellence Awards website and in a published document.

The purpose of the Environmental Excellence Awards Program is to honor innovative projects, including those that support the use of renewable energy sources and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, preserve historical and cultural sites while improving transportation infrastructure across the country, and involve partners and the public to consider ecological issues early in the transportation planning process and, thereby, expedite the environmental review process. The Program is open to nominations by any individual or agency across all levels of staffing, agencies, and the public.

The recipients of the Environmental Excellence Awards demonstrate strong commitment to environmentally-sensitive solutions and to integrating environmental considerations into transportation and infrastructure projects. These recipients serve as effective examples for other agencies or individuals looking to promote environmental excellence in their work. The data gathered and information collected as part of the Environmental Excellence Awards Program identify outstanding efforts occurring nationwide that go beyond traditional transportation practices and demonstrate environmental excellence to showcase these examples as best practices and products for other practitioners and interested parties.

3. Extent of automated information collection:

The Environmental Excellence Awards Program supports the use of an online submission form that will be available via the FHWA Environmental Review Toolkit website. This submission form will allow prospective applicants to nominate individuals, projects, or processes. FHWA expects the estimated completion of each application by respondents to be approximately 8 hours. All information is to be submitted electronically. Supporting documentation is optional.

4. Efforts to identify duplication:

The biennial Environmental Excellence Awards Program facilitates the submittal of current practices that go beyond traditional transportation projects and encourage environmental stewardship and partnerships. The Environmental Excellence Awards is unique among Federal awards programs, as it places a significant emphasis on the natural and human environment and on the ways that initiatives protect and enhance the environment and quality of life. At the same time they build partnerships; address environmental challenges through innovative solutions; and encourage interagency, tribal government, and public coordination.

5. Efforts to minimize the burden on small businesses:

FHWA intends for an electronic application and submission process. No special equipment is required to apply. The completion and submission of applications for the Environmental Excellence Awards will take place online via an FHWA secure website.

6. Impact of less frequent collection of information:

The biennial Environmental Excellence Awards Program facilitates the submittal of current, innovative practices. If the program were less frequent, FHWA may miss opportunities to highlight significant partners, projects, or processes that use FHWA funding sources to achieve environmental excellence.

7. Special circumstances:

There are no special circumstances associated with this information collection.

8. Compliance with 5 CFR 1320.8:

The FHWA published a Notice of Request for Comments on May 3, 2019 (84 FR 19153), which solicited public comments regarding this information collection requirement. No comments regarding this information collection were received.

9. Payments or gifts to respondents:

There are no payments of gifts being offered to respondents as part of this information collection effort.

10. Assurance of confidentiality:

We do not assure any confidentiality of responses to this information collection effort.

11. Justification for collection of sensitive information:

We are not collecting any sensitive information as part of this information collection effort.

12. Estimate of burden hours for information requested:

FHWA anticipates that it will take eight (8) hours per respondent per application to complete each of the 150 Environmental Excellence Award nomination applications that will be submitted biennially. There will be 1200 hours each collection year.

FHWA estimates that the average salary of the respondent, typically an Urban/Regional Planner (occupation code 19-3051; <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes193051.htm>) has a median hourly wage of \$46.91 (hourly salary of \$36.65 weighted with a 28 percent benefits adjustment of \$10.26) according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

It is estimated to take respondents a total of 1200 hours to submit nominations in a total cost of \$59,892.

8 hours × 150 Nomination Applications (respondents) = 1200 hours each collection year.

Note: OMB approvals are giving in 3 year cycles. There will be 2 collections during this approval, which equal 2400 burden hours. The 3-year burden hour annual average will be 800 hours (2400 hours divided by 3 years). This will be adjusted when it is renewed in 3 years.

13. Estimate of total annual costs to respondents:

There will not be any cost to the respondents.

14. Estimate of cost to the Federal government:

FHWA anticipates that the projected cost estimate to the Federal government is \$18,366.40 This cost estimate assumes an FHWA Headquarters GS-13 hourly staff salary of \$44.15 and 416 hours (2,080 * 20% Staff Time) every other year dedicated to reviewing, processing, and managing the Environmental Excellence Awards Program.

15. Explanation of program changes or adjustments:

As with the previous Environmental Excellence Awards, the 2017 and 2019 award cycles integrate elements and themes of FHWA's former Exemplary Ecosystem Initiatives (EEI) and Exemplary Human Environment Initiatives (EHEI) programs. The 2017 and 2019 Environmental Excellence Awards Program will request nominations for awards according to similar categories as the previous Environmental Excellence Awards Program.

16. Publication of results of data collection:

FHWA will publish the results of the Environmental Excellence Awards on its Environmental Excellence Awards website. FHWA will also produce a document that recognizes the recipients and describes the partners, projects, and processes that were selected as winners. Winners will also be announced and recognized at an awards ceremony.

17. Approval for not displaying the expiration date of OMB approval:

Approval for not displaying the expiration date is not being requested.

18. Exceptions to certification statement:

No exceptions to the certification statement are being requested.