



**THE ORIGINAL GREEN
SEAL OF APPROVAL
SINCE 1989**

GS-20

Green Seal™ Standard for Environmental Innovation

Recognition for Innovation and Environmental Benefits

Green Seal believes that environmentally innovative approaches and breakthrough technologies are necessary to further our mission: increasing the sustainability of our economy. With this pioneering standard, GS-20, we are now able to provide independent verification for environmental benefits and innovations through credible, science-based certification.

In the past, Green Seal was unable to respond to requests for certification of products and services that were not covered by our existing standards. With GS-20, Green Seal is now able to verify that these products, services, processes, and technologies (collectively referred to as "initiatives") provide significant environmental benefits compared to mainstream alternatives. Like all other Green Seal standards, this verification addresses multiple environmental attributes across key life-cycle stages. GS-20 establishes two forms of recognition for environmental benefits:



- **Certification for innovative initiatives, and**
- **Validation of environmental benefits for non-innovative initiatives.**

The Scope of GS-20

This standard covers commercially available initiatives that deliver significant environmental benefits over mainstream alternatives that provide the same function. The scope excludes initiatives that are covered by existing Green Seal standards or by other Type I ecolabels available in the United States.

Key Areas Addressed

Initiatives are evaluated for

- **Functional Performance.**
- **Protection of Human Health and the Environment.**
- **Innovation (if seeking full certification).**

This evaluation compares the initiative with mainstream alternatives, considering multiple environmental attributes across key life-cycle stages, and verifying that it provides significant environmental benefits compared to mainstream alternatives. A feasible, cost-effective approach is used as an alternative to costly and complex formal life cycle analyses (LCAs). GS-20 recognizes two types of environmental benefits:

- **Case A:** Significant environmental improvements for a baseline level of performance.
- **Case B:** Significant improvement in performance for a baseline level of environmental impact.

Demonstrating Functional Performance

Applicants must submit performance evaluation data for the initiative:

- **Case A** – demonstrating that the performance is equivalent to others in its class.
- **Case B** – demonstrating that the performance is significantly better than others in its class.

**SUSTAINABILITY
LEADERSHIP STANDARDS**



**INDEPENDENT
THIRD-PARTY
CERTIFICATION**



**SUSTAINABILITY
RESEARCH &
LIFE CYCLE ANALYSIS**



**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
FOR INSTITUTIONAL
GREENING**



Demonstrating Health and Environmental Benefits

Applicants must submit data for multiple environmental attributes at key life-cycle stages of the initiative. These must be compared to other products that provide the same function. The comparison must demonstrate:

- **Case A** – Significant benefits for human health and the environment.
- **Case B** – Equivalent impacts on human health and the environment.

Environmental benefits may include:

- Improved technical or environmental efficiency
- Beneficial alternatives to an existing practice
- Converting waste to a resource
- Combining technologies or processes in an innovative way
- Approaches that are unusual for the market category and provide improved performance or increased environmental value.

Demonstrating Environmental Innovation — An Additional Requirement for Certification

Applicants must submit information demonstrating that the initiative is not widely implemented in that market. Applicants must also demonstrate that the initiative delivers significant environmental achievements in at least one of the areas of environmental benefits listed above.

Evaluation Process

Green Seal will review all information submitted by the applicant and evaluate the initiative in a two-stage process:

Stage I – A comparison of the initiative to mainstream offerings which provide the same function. Green Seal will establish leadership requirements for the relevant category and publish them for public comment. Each applicant will then have the option to review these requirements and decide whether to apply for recognition under GS-20.

Stage II – A verification of the initiative's significant environmental benefits. The applicant will submit any additionally required information and Green Seal will evaluate the initiative against the requirements established in Stage I.

Benefits of Recognition

Consumers are increasingly demanding safer, environmentally preferable options. GS-20's independent review makes it quick and simple for purchasers to identify environmental leadership in the marketplace.

Achieving certification or validation to GS-20 also offers many other opportunities:

- Clearly and confidently market your initiative as an industry leader
- Highlight your initiative as a Green Product That Works
- Offer clients details of your initiative's environmental benefits

Recognition through GS-20 shines a spotlight on your innovation and informs consumers about the environmental benefits of your initiative.

This is only a summary of the standard.

The full standard is available for free download at greenseal.org/gs20

For more information visit: greenseal.org, call: 202.872.6400 or email: greenseal@greenseal.org