



PROGRAM APPLICATION

WHAT IS ADVENTURE GREEN ALASKA?

Adventure Green Alaska (AGA) is a voluntary certification program for tourism businesses operating in Alaska that meet standards of economic, environmental, and social sustainability. AGA encourages tourism businesses to evaluate their operations and determine whether they use — or could be using — best management practices. Qualifying at one of the three stepped levels of certification earns businesses the right to use the AGA label and participate in AGA promotional opportunities. AGA also assists non-qualifying tourism businesses to improve their operations so they may become eligible for the sustainable tourism label.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF ADVENTURE GREEN ALASKA

- AGA is entirely voluntary.
- AGA is simple and affordable.
- AGA is user-friendly and collaborative.
- AGA certification provides tangible marketing benefits.
- AGA increases traveler awareness of sustainable business practices.
- AGA leads to measurable improvements in tourism business practices.
- AGA applies statewide.
- AGA accepts applications from all tourism businesses operating in Alaska.

HOW DOES THE PROCESS WORK?

Adventure Green Alaska offers three levels of certification:

Bronze level - Meets basic standards of sustainability.

Silver level - Meets basic standards and shows a commitment to a higher level of sustainability.

Gold level - A business reaching this level is a leader in the tourism industry. This business may implement new technology, develop innovative sustainability practices, or help partner businesses implement sustainable practices.

This three-level approach allows a wider range of businesses to apply to AGA, enter at an appropriate level, and provides an incentive for businesses to continually improve the way in which they operate.

BASIC CRITERIA

Businesses seeking AGA certification must meet the program’s minimum standards of quality, safety, and sustainability.

- The business complies with U.S. environmental, consumer protection, and labor laws while operating within the State of Alaska or its territorial waters.
- The business has a two-year operating history in Alaska.
- The business is a member of a tourism or community trade association (the Alaska Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Association, convention & visitors bureau, Sustainable Travel International, etc.).

5-STEP APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Complete the general information section of the application.
2. Check that your business complies with AGA’s three basic criteria.
3. Provide the names and contact information for two references who can verify the quality, stability, and sustainability of your business.
4. Include application fee. Certification is valid for one year from the date of issuance. The certification fee pays for the administration and marketing costs of certification. It is based on the business's number of full time equivalent (FTE) employees. (A permanent employee working full time is 1 FTE. Employees working half time or for only half the year should be counted as .5 FTEs.) Please contact AGA for more information.

1 to 2 FTEs	\$100
3 to 5 FTEs	\$150
6 to 10 FTEs	\$300
11 to 20 FTEs	\$400
21 to 50 FTEs	\$500
Over 50 FTEs	\$1,000

5. Complete the sustainability application. The questions are arranged in four subject categories and an applicant can earn up to 100 points in each category. The application also contains an extra credit section at the end of each category. Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the extra credit section to describe additional sustainable business strategies being used that aren’t captured by the application’s standard questions. Extra credit points count toward an applicant’s final certification level. The certification level (Gold, Silver, or Bronze) depends on the total number of points earned. Applicants who earn 360 or more points are eligible for Gold level certification; applicants who earn 320 or more points are eligible for Silver level certification; and applicants who earn 280 or more points are eligible for Bronze level certification.

The AGA program administrator assists businesses with the application process, reviews completed applications, and makes recommendations to the AGA board of directors at regularly scheduled meetings. The board of directors approves the businesses that receive certification. Businesses may submit a written request for reconsideration to the AGA board of directors within 10 days of a final decision.

MONITORING, COMPLIANCE, AND RENEWAL

AGA will monitor program compliance through random spot checks and customer comments. A condition of certification is your agreement to allow site visits at the discretion of the AGA program administrator or board of directors. Additionally, AGA will solicit customer comments throughout the certification period. Although the certification will be awarded for one year, AGA asks that businesses provide notice of any significant changes or deviations from the initial application. Application materials may be posted on the AGA website. If deficiencies are reported, AGA will offer follow-up assistance to correct them. Consistent failure to make any changes will result in the removal of the business from the program. All AGA promotional materials must be returned and the business will refrain from using any AGA information and materials.

AGA is committed to continual improvements and will periodically review and revise the sustainability standards and program. A business seeking renewal will be evaluated against the most current sustainability standards.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ADVENTURE GREEN ALASKA?

Business Benefits

- Use of AGA logo
- Inclusion in AGA promotional materials and events
- Recognition on the Adventure Green Alaska and Alaska Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Association websites
- Media exposure and enhanced marketing opportunities
- Technical assistance and training
- Connections to existing national and international groups and certification models

Additional Benefits

- Involvement in Alaska's first certification program for the tourism industry
- Enhanced conservation ethic in Alaska's tourism industry
- Increased growth and quality of eco-friendly tourism in Alaska and worldwide
- Support for local businesses and communities
- Support for the natural environment, history, and culture of people living in Alaska

WHY CERTIFY "SUSTAINABLE" TOURISM BUSINESSES?

Tourism is becoming one of the world's largest industries and Alaska is in a unique position to benefit. Alaska will see tourism play an increasingly dominant role in economic growth and development. As tourism continues to become an even more important part of the state economy, so too will the need to protect the very things those tourists come to see: mountains, glaciers, forests, oceans, wildlife, and authentic communities. The challenge, then, will be to manage tourism development and growth so that tourism continues to provide benefits to both urban and remote communities while conserving Alaska's great resources.

In other tourism destinations, particularly outside the United States, concerned tourism businesses and travelers have addressed this challenge by promoting the concept of sustainable tourism, or "ecotourism." Sustainable tourism may be defined as *travel to natural areas that is beneficial to local economies, respectful of the environment, and sensitive to indigenous cultures.*

Sustainable tourism has enjoyed a healthy increase in public awareness and popularity. However, in practice it has sometimes become lost among other forms of tourism and has been unable to carve out more than a small share of the global tourism market. Without a marketing edge, or significant marketing resources, sustainable businesses, often smaller-sized businesses, do not always get public recognition for their actions. AGA encourages travelers to patronize sustainable businesses and provides an economic incentive for other businesses to improve their operations.

AGA standards, criteria, and the application process were developed with partners such as Alaska Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Association business members, conservation group representatives, and tourism consultants.

CONTACT US

Completed applications and registration fees should be mailed to:

Adventure Green Alaska
2207 Spenard Road, Suite 201
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

For questions, call AGA at 907-258-3171 or email info@awrta.org.