

PLAY TO ZERO



Green Sports Alliance | USGBC | Arc Skoru

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Introduction

This document describes the components of the **Play to Zero™** program, including participation requirements, evaluation criteria, and opportunities for recognition. Play to Zero applies to sports venues, teams, leagues, conferences, and related organizations. The program seeks to accelerate the transition toward net zero energy, water, and waste operations for the sporting industry. To that end, Play to Zero provides a performance-based framework with opportunities for all market participants to unite, improve, and celebrate leadership.

Program Elements

Play to Zero is open to everyone in the sports industry - venues, teams, organizations, leagues, corporate partners, and allies. There are five steps to participation:

1. Sign up for free as a Green Sports Alliance member - [learn more about membership](#).
2. Commit to improve sustainability over time.
3. Commit to measuring performance.
4. Apply for recognition as a Player, Leader, or Champion.
5. Use the recognition and support to engage fans and partners.

That's it. Visit PlayToZero.org to get started. Email analytics@greensportsalliance.org for more information.

Recognition

Play to Zero participants can earn annual recognition in more than a dozen categories:

1. Everyone starts as a **Player** by designating leadership, committing to improvement, and measuring performance.
2. Venues and organizations can level-up by creating a **net zero roadmap** and improving performance: $\geq 30\%$ for **Leader** and $\geq 50\%$ for **Champion**.
- 3.

All recognition is based on improvement measured with data in [Arc](#) - the performance scoring platform supporting the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED rating system.

	Player		
	+ Leadership + Commitment to improvement + Commitment to measurement		
	Energy	Water	Waste
	+ Roadmap		
Leader	$\geq 30\%$ reduction in energy and/or GHG emissions	$\geq 30\%$ reduction in potable water consumption	$\geq 30\%$ solid waste diversion
Champion	$\geq 50\%$ reduction in energy and/or GHG emissions Net zero energy and/or GHG emissions	$\geq 50\%$ reduction in potable water use Net zero potable water use	$\geq 50\%$ solid waste diversion Net zero waste

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Player

Intent

Player is the entry point for Play to Zero. The Player designation recognizes teams, leagues, and organizations that have taken clear steps to begin their journey to net zero operations.

Opportunity

Player recognition is available to any Green Sports Alliance member. Players must document:

1. **Leadership:**
 - a. **Documentation:** Affirmation on organizational letterhead or equivalent stating the name(s) and email(s) of the sustainability leader or sustainability team members.

2. **Commitment to improve performance:**
 - a. **Documentation:** Affirmation on organizational letterhead or equivalent stating the commitment to improve specific areas of performance over time. This commitment will not be made public.

3. **Commitment to performance measurement:**
 - a. **Documentation:** Creation of at least one project in Arc and submission of data in at least one performance category. This commitment will not be made public.

There is no fee for [GSA members](#). Members simply send these three pieces of documentation to analytics@greensportsalliance.org. They can be consolidated into a single letter or equivalent document.

When the information is accepted, the prospective Player will receive a media kit, including a Player certificate, Play to Zero logo, and supporting materials. The Play to Zero team will celebrate the achievement through recognition on social media and other channels.

Program Elements

Venues, teams, leagues, conferences, and other organizations receive Leader and Champion recognition based on two elements:

1. **Roadmap**
2. **Performance**

These combine to demonstrate both the capability for action and real-world outcomes.

Roadmap

Play to Zero recognizes organizations that establish a credible **roadmap** to measure and improve performance. Leader or Champion recognition requires a roadmap covering management, execution, and performance. Essential elements of a roadmap include:

1. **Leadership:** The organization has designated an individual or group with responsibility for its conservation and resource protection strategy.
2. **Target:** The organization has committed to or established a quantitative conservation or management target.
3. **Assessment:** The organization understands its current operating performance and circumstances (e.g., a greenhouse gas inventory or equivalent for other issues)
4. **Actions:** The organization understands where and how it will act to achieve its performance targets.
5. **Measurement:** The organization has a specific, resourced-plan to measure relevant aspects of operational performance (e.g., energy, water, waste).

Venues or organizations pursuing Leader or Champion awards must document these five elements and submit information to analytics@greensportsalliance.org The submittal may be

a single document or multiple items. The transmittal email should clearly indicate how to find evidence for each element.

Energy Performance

Intent

Play to Zero Leader and Champion recognition for energy celebrate actions taken to increase the use of clean energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in venues, across organizations, and in communities.

Criteria

This Energy category provides participants with multiple opportunities for recognition:

	Venue	Organization
Player	Prerequisite for Leader and Champion	
Leader	Management + ≥30% net reduction in <i>GHG emissions</i>	
Champion	Management + ≥50% net reduction in <i>GHG emissions</i>	

The reductions listed above may be achieved through any combination of

- Energy efficiency
- Energy supply
- Energy or emissions offsets

Play to Zero recommends the use of a 1-year baseline and a 1-year reporting period. Alternative comparisons can be proposed and justified (e.g., season-to-season).

Play to Zero recognizes any credible, well-documented baseline. This can be a “business-as-usual” performance level (such as energy or emissions intensities derived from the U.S. Department of Energy Commercial Building Energy Consumption Survey) or improvement over time (e.g., 2019 vs. 2021).

Organizations encompass a wide range of entities. For example, a league is an organization. Its members may include athletic departments, individual teams, and specific venues. These entities can participate collectively or individually.

Community Impact

Venues and organizations are encouraged to achieve their energy goals through engagement and investment in their communities.

Play to Zero provides additional recognition for high-impact community programs. These programs generate “double” benefits for teams, counting toward net energy and emissions improvement and recognition as a Community Leader or Champion.

Community programs may include:

- Direct investment in projects such as low-income housing or renewable energy generation within their community (e.g., engaged offsets).
- Fan-engagement strategies (e.g., behavioral change campaigns).
- Other creative ideas that yield demonstrable impacts on energy and emissions.

	Community
Player	Required
Leader	Impact ≥30% of annual energy use or GHG emissions
Champion	Impact ≥50% of annual energy use or GHG emissions

Water Performance

Intent

Play to Zero Leader and Champion recognition for water celebrate action to promote water conservation, water restoration, and water resource management in sporting venues and across organizations.

Criteria

The Water category provides participants with multiple opportunities for recognition:

	Venue	Organization
Player	Required	
Leader	Management + ≥30% net reduction in potable water use	
Champion	Management + ≥50% net reduction in potable water use	

The reductions listed above may be achieved through any combination of

- Water conservation
- Water supply
- Water restoration credits

Play to Zero recommends the use of a 1-year baseline and a 1-year reporting period. Alternative comparison can be proposed and justified (e.g., season-to-season).

Play to Zero recognizes any credible, well-documented baseline. This can be a “business-as-usual” performance level (such as water or water use intensities based on code-compliance or a measured performance benchmark) or improvement over time (e.g., 2019 vs. 2021).

Community Impact

Venues and organizations are encouraged to achieve their water management goals through engagement and investment in their communities.

Play to Zero provides additional recognition for high-impact community programs. These programs generate “double” benefits for teams, counting toward net water management targets and recognition as a Community Leader or Champion.

Community programs may include:

- Direct investment in projects such as low-income housing or verified water resource restoration projects (e.g., see examples from [BEF](#)).
- Fan-engagement strategies (e.g., behavioral interventions).
- Other creative ideas that yield demonstrable impacts on water conservation.

	Community
Player	Required
Leader	Impact ≥30% of annual potable water use
Champion	Impact ≥50% of annual potable water use

Waste Performance

Intent

Play to Zero Leader and Champion recognition for waste celebrate action to reduce waste generation and promote waste diversion in sporting venues and across organizations.

Criteria

The Waste category provides participants with multiple opportunities for recognition:

	Venue	Organization
Player	Required	
Leader	Management + ≥30% waste diversion	
Champion	Management + ≥50% waste diversion	

The reductions listed above may be achieved through any combination of:

1. Reduction in waste generation
2. Increase in material reuse
3. Increase in diversion of materials from landfill

All diversion is included for Leader and Champion recognition. Incinerated waste does not contribute to diversion rate for net zero recognition.

Play to Zero recommends the use of a 1-year baseline and a 1-year reporting period. Alternative comparison can be proposed and justified (e.g., season-to-season).

Play to Zero recognizes any credible, well-documented baseline. This can be a “business-as-usual” performance level (such as regional average diversion rates) or improvement over time (e.g., 2019 vs. 2021).

Community Impact

Venues and organizations are encouraged to achieve their waste management goals through engagement and investment in their communities.

Play to Zero provides additional recognition for high-impact community programs. These programs generate “double” benefits for teams, counting toward zero waste management targets and recognition as a Community Leader or Champion.

Community programs may include:

- Direct investment in projects such as local circularity infrastructure or litter cleanup and beautification projects.
- Fan-engagement strategies (e.g., behavioral interventions).
- Other creative ideas that yield demonstrable impacts on zero waste systems.

	Community
Player	Required
Leader	Impact ≥30% of annual waste generation
Champion	Impact ≥50% of annual waste generation

About

Play to Zero is led by the [Green Sports Alliance](#) in partnership with [Arc Skoru](#), part of the [U.S. Green Building Council](#) family of organizations.

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