

FORM BEST PRACTICES CONTEST 2026

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Country.....China

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Name project

Led the drafting of the *Technical Specification for Gross Ecosystem Product (GEP) Accounting*.

Category Certification Criteria: mark the category of your project

- ☐ Energy and environmental policies (politiche energetiche e ambientali);
- ☐ Infrastructure policies (politiche infrastrutturali);
- ☐ Quality of urban life policies (politiche per la qualità urbana);
- ☐ Agricultural, touristic and artisan policies (politiche agricole, turistiche, artigianali);
- ☐ Policies for hospitality, awareness and training (politiche per l'ospitalità, la consapevolezza e la formazione);
- ☐ Social cohesion (coesione sociale).

Summary project

Gross Ecosystem Product (GEP) refers to the total value of products and services generated by an ecosystem within a given area over a specific period. It represents the aggregate economic value of the goods and services that ecosystems provide for human well-being.

GEP accounting provides a quantitative basis for **ecological compensation** and **green development performance assessment**, supporting the coordinated advancement of ecological protection and economic development.

Goal project

GEP accounting in Gaochun District delivers value across five dimensions:

Quantifying ecological value — converting mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes, and grasslands into quantifiable economic value.

Advancing the "Two Mountains" theory in practice — using GEP to guide policies and industries, enabling the conversion of ecological assets into economic returns.

Establishing an ecological assessment mechanism — Gaochun was the first in China to incorporate GEP into government performance evaluation, incentivizing ecological conservation.

Facilitating the marketization of ecological products — issuing agricultural carbon credits and enabling asset-backed transactions.

Supporting high-quality development — using GEP to inform planning, prioritizing eco-friendly economic growth, and setting a benchmark for Beautiful China.

Result project

Gaochun District has built **China's first county-level GEP accounting system**, comprising 3 primary indicators, 18 secondary indicators, and 728 standards in total. In 2020, its GEP reached **165.6 billion yuan** — 3.4 times its GDP — with an average annual growth rate exceeding 3%. The district pioneered the first **GEP-based ecological loan**, the first **agricultural carbon credit**, and the first **carbon sink insurance policy**, opening financial channels for converting ecological value into monetary returns. It also took the lead in implementing **dual accounting and dual assessment of both GDP and GEP**, covering 17 departments, 8 sub-districts and towns, and 4 industrial parks. Through restoration projects such as the **Gucheng Lake polder-removal-and-lake-return program** and the exploration of a **zero-carbon village model**, Gaochun has achieved the full conversion of ecological products from accounting to monetization — offering a replicable **Gaochun model** for the nation.

Finance (costs and benefits)

Costs:

Gaochun District partnered with Nanjing University, China Jiliang University, and other institutions to establish professional teams for GEP accounting standard research, with an initial investment of approximately **tens of millions of yuan** in research and field surveys. Continuous funding has been allocated to projects including polder removal and lake return, river and lake dredging, ecological restoration, and pollution control. For instance, the **Gucheng Lake polder removal and lake return project** alone required a total investment of approximately **3 billion yuan** to restore the lake's ecological functions. Annually, **several million yuan** is also dedicated to GEP assessment work, covering data collection, analysis, evaluation, and result application.

Benefits:

In 2019, Gaochun's GEP reached **157.57 billion yuan** — 3.4 times its GDP — and exceeded **170 billion yuan** by 2023. Gucheng Lake crabs command a **brand premium** thanks to the district's ecological advantages, with a total output value surpassing **10 billion yuan**. In 2024, **Jiangsu Province's first agricultural carbon credit** was issued, trading over **130 tons of carbon emission reductions**. Eco-tourism and wellness industries are thriving: for example, the agritainment venues in **Lanxi Village, Yaxi** received **1.33 million visitors** annually, with an average household income of **150,000 yuan**. The incorporation of GEP into government performance evaluation has driven the synergy between ecological protection and economic development, enhancing the district's overall competitiveness.

Staff (staff involved and use of time)

Human Resources:

The effort was led by **Professor Zhu Xiaodong's team at Nanjing University**, in collaboration with experts from China Jiliang University and other institutions forming the core research team. The Gaochun District **Bureau of Ecology and Environment**, Bureau of Quality Supervision, Development and Reform Commission, and Bureau of Statistics were involved throughout the process. Each sub-district, town, and industrial park assigned dedicated personnel to support data collection and field surveys.

Timeline:

From initial preparation in 2019 to the release of **China's first county-level GEP accounting standard system** in September 2020, the process took approximately **18 months**. In 2021, research continued to deepen – Gaochun took the lead in drafting **Jiangsu Province's first local GEP accounting standard**, the Technical Specification for Gross Ecosystem Product (GEP) Accounting, which was officially released in **July 2021**.

Additional information (if necessarily)

The Gaochun GEP project has delivered multi-dimensional benefits to local residents, farmers, and business owners.

For residents: Projects such as polder removal and lake return have improved water and air quality. Eco-tourism and organic agriculture have created local employment, while dividends, compensation, and labor opportunities have broadened income sources.

For farmers: Organic rice, crabs, and other products command premiums through carbon credit trading and eco-labeling. In **Hemujiang Village**, households have seen annual income gains of nearly **10,000 yuan**. Ecological farming techniques have optimized production models, and farmers can also access financing through the **"GEP Ecological Value Loan"** – for example, the **Shuicao Aquatic Plant Cooperative** secured a **1 million yuan** loan.

For business owners: Ecological advantages have boosted the appeal of homestays. In **Lanxi Village**, per capita income rose from under **10,000 yuan** to **40,000 yuan**. Enterprises leverage eco-branding to reduce costs and attract investment, while confirmed property rights over woodland and water resources facilitate trading and financing.

Overall, the project has achieved a win-win in ecological and economic returns, enabling shared benefits from green development.

Link website

.....<http://www.chinadevelopment.com.cn/news/zj/2026/05/1994667.shtml>
(if available)

Once filled in this form please send it to: info@cittaslow.net

- Participation Deadline, 19 May 2026 -