

LEED Green Building Certification System

What is LEED?

LEED is a third party certification program and the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings. Developed by the U.S. Green Building Council in 2000 through a consensus based process, LEED serves as a tool for buildings of all types and sizes. LEED certification offers third party validation of a project's green features and verifies that the building is operating exactly the way it was designed to.

What types of buildings can use LEED?

LEED certification is available for all building types including new construction and major renovation; existing buildings; commercial interiors; core and shell; schools and homes. LEED systems for neighborhood development, retail and healthcare are currently pilot testing. To date, there is over 4.5 billion square feet of construction space involved with the LEED system.

How does LEED work?

LEED is a point based system where building projects earn LEED points for satisfying specific green building criteria. Within each of the seven LEED credit categories, projects must satisfy particular prerequisites and earn points.

The five categories include Sustainable Sites (SS), Water Efficiency (WE), Energy and Atmosphere (EA), Materials and Resources (MR) and Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ). An additional category, Innovation in Design (ID), addresses sustainable building expertise as well as design measures not covered under the five environmental categories. The number of points the project earns determines the level of LEED Certification the project receives. LEED certification is available in four progressive levels according to the following scale:

There are 100 base points; 6 possible Innovation in Design and 4 Regional Priority points

Certified 40–49 points

Silver 50–59 points

Gold 60–79 points

Platinum 80 points and above

What are regional credits?

Regional credits are another feature of LEED and acknowledge the importance of local conditions in determining best environmental design and construction practices. LEED projects will be able to earn “bonus points” for implementing green building strategies that address the important environmental issues facing their region. A project can be awarded as many as four extra points, one point each for achieving up to four of the six priority credits. To download a region-by-region list of priority credits, visit www.usgbc.org/leedv3.

How are LEED credits weighted?

The allocation of points is based on strategies that will have greater positive impacts on what matters most – energy efficiency and CO₂ reductions. Each credit was evaluated against a list of 13 environmental impact categories, including climate change, indoor environmental quality, resource depletion and water intake, among many others.

Is LEED training available?

Yes, USGBC offers a variety of LEED instructor-led workshops, online courses and Webinars (live and on-demand). To learn more about USGBC's LEED curriculum, visit www.usgbc.org/education.

Can products be certified under LEED?

No, LEED applies to green building projects. Individual products can contribute to points under the

certification system; LEED criteria are performance-based. In attempting to meet these requirements, LEED practitioners identify products that have desired attributes. However, some LEED criteria do require specific product data as a part of a successful submittal.

How much does it cost to register a project?

The registration fee for a project is \$450 for USGBC members and \$600 for nonmembers.

What is the process for LEED certification?

Certification is now administered by the Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI) through a network of professional, third-party certification bodies. To register a project for LEED certification, visit www.gbci.org.

What is the average LEED certification fee?

LEED certification fees vary by project size but the average certification cost is \$2000.

What is the LEED professional credentialing program?

The LEED professional credentialing program is being managed by GBCI, and includes a multi-faceted credentialing system that ensures that LEED professionals have the latest knowledge and understanding of green building practices and to encourage professionals to maintain and advance their knowledge and expertise.

Under the new program, there are three tiers of excellence for a professional to pursue: LEED Green Associate; LEED AP with specialty; and LEED AP Fellow. To learn more about the tiers and the professional credentialing program, visit www.gbci.org.

Does green building cost more?

No, green buildings do not have to cost a penny more. LEED certified projects to date demonstrate that you can achieve LEED certification and reap its many benefits with a common-sense approach to design with no additional dollars. Depending on your green building strategy and the level of certification your project is targeting, there may be mid- and long-term ROI associated with additional green features that merits an investment in first costs.

What are the benefits of LEED certification?

LEED certification is third-party validation of a building's performance. LEED certified projects blend environmental, economic, and occupant-oriented performance. They cost less to operate and maintain; are energy- and water-efficient; have higher lease-up rates than conventional buildings in their markets; are healthier and safer for occupants; and are a physical demonstration of the values of the organizations that own and occupy them. For more information: www.usgbc.org.