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FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

LEED® for Existing Buildings

What is LEED for Existing Buildings?

LEED for Existing Buildings is a tool for the ongoing operations and maintenance of existing buildings. The rating system identifies and rewards current best practices and provides an outline for building's to use less energy, water and natural resources; improve the indoor environment; and uncover operating inefficiencies. It is one tool within a suite of LEED assessment instruments developed by the USGBC to promote market transformation to sustainable building and operating practices.

What are the benefits of LEED for Existing Buildings?

LEED helps building owners and managers solve building problems, improve building performance, and maintain and improve this performance over time. LEED reduces cost streams associated with building operations, reduces environmental impacts, creates healthier and more productive employee workspaces, and provides public recognition for leadership in sustainability. The majority of requirements for LEED for Existing Building certification are operations and maintenance best practices. The process does not necessarily require any major upgrades, instead it promotes using performance records, testing and analysis and tracking resource use. LEED for Existing Buildings certification ensures your building is meeting its potential.

How is LEED for Existing Buildings different than other LEED rating systems?

LEED for New Construction and Commercial Interiors focus largely on the construction and/or major renovation phase of a building. When the project is complete and the building is in operation, LEED for New Construction and Commercial Interiors have performed their intended task. The intent of LEED for Existing Buildings is to certify the operation of the building and create a plan for ensuring high performance over time. The rating system captures both a building's physical systems (equipment, design, land use, etc.) but also the way the building is occupied and operated by its managers (waste management, temperature monitoring, commuting programs, etc.).

A key goal of LEED for Existing Buildings is to institutionalize a process of reporting, inspection and review over the lifespan of the building. So when LEED is applied to new construction and commercial interiors, the one time act of renovating, constructing or tenant fit-out is certified. LEED for Existing Buildings certifies the completed and operated building as it functions on an ongoing basis.

Who should use LEED for Existing Buildings?

LEED for Existing Buildings helps building owners and managers solve building problems, and improve building life cycle performance. LEED is used by everyone from facility managers to operations contractors. LEED applies to the spectrum of facilities ranging from those wanting to identify efficiency improvement opportunities and put in place sustainable policies to those facilities in need of significant system and operational improvements.

LEED for Existing Buildings requires three months of operational data for an initial certification, any building construction must be complete for at least a three month span before LEED certification can be pursued. Existing buildings undergoing substantial renovations are eligible to become certified under LEED for Commercial Interiors, Existing Buildings (upon completion of the renovation and three months of occupancy/operation) or New Construction. Comparing

LEED for Existing Buildings Frequently Asked Questions

the requirements of LEED for Existing Buildings to other LEED rating systems will help you determine which rating system is better suited to your project type.

How do I know if LEED for Existing Buildings is right for my project?

USGBC encourages the project team to tally a potential point total using the rating system checklists for all possibilities. The project is a viable candidate for LEED certification if it can meet all prerequisites and achieve the minimum points required in a given rating system. If more than one rating system applies, then it is up to the project team to decide which one to pursue. If questions or concerns remain, please e-mail leedinfo@usgbc.org or call 202-828-7422.

How was LEED for Existing Buildings developed?

The LEED for Existing Buildings Core Committee, a group of experts representing various facets of the industry, developed a draft of the rating system (LEED for Existing Buildings Pilot Program Rating System) with input from the LEED Steering Committee. Technical Advisory groups, the Technical and Scientific Advisory Committee, and representatives from all major sectors of the building industry also guided the development of LEED for existing buildings. The rating system was piloted in 100 buildings to ensure its practicality as a tool for achieving sustainability. Comments on the pilot rating system received from pilot participants and members of the public guided revisions to the draft system, and the USGBC membership approved a final, 'balloted' version of LEED for Existing Buildings in October of 2004.

Helpful tips to get started:

1. Review the LEED rating system to assess credit potential
2. Set your target certification level: Certified, Silver, Gold, Platinum
3. Assess what equipment will need upgrades
4. Assign responsibility for credits and for writing green policies
5. Make a budget
6. Make a timeline to optimize work and process flow
7. Register project to take advantage of USGBC resources

Where can I get an updated copy of the LEED Rating System? It's available for download by going to [LEED for Existing Buildings Web page](#) and then following the link to the Rating System.

What is the process for LEED certification?

LEED Certification steps:

1. Register eligible building via www.usgbc.org
2. Identify and implement operational improvements and equipment upgrades necessary to obtain certification
3. Prepare your application by documenting building performance data and operational procedures
4. Submit certification application to the USGBC for review and provide any supplemental information deemed necessary by the reviewers
5. Receive a final LEED certification review from the USGBC

How often does a project need to re-certify under LEED?

Re-certification of LEED is required at least once every five years, though buildings can re-certify annually. Annual certification might be beneficial in cases where building operators want yearly feedback on building performance for performance reviews and budgets, or in cases where LEED certification scores are included in lease agreements as a metric for quality of delivered space. Applications for re-certification only require documentation of changes in policies and performance data that have occurred since initial certification.

Is there a minimum age for a building to participate in LEED for Existing Buildings?

LEED for Existing Buildings requires buildings to be at least two years old before certifying. Buildings less than two years old can register projects and begin the performance period for certification, but will not be certified until two years have elapsed.

Is training available for LEED?

The USGBC provides LEED for Existing Buildings training workshops. To view the dates and locations of LEED workshops, visit the [Workshop](#) section of the USGBC website. This is a searchable database, enabling you to find the workshop date, location and time that work for you.

Where can I get answers to additional LEED questions? Send emails to: leedinfo@usgbc.org or call 202-828-7422.