

LEED CERTIFICATION

WHAT IS LEED CERTIFICATION?

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), provides a suite of standards for environmentally sustainable construction. Since its inception in 1994, LEED has grown to encompass over 6,000 projects in 28 countries covering 1 billion square feet of development area. The hallmark of LEED is that it is an open and transparent process where the technical criteria proposed by the LEED committees are publicly reviewed for approval by the more than 8,500 membership organizations that currently comprise the USGBC.

LEED certification is obtained after submitting an application documenting compliance with the requirements of the rating system.

The LEED rating system offers four certification levels for new construction – Certified, Silver, Gold and Platinum – that correspond to the number of credits accrued in five green design categories: sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources and indoor environmental quality. LEED standards cover new commercial construction and major renovation projects, interiors projects and existing building operations. Standards are under development to cover commercial "core & shell" construction, new home construction and neighborhood developments.

HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT LEED?

The U.S. Green Building Council's LEED website provides tools for building professionals, including:

- Information on the LEED certification process.
- LEED documents, such as checklists and reference guides. Standards are now available or in development for the following project types:
 - New commercial construction and major renovation projects (LEED-NC)
 - Existing building operations (LEED-EB)
 - Commercial interiors projects (LEED-CI)
 - Core and shell projects (LEED-CS)
 - Homes (LEED-H)
 - Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND)
- A list of LEED-certified projects.
- A directory of LEED-accredited professionals.
- Information on LEED training workshops.
- A calendar of green building industry conferences.



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TIPS FOR GETTING LEED CERTIFIED

- **Set a clear environmental target.**
Before you begin the design phase of your project, decide what level of LEED certification you are aiming for. Also consider including an optional higher certification target – a "stretch" goal – to stimulate creativity.
- **Set a clear and adequate budget.**
Higher levels of LEED certification, such as Platinum, do require additional expenditure and should be budgeted for accordingly
- **Stick to your budget *and* your LEED goal.**
Throughout the design and building process, be sure your entire project team is focused on meeting your LEED goal on budget. Maintain the environmental and economic integrity of your project at every turn.
- **Engineer for Life Cycle Value.**
As you value-engineer your project, be sure to examine green investments in terms of how they will affect expenses over the entire life of the building. Before you decide to cut a line item, look first at its relationship to other features to see if keeping it will help you achieve money-saving synergies, as well as LEED credits. Many energy-saving features allow for the resizing or elimination of other equipment, or reduce total capital costs by paying for themselves immediately or within a few months of operation. Prior to beginning, set your goals for "life cycle" value-engineering rather than "first cost" value-engineering.
- **Hire LEED-accredited professionals.**
Thousands of architects, consultants, engineers, product marketers, environmentalists and other building industry professionals around the country have a demonstrated knowledge of green building and the LEED rating system and process – and can assist you in meeting your LEED goal. These professionals can suggest ways to earn LEED credits without extra cost, identify means of offsetting certain expenses with savings in other areas and spot opportunities for synergies in your project.