

LEED CERTIFICATION INFORMATION

What is LEED certification?

In the United States and in a number of other countries around the world, LEED certification is the recognized standard for measuring building sustainability. Achieving LEED certification is the best way for you to demonstrate that your building project is truly "green."

The LEED green building rating system -- developed and administered by the U.S. Green Building Council, a Washington D.C.-based, nonprofit coalition of building industry leaders -- is designed to promote design and construction practices that increase profitability while reducing the negative environmental impacts of buildings and improving occupant health and well-being.

What are the benefits of LEED certification?

LEED certification, which includes a rigorous third-party commissioning process, offers compelling proof to you, your clients, your peers and the public at large that you've achieved your environmental goals and your building is performing as designed. Getting certified allows you take advantage of a growing number of state and local government incentives, and can help boost press interest in your project.

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 does one achieve LEED certification?

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

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 and settle on a firm overall budget. 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 out 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.