

LEEDing the Way to the Future

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As Published in *Campus Facility Maintenance*, Spring 2006, pp 42-44



When the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) launched the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification program approximately five years ago, there was some concern and skepticism regarding how well the program would work and be received. Leaders within the USGBC were concerned about potential flaws in the program and how quickly they could be addressed to avoid stalling the entire project. Additionally, leaders wondered how they could get major industry sectors, such as architecture and design, structural engineering, building construction, building owners and managers, and the Janitorial/Sanitation industry interested and involved in LEED.

Indeed, when the program debuted it did have problems and was met with some resistance. But after five years, we can say without hesitation that the program works and is an over-whelming success. In fact, LEED has been so successful, it has helped USGBC become a much more solid and relevant organization, growing to more than 6,000 members.

Other indications of LEED's growth include: In 2001, there were five LEED-certified projects. By 2002, there were 38, in 2003, 82 and by 2004, 162. Today, nearly 300 projects have been LEED-certified: in 2001, there were 200 LEED registered projects (projects seeking LEED certification); by 2002 that number had jumped to more than 600. In 2003, 800 projects were registered, a number that doubled in 2004. Today, there are approximately 2,200 LEED-registered projects; and, by the end of 2005, the number of architects, engineers, contractors, environmentalists and even members of the cleaning industry that have become LEED Accredited Professionals - building industry professionals that have demonstrated their knowledge and capability to facilitate the LEED certification process - hit 20,000.

WHY DOES LEED WORK ?

LEED's success stems from several factors. For one, many architectural and engineering companies got involved with LEED right away because it helped differentiate them from their competitors. These companies wanted to stay on the cutting edge of

industry trends and LEED is one of the most significant programs helping them do that to come along in years.

Another reason is demand. Schools and universities as well as environmental organizations throughout the United States want their facilities LEED-certified. They believe it is the "right" thing to do, i.e. that it is healthier for building users and the environment - but also is a wise marketing decision. Federal agencies, such as the General Services Administration, the U.S. Energy Department and even branches of the military, have also joined the LEED initiative.

Another reason LEED works and has done so well is that it incorporates a rather simple point system to attain certification. An organization wishing to have a building LEED-certified receives points for categories, such as: Sustainable-site selection; Improved water efficiency; Enhanced energy efficiency; Materials used; Overall indoor environmental quality; and Design innovation.

There are different LEED programs, among them LEED-NC, for new construction; LEED-EB, for existing buildings; and LEED-CI, for commercial interiors. All of these programs have a similar rating system, although the points vary by category as do the number of points needed to attain certification.

BACKGROUND AND EVOLUTION

During the early 1990s, the Green building movement was struggling to take hold. In 1992, David Gottfried, Rick Fedrizzi and Mike Italiano founded USGBC. The first attempt at some sort of "sustainability standard" program or rating system was developed under the auspices of the American Society of Testing and Materials. However, that program did not receive widespread backing, forcing supporters to look for an alternative organization willing to develop a Green rating system.

In 1996, the U.S. Department of Energy contracted with Public Technology, Inc., a nonprofit technology research and development organization based in Washington, D.C., to develop *The Sustainable Building Technical Manual*. Gottfried would

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Points Available Under LEED Programs

Credit Category	LEED-CN	LEED-EB	LEED-C
Sustainable Site	14	14	7
Water Efficiency	5	5	2
Energy & Atmosphere	17	23	14
Materials & Resources	13	15	14
Indoor Environmental Quality	15	21	15
Innovation/Design Process	5	5	5
Total Points Possible	69	83	57

Minimum Points Required for Various LEED Levels

Rating	LEED-NC	LEED-EB	LEED-C
Certified	26	32	21
Silver	33	40	27
Gold	39	48	32
Platinum	52	64	42

serve as editor of the manual, which would serve as a catalyst for what would later lead to the development of the LEED Rating System.

LEED-NC was then launched four years later in 2000 and LEED-EB was launched in November of 2004 built on the success of LEED-NC and the growing power of the USGBC and its LEED "brand."

One of the keys to the success of LEED was the decision made early on to use existing standards and codes as the basis for the rating systems, rather than developing unique requirements. For example, LEED-EB uses many widely used standards within the leaning industry in order to reduce barriers for manufacturers to participate and to make it easier for building owners and managers to meet the requirements. Among these are:

- Green Seal, an independent, nonprofit organization that identifies and promotes Green cleaning products and other environmentally-preferable products that minimize cleaning's affect on the environment.
- California Code of Regulations for Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) standards, established by the California Air Resources Board to help reduce VOCs for several consumer product categories that are not necessarily covered by Green Seal.
- Carpet and Rug Institute's Green Label program for testing and evaluating vacuum cleaners regarding their effectiveness in soil removal, carpet appearance and dust containment. And just recently a new program has been developed to certify carpet extractors.
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines, which cover post-consumer recycled content for janitorial paper and trashcan liners, helps ensure that materials collected in recycling programs are used again in the manufacture of new products.

This cooperation is important because these organizations have a definite impact on the Jan/San industry. And programs controlled by a building's cleaning staff, including interior and exterior maintenance and cleaning, recycling, waste and pest management can contribute as many as 13 (out of 32 available) points toward the basic LEED-EB certification.

BOTTOM-LINE BENEFITS

Now that LEED is established, we are seeing LEED-certification can have several financial benefits-especially for those in real estate, construction and development. Many LEED-certified buildings are reporting that they are saving 30 to 40 percent the cost for energy, water and waste disposal. And, by marketing their buildings' environmentally-responsible, many facilities have been able to secure better and longer-term tenants and some have even reported being able to charge as much as a 10 percent premium for their leased space.

In some instances, certification helps owners and developers qualify for state and local government tax incentives. And, some major grant institutions now require the organizations they give money to have LEED-certified facilities. At the same time, many U.S. cities are now stipulating that new government projects and developments achieve a LEED rating, which encourages private developers doing business with these cities to follow suit.

Additionally, universities and colleges are quick to inform parents and potential students that theirs is a healthy, Green, LEED-certified facility. This indicates that the school is not only well run and maintained, but abreast of the latest building operations, design and technologies, including cleaning.

EARNING POINTS

Building owners and managers can earn up to two points toward LEED-EB certification by developing building exterior sustainable cleaning and maintenance programs. Three points can be secured by implementing a purchasing program for such things as cleaning products, disposable paper products and trash liners that meet Green and sustainability criteria.

Points also are awarded for employing high-performance entry systems, such as qualifying mats that help reduce the amount of dust and soil entering a facility. And, points can be earned for ensuring that janitorial closets are properly constructed and isolated so that they do not affect a facility's indoor air quality and for having hot and cold water and drains for liquid disposal.

The use of more environmentally-preferable cleaning equipment, such as high-filtration vacuum cleaners, low-moisture carpet extractors and floor machines with vacuum systems also secures points. And, employing integrated pest-management systems that minimize the use of pesticides can help a facility become LEED-EB certified. Interestingly, what many building owners, managers and facility service providers often find is that securing many of the cleaning-related credits in LEED-EB actually require a rather small investment. For instance, an existing building can earn one point toward certification just by making sure 30 percent of the cleaning products it purchases annually are Green certified.

However, one of the greatest potential contributions LEED-EB can make is to create the opportunity to totally re-think cleaning. Green cleaning is an opportunity to ask the fundamental question: "How much cleaning is truly required to create a healthy, high performing building?" and to compare the costs for achieving this compared to other possible facility investment, such as alternative power, vegetative (green) roofs, new floor coverings, low-impact paints and other materials.

This is an important opportunity, one that I hope many will take advantage of. LEED is already having a significant impact and our input today can help shape the program of the future, which will likely have a major impact for years to come. For more information, visit www.destinationgreen.com/LEED/leedcreditlist.html.

The Ashkin Group is one of the nation's leading consulting firms working to green the cleaning industry. A 25+ year veteran of the cleaning industry, Steve Ashkin is the author of *Green Cleaning for Dummies* and a tireless advocate for environmentally preferable cleaning products. Often referred to as the "father of green cleaning," Ashkin has played a pivotal role in setting industry standards, promoting environmentally preferable products, and advocating for socially responsible practices. For more information or to subscribe to his e-newsletter, DestinationGreen, visit www.ashkingroup.com.