



Updates to the LEED rating Systems

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LEED version 3 (v3), released earlier this year in April, is the latest version of the USGBC's rating system. LEEDv3 is comprised of the following three elements:

- > LEED 2009
- > LEED Online
- > GBCI Certification

The changes USGBC made to create LEEDv3 alter both how a potential project approaches LEED Certification and also how a person seeks LEED Accreditation.

This article highlights the changes associated with LEED 2009, the building rating system, as well as addresses how current and prospective LEED APs are affected by the implementation of LEEDv3.

LEED 2009

The LEED 2009 technical advances are based upon three major enhancements:

- > Harmonizing prerequisites and credits
- > Adjusting credit weightings
- > Creating regional credits

Harmonizing Prerequisites & Credits

The USGBC's harmonization of prerequisites and credits is an attempt to create overall consistency amongst the building rating systems. With an enhanced streamlined approach, LEED 2009 has a more integrated point system. Rating systems are now based on the following structure:

- > A 110-point system: 100 base points and 10 potential bonus points
- > 6 potential points for innovation and design and 3 points for exemplary performance
- > 4 points for regional priority

Updates to all rating systems will now occur together on a tentatively-scheduled two-year cycle.

Adjusting Credit Weightings

The second enhancement made for LEED 2009 is the adjustments to credit weightings. The USGBC decided that the credits for LEED 2009 will be weighted according to the credit's ability to impact different concerns related to the environment and human health. The new credit weights were dependent on an evaluation system the USGBC devised that consisted of 13 environmental impact categories. The weight was determined based on the credit's ability to mitigate an environmental impact. In addition, more emphasis was placed on points that affect a building's carbon footprint.

Noted credit weight and point allocation changes in LEED 2009 include:

- > An increase in the energy-efficiency credit from 15 to 18 points and the elimination of the two-point credit requirement
- > An increase of two (2) points to the renewable-energy credit – now a maximum of six (6) points
- > A reduction of points in the following credits in the LEED-EB: O&M 2009 system:
 - o MR1, Sustainable Purchasing: Ongoing Consumables
 - o MR4, Reduced Mercury in Lamps
 - o MR7, Solid Waste Management: Ongoing Consumables

For the category of Indoor Environmental Quality, the overall weight of the category dropped from 23 percent in the LEED-EB: O&M 2008 system to 15 percent in the LEED-EB: O&M 2009 system.

The Material Resources category received a significant weight reduction in the LEED 2009 system with less emphasis on green cleaning and purchasing. In return, more emphasis is placed on sustainable sites and a transportation-management plan.

Creating Regional Credits

In order to make a LEED Rating System that is more encompassing of buildings in different locations with different environmental priorities, the USGBC has identified existing credits for bonus points based on specific regional issues.

The LEED 2009 system allocates six (6) regional priority credits (RPC) that are qualified for regionalism weight, and projects can earn up to four (4) bonus points in the RPC category. The RPC's were determined by regional councils and chapters and reflect local environmental priorities. RPC's are automatically determined based on the project's zip code, which is required when registering a project on LEED Online.

If a project meets the credit requirements for a credit that is a RPC, the building earns the allocated point(s) for the credit plus a bonus point for being a RPC.

Because RPC's are based on existing credits, they should not hinder a project's ability to become LEED Certified. Instead, RPC's are meant to provide opportunities to earn bonus points for credits projects might already be attempting to achieve.

Conclusion

The changes implemented for the LEED 2009 rating system do not necessarily create new hurdles for project's considering LEED Certification. The changes are more cosmetic and occur mostly as adjustments to credit weights and point allocations. For registered projects debating whether to pursue certification under LEED 2009 or an older system, a comparison of the benefits with older rating systems should not be difficult.

LEED Accreditation for LEEDv3

In an effort to encourage green building professionals to maintain and advance their knowledge and expertise with the LEED program, the LEEDv3 system has implemented changes to the process of becoming a LEED AP and maintaining a viable LEED AP status.

The new LEED credentialing program has three fundamental changes it is phasing into action throughout 2009:

- > **Three levels of excellence that distinguish practitioners with basic, advanced, and extraordinary levels of knowledge**
- > **Eligibility requirements for all levels of the exam system**
- > **Credentialing maintenance requirements that ensure LEED professionals have the latest knowledge and understanding of green building practices**

For Prospective LEED AP's

The new LEED AP exam is divided into two parts: the LEED Green Associate exam and the specialty exam based on one of the LEED Rating Systems. By passing these two exams, a candidate is awarded a LEED AP+ designation. The LEED Green Associate accreditation is intended for professionals who want to demonstrate green building expertise in non-technical fields of practice and indicate basic knowledge of green design, construction, and operations.

To be eligible to take the Green Associate exam a candidate must meet one of the following criteria: a) have experience in the form of involvement on a LEED-

registered project, b) employment in a sustainable field of work, or c) engagement in an education program that addresses green building principles.

The LEED Green Associate exam will address credit intents but not actual credit details from various rating systems. This exam can be taken alone or in conjunction with a specialty LEED AP+ exam.

The second part of the LEED AP exam is the specialty exam. LEED AP+ designations can be earned by passing a specialty exam based on one (1) of the following LEED Rating Systems:

- > Operations & Maintenance
- > Homes
- > Building Design & Construction
- > Interior Design & Construction
- > Neighborhood Development

Once a LEED AP+ designation has been earned, the LEED professional must maintain LEED accreditation through the new Credentialing Maintenance Program (CMP). The CMP is designed to facilitate a LEED professional's continuing development in the field of LEED. To maintain a valid LEED professional status, professionals must earn their required continuing education (CE) hours during a 2-year period following the date the credential was awarded.

CE hours are determined based on the number of LEED Rating Systems you tested into. The hourly increment for 1-5 specialties is: 30, 36, 42, 48, and 54 CE hours. The minimum 30 CE hours required includes: community service, committee involvement, authoring, and training (taking and providing). Green Associates must earn 15 CE hours biennially.

For Legacy LEED AP's

LEED AP legacies have three (3) options for maintaining their LEED AP status:

1. Select only one of the LEED AP+ specialty designations by June 2011. No testing is required, but credentialing must be maintained over 2 years through the CMP (see above).
2. Take one or more of the specialty exams to earn LEED AP+ designation and immediately enter into the CMP.
3. Do nothing and simply maintain a LEED AP designation. The LEED AP designation will not be taken away, but the designation will be considered "inactive."

For buildings pursuing LEED certification, a bonus/innovation point is awarded for having a LEED AP+ on project; however, the LEED AP+ must have the specialty designation of the appropriate rating system for the project. For example, if you are a LEED AP+ under CI, a project pursuing LEED NC cannot earn the bonus/innovation with your LEED designation.