



2101 L Street NW,
Suite 500
Washington, DC 20037
T: 202 828-7422
F: 202 828-5110
www.usgbc.org

LEED Rating System Development

Why are the LEED rating systems being updated?

The hallmark of LEED and its ability to affect market transformation is its continuous improvement cycle that enables the rating system to increase in scope and stringency as market readiness increases and new technologies become widely available. With LEED 2009, the primary changes were foundational changes, such as rating system content alignment, credit point value allocation, the development of LEED Online v3, and changes to the professional credentials and certification process. These foundational changes continue to be refined in the context of LEED 2009, but will not be fundamentally changed again with the next update of LEED.

For the future LEED update, USGBC will focus on increasing the technical rigor of the rating system, and expanding the market sectors able to use LEED. The update to LEED builds on LEED 2009 in a thoughtful way. It optimizes the foundations in LEED 2009, and will continue to improve the clarity, usability, functionality and interconnectedness of the rating systems through future version development.

What will updates to LEED look like?

The next update to LEED is a general technical update to the LEED rating systems, including the Building Design + Construction, Interior Design + Construction, Operations + Maintenance, Neighborhood Development, and LEED for Homes rating systems. It presents the opportunity to engage with LEED program development and will include: multiple public comment periods, responses from USGBC member committees, and a ballot vote among USGBC's industry-wide membership. The proposed update reflects a year's worth of development by USGBC committees that was shaped by market feedback. The public comment period launching in fall 2010 will provide stakeholders the opportunity to influence the evolution of the content as it moves toward becoming a balloted rating system.

What are the differences between LEED 2009 and the next update to LEED?

The differences between LEED 2009 and the update to LEED are limited to three main areas:

- **New Credit Categories** that help teams understand how to best achieve their project priorities;
- **Changes to Technical Content** that increases the technical rigor of the rating system. The proposed technical changes have been informed by market data, stakeholder-generated ideas, expert engagement, and advances in technology and market acceptability of LEED and green building practices.
- **Revised Point Distribution** that will more closely tie the rating system requirements to the priorities articulated by the USGBC community. This revision is currently in process, and the proposed distribution will be reflected in the draft at the time of the second public comment period. At this time, proposed credits have no point value associated with them.

Are there new prerequisites?

There are new prerequisites across the credit categories and rating systems. Prerequisites have been carefully considered in order to create a basic level of performance among LEED projects. Like all changes to the rating systems, new prerequisites are available for comment and will be tested in the Pilot Credit Library, and will evolve based on the feedback USGBC receives.



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Are there new credits?

There are new credits across the credit categories and rating systems available to project teams, and have been harmonized as appropriate across our products to further align the rating systems. New credits have been developed to increase the scope of issues that LEED addresses, and provide additional incentive for projects to address issues critical to USGBC's mission. Like all changes to the rating system, new credits are available for comment and will be tested in the Pilot Credit Library, and will evolve based on the feedback USGBC receives.

Are there new credit categories?

There are three new credit categories introduced in the LEED update, aimed at assisting teams in understanding which credits help them best optimize the issues most important to them, and also harmonizes the commercial rating systems with the LEED for Homes rating system in terms of organization. The three categories are:

- **Integrated Process (IP):** highlights the importance of the use of iterative, inclusionary process in the design, construction, operations and maintenance of green projects
- **Location and Transportation (LT):** reorganizes project location, planning and transportation issues into a new category to highlight the importance of and increase dialogue about these issues. Most of the credits in the new LT category previously existed (in some form) in the Sustainable Sites category.
- **Performance (PF):** highlights the importance of on-going operational performance in LEED projects. Credits that deal with performance measurement and verification will be reorganized into this category and are intended to be a natural link to USGBC's Building Performance Partnership (BPP). The scope of this category includes, but is not limited to
 - Metering
 - Commissioning
 - Utility consumption data reporting
 - Occupant comfort/satisfaction surveys

Have the point values of existing credits changed?

Each rating system will go through a weightings process similar to LEED 2009. In LEED 2009, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Tool for the Reduction and Assessment of Chemical and Other Environmental Impacts (TRACI) categories were used to determine a relative weight of each credit as compared with the others within a given rating system. For the update to LEED, USGBC has developed a number of impact categories more closely aligned with our mission that will inform the point allocation across the rating system. This process will take place between the first and second public comment periods. It is anticipated that LEED will maintain the 100-point system, and that a minimum of 1 point per credit will be available.

How did USGBC decide which parts of the rating systems would be proposed to change?

USGBC's member committees utilized several member- and stakeholder-driven tools to inform the highest-priority changes. In mid-2009, a Call for Ideas was opened to all LEED stakeholders and generated over 700 comments regarding areas to improve LEED, including technical content improvements. Additionally, ideas suggested in the LEED 2009 public comment process that were not addressed at the time informed the current proposed changes. Market sector and credit achievement data were reviewed to determine which credits are historically



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unachievable, and which have succeeded in market transformation, both necessitating revisions to requirements. USGBC's LEED committees, with field expertise, guidance from USGBC leadership, and stakeholder-driven feedback, informed the priorities for this update.

Are the Minimum Program Requirements (MPRs) changing?

The Minimum Program Requirements (MPRs) may change, and the MPRs for the LEED update are still under discussion and development. Future MPRs will be provided during later public comment periods.

Will the Minimum Program Requirements be available for comment?

Yes, Minimum Program Requirements will be available for comment during subsequent comment periods, but are currently under discussion and development as the proposed updates enter the first public comment period.

Does the LEED update cater to more market sectors or space types?

Yes. The updates to LEED will have compliance paths for additional market sectors, including new and existing data centers, new and existing hospitality projects, new warehouses and distribution centers, existing schools, and existing retail.

Do I need to comply with the proposed updates now?

No, project teams need not comply with the rating system proposed for public comment. Project teams should follow the rating system version for which they are currently registered. USGBC encourages project teams to review the public comment draft and provide feedback regarding the opportunities and challenges that the proposed requirements would pose based on your knowledge and expertise.

When is the update to LEED expected to replace the current version of the rating systems?

It is anticipated that the updated LEED rating systems will be available in approximately two years, after the public comment and response periods. As the process progresses, we will better be able to anticipate an exact launch date.

When will we see this update used in the market?

In order for the market to be prepared for an update to LEED, it is critical that USGBC provide ample time for the market to understand the concepts and expectations associated with an update to the rating system. As our stakeholders' input continues to drive refinement to the proposed update over the next two years, market leaders should align with the development to be poised for continued leadership in the years to come. We expect the updated rating systems to be available for ballot after three public comment and response periods, around the fourth quarter of 2012.

I have projects using a current or older version of LEED. Will these projects be required to follow this proposed updates?

Projects currently registered with LEED should follow the version under which they are currently registered. Project teams will not be required or able to register for the updated rating system until it has undergone a ballot vote by USGBC membership. Prior to ballot, the proposed rating system will go through at least two public comment and response periods. Projects that have not yet certified at the time of launch will still be able to certify under the rating system which they are registered.



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Will there be a new LEED Online model?

No. USGBC intends to continue to utilize LEED Online v3, and will continue to refine this tool. LEED users who have familiarized themselves with LEED Online v3, and those who will learn it in the future, will be able to continue to utilize these skills even after the proposed updates to LEED.

Will the LEED Professional Credentials change again?

It is anticipated that the LEED Professional Credential program administered through the Green Building Certification Institute will remain the same.

Does my company need to buy new reference guides?

The update to LEED will cover additional areas and will have more information, including examples, guidance, and other pertinent information, so project teams will benefit from having the reference guide available. However, USGBC is actively considering innovative ways to bring the reference guide content to users that minimize cost and best address the information most beneficial to users.

I want to help develop LEED credits of interest to me and my company. How do I best make my voice heard?

There are four ways to engage in the development of LEED.

First, LEED stakeholders are encouraged to participate in the [public comment process](#), which will begin Nov. 8, 2010. The first public comment period will be open for a period of approximately 60 days, followed by a period of response and revision to the rating system.

Second, current LEED project teams are encouraged to utilize the LEED Pilot Credit Library, where teams can test new and substantially modified prerequisites and credits proposed for the LEED update, as well as other test credits piloted in areas not currently addressed within the LEED rating systems. For more information on the Pilot Credit Library, visit usgbc.org/pilotcreditlibrary.

Third, LEED stakeholders are encouraged to apply for open committee seats during Expression of Interest Periods as they arise. USGBC's volunteer committee members are at the heart of the evolution of the LEED rating system.

Finally, consider joining USGBC as an organizational member. USGBC committees are limited to employees of member companies or organizations. Also, only members can vote on proposed changes or updates to LEED. Visit usgbc.org/membership for more information.

I would like to participate in public comment. How do I best understand and use the documents provided by USGBC?

The documents provided by USGBC for the 1st public comment period are organized as the five aligned documents currently used for the LEED 2009 reference guides. The Building Design + Construction document includes requirements for New Construction, Core and Shell, Schools, and Retail projects with additional compliance paths for hospitality, warehouses and distribution center, and data center projects. The Interior Design + Construction document includes the Commercial Interiors and Retail rating systems. The Existing Buildings: Operations + Maintenance document includes the Operations and Maintenance rating system, with additional compliance paths for schools, retail, hospitality, and data center projects. The LEED for Homes document includes requirements for LEED for Homes single family, multi-family low-rise, and



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multi-family mid-rise projects. Finally, the Neighborhood Development document includes the updated requirements for LEED for Neighborhood Development.

All rating systems currently used in LEED still exist, but are packaged together in this way to indicate areas of alignment between rating systems, and allow those participating in public comment to reflect on a rating system as a whole or a requirement as it relates to each product in which it appears.

Why are the prerequisites and credits in the alignment documents lacking numbers associated with their title?

Because the arrangement of the requirements has been done by alignment document rather than individual rating system, numbers have been eliminated *within the public comment alignment documents only* to reduce confusion and avoid listing multiple numbers for each prerequisite or credit. Each individual rating system will have credit numbers, and these numbers can be viewed in the scorecard documents provided with the alignment documents on the public comment page.

I submitted comments during a public comment period. Will my comments be taken into consideration? Who reads my comments?

All comments submitted during public comment through the USGBC web-based forum, as well as Pilot Credit Library feedback generated at the [LEEDuser forum](#), will be compiled and considered in the evolution of LEED by staff and LEED committee members. All comments submitted will be provided a response and posted online for stakeholders to view during the next public comment period.

LEED for Neighborhood Development was just released. Why is it being changed again?

LEED for Neighborhood Development is included in the LEED update in order to align credits as appropriate, modify similar credits that have substantially changed in the Building Design + Construction Rating System, and also reweight the rating system based on USGBC's new version of impact categories. The majority of LEED for Neighborhood Development will remain the same regarding technical content in the update to LEED.

How is the LEED for Homes rating system being integrated into this process?

LEED for Homes has undergone a technical update and will follow the same public comment and ballot process as the commercial and neighborhood rating systems, and at the same time. The LEED for Homes rating system will align credits similar to the commercial rating system, align credit categories with the commercial rating systems, and go through the weightings process for point allocation based on USGBC's defined impact categories for LEED.

How will LEED v3 and the LEED 2009 rating systems continue to evolve over time?

LEED v3 and the LEED 2009 rating systems will continue to evolve as we refine LEED Online and address rating system issues through the LEED Addenda process. More information on the continued evolution of the current LEED rating systems can be found in the [LEED Foundations Documents](#).