



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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LEED® for Commercial Interiors

What is LEED for Commercial Interiors?

LEED for Commercial Interiors is a rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council that addresses the specifics of tenant spaces primarily in office, retail and institutional buildings. Tenants who lease their space or do not occupy the entire building can LEED certify their space as a green interior.

LEED for Commercial Interiors was designed to work hand-in-hand with the LEED for Core & Shell Rating System. LEED for Core and Shell is a tool that developers can use to LEED certify the core and shell of their development. LEED for Core and Shell and LEED Commercial Interiors establish green building criteria for commercial office real estate for use by both developers and tenants.

What tools are available for projects going through the LEED certification process for a commercial interior?

There are many tools available for projects going through the LEED certification process. The Reference Guide will help guide the project team through the LEED credit process. In addition, the LEED for Commercial Interiors rating system and other resources are available on USGBC's Web site under the LEED section.

How do I know if my commercial interior space is a good fit for LEED?

Projects should review the rating system and be sure the project can meet all prerequisites and achieve the minimum number of points required for LEED certification. If more than one rating system applies, the project team may decide which certification type to pursue. Email: leedinfo@usgbc.org for more info.

What are the LEED requirements for the tenant space vs. the whole building?

Sustainable Sites credit 1 applies to the building selected, not to the scope of work.

Water Efficiency credit 1 is based on the planned occupancy of the space, regardless of when the restrooms are constructed, who pays for them or where they happen to be located.

Energy and Atmosphere prerequisite 1, Fundamental Commissioning, applies to the work done during the project, and as a minimum applies to the energy-related system listed in the requirement. (See page 19 of V2 of LEED for Commercial Interiors).

It is not expected that the central building-wide systems will be commissioned (unless it is part of the scope of work of the project), but some tenants may elect to have their commissioning authority confirm that these systems meet the owner's project requirements and the basis of design. Note that Indoor Environmental Quality

prerequisite 1, and the flush-out compliance path in Indoor Environmental Quality credit 3.2 require evaluations of the air handling system; ideally, this is done before deciding on the project space. Owners who routinely hire their own commissioning authority may elect to have them do these evaluations.

Energy and Atmosphere prerequisite 2, Minimum Energy Performance, and Energy and Atmosphere prerequisite 3, CFC Reduction in HVAC&R Equipment, only apply to the scope of work defined by the project team.

Energy and Atmosphere credit 1.1 and 1.2 only look at the lighting power used in the project space. By contrast, Energy and Atmosphere credit 1.3 either prescriptively addresses the design of the HVAC system, or the overall performance of the HVAC system even when a project shares a common system with other parts of a building. The exception, "Appropriate Zoning and Controls," by virtue of how the requirement is written, only applies to the tenant space.

In the Indoor Environmental Quality section of the LEED for Commercial Interiors rating system, several of the prerequisites and credits address performance of the HVAC system. In Indoor Environmental Quality prerequisite 1, Minimum IAQ Performance, the requirements of ASHRAE 62.1-2004 apply to the capabilities of the building's HVAC system; but, because modifications to the whole HVAC system may be beyond the scope of an individual tenant project, the requirement provides an alternative minimum.

I am trained as an interior designer and don't have the background to handle the energy- and HVAC-related credits. What do I do?

Successful LEED projects begin with a fully integrated design team in which all the professional disciplines work together toward the project goals. Following a process of integrated design will ensure that the team is working together and minimize any potential errors.

I am not familiar with commissioning and have never encountered it in an interior project. Is it really necessary? How do I get it done?

Commissioning is a process to assure that the project is built and operating as it was designed. Independent commissioning agents can be hired to perform the task. Larger Architectural and Engineering firms may have commissioning agents on staff.

Commissioning is an important step designed to save the project money over the lifecycle of the project.

Where do I find the reference materials for my project?

Go to www.usgbc.org then click on 'MyUSGBC' in the upper right-hand corner. Log-in with your site user information and look on the left-hand side of the screen under 'Project.' There you can access resources, Letter Templates, Credit Interpretation Requests (CIR's) and Surveys.

Does the LEED rating system recommend building products?

No, USGBC certifies buildings and tenant spaces under the LEED rating systems, not the materials that are used to construct the building or interiors.

Within the LEED rating systems, building products contribute to achieving LEED points following performance-based requirements. To meet these requirements, practitioners identify products that have specific attributes. Some LEED points will require that certain limits or minimums be met. Other points require that specific product technical information be quantified in order to calculate the product's aggregate environmental or health value.

Many manufactures now offer the necessary product technical information that you need to meet LEED credit requirements and have trained sales professionals who can guide you to products and materials that may contribute to LEED credits, as well as meet your broader environmental criteria.

What educational programs are available to learn more about LEED?

Numerous training workshops and webinars are available on the USGBC Web site; [click here](#) for more information.

Are IIDA, ASID, and AIA continuing education units available for LEED Workshops?

Yes, continuing education units are available; please inquire when you sign up for a LEED workshop for details.

Can interior designers become LEED Accredited Professionals?

Yes. Anyone wishing to seek accreditation can sit for the any or all of the three LEED Professional Accreditation exams. There is a specific track for the interior designer profession. LEED Accredited Professionals that are serving on a LEED project team will earn one LEED point towards certification for all LEED rating systems (under Innovation in Design Credit 1). Visit www.gbci.org for more information about the LEED Professional Accreditation process.

How do I get started?

You can learn more about LEED on USGBC's Web site: www.usgbc.org or by contacting USGBC via email leedinfo@usgbc.org.