

LAST UPDATED:

June 1, 2011

Overview

This document helps project teams answer the question 'Which rating system should I use for my LEED project?'

These are not rigid rules. If a project meets the Minimum Program Requirements (see below), then it may pursue LEED, even if the 'perfect' rating system does not exist for it. The multitude of unique projects eligible for LEED make it impossible to provide language that will fully address all possible situations. This document strives to explain what type of project each rating system was written for, and therefore provide a flexible blueprint that USGBC asks project teams to use to make a reasonable decision. It does not dictate that decision.

Occasionally, GBCI reviewers recognize that an entirely inappropriate rating system has been chosen. In this case, GBCI will ask the project team to make a switch post-registration. Please review this guidance carefully, and <u>contact GBCI</u> at gbci.org if the correct path is very unclear.

Other documents that help project teams understand how their project may pursue LEED:

Minimum Program Requirements (MPRs)

The MPRs answer the question 'Can I pursue LEED for my project?' by listing the basic characteristics that a project **must** possess to be eligible for certification. They are linked from all 2009 rating system pages at usgbc.org.

Instead of the MPRs, Homes project teams should refer to the <u>LEED for Homes Scope & Eligibility Guidelines</u>, available on the Homes page at usgbc.org.

Rating system

Pay careful attention to prerequisites, and make sure that the project can earn enough points to earn certification.

GBCI information about the certification process

GBCI publishes guidance on the certification process at gbci.org.

How to use this guidance

First

Determine which construction type your project falls into. Be sure to consider the building in its <u>entirety</u> or the <u>complete interior space</u>. Partial buildings or spaces are not eligible for certification.

Second

If there are multiple rating systems applicable to the construction type, choose one based on space usage type.

Third

If the correct rating system is not obvious, i.e. if different parts of the project are undergoing different kinds of construction or are serving different space usage types, carefully review the 'When several rating systems may be appropriate' section below.

The reference guide introductions and the rating system selection tool in LEED Online v3 are in the process of being updated to match this guidance. This document takes precedence over those tools and resources.

First, choose a rating system based on construction type



Complete Construction

Appropriate for:

Buildings that are undergoing new construction or <u>major</u> <u>renovation</u> (or <u>gut rehab</u>, for low- and mid-rise residential) and a complete <u>interior fit-out</u>. There are five rating systems in this category.



Core and Shell Construction

Appropriate for:

Buildings that are undergoing new construction or <u>major</u> <u>renovation</u> but NOT a complete <u>interior fit-out</u>. There is only one rating system in this category.



Interior Construction

Appropriate for:

Interior spaces that are undergoing a complete *interior fit-out*. There are two rating systems in this category.



Existing Buildings: Limited Construction

Appropriate for:

Existing buildings undergoing improvement work or no construction. There is only one rating system in this category.

Second, choose a rating system based on **space usage type**



Appropriate for:

- buildings that do not primarily serve K-12 educational, retail, or designated healthcare uses
- high rise (7+stories) residential buildings

SCHOOLS

Appropriate for:

- buildings made up of core and ancillary learning spaces.
- generally, K-12 schools, because the rating system was written with this age group in mind. However, it may be used for different age levels.

See the LEED for Schools Applications table below for more information.

HEALTHCARE

Appropriate for:

- buildings that serve individuals who seek medical treatment, including licensed and federal inpatient care facilities, licensed and federal outpatient care facilities, and licensed and federal long term care facilities. These are considered LEED for Healthcare 'designated' uses.
- buildings with other kinds of medically-related uses, such as unlicensed outpatient facilities, medical, dental and veterinary offices and clinics, assisted living facilities and medical education & research centers are examples of 'non-designated' uses, and may use LEED for Healthcare at the project team's discretion.



Appropriate for:

- buildings or interiors dedicated to the sale of goods or commodities directly to consumers who come onto the premise for the purpose of obtaining those goods or commodities. Includes (but is not limited to) banks, restaurants (quick and full-serve), stores of any kind, spas, etc.
- Includes both direct customer service areas (showroom) and preparation or storage areas that support the customer service.

HOMES

Appropriate for:

Low-rise (1-3 stories) <u>residential</u> buildings. The <u>LEED for Homes Multi-Family Midrise</u> rating system, located on the LEED for Homes page within usgbc.org, is appropriate for mid-rise (4-6 stories) <u>residential</u> buildings. See the Residential Applications table below for more information.

COMMERCIAL INTERIORS

Appropriate for:

Interiors dedicated to functions other than retail.

Third, making a decision

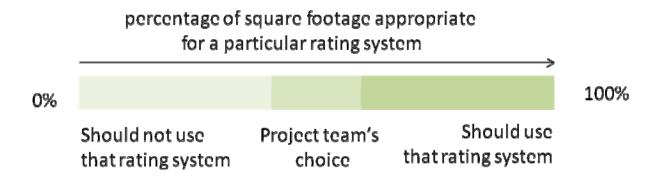
When several rating systems may be appropriate

40/60 rule of thumb

The following "40/60 rule" provides guidance for making a decision when several rating systems appear to be appropriate for a project. To use this rule, first 'assign' a rating system to the every single square foot of the building based on the guidance in the rest of this document (for example, Existing Buildings: 0&M for an existing structure, and New Construction for an addition being built onto it). Then, choose the best rating system depending on the resulting percentages. Be sure to include the entire certifying square footage (but no more than that) in this exercise.

Keep in mind that the entire gross floor area of a LEED project must be certified under a single rating system, and is subject to all prerequisites and attempted credits in that rating system, regardless of a mixed construction or space usage type.

- a) If a rating system is appropriate for less than 40% of the gross floor area of a LEED project building or space, then that rating system should not be used.
- b) If a rating system is appropriate for more than 60% of the gross floor area of a LEED project building or space, then that rating system should be used.
- c) Project teams with buildings and spaces that do not fall into the scenarios described in a) and b) must independently assess their situation and decide which rating system is most applicable.



Additional restrictions and guidance

Meeting the definition of a construction type

Many projects will be undergoing construction work that does not fall neatly under one construction type definition (such as 'major renovation' or 'interior fit-out'). It is the project team's responsibility in this case to make a reasonable determination on which definition best fits their project. A strict application of each definition is not required.

Maximum amount of work for interiors projects

If *both* the following two statements describe the project, then a whole building rating system (any except LEED for Commercial Interiors or LEED for Retail: Commercial Interiors) should be used.

- 1) the entity conducting the work leases OR owns and controls 90% or more of the building that the space is located in
- 2) the same entity is conducting new construction or *major renovation* in 40% or more of the gross floor area of the building

LEED for Schools Applications

Table 1

	% of building square footage dedicated to learning space				
	more than 60% core	40-60% core and	Less than 40% core		
	and ancillary	ancillary,	and ancillary OR less		
	including 25%+ core	including 10%+ core	than 10% core		
K-12	should use LEED for	may use LEED for	should not use LEED		
	Schools	Schools	for Schools		
other than	may use LEED for	may use LEED for	should not use LEED for Schools		
K-12	Schools	Schools			

Residential Applications

Use this table to inform a decision between LEED for Homes, Multi-family Midrise, and a Complete Construction rating system. *LEED for New Construction (NC)* is listed here for the purposes of brevity.

Table 2

	# of occupiable,	% of square footage that meets the definition of 'residential'		
	above-grade stories	<40%	Between 40 and 60%	>60%
Single-family home	n/a	n/a	n/a	LEED for Homes
Multi-family with HVAC	1-3 stories	NC	NC or Homes	Homes
systems shared across living units	4-6 stories	NC	NC or Mid-rise	Mid-rise
	7+ stories 1-3 stories	NC NC	NC NC or Homes	NC* Homes
Multi-family with individual unit HVAC systems	4 stories	NC	NC, Homes, or Mid-rise	Homes or Mid-rise
	5-6 stories 7+ stories	NC NC	NC or Mid-rise NC	Mid-rise NC*

^{*}if the building is 7-8 stories, it may use Mid-Rise in exceptional situations. Please contact Kelsey Mullen (kmullen@usgbc.org) for further information.

Glossary

Alteration: Includes <u>improvement</u> work in addition to the rearrangement of any interior space by the construction of non-bearing walls, partitions, ceilings, and floors, the addition or elimination of any interior door or window, the extension or rearrangement of any MEP or service system (peripheral or core), and the installation of any additional equipment or fixtures. Typically work does not extend to the <u>primary structural</u> <u>components</u>, <u>exterior shell</u>, or roof of the building.

Ancillary Learning Spaces: Informal learning spaces, including corridors, cafeterias, gymnasia and indoor swimming pools.

Complete Interior Space: At a minimum, all the <u>gross floor area</u> within the exterior walls of a building that is within a single occupant's control and contains all building components altered as part of the LEED-certifying construction scope. For more information, see the <u>MPR</u>. <u>Supplemental Guidance</u>, linked from all 2009 rating system pages at usgbc.org.

Core Learning Spaces: Formal learning spaces, including classrooms, instructional pods or activity areas, conference rooms, libraries, offices, speech clinics, offices used for educational purposes and music rooms for instruction, practice and performance.

Core and Shell Construction: The construction of a building's exterior shell and core mechanical, electrical, and plumbing units.

Entirety: The sum of the constructed components that make up a building which is <u>physically distinct</u> from another building. For more information, see the <u>MPR Supplemental Guidance</u>, linked from all 2009 rating system pages at usgbc.org.

Exterior Shell: Any part of a building structure that acts as a barrier between the interior and exterior.

Fit-out: See 'interior fit-out'.

Gross Floor Area: (based on ASHRAE definition) Sum of the floor areas of the spaces within the building, including basements, mezzanine and intermediate-floored tiers, and penthouses with headroom height of 7.5 ft (2.2 meters) or greater. Measurements must be taken from the exterior faces of exterior walls OR from the centerline of walls separating buildings, OR (for LEED CI certifying spaces) from the centerline of walls separating spaces. Excludes non-enclosed (or non-enclosable) roofed-over areas such as exterior covered walkways, porches, terraces or steps, roof overhangs, and similar features. Excludes air shafts, pipe trenches, and chimneys. Excludes floor area dedicated to the parking and circulation of motor vehicles. (Note that while excluded features may not be part of the gross floor area, and therefore technically not a part of the LEED project building, they may still be required to be a part of the overall LEED project and subject to MPRs, prerequisites, and credits.)

Gross Square Footage: See *gross floor area*

Gut Rehab: A building that a) is stripped to the studs on at least one side of the entire insulated envelope (exterior walls and insulated ceiling or roof) for insulation installation and inspection, and b) is receiving replacements for most systems and components (HVAC, windows, etc).

Improvement: The restoration or application of interior finishes and fixtures, MEP and service system equipment repair/replacement/upgrades, minor space-use changes, and preventative or corrective maintenance.

Interior Fit-Out: The installation or application of interior finishes, floor and ceiling systems, non-bearing partitions, furniture, interior doors and windows, and other components that make a space fully usable for the purpose it is intended. A complete interior fit-out is such that no further construction work is needed or intended for occupancy.

Major Renovation: Includes extensive <u>alteration</u> work in addition to work on the <u>exterior shell</u> of the building and/or <u>primary structural components</u> and/or the core and peripheral MEP and service systems and/or site work. Typically, the extent and nature of the work is such that the <u>primary function space</u> cannot be used for its intended purpose while the work is in progress and where a new certificate of occupancy is required before the work area can be reoccupied.

Primary Function Space: The floor area that serves the main purpose of the building or space.

Primary Structural Component: Any component of the load-bearing structure of a building including footings, piles, foundations, columns, girders, beams, joists, wind or seismic bracing.

Residential: A unit or series of units that each include a cooking area (comprised of sink(s), cooking appliance(s), preparation space(s)) a bathroom, and a sleeping area. Communal, circulation, storage, and other support areas such as living rooms, hallways, and closets that primarily serve residential occupants also fall under this definition.

For buildings such as dormitories and assisted living facilities that have common areas (central kitchens and lounges) it is at the project team's discretion to define the common areas and the living units as residential.

Example:

LEED for New Construction vs LEED for Core & Shell

A new office is being constructed, and the interior fit-out is being completed with the exception of furniture installation and interior paint application for the entire gross floor area. LEED for Core & Shell would be the result of a strict interpretation of this guidance because the fit-out is not technically complete for at least 40% of gross floor area. However, LEED for New Construction is the best rating system for this project because the vast majority of the components that make up the interior fit out are complete.