

LEED and the Hospitality Industry

In the United States alone, hotels represent more than 5 billion square feet of space, nearly 5 million guest rooms, and close to \$4 billion in annual energy use. Business meetings in the United States constitute a \$175 billion industry, and Americans make more than 400 million long-distance business trips each year.

Hotels and other hospitality venues have a significant opportunity to reduce negative environmental impacts associated with guest rooms, event space, and general facility use through measures such as energy and water efficiency, waste reduction and management, sustainable and local purchasing, and use of alternative transportation. Hotels and conference centers can also contribute to human health by providing healthy, comfortable, and productive indoor environments with improved indoor air quality, access to daylight and views, and occupant control of the lighting and thermal environment.

USGBC works to promote cost-efficient and resource-saving green building design, construction, and operations with the goal of protecting the global environment and human health. The LEED® green building certification program provides the framework for building and operating hotels sustainably. Green buildings use on average 26% less energy, emit 33% less carbon dioxide, use 30% less indoor water, and send 50%-75% less solid waste to landfills and incinerators. The opportunities for hospitality venues to integrate green building strategies into their design, construction, and daily operations makes business sense and can be an important part of a company's commitment to sustainability.

Can hotels, motels, resorts and other hospitality facilities use the LEED green building certification program?

Yes. *LEED for New Construction and Major Renovations* and *LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance* are the two LEED rating systems that are most appropriate for lodging projects. Recognizing the unique opportunities and challenges that often exist in hotels, motels, and resorts, USGBC has also developed modifications to certain LEED credits for such projects. These modifications will be released in mid-2011.

How many hospitality projects are involved with LEED?

As of March 3, 2011, 91 lodging properties have achieved LEED certification. An additional 1,100 lodging projects have registered with LEED and are working towards certification. The number of LEED-certified Convention Centers has nearly doubled in the last year: 19 such facilities are currently LEED certified, and an additional 51 are pursuing certification.

Will there be a LEED certification program (rating system) specific to Hospitality?

Due to features such as on-site amenities, food and beverage operations, pool and laundry operations, convention facilities, frequent renovation cycles, and transient guest populations, hospitality properties can present unique challenges and opportunities in certain areas of environmental performance. The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) brought together a group of hospitality industry leaders in 2008 in order to identify the areas of LEED that need further attention in light of hospitality-specific circumstances. From this work, USGBC produced a needs assessment outlining technical and non-technical changes that would allow LEED to better address lodging facilities. Through its established committee structure, USGBC then formed a formal Hospitality Adaptations Working Group comprised of industry experts from USGBC member companies. This group worked with the LEED Steering Committee, USGBC staff, and the LEED Technical Advisory Groups to modify certain LEED credits in order to better capture the environmental impacts and opportunities associated with lodging properties. The clarifications and modifications to LEED credits produced by this process and the work of the Hospitality Adaptations Working Group will be released in mid-2011.

Why has the process of developing and releasing these refinements taken almost three years?

The process of changing LEED certification requirements is no small task. LEED is developed through an open, consensus-based process. The key elements of USGBC's consensus process include a balanced and transparent committee structure, technical advisory groups that ensure scientific consistency and rigor, opportunities for stakeholder comment and review, member ballot of new rating systems, and a fair and open appeals process. While it does take some time, the transparent

process ensures industry involvement as well as the rigor, integrity, and appropriateness for the industry of the resulting requirements.

Is USGBC's certification system refinement work focused only on newly constructed hotels?

Changes have been made to both LEED for New Construction and Major Renovations and LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance. All refinements of LEED look holistically at design, construction, operations and maintenance. Improving the environmental performance of existing buildings' operations and maintenance represents a significant portion of the environmental opportunity in the real estate sector.

How significant are the changes to LEED NC and LEED EB for lodging and other hospitality projects?

The bulk of the rating systems remain the same but certain credits have been refined to better suit the hospitality market. Clarifications to be included in the LEED Reference Guides have been developed for 15 LEED NC credits and 15 LEED EB credits. A new credit that covers FF&E purchasing has been developed and approved; it will be added to the LEED NC rating system in mid-2011. A significant change to the food and beverage purchasing credit in LEED EB: O&M has also been approved and will be released in mid-2011.

Four other adaptations have been approved and will be released with the next version of LEED, likely in late 2012. These include changes to the Development Density and Community Connectivity credit in LEED NC, changes to the Light Pollution Reduction credit in LEED NC, and changes to the Outdoor Air Delivery Monitoring credits in both LEED NC and LEED EB.

Should hoteliers use the existing LEED rating systems until the hospitality adaptations are released?

Yes, LEED NC and LEED EB are and will remain the best ways for hotels, motels, and resorts to achieve LEED certification. Over 90 such projects have done so successfully.

If a lodging property is not yet LEED-certified, is there any way it can communicate the LEED-aligned environmental initiatives it is working on?

Yes. The *Green Venue Selection Guide: Integrating LEED Into Travel & Event Management* is a free resource from USGBC that helps venue staff communicate their facility's environmental efforts and accomplishments when submitting proposals to potential customers. The 5-page Hotel & Conference Center Environmental Questionnaire contained in the guide can be used both by hotels that have already achieved LEED certification and by those that have not. In either case, the questionnaire provides an easy way to inform customers of a property's progress on key environmental metrics from LEED.

Travel, meeting, and event planners can use the questionnaire to identify and select the greenest facilities based on LEED criteria, facilities that can help them meet their sustainability goals, during the RFP and venue selection process. Green venues are fundamental to reducing the environmental impact of organizations' meetings, events and travel. Using environmentally responsible meeting, event and lodging facilities makes business sense and can be an important part of an organization's commitment to sustainable policies and operations.

The guide includes background information on green building and hospitality and can be accessed free of charge at www.usgbc.org/venueguide

How can I be sure that my product or service is represented in LEED?

Products and services play a large role in the LEED certification process and can help projects achieve certain LEED credits. Even though products and services do not directly earn LEED points for projects and USGBC does not certify, promote, or endorse the products or services of individual companies, membership in USGBC can be a good way for companies to demonstrate their support of green building and USGBC. More information can be found at www.usgbc.org/membership.

Since LEED does not reference specific products or services, it is important for product manufacturers and service providers to learn how their products or services can help projects meet LEED credit requirements. Please visit www.usgbc.org/leed for more information on LEED and free access to the LEED Rating Systems.