“Like TurboTax for LEED” - GSA Launches Building Portfolio Management System

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One of the nation’s largest public real estate organizations is launching a new building portfolio management system, designed to benchmark performance in sustainable building operations across its portfolio - roughly 375 million square feet.

Game on.

“Our new management information system is like TurboTax for LEED certification”, said David Gray, Sustainability Manager at GSA.

The system is the backbone of GSA’s application to the LEED Volume Program for Operations & Maintenance, a program through which GSA intends to certify 50 buildings by the end of 2012. The federal agency has a long history using LEED as a tool for evaluating and measuring achievements in sustainable design.

“Our new tool cuts documentation time for LEED certification in half and allowed us to design a process where field offices can achieve certification at no cost beyond staff hours, as long as the facility meets the energy and water prerequisites.”

Sound too good to be true? It doesn’t stop there: The tool will help GSA comply with Executive Order 13514, Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance. The order sets Guiding Principles for federal agencies, like water use reduction and energy use optimization, and requires that at least 15% of each agency’s existing buildings above 5,000 gross square feet comply by 2015. GSA has set their target at 18% of their portfolio, which chalks up to 236 facilities.

Those who own and manage real estate portfolios large and small know that the first hurdle in greening existing buildings is simply collecting all of the asset information and benchmarking against performance goals to determine where to target investment.

“The Guiding Principles provide high-level objectives, but don’t include a methodology to achieve them or to verify compliance”, said GSA’s Gray. “Using the LEED Volume Program for Operations and Maintenance methodology, GSA is able to verify compliance with the Guiding Principles for sustainable existing buildings across multiple buildings.”

This approach puts GSA on target to comply with the Executive Order, but Gray explained GSA’s ultimate goal is to implement sustainable operations and maintenance practices across its entire portfolio. To assist other agencies in meeting their goals, GSA is sharing information on its tools and LEED strategies with other federal agencies.

“Our volume certification process will involve over 300 people across all 11 regions. This will allow us to embed more sustainability practices as standard across the portfolio - even in buildings that are not eligible for certification. There is value in this because we won’t just be focusing on the top performers, but moving the needle for the entire portfolio”.

Learn more about GSA’s goals for high performance and sustainable buildings »

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