Improving the Building Product Supply Chain, One LEED Volunteer at a Time

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Credit: Ruin Raider via Flickr

USGBC has just announced that it is establishing a group of 11 to 15 volunteers to serve as a working group that will determine how to best implement Option 3 of the Material Ingredients credit proposed for LEED v4. The call for self-nominations of applicants posted April 1 to the volunteer opportunities page on the USGBC website, and USGBC will accept applications through May 1. To be eligible, applicants must be an employee of an organization that is a member of USGBC.

Option 3, the new "supply chain optimization" pathway to achieving the proposed credit, debuted in the sixth public comment version of LEED v4. This option rewards LEED project teams for specifying materials in a way that encourages improvements in building materials production along the supply chain, from product manufacturers to raw material suppliers.

The new credit language — and the working group — represent an extraordinary opportunity to bridge communication and collaboration gaps that have stymied progress toward better, healthier building products and manufacturing processes. In order to succeed, the working group will need representation from diverse USGBC member companies that haven't always seen eye-to-eye — it will need to be a true reflection of the member-driven, consensus-based technical development process that defines LEED and sets it apart. The working group will be part of the ongoing conversation among those interested in market transformation, including chemical suppliers, design teams, producers of raw materials, academics, building product manufacturers and government entities. It will allow those who are responsible for signaling the needs and intentions of the downstream green building industry to do so in the most effective way possible, beginning with direct engagement of upstream suppliers.

Part of the charge for the Material Ingredients Supply Chain Optimization Working Group is to identify third-party programs that can verify which manufacturers are engaging in robust safety, health, hazard and risk programs. The group also will create guidance to assist project teams that need simple, smart ways to specify products based on these third-party verifications.

USGBC has launched the same language as a pilot credit (MRpc79), a mechanism that allows teams to immediately apply the credit language to current LEED projects and offer feedback to the working group on how best to implement the credit.

LEED's newest approach to improving transparency and transfer of information for decision-makers should stimulate innovation along the whole supply chain, and lead to better, healthier building products. Better products mean improved global competitiveness without sacrificing the health of our people and planet. Given the accelerated uptake of LEED outside the United States, this working group will be on the forefront of important changes that will have repercussions around the world. Apply today on the volunteer opportunities page.

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