



Federal agencies get mixed results on White House green building report card

Published on **5 Jun 2013**

Written by **Lane Burt**

Posted in **Advocacy and policy**



Late last week, the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released their [annual agency sustainability scorecards](#). These scorecards track how federal agencies are doing in complying with the requirements of Executive Order 13415, which set goals to show reductions on metrics like energy, water and waste in the agencies' operations. The agencies get red, yellow or green to show how they are faring.

So what's new this year? Well, the General Services Administration (GSA), the federal government's landlord, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are doing quite well when it comes to sustainability and especially green building. **GSA is saving over \$65 million a year from energy efficiency**, proving once again that green building pays off for the taxpayers. GSA and EPA got "straight greens" last year too.

But this isn't Lake Wobegon, and everyone isn't above average. The spectrum of scores, notably struggling in the green building category, is particularly salient in the context of current events. Congress is sending mixed messages at best by entertaining not one, but two poison pill amendments to the Shaheen-Portman energy efficiency legislation that would basically stop federal green building entirely


Here are the green building highlights:

- **GSA:** GSA went from 8 percent of its portfolio to 10 percent, ahead of the pace of the 15 percent by 2015 goal. GSA has a huge portfolio, so this is significant, as is the \$65 million taxpayer dollars saved per year already mentioned.
- **EPA:** It's not a shock that EPA is good at this stuff, scoring green on all the metrics. It is equally proficient at green building, having 16 LEED registered or certified projects over 1 million square feet. Impressive.
- **Department of Defense (DOD):** DOD is still in the red on green building. In its defense, its portfolio is the largest of any federal agency, and it has been putting significant effort into improving. DOD has more LEED certified buildings than any agency, and the National Academy of Sciences recently revalidated the DOD policy to certify their buildings to LEED Silver. Most recently, DOD released its new Unified Facilities Code, which draws heavily from ASHRAE/USGBC/IES Standard 189.1, a green building code. It clearly understands the scope of the challenge it is taking on, and I wouldn't bet against it succeeding.


- **NASA:** NASA is all green... except in green buildings, where it gets a yellow again this year. If you're like me, you have unreasonably high expectations for NASA and were a bit disappointed in just a 1 percent increase in its green portfolio. Maybe next year will be the year for the agency with the 3rd most LEED buildings, behind DOD and GSA.
- **Department of Energy (DOE):** DOE was good on most metrics, with five out of seven green scores, but not so good on green building, getting a red score again this year after showing only a 1 percent increase in its sustainable portfolio. DOE has the fourth most LEED buildings of all agencies, and there is no doubt it knows how to improve its buildings, so perhaps a big improvement is in the future.
- **Department of State:** The State Department scored green last year, but still took a huge leap forward in getting a green this year, jumping from a roughly 6 percent sustainable portfolio to 19 percent. The State Department is the purveyor of over 10 million gross square feet of LEED-registered or -certified project space. We can confirm that there are many LEED-certified U.S. embassies around the world that quietly communicate American values every day.
- **Department of Agriculture (USDA):** USDA repeated its green in green building score again this year. Many people think that green buildings are only in Manhattan or Washington, D.C., but that's not the case. USDA even [has a map](#) of some of the LEED and ENERGY STAR projects it has supported through its rural development program. USDA has 65 LEED-registered or -certified projects, amounting to over 1.8 million gross LEED square footage.

The agencies that struggled with green building cited their older, historic building stock as the reason they are behind. While it is true that some older buildings can be challenging, I have to think that if the Treasury Department can find \$3.5 million in savings every year from its LEED Gold certification, then our other most prized and well-known buildings around the country stand to gain from starting the program.

[Discover which agencies have the most building space.](#) If you want to know how LEED has been used by the high-performing agencies to date, check out our [LEED in the Public Sector Fact Sheet](#).



Lane Burt
Policy Director
U.S. Green Building Council



Member employees, USGBC staff

1 comment

[Leave a comment](#)



Brandon Peck
Dutko Grayling

5 hours 27 min ago

Hopefully DOE can also continue to be a trendsetter in the midst of S-P emerging

Leave a comment

Don't have an account? [Create one](#)

You must be signed in to leave a comment.

Email

Password

SIGN IN