

Next Steps for LEED 2012: Q&A with Chrissy

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It takes a lot to finalize a new [LEED rating system](#): A lot of time (years), a lot of public comments (over 19,000), and a lot of steps in the process (hence this explanatory entry). With the closing of third public comment, now seems a particularly good opportunity to focus on a fundamental piece of LEED 2012's evolution - [the ballot period](#). If there are no more substantive changes – and as a result – additional public comment periods, balloting will be the next step in the process. Today, I sat down with Gwen Building, an inquisitive (and sadly, fictional) USGBC Member, to defog this critical step in developing LEED 2012. Read on, because this involves you! (Yes, you!)

Gwen Building (GB): There's been a lot of buzz about the upcoming ballot for [LEED 2012](#). What exactly is “ballot?”

Chrissy Macken (CM): The ballot period is the opportunity for USGBC membership to vote on the rating system changes for LEED 2012. We ballot all technical changes and new versions of rating systems.

GB: How does balloting work?

CM: Our USGBC national members interested in voting [opt into a consensus body](#). That group votes on behalf of the entire membership whether to approve the proposed changes to the rating system. If the changes pass ballot, then LEED 2012 is finalized and becomes available for project teams everywhere to utilize. Hooray! **The opportunity to opt in to the consensus body starts April 2**. From there, we'll ensure the consensus body is balanced, with members from every interest category - prior to opening ballot.

GB: Why do we use a consensus body? Shouldn't everyone just vote?

CM: Ideally, every member company participates. But, just like a presidential election, ballots don't have nearly the turnout they should. Some members might not be interested in ballot, even if they are engaged with other aspects of LEED.

Examples include our recent LEED 2009 for Retail, Healthcare, and Neighborhood Development ballots: All very important products with significant market impact, but unlikely that our entire membership would be interested in all of them. An urban planner, for example, would be most interested in the Neighborhood Development ballot, but maybe not so much LEED for Retail.

GB: LEED 2012 is a ballot of all our rating systems. Do we expect our consensus body will be pretty big?

CM: Yes, LEED 2012 is different because it is a comprehensive update to all rating systems. We've had lots of participation in the three public comment periods - over 19,000 comments in total - so hopefully that translates to a really energetic and engaged consensus body.

GB: Is there a limit to how many of our members can get involved in the consensus body?

CM: Not at all! **The consensus body is open to all USGBC national members in good standing as of March 1, 2012. Good standing must be maintained throughout the balloting period, June 30.** There is no limit to the number of participants, and any imbalances are addressed through randomly appointing additional members to the consensus body.

GB: Interesting. Well, enough about consensus body, how does a rating system pass ballot?

CM: That's a great question. There are three conditions necessary to pass ballot: **quorum, consensus and balance**. To meet the quorum requirement, at least half of the member companies in the consensus body must cast a vote – this ensures we have a substantial amount of members involved in the process. To meet the consensus requirement, at least two-thirds of them must vote in the affirmative – this is the basis for determining whether our members are in agreement on the proposed changes. To meet the balance requirement, at least half of the members in each interest category must vote in the affirmative – this ensures that no single interest group dominates the vote.

GB: That is the most complicated thing I have ever heard! EVER!

CM: Right? [Laughing] It's pretty convoluted. But at least we can say there's a method to our madness!

GB: Well, I think I found a loophole in your “method” – wouldn't it be easy for large companies with a ton of employees to dominate the vote? What tyranny!
CM: Ah, I haven't yet mentioned a key detail. **While every employee from a company may participate in ballot, each company receives one vote.** A company with 1,000 employees could have all employees opt in, only interested employees, or one employee. No matter the strategy, each company vote is calculated proportionally to equal one vote from each company. We've updated this process from the LEED 2009 ballot to give companies the flexibility to engage their employees how they see fit.

GB: Wow, this is a ton of information. What are the key takeaways for members?

CM: Finally, a softball question!

1. Be sure that your company membership was in good standing as of March 1, and remains in good standing until at least June 30;
2. [Join the consensus body](#) starting April 2 – it's open through May 1;
3. Contact your [USGBC Chapter](#) for information about local events and presentations related to LEED 2012; and
4. Vote between June 1 and 30. If you want to vote, you must join the consensus body in April!

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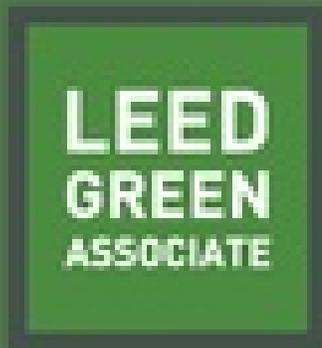
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