



**LEED®**

**Foundations of the  
Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design  
Environmental Rating System  
A Tool for Market Transformation**

**LEED Policy Manual**

**August 2006  
LEED Steering Committee**

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## **Mission of LEED**

LEED encourages and accelerates global adoption of sustainable green building and development practices through the creation and implementation of universally understood and accepted standards, tools and performance criteria.

## **SECTION 1**

### ***Purpose of this Document***

This Foundations of LEED Green Building Rating System (LEED Foundations Document) is intended to be a blueprint for the market-transformation process to be achieved through the ongoing refinement and development of LEED and the procedures that support it. This document is a work in-progress that will be updated on a regular basis as the LEED product portfolio evolves and becomes implemented with different market sectors.

The Foundations document is required reading for all LEED Steering Committee members and all Chairs and Vice Chairs of LEED Horizontal and Vertical Market Product Committees, as well as Technical Advisory Groups, Curriculum/Accreditation Committee and the Technical and Scientific Advisory Committee (TSAC). It is also recommended reading for all USGBC Board members and other Sub-Committee Chairs.

This manual is the first in a series which collectively comprise the Foundations Documents for the LEED Green Building Rating System. This includes:

#### **LEED Policy Manual**

LEED Product Development and Maintenance Manual

LEED Committee Charters

These documents should be read together for a comprehensive understanding of the Foundations of LEED.

The LEED Policy Manual describes USGBC policy for consensus based development of the LEED family of products, their implementation and promotion in the marketplace and the education, outreach and other support activities to maximize the acceptance and uptake of LEED products in their respective markets both nationally and internationally. The manual also describes USGBC's policy for protection of the LEED brand and integrity. **The LEED Policy Manual is designed to be an executive summary of the two following documents, the Product Development and Maintenance Manual and the Committee Charters.**

## SECTION 2

### ***The LEED Vision for Market Transformation***

The buildings that we live in, work from, and enjoy during our leisure activities represent the largest contributions to anthropogenic environmental impacts and resource depletion and threaten our environmental, economic and social sustainability either directly or indirectly.

Designing, constructing and operating our built environments in harmony with the natural environment can and must be accomplished. For humankind to have a future we must learn to live within the flows of nature and we must reduce the wastes and pollution from our activities to levels that can be accommodated by the earth's natural systems. It is to this future the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) is committed. USGBC is the foremost advocate of transforming the building and real estate market towards sustainability while promoting human health, environmental restoration, economic prosperity, social welfare and equity.

USGBC is committed through its development and implementation of the LEED Green Building Rating System to transforming the market so that green buildings become accepted as commonplace. The green building movement is now beginning to make spectacular advances in building technologies, integrated design and operating practice.

Enduring buildings are ones that prove adaptable to change in their surroundings and in their use. LEED must also grow and adapt as we learn more about sustainability and to keep promoting change within its target markets.

### ***The Essence of LEED***

#### **LEED is a product of the U.S. Green Building Council:**

- It is identified with USGBC and supports and advances the Council's mission
- It is consistent with the governing principles, goals, objectives and processes of the Council
- It continually garners input from USGBC membership and outside experts whose participation represents a diverse and broad coalition of building industry stakeholders

#### **Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design—LEED:**

- Is the most extensive, authoritative and well recognized *certification standard* that distinguishes green buildings by design, construction and operation from the rest of the market
- Is a *design guideline* to move building construction and operation toward sustainability
- Is an integrated green building design *training program* to encourage best practice and provide support to the entire real estate industry

- Is a professional accreditation system to distinguish and recognize individual professionals for their expertise in the design, construction and operation of green buildings and achievement of LEED certification

**LEED is a brand:**

- Recognized as the benchmark for green design and development throughout the building industry in the US and increasingly overseas
- Known for its credibility and integrity
- In demand from private and public building owner/occupant/tenants, as well as key decision makers in design, construction, operation and management
- In demand from State and Local governments as a vehicle for design and operation of their own property portfolios and as a vehicle for local policy implementation and incentives
- In demand from high environmental quality speculative developers wishing to distinguish themselves from the rest for their buildings
- Protected and advanced in the marketplace by USGBC nationally and internationally

**LEED is a flexible, yet consistent rating system:**

- That offers an ongoing development process that is broad and flexible and inclusive of the needs of horizontal markets and different building types within these markets or regions, while maintaining the integrity of the system's goals and objectives
- That is adaptable to new processes and technologies or locations while maintaining consistency in adherence to core principles
- That provides objective, clear, concise, objective, actionable, verifiable and documentable criteria for crediting green building performance
- That is updated regularly to take account of new knowledge about the environmental impacts from buildings and their relative importance, while providing sufficient time for the building industry to adapt to these updates

**LEED operates on sound business principles and practices:**

- Generates its own sustainable revenues for administration, customer support, training and ongoing program development
- Benefits from sponsorship for the development of new LEED products and variants
- It works from realistic budgets

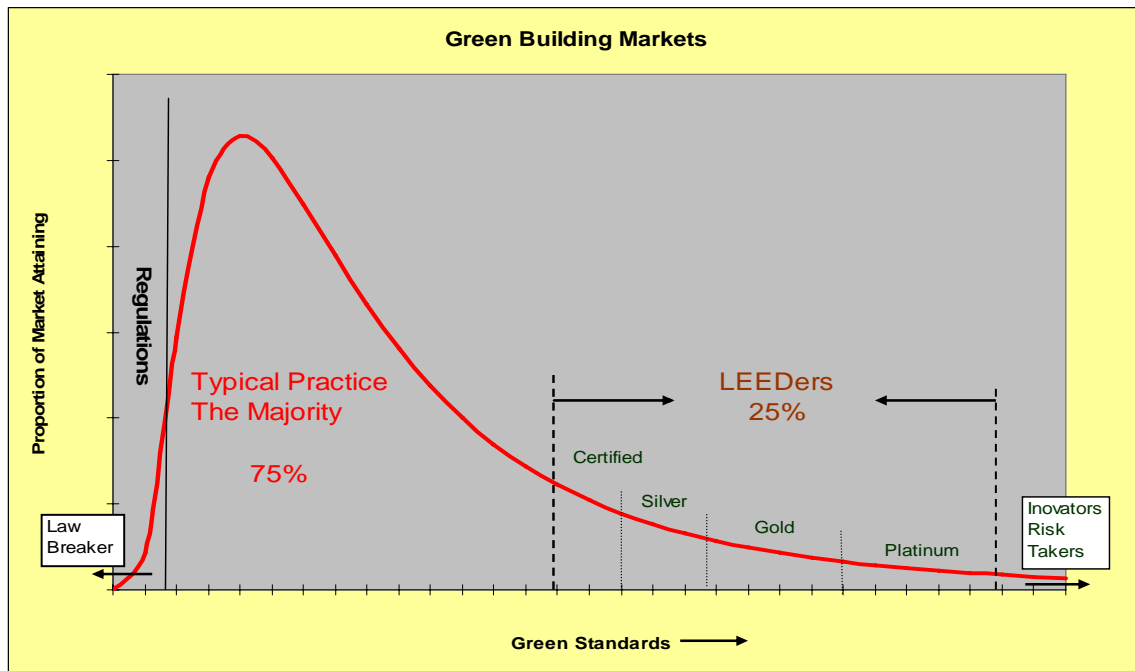
## ***LEED Strategic Goals***

The LEED Green Building Rating System will strive to:

- Promote the tangible and intangible benefits of green buildings including environmental, economic and social benefits over the life cycle of buildings.
- Achieve high profile and successful product launches.
- Earn widespread and routine endorsement by private and public real estate industry leaders and stakeholders.
- Earn widespread and routine endorsement by Federal, State and Local Government and adoption as a vehicle for policy development and implementation.
- Deliver superior customer service that is professional, timely, and targeted to the customer's needs.
- Offer a comprehensive portfolio of programs to meet the diverse needs of the real estate industry.
- Develop innovative technical tools and support services for LEED products.
- To consolidate LEED as the standard for green building practices for our homes, non-residential buildings and developments throughout the U.S. and internationally.
- Lead the industry state of knowledge about practical implementation of the most up-to-date and practical innovations.
- Improve LEED's performance criteria as the industry gains experience with integrated design and green construction.

## Positioning of LEED Standards in the Market

Buildings vary widely in the extent to which they exhibit green characteristics. The diagram overleaf shows how USGBC envisages that LEED is positioned to promote market transformation. The graph indicates that the majority of the market adopts a construction standard a little better than code and regulation, though some don't even achieve this level, thereby breaking the law. At the other extreme, there are the deep Green innovators who are inventing the new practice for the future, but doing so at significant technical or financial risk.



LEED is targeted at the early adopters of Green building practice. The third party assessed and certified performance represented by a LEED Certification signals the improved environmental credentials of these Green buildings to the market, allowing them to achieve premium value within their local markets. Although LEED is not targeted at the deeply green building, innovation credits do provide a mechanism for rewarding innovative green practice. Such innovations also provide ideas for future LEED credits. Equally, as LEED promotes green building practice into the mainstream, the level of performance needed to achieve LEED certification will rise to stay consistent with its focus on leading early adopters in the market.

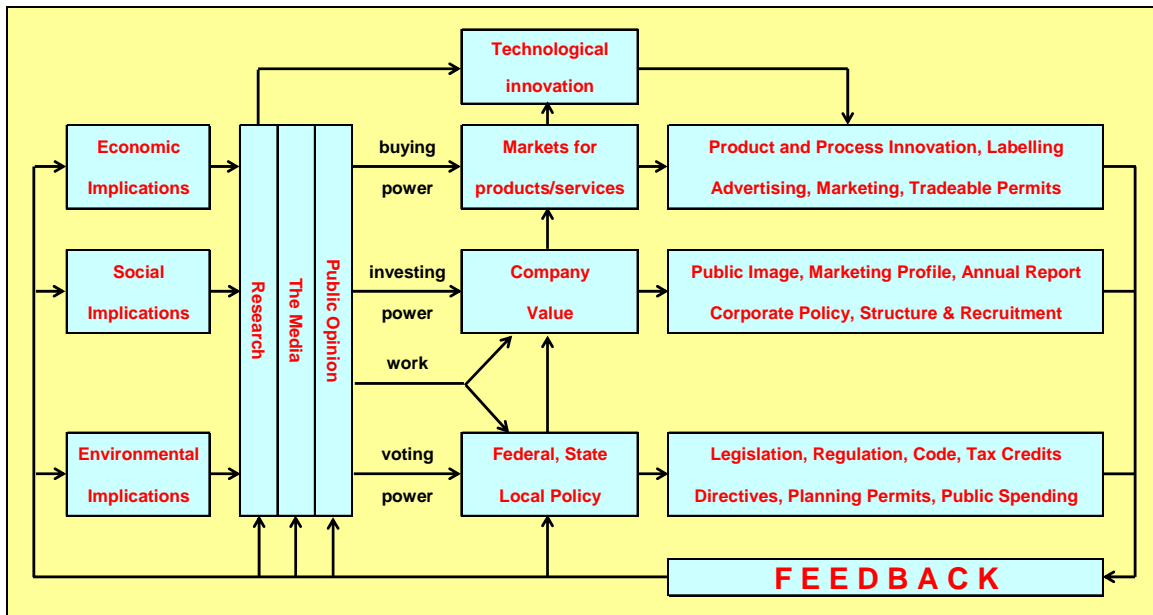
## How LEED Effects Market Transformation – Drivers for Change

For market transformation to be successful, it is important to understand what drives change. As demonstrated in the figure below, the drivers for change in green building markets can be traced back to the actual environmental, economic and social impacts that we all experience. Often these are not obvious and are only uncovered by research. The research findings only make a difference if they feel relevant to the general public and the media plays a key role in interpreting research findings so that they are understood by the general public. There are 4 things that the general public can actually do to make a difference:



1. they can change the things that they buy
2. they can choose where to invest their savings
3. they can vote for an administration sympathetic to their aims
4. they can choose where they wish to work and apply their labor

By signaling the otherwise invisible benefits of green buildings, LEED informs purchasing decisions that enhance the value of green buildings compared to alternatives. This can add real premium value to buildings that distinguish themselves in this way. Corporations can also choose to buy into green buildings as a way of signaling to their staff, their customers and their investors that they are an ethical organization that cares for the future. By buying into green buildings, commercial business can make a public statement about the ethos of their organization. In addition, they will save money directly on the running costs of their buildings, improve the productivity and health of their employees and attract and retain the best staff. People prefer to work in green buildings. The public like to invest ethically and ethical investment typically outperforms average investment so acting green is also wise investment. Public sector organizations can also signal their environmental credentials to their voters by investing in green buildings and by devising policy instruments that lever increased uptake of green buildings. LEED provides the perfect policy instrument for such policies.



### ***LEED Portfolio of Products***

Over its life, a building goes through different phases until it eventually becomes obsolete and is demolished or renovated and given a new lease of life. At each phase, different decision takers are influential to the buildings design and operation. Every decision has a client (who can determine the context of the decision) and a decision-taker (who implements the decision).

LEED provides the common language in which aspirations can be expressed (Client wants Gold) and decision-taker must deliver (Designer must design to achieve the credits for Gold). There are also indirect effects of the decisions informed by LEED ratings.

### **Horizontal Market Products**

The Horizontal Market products are the main LEED products. The Horizontal market products attempt to span the full range of possible building types and phases in the life of a building. Horizontal Market products have priority over Vertical Market products for Steering Committee volunteer time, as well as USGBC Staff time and budgetary resources.

Horizontal Market products must be developed to achieve the right balance between adaptation and tailoring for practical application within their target markets, whilst maintaining brand identity and consistency of standard and rigor across the LEED product range. Permissible adaptations are described in the LEED Product Development Handbook.

Horizontal Market products are developed by their own product committees in conjunction with the Technical Advisory Groups to ensure consistency. All Horizontal Market products are subject to review and approval by the LEED Steering Committee. All Horizontal market products must be piloted and balloted with the full USGBC membership before they are launched and implemented by USGBC.

### **Vertical Market Products**

In some building sectors, there are specific technical features of the buildings and/or the processes that take place within them that demand special treatment.

In these instances, a LEED Application Guide gives specific advice on how to apply LEED and on any special exceptions or interpretations that can be used to deal with specific problems or simply to assist an application.

Vertical Market products are also developed by their own product committees and subject to review and approval by the LEED Steering Committee advised by the Technical Advisory groups to ensure consistency. Vertical Market products may be piloted and balloted with the full USGBC membership before they are launched and implemented by USGBC. Where an application guide makes no adaptation of credits and simply fulfills an educational or marketing role, there will be no need to pilot or ballot the Guide. Such cases will be at the discretion of the LEED Steering Committee.

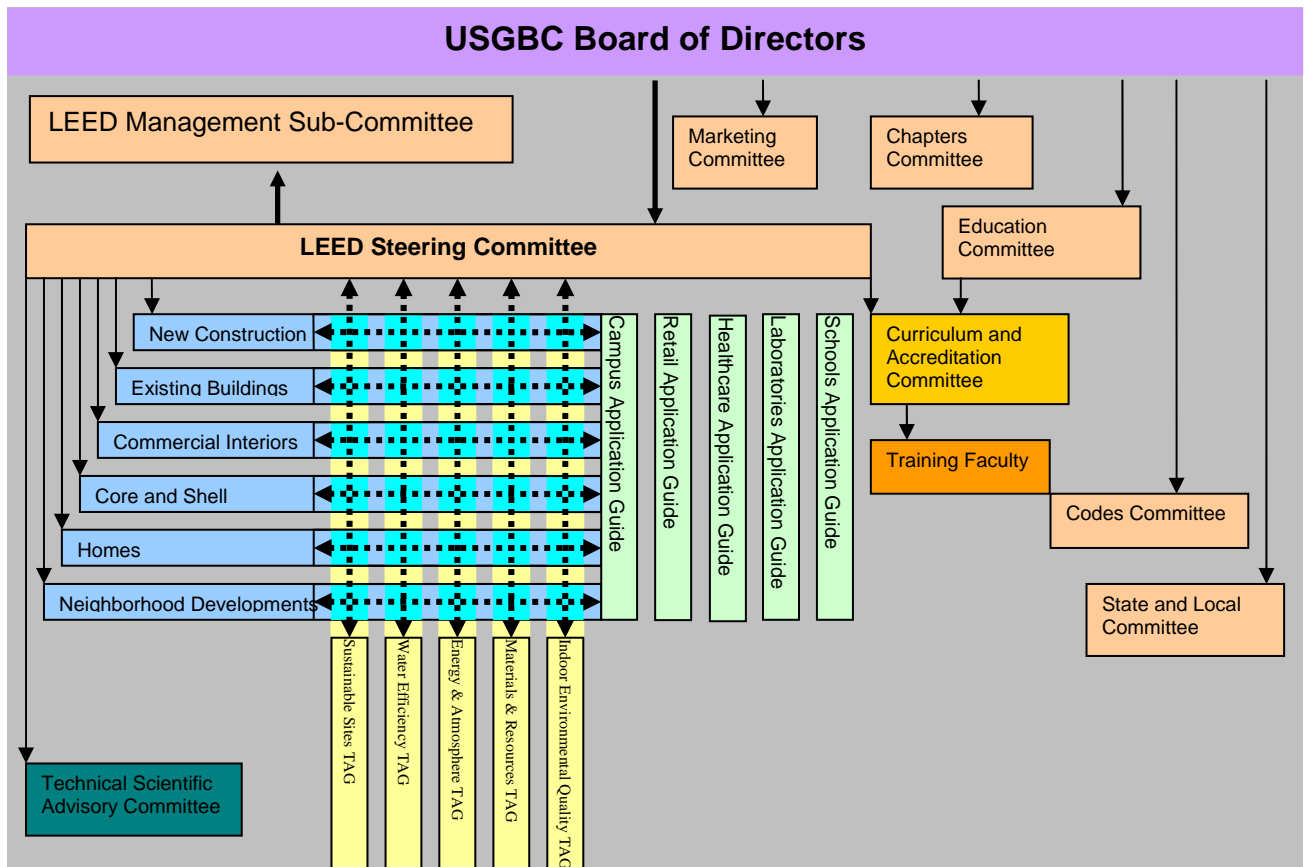
## SECTION 3

### LEED Committees

The dedication and expertise of the USGBC membership represents the LEED System's most valuable asset. The Foundations Policy document outlines the basic structure and function of the LEED Committees.

#### How LEED Committees are Organized

The following diagram shows how the LEED Management Sub-Committee and the LEED Steering Committee are at the heart of LEED operations. The diagram also shows how the other LEED Committees are organized by product and by technical field. The Product Committees are divided to address vertical and horizontal markets. Technical Advisory Groups support both Horizontal and Vertical Market Committees and provide consistency of approach and performance across the product range.



### **Steering Committee**

Working together with LEED Staff and the USGBC Board, the Steering Committee is charged with overseeing development and delivery of the LEED product line consistent with the mission of LEED and USGBC. The Steering Committee's role is to (1) Establish and enforce LEED direction and policy, (2) Delegate responsibility and, (3) Oversee all LEED committee activities.

### **Management Sub-Committee**

The LEED Management Sub-Committee is a subset of the Steering Committee that brings a particular management function expertise, as well as representation of each of the key interests present on the LEED Steering Committee. The purpose of the LEED Management Sub-Committee is to provide a forum for rapid decision-making where the full representation of interests from the full LEED Steering Committee is not needed or where executive decisions need to be made on behalf of the Steering Committee.

### **Horizontal Market Committees**

Horizontal Product Committees work with the Steering Committee and LEED Staff to oversee efforts to bring each LEED Horizontal Product through the process of technical development, and to assist in the development of business, marketing and operations plans for the smooth and effective operation of each product line.

### **Vertical Market Committees**

Vertical Market Committees adapt Horizontal Market rating criteria and supporting tools and products, etc. to the needs of particular building sectors and develop Application Guides for use in these markets.

### **Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs)**

The TAGs are responsible for maintaining consistency and technical rigor in the development of credits throughout the LEED product portfolio. They also respond to specific credit rulings and interpretations.

### **Technical Scientific Advisory Committee (TSAC)**

The role of TSAC is to ensure the technical soundness of LEED and its supporting documents, such as the Reference Guide, LEED training and accreditation programs and software support tools. This Committee also serves as a scientific advisory committee to the Council when technical issues are potentially difficult to resolve, involve significant controversy, or involve issues that may become inconsistent across LEED products.

### **Curriculum/Accreditation Sub-Committee**

The Curriculum/Accreditation Sub-Committee is jointly constituted by the Education Committee and the LEED Steering Committee with the specific role of developing and implementing the Council's own workshop program and Professional Accreditation Exam.

### **Adjunct Committees**

Several other committees that report directly to the Board are also influential to LEED. The Chapter Steering Committee is particularly influential since it represents the active membership at the local level and provides a primary mechanism for promoting LEED locally and for local LEED Education and Workshops. As a result, the Chapter Steering Committee is represented on the LEED Steering Committee and the LEED Management Sub-Committee. The State and Local Government Committee assists State & Local Government to adopt LEED and use it effectively as a policy instrument. The Codes Committee researches and negotiates with code writing bodies to remove barriers to green building innovation that are implicit or explicit within building codes. The Education Committee's mission is to work to integrate green building material into the curriculum and to undertake outreach to professionals to improve their capability in and experience of integrated design.

### ***Committee Policies***

The following section summarizes the USGBC policies and procedures that apply to LEED committees. These policies do not regulate task forces or short-term working groups of limited duration. Unless otherwise noted, all USGBC policies that apply to all committees will apply to LEED committees, including the USGBC Conflict of Interest Policy (see below) and the Anti-Trust Compliance Policy.

Each LEED Committee type should have its own charter. If an individual committee needs to alter the charter for their type for any reason, all changes must be approved by the USGBC Board. These Charters describe in detail the composition of each LEED Committee, its charge, its relationship to other Committees in the LEED System, and outlines Committee operation guidelines.

### **Conflict of Interest Policy**

At all levels of decision-making in committees, persons casting votes and otherwise making decisions shall be aware of potential (real or perceived) conflicts of interest regarding the matter which is subject to the vote or decision. During discussion of such issues, Committee members will be required to disclose any and all such conflicts pursuant to the Council conflict of interest policy. Committees shall decide whether the disclosed conflict should prohibit the individual from participating in and/or voting on the subject at hand. This policy is designed to ensure that all officers, directors, committee members and other persons serving in a leadership capacity of, for, or on behalf of the U.S. Green Building Council ("Leaders") exercise good judgment in dealing with conflicts that could undermine the best interests of the Council.

### **Balance and Participation**

The Council and the LEED Steering Committee will strive to involve different types of members in the discussions and consideration of proposed rating criteria as appropriate for the nature of criteria being considered. USGBC staff may not vote on standing LEED committees, unless approved by the USGBC Board. Unless otherwise noted, a minimum of 5 member categories will be represented on all LEED product committees. The formation of any new committee and committee openings will be announced in the USGBC member newsletter and to the public.

Given the explosive growth of the Council's membership over the last few years, it is a significant challenge to balance the desire to provide opportunities for participation in the development of LEED with the need to maintain a manageable size of the volunteer committees. To accomplish this, the USGBC policy calls for the establishment of Core Committees and Corresponding Committees. Unless otherwise noted, all other LEED committees will be composed of a working Core Committee and a larger members-only Corresponding Committee that may be unlimited in size.

### **Core Committees**

**Core Committees have the primary role and responsibility for developing and implementing policy and/or elements under their jurisdiction. The LEED Steering Committee will be comprised only of Core Committees as described below. LEED Core Committees are responsible for recommending policies to the Steering Committee and providing policy oversight to relevant programs. The Core Committee will be composed of an odd number of 7 to 25 members.**

### **Corresponding Committees**

Unless otherwise noted, any number of USGBC members can join a Committee as Corresponding members. Corresponding members are placed on a listserv on the members only side of the website and will receive regular postings of minutes from Core Committee meetings and may submit comments on products in development and other projects to be considered by the appropriate Core Committee. All initial comments must be expressed in writing via the listserv. Depending on their workload, Core Committees or USGBC staff should respond to Correspondents within 2-4 weeks. Core Committees may invite participation of Correspondents in their regular meeting at their discretion.

Core Committees may set rules for the time frame and means by which a desire to comment may be expressed. Committees may limit comments to written comments or allow personal presentations, at their discretion, unless otherwise instructed by the Board.

An email address will be available on the public side of the USGBC website to enable interested non-members to correspond with each LEED Committee.

### **Meeting Minutes**

Written minutes shall be taken at Steering Committee meetings and other committees, TAGs, technical committees should also take minutes in accordance with Council policy. Copies of the minutes should be distributed to those who attend the meeting, should be reviewed for accuracy by attendees with corrections noted, and should be retained in the Council's files. All LEED committees are permitted to keep working notes in addition to their official minutes. The working notes must not be posted to the public web site, but **MUST** be destroyed after 4 months from the meeting date. Working notes are not to be posted to anyone but core committee members and staff. It is understood that such meeting notes will not be officially approved by meeting participants and consequently may not represent all of the perspectives of the meeting participants and therefore may contain inaccuracies.

While the detailed discussion of product development does not need to be recorded for every meeting, action items, decisions about process and determinations about standards should be recorded at the point whenever they are reached within the product development.

**Technical Quality**

LEED committee discussions and decisions should be grounded on technical and scientific considerations of the highest quality. Horizontal and Vertical Market product committees should refer technical questions of concern to the Technical Advisory Groups for consideration as necessary. If an issue proves to be highly contentious or very difficult to resolve technically, then on the advice of the Technical Advisory Groups, the LEED Steering Committee may refer it to the Technical and Scientific Advisory Committee (TSAC).

**Discharge**

Members may be discharged from a committee by the chair as a result of violation of the Council’s Conflict of Interest Policy, lack of attendance of 1/3 of committee meetings, misconduct, or no longer being employed by a member company.

**Expenses**

Expenditures for committee activities shall be within amounts fixed by the Board in the annual budget. Committees shall not pay salaries or professional fees to any committee officer. There may be special circumstances when committee members will be compensated for specific expenses, within the parameters of the budget set by the Board. No committee member has the authority to execute any contract on behalf of USGBC.

***Relative Roles of Volunteer Members and Staff***

Consistent with volunteer-governing organizations, the Board and its designated committees are responsible for policy direction while the staff is responsible for effective implementation of policy and program operations. The line between roles is not always clear or rigid. As USGBC staffing expands, the relative roles of volunteers and staff will also evolve within this overarching context. This section provides guidance for how work will be accomplished for LEED.

**USGBC member/LEED Staff Interactions – Key Functions**

<b>Volunteer member Committees</b>	<b>Professional Staff</b>
Develop overall strategy and policy as delegated by the USGBC Board of Directors	Develop and implement staffing, organizational structures and processes to effectively manage the LEED program and implement policies including LEED registration, customer service, certification, production and sale of materials, development and administration of the LEED workshop program and Accreditation exam.
Develop rating criteria	Report and advise on strategies and policies including rating criteria, funding and strategic

	partnerships, and to manage those partnerships
Determine structure and composition of Committee and Subcommittees	Develop budgets and manage program expenditures within authorized budgets
Develop strategic partnerships	Initiate and manage contracts for support services and commissions
Identify and help develop funding opportunities in concert with CEO	Report progress on important benchmarks of LEED performance (for example, the number of project registrations, or number of professionals trained). Review and make initial recommendations on LEED applicant building projects
Help develop strategic plans for Business, Marketing and Operations	Provide secretariat to Committees

**Reporting Relationships**

LEED staff support the Committees but do not “report” to the Committees or individual members. The USGBC President & CEO is responsible for the overall performance of the organization including personnel and operations. However, to expedite communication and decisions, the President & CEO is also a member of the LEED Steering Committee and its Management Sub-Committee. The Vice President of LEED also provides the main point of contact between the LEED Steering Committee and staff.

**Committee Staff Support**

LEED Staff assist in developing meeting agendas, including soliciting input and preparing necessary materials. Staff is also responsible for arranging meetings, encouraging Committee member participation, taking minutes and distributing them in a timely fashion to Committee members, submitting them for web posting. Exceptions to this can be determined by the Committee and Staff on a case-by-case basis.



## **SECTION 4**

### ***Protecting and Advancing the LEED Brand***

If members of USGBC are the LEED System's most valuable assets, then a close second is the value of the LEED brand and the intellectual capital comprised by the LEED rating criteria, the consensus processes for their development and the rigor, and consistency of the certification processes. These assets must be protected in order to protect the integrity of LEED and its further advance LEED in the market.

As LEED becomes widely used in the U.S. and internationally, upholding the rating system's core environmental performance levels while allowing for regional supplementation and sectoral and national adaptation becomes increasingly important. A LEED rating must mean the same to the market in all circumstances.

The following policies describe the procedures and guidelines that USGBC has adopted to balance the tension between maximizing the effective dissemination and use of the LEED system while also protecting its core identity, integrity and consistency of standard.

### ***The Structure of LEED***

#### **The LEED Standard**

The LEED standard is the heart of the LEED System. Since its release in 2000, the basic LEED standard is being adapted to an increasing array of Horizontal and Vertical Markets. It covers environmental actions in:

- Sustainable Sites
- Water Efficiency
- Energy and Atmosphere,
- Materials and Resources
- Indoor Environmental Quality
- Bonus Credits for Process and Design Innovation

All LEED standards contain three principal types of requirements:

- Prerequisites: Required elements all of which must be met before a project can be considered for LEED Certification.
- Core Credits: Specific actions a project may take in the five areas described above. All Core Credits are voluntary, but each level of LEED Certification requires that certain thresholds be met.
- Innovation Credits: "Extra credit" given for exemplary performance beyond Core Credit performance levels or implementation of innovative actions that confer significant environmental benefits not covered in the rating system.

Provided all Prerequisites are satisfied, the LEED Certification rating is determined by the numbers of credits achieved as follows:

- LEED Certified projects achieve at least 40% of the Core Credits
- LEED Silver projects achieve over 50% of the Core Credits
- LEED Gold projects achieve over 60% of the Core Credits
- LEED Platinum projects achieve over 80% of the Core Credits

The credits and prerequisites in all LEED versions are presented in a common format. This structure is considered part of the LEED brand and should be retained in all LEED versions:

- Intent
- Requirement
- Technologies / Strategies
- Documentation requirements and supporting “Letter Templates” (See below)

### **Future Revisions of LEED**

Future revisions of the LEED rating criteria may expand Core Credits beyond the five categories noted above, adopt some established Innovation Bonus Credits as Core Credits and possibly eliminate some existing Core Credits. In addition, future systems may weight credits to better reflect their relative impacts on sustainability.

### **The Consensus Process**

The committee structure, with its balanced representation of stakeholders and conflict of interest policies, ensures that the development of LEED versions is consensus based and even-handed. The Technical Advisory Groups ensure consistency and rigor in the development, interpretation and enforcement of the standards between LEED versions helping to assure the quality and integrity of the LEED brand. The balloting of new versions with the USGBC membership reinforces the open consensus process. The appeal processes and procedures implemented by the Council assure the fair treatment of individual LEED applicants. All of these measures are essential to protecting and enhancing the integrity, authority and value of the LEED Brand. Similar consensus based processes are used to support the development and implementation of the LEED workshop program and the LEED Professional Accreditation Exam.

In licensing LEED for use in other countries, USGBC will ensure that any approved licensees establish similar consensus processes for the adaptation and implementation of LEED rating systems, Workshop programs and Accreditation Exams and therefore protect and reinforce the credibility and integrity of the LEED brand internationally

### ***Actions for Brand Protection and Advancement***

USGBC will protect the Brand for the family of LEED and USGBC products and services as follows:

- Maintain and enforce LEED trademark and copyright materials in the United States and other Countries as appropriate

- LEED and LEED products and services will only be licensed through the US Green Building Council. No third party may convey the use or license to use LEED and/or LEED products to any other.
- Create market incentives and promote the value of LEED Certification by the US Green building Council
- Development of proof sources and establish LEED/USGBC as a credible source of green education and market transformation
  - Library of Referenced Standards
  - Case Studies
  - Web Site – [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org) / [www.leedbuilding.org](http://www.leedbuilding.org)
  - Background papers
  - Presentations
  - Technical, Financial and Market Research Reports
  - Press Articles/Features
  - Books
  - Literature surveys (especially of USGBC members)
  - Continue a highly visible awareness and marketing campaign
  - Offer training workshops, jointly sponsored regional seminars
  - Sponsor USGBC/LEED high-level National and International events
- Ensure a high degree of consistency in the credit structure, look and feel, stringency and comparability of certification levels across all LEED products whilst permitting sufficient adaptation to market needs and practical requirements.
- Protect the credibility and integrity of LEED by maintaining processes that protect the quality and independence of LEED assessments and provide broad consensus based support for the development of LEED products.
- Protect the credibility and integrity of LEED by maintaining the quality of USGBC workshop training and Accreditation exams.

## **SECTION 5**

### ***Modifying LEED***

USGBC recognizes that LEED needs to be adaptable to meet the different needs of different markets in different locations. Equally though, it is also essential that LEED is consistent and universally recognizable both technically and in terms of the brand.

There are two basic types of modifications to LEED either in the U.S. or in other countries: Adaptations and Supplements. Entities wishing to adapt or supplement LEED for local purposes are urged to first consult the LEED Product Development Handbook.

#### **Adaptations**

USGBC recognizes the importance of local conditions in promoting sustainability, and the need for LEED to be flexible to accommodate these conditions. Nonetheless, adaptation of LEED Rating systems for local use carries significant burdens and responsibilities for the adapting entity. USGBC considers it preferable and recommended that any adaptation to local conditions is done by means of a supplement to the basic LEED standard which of itself remains intact. In this way, either LEED or the supplement can be updated independently without having implications for the other.

#### **Supplements**

USGBC will not normally evaluate or recognize modifications to LEED outside of the Guidelines presented above or in the LEED Product Development Handbook. However, if an entity wants to develop a Supplement to LEED that changes point weightings, add more credits or modifications outside of the flexibility mechanisms described above, it can certainly do so with the following caveats:

1. The provisions of the addendum are scored by the entity itself and USGBC would be under no obligation to assess or certify provisions within the addendum.
2. These provisions are not compared publicly to LEED, either favorably or unfavorably.
3. Projects submitted to LEED will follow only the requirements and documentation required by the approved LEED credits/prerequisites and will not entertain requests to evaluate modifications to LEED outside of the parameters established in this document.

## **SECTION 6**

### ***LEED Process Guidelines***

#### ***Changes & Corrections***

As described below, the Council will issue periodic **changes, clarifications, interpretations, and editorial corrections**. The process will differ for each type of change to LEED. The process shall consider the type of issue and the appropriate individual or party to address the request. The LEED Steering Committee is responsible for guiding the process of changing LEED requirements.

The formal response process for each type of change to LEED may include requirements for voting on the part of the responsible Committee, the USGBC Board or by the membership at large. Voting procedures will follow the principles of consensus established in the Council's bylaws. If consensus is not established at a particular level, then the Request shall be moved up to the next committee or organizational level as appropriate. In any case, (excepting legal challenge) the vote of the Council membership or the USGBC Board shall be taken as the final arbitration of an issue once all recourses of appeal have been exhausted.

#### **Changes**

“Changes” are classified as modifications of point totals and/or requirements for obtaining LEED credit. Changes must be balloted if any of the following circumstances arise.

1. Existing criteria are found to be incorrect in an existing version and must be replaced by new criteria that are substantively different to those already existing. Simple updates to referenced standards that do not imply any change to the stringency of a standard but simply maintain LEED in line with current practice would not warrant ballot, for example.
2. Setting award levels that change the number of available points or proportion of points assigned to a particular issue (weighting)
3. Changes to criteria as part of normal product evolution that change the stringency of a credit (making it easier or more difficult to achieve).

#### **Clarifications**

“Clarifications” are changes to the wording in a LEED Credit or Prerequisite that bring actions in line with intent. Clarifications correct unclear communication, syntax or word use. Clarifications are distinct from changes in that they don't change the intent, requirement or stringency of a credit. Rather, they further define and refine the requirement. (For example, providing a definition of what is meant by “shade,” or specifying a particular chapter in a referenced document.)

Product committees are responsible for taking the lead on issuing clarifications. Clarifications will be reviewed by the Steering Committee but do not require ballot of the membership.

## **Editorial Corrections**

Editorial corrections are the lowest level of change to LEED Rating Criteria. Such corrections involve non-substantive elements, such as spelling, grammar, punctuation and organization for clarity and flow.

Editorial corrections are performed by the Product and Steering Committees and staff. They are not subject to review, approval or ballot.

## *Project Certification Process*

To earn LEED certification, the applicant project must satisfy all of the prerequisites and a minimum number of points to attain a LEED rating level. The certification review process includes the following:

- 1) **Application Submittal.** The project team submits two copies of ALL project application materials, and the corresponding fee (check payable to U.S. Green Building Council), to the LEED Certification Manager.
- 2) **LEED Version 2 Technical Reviews.**
  - a) **LEED Version 2.0 Review:** Documentation submittals for every prerequisite and credit are reviewed for compliance. The inclusion of extraneous documentation is discouraged as this slows the application review process. Within 30 days of administrative approval, the USGBC issues a Preliminary LEED Review document noting credits earned, pending and denied. The project team has 30 days from the receipt of the Preliminary Review to provide corrections and/or additions as a supplementary submittal to the application. The USGBC conducts a Final LEED Review of the application within three weeks of receiving the resubmittal and notifies the project contact of the LEED certification.
  - b) **LEED Version 2.1 Review:** The LEED Letter Templates and additional submittals for each prerequisite and credit are reviewed for compliance. Within 30 days of administrative approval, the USGBC issues a Preliminary LEED Review document noting credit achievement anticipated, pending and denied. In addition, up to six prerequisites and/or credits shall be selected for audit. The project team has 30 days from the receipt of the Preliminary Review to provide corrections and/or additional supporting documents (e.g., calculations, cutsheets and other backup) as a supplementary submittal to the application. The USGBC conducts a Final LEED Review of the application within three weeks of receiving the resubmittal and notifies the project contact of certification status. If two or more audited credits are denied, additional credits may be selected for a second audit and may prompt a Second Preliminary LEED Review prior to a Final LEED Review.
  - c) **LEED Version 2.0 / 2.1 Combination Review:** All credits submitted under the LEED v2.0 Rating System shall be reviewed as outlined in the LEED 2.0 Review Process. All credits submitted under the LEED v2.1 Rating System shall be reviewed as

outlined in the LEED v2.1 Review Process. If audited credits pass, the timeline is identical for both processes.

3) **Award.** Upon notification of the LEED certification, the project team has 30 days to accept or appeal the awarded certification. Upon the project's acceptance, or if it has not appealed the rating within 30 days, the LEED certification is final. The project may then be referred to as a LEED certified building. The USGBC presents the project team with an award letter, certificate and metal LEED plaque indicating the certification level.

4) **Appeal** Once the certification process is completed and the Final Certification Review has been issued, projects have the option of appealing denied credits in the form of a certification appeal. This allows projects to appeal to receive a higher level of certification than they were awarded, or simply obtain additional credits to their certification.

*Step 1*

The project team submits information on the credits that are to be appealed and the credit appeal fee to the USGBC Certification Manager. The information submitted must be collated as a separate package for each credit being appealed. This information must be submitted in electronic format for distribution via email and must include:

- All previously submitted documentation
  - initial filing
  - any further information submitted at any point during the review process in response to reviewer comments
- All additional appeal documentation.

If the project team fails to submit any new documentation, the credit will be denied without further action. USGBC staff will assign the appeal review to one of the consultants under contract to perform LEED certification reviews (appeal reviews will always be handled by a consultant different than the consultant who conducted initial review). The reviewer will then conduct a review of *all* material submitted with the appeal. The consultant will draft a credit ruling and work with USGBC staff to finalize the ruling. At any time during this process, USGBC staff may choose to consult with TAG, TSAC and product committee members for technical or policy assistance. The Appeal Ruling will be inserted into the LEED certification review (sent to the project team at the end of final review) and this document will be renamed 'Appeal Review'. The Appeal Review will then be sent to the project team.

*Step 2*

Successful Appeal

No further action.

Unsuccessful Appeal – Final Appeal Review

If the Appeal Review upholds denial of a LEED credit, the project team may choose to pursue a Final Appeal. The project team must submit all previously submitted documentation and a Final Appeal fee for each credit going to final appeal. The information submitted must be collated as a separate package for each credit being appealed. This information must be submitted in electronic format for distribution via email and must include:

- All previously submitted documentation
  - initial filing
  - any further information submitted at any point during steps 1-3 above in response to reviewer comments
  - the step 1 additional appeal documentation
- Further final appeal documentation

If the project team fails to submit new or additional information, the credit will be denied without further action.

The Appeal package will be sent to the Management Subcommittee of the LEED Steering Committee (MSC). The MSC will perform a cursory review of the issues raised in the appeal and assign a full review of the appeal package to either the relevant Technical Advisory Group, the relevant Product Committee or to the Technical and Scientific Advisory Committee as the issues being appealed dictate. At the discretion of either the appellant or the committee assigned to develop the MSC recommendation a 15 minute teleconference will be scheduled to afford the review committee the opportunity to ask questions of the appellant and allow the appellant the opportunity to verbally present their appeal – if neither the appellant nor the review committee wish to engage in the teleconference, no teleconference will occur. No ruling will be made or response given during the call. The assigned group will develop a ruling, resolve any outstanding issues with MSC and submit the ruling as a recommendation to the MSC. MSC will issue the Final Appeal Review.

*Step 3*

Successful Appeal

No further action

Unsuccessful Appeal – Final Appeal

If the Final Appeal upholds denial of a previously denied credit, no further recourse for the project team remains. The ruling of the MSC is final.



*Balloting Procedures*

The following process will govern balloting of credits, credit categories, cross-credit issues, rating systems in the LEED program:

1. The LEED Steering Committee approves the release of any LEED action for comment.
2. The USGBC Board approves the release of the action for comment and balloting.
3. The proposed action will be made available to the public on the USGBC web site. Current members of USGBC in good standing will be notified of the comment period and announcements will be sent to appropriate publications.
4. Web-based comments will be accepted within a thirty to sixty day comment period. The comment form will require respondents to reference specific paragraphs or sections and will include provisions for submitting substantive and procedural comments.
5. A period of no less than thirty days will be allowed to collate comments and draft revisions in response to comments. Similar comments may be aggregated, along with explanations of how any differences were resolved. The LEED Steering Committee will approve revisions to the product or item.
6. An annotated draft highlighting any further changes made to proposed action will be posted on the web site along with a summary of public comments and responses. Comments on the changes to the proposed action only will be accepted for a period of fifteen days;
7. Subsequent comments on the changes to the proposed action will be considered for incorporation into the ballot draft within sixty days.
8. At its discretion, on the basis of substantive or procedural comment, the LEED Steering Committee may remand any part or the whole of the proposed action back to the originating committee/membership for an additional comment period repeating steps 3-7 as it deems necessary.
9. Members will receive an email notification of the ballot. The proposed action will be accompanied on the web site by commentary with the changes highlighted.
10. Thirty days will be provided for members to cast votes on the ballot with one vote allowed for the USGBC primary liaison.
11. A minimum of two-thirds affirmative vote of votes cast will be required for an action to pass. A quorum of ten percent of USGBC members will be required.
12. An announcement of the ballot results will be made to the membership within four weeks.
13. If within fifteen days of the announcement of the ballot results any party raises a procedural issue with the ballot, they may file an appeal to the Board (see procedural appeals policy below).
14. If the action passes, publication and implementation follows. If the action fails, it may be resubmitted for ballot at a later date.
15. An item may be withdrawn by the USGBC Board or the LEED Steering Committee at any time during the above-described process.

*Appeals Procedures*

**Procedural Appeals**

When an appeal is made to the Board regarding any procedural issue, the Board or its designated committee will address the appeal and respond either with a conclusion on the issue or a statement of intention to pursue the subject further within 45 days of receipt. The appeal must be in writing and must state the nature of the objection(s) and proposed remedial actions.

**General Appeals**

The Board may decide to remand any part or the whole of the balloted credit or rating system back to the LEED Steering Committee, to the originating committee/membership for an additional comment period or ballot repeating any of steps 3-7 as it deems necessary. The Board may mandate procedural changes in repeating any steps to respond to the appeal.