Why did USGBC choose to update the LEED rating system?

USGBC’s mission is to transform the way buildings and communities are designed, built and operated, enabling an environmentally and socially responsible, healthy, and prosperous environment that improves the quality of life. One of the key ways we achieve this is through the LEED rating system.

With continuous advances in technology and the needs of the marketplace, in order for LEED to remain relevant, it is critical that USGBC evolve the LEED program to address environmental issues. USGBC wants LEED buildings to not just do less bad from an environmental perspective, but do more good.

This requires that the LEED rating system continuously improve and guide the market toward more environmentally sustainable strategies and decisions. This is accomplished in a number of ways through changes to the rating system requirements.

What are the major changes in LEED v4?

- **Greater focus on performance:** Linking credit achieve more closely with improved environmental outcomes
  - Example #1: LEED 2009 = bike rack and changing rooms. LEED v4 = bike rack and changing rooms + must be in a bikeable area.
  - Example #2: More points awarded to IAQ testing as compared to the flush out.
  - Example #3: Two new prerequisites for have a whole building water meter and a whole building energy meter.
  - Example #4: Restructured the Materials and Resources credits. Focusing on holistic material performance (total environmental impact: water, energy, etc.) instead of rewarding single attributes of material (recycled content, regional, etc.)
  - Example #5: Low-Emitting Materials credits: in LEED 2009 they addressed VOC content, in LEED v4 they address the actual emissions of the product which better relates to the air quality within a space.
  - Example #6: Increased stringency in energy performance prerequisites and credits, resulting in reduced carbon impact of LEED buildings.

- **Transformation on a larger scale**
  - New market sectors - LEED v4 addresses 21 different market sector adaptations - each reviewed by market leaders either owning or designing or operating those space types - to identify and address the unique needs of each market.
    - Data Centers: energy credits are more appropriate for this large energy user
    - Warehouse and Distribution Centers: addresses transportation energy impacts
    - Hospitality: specific guest room needs
    - Existing Schools: transfers many of the ideas from Schools NC to Schools EB
    - Existing Retail: addresses transient customers and supply chain issues
    - Midrise Residential: construction type differences between single- and multi-family
  - LEED is Global - In the new rating system, project teams will find greater recognition of regional context with the incorporation of regional and local equivalencies to typical referenced standards. Project teams will also that metric units have been included in all tools and resources.

Why did the rating system development process take so long - six public comment periods over three years?

Stakeholder engagement is an extremely important part of LEED development. LEED is successful because it is built by those who use it through our rigorous, consensus-based development process. The LEED v4 update included changes to most credits in the system, and has engaged stakeholders from all parts of the green building industry. Successful LEED development balances the imperative of USGBC’s environmental goals with the market’s ability to
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successfully implement the changes – this takes time. LEED v4 included six public comment periods, evidence of unprecedented engagement from all stakeholders.

I have a comment about a credit I think should be changed in LEED v4. How can I submit this feedback?
The LEED v4 rating system was approved by USGBC membership in June 2013, with 86 percent of membership voting in favor of adopting the new program. Due to this circumstance, changes to the technical requirements of LEED v4 may not be made. Your comment may be considered for future updates to the LEED program.

Has multiple building guidance been developed for LEED v4?
Yes. Guidance has been developed for LEED v4 for Multiple Building and On-Campus projects. Full guidance and documentation will be available at the time of LEED v4 program launch.

Has recertification guidance been developed for LEED v4?
Yes. Recertification guidance has been developed for LEED v4. Full guidance and documentation will be available at the time of LEED v4 program launch.

How much more does LEED v4 cost?
The cost of using LEED v4 (or any version of LEED) varies by project and the strategies a project chooses to employ in order to meet the requirements. Wherever possible, USGBC has sought to reduce the “soft costs” associated with LEED v4 by streamlining documentation and providing improved tools and resources that have been thoroughly tested through the LEED v4 Beta Program.

Support Tools and Resources

How has USGBC improved the reference guide for LEED v4?
The LEED v4 reference guides will provide improved content and organization and be delivered in a wider variety of formats, including traditional print and web-based.

How will the reference guides be organized?
The reference guide includes the following sections:

1. Behind the Intent
2. Step by Step Guidance
3. Required Documentation
4. Further Explanation
5. Related Credit Tips
6. Changes from LEED 2009
7. Reference Standards
8. Exemplary Performance
9. Definitions

What formats will the reference guide be delivered?
The reference guide will be delivered in multiple formats:

1. Print
2. PDF
3. Web-based (including video tutorials, audio clips, reviewer tips, and more).

How much does the reference guide cost?
Pricing for the reference guide - including bulk purchase pricing and subscription based pricing for the web-based guide - has not yet been determined.

How the user experience with v4 will be different from past rating systems?
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- **Reference guide delivery methods** – in addition to the traditional book format, the reference guide will be available in a web-based format that relies on more interactive modes of delivery, for example, video tutorials.
- **Improved documentation** – the documentation forms have gone through more than a year of development and several rounds of review to ensure that the documentation process does not create unnecessary burden for project teams. Fields within forms have been minimized wherever possible, and are more focused on industry standard documentation, reducing the need to create documents simply for LEED certification.

Education

Where can I access LEED v4 education?
A number of LEED v4 education resources are available:
  - A free overview document: LEED v4 User Guide
  - A free two-part series: Introduction to LEED v4
  - A five-part series available for purchase: D+C Rating System Review Series
  - A series of LEED v4 Workshops at the 2013 Greenbuild International Conference and Expo

The O+M Rating System Review Series will open for registration in October.

Credentials

How is the credential program changing for LEED v4?
In Spring 2014, USGBC will update the LEED Green Associate and AP exams to include information on LEED v4 and other updates in the world of green building. There will be no distinction in versions of the credential, so current credential holders do not need to retest. We expect that their continuing education will keep them up to date with the most recent green building education.

If you are already a LEED AP or Green Associate you’re all set. You don’t need to retest and you will have the same credential as those that take the v4 version of the exam. Keep doing your CMP to make sure you’re ready to work on LEED v4 projects.

If you are planning to take the test make sure you’re studying the right material based on when you plan to take the exam. If you are taking it before Spring 2014, focus on LEED 2009. If you are taking it after that time, look at the LEED v4 rating systems.

Transitioning to LEED v4

Is the LEED v4 Beta Program still open for participation?
No, the LEED v4 Beta Program is closed to new registrants. Projects wishing to register for LEED v4 will be able to do so beginning at the Greenbuild International Conference and Expo in Philadelphia, scheduled for late November 2013.

When will USGBC launch the LEED v4 program?
The LEED v4 program will open for registration at the Greenbuild International Conference and Expo in Philadelphia, scheduled for late November 2013. The LEED v4 program launch includes rating system, reference guides available for purchase, full documentation, regional priority credits, and educational offerings.

What are the registration and certification fees for LEED v4?
Registration and certification fees for LEED v4 will launch at the current pricing for LEED 2009 registration and certification. See the GBCI certification fees page for more information.
What resources will be available for project teams upon launch of LEED v4?
The LEED v4 program launch includes rating system, reference guides available for purchase, full documentation, regional priority credits, and educational offerings.

How can a current project adopt parts of LEED v4?
USGBC is in the process of developing Alternative Compliance Paths for LEED 2009 that would allow projects to adopt portions of LEED v4. Only portions of the LEED v4 program approved for use in LEED 2009 by the LEED Steering Committee will be allowed. This information will be posted at www.usgbc.org/leedv4 once available.

Current projects may also earn Innovation points using the Pilot Credit Library and choosing the LEED v4 strategies.

Can a project team switch from LEED 2009 to LEED v4?
Project teams may switch from LEED 2009 to LEED v4 once the new program has launched at the Greenbuild International Conference and Expo in Philadelphia, scheduled for late November 2013. It has not been determined if there will be an additional cost to transition between programs.

When is the last day to register for LEED 2009?
Projects may register for LEED 2009 until June 1, 2015.

When is the sunset date for LEED 2009?
The sunset date for a rating system is typically six years from the last date of registration. Using this formula, LEED 2009 is expected to sunset for certification around June 2021.

Does my project need to comply with LEED v4 once it launches?
No. If a project is already registered, they comply with the version under which they have registered.