



Tips to Prepare for the Launch of the LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance Volume Program

At Healthy Buildings, we are preparing building owners and managers to position their buildings for participation in volume certification in anticipation of the launch of the LEED EBOM Volume Program in mid-2011. Our considerable past experience with LEED EBOM has allowed us to glean valuable lessons on effectively achieving volume certification for existing buildings. The Program is currently still in pilot and can be found at usgbc.org/leedvolume. The following article will discuss some of the important lessons we learned throughout the process, and will assist groups preparing to engage in volume certification.

Lessons Learned

The most significant lesson we learned from working on LEED Volume Pilot Program was the importance of developing a clear strategy, grounded in a logical flow of actions and responsible parties. Working with several properties and people at the same time demands extremely organized systems at both the building and portfolio level. Credit documentation for LEED certification can be chaotic, and the order of operations can be dictated by which credits are easier or less expensive to achieve. These decisions do not always encourage a path to maximizing certifications in a streamlined, cost-effective and timely fashion. Selecting which credits to pursue, when to pursue them, and who is ultimately responsible for ongoing documentation is critical, especially for volume certification.

One of the greatest features of the volume certification process for existing buildings is the flexibility to design prototype strategies according to the specifics of an organization's group of buildings and its management structure. In building operations, the concept of prototype strategies does not mean that the buildings necessarily have physical features or performance levels in common. Rather, it means that a participant uses a common framework of technical tools and management processes to ensure consistent implementation of LEED credits. When an organization has management similarities across a group of buildings, it can leverage those existing similarities to facilitate a streamlined LEED documentation process. The approaches outlined below were specifically developed for a national property management firm and will provide property management firms and building owners with some of the basics to participating in the LEED Volume Program for Existing Buildings: Operations and Maintenance.

Project Management Support

Engaging a team to participate in the development and implementation of the program is critical. Each volume participant identifies a prototype administrator who will be responsible for developing pre-certification and ongoing certification submittals for USGBC/GBCI, creating documentation tools, managing volume project teams, providing training, and performing quality control of building-level documentation. In addition to key in-house personnel required to manage the project, an outside consultant may be very helpful in guiding the process. In preparation for the launch of the program, I am working with clients to identify prototype administrators and to develop their teams.

Development of Precertification Package for Submittal to USGBC

Unlike an individual certification program, volume participants must prepare and submit a prototype precertification package to USGBC/GBCI to seek approval for the strategic approach. A Quality Control Plan, education plan, and prototype credit documentation are developed to account for the characteristics of a participant's group of buildings. All precertification submissions outline how the



participant will manage pre-performance period activities, performance period dates, post-performance period data analysis, and team training. The precertification package requires a description of the tools to facilitate the process, education and training of building staff, credit documentation (including building-level and portfolio-level tools), and the quality control process. I am working with clients now to frame out the contents of their precertification packages.

Program Tools

The LEED Volume Program offers significant flexibility in the tools and formats that participants use to document volume projects. Below are examples of some building-level and portfolio-level program tools that can be used as part of a participant's quality control and education plans, and can be beneficial in tracking ongoing performance.

Procedures Manual

USGBC will release comprehensive customer guidance documents when the full LEED Volume Program for Existing Buildings: Operations and Maintenance is launched in mid-2011, providing assistance on general program procedures as well as submittals. However, it can be advantageous for volume participants to create their own procedures manuals, as part of their Quality Control Plan, to provide organization-specific program details. Similar to the LEED reference guides, a procedures manual outlines credit intent and requirements, procedures and documentation requirements and sample narratives.

Credit Compliance Tools

Instead of requiring volume participants to exclusively use the LEED credit forms, the Volume Program allows organizations to define their own tools for verifying achievement. The prototype administrator can design customized credit compliance tools to mimic some aspects of LEED credit forms, while leveraging building and management similarities to streamline the documentation process.

Policies and Plans

Volume participants can develop standardized policies and plans tailored to operational management practices which meet prerequisite and/or credit requirements. The policies and plans can be vetted at a corporate or portfolio level to ensure consistency with existing policies for the company's building operations and maintenance practices. Additionally, where possible, the policies and plans can be integrated into existing property management operations and maintenance manuals in an effort to institutionalize them into company culture. This was a successful component of the C&W program since the policies developed for LEED submittals were modified for company-wide implementation.

Metrics Digest

A digest report on a participant's performance across a group of buildings can be developed to provide a snapshot view of credit achievement across the group. This type of tool is not required for the program, but can help organizations assess their performance in a high-level summary. This type of tool can provide updates to the prototype administrator on the certification status of the group, and can indicate if certain buildings need attention.

Web-based trainings

In order to ensure successful implementation, prototype administrators or their consultants can conduct web-based trainings as part of their education plan, throughout each phase of the program. Initially, teams often need training on green building basics and on the intent of the rating system requirements.



During the performance period, training should cover maintaining credit documentation requirements and quality control. At C&W we held bi-weekly, web-based trainings.

For more information, please visit www.usgbc.org/leedvolume and contact:

Gwen Sheinfeld, LEED AP
Director of Corporate Sustainability
Healthy Buildings
gsheinfeld@healthybuildings.com
917.775.0215