

Guide to LEED Certification: Cities and Communities Pilot

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Congratulations on your decision to pursue LEED certification for your project!

You're on your way to impacting and improving the performance of your city or community. This guide will lead you through the process.

LEED for Cities and LEED for Communities certifications involve three main steps:

1. **Register** your project by completing key forms and submitting payment.
2. **Apply for precertification and/or certification** by submitting information for review through the [Arc](#) online platform and paying the associated certification fee.
3. **Review.** Your LEED application is reviewed by GBCI.

If you need assistance at any time, please contact gbc.org/contact.

Register

Registration is an important step in the LEED certification process, signifying your intent to pursue LEED certification.

Before you begin, you'll want to make sure that your project is appropriate for LEED for Cities and LEED for Communities. Your project should:

- Have a managing entity
- Have a reasonable LEED boundary established
- Be used regularly by people

A project using LEED for Cities should register the entire city; a sub-section of a city can use LEED for Communities.

If you're not sure whether your project is appropriate for LEED for Cities or LEED for Communities, please contact gbc.org/contact.

Note: There are [separate guides](#) for the LEED Commercial, Homes, and Neighborhood Development rating systems.

To get started with your city or community project, you will use the Arc platform to provide registration information, submit payment and sign the services agreement. Once you've completed these steps, your

project will be accessible in Arc.

From here, you can assemble your project team and the data collection process begins!

Project Team Roles

Individuals on your project team will be called on to perform certain roles throughout the LEED certification process. Here's a rundown of who's who so you can select your team wisely:

- **Owner:** The owner of the project is the person/managing entity who has authority to hold and control land or infrastructure or implement policy changes within the project boundary and accepts (or authorizes the acceptance of) the services agreement. While there may be multiple managing entities for a particular project (if so, please submit a [Confirmation of Primary Owner's Authority Form](#)), we ask that you identify a single individual to administer the certification process. Big takeaway: the managing entity has ultimate control over the LEED certification application, meaning that GBCI will respond to the managing entity regarding the administration of the project over any other member of the project team.
- **Agent:** The agent is the person (or entity) who is granted actual authority by the managing entity to register the project and accept the services agreement. If you are using this option, remember to upload a signed [Confirmation of Agent's Authority Form](#).
- **Project Administrator:** This team member acts as a project manager, overseeing the LEED project as well as which project team members are responsible for certain tasks and requirements. The project administrator plays a key quality role by checking that the LEED application is complete and accurate before submitting the project to GBCI for review, and accepting the review results once the review is complete. Note: the individual who initially registers the project will automatically be granted the role of the project administrator, but the owner may transfer this role to another team member at any time.

Important considerations

Precertification Review (optional)

You may choose to pursue precertification ahead of full certification if you'd like additional support and formal recognition up-front. Precertification involves sharing key project details and planning initiatives and preparing for performance tracking. Precertification sets you up for success in collecting performance data.

To pursue precertification ahead of full certification, you'll submit part of your application up-front (the precertification actions), and will receive two rounds of review. Once you've achieved a performance score of at least 40, you'll submit all of your remaining actions and performance data for full certification review.

Apply

Now comes the fun part: you're ready to collect and submit the appropriate documentation.

Working with your project team, you will enter information into Arc to fulfill each of the required actions, including any supporting documents. You will also track data and enter it into the Arc platform. As you add data to Arc, you will receive a performance score. After providing annual data, if you have achieved a minimum score of 40, your project will be eligible for certification review.

Make sure to perform a rigorous quality check of all of your recorded data before submitting for review. We suggest that you open each action and check that you have included all required information, and open each file to verify that you have submitted the correct document.

Review

After paying the certification fee, your project will undergo review using the process described above in which GBCI checks your application for completeness and reviews your performance data for technical accuracy.

Part 1: Preliminary Review

- You will first submit your application for a preliminary review. GBCI will check your application for completeness and compliance with rating system requirements. During this stage, GBCI may reach out to you to discuss your project's approach and ask questions about your project's planning documents.
- GBCI will respond with its preliminary Review Report within 20-25 business days, indicating which areas of the application have been approved and if further information is required.
- Your team can accept the preliminary review results as final if you are satisfied, or prepare new or revised documentation before submitting for final review.

Part 2: Final Review (optional)

- The final review stage allows you to submit supplementary information or amend the application. GBCI will then review revised or newly submitted information.
- GBCI will respond with a final Review Report within 20-25 business days, indicating whether the application is approved.
- Like the preliminary review, you can either accept the review results as final or revise your application and resubmit for a supplemental (appeal) review.

Part 3: Supplemental (Appeal) Review (optional)

- The supplemental (appeal) review stage provides an additional round of review and allows you to submit additional information or amend the application. GBCI will review the revised or newly submitted information and update the LEED Review Report accordingly. The fee associated with supplemental (appeal) reviews may vary depending on the level of complexity of the credit/prerequisite submitted for review.
- GBCI will respond with an updated LEED Review Report within 20-25 business days, indicating any changes to the precertification/certification approval status.
- Like the final review, you can either accept the supplemental review results as final, or submit for additional supplemental reviews. There is no cap on the number of supplemental reviews you can receive.

Contesting a Review Ruling

If resolution of a technical issue related to a review ruling has not been achieved via GBCI's customer support channels and discussion with GBCI reviewers (www.gbci.org/contact), GBCI has put in-place a Review Challenge Policy whereby a project team may challenge the accuracy of a review decision regarding the sufficiency of already submitted materials. Please refer to the [GBCI Review Challenge Policy](#) which outlines the process for doing so.

Certify

After successful review by GBCI, projects with a confirmed minimum performance score of 40 meet the requirements for certification. If you've met the requirements for certification, congratulations from all of us

here at USGBC and GBCI!

Certification Levels

While all LEED-certified projects are a cut above the rest, projects are assigned one of four levels of certification to acknowledge the degree of achievement. The performance score your project earns determines the level of LEED certification that you will receive.

- LEED Certified™: a verified score of 40-49
- LEED Silver®: a verified score of 50-59
- LEED Gold®: a verified score of 60-79
- LEED Platinum®: a verified score of 80+

Promote your project

Once you've earned certification, it's likely that you'll want to tell the world – and we do too! USGBC will reach out to you directly to showcase your achievement to the world and underscore your sustainability efforts.

Project information: How USGBC handles your data

Your work with LEED is something to be celebrated – and communicated to the world at large. Achieving LEED certification gives you the opportunity to share your city/community's plans, strategies and insights, and play a pivotal role in educating other project teams.

How is USGBC utilizing your project data?

We use your project data for the greater good: to educate and provide resources for LEED project teams and others around the world, showcase your strategies, and share the size and power of the green building movement.

LEED-registered and certified projects are, by default, considered “public” projects, and thereby included in USGBC's public LEED project directory. A listing in this directory allows the general public and members of the media to look up your project listing and its related details.

Here's a full list of the data and project elements that may be listed in the project directory:

Project directory information

- Project name
- Project ID
- Physical address
- Project location
- Date of registration
- Date of initial certification
- Certification level
- Total points earned during certification
- Project scorecard
- Project type
- Project acreage
- Current performance score
- Performance score over time
- Performance tracking status
- Performance certification status
- Performance certification dates

All “public” projects also benefit from publicity opportunities: we may utilize your project data to create case studies highlighting your project’s features, reference your project on our website or to the media, or create other derivative works.

Information that may be used for articles, project profiles, other features:

- Service providers
- Project team members
- Promotional or other project photographs
- Project strategies for certification
- Quotations from team members

You are free to opt-out of the LEED project directory and publicity opportunities as a “private project” at the time of registration: specific instructions on how to do so are available in LEED Online. All private projects that earn certification will be prompted once more to transition to public status (we can’t help ourselves, we love sharing good news!). You will need to re-confirm your “private” status at that time, if you wish to retain it.

Remember, projects that retain their “private” (or confidential) status after certification, may not be marketed or represented as LEED certified to the general public. Please carefully review of the [LEED Trademark Policy and Branding Guidelines](#) for more information.

Important considerations

Revocation of LEED Certification

In rare situations, LEED certification may be revoked. We’ve created the [GBCI Certification Challenge Policy](#) to ensure that all LEED project submittals and subsequent reviews by GBCI team members are done so with integrity, accuracy and truthfulness. A certification challenge may be initiated by GBCI or by any third party within 18 months of a project’s certification. The certification challenge may include additional review of project documentation, the review of supplemental information, and/or a site visit. In line with the policy, you’ll need to retain all project documentation related to your certification, and precertification, for two years after receiving certification, to ensure that this information is available in case of a challenge.

Maintaining LEED Certification

The journey doesn’t end with your project’s initial certification. Achieving LEED certification means that your project meets the high standards of LEED across its entire lifespan, not just at a single point in time.

Projects can track and record performance data for the required metrics in Arc on an ongoing basis, with the performance score updating along the way.

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