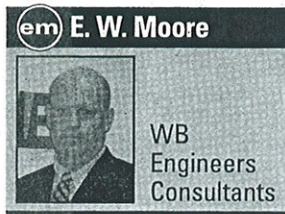


Good news in the engineering sector: The new LEED v3 certification is much improved!



There is a lot of doom and gloom in the world today, but there is some good news in our sector: the new LEED v3 certification is much improved from the old version.

Launched by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) on April 27, we (as mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire protection and commissioning engineers) like the changes in the water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, indoor environmental quality and regional priority—but we are most enthusiastic about the energy and atmosphere credits and the increased value placed on commissioning.

Indeed, as we at WB Engineers see it, the commercial interiors and existing building markets will now be much more receptive to pursuing LEED certification, thanks to the revised LEED standard. One of the major improvements is an increased focus on energy efficiency. The intent is to establish the minimum level of energy efficiency for the tenant space systems to reduce environmental and economic impacts associated with excessive energy use. And now, with more than 35 possible credits available for energy and atmosphere efforts and only 40 points needed for LEED certification, a project can almost achieve certification on the energy and atmosphere credit alone!

Another reason that we think well of the increased focus on energy efficiency in the new standard is that programs offered by New York State Energy Research and Development Authority's (NYSERDA) and Energy Star (a joint program of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy) offer incentives and recognition for participation in their energy efficiency programs. More and more clients are asking about energy programs—and they should be! These efficiency programs parallel the LEED requirements on projects. For example, NYSERDA New Construction program applicants can receive 10% additional incentives for commissioning and fixed incentives to offset costs for LEED certification.

What's more, the LEED standards for existing building: operations maintenance have also been revised. A building's Energy Star benchmark rating has now taken on increased value. An Energy Star-labeled building (in order to qualify for the Energy Star label, a building must earn at least a score of 75), earns four credits toward LEED certification. An improved building, one

that achieves Energy Star score of 85, earns 14 credits toward LEED certification. This reflects over 25 percent of the points required for Silver level certification.

Building energy retrofits are funded by the NYSERDA "existing facilities" program. Through program participation, a building's upgrades can support reduced energy consumption, increase the facility's Energy Star score and achieve additional credits towards LEED certification. It's a triple win!

A significant revision to the commercial interior standard is that enhanced commissioning is now worth five credit—and since silver certification is 50 to 59 points, enhanced commissioning now brings you 10% towards certification. Indeed, even if there weren't any LEED points available, the benefits of commissioning

for this process are big enough that this process should be part of any project.

purpose of commissioning (green or not) is for clients and designers to verify that all equipment and

Enhanced commissioning ensures that the highest level of certification is obtained on a green project. This credit emphasizes a better transition of a building or space to the operations staff through the development of a systems manual and tracking the completion of specified training.

The commissioning process is included as part of LEED certification because it is a highly effective method to improve the performance of building systems and equipment. In a nutshell, commissioning is the systematic process of ensuring that a structure meets a client's project requirements and the engineering and architectural firms' design. The

integrated systems within the space work satisfactorily and provide peak performance. Commissioning systems is accomplished through various phases, and ensures that the space can be operated safely and according to the owners' needs.

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credit emphasizes a better transition of a building or space to the operations staff through the development of a systems manual and tracking the completion of specified training. In addition, a review is held within ten months of substantial completion, which includes a check on tenant operating conditions and a re-inspection assessment of "open issues" found by the commissioning team.

You have until June 27 to register for LEED 2009. WB's advice: take advantage of it! The changes reflected in LEED 2009 provide an increased value on projects that conserve resources—not just energy.

E.W. Moore, PE, LEED AP is a senior associate and manager of the commissioning group at WB Engineers | Consultants, New York, N.Y.

MEP Engineer

E. W. Moore
WB Engineers | Consultants

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