

# LEED set for big changes

## Green building accreditation modifies testing, certification process

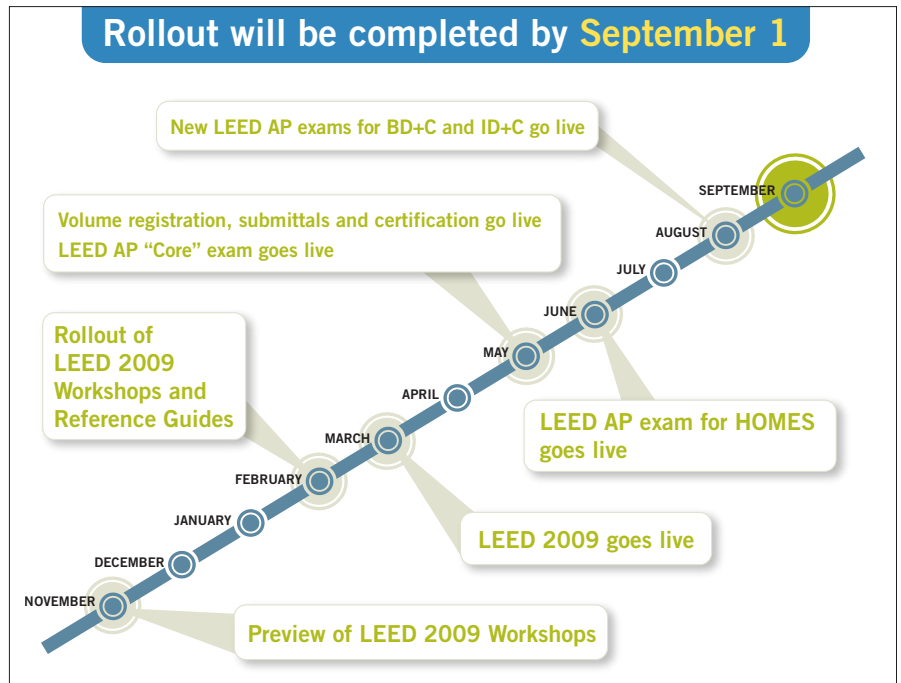
The U.S. Green Building Council and the Green Building Certification Institute are ready to begin operating under the new LEED revisions that will adjust nearly every aspect of the program, including adding a new tier to certification as well as how buildings are graded.

March 31 was the last date that candidates were able to register for the expiring credentialing exams: LEED for New Construction version 2.2, or LEED-NC, and LEED for Commercial Interiors version 2.0, or LEED-CI.

As part of the changes to the accreditation process, the LEED-NC designation will be replaced with the LEED Building Design and Construction, or LEED-BD&C, designation and the LEED-CI designation will be replaced by LEED Interior Design and Construction, or LEED-ID&C.

Scheduling and rescheduling services for the current LEED-NC and LEED-CI exam registrations will still be available after the March 31 registration deadline — but the GBCI has not yet determined the date that the exam will be retired.

The three new tiers are LEED Green Associate, LEED-AP+, and LEED-AP Fellow. As the first step in the LEED career pathway, the LEED Green Associate credential attests to the candidate's knowledge of good environmental practice and skill, and reflects understanding and support of green design, construction, and operations. There are no specialties within the LEED Green Associate tier.



Source: U.S. Green Building Council/Green Building Certification Institute

Candidates are required to document involvement in support of LEED, be employed in a sustainable field of work, or be engaged in an education program in green building principles and LEED. The credential maintenance requirements for a LEED Green Associate are to participate in 15 hours of continuing education required every two years, with

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three hours obtained from an approved program specific to the LEED Rating System, credit categories and LEED updates. More information on credentialing maintenance is not yet available.

The tiered system will be flexible to allow credit for other than taking a class or attending a workshop. The credential fees are a \$50 application fee, \$150 per exam appointment for USGBC national members and full-time students, or \$200 per exam appointment for all others and \$50 every two years.

The LEED-AP+ credential signifies an advanced depth of knowledge of green building practices. Those awarded LEED-AP+ will earn their credentials in one or more of the following five specialties: Building Design & Construction, or BD&C; Operations & Maintenance, or O&M; Interior Design & Construction, or ID&C; Homes; and Neighborhood Development, or ND.

Candidates are required to document professional experience on a LEED project within the past three years with verification through LEED online or employer attestation. The credential maintenance requirements for a LEED-AP+ are to participate in 30 hours of continuing education required every two years, with six hours obtained from an approved program.

Specific information on credentialing maintenance is also not yet available, but the GBCI says the tiered system will be flexible to allow credit for other than taking a class or attending a workshop.

The credential fees for LEED-AP+ are a \$100 application fee, \$300 USGBC national member fee per exam appointment or \$450 non-member fee per exam appointment, \$50 every two years. Any additional specialty exam is \$150 for USGBC national members per exam appointment and \$250 for non-members per exam appointment, plus the application fee.

The third tier, LEED-AP Fellow, is currently under development. The GBCI says this tier will distinguish an elite class of leading professionals that will contribute to the standards of practice and body of knowledge for achieving continuous improvement in the green building field.

LEED-APs credentialed prior to June 2009 do not have to do anything and can maintain their LEED-AP status. In order to become a LEED-AP+, those previously credentialed can enroll in the new tiered system, agree to the credentialing maintenance program and compile the requirements for the initial two-year reporting period. Once enrolled those certified can use one of the new specialty designations after their name. Enrollment

## How do the LEED-AP+ specialties correspond to the LEED-AP exam tracks?

Legacy LEED-APs will automatically enroll in the specialty that corresponds to the exam track through which they were originally accredited. Legacy LEED-APs may request to enroll in a different specialty among O&M, BD&C and ID&C, if it is more applicable to their field of work.

- > LEED-AP+ Operations & Maintenance, or LEED-AP+O&M, was formerly LEED Existing Buildings
- > LEED-AP+ Building Design & Construction, or LEED-AP+BD&C, was formerly New Construction and Major Renovations
- > LEED-AP+ Interior Design & Construction, or LEED-AP+ID&C was formerly Commercial Interiors

must occur before June 2011. Current LEED-AP credential holders can also become a LEED-AP+ by passing one of the new specialty examinations — only part two of a LEED-AP+ exam will be required if testing by June 2011.

The \$50 credentialing maintenance fee for the first two-year credentialing maintenance program reporting period will be waived for current LEED-APs who enroll in the new tiered system between June 30, 2009 and June 30, 2011. After June 30, 2011, the credential maintenance fee will be \$50 every two years.

The LEED 2009 plan passed member ballot in November. It also includes a series of major technical advancements focused on improving energy efficiency, reducing carbon emissions, and addressing other environmental and human health outcomes.

LEED 2009 will also incorporate highly anticipated regional credits, extra points that have been identified as priorities within a project's given environmental zone. LEED has also undergone a scientifically grounded re-weighting of credits, changing allocation of points among LEED credits to reflect climate change and energy efficiency as urgent priorities. This will be one of the most significant changes to the rating system, and will increase the importance of green building as a means of contribut-

ing immediate and measurable solutions toward energy independence, climate change mitigation, and other global priorities.

LEED 2009 incorporates eight years worth of market and user feedback in the form of precedent-setting credit interpretation rulings, which will ensure clarity for project teams.

Coupled with a credit alignment structure designed to create a more elegant and harmonized rating system, the USGBC has developed LEED 2009 to 'reset the bar' for the certification of high-performance green buildings.

Process innovation in how new technical advancements are incorporated into LEED will also be introduced alongside LEED 2009, including a pilot process for individual credits that will allow major new technical developments to be flexibly trialed, evaluated, and incorporated into LEED.

"The conclusion of the balloting process marks the culmination of tireless work done by representatives from all corners of the building industry," said Brendan Owens, USGBC vice president, LEED technical development. "We have the deepest gratitude for our volunteer leaders, and for their bold steps towards resetting the bar for green building leadership and challenges the industry to move faster and reach further." ■