

**This fact sheet provides information and resources to assist Seattle area contractors in understanding LEED™ and is one of several in a series on how LEED™ applies to you. The Resource Venture also offers free information, assistance and referrals to help you achieve your project's LEED™ goals.**

## What Is LEED™?

- The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System™ (LEED™) is a voluntary, market-based rating system for defining what elements make a building 'green' and to quantify how 'green' a building is in comparison to another building.
- LEED™ is based on accepted energy and environmental principles and strikes a balance between known effective practices and emerging concepts. It encourages a whole building approach over a building's life cycle that guides a collaborative and integrated design and construction process.
- LEED™ Version 2.1 applies to new construction and major renovation of commercial, institutional and high-rise residential buildings. In the future, additional LEED™ tools will be available for: core and shell, multiple buildings, residential projects, commercial interiors and existing buildings.
- Project teams (owners, developers, architects, and contractors) use the LEED™ rating system as a tool to help them determine green project goals, identify green design strategies, measure and monitor progress and document success.
- The development of the LEED Green Building Rating System™ was instigated by the U.S. Green Building Council's membership. The Council is a national nonprofit organization whose membership is comprised of: contractors, architects, building owners, developers, financial institutions, product manufacturers, environmental groups, universities, utilities, research institutions and federal, state and local governments.

Council members developed LEED™ to define "green building" by establishing a common standard of measurement; promote integrated, whole-building design practices, raise awareness of green building benefits and transform the building market.

## How It Works

- LEED™ provides a menu of green building measures in five environmental categories:
  - Sustainable Sites
  - Water Efficiency
  - Energy and Atmosphere
  - Materials and Resources
  - Indoor Environmental Quality

Innovation and Design Process is an additional category where points can be earned for exceptional building design and performance above the LEED™ requirements or innovative performance in green building categories not specifically addressed by LEED™.

Points are earned in each category. The points are performance based rather than prescriptive to encourage innovation and an integrated approach to design.

- After a building has been completed and the project team has submitted the project documentation along with the appropriate fee, the Council will certify the project as LEED™ Certified, Silver, Gold or Platinum based on the total number of points earned on a menu of green building measures.

## Why Should My Construction Company Care?

- LEED™ is rapidly becoming the leading U.S. standard for measuring a building's environmental performance. The City of Seattle has adopted a Sustainable Building Policy that sets a target of achieving the LEED™ Silver Level for all City-owned new construction and major renovations over 5,000 sq.ft. The City is currently planning or constructing numerous building projects to this new standard, including: the new City Hall, Justice Center, Central Library and McCaw Performance Hall.

Other owner/clients, such as local colleges and major businesses, are currently using or looking seriously at LEED™ as a tool to green their projects. In addition, the City of Seattle implemented the LEED™ Incentive Program (see *Where to Get More Information*) to encourage private sector construction projects to follow its lead of incorporating more sustainable, "green" materials and methods. This program provides incentive money to selected projects to cover the soft costs associated with LEED™ certification.

- Therefore, developing competency in LEED™ is important for construction companies for a number of reasons:
  - Meeting requirements on projects undergoing LEED™ certification.
  - Recruiting clients such as governments, colleges, and major businesses that use LEED™.
  - Delivering a quality product to those customers.
  - Gaining a competitive edge in the growing green building marketplace.

## The Contractor's Role

- Although much of what makes a building LEED™ certified depends on design decisions, contractors have a significant role in implementing LEED™ on a project. Construction companies with a working knowledge of LEED™ and experience with sustainable construction practices are in demand. Architects and owners want a contractor who can:

- Assemble and maintain records necessary to document a building's compliance with LEED™ requirements
- Execute new construction methods per specifications, at a reasonable cost
- Achieve high recycling rates (LEED™ credits are available for achieving 50% and 75% recycling/salvage rates on a project)
- Demonstrate knowledge of the numerous materials that are rapidly renewable, contain recycled content and emit low VOCs
- Assist project teams in identifying ways to reach a project's LEED™ goals.

## Where To Get More Information

- The **Resource Venture's** Sustainable Building Program offers free assistance to Seattle design and construction professionals. Call us to arrange a free visit to your job site or office. We can address LEED™ questions or give a presentation on green building.

Our Web site includes:

- Other LEED™ fact sheets
- Sustainable building information
- A directory of recycling companies
- Construction recycling information

- **LEED™**  
Detailed information on the rating system, the certification process, training workshops, the accreditation exam and case studies is available at [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org).

- **LEED™ Incentive Program**  
This program provides incentive money to selected projects to cover the soft costs associated with LEED™ certification. Check out the program at [www.cityofseattle.net/sustainablebuilding](http://www.cityofseattle.net/sustainablebuilding).

## At Your Service

The Resource Venture provides *free* information and assistance to help Seattle businesses improve their environmental performance. We are a partnership of the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce and Seattle Public Utilities.

[www.resourceventure.org](http://www.resourceventure.org) / (206) 389-7304