

LEED
CERTIFICATION
MANUAL
2024 EDITION

GBCI®

1. INTRODUCTION	3
1.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES.....	3
1.2 EXPECTATIONS OF REVIEW TEAMS	4
1.3 SCOPE OF GBCI CERTIFICATION	4
1.4 DEFINITIONS	4
2. THE CERTIFICATION REVIEW	6
2.1 LEED CERTIFICATION REVIEW PROCESS.....	6
2.2 PROCESS FLOW	6
3. SPECIFICS OF THE REVIEW PROCESS.....	7
3.1 PROJECT REGISTRATION	7
3.2 APPLICATION REVIEW	7
3.3 POST-REVIEW	13
4. TECHNICAL GUIDANCE.....	14
4.1 ORDER OF PRECEDENT IN DECISION-MAKING	14
4.2 DEALING WITH UNCERTAINTY.....	14
4.3 CHECKING FOR CONSISTENCY	15
4.4 REVIEW COMMENTARY.....	16
4.5 COMPLETING MINOR TASKS.....	16
4.6 AWARDED PARTIAL CREDIT	16
4.7 INNOVATION CREDITS	16
5. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALITY CONTROL	18
5.1 QUALITY ASSURANCE EXPECTATIONS	18
5.2 INTERNAL REVIEW QUALITY CONTROL PROCESS.....	18
5.3 GBCI QUALITY METRICS.....	19
5.4 GBCI QUALITY EXPECTATIONS	19
6. CUSTOMER SERVICE	21
6.1 RESPONSIBILITIES.....	21
6.2 WRITTEN RESPONSES.....	21
6.3 PROJECT TEAM CALLS	23

1. Introduction

This document, the LEED Certification Manual (LCM), has two primary purposes: to serve as a reference tool while conducting LEED reviews; and to improve consistency across those reviews among Review Teams. It establishes the guidelines and procedures under which a project pursuing LEED certification is processed and technically reviewed.

A step-by-step outline of the review process and guidance for conducting each major element of a review are included. However, while this document does address recurring and challenging review issues, it does not attempt to address every possible challenge that might present itself during a review. It is not intended as a literal script for performing LEED reviews. Instead, the document provides a framework of priorities, attitudes, and timelines to guide Review Teams in making independent decisions on most of these issues.

The second purpose of this manual is to improve consistency of LEED reviews across projects, Rating Systems, and Review Teams. The areas of consistency focused on in this manual include (1) decision-making during the review and (2) communication to the Project Team. Adherence to the guidance in this manual will help to ensure a high level of consistency and accuracy across LEED reviews, and in turn help to ensure a high level of integrity for the LEED Certification program and advancement of the Green Business Certification Inc.'s (GBCI) mission. All GBCI Review Teams, including staff involved with performing or overseeing LEED reviews, are required to follow the guidance in the LCM.

1.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

GBCI employs five guiding principles to support the advancement of its mission. These principles provide a foundation for operational strategy and growth and serve as a tool for evaluating both successes and new challenges. These principles are particularly relevant for conducting LEED reviews.

Assuring Validity and Quality

We ensure rigor in the design, development, and implementation of the processes we use to measure green building performance (certification) and green building practice (credentialing). Our approaches and methodologies are designed for consistency and objectivity to assure the validity of our certifications and credentials.

Ensuring Transparency and Clarity

We are open and authentic in the way we do business and the information we make available. We operate within the standards and guidelines of our business. The way we conduct our business—with a deep sense of integrity and ethical responsibility—creates a sense of predictability in the marketplace. Our stakeholders know what they can expect from us.

Adapting to Change

We practice continuous improvement and adapt to the changing needs of the global marketplace, advancing our knowledge and expertise to move the green building industry forward.

Providing Excellence in Service

Our focus is on building relationships with those we serve. We provide excellence through high-quality responsiveness to our clients and customers. Our goal is to support and partner with our stakeholders for the long-term.

Driving Change to Create a Lasting Impact on the World

We affect the green building industry in an enduring way by verifying knowledge and performance. We influence long-term beneficial change by focusing on results that matter and recognizing leadership in the field. We feel a personal and organizational responsibility for creating global change that is economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable and lasting.

1.2 EXPECTATIONS OF REVIEW TEAMS

1.2.1 Sufficient Demonstrated Competence

Each Review Team is responsible for maintaining Reviewers with sufficient expertise to complete a technically sound review in the rating systems and programs in their scope of services.

Reviewers are expected to maintain current familiarity with USGBC published documents, including Addenda, and all referenced industry standards.

1.2.2 Document Access and Version Control

Each Review Team is responsible for ensuring that Reviewers have convenient (at least electronic) access to all necessary reference documents, including, but not limited to: the LEED Reference Guide (for all applicable rating systems), Reference Guide Supplements (e.g. Advanced Energy Modeling for LEED Technical Manual), any document that USGBC or GBCI publishes as guidance to either Project Teams or Reviewers, and any standard referenced in the LEED Green Building Rating System (e.g. ASHRAE Standard 90.1).

It is the responsibility of each Review Team to ensure that Reviewers adhere to the most current versions of GBCI guidance documents, including the LEED Certification Manual, Technical Writing Guide, stock text, and standard operating procedures. The most current versions of these documents are maintained in the GBCI Certification Wiki at certificationwiki.gbci.org.

1.3 SCOPE OF GBCI CERTIFICATION

GBCI administers certification for all published versions of LEED, as well as other related rating systems and programs.

For more information on the LEED Rating Systems, visit www.usgbc.org/leed. Details on the application process for Project Teams can be found in the Guide to LEED Certification at www.usgbc.org/cert-guide.

1.4 DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are used consistently throughout this document to refer to parties involved in the LEED Certification Process:

Project Team: an individual or team seeking LEED certification of a project.

Green Business Certification Inc. (GBCI): organization that manages the accreditation of individuals and the certification of projects.

Review Team: a group of individuals who administer and complete the review of projects pursuing LEED certification; oversee quality assurance; and provide technical customer service to Project Teams. Review Teams can be either internal to GBCI or contracted organizations.

Reviewer: an individual member of a Review Team who provides technical review of projects applying for LEED certification.

Review Lead: a member of a Review Team who ensures consistent quality within and across LEED reviews and serves as the primary contact for specific reviews.

U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC): developer of the LEED Green Building Rating System.

2. The Certification Review

2.1 LEED CERTIFICATION REVIEW PROCESS

To maintain efficiency and consistency and to ensure satisfaction for the Project Team, all LEED certification reviews shall be performed according to the LEED Certification Review Process. Failure to follow this procedure will have a direct impact on a Review Team's performance evaluation. It is in the Review Team's best interest to promptly communicate any issues regarding the outlined process to GBCI.

2.2 PROCESS FLOW

The following sections describe the path of an application through review, from registration to certification. A visual is available at the end of this document, as Appendix 1.

3. Specifics of the Review Process

3.1 PROJECT REGISTRATION

3.1.1 Project Team registers project

The Project Team provides information about their project and uses the Rating System Selection Guidance (www.usgbc.org/leed-tools/rating-system-selection-guidance) to determine which LEED rating system is most applicable to their project. The Project Team then selects a name for the project, submits payment for registration, and the project is given a unique identification number. At this time, the project owner must agree to adhere to the LEED Certification terms and conditions and verify that the project meets the LEED Minimum Program Requirements.

3.2 APPLICATION REVIEW

3.2.1 Project Team submits project for review

The Project Team submits prerequisites and credits for review and after payment has cleared, GBCI receives automatic notification from LEED Online that the project is ready for review. The number of prerequisites and credits included in any given review phase will be determined by the Project Team based on the application pathway they've chosen (split or standard review). Prior to certification, the Project Team must have submitted all prerequisites and sufficient credits to achieve certification for review.

3.2.2 Project is assigned to a Review Team

Projects are assigned in the order that submittals are received via LEED Online. Each qualified Review Team will receive projects depending on rating system ability, capacity, quality, timeliness, and submittal volume. GBCI does not guarantee any minimum quantity of reviews to be assigned to any Review Team in any given period. A Review Team will only be assigned projects in those rating systems for which it has received documented qualification from GBCI. GBCI will make no preliminary assessment of potential conflicts of interest, of the number of credits a project is attempting, or of the given project's technical complexity. Each assignment will include summary project information and due dates for Review Team deliverables. Each Review Team is expected and assumed to be equally capable of completing a technically-sound review in the specified time period.

For all phases of review, the Review Team is allotted a range of 11 to 13 business days in which to complete the review prior to sending it to GBCI for quality control. The date an application is submitted to GBCI is considered day 0; the draft review is due to GBCI on day 13 of the same timeline. Assignments to Review Teams will happen by day 2. In case GBCI does not receive automatic submission notification from LEED Online, the review team may have less than 11 business days to complete the review and GBCI will work closely with the Review Team to prioritize reviews in those situations. See the GBCI Assignment Distribution Schedule and Timelines attached as Appendix 2.

Note on Holidays: Holidays are considered non-business days and are not counted in due date calculations. GBCI observes the federal holiday schedule as published by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) with the following exceptions:

- Columbus Day is a business day
- The Friday after Thanksgiving is a non-business day
- 12/25 through 1/1 are considered non-business days by GBCI

3.2.3 Review Team accepts or declines project assignment

Assignments are made with the assumption that no Conflict of Interest (COI) exists between the Review Team and the project in question. The boundaries of conflict of interest for purposes of LEED certification are defined in the contractual agreement held between GBCI and the Review Team.

The Review Team must decline to accept projects for which they are not authorized by GBCI to review (for example, an application under rating system family they have not been approved for).

In all cases, the Review Team is required to accept or decline assignments within 1 business day of receiving the role invitation. The Review Team must decline the project if a COI is identified. GBCI will assume the project is under review if no response is received. Please note, in instances where an assignment is rejected, GBCI is unable to guarantee that an alternative project will be offered as a replacement.

3.2.4 Project access is provided to Review Team

Each Review Team has a master account in LEED Online to which all projects are assigned. The Review Team must identify a primary point of contact who shall be responsible for project acceptance and assignment to Review Leads. By default, this person has access to all projects assigned to that Review Team and can assign project administrator access to the Review Lead for each specific project. The Review Lead may then assign additional Reviewers to the project. Review Leads and Reviewers are only able to view in LEED Online those projects to which they are assigned.

3.2.5 Reviewers perform a technical review of the submitted application

The assigned Reviewers complete a technically sound review of the submitted documentation. This shall include review of all general documents (Project Information Forms), all prerequisite and credit forms that have been submitted, and the necessary supporting documentation to demonstrate compliance. The Review Team is responsible for ensuring that all credits submitted by the Project Team receive a review (e.g. including new credits submitted during a final review or a credit denied outright during the preliminary review but re-submitted for review).

In a split Design and Construction review, each credit submitted prior to the Final Construction Review shall be afforded two full rounds of review. Typically for BD&C and ID&C projects, those two rounds will occur in either the Design Phase or the Construction Phase, but if a credit is submitted for the first time in the Final Design Review, it may receive one additional review in the Construction Phase. If they so choose, a Project Teams is permitted to change their innovation strategy for a specific

innovation credit at each phase of review and as such, innovation credits may receive up to four rounds of review. Any one innovation strategy receives only two rounds of review.

Additionally, if a credit has already received two rounds of review in the Design Phase, but new information is provided by the Project Team indicating that a design change has occurred that impacts credit performance, the credit/prerequisite shall receive one additional round of review in the Construction Phase to confirm ongoing achievement of the credit.

If construction credits are submitted during the Design Phase, the Review Team shall alert GBCI to confirm with the Project Team if the certification application is under the correct review timeline.

If a credit or prerequisite is marked “Anticipated”/“Awarded,” and information is submitted during a subsequent review phase that calls into question the validity of information upon which such earlier determinations were based, the Reviewer shall provide the Project Team with the opportunity to provide narrative clarification supporting ongoing compliance with the credit or prerequisite requirements. For any phase of review prior to the construction final review phase, the Reviewer shall change the credit to Pending, and provide review comments addressing the outstanding issue(s). For the construction final review phase, the Reviewer shall issue a Mid-Review Clarification (MRC). MRC should also be issued for any credits still ‘Pending’ and not submitted during the construction or standard final review phase.

See Section 4: Technical Guidance for more information how to conduct reviews.

3.2.5.1 Preliminary review

In a preliminary review, the Reviewer shall assess whether the intent and requirements of all submitted prerequisites and credits have been met. When it is unclear whether requirements have been met, the credit shall be denied pending clarification. In such cases, the Review Team must ask the Project Team to provide supplementary information and/or documentation. Credits shall be denied outright in the preliminary review only on the rare occasion when it is very clear that the credit is unobtainable.

In a Preliminary Standard, Design, or Precertification Review, the first priority for the Reviewer is to confirm that the project is registered under the correct rating system and adaptation and to determine whether the project’s compliance with any of the Minimum Program Requirements (MPRs) is in question. If there are issues with MPR compliance or rating system adaptation, the Review Lead must contact GBCI immediately before proceeding with the rest of the review. Review teams must identify such information and alert GBCI within 4 business days of project assignment.

3.2.5.2 Final review

A final review addresses those prerequisites and credits that were denied or pending in the preliminary review and resubmitted, as well as credits that have been newly added. Typically, final reviews are conducted by the same Review Team that completed the preliminary review. In some instances, GBCI may assign a new Review Team to a project to complete the final review. In such instances, instructions will be clearly communicated to both the original and new Review Teams. A Review Team should not begin a final review for a project unless either 1) the Review Team also completed the

preliminary review for the same project or 2) the Review Team was instructed by GBCI to begin work on the final review.

Similar to the preliminary review, in a final review, the Reviewer shall assess whether the intent and requirements of all submitted prerequisites and credits have been met, and whether the Project Team has provided clarifications or additional information that address all issues identified in the preliminary review. When it is unclear whether requirements have been met, the credit shall be denied. In such cases, the Review Team must cite missing supplementary information and/or documentation that resulted in the denial.

The Reviewer shall not return to credits awarded in previous phases without due cause. New issues shall only be raised in the final review if they are triggered by new documentation provided by the Project Team or credits not previously reviewed. A credit may only be un-awarded in the final review if new documentation from another credit brings it into question. In such cases, an MRC may be appropriate, see section 3.2.6 for details.

3.2.5.3 Supplemental (Appeal) Review and Review Challenge

A supplemental (appeal) review may be pursued after the final review of either a design or construction phase, or after the final standard or combined review. If a credit is denied in the design phase, the Project Team may choose to defer supplemental (appeal) review of that credit until after the construction phase. A supplemental (appeal) review will generally consist of only those credits that the Project Team has specifically submitted for a supplemental (appeal) review. In some cases, credits that were denied purely because of issues within another credit may be awarded in a supplemental (appeal) review if the parent credit/prerequisite is successfully reviewed during the supplemental (appeal) review. There are two types of supplemental (appeal) reviews:

- a. credits denied in a final review that require additional clarification
- b. credits that are newly pursued after the final review

The two types of supplemental (appeal) review may be reviewed by the same Review Team that performed the preliminary and final review, or, at the discretion of GBCI, by another Review Team. There is no limit on how many times a Project Team may submit these types of supplemental (appeal) reviews. A Review Team should not begin a supplemental (appeal) review for a project unless the Review Team is instructed by GBCI to begin work.

If a Project Team disputes the final or appealed credit ruling, they may opt to pursue a review challenge. In case of a review challenge, a Project Team provides no new documentation except for a narrative disputing the original ruling. Review challenges must be reviewed and ruled upon by a new Review Team. If the original Review Team is assigned a review challenge, they must immediately flag this for GBCI's attention and stop work on the appeal (see Section 3.2.8 below).

If, after the first review challenge, the Project Team disputes the ruling, the issue is brought to the authority of an Appeals Board. If an appeal overturns the initial credit ruling, the original Review Team will be notified.

3.2.5.4 Evaluation Designations

Anticipated/Awarded: The Project Team has provided the mandatory documentation which supports achievement of the credit requirements and associated points. (Credits are marked as “Anticipated” in a Design Phase because the project is not yet built).

Pending: The Project Team has not fully satisfied the mandatory documentation requirements, or the documentation is incomplete and full determination cannot yet be made. This designation may only be used in a preliminary review.

Denied: The Project Team has applied for a point in a particular credit but cannot sufficiently demonstrate achievement of the credit requirements or intent.

3.2.6 If necessary, Review Lead requests a mid-review clarification (MRC) from Project Team

During a preliminary review, a mid-review clarification is rarely requested and only to clarify major project scope, rating system, adaptation, or MPR issues, and/or to obtain significant missing documentation. The request should only be made if the scope of the project, a large number of credits, or a significant prerequisite is affected. If only a few credits are affected, the issue should simply be raised in the preliminary review comments. An MRC should NOT be requested in the preliminary review if the scope of the project is clear and any missing documentation only affects a few credits. These issues can simply be raised in the preliminary review comments.

During a final review, an MRC is requested when fairly minor adjustments can result in awarding a prerequisite or credit that would eliminate the need for a supplemental (appeal) review, or where narrative clarification could support the awarding of partial credit for multi-point credits. A request is only made if a prerequisite will otherwise be denied, a previously awarded credit is likely to be denied based on new information submitted at the final review phase, minor clarification(s) or adjustments could lead to achievement of a higher certification threshold (e.g. Platinum instead of Gold), or in a design final review, multiple points are at stake. An MRC should NOT be requested in the final review if the reasons for denial of a prerequisite or credit are clear (the Project Team did not adequately respond to preliminary review comments, requirements are objectively not met or the documentation revisions would require significant work by the Project Team) or minor issues can be resolved by simple reviewer research or recalculation. If the preliminary review comments were clear and the Project Team simply did not respond to them, the reviewer may deny the prerequisite or credit. For EAp Minimum Energy Performance, an MRC request should limit the Project Team to narrative clarifications that will allow the determination of partial/full credit but should disallow energy model revisions.

During a final review, an MRC allowing major adjustments or energy model revisions should only be allowed when the Reviewer determines that their preliminary review comments could have been misconstrued by the Project Team due to lack of clarity.

In all cases, MRCs should be issued as early as possible to avoid unnecessarily extending review timelines. This is especially important for MRCs concerning project scope or appropriate rating system—such issues should be reported to GBCI no later than 4 business days after project assignment. See examples of issues to be raised in a MRC request and instructions on how to send one in the GBCI Certification Wiki. Review Teams are expected to resume review timeline or issue a follow-up MRC within 2 business days of a response from the Project Team.

3.2.7 Review Lead provides quality control for the project

After the Reviewer has completed the review of the project and flagged any issues for the Review Lead, the review must go through a quality control process involving both the assigned Review Team and GBCI.

While the Review Lead is ultimately responsible for ensuring the quality of the review, the Review Team may decide to have team members other than the Lead provide this quality control. At a minimum, the quality control process must address both technical and procedural aspects of the review. Technical quality control includes re-reviewing select prerequisites and credits to ensure that they were evaluated correctly, checking that requirements were applied accurately and verifying that referenced standards and other guidance documents were used appropriately. Procedural issues may include appropriate use of stock text in crafting review commentary and adherence to the requirements of this document.

If both the Reviewer and the Review Lead are uncertain about how a credit should be evaluated and questions remain after internal escalation processes within the Review Team, the Review Team should flag such issues for GBCI's attention (see Section 3.2.8 below).

See Section 5: Quality Assurance and Quality Control for more information on this subject.

3.2.8 Review Team sends the draft review to GBCI, flagging any issues

The Review Lead will deliver the completed review to GBCI for processing. A GBCI Reviewer may perform a final assessment of quality and request any necessary revisions. The Review Team must make any such revisions within **two** business days.

Certain issues in the review may require greater attention from GBCI. It is the responsibility of the Reviewer to flag such issues to ensure that they are checked for consistency compared to other reviews. Issues should be classified as either SOS or FYI:

***SOS:** Issues that require guidance or feedback from GBCI. The summary should include a brief synopsis of the issue, how it was dealt with, and a specific question(s) on the guidance requested. Examples of mandatory SOS issues include:*

- *All denied prerequisites in a final and appeal review (mandatory – the SOS must also indicate whether it was sent for MRC, and if not, why).*
- *All pilot credits, listing the credit name.*
- *All alternative compliance paths that the Project Team has developed (as opposed to official LEED ACPs).*
- *All final reviews for which no credits were submitted, or a few credits were submitted and no further information was provided for those credits.*

- *All final reviews where credit denials result in a drop in certification level.*
- *All final reviews where credits earned under the related Master Site were not submitted.*
- *All scenarios when conflicting published guidance is identified.*
- *All other issues that are highlighted for SOS in the GBCI wiki. These will often be noted on reviewer calls. Examples may include new International ACPs with complex referenced standards; industry-specific applications such as refrigerated warehouses where GBCI has noted inconsistency in reviews, etc.*

FYI: Informational items to explain any unique, tricky, or potentially confusing issues that do not require guidance from GBCI. Examples of FYI issues include:

- *Explaining credit rulings where documentation is ambiguous or complicated.*
- *International ACP included in the application.*
- *List of credits that went to MRC – especially if project is within one or two points of a certification threshold.*
- *Credit recalculations where the project lost more than one point.*

If SOS issues have not been identified, reviews are assumed to be ready for the Project Team and are subject only to a sampling rate for quality evaluation.

3.2.9 GBCI sends completed review to Project Team

Once the review is fully complete, it is returned to the Project Team within LEED Online by GBCI.

Following the preliminary review, the Project Team is given the opportunity to provide clarifications for those credits that have been designated *pending* or *denied*.

3.3 POST-REVIEW

3.3.1 Project Team accepts, appeals, or requests an additional supplemental (appeal) review after the final review is complete

Following the final review, the Project Team decides whether to accept, appeal, or request an additional supplemental (appeal) review. To complete their certification, the Project Team must submit the Certification Acceptance Form within LEED Online. Once the Certification Acceptance Form has been received, the project is removed from the Review Team's active project list.

4. Technical Guidance

4.1 ORDER OF PRECEDENT IN DECISION-MAKING

Reviewers must conduct review decisions and assessments based on established technical LEED requirements. LEED requirements shall be determined from the following items in the order listed:

- a. Published LEED Rating System
- b. LEED Addenda*
- c. LEED International Alternative Compliance Paths (when used by Project Team)
- d. LEED Reference Standards and Documents (when mandatory, based on project details and registration date)
- e. LEED Interpretation rulings (LIs)**
- f. Published LEED Reference Guides and Supplements
- g. Published Reference Guides, User's Manuals, and Supplements for LEED Reference Standards and Documents (i.e. ASHRAE 90.1 User's Manual)
- h. Submittal Templates/Forms
- i. Public guidance for other LEED Rating Systems if applicable, especially if newer
- j. Current version of the LEED Certification Manual
- k. Internal guidance discussed and decided on LEED Reviewer calls***

Note that past reviews do not set formal precedent for LEED requirements to ensure that neither prior Project Team errors nor reviewer oversights are perpetuated, which could jeopardize the integrity of the rating system requirements and the LEED brand.

* Unless the LEED Addenda, and/or LEED Interpretation specifically cite the rating system or clarify the previously stated requirements in those documents, these shall only be regarded as mandatory for Project Teams registered **after** the date of publication.

** If a LEED Interpretation overrules a project-specific Credit Interpretation Ruling (CIR) that preceded it, the Project Team still has the option of using the project-specific CIR.

*** All guidance discussed on LEED Reviewer calls must be supported in review comments by one of the other references above. If a Reviewer or Review Team is concerned that any guidance from the reviewer call cannot be supported by one of the referenced documents above, please raise this as an agenda item for the next relevant LEED Reviewer call.

4.2 DEALING WITH UNCERTAINTY

At the outset of a review, it should be assumed that the Project Team is being honest about their achievements. Each attempted prerequisite and credit is assumed to be earned until the submittal documentation is found to indicate otherwise. Errors and mistakes should not be aggressively sought out. Additional documentation or clarification is to be requested only if a submittal is missing pivotal information, and/or if there is significant doubt that the Project Team has met the intent and requirements of the prerequisite or credit or has achieved the specified threshold for credits with multiple-point thresholds. It is acceptable and encouraged to use publicly available data (such as

online mapping tools and product cut sheets) to check submittals that appear to be inconsistent or inaccurate.

If simple good judgment can lead to confidence that a Project Team has earned a credit or prerequisite, then the point(s) shall be awarded.

Examples of issues that need further clarification or documentation from the Project Team:

- a. Complex project building or green building strategies where the compliance methodologies or strategies are unclear
- b. Missing referenced or required documentation
- c. Inconsistencies/conflicts in submitted documentation within and between credits
- d. Errors made in the calculations or modeling inputs that cannot be simply re-calculated by the Reviewer
- e. Simulation results that appear unreasonable based on project inputs
- f. Claims made about equipment or materials that are inconsistent with industry-available technologies
- g. Inappropriate application of the LEED Rating System, Reference Guide, Referenced Standard, or Template/Form
- h. Documentation that suggests the project is not registered under the correct rating system and adaptation or does not comply with all MPRs

Examples of issues that do not need further clarification or documentation from the Project Team:

- a. Minor alterations to template calculations that do not affect the outcome of a credit assessment
- b. Poorly executed documentation that nevertheless communicates the necessary information
- c. Minor conflicting details between the credit narrative and template

While the Reviewer shall give the Project Team the benefit of the doubt, he or she should be aware that intentional deception on the part of the Project Team does occasionally occur. If the submittal documentation suggests intentional deception, details about the situation should be communicated to GBCI staff immediately.

4.3 CHECKING FOR CONSISTENCY

The Reviewer shall pay attention to the interactions among credits and how data is used in calculations for different purposes. While data may be used in different ways in different credits, the fundamentals of the building pursuing certification, and the parameters of the project site, should be consistent across all credits, where appropriate. Clarifications should be requested when inconsistencies are not justified and may lead to uncertainty about credit achievement.

Common areas of inconsistency include the LEED Project Boundary, occupancy, area of the building and site, costs of energy or materials, performance periods (in LEED O+M), and the classification of spaces. Many interactions are more subtle than numerical

values, such as the layout of the lighting, mechanical or plumbing systems, or the scope of inclusion of certain materials.

4.4 REVIEW COMMENTARY

Reviewers are required to provide a comment for every prerequisite and credit reviewed explaining why it has been awarded, pending, or denied. Review comments must be written in accordance with the most current version of the GBCI Certification Technical Writing Guide. GBCI also provides stock text (available on the GBCI Certification Wiki) as a tool for crafting consistent comments. The stock text includes common earned and denied scenarios and shall be used when applicable. Stock text must be customized to address the project-specific circumstance of each individual project.

4.5 COMPLETING MINOR TASKS

Minor tasks, such as simple post-processing, simple calculation corrections, and quick technical research may be performed for the Project Team. This may be done only if it is clear that the issue is simply with the documentation itself, as opposed to the part of the project the documentation describes. This strategy reduces unnecessary communication and associated waiting periods for minor issues that do not truly affect the review.

Reviewers shall perform these minor tasks whether or not a LEED certification level is at stake, because Project Teams should be recognized for credits they have truly earned. Such actions require educational notes in review comments explaining the minor tasks the Reviewer completed. Reviewers may temporarily modify Template/Form inputs to verify results but may not save these changes or otherwise modify documentation within LEED Online.

4.6 AWARDING PARTIAL CREDIT

Credits that have multiple points available shall be assessed on an incremental basis (not all-or-nothing). Award a portion of the points (in whole number increments) pursued, if the submittal justifies doing so.

Example: Final review of EAc Optimize Energy Performance

6 points pursued – HVAC measures document 4 points well, but 2 points are questionable due to lighting issues that have not been adequately addressed by the Project Team. Mark 4 points as 'earned and 2 points as 'denied.

4.7 INNOVATION CREDITS

Innovation credits are awarded for implementing innovative strategies that go above and beyond the requirements of the LEED rating system in which the project has applied.

To award an innovation credit, Project Teams must demonstrate:

- a. Quantifiable environmental benefit from their strategy
- b. A comprehensive whole building nature of their strategy (i.e. more than a single product)
- c. The strategy is not already awarded in an existing LEED credit

Innovation credits shall be decided on a case-by-case basis and can include exemplary performance (as defined in the Reference Guide), credits from a different rating system, and strategies not directly covered by LEED. If an attempted strategy is clearly incapable of meeting the requirements for an innovation credit, it may be denied without requesting clarification during the preliminary review. In such situations, the Project Team shall be advised to apply for an alternate innovation strategy.

5. Quality Assurance and Quality Control

5.1 QUALITY ASSURANCE EXPECTATIONS

Each Review Team must document standards and processes that govern its operations that align with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065, Conformity assessment -- Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services. This stipulates that all processes undertaken by the Review Team are regularly audited to ensure sufficient demonstrated competency to LEED requirements. Quality control measures must be employed in the review process to ensure that Review Teams complete certification reviews and customer service with technical rigor and procedural consistency in accordance with the requirements of the LEED Certification Manual (this document).

As explained in the Introduction to this document, every Review Team is responsible for maintaining Reviewers with sufficient expertise to complete a technically sound review of all prerequisites and credits in all contracted rating systems and programs. In addition, the Review Team is expected to have processes and protocols in place to produce high-quality work in a timely, efficient, and standardized manner.

5.2 INTERNAL REVIEW QUALITY CONTROL PROCESS

As explained in Section 3.2.7, the Review Lead shall be responsible for ensuring that each project receives a quality control review after Reviewers have completed their work and before it has been sent to GBCI.

The following is a suggested minimum quality control scope for an individual review:

- a. Assess the overall quality of the submissions and check the general submittal documents. Read the project narrative and view the site plan and the project renderings.
- b. Review a **minimum** of 25% of denied and awarded credits/prerequisites. Depending on the quality of the review and how many credits have been denied, QC may require re-review of all denied credits/prerequisites and additional spot checks of awarded credits for consistency.
- c. Always check within a preliminary review those credits that are most technically difficult and are most often submitted incorrectly.
- d. When reviewing a project, ensure that review commentary is clear and concise, and that while review commentary should provide educational guidance, it may not provide consulting-level advice to the Project Team. Check that the technical advice section details the submission requirements for all the issues raised within the review comments.
- e. Check for consistency between credits and submittal documents e.g. site boundary, FTE, etc.
- f. Check the reasoning behind denied credits and verify that it complies with credit requirements.
- g. Always check that project-specific CIRs, or precedent setting LIs, have been appropriately referenced in a review comment.
- h. Evaluate whether a mid-review clarification request should be sent for any credits.

- i. During the final review, check a **minimum** of 25% of those credits/prerequisites that required clarification after the preliminary review. Also, note the date sequence of uploaded documents to ensure that recently uploaded documents have been addressed in the review.

5.3 GBCI QUALITY METRICS

GBCI will regularly monitor the work provided by Reviewers (including reviews and customer service) to ensure consistency, high-quality, and a positive customer experience.

5.3.1 Reviews

Reviews selected for quality evaluation by GBCI will be assessed by credit to identify both quality issues and commendable work. This assessment will allow GBCI to identify areas of concern and cross-training opportunities, as well as highlight best practices. An issue that is likely to generate a customer service inquiry (even if it is not likely to affect compliance) is considered a quality issue.

The types of issues that may be assessed include:

- Platform and scorecard errors
- Missing essential information
- Inappropriate information included
- Spelling, grammar, formatting, and clarity issues
- Post QC revision issues

Commendable areas that may be assessed, include:

- Overly complex issues handled appropriately
- Extra effort provided during the review
- Above and beyond support provided to the customer

Review quality control comments will be provided to Reviewers in a timely manner so that Review Teams can ask questions, investigate issues raised, and self-correct as necessary. Summary reports will be provided to Review Teams monthly to identify trends and assess performance against GBCI quality expectations.

5.3.2 Customer Service

Customer service responses and Project Team calls will be periodically audited to ensure a positive customer experience. The accuracy, clarity, and customer approach will be assessed along with the responsiveness and first contact/call resolution rate.

5.4 GBCI Quality Expectations

Overall Reviewer quality will be evaluated monthly as the percentage of assessed credits, by rating system, that have not had any quality issues noted. Evaluations will be further broken down by credit category.

Table 1: Review Quality Expectations by Rating System

Score Range	Quality Expectations
>90%	Meeting expectations
85% - 90%	Room for improvement
<85%	Not meeting expectations

Table 2: Review Quality Expectations by Credit Category

Score Range	Quality Expectations
>85%	Meeting Expectations
80% - 85%	Room for improvement
<80%	Not meeting expectations

Review Teams that are meeting monthly quality expectations are in good standing and able to benefit from GBCI's lowest quality assessment rates.

Review Teams who have room for improvement and/or are not meeting expectations may be subject to higher assessment rates and should be actively working with GBCI to improve their quality.

Review Teams that are not meeting expectations for two or more months simultaneously may be subject to corrective action.

6. Customer Service

6.1 RESPONSIBILITIES

The Review Team is responsible for responding to all review/project-specific enquiries that are forwarded to them by GBCI. Inquiries may consist of issues that can all be addressed via written correspondence or may involve a request to hold a call with the Project Team to discuss review/project specific issues.

When authorized as a separate service, the Review Team may be responsible for technical customer service inquiries that are not specific to the Review Team's assigned certification reviews but generally within the scope of the LEED rating systems, reference guides, and supporting tools and resources. In this case, the quality expectations and Review Team qualifications remain the same. Review Teams must decline inquiries where a conflict of interest exists, in alignment with Section 3.2.3.

6.2 WRITTEN RESPONSES

At minimum, the Review Team is required to acknowledge receipt of the inquiry within 1 business day and provide a full written response within 2 business days. The reply is expected to be concise, exact, and provide a clear customer-ready response to each question raised in the inquiry. Responses should conform to the latest edition of the GBCI Technical Writing Guide. The Review Team is not required to provide a pre-review of documentation and may direct a project team to provide more specificity when the question(s) posed by the Project Team are too broad, or request consulting advice.

The Review Team should not suggest specific design, construction, or operational strategies, but shall provide guidance on the Reviewer expectations relative to the documentation necessary to document credit or prerequisite compliance. There is a fine but important line between providing guidance on the review and providing green building consulting.

Examples Considered Consulting:

- Suggesting specific design, construction, or operational strategies to achieve compliance.
- Performing complex calculations that must be informed by project-specific assumptions from the design and cannot be determined based on the documentation submitted.
 - Example: Performing ASHRAE 62.1 multi-zone calculations for a variable air volume system where the zone input parameters and Ez values are not specified and cannot be determined from the documentation provided.

Examples Not Considered Consulting:

- Confirming that a proposed design, construction, or operational strategy will comply with credit or prerequisite requirements. Review Team responses must be qualified where necessary to note that the customer service response is not considered a review of the project documentation, and to indicate the specific documentation needed to confirm credit/prerequisite compliance using the proposed strategy.

- Providing specific guidance regarding the documentation that may/must be used to show that the project's design, construction, or operational strategy complies with the prerequisite or credit intent.
 - Example: Documentation provided at preliminary review phase is insufficient to confirm credit or prerequisite compliance. Review comments shall provide specific direction as to the additional information necessary to confirm prerequisite or credit compliance. Additional guidance shall also be provided in response to a customer inquiry if the customer remains unclear about the documentation requirements. [Note: it is not necessary for the reviewer to provide examples of satisfactory documentation; but the reviewer must clearly delineate expectations regarding the additional information/documentation needed to show compliance].
- Providing a Project Team with a reference to a LEED Interpretation, Pilot Credit, section of the LEED Referenced Standard or Reference Guide, or any other published document that describes a specific credit or prerequisite compliance strategy that the Project Team may apply to achieve credit compliance.
- Providing specific references to simulation modeling approaches which may be used to document design, construction, or operational strategies that are designed for the building within the software package used by the Project Team.

[Note: the Reviewer may only provide this guidance when they are technically competent with the software and the specific simulation modeling approach. The Reviewer may never say that a software package cannot perform a certain function, since most software is continuously updated; but a Reviewer may ask for further documentation supporting the capabilities of a software package to perform a certain function].

- Example: Energy recovery is present in the proposed design, but the Project Team has not modeled it correctly for Minimum Energy Performance. If the Reviewer knows how to model energy recovery using the software package, the Reviewer may provide this guidance in the review comments or in response to a customer inquiry. The Reviewer is not obligated to provide such information, but it is not considered “consulting,” and the Reviewer may opt to provide this information.
- Making minor revisions to the calculations provided by the Project Team where the project-specific assumptions can be determined from the submitted project documentation.
 - Example: Revising the Ez value from 1.0 to 0.8 in the ASHRAE 62.1 MZ calculator to check ongoing compliance when the Reviewer determines the value should be 1.0 based on the documentation submitted.

Responses to Project Team inquiries are to be considered binding for the specific project in question.

6.3 PROJECT TEAM CALLS

The Review Team may be responsible for leading conference calls with Project Teams. Calls may occur before (“Pre-Submission Calls”) and/or after (“Post-Review Calls”) reviews occurring at each of the review phases.

GBCI will coordinate the assignment process for all calls. The Review Team is required to acknowledge receipt of the call request within one business day and to provide the Project Team (cc: GBCI) with a confirmation of call scheduling within two business days. Calls typically are scheduled for one-hour or less but may occasionally take longer. The Review Team is responsible for ensuring that representatives in attendance on the call possess sufficient in-depth technical knowledge of each of the applicable credits in question. In the case of Post-Review Calls, the Review Team is responsible for ensuring that representatives who participated in the related review phase are engaged on the call.

The Review Team shall review technical questions and agendas in advance of calls and prepare notes and draft responses for discussion on those calls. The draft responses shall be provided to GBCI for review in advance of the call. In the event the Review Team requires additional input from GBCI on a draft response, this shall be conveyed to the Certification Operations Liaison a minimum of two business days prior to the scheduled call to allow for coordination with staff resources.

Call notes shall be finalized immediately following the call, if possible. Notes shall be forwarded to the Project Team with GBCI on copy within two business days of the call. In the event, some items require additional research, forward the call notes, and indicate the items still under research. Forward a revised copy of the notes once all items have been addressed.

Call Procedures:

- Log into the call at least five minutes prior to the scheduled call time. Ensure that all members of the Review Team that will be participating in the call are present.
- Start the call on time. Introduce yourself and all members of the review team. Ask the project team members to do the same. It is helpful, but not mandatory, to use cameras during the meeting. *[Note: Reviewers contracted to GBCI, please introduce yourself as “XXXX, a certification reviewer for GBCI” rather than using your own company / organization name. This will help to minimize confusion on the part of the customer].*
- For Pre-Submission Calls ask the Project Team to provide a general project overview to help familiarize everyone on the call with the scope of the project.
- Address each of the agenda items. If you are unable to provide an answer to a particular issue, indicate that additional research is needed but the answer will be provided in the post-call notes. Whenever possible, provide a specific reference to a published LEED Interpretation or other applicable document.
- The Review Team should not suggest specific design, construction, or operational strategies, but shall provide guidance on the Reviewer expectations relative to the documentation necessary to document credit or prerequisite compliance. There is a fine but important line between providing guidance on the review and providing green building consulting. See Section 6.2 above for additional information.

Appendix 1: LEED Certification Process Flow

Appendix 2: GBCI Assignment Distribution Schedule and Timelines