



Frequently Asked Questions

FOCUS: Building Materials

Building materials play a fairly substantial role within the LEED Rating System. The most common and fundamental questions from specifiers, manufacturers and LEED practitioners have been included in this document. For technical Q&A, refer to the LEED Credit Interpretation Rulings.

- **Can a single building product achieve points in the LEED Rating System?**
- **What part do building materials play in the LEED Rating System?**
 - The vast majority of building products will only *contribute* to achieving LEED points. LEED mostly sets performance-based requirements. In attempting to meet these requirements, LEED practitioners identify products that have desired attributes. Some LEED points will require that certain limits or minimums be met. Other points will necessitate gathering specific product data into a spreadsheet in order to calculate the *aggregate* environmental or health value of a set of products.
- **How do my company's building products apply to the LEED Rating System?**
 - USGBC recommends that manufacturers familiarize themselves with the Rating System, make sure they completely understand the credits that apply to their products, and communicate the details to their clientele.
- **How can my company's building products become LEED-certified?**
 - They can't be. USGBC certifies buildings, not the materials that are used to construct the building. Only a few LEED points are dependent upon third-party certification or proving equivalence to a given standard. Manufacturers often consider the broader marketing benefits of product certification. Environmental and health claims can be certified or reviewed by organizations such as Scientific Certification Systems (www.scs1.com), Forest Stewardship Council (www.fscus.org), Green Seal (www.greanseal.org), Green Guard (www.greenguard.com), Carpet & Rug Institute (www.carpet-rug.org), Building Green Inc. (www.buildinggreen.com), Energy Star Roof program (www.energystar.gov) and others.
- **Can my company use the LEED logo if it provides green building products or services?**
 - *NO!* Only USGBC and LEED Certified buildings can use the LEED logo. All other uses violate USGBC's LEED trademark rights and are counterproductive to establishing a recognizable national brand name for green buildings. USGBC member organizations are encouraged to use the "USGBC Member" logo.

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Some tips specific to the “Materials and Resources” category:

- **MR Credit 1: Building Reuse (maintaining a % of structure, shell and non-shell components)**
 - Quantify structural elements in terms of cubic feet. Quantify shell and non-shell elements in terms of square feet.
- **MR Credit 3: Resource Reuse (specify salvaged/refurbished materials)**
 - Calculated as a percent of total cost of building materials (labor and equipment cost not included).
- **MR Credit 4: Recycled Content *** the most commonly misunderstood credit!*****
 - Products with *ANY* recycled content *CONTRIBUTE* to achieving points within this Credit.
 - In LEED Version 2.0, the percentages quoted in this Credit are based on a *proprietary* calculation scheme that is explained in the LEED Reference Guide. USGBC requires that the cost of each product is entered into a weightings calculation to place more “value” on post-consumer recycled content (versus post-industrial content). The tally of all these “values” are then compared to the total cost of building materials (labor and equipment cost not included). The LEED Calculator contains spreadsheets that accept data and calculate the results, in order to facilitate the process. *Note: This credit will be simplified in LEED Version 2.1. It will have an option to use a default percentage for total material costs, and does not have the proprietary weightings calculations.*
 - LEED excludes in-house waste from its definition of post-industrial recycled content because reusing in-house waste is commonplace. The purpose of this credit is to stimulate the recycling market.
- **MR Credit 6: Rapidly Renewable Materials**
 - Defined by LEED as resources that are planted and/or harvested within a ten-year cycle.
 - Calculated as a percent of total cost of building materials (labor and equipment cost not included).
- **MR Credit 7: Certified Sustainably Harvested Wood**
 - Calculated as a percent of the cost of all wood-based products used on the project (labor and equipment cost not included).
 - LEED requires certification based on the Forest Stewardship Council’s “Principles and Criteria.” There are other sustainable forestry certifications available, but the LEED development committees believe that FSC is currently the most comprehensive.

Some tips specific to “Indoor Environmental Quality”:

- **IEQ Credit 4: Low-Emitting Materials**
 - Four points are available in regards to adhesives and sealants, paints and coatings, carpets, and composite wood and agrifiber products.
 - The credit does not apply to exterior paints and materials that are not exposed to interior spaces. Apply for an Innovation Credit if applicable to your project.

*Additional details can be found in the LEED Reference Package and Credit Rulings.
Visit www.leedbuilding.org.*