



How Does a Building Become Green?

The LEED Certification and its Development: A Case Study Between the U.S. Green Building Council, Green Building Certification Institute and Prometric

What does it take to make a building green?

LEED certified! Founded in 1993, the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) is focused on fulfilling the building and construction industry's vision for high-performance, sustainable green building. Today, the organization encompasses more than 13,500 member companies and in the past five years alone, has quadrupled its membership. One of the driving forces behind its growing membership base is the USGBC's green building rating system, known as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED).

The LEED green building rating system is a voluntary certification program that defines the criteria by which buildings are judged for being a "high-performance green building." Buildings that fit the criteria are more environmentally responsible, healthier and more profitable structures. LEED addresses a variety of buildings and building project types through individualized systems, including: new construction, existing buildings, commercial interiors, core and shell, retail, healthcare, schools, homes and neighborhood development. LEED ratings on buildings can only be administered by the USGBC.

There are also LEED Accredited Professionals, who fully understand the stringent requirements it takes to make a building green and can grade potentially environmentally-friendly structures based on consistent, credible standards and "green" building criteria.

As the world's collective environmental conscience rapidly expands and places an increased focus on eco-friendly and sustainable building practices, the leadership and vision of the USGBC and its LEED program are becoming more valuable everyday. The sheer demand for the USGBC's expertise and the LEED program--while welcomed by the organization--would prove to be a unique challenge as it tried to determine the best way to accommodate the explosive growth of its LEED certification program.

The Challenge: Keeping Green Growing

The success of the USGBC and its LEED program is proven by the massive growth seen since the organization's founding. With more than 3.2 billion square feet of commercial construction space currently rated in the LEED system and almost 14,000 private homes either in process or already rated, green

building is showing no signs of slowing down. And neither are the property values: The total value of these structures tops \$7.5 billion.

In concert with this increase in green building practices, more LEED Accredited Professionals are needed to design and build these structures. Since its inception in 2001, the LEED AP exam has consistently grown, experiencing an average growth per year of 120 percent. Those who attain the LEED AP credential have knowledge of the LEED Rating Systems that allows them to facilitate the integrated design process and streamline LEED certification for their projects. LEED Accredited Professionals must pass an exam testing green knowledge in all areas of green construction and facilities, from carpeting and lighting to design and furniture. At the end of 2007, there were more than 45,000 Accredited Professionals serving the industry.

But this still was not enough. With almost 10,000 projects currently working through the LEED system and more than 5,000 registered in 2007 alone, the USGBC needed

to keep the growth of its LEED rating system on par with the growth of its certification process.

The Need: It's Not Easy Being Green

Because of the rapid growth of the program, the USGBC was finding the task of creating, administering and scoring the LEED AP exam on a larger scale more difficult, especially as the organization needed to simultaneously maintain its leadership position in the green building industry. The USGBC decided that it needed an experienced and proven third-party testing company to help create, facilitate and grow the certification exam to meet the evolving needs of its candidates.

The USGBC's challenge was in finding a third-party resource that could not only administer the exam securely over a wide geography, but also act as a partner in the continued development of the exam's content and, in doing so, the future growth of the LEED Accredited Professional program. The USGBC found the answer to its dilemma when the leadership enlisted Prometric, the global leader in technology enabled testing and assessment, to become its testing partner for the LEED Professional Accreditation program.

The Solution: Green Goals

To accommodate the increased topical interest in its certification exams, the USGBC contracted with Prometric to offer the exam through a global network of test centers. Since Prometric test centers are in nearly every market

worldwide, the exam would now be available to a vastly larger and geographically dispersed candidate base. Prometric's test centers are also staffed by trained exam proctors and equipped with the latest forms of testing technology, ensuring that the integrity of the LEED AP exams and its candidates would remain intact regardless of the increased administration scale.

Prometric's biggest contribution to the USGBC, however, came in its ability to use its experience in testing and certification to help the USGBC identify new opportunities.

The USGBC enlisted Prometric to guide Job Task Analyses on a global and exam-level scale, essentially reviewing the organization's goals, strategy and existing credential offerings to identify potential new content or entirely new certifications. After identifying opportunities, Prometric assists in the design of certification blueprints, or the roadmaps that a redesigned or brand new certification will follow, from concept to creation. Prometric then aids the USGBC in developing the questions (or items) for the exams and uses its psychometric experts to determine whether or not the newly crafted exams are both legally defensible and consistent with the goals of the certification.

From soup to nuts, Prometric helps the USGBC determine what aspects of green building it needs to examine, how it can use psychometric analysis to best measure these traits in candidates, what questions to ask, how to ask them and

how to score them. Going beyond that, Prometric also handles the computer-based delivery, scoring and management of every exam, allowing the USGBC to continue innovation and thought leadership for the greening of construction.



Moving Forward: The Next Shade of Green?

In 2008, the USGBC announced the creation of the Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI) to manage the LEED Professional Accreditation program and potential future green building credential programs. The GBCI provides a separate organizational structure with responsibility for the administration of the LEED AP program, eliminating any perceived or potential conflicts of interest between exam development and standards development, and between exam development and educational curriculum development.

Prometric's work with the organization continues, now partnering with the GBCI directly, and is currently conducting a Global Job Task Analysis to determine if any new credentialing opportunities or markets are available for the GBCI. By partnering with Prometric to help craft and administer the LEED AP exam, the USGBC (and its GBCI testing wing) is poised to continue its leadership in the green building space, through not only best practices and standards, but a sound and legally-defensible certification program, ensuring that a LEED rating remains the highest benchmark in eco-friendly construction.