

LEED v4 Rating System Selection Guidance

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RATING SYSTEM SELECTION GUIDANCE

You've decided to pursue LEED v4, but you're looking for some guidance to select a rating system before you register your project.

Here's how to use the guidance below:

1. Identify an appropriate rating system
2. Determine the best adaptation

Please pay close attention to this guidance, because if you select a rating system that doesn't apply, USGBC may request that you change your project's rating system.

Don't forget, your very first step should be to make sure that LEED will work for your project no matter what rating system you choose. Check out the [LEED v4 Minimum Program Requirements](#).

Contact USGBC if you are not clear which rating system you should use.

Rating system descriptions

LEED for Building Design and Construction. Buildings that are new construction or major renovation. At least 60% of the project's *gross floor area* must be *complete* by the time of certification (except for LEED BD+C: Core and Shell). Must include the entire building's gross floor area in the project.

- **LEED BD+C: New Construction and Major Renovation.** New construction or major renovation of buildings that do not primarily serve K-12 educational, retail, data centers, warehouses and distribution centers, hospitality, or healthcare uses. New construction also includes high-rise residential buildings 9 stories or more.
- **LEED BD+C: Core and Shell Development.** Buildings that are new construction or major renovation for the exterior shell and core mechanical, electrical, and plumbing units, but not a complete interior fit-out. LEED BD+C: Core and Shell is the appropriate rating system to use if more than 40% of the gross floor area is incomplete at the time of certification.

- **LEED BD+C: Schools.** Buildings made up of core and ancillary learning spaces on K-12 school grounds. LEED BD+C: Schools may optionally be used for higher education and non-academic buildings on school campuses.
- **LEED BD+C: Retail.** Buildings used to conduct the retail sale of consumer product goods. Includes both direct customer service areas (showroom) and preparation or storage areas that support customer service.
- **LEED BD+C: Data Centers.** Buildings specifically designed and equipped to meet the needs of high density computing equipment such as server racks, used for data storage and processing. LEED BD+C: Data Centers only addresses whole building data centers (greater than 60%).
- **LEED BD+C: Warehouses and Distribution Centers.** Buildings used to store goods, manufactured products, merchandise, raw materials, or personal belongings, such as self-storage.
- **LEED BD+C: Hospitality.** Buildings dedicated to hotels, motels, inns, or other businesses within the service industry that provide transitional or short-term lodging with or without food.
- **LEED BD+C: Healthcare.** Hospitals that operate twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week and provide inpatient medical treatment, including acute and long-term care.
- **LEED BD+C: Homes and Multifamily Lowrise.** Single-family homes and multi-family residential buildings of 1 to 3 stories. Projects 3 to 5 stories may choose the Homes rating system that corresponds to the ENERGY STAR program in which they are participating.
- **LEED BD+C: Multifamily Midrise.** Multi-family residential buildings of 4 to 8 occupiable stories above grade. The building must have 50% or more residential space. Buildings near 8 stories can inquire with USGBC about using Midrise or New Construction, if appropriate.

LEED for Interior Design and Construction. Interior spaces that are a complete interior fit-out. In addition, at least 60% of the project's gross floor area must be complete by the time of certification.

- **LEED ID+C: Commercial Interiors.** Interior spaces dedicated to functions other than retail or hospitality.
- **LEED ID+C: Retail.** Interior spaces used to conduct the retail sale of consumer product goods. Includes both direct customer service areas (showroom) and preparation or storage areas that support customer service.
- **LEED ID+C: Hospitality.** Interior spaces dedicated to hotels, motels, inns, or other businesses within the service industry that provide transitional or short-term lodging with or without food.

LEED for Building Operations and Maintenance. Buildings that are fully operational and occupied for at least one year. The project may be undergoing improvement work or little to no construction. Must include the entire building's gross floor area in the project.

- **LEED O+M: Existing Buildings.** Existing buildings that do not primarily serve K-12 educational, retail, data centers, warehouses and distribution centers, or hospitality uses.
- **LEED O+M: Retail.** Existing buildings used to conduct the retail sale of consumer product goods. Includes both direct customer service areas (showroom) and preparation or storage areas that support customer service.
- **LEED O+M: Schools.** Existing buildings made up of core and ancillary learning spaces on K-12 school grounds. May also be used for higher education and non-academic buildings on school campuses.
- **LEED O+M: Hospitality.** Existing buildings dedicated to hotels, motels, inns, or other businesses within the service industry that provide transitional or short-term lodging with or without food.
- **LEED O+M: Data Centers.** Existing buildings specifically designed and equipped to meet the needs of high density computing equipment such as server racks, used for data storage and processing. LEED O+M: Data Centers only addresses whole building data centers.
- **LEED O+M: Warehouses & Distribution Centers.** Existing buildings used to store goods, manufactured products, merchandise, raw materials, or personal belongings (such as self-storage).

LEED for Neighborhood Development. New land development projects or redevelopment projects containing residential uses, nonresidential uses, or a mix. Projects may be at any stage of the development process, from conceptual planning through construction. It is recommended that at least 50% of total building floor area be new construction or major renovation. Buildings within the project and features in the public realm are evaluated.

- **LEED ND: Plan.** Projects in conceptual planning or master planning phases, or under construction.
- **LEED ND: Project.** Completed development projects.

Choosing between rating systems

The following 40/60 rule provides guidance for making a decision when several rating systems appear to be appropriate for a project. To use this rule, first assign a rating system to each square foot or square meter of the building, and then choose the most appropriate rating system based on the resulting percentages.

The entire gross floor area of a LEED project must be certified under a single rating system and is subject to all prerequisites and attempted credits in that rating system, regardless of mixed construction or space usage type.

- If a rating system is appropriate for less than 40% of the gross floor area of a LEED project building or space, then that rating system should not be used.
- If a rating system is appropriate for more than 60% of the gross floor area of a LEED project building or space, then that rating system should be used.
- If an appropriate rating system falls between 40% and 60% of the gross floor area, project teams must independently assess their situation and decide which rating system is most applicable.